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## Review: Lines of Geography in Latin American Narrative: National Territory, National Literature, by Aarti Smith Madan

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which is common in many works on Iberian literatures, can be at least partially explained by the peculiarities of the Basque literary (and political) space, which did not participate in the Iberianist dialogues that this work describes.

Secondly, from a methodological perspective, the decision taken by Newcomb of going directly to the original texts, and analyzing and comparing them first hand, offers a fresh reconsideration of works that, like *Causas das decadências dos povos peninsulares* by Antero de Quental, for example, have already produced a copious amount of secondary bibliography. The possible downside to this choice is that at some points there seems to be limited mentions to previous works on the same issues, some of which could have helped widen and deepen the analysis of the texts. A good example is the chapter on Portuguese-Galician relations, which have been studied by many scholars such as Elias Torres Feijó or Carlos Pazos Justo, who belong to the Galabra research network.

With *Iberianism and Crisis. Spain and Portugal at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, Newcomb makes a notable contribution to the field of Iberian studies, and to the historical reconstruction of the Iberian(ist) cultural relations from which, at least partially, they derive, as Newcomb himself acknowledges and explains. It offers a prismatic approach to a set of canonical texts and authors that embody a complex network or rhizome of cultural relations in a particularly rich period of crisis, but also of self-reflection and regeneration. For these reasons, this work is an essential reference for scholars interested in the crisis of the *fin-de-siècle* and on the study of the transnational and transcultural interconnections in the Iberian space.

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AARTI SMITH MADAN. *Lines of Geography in Latin American Narrative: National Territory, National Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 291 pp.

What is the relationship between the demarcation and the poeticization of the land? What can the formal and aesthetic features of writing – structure, style, rhythm, literary devices – tell us about the politics of geography? How are geographical discourse and practices rooted in imperial projects adopted and reshaped by the intellectual and political architects of newly independent nations? These are some of the complex and compelling questions that drive Aarti Smith Madan's excellent monograph, *Lines of*

*Geography in Latin American Narrative*, published in 2017 as a contribution to the Palgrave series in “Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies,” edited by Robert T. Tally Jr. The transdisciplinary ambition of Madan’s study is matched by an impressive depth and range of textual research, theoretical and methodological clarity and coherence, and a smartly innovative trajectory of thinking about the relationships between literature, geography, and nation-state consolidation in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Latin America.

Returning to some of the foundational writers and texts of Latin American literature, with focused chapters on the Argentines Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Estanislao Zeballos and the Brazilian Euclides da Cunha, Madan reinvigorates them not only through close-reading and renewed reflection on their historical and socio-political contexts, but also by locating them in relationship to a critical genealogy of geographical discourse. Following a substantial introductory chapter that clearly delineates Madan’s questions and approaches, and the stakes of their merging of “Latin America’s *fin-de-siècle* geographical and literary projects into a geocritical reading,” the book’s first chapter considers the complicated legacy of Alexander von Humboldt as the key figure in the emergence and consolidation of Latin American geographical discourse (4). Analyzing Humboldt’s work and drawing upon a wide-range of critical studies and histories, here Madan identifies features that are redeployed by Latin American writers, notably a bridging of art and science, and an aesthetics that normalizes contradictions in terms of the relationship with environmentalism, conquest, and the place of the “primitive,” “barbaric,” and the “premodern” in their understanding and delineation of the land.

In the next two chapters, “Sarmiento the Geographer: Unearthing the Literary in *Facundo*” and “Estanislao Severo Zeballos and the Transatlantic Science of Statecraft,” Madan convincingly argues that while these two writer-politicians from Argentina drew clear influence and authority from Humboldt’s “aestheticized geographical discourse,” they write both with and against it as they transculturally convert the writing of the earth into a writing of the nation. While much has been written about these two foundational figures, Madan forges a new approach, carefully reading their relationship through the institutionalization of geographical discourse, i.e. through an attentiveness to their practice and esteem of aesthetics, to formal, lyrical qualities or literary aspirations (met or unmet), and by excavating the poetic within their expository, didactic, and political purposes. While the literary qualities of Sarmiento’s work have been recognized in its canonization and treatment by a number of scholars and critics, Madan’s approach recovers its geographical roots. And in the case of Zeballos, never known as a good writer, Madan vigorously contends that his

writing is worth reexamining precisely because, in its failed attempt at a literary register, Zeballos “spells out and often theorizes the essential attributes of geographical discourse.” (130)

The next chapter turns attention to the Brazilian engineer, cartographer, and journalist, Euclides da Cunha. “Provincializing World Geography: Land and Letters in Euclides da Cunha’s *Os Sertões*” considers his monumental treatment of land, society, and conflict in Brazil’s semi-arid northeast interior. Again, Madan is closely attentive to the poetics of landscape representation, examining the interplay in da Cunha’s writing between a socialization/anthropomorphizing of the region’s flora and the naturalization of the region’s human inhabitants. She thus illuminates a persistent oscillation in his thinking between nature as metaphor and nature as object of representation.

Finally, in a short, concluding chapter, Madan analyzes Andrés di Tella’s 2007 documentary, “*El país del diablo*,” which traces Zeballos’s mapmaking campaign in the wake of the *Conquista del Desierto*. Here, she clarifies the contemporary stakes of her analysis of *fin-de-siècle* Latin American geographical discourse. Reading a sequence in the documentary that features one of the last living speakers of the native Ranquel language and a historical reenactment of a scene of violent imposition of language and maps on the Indigenous other (in the wake of the conquest of the Pampas), Madan, through di Tella, sharply condemns these efforts at national consolidation and highlights the continued and even intensified will to resistance of the nation’s (and continent’s) internal others. As she writes: “Even if the geographical and literary projects of the liberal nineteenth century were about Cartesian rationalization – imposing an order upon América’s ‘barbarism’ – then projects like di Tella’s are the first steps toward peripatetically reversing that model ...” (255). She thus highlights, alongside di Tella and a number of other examples of activist decolonial thinking, the ever-urgent claims of a post-Eurocentric contestation of a geography that has “only diced this vast territory into more controlled pieces of difference ready for extraction and exploitation ...” (257). In the end, Madan’s book, sharply punctuated by the acknowledgement of profound social and ecological crisis and the enduring resistance of alternative mappings and imaginings of land and difference among Amerindian peoples, compels its reader to ask after other possible geographies.

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