Check for updates

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Otherness, class and labor: Internal migration and emigration in four Spanish novels of late Francoism

[version 1; peer review: awaiting peer review]

Maria Ayete Gil

University of Alcala, Alcala de Henares, Community of Madrid, Spain

v1 **First published:** 22 Sep 2026, **6**:365
https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.24582.1
Latest published: 22 Sep 2026, **6**:365
https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.24582.1

Abstract

This article examines four Spanish novels published during the late Francoist period: *La mina* (1959), by Armando López Salinas; *Ajena crece la yerba* (1962), by Ramón Solís; *Hemos perdido el sol* (1963), by Ángel María de Lera; and *Cacereño* (1969), by Raúl Guerra Garrido. The selection of these novels is not arbitrary: whereas *La mina* and *Cacereño* portray internal migration within Spain, the other two depict the experience of Spanish migrants abroad. Nor is the period of their production incidental: the 1950s and 1960s witnessed one of the largest rural exoduses of the twentieth century. The article analyzes the literary construction of migrant subjects as figures of otherness within this sociohistorical context. To this end, it is structured around four analytical axes: (1) the reality of the Spanish countryside, (2) the obstacles inherent in the migratory process, (3) class difference, and (4) labor.

Keywords

Otherness; Class; Labor; Migration; Late Francoism

Open Peer Review

Approval Status *AWAITING PEER REVIEW*

Any reports and responses or comments on the article can be found at the end of the article.

This article is included in the Horizon Europe gateway.

This article is included in the The Political Novel in Europe and Migration/Exile collection.

Corresponding author: Maria Ayete Gil (maria.ayete@uah.es)

Author roles: Ayete Gil M: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review & Editing

Competing interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Grant information: This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme [Cartography of the Political Novel in Europe] (Grant number: 101094658).
The funders had no role in study design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish, or preparation of the manuscript.

Copyright: © 2026 Ayete Gil M. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

How to cite this article: Ayete Gil M. **Otherness, class and labor: Internal migration and emigration in four Spanish novels of late Francoism [version 1; peer review: awaiting peer review]** Open Research Europe 2026, **6**:365
https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.24582.1

First published: 22 Sep 2026, **6**:365 https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.24582.1

Introduction

In 1932, Carl Schmitt published *The Concept of the Political* with the aim of explaining the origin of the political unity of the State. This origin is found in the political, understood as the element that seeks to establish social homogeneity through the creation of an identity around which the people can be unified[1]. If "the State is the political status of a people organized within territorial boundaries" (Schmitt 1991, 49),[2] the people exist politically only as a set of homogenized individuals who inhabit those boundaries. This set of individuals is related through social association: its members are friends. According to Schmitt, the categories proper to the political, or "the specific political distinction to which all political actions and motives can be reduced, is that between friend and enemy" (1991, 56). The political establishes, it could be said, a relation of opposition —or a principle of dissociation— in which "the political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he does not have to appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to conduct business with him. He is simply the other, the stranger, and his essence is sufficiently determined by the fact that he is, in a particularly intense sense, existentially something different and alien" (1991, 57). The enemy is "the other, the stranger"; that is, the one who is not part of the community, the one who is on the other side of the borders: the excluded.[3]

Chantal Mouffe exposes in *The Return of the Political* (1999) the impossibility of an inclusive community, since all community construction is in essence antagonistic. According to Mouffe, the institution of a *us* (a community and the collective identity on which it is founded) entails the erection of a frontier that differentiates from a *them* (1999, 159). This implies two things: the first one, that there is no founded identity without exclusion;[4] second, that the constitutive exterior inherent to community construction is, at the same time, that which allows the foundation of the communitarian *us* and a marker that reminds us of its permanent partiality. In brief: there is no identity founded without exclusion, there is no community founded without exclusion.

We live in community and we live subject to boundary regimes. However, the degree to which these regimes are restricted is unequal, and this inequality is rooted in class, gender and race. In the end, it is the rich territories that command the building of barriers that separate them from the poor territories, and the border crossing experience is conditioned by the color of passport and skin, but also by gender and appearance, by gestures, looks and tremors. Borders are experiences that also transform the subjectivity of the migrant subject and cross the body, scarring it.

This article analyzes four Spanish novels published between 1959 and 1969, focusing on the representation of the migrant subject and on their living conditions in both the place of origin and the destination. The novels are: *La mina* (1959), by Armando López Salinas; *Ajena crece la yerba* (1962), by Ramón Solís; *Hemos perdido el sol* (1963), by Ángel María de Lera; and *Cacereño* (1969), by Raúl Guerra Garrido.[5] The selection of these novels is not accidental: whereas *La mina* and *Cacereño* narrate internal migration in Spain, the other two narrate the experience of the Spanish migrant abroad. The moment of production of these texts is not accidental either: during the 1950s and 1960s, one of the largest migratory waves of the twentieth century took place. Technological modernization destroyed small- and medium-scale peasantry, forcing it to migrate to the city in order to survive. The analysis presented below has as its main objective the examination and explanation of the Spanish migrant subject, who, upon crossing borders, becomes estranged: an enemy. To this end, the study is structured around four axes: (1) the reality of the Spanish countryside, (2) the obstacles of the migratory process, (3) class difference, and (4) labor.

Introduction. Late Francoism and Rural Exodus

The protagonists of the four novels under study are characters who represent a collective: that formed by Spaniards who, throughout the 1960s, became cheap labor for companies with factories located both within the national territory and abroad. On the socioeconomic level, the 1960s in Spain are characterized by a certain opening of the Franco regime, resulting from the Stabilization Plan of 1959, which inaugurated the era of so-called developmentalism. During this period, Spain "modernized" through the creation of two sectors: one industrial and the other within the service sector (tourism). Exports increased, and a certain amount of capital accumulated, also as a result of external investments (especially American), although state protectionism and interventionism remained present.[6] This combination of modernization and traditionalism was achieved through the incorporation of technocrats from Opus Dei into the

[1]For this reason, he maintains, already at the beginning of the text, that "the concept of the State presupposes that of the political" (1991, 49). [All theoretical sources consulted in this study were read/written in Spanish. This is our own translation of the quotations.]
[2]Italicized in the original, unless otherwise indicated.
[3]It can therefore be asserted that the constitutive political principle of any association (of a community; of a State) is a dissociative operation: antagonism (Marchart 2007, 41).
[4]This is not an original idea of Mouffe's, but rather a rethinking of similar ideas previously formulated by Jacques Derrida or Julia Kristeva.
[5]The translations of the novel titles would be: *The Mine*, *The Grass Grows Elsewhere*, *We Have Lost the Sun* and *From Cáceres.*
[6]For a study on foreign investments, see Sánchez Recio and Tascón Fernández (2003) "La política y los empresarios en los años 60)".

government.[7] The regime aligned itself with the capitalist model of production and its consumer society: it sought to partake in the feast of globalization and economic liberalism; to promote (or market) something resembling a welfare state; and, in doing so, to gloss over the reality of working-class exploitation.

Part of this working class is made up of the peasantry, a collective historically affected by agrarian policies, including those of the 1950s and 1960s, which were responsible for the transformations that took place in the country's rural areas during that period. Changes in the countryside were directed toward a productivist model of agriculture.[8] To achieve this, technological progress and mechanization were necessary, which reduced the need for labor.[9] The surplus labor force —the remnants of that reduction in labor demand; the unemployed— had no choice but to migrate in order to survive. Where did they go? Either abroad or to expanding national urban industrial centers. This is the so-called rural exodus.[10]

However, the exodus not only entails the depopulation of the country's rural areas or their stagnation —"aging increases and there is, in addition, a significant decline in generational reproductive capacity" (Camarero Rioja 1991, 17)— but also the total impoverishment of those agrarian areas incapable of meeting the demands of the new market and, therefore, less favored by agrarian policies. Deagrarianization and the exodus ultimately produce an uneven transformation of the rural habitat, since while some areas became urbanized (especially those close to industrialized zones), others remained rural. Within the latter, there were regions with a completely paralyzed productive sector.

The protagonists of many Spanish novels published as early as the late 1950s come from this hungry and disintegrating rural world. The hegemonic narrative paradigm of the period is that of social realism: texts of a realist nature that seek, broadly speaking, to make explicit and denounce the injustices and inequalities of society through the representation of the most disadvantaged social strata, struggling for survival.[11] Without losing sight of the heterogeneity of mid-century narrative production, these are what might be termed social novels.[12] Following Pablo Gil Casado, "we will say that a novel is social only when it points out the injustice, inequality, or stagnation that exist in society and, with a critical purpose, shows how they manifest themselves in reality, in a sector or in the totality of national life" (1975, 19). That is, it is not enough for the protagonist of a novel to be a worker or for the narrative to take place in a shantytown neighborhood, for example, rather, for a novel to be social, there must be advocacy for the working class and a focus on problems that are the result of systemic inequality (1975, 21).

Since the greatest injustices and inequalities are detected in the countryside, it is not accidental that many novels of the period set their plots—or part of them—in villages ravaged by poverty and the rural exodus. Consider, for example, *Los bravos* (1954), by Jesús Fernández Santos; *Dos días de setiembre* (1962), by José Manuel Caballero Bonald; *El cacique* (1963), by Luis Romero; or *Tierra para morir* (1965), by Ángel María de Lera. Not to mention the rural settings of texts such as *Central eléctrica* (1958), by Jesús López Pacheco; *La zanja* (1960) and *Un cielo difícilmente azul* (1961), by Alfonso Grosso; *La noche más caliente* (1966), by Daniel Sueiro; or *La huelga* (1967), by Isabel Álvarez de Toledo. *La mina*, *Ajena crece la yerba*, *Hemos perdido el sol*, and *Cacereño* —our corpus— are, for their part, novels that also follow this line. In them, the villages from which their protagonists originate are represented, either because the narratives begin with the departure of the subjects (*La mina* and *Cacereño*) or through evocation from abroad (*Ajena crece la yerba* and

[7]The contradictions of the regime in this second stage are evident.

[8]Felisa Ceña Delgado states this very clearly, for whom these changes "are not the result of decisions made within the rural environment but are imposed by the dominant model of economic growth" (1992, 12).

[9]"The increase in agricultural productivity meant moving from agriculture based on biological energy and polyculture (traditional) to one intensive in capital and specialized (modern). Capitalization would be achieved through technological innovations with mechanical capital (labor-saving), chemical and biological capital (land-saving)" (Ceña Delgado 1992, 18).

[10]Francisco Candel relies on data from the *Anuario del mercado Español 1968* to assert that "the provinces of Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, and Vizcaya had emerged as the most sought-after destinations for the population changing residence. In 1966, Barcelona had received 86,092 immigrants; Madrid, 25,104; Valencia, 20,648; and Vizcaya, 18,667" (1976, 18–19). This migratory flow "experienced, at the end of the 1970s, a clear tendency to slow down. A slowdown determined by the progressive 'exhaustion' of rural labor reserves, and by the reduced attractiveness of urban areas, with high unemployment rates, for the rural population. In short, depopulated villages and overcrowded cities" (Camarero Rioja 1991: 18).

[11]According to Santos Sanz Villanueva, it can be said that, in general terms, "during the course of the 1950s a very significant change took place in Spanish novels," which can be summarized as follows: "from a conservative perspective on the world, focused on traditional narrative molds, there is a shift to a sympathetic, complicit, or critical —and sometimes progressive and leftist— view shaped by a new or renewed objectivist-style realism" (2010, 154).

[12]Care must be taken, because even within the selection of texts under study there is heterogeneity. *La mina*, by Armando López Salinas, is a novel belonging to socialist realism or critical realism, a minority branch within the dominant paradigm characterized, like the other novels of this more politically oriented current, by depicting "the injustice, exploitation, or alienation of a social class (the proletariat) in relation to the one that holds political, economic—and ideological in its entirety—power, together with the means of production (the dominant classes) […] not as a mere depiction or antiseptic fresco of social tensions, but as a dialectical analysis of these relationships, of their contradictions, with the purpose of provoking censorship, denunciation, and the awakening of consciousness in the reader" (Álamo Felices 1996, 206).

Hemos perdido el sol). [13] Thus, these are four texts that narrate the rural exodus in order to highlight not only the processes of becoming the other and the problems of adaptation and exploitation at the destination, but also the reality of the villages left behind.

Internal Migration: from the Countryside to the City. *La mina* and *Cacereño*

The protagonist of Armando López Salinas' novel *La mina* is Joaquín, a peasant from the village of Tero in Andalusia. Due to the hunger and misery in the Andalusian countryside, he and his family are forced to move to the mining town of Los Llanos (Ciudad Real). *Cacereño*, the text by Raúl Guerra Garrido, is centered on José Bajo (Pepe), a peasant from Torrecasar, a village in the province of Cáceres (Extremadura). The starting point is the same: the lack of work drives the man to emigrate in order to survive. His destination? Initially Germany; however, he ends up in San Sebastián (Basque Country). Joaquín begins working in one of the mines of Los Llanos, while Pepe settles in the metallurgical industry in Eibain. The mine and the factory: two paradigmatic spaces in proletarian narrative, two symbols of labor overexploitation.

The countryside that both Joaquín and Pepe leave behind is very similar: these are places where the lack of structural agrarian reform has resulted in misery. The peasant has no work, no matter how hard he looks for it, no matter how he goes each morning to the town hall square to try to sell his labor to the highest bidder; waiting for the overseer's hand to point at him and, this time, be able to return home with a few—very few—coins in his pocket. Because without work there is no money, and without money there is no food: "Sin dinero no se puede vivir. A mí no me parece que todos tengamos que ser pobres sólo por trabajar el campo y no ir a las fábricas" (López Salinas 2013, 124), Joaquín insists, advocating for the dignification of the peasantry. Pepe el Bajo points to something similar when he refuses to be exploited for a meager wage in the countryside: he is "un hombre"—he argues—and, therefore, "necesito un trabajo de hombre, no estoy dispuesto a aceptar uno de bestia" (Guerra Garrido 2019, 73). Neither man leaves his village of his own free will (a decision taken voluntarily), but out of sheer necessity. That is why Joaquín does not hesitate to call things by their name, clarifying that "a mí me han empujao, me han echao de la tierra" (2019, 291).

Both the first part of *La mina*, titled "La huida," and the initial sections of *Cacereño* are a direct reflection of the precarious situation in the represented rural areas and the gradual abandonment of their active population. The Andalusian and Extremaduran countryside of the period was characterized by regions dominated by large landholdings. That is, places where land ownership was very clearly divided: on one side, the large landowners (owners of the land) and, on the other, the workers, mere day laborers. Neither Francoist reforms nor colonization policies had a real impact on land ownership in these areas: as Cristóbal Gómez Benito maintains, "the latifundist regions remained so, and the social structure remained practically unchanged. Even today, most estate-dominated regions exhibit high rates of agricultural unemployment" (2004, 77).[14] The technological and mechanized advances that agriculture experienced during the 1960s reduced the amount of labor required to extract surplus value, creating a mismatch between the pool of potential workers and the limited job opportunities. The injustice of land distribution is highlighted on several occasions in the novels. The peasants' attachment to the land is total; this is why Joaquín asserts that, even if economically it is not so, "esta tierra es nuestra," because "nosotros la hemos hecho con nuestro trabajo" (López Salinas 2013, 123). This rootedness to the land and to a specific way of life—tied to the rhythms of nature and to a more relational notion of community—emerges clearly in both texts: the village, its people, and its landscape are all that the protagonists and their ancestors have ever known.

This rootedness is the cause of the rupture produced by migration to the city. If in the village everything seemed to Joaquín "como hecho de su propia sangre" (2013, 123), in the urban environment everything is strange, alien. Especially if, as happens to Pepe, this new environment is accompanied by an unknown language (Basque) and different customs. Estrangement, the feeling of marginality and exclusion, loneliness, a sense of exile, and nostalgia are some of the sensations experienced by migrant subjects during the adaptation process at the destination. Pepe, for example, "le deprimía su soledad," a loneliness he describes as "hostil," which drives him to go into bars to drink alcohol "por matar el tiempo, por sentirme rodeado de seres humanos" (2019, 101, 102, 109). Joaquín experiences a certain initial estrangement with the landscape of Los Llanos, which he describes as tierra "reseca" de hierba "como agostada" y campos "requemados" (2013, 168), so different from that of his village. And a radically different horizon, in which "los edificios y las torres metálicas de las explotaciones" stand unmoved. Further away, "las chimeneas de la Minera del Sur lanzaban chorros de humo negro" (2013, 161).

[13] It is also necessary, when considering this socially oriented literature, to take into account the travel books of the period, such as *Caminando por las Hurdes* (1960), by Armando López Salinas and Antonio Ferres; *Campos de Níjar* (1960), by Juan Goytisolo; or *Viaje al sur* (2020, posthumous publication), by Juan Marsé, for example.

[14] "The reasons that condemn peasants to poverty and drive them to undertake a journey to the cities and industrial centers lie in the lack of an agrarian reform capable of keeping the Spanish rural area in a productive state" (Becerra Mayor 2013, 66).

Not all migrations are the same. Returning to his place of origin is unthinkable for Pepe, because for him, return is synonymous with failure, shame, and weakness: "Tengo que salir adelante. […] mintiendo, rebanado, como sea, todo antes que regresar derrotado" (2019, 92). Pepe needs to prove to others and to himself that the decision to emigrate was the right one, that he is capable of fighting and achieving a dignified future. His journey for a few days to Torrecasar toward the end of the novel marks the culmination of his migratory process: the public demonstration of upward social mobility; the closing of the circle, the end of the journey. Joaquín's migration, accompanied by his family, quickly becomes temporary upon arrival: the work is hard and affects his health; he is exhausted, in pain, and ill, and they do not even yet have a house to live in alone (they share housing). Moreover, in Los Llanos the climate is harsh; the place is inhospitable. "En cuanto tenga unas perras nos volvemos a Tero," the character soon asserts, because the comparison is inevitable: "El cielo del pueblo es siempre azul; sólo se pone oscuro cuando llueve; en la mina nunca sabes cuándo es de noche o de día, siempre es igual de negro el cielo" (2013, 182–183). This is nostalgia, or the memory of what has been left behind, always magnified, which bursts into the lives of migrants at every step, in the face of every difficulty. The mark of exile.

Pepe lives in the Urraenea neighborhood; Joaquín in Santa Ana. Immigration causes a drastic increase in urban populations. To accommodate this growth, hastily built, overcrowded neighborhoods are constructed using cheap materials and minimal infrastructure. But slum development also appears, a symptom of the city's inability to absorb migration from the countryside. Both Urraenea and Santa Ana are excellent examples of the characteristics of this new urban space, epitomizing spatial segregation in cities according to social class and origin. These neighborhoods are located far from the nerve centers of the cities —Santa Ana, for example, "es un monte que está al otro lado del pueblo" (2012, 156)— and in them people live crowded into small apartments, commercial spaces, or huts.[15] Streets are unpaved, there is no water or electricity, no public transportation system, and the housing conditions are poor. "Parece que la barriada la haya hecho el enemigo para que sus habitantes estén incómodos" (2019, 116), Pepe el Bajo asserts. Friends and enemies, known and unknown, inside and outside. In Santa Ana, houses were built "entre unos barrizales y charcas de agua estancada," where, when Joaquín and his family arrive, even "algunos cerdos hozaban entre los desperdicios rebuscando la comida con su hocico largo" (2013, 158). The isolation and inequalities with respect to the urban core are obvious: this is a spatial separation in which boundaries are established between what is one's own and what is foreign, the clean and the dirty, the safe and the dangerous. The center is reserved for leisure, the housing of the bourgeois classes, and tourism, while the working class is located in the peripheries or in nearby towns, far from the spotlight, out of the picture. The transformation into otherness begins here, as soon as they arrive, because the stranger (foreigner, enemy) is not only the one who comes from outside, but also the one who settles on the other side of the symbolic walls that enclose (and protect the city center from contamination).

Class difference is another cross-cutting element in the two novels: it hovers over the narratives in one way or another. More than that: it structures them. The fictional universes of *La mina* and *Cacereño* depict a society fundamentally divided into two: on one side is the group that owns the means of production, and on the other, those who possess only their life —their labor power. Some have money and others do not; some have soft hands and others, rough; some have fair skin and others, darkened. In the first novel, the miners confront the dominant class, formed by the owners of the mine; in the second, the same occurs, with the bourgeois class represented by José María Lizarraga, the factory owner. But in the rural environment from which the protagonists come, the division is the same: in Torrecasar, the difference is such that the day laborers cannot even access certain public spaces frequented by the wealthy. Caciquismo reigns in the area, and the figure of the landowner —Don Luis— is omnipresent. In Taro, Joaquín's village, "ya sabes, hay gentes que van montaos en el macho y otros que andan a pie. Los que van montaos no se cansan y tienen la tripa llena, otros sufrimos de sol a sol y llevamos la hambre en la cara" (2013, 121). Class inequalities are also made evident through descriptions of clothing and housing —that is, through the representation of the living conditions of some versus others. For example, the houses of the mine director and the engineers are large, sumptuous, and feature "fuentes con chorros de agua y rosas azules" (2013, 169), while the tourists who vacation on the beach in San Sebastián de Cacereño are distinguished by their skin color, height, and clothing. On the beach, Pepe finds his otherness unbearable, which is why he feels that "la masa […] le gritaba: ¡Fuera, no eres de los nuestros! ¡Fuera!", because "aunque viviera mil años no se le quitaría el pelo de la dehesa, siempre sería un dominguero que venía a estorbar a los veraneantes" (2019, 173). In these novels, as is evident, the division is nothing other than that between those above and those below, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. However, it must be emphasized that, while *La mina* establishes this differentiation between exploiters and exploited in a stark manner, *Cacereño* has the virtue of complicating the social fabric, since within the working class a subdivision arises between natives of the Basque Country and the others (the "Cacereños"), showing the gradation in exclusion and

[15]"Massive immigration, together with the population explosion, has created the dreadful housing problem. […] a problem difficult to solve in capitalist countries of almost strictly and exclusively private initiative, since official and municipal decisions are extremely meager" (Candel 1976, 50).

exploitation, and broadening the community-related issues.[16] Despite this nuance, one thing is clear: if there is something that both texts put on the table, it is the common situation of exploitation of the proletariat as proletariat, regardless of geographic location or origin. The problem and the struggle are not local, but national (universal).

The expulsion of peasants from the land to the city entails their insertion into a cycle of changes, among which —beyond landscape, customs, and community— work stands out: with the exodus, the peasant becomes a proletarian. A proletarian in an extremely precarious condition, given the mass of potential workers crowding the gates of the factories. At one point in *La mina*, one of the overseers stops the complaints of a companion of Joaquín as follows: "recuerda que en la calle hay muchos hombres deseando buscar el jornal" (2013, 204). There is no doubt about the threat: the devaluation of labor limits the workers' ability to protest their working conditions, even though, in the tavern of Los Llanos —a place of leisure but also of gathering— these concerns emerge and are recognized. In *Cacereño*, by contrast, protest is articulated; however, none of the two strikes organized in the factory succeed. Why? Because the differences between foreign workers and Basques outweigh their similarities, summarized in their shared condition as exploited subjects. The unity of social mobilization is fragmented in Guerra Garrido's novel, and it is fragmented by a very rigid (exclusive) notion of community, which multiplies layers of exclusion, preventing the identification of a common enemy against which to organize.[17]

In both *La mina* and *Cacereño*, a faithful portrayal of the labor sector to which the protagonists belong emerges: there is a description of the work itself and a denunciation —more forceful in *La mina*— of the working conditions and their consequences (illness, physical pain, accidents). In the mining work, safety conditions are nonexistent: toxic gases are breathed in, the heat is suffocating, there is filth, rats, and humidity, in addition to total darkness.[18] The accident that closes the novel, claiming the lives of several miners —including Joaquín— is the ultimate demonstration of an ideology that places profitability above human lives. However, the novel does not hesitate to point out the culprits: one of the wives of the deceased demands "pedirles cuentas de las vidas" (2019, 301) from the owners of the mining operation; accountability, because "es allí," in the mine, underground, "donde les roban el sudor, es allí donde los hombres mueren para que La Minera acumule dinero" (2019, 302). Through the account of these two migrations, these novels ultimately explain where the capital necessary for Spain's economic development during the 1960s comes from: namely, from the pauperization of the countryside and the exploitation of the working class.

International Borders: Ajena crece la yerba and Hemos perdido el sol

According to the data handled by Félix Santos in *Exiliados y emigrados* (1999), during the 1950s and 1960s what is known as "economic emigration" took place, led by nearly "two million Spanish workers who dispersed throughout industrialized Europe"; Germany, France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, primary (11; 31).[19] The exodus occurred in two directions: internal (from the countryside to the city) and external (from Spain to foreign countries). The latter was of great interest to the Franco regime, hence the Law of July 17, 1956, by virtue of which the Instituto de Emigración was created to promote and direct migratory movements abroad. And why was it of interest? Broadly speaking, because emigration functioned as a patch for the problems of unemployment —which generated social tensions— and for internal migration from rural areas to urban centers.

The prototype of the Spanish worker who emigrated to that "supposed European El Dorado" (Candel 1976, 43) came from the construction sector, industry, or agriculture. According to Santos, they were

> people generally of a low cultural level, sometimes illiterate, with deficient professional training. They were generally young people […], predominantly men with strong potential work capacity […]. In quite a few cases, they were emigrants in a 'second instance': it was not uncommon for Andalusians, Extremadurans, or Castilian peasants who had first emigrated to Madrid, Bilbao, or Barcelona to later make the leap to Europe.

[16]The terms 'cacereño' or 'maqueto' were used pejoratively at that time to refer to the population living in the Basque Country who came from other autonomous communities.

[17]As the authors of the introductory study of *Cacereño* maintain, "it is a novel, ultimately, pessimistic about the possibilities of subverting injustice and achieving social peace and welfare, and not only because of the power exercised by the capitalist class, since behind the backdrop of Pyrrhic workers' victories looms another form of social violence" (Larraz, Álvarez Villalobos y Suárez Toledano 2019, 31).

[18]Before settling into the metallurgical industry, Pepe el Bajo works as a laborer and a pneumatic hammer driller inside a metal bell at the bottom of the sea. The descriptions of this second job are, at times, harrowing: "La campana era un cilindro metálico de pareces dobles y unos dos metros de diámetro que, desde una altura aproximada a la del muelle, bajaba vertical a clavarse en el fondo marino. Insuflaba aire y extraía agua de filtración. En su base trabajaba el picador […]. El trabajar encerrado en semejante tubo, sin espacio para moverse, con luz artificial, escuchando los sospechosos ruidos de las olas, era opresivo […]. Las condiciones son tan duras que los relevos se hacen cada dos horas. Dos horas infinitas" (2019, 98–99).

[19]"In those years," the author continues, "while in Spain the weak productive capacity threw part of the population into unemployment, in the aforementioned European countries labor was sought that would allow them to maintain their high pace of development" (1991: 31).

The causes of emigration are already well known: the deficient living conditions in Francoist Spain, from which the urban residents were not exempt, also plagued by high unemployment rates, job instability, and low wages.

Like the protagonists of the two previous novels, Martín (*Ajena crece la yerba*) comes from a town in Andalusia, Olvera, and, at the moment of the narration, he is returning to Spain by train after seven months working in northern France harvesting beets and performing other agricultural tasks. At one of the stops before crossing the border into Spain, the man misses the train, becoming stranded (he does not know the language), alone, and without luggage in a foreign country. The story time is brief: it is limited to Martín's ordeal in the French city until the promise, barely twenty-four hours after his arrival, that he will be able to return home on the next train. However, Martín recalls his recent past (analepsis), expanding the narrative time and thus allowing the reader to learn about the character's living conditions in the town and the work he carried out in France. The situation in Olvera is not exceptional: unemployment, low wages, misery. "Sí, había pasado algunas veces hambre, y hambre sin esperanza de hallar el fin, el hambre cuando se ha agotado todo, cuando se ha vendido lo necesario, cuando no hay modo de sacar una peseta a los amigos ni a los familiares, cuando no hay más que mendigar" (1962, 15), he confesses early on. The situation of the peasantry in France, however, is very different, and this surprises Martín, who cannot help but feel a certain admiration for peasants who "vivían bien" or who "por lo menos aparecían bien vestidos y muchos de ellos montaban motocicletas" (1962, 38). But not only that: "En el campo se veían cosechadoras y tractores como los que había en el cortijo del marqués, sólo que aquí abundaban más y estaban por lo visto al alcance de cualquiera" (1962, 38). Money appears to circulate differently in the neighboring country, perhaps in a more equitable manner, reducing a class gap that was abysmal in Spain. What is clear is that, as the protagonist argues, "en los campos de Francia trabajaban todos con mucho más interés y tesón que en el pueblo. Quizá porque se pagaba mejor" (1962, 39).

With *Hemos perdido el sol*, the novel by Ángel María de Lera, we accompany a group of Spanish emigrants who have just arrived in two German cities to work in the factories of the Pluto Metalwerke company.[20] These workers are "campesinos, mecánicos, escribientes … Lo mismo los de Madrid que los del pueblo" (de Lera 1965, 130). They are all one. And there are both men and women. Work in West Germany allows them to live, and not merely survive, as had been the case in Spain, where "el que más y el que menos trabajaba […] como un desesperado … ¿Y, para qué? Ocho horas en el taller o en la obra y, luego, a buscarse chapuzas. Y ni aun así se podía vivir" (1965, 15). As for the situation in the countryside, day laborers were "la mitad del año, parados. La otra mitad, ganando una miseria" (1965, 24). Once again, nothing exceptional. As in the preceding novels, references to Spain's socioeconomic situation abound here with the aim of establishing comparisons and, ultimately, denouncing the endemic precariousness of the place of origin.

The novels by Ramón Solís and Ángel María de Lera intersect with *Cacereño* in their portrayal of a complex fabric of exclusions, or a gradation of marginalization. Pepe el Bajo, the peasant who arrives in San Sebastián in Guerra Garrido's work, finds that the landscape, customs, and the Basque language make him feel as though he were abroad. He occupies the lowest rung of the social body: the outsider, the Spaniard (not Basque). The emigrants in *Ajena crece la yerba* and *Hemos perdido el sol* occupy, in their respective destinations, the same position as Pepe: they embody radical otherness. Thus, Spaniards in Germany "nos miran como a bichos raros" (1965, 16), one of Lera's characters maintains upon arriving at the train station, while Martín, as soon as he sets foot on the platform, encounters a woman who "le miraba con cierto desdén, como si fuese un mendigo" (Solís 1962, 8). At this point, the question of the body is fundamental, since it operates as a direct mechanism of differentiation: physiognomy, skin color, gestures, and clothing are traces of exclusion that are difficult to erase. Thus, if the Spaniards who disembark at the German station draw attention, it is because they do so "con sus boinas, sus trajes arrugados, sus maletas de cartón y sus paquetes disformes, con su movilidad, su pequeña estatura, sus ojos vivos y su parloteo incansable" (1965, 16). In the case of France, the waitress at the station bar looks at Martín "con aire de superioridad, con desprecio, como se mira a los mendigos y a los vagabundos" (1962, 28). But "no era la primera vez que le habían mirado así en Francia," he then states: "su ropa de campesino, sucia y rozada después de los siete meses de un trabajo intensivo, en el que no había lugar a la limpieza, era sin duda la culpable de esta reacción de las gentes. Por otra parte, la boína encasquetada y la barba crecida debía darle un aspecto siniestro" (1962, 28). It is that beard that the emigrants in *Hemos perdido el sol*, incidentally, are careful to shave every day, since, if they do not —they maintain— "parecemos más sucios en comparación con los alemanes" (1965, 72).

The portrayal of emigration constructed in these novels remains within shades of gray, insofar as it is neither flat nor manichean; it neither solely praises the benefits of a life with greater social freedoms nor demonizes the experience abroad, despite not concealing the difficulties it entails (food, climate, customs, family, housing, language, exclusion).

[20] An important difference compared to the first two novels is that, in these two narratives, we are faced with emigration without risk —that is, with a work contract and, in the case of *Ajena crece la yerba*, even with the security of returning home. In internal migration, this does not occur: the migrant arrives at the destination without employment.

The device of comparison is repeatedly employed in both narratives to produce different types of cultural and moral clashes. Through these clashes, for example, the modernity of foreign countries is highlighted —where there are washing machines, televisions, and electric shavers— thereby exposing the backwardness of Spain in general, and of the countryside in particular;[21] sexual freedom emerges, indirectly contrasted with the religious oppression of the Franco regime, anchored in traditional values related to chastity and honor; and the possibility of more flexible gender roles is introduced.

Through Martín's observations, *Ajena crece la yerba* presents the socioeconomic structure of the Spanish countryside —and, by extension, of the entire country— divided into two groups differentiated by the possession of capital: some have it, and others do not. The possibilities for upward social mobility are nonexistent. These are two static groups, especially one of them: "Hacía ya muchos años que por aquellas tierras unos nacían ricos y otros pobres," the man maintains, "y no había jamás oportunidad para el pobre de transformarse en rico" (1962, 187), not even by moving to the city, nor abroad. The narrative repeatedly emphasizes this class difference, doing so through various motifs. One of them is the body; another is water. Let us take note. "A los señoritos se les nota en las manos, en la piel de la cara, ¡qué se yo! En cien mil cosas. El trabajar al aire libre o el sudar en las naves de una fábrica marcan un sello. Cuando las manos hacen una cosa un día y otro se encallecen y se señalan" (1962, 121). Hands, feet, back, skin: the body is a surface on which class marks are indelibly inscribed. For this reason, as we noted earlier, it functions as a mechanism of exclusion or conversion into otherness.

Water, in the form of rain, on the other hand, "es enemiga de los pobres, especialmente de los campesinos," the protagonist points out. Indeed, "en el campo no llueve para todos, sólo para los que poseen la tierra. Los mercenarios de la agricultura han de ver caer el agua sin jornales. El agua es para unos dinero que riega y fructifica la tierra, para otros el trabajo incómodo bajo la inclemencia de su monótono golpear o el vagar por las tabernas sin salarios que llevar a casa" (1962, 156). This passage is remarkable in its particular exposition of class inequality in the countryside —and, again, across the country— highlighting the peasantry's misery as a result of the problem —the injustice— of land ownership. Yet Martín, despite clearly perceiving the injustice, cannot avoid falling into essentialism, naturalizing the inequality born of exploitative relations: "siempre habrá unos que vivan bien y otros que trabajarán como mulos para llevar a casa un salario insuficiente" (1968, 33). The capitalist mode of production, based on the extraction of surplus value from the exploited by the exploiters, ultimately appears not only ahistorical but also as the only possible and universal system: "como siempre y como en todos los sitios" (1962, 62).

And since the prevailing system is the only possible one and is universal, the unity of workers makes no sense, as any attempt to transform reality is futile (doomed to failure). Hence, when the owner of the station bar —a Spanish exile— equates himself with Martín by telling him, "yo soy un trabajador como tú" (1962, 29), the protagonist immediately distances himself: "Bueno, entre una clase de trabajo y otra hay una gran diferencia —contestó para señalar de esta manera que, aunque trabajadores, pertenecían a una clase muy distinta" (1962, 29). But the portrayal of the dominant political subject in Francoist Spain does not end here, with this exposition of the impossibility of class consciousness for subjectivities that, despite perceiving inequality, fragment the working class into multiple subclasses, making cohesion impracticable. There is more. In the station bar, a group of Spanish exiles gathers to talk with Martín. He wants nothing to do with the war or politics, and this attitude is censured by his compatriots, for whom there stands an "obrero" —Martín— for whom "todo lo que se le ocurría era eso: que no quería líos, que sólo aspiraba a trabajar. Si la vida estaba mal, trabajaría más; pero sin el más leve asomo de rebeldía, escéptico para todo lo que no fuera ganar dinero" (1962, 78). Defeat in the Civil War is also the defeat of an alternative horizon of possibility, and the dictatorship enforces a political anesthesia encoded in the suppression of solidarity in favor of the most radical individualism, the capitalist kind, according to which life is a constant competition and the only existing value is money.

Ángel María de Lera's novel, *Hemos perdido el sol*, articulates its critique of exploitation through the contrast established, in the labor sphere, between Spain and West Germany. In Spain, the enrichment of the minority at the expense of the majority is, for the emigrants, obvious: the fruits of labor "es para ellos, para los patronos," which is why "se ve tanto coche y tanto lujo. ¡A costa nuestra!" (1965, 103). Society is, once again, divided into two: the rich and the poor, the exploiters and the exploited. The same, of course, applies abroad. However, there the conditions are different; there, at least, the bosses "dejan vivir a sus trabajadores" (1965, 315). Wages are higher and working hours shorter. But if Martín —as we saw earlier— is incapable of conceiving of a working class homogenized in its exploited condition, in Germany the capitalist ideology has already operated in the apparent dissolution of class differences. It is for this reason that one of

[21]The owner of the train station bar lends Martín his electric shaver, which the peasant takes with "cara de estupor," since "jamás había tenido en su mano un chisme como aquel, ni siquiera lo había visto funcionar"; neither the washing machine nor the refrigerator, which "le habían parecido cosas extrañas e irreales que nada tenían que ver con él" (1968, 55).

the emigrant characters is surprised in a bar when, looking at the other patrons, he cannot tell whether "son ricos o no; si son operarios o patronos; si son jueces, electricistas, tenderos … Todos visten bien y parecen acostumbrados a estos sitios. […] ¡Es formidable!" (1965, 303). But this is only a mystification: differences do exist, of course, and Spaniards there are third-class citizens; what differs is the perception offered to them of their position within the system.

The Pluto Metalwerke factory is represented and protected by the national metalworkers' union, which demands a general wage increase under the threat of a sector-wide strike. This situation is unthinkable in Francoist Spain. The Spaniards fear the consequences of striking: they are convinced that they will be the first to be fired. However, as they soon discover, "por ir a la huelga no pasa nada. O se gana o se pierde. Eso es todo" (1965, 71). They have exactly the same rights as any German worker and, therefore, the backing of the union mass. Unlike what happens in *Cacereño*, where differences outweigh similarities, here "no se trata en esto de alemanes o españoles. Unos y otros somos trabajadores, compañeros y nada más" (1965, 220). The difference is radical: the conflict is conceived collectively because, in Germany, there is solidarity and class unity. The novel's argument in favor of worker unity is clear at this point, as is its depiction of a reality —the German one— in which the tools to fight for better working and living conditions exist and function (the strike is won).

However, in the German factory there are also accidents; workers die as well. And there is also alienation. Profitability matters, the greatest benefit at the lowest cost, and in that machinery, the emigrants constitute only the final piece. They perform the work that locals do not want to do, live in the outskirts, have dark skin, and barely any money. Like Martín in *Ajena crece la yerba*, harvesting beets. Low pay and very hard work, but the reality is that "en siete meses se gana para todo el año" (1962, 32). And all that money earned is, the character emphasizes on several occasions, "el precio de jornadas inagotables, doblado por la cintura en la monotonía del trabajo del campo. […] un quehacer que mantiene unos músculos en tensión agotadora, mientras los otros permanecen rígidos, forzados, hasta provocar dolor" (1962, 182). "La recogida era lo más duro," he continues, "no ya porque la forca se va afilando con la tierra y es un cuchillo que puede cortar el pie del que no está habituado, sino también porque la labor lima las uñas hasta hacerlas saltar" (1962, 184). And when it rains, everything worsens, because "moverse en el fango era tan duro que a alguno que alargó la faena más de la cuenta se le abrieron las ingles en el esfuerzo de caminar en el barrizal" (1962, 184). Abroad nothing is given away. Money is earned, yes, but one must work very hard. One must also endure exclusion, cope with isolation, and control homesickness.

Final words

The four novels analyzed compose a representative panorama of the Spanish national and international emigration experience during the 1950s and 1960s. In all four cases, the same starting point: the misery of the Spanish countryside and the deterioration of wages (and of living conditions) in the cities. This is, it must be said, a multifaceted panorama, since, despite converging on issues transversal to the migratory process —such as exclusion, racism, or labor exploitation — each novel offers a situational perspective that emphasizes the heterogeneity of the migrant experience of the era. Consider, for example, the outcome of the migratory journey: for Joaquín, the move from the countryside to the city means nothing less than death; for Pepe, however, the longed-for upward social mobility; Martín, in principle, will return home with the money intact under his sash, while the majority of Spaniards in Germany have no choice but to adapt to life under that gray sky.

However, if the four texts coincide in one way or another, it is in highlighting the bent, aching, and bruised bodies of the working class as the main support and driving force of the particular 'Spanish miracle' of Francoist developmentalism. The economic takeoff of the 1960s is built upon the unrestrained exploitation of subjects forced, by necessity, to sell themselves to the point of exhaustion (or death). The novels do not forget the reality of a social fabric in which class difference is abysmal: some have everything, while others have almost nothing. For this reason, they insist, over and over again, on inequality and on the injustice of distribution.

But these four novels are only four of the many narratives published from the late 1950s to the late 1960s dealing with exodus, migration, peasant poverty, class difference, the chiaroscuro of modernization, and exploitation.

Ethics and consent

Ethical approval and consent were not required for this study as it consists of textual and literary analysis of published works.

Data availability

No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study. The research is a qualitative literary analysis based entirely on the following published primary sources: *La mina* by Armando López Salinas *(López Salinas, Armando*

2013), *Ajena crece la yerba* by Ramón Solís (*Solís, Ramón 1962*), *Hemos perdido el sol* by Ángel María de Lera (*De Lera, Ángel María 1968*), and *Cacereño* by Raúl Guerra Garrido Guerra (*Garrido, Raúl 2019*).

All references to the text and citations are included within the article and the bibliography.

Bibliography

Álamo Felices F: *La novela social española. Conformación ideológica. Teoría y crítica.* Almería: Universidad de Almería. Servicio de Publicaciones; 1996.

Becerra Mayor D: **Estudio preliminar.** *López Salinas, Armando, La mina.* Madrid: Akal; 2013; 5–112

Camarero Rioja LA: **Tendencias recientes y evolución de la población rural en España.** *Política y Sociedad.* 1991; **8**: 13–24.

Candel F: *Inmigrantes y trabajadores.* Barcelona: Plaza & Janés; 1976.

Ceña Delgado F: **Transformaciones del mundo rural y políticas agrarias.** *Revista de Estudios Agro-Sociales.* 1992; **162**: 11–35.

De Lera ÁM: *Hemos perdido el sol.* Madrid: Aguilar; 1965.

Gil Casado P: *La novela social española.* Barcelona: Seix Barral; 1975.

Gómez Benito C: **Una revisión y una reflexión sobre la política de colonización agraria en la España de Franco.** *Historia del Presente.* 2004; **3**: 65–86.
Publisher Full Text

Guerra Garrido R: *Cacereño.* Madrid: Akal; 2019.

Larraz F, Álvarez Villalobos M, Suárez Toledano C: **Estudio introductorio.** *Guerra Garrido, Raúl, Cacereño.* Madrid: Akal; 2019; 5–46.

López Salinas A: *La mina.* Madrid: Akal; 2013.

Marchart O: *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; 2007.

Sánchez Recio G, Tascón Fernández J: **La política y los empresarios en los años 60. La inversión extranjera norteamericana.** *Historia y política. Ideas, procesos y movimientos sociales.* 2003; **9**: 123–157.

Santos F: *Exiliados y emigrados (1939–1999).* Segovia: Fundación Ramón Rubial; 1999.

Sanz Villanueva S: *La novela española durante el franquismo. Itinerarios de la anormalidad.* Madrid: Editorial Gredos; 2010.

Schmitt C: *El concepto de lo político. Texto de 1932 con un prólogo y tres corolarios (1927).* Madrid: Alianza; 1991.

Solís R: *Ajena crece la yerba.* Madrid: Editorial Prensa Española; 1962.