

PROJECT OUTLINE

Spanish-speaking novels by migrant women in Europe in the 20th and 21st century

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Short summary

This project analyses novels written by women who migrated from Spain or Latin America to (other) European countries during the 20th and 21st century in order to investigate how the genre of the novel gives these marginalized subjects a voice.

State of the art

In the last twenty-five years, numerous studies have been dedicated to the female perspective in migration literature, often in relation to the female body or identity (for example the articles in Willis et. al. 2019 as well as in Brinker-Gabler 1997). Social science researchers have also addressed female migration (to Europe) in relation to diaspora, transnational politics, and conflict (Bermudez 2016) or by comparing migrant women who usually travelled with their families with those who travelled alone mostly during the second half of the 20th century (Izquierdo 2008).

However, scholars of literature and social science have rarely analysed women's voices in emigration novels combining the two perspectives. In contrast, this study adopts an interdisciplinary approach by combining approaches from gender studies with literature, history, and social science. This project expands and deepens the research already published in the edited volume *La Mirada femenina desde la diversidad cultural: Relatos literarios desde 1960 hasta el presente* (*The female perspective from cultural diversity: Literary stories from 1960 to the present*) and the work carried out at the University of Alcalá on this topic entitled *Female and Latin American Migratory Memory in the Spanish Novel of the Twentieth Century*. It will take into account a broader European context by focusing on female migration from Spain to other European countries.

Objectives

This project is designed to study migration as a literary, historical, and social phenomenon. In doing so, we will pursue three goals in particular:

1. To develop a general panorama of the female migration novel written in Spanish in the 20th and 21st century, including a chronology of the fundamental stages of its development and an outline of the common characteristics of the genre.
2. To analyse the cultural voices expressed in the most important novels of each period including the description of traditions and customs from the author's home country as well as the corresponding processes of preserving, replacing or forgetting this heritage.

3. To analyse the language and textual structures which serve to tell the story and find out how the writing process gives sense to and empowers the life of migrant women writers.

Corpus

To carry out this research we have selected the novels to be analysed according to three specific qualities. First, we will limit the research to novels written by women in order to demonstrate the existence of the female tradition in the genre of migration novel. Secondly, we will study those novels that address migration as a human phenomenon as a central theme to consider the choice of the novel as a privileged literary genre expressing the experience of migration. Finally, we will limit our study to novels written in the 20th and 21st century to describe the characteristics of female migration in this era, from the perspective of women writers from Spain and Latin America who have experienced migration in Europe and whose voices traditionally have not been heard. To complete our corpus, we have included the date of birth, the author's original country, her last destination, and the importance of her work as metadata (see Appendix).

Theory and methods

Our work draws on Mikhail Bakhtin's theories on the novel as an initial reference point, which are still valid in the 21st century, and the approach developed by Shirley Mangini, who proposed a gender outlaw theory for works that alternate between literature and history. Furthermore, as a basis for the analysis of our novels, we will draw on gender, sociological and economics studies that have revealed existing prejudices about migrant women.

We will use the comparative historical method. We intend to study the female novels in the political contexts in which they were written and we will compare them with other novels that were written in the same historical periods but in other geographical spaces to compare forms of female empowerment through history. One of our hypotheses is that differences in the geographical space that authors come from cause them to adapt differently in European regions and this is dealt within the novels.

Timetable

Dates	Activities
January-April 2021	Elaboration of theoretical foundations
May-July 2021	Women authors born between 1890-1920
September-December 2021	Women authors born between 1921-1950
January-April 2022	Women authors born between 1951-1965
May-July 2022	Women authors born between 1966-1985
September-December 2022	Conclusions

References

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