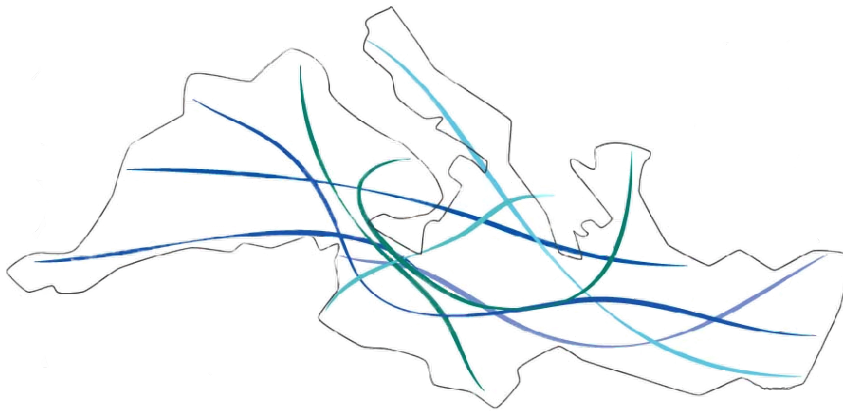


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*Women's migration to and from  
some Mediterranean countries  
in Vientos de agua  
by Juan José Campanella*



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*Women's migration to and from some Mediterranean countries in Vientos de agua by Juan José Campanella*

Abstract

This article tries to highlight the particular features that migrant women show in a pioneering cultural product: Juan José Campanella's television series *Vientos de agua*, 2005. The process of forced geographical displacement is situated during two terms: the middle of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Women who fled from Mediterranean Europe to America, moving away from fascism in different Mediterranean latitudes, and women who, years after, seek in Spain a subsistence not guaranteed in their places of origin, share similar miseries in the process of leaving homeland. The intention of these lines is to give account of their vulnerabilities and the reason why is relevant to focus on them.

Keywords: Women, Spain, Migration, *Vientos de agua*, Juan José Campanella.

*La migración femenina hacia y desde algunos países mediterráneos en Vientos de agua de Juan José Campanella*

Resumen

Este artículo aspira a destacar las particularidades que muestra la representación de las mujeres migrantes en un producto cultural pionero: la serie de televisión de Juan José Campanella *Vientos de agua*, de 2005. El proceso de desplazamiento geográfico forzado se sitúa en dos periodos: mediados del siglo XX y principios del XXI. Las mujeres que huyeron de la Europa mediterránea a América, alejándose del fascismo en diferentes latitudes mediterráneas, y las que, años después, han procurado alcanzar en España una subsistencia no garantizada en sus lugares de origen comparten similares problemáticas en el proceso de salida de la patria y en la inmersión en la tierra de acogida. La intención de estas líneas es dar cuenta de sus vulnerabilidades y de algunos motivos por los cuales es pertinente centrarse en ellas y en su estudio.

Palabras clave: Mujeres, España, Migración, *Vientos de agua*, Juan José Campanella

*La migrazione delle donne da e per alcuni Paesi mediterranei in Vientos de agua di Juan José Campanella*

Sinossi

L'articolo si propone di evidenziare le specifiche caratteristiche che mostrano le donne migranti in un prodotto culturale pionieristico: la serie televisiva *Vientos de agua* di Juan José Campanella (2005). La dispersione geografica forzata si colloca entro due termini: la metà del Novecento e l'inizio degli anni Duemila. Le donne che hanno lasciato l'Europa mediterranea per l'America, fuggendo dal fascismo a diverse

latitudini del Mediterraneo, e le donne che, anni dopo, hanno cercato in Spagna la persistenza non garantita dei loro luoghi di origine, mostrano le medesime difficoltà nell'abbandono del luogo di provenienza. L'articolo mira a evidenziare le loro vulnerabilità e le ragioni per le quali è importante soffermarsi su di loro.

Parole chiave: Donne, Spagna, Migrazioni, *Vientos de agua*, Juan José Campanella.

# *Women's migration to and from some Mediterranean countries in Vientos de agua* by Juan José Campanella<sup>1</sup>

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## *1. Representing migrant women*

The forced displacement of women to and from Spain in the 20th century and so far in the 21st century is due to a variety of causes. Political and economic reasons are often at the root of these movements. It is a frequent simplification to underestimate the political edges, putting all the emphasis on purely economic issues. That's why, in this analysis, I will take into account a complexity of factors underlying the need to leave one's own place of birth and belonging, circumstances clearly made worse for women by the fact that they are more vulnerable to prejudice.

To start with, and on a conceptual level, the apparent dichotomy between *migration* and *exile* could be problematised as heir to certain elitist prejudices that should be set aside. We cannot ignore the fact that there is an almost automatic association between *migration* and socio-economic motivations on one hand, and exile

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<sup>1</sup> This article arises from the Project "Memoria de migración, experiencia bélica y exilio. España y Argentina: representaciones literarias de y sobre mujeres en contextos de guerra, dictadura y destierro durante el siglo XX" [Memory of migration, war experience and exile. Spain and Argentina: literary representations of and about women in contexts of war, dictatorship and exile during the 20th century"], (PID 11/H-897, Universidad Nacional de La Plata). It is linked also to the Project "España y Argentina en diálogo. Literatura, cultura, memoria. 1940-2013" ["Spain and Argentine in dialogue. Literature, culture, memory. 1940-2013"] (PICT 2016-0623, Agencia Nacional de Promoción Científica y Tecnológica), directed by Raquel Macciuci.

and political motivations with consequences of persecution and even danger of death, on the other. Thus, *exile* is given a certain aura of social prestige, while *migration* is limited to terms of poverty or deprivation. Referring to the Spanish case in particular, Bárbara Ortuño Martínez says:

[I]n the middle of the 20th century, (...) the word exile – which, although it had been present in the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy as a synonym for expatriate, had practically no other use than the literary one – began to become generalised as the proper term to designate political emigration, and the adjective 'exiled' to refer to those who leave a country for political reasons. The event in Spanish history that brings together the defining characteristics of exile par excellence – even though many historians use the term to refer to the political emigrations of the 19th century – is the massive and violent departure of the population as a result of the Civil War and the establishment of the Franco dictatorship. (Ortuño Martínez, 2016, p. 78).

As a first conclusion on the point, we should say that the theoretical concepts which allow us to think about historical phenomena and their representations through narratives (filmic or literary) are necessarily permeable because the issues that are at their origin are also permeable. Thus, the words that emerge from different disciplines to encode the phenomena of forced displacement may look like specific, but at the same time they overlap and create adjacency fields: *exiled*, *refugee*, *uprooted*, *emigrant*, *political emigrant*...

In the Spanish-speaking literature on republican exile, words commonly used to describe the refugee include *exiliado* (exile), *refugiado* (refugee), *desterrado* (uprooted person) – or just *republicano* (republican, which here means 'supporter of the Republic', rather than 'member of one of the republican political parties'). Words less commonly used include: *emigrante* or *emigrante político* (emigrant/political emigrant), *expatriado* (expatriated) and variations on the theme of *migrante* (migrant). The exile as an event is most often referred to by historians or Spaniards as the *exilio republicano* (republican exile) but in Mexico, for example, it is usually called the *exilio español* (Spanish exile). It has also been called the 'emigration' or 'exodus' produced by the Civil War. The word *desplazado* (displaced person) exists but it is rarely used (if ever) to describe Spanish Civil War refugees. (Rickett, 2014, p. 17)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth examination of this question, see, for example, a thesis that systematises the different positions and the scope of the concept: *Rethinking*

The interdisciplinary approach is clearly important in the treatment of these concepts, but again, regarding the issue of representation in different aesthetic media, it is relevant to point out that these concepts are almost as mobile as the situations and subjects they designate.

According to the different possibilities mentioned before, “migrant” will be the prevailing option in this work. Unlike the other choices, which refer to a situation already consolidated, accepted or not, but which in some way is already a *fait accompli*, “migrant” conveys somehow the message that the individual involved is still in transit. Not adding any of the prefixes that indicate a source or a destination (*emigrant* or *immigrant*), that sort of non-belonging and constant transit seems to be a fundamental meaning of the word “migrant”. The lack of precision, the appearance of incompleteness are features that leave a little more room for certain questions to be answered in most detailed demographic studies, in the field of social sciences.

In addition to the general shortage to cover the complexity of the process, we should add practical conditions referred exclusively to women which make displacement even more imperative for them: their bodies and the roles expected to be played by them are crucial circumstances in a hard and, at times, even traumatic search for belonging.

How can we measure to what extent a woman moves by her own will or is forced to do so? It is true that in some cases, when there is an explicit political threat, such as a pursuit by a dictatorial government, there is a real urgency to leave, but it is often impossible to determine whether other causes are not also realities that push people to leave their place of origin. How can we catalogue the situation of an African woman in Spain who has to work in a nightclub, under the authority of a violent pimp? What concept can be representative to specify the case of a Colombian woman who seeks by all means to stay in Spain, fluctuating between illegality and the unwanted possibility of marrying a friend? What is the right word to describe the uprooting of an Italian girl whose

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*Transterritory: A Conceptual History and its Implications for Hermeneutic Theory* (Córdoba Guzmán, 2018).

father disappeared, probably as a result of fascism, and who spends her days on the ship where her father worked, drifting, in the hope of finding someone to take care of her? These are just some of the cases we will consider; but it is important to remark that when we refer to “migration” and “migrant women”, we are considering a wide and complex range, which incorporates elements of the concept of *exile*. As for the concept of “expatriation”, although we consider there is no official mandate in this sense on the women we are focusing, it must be kept in mind that much more subtle but also profound pressures force these women to be away from their homeland. So, in a sense, they are *expatriates* as well. With no country and no father [in Latin, “pater”], these migrant women will sometimes be subjected to other paternalisms that also imply a brand of power and domination, even if they are almost always imbued with good intentions.

This article aims to focus on the representation of migrant women in a pioneering cultural product: the television series *Vientos de agua* (*Water winds*) (2005) by Juan José Campanella, considering their forced displacement during the 20th century and the early 21st century. This object of study is meaningful to analyse multiple directions of their movements and different configurations of the image of migrant women to and from Mediterranean countries. This audiovisual text is actually a pioneer in the treatment of the migration issue between Spain and Latin America in the format of a television series. However, certain images and prejudices about migrant women persist and are installed with a dangerous naturalisation that must be questioned.

Although the plot focuses mainly on the story of two men, it is possible to explore a very wide universe to consider two different periods, situated respectively in the middle of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, which reveal vulnerabilities and renewed problems of marginalisation of women who need to leave their homeland. During the first half of the 20th century, a group of women flee from Mediterranean Europe to America (in the series, especially from Spain and Italy to Argentina), moving away from fascism. At the beginning of the 21st century, other several women seek in Spain an unguaranteed subsistence in their places of origin, but their stay in the new country becomes problematic: a Colombian



woman is exposed to stigma and discrimination; a Senegalese woman is exposed to physical violence and other dangers. These women, living in the 21st century, somehow recycle the suffering experienced by the others ones who, half a century earlier, went into exile following an exactly opposite direction.

Involving all these women in the process of *migration*, I will consider the category of *exile* associated with political causes, but also closely linked to social and economic aspects. I will focus on female characters, who experience the suffering of the process in itself, increased by preconceptions associated with gender.

## *2. Round trip itineraries. From Europe to Argentina and vice versa*

*Y te acercas y te vas después de besar mi aldea.  
(So you come closer and leave after kissing my village.)  
Joan Manuel Serrat, "Mediterráneo".*

The first scene of an adult migrant woman who will play an important role in this television series is paradigmatic in terms of the treatment of silence. Paradoxically, there is a dialogue in which the woman does not speak. Laia (played by Pilar Punzano) cries and, when someone approaches her, she holds back her tears, she cannot utter a word, just listens and finally runs away. This scene takes place on the ship that transports one of the main characters of the series (José-Andrés) from Spain to America. Despite not emitting a sound other than a moan, the woman is an active receiver and picks up essential information. Above all, she decodes a fundamental question of identity: the young Spaniard she meets on the deck of the ship mentions his brother, Andrés, and alludes to him, arguing that Andrés would know how to comfort her.

The young man interacting with Laia has taken the name of his brother and must hide his own identity. At this point, and although it is not the objective of this work to dwell on male migrant subjects, it is pertinent to make the circumstance explicit, in order to understand Laia's cunning despite her vulnerability.

The protagonist's real name, José Olaya (played by Ernesto Alterio), is now associated with a crime: having blown up the mine

that led to his brother's death, he must face the fact that the real Andrés (the one who originally conceived the plan of emigrating to America) is dead in Asturias. José had reacted not only against his pain, but against injustice, against the abuse of power and authority and against the mistreatment of miners. He is now a fugitive and, as a consequence, Andrés' original intention to migrate in search of an economic improvement becomes an urgent need to flee for José, who takes the identity of his brother.

Laia is going to Argentina to marry a man she does not know, but also to work as a kind of high-class prostitute. She already knows during the trip that her future is uncertain. Leaving the Mediterranean country and going to America is a complete imposed destiny. Not only has she not chosen the man she will marry, but she must be the mistress of other unknown men. Laia's release will come a few years later, when José Olaya meets her again and sees that she is now the owner of a fine brothel. Paradoxically, she somehow exercises over other women the kind of stewardship that she had suffered over herself when she moved from Europe to America.

Graciela Wamba (2010, p. 437) points out that:

In the miniseries, Laia, the first love on the ship of the young Asturian Andrés [in fact, José], arrives to work in a brothel, showing a false marriage certificate to customs when landing, following the typical white slavery strategy. However, Laia manages to progress and appears in the 1950s as the owner of a very fine brothel in Buenos Aires. Her commercial success somehow redeems her from her past and grants her some social recognition.

In any case, if we take into account not only the Atlantic plot but also different aspects of the Mediterranean route, this character reproduces a vicious circle of women at the service of men and never manages to find her place in the world. Laia never achieves a bond with the protagonist which lets her to be seen as a "lady". In the end, she chooses to go back to Europe, to go to France.

### *3. From Mussolini's Italy, an eternal child*

There is another relevant case of representation on the same ship which brings Laia from Catalonia to America. This is a girl coming

from another Mediterranean country, Italy. She is little Gemma (played by Francesca Trentacarlino as a child and Giulia Micheleni since the age of 14), the daughter of a ship's worker, who wanders on the ship looking for someone among the passengers who can take care of her. Gemma's father had commissioned a colleague to look after her until his return, but for the time of this last trip which is bringing Gemma to America, he is not back. We can easily suppose that he has been a victim of Italian fascism, as he had been fighting Mussolini. From now on his whereabouts are unknown.

In literal terms, Gemma is not an *exiled*. There has been no conscious reason, politically motivated, for her transatlantic voyage; however, the girl has no choice. She is not technically (yet) an anti-fascist militant, but her displacement is undoubtedly forced and her condition is particularly vulnerable. Gemma, without her father, is under the protection of a makeshift guardianship shared by two other migrants. There is a kind of mutual adoption, marked by the empathy that exists between them, despite the fact that they speak different languages.

The underage condition is something that will accompany Gemma for most of her life. In her character, we can observe a fairly prototypical characteristic of gender issues: she lives in an almost perpetual minority. Although she has a strong personality and is very determined, both as a child and as an adult, Gemma will be under a kind of permanent guardianship.

When she arrives in Argentina, the girl lives with a woman for whom she works as a housekeeper. There, the little girl suffers mistreatment and abuse of authority. Faced with this situation, the girl is finally adopted by Juliusz (played by Pablo Rago), a young Hungarian Jew who has escaped fascism. Juliusz is also one of the men who looked after Gemma on the ship. The girl trusts him very much. Over the years, this relationship mutates into a sexual-affective bond and Gemma marries the man who has been her guardian or caretaker since her childhood.

The couple lives a shared life in a climate of mutual understanding and companionship. However, it is striking to observe how the evolution of this relationship is naturalised. They become a couple after knowing each through a situation of abandonment in which the adult – albeit a young adult, it is true – had taken care of the minor.

The lively, witty and active Gemma retains, even as an adult, that playful character that evokes the child she once was. At the same time, there is an inconvenience the couple is going through. Juliusz and Gemma wish to have a baby, but she does not get pregnant. The roles of care-provider and care-receiver in this bond are only reversed in an off-stage situation, an event about which two male characters dialogue in a plane of unreality given by the fact that both dialogue partners are already dead. Only then, with Gemma out of the scene (and Juliusz being one of the story tellers), we will learn that at the end of Juliusz's life, when he was harassed by a very cruel terminal cancer, it is Gemma who has assisted him for a long and dedicated period. Also through the male characters, viewers learn that Gemma fulfilled her wish to become a mother by marrying a second time, after the death of her first husband, Juliusz, to a considerably younger man. In other words, she somehow manages to reverse the everlasting minority that has always constituted her. But in an indirect tribute, her first son will be called Juliusz, with the aggravation that in the series, Juliusz himself, now dead, clarifies that this fact is unknown to Gemma's second husband. Thus, the “first owner” remains the omniscient possessor of a secret homage.

#### 4. *She (doesn't) have a ticket to ride*<sup>3</sup>

The neologism “mothers-wives” [“*madresposas*”], which makes part of the following title: *The captivities of women: mothers-wives, nuns, whores, prisoners and crazy women* [original title: *Los cautiverios de las mujeres: madresposas, monjas, putas, presas y locas*] (Lagarde, 2005), highlights the two principal spaces that women's bodies occupy inside a world shaped by a *macho's* conception that continues to manifest its burdens. Through the incidence of migration, this term deepens its loving and at the same time limiting scope. The mother and the wife – and the mother who is also a wife – define their place in the bond with the other as soon as the term is used. In the forced displacements of the early and

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<sup>3</sup> The following three sections have had a first formulation with variants and in Spanish, in Sánchez, 2021.

mid-20th century, it was to be expected that the fate of migrant women from Europe to Argentina, as in the case of *Vientos de agua*, would be to become mothers.

Each woman's aspiration tended to depend on male companionship. In this sense, marriage and subsequent motherhood were natural goals (or were naturally supposed to be the only path to follow). The TV series features some dissident role models, but in fact, even in these cases, which are a minority and to some extent marginal, there is always a romantic aspiration to bond with a man with whom a classic family might be possible. There are representations of women who question the prevailing models, but there is also a very strong inheritance of expectations passed down from a generation of women who lived a few decades earlier:

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the dominant cultural representation of women was based on the discourse of domesticity that evoked the feminine prototype of the perfect married woman, whose main function was to care for the home and family. The most frequent cultural representation of women was that of the 'angel of the home', the seraphic provider who sustained the family. According to this model, women were to be modest, submissive, and lovingly devoted to their children, husbands, or fathers, but they were also required to perform effectively in their role as rulers of the home. (Nash, 1999, p. 25).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century storyline of the series, women who glimpsed any deviation from the prevailing norms suffered negative consequences. José Olaya's two wives can be analysed following this line. The social duty that binds them to be fundamental "guardians of the family" (Nash, 1999, p. 25) manifests itself with tragic or almost tragic consequences.

The mother of Olaya's first two children is Sophie (played by the Italian Caterina Murino), a French woman of Jewish origin who had fled Nazism and had gone into exile in Argentina. She has a daughter, also French, and is very talented playing piano.

Everything goes well at first when her activity is limited to giving piano lessons to the children of the neighbourhood. At home, her husband allows Sophie, without objection, to exercise her talents. But life gets complicated and there are even situations of verbal domestic violence when Sophie's wishes go beyond the doors of home. The woman, invited by some neighbouring musicians who

make up a small tango orchestra, has a chance to go out and show her talent outside. Sophie had learned the tunes that the neighbours rehearse and the musicians seem pleasantly surprised by the performance they hear in the neighbouring house. At some point, they ask for the person they hear through the walls to play in their tango band. At first, the musicians assume that the pianist who plays next to the house is a man. That's the first warning sign that something is supposed to be out of place. Once the orchestra accesses to live performances, with great success, the woman has to hide her identity and play with her back to the audience. Already in her first interview with the musicians, she had dressed as a man and had cut her hair. But the real problem is that she has challenged her husband.

José Olaya objects Sophie's performing in public and frequenting stages, considering these activities as *brothel*. He only accepts the artistic performance of his first children's mother when Laia, the Catalan he had met on the trip to Argentina, persuades him to do so. Finally, the tango orchestra begins to enjoy a success that promises growth and performances elsewhere. Unfortunately, on their first departure from the city of Buenos Aires, the musicians are involved in a car accident in which there is a victim: the only woman in the orchestra, Sophie. The tragic fate seems to have taken away that hint of freedom that the woman dared to develop.

The woman who will be José Olaya's second wife, Lucía (played by the Argentinian Valeria Bertuccelli), is not in exact terms a *migrant* or an *exiled* woman. However, Lucia does undergo a kind of internal migration and pursues her vocation, Medicine, in a town on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Lucía makes this decision before getting married with José – with whom she has started a relationship – because he cannot overcome the death of his former wife, Sophie, and is not ready to start a new couple. But soon José will come to rescue her after learning that she is seriously ill.

José finds Lucía really ill, suffering from a life-threatening high fever, also arrested by the police because of her social commitment and political activism. This is how the revolutionary dream of another woman who wanted to disobey established mandates and who follows her vocation, comes to an end. On a first reading, we could conclude that the man has finally worked out his grief for his former

wife. We could also conclude that he has come out of his stagnation to value the woman who will become the mother of his third child, Ernesto Olaya (played by Argentine actor Eduardo Blanco), the other protagonist of *Vientos de agua*, the Argentinian emigrant in Spain at the beginning of the 21st century. However, we cannot ignore that also on this occasion, the woman has paid the price for her free will. Persecution, illness, and the danger of death are the answers to these attempts at independence.

##### *5. It's not only love... It's about how to legalize a residence*

In the migration that reflects the contemporary age, the motivations and freedoms are, of course, different. We can consider separations and new beginnings in less drastic ways, but “mother-wives” once again respond to this preconceived dual role.

Mara (played by Colombian Angie Cepeda) is a migrant who works in a bar in the Spanish capital. She is always empathetic and generous with those who arrive in Madrid and face all the difficulties inherent to the lack of required documentation. On more than one occasion, she has to bow to the repressive demands of her surroundings. Her deployment throughout the series is also evident in her body, spontaneous, friendly and approachable, avoiding any prefabricated pose. However, there are moments when she has to hold back and, in a way, mask herself.

For example, she changes clothes with the gaze of others in mind. When Ernesto Olaya's wife arrives in Spain on a fleeting visit, Mara feels suspiciously observed and changes her miniskirt for jeans. She also blatantly lies when she says that she has only been living there – in the same flat as Ernesto – for three days. She lies to avoid the newcomer's jealousy, but the inertia of her bodily memory does not lie and Ernesto's wife notes that the ease with which Mara handles herself in the house and the speed with which she finds things cannot date from just a few days ago.

Cecilia, the “mother-wife” (wife of Ernesto Olaya, mother of her children) has crossed the Atlantic from Argentina to Spain to see her husband, who has been working in Madrid for a year. He had the idea of settling there before bringing his family, but in the meantime, in

Buenos Aires his wife has fallen in love with a doctor from the hospital where she works as a midwife (also in this role she is in charge of the perpetuation of the species). Cecilia's daughter has decided to stay in Argentina, but her son Tomás has followed his father's migration to Spain. The "mother-wife" feels as a duty to hold the family together, but for the first time she admits the possibility of twisting the course of this structure. The distance – physical and symbolic – imposed by the migration of her husband has altered the pattern that she has followed for more than twenty years. It is worth noticing that, in any case, she will try to revive the family institution when, a year later, her husband travels to Buenos Aires to divorce her, by mutual consent.

The role of the "mother-wife" seems to be stronger than any attempt to break the mold. It is noticeable how she, as a woman, remains somewhat anchored to this permanent aspiration for things to go back to the way they used to be. Having lost her interest in the affair with the doctor and after agreeing on a friendly dissolution of the marriage bond, during Ernesto's trip to Argentina, however, a confusing approach between the two members of the ex-couple will be provoked by her. On the verge of divorce, Ernesto and Cecilia wake up in a hotel, in Buenos Aires, and it is clear in the scene that there has been a sexual encounter between them. It is not easy for them to identify if they are just saying goodbye or there is a hinted possibility of reconciliation there, and in that precise moment, the telephone rings. The naked bodies on the bed are slow to react and finally Cecilia answers the phone. A minor detail is interesting: Ernesto is closer to the phone and he would be expected to answer it, but it takes longer for him to wake up, and finally Cecilia steps over his body and answers, at 7 in the morning, a call that is destined for her ex-husband. These details, prosaic in principle, become more meaningful if we consider that, at that time of day, it is most likely to be a call from Spain, and specifically from Ernesto's current partner, the Colombian migrant Mara. The fact that Cecilia picks the phone exposes the obvious reunion between the Argentine migrant, who has returned to his country for business purposes, and his ex-wife.

The male migrant is now debating between two women, two role models and two homelands. Already in possession of dual nationality,



because his father is a Spaniard, the man counts now on legal documents that let him make his own decision. Mara's case is different. She has helped him with essential survival issues when Ernesto was a neophyte migrant, but she is still in the weak position of an undocumented migrant. Her tourist visa expired a long time ago. The Spanish authorities have caught Mara at her workplace – a clear infraction since she is technically not authorized to work – and she must leave Spain. Only one solution can formalise her situation: to get married. Once again, the role of wife, dependence on a man's protection and a document that links her to him, are the means to solve women's precariousness. At this point, it should be clarified that the solution of a marriage arranged to legalise a migratory situation is not exclusive for women. The vulnerability and dependency observed in this case lies in the fact that the representation of the woman places her almost in a role of supplication.

The day before, Ernesto had learned, also through a phone call, of Mara's current situation: the authorities' intimation and the only possible solution by marrying a Spanish citizen. It is not clear what decision he will make. Ernesto may succumb to the seduction of his ex-wife, Cecilia, because of weakness, homesickness (he is about to divorce, but Cecilia has been her wife for more than twenty years) or fear of making a commitment to Mara in Spain. He may, on the other side, keep his promise to return and agree to marry Mara and share with her the benefits of a Spanish citizenship. What is clear is that the power to decide in which direction this dispute between two women will go, remains in the domain of the man.

Faced with this uncertain prospect, Mara twists the course of waiting, takes action and acts with determination. She chooses to marry a Spanish musician (played by José Miguel Monzón Navarro, better known by his stage name: El Gran Wyoming), a friend of both (hers and Ernesto's), who agrees to formalise an arranged marriage, thus doing her a great favour so that she can stay in Spain, the land where Mara has settled and worked for years. That is, although she makes her decision without waiting for the approval or help of her current partner (Ernesto), the woman has to falsify her true sentimental situation to wield the title of wife, which allows her to legalise the residence in Spain. Wrapping up a further feminine image

configuration, Ernesto returns to Spain from Argentina and, after a first scene of outrage over the recent and hasty marriage to his friend, he joins Mara once again after the revelation that she is pregnant. Thus, the Colombian migrant in Spain, in order to obtain legal status, will become not only a wife (apocryphal, by the way) but also, in a reinforcement of her current circumstance, a mother-wife.

Mara, a free, calm and independent woman, always ready to help others, to provide them with shelter, food and work, paradoxically finds her *Deus ex machine* at the beginning of the 21st century under the wing of at least three men: Her Spanish friend agrees to marry her because of a paperwork issue; her Argentinian-Spanish sentimental partner does not succumb to the seduction of his ex-wife and returns to Spain, as he had promised; finally, there will be “a third man”, her child, also a Spanish boy, who will have the (presumed) name of his Spanish grandfather: Andrés.

It is interesting to remember that in this homage to the Spanish grandfather there is also something apocryphal, or at least oblique, unknown. There is also an unintended tribute to another man, because – let us remember synthetically – the grandfather’s real name is José. Only in the 1930s he replaced it, answering to his mother’s request, to take the identity of his brother and to be able to leave for Argentina. The real Andrés, the one who was going to emigrate, had died in Asturias as a result of the explosion of a mine.

## 6. *Exiled women's sex work*

The bodies of migrant and exiled women are often forced to meet certain requirements. As a tool for sex work, these bodies are subjected to an unequal exchange of forces and power, subordinated to the whim and will of the client.

The figure of the pimp who manages and controls and supposedly “takes care” of sex workers contributes to make the situation even worse.

Gayle Rubin points out that “the clue to unravel the system of relationships whereby women become prey to men may be found in

the overlapping works of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Sigmund Freud” (Rubin, 1986, p. 96). Rubin adds that:

The domestication of women, under other names, is studied extensively in the work of both [Lévi-Strauss and Freud]. When reading it, one begins to glimpse a systematic social apparatus that uses women as raw materials and models domesticated women as products. (Rubin, 1986, pp. 96-97)

Neither of them forged a critical view of the issue.

The discussion on prostitution continues to be the topic of debate within various feminist groups. We cannot summarise the different positions in detail here, but, broadly speaking, we can say that some of them advocate the total abolition of prostitution, considering it oppression in all cases, while many of them identify the free exercise of the activity as an option, which implies the right to carry out a trade, not different from others.

In this sense, it is pertinent to mention that women in Spain, and in particular some organisations, have been reflecting on this point for a long time. The anarchist women's organisation *Mujeres Libres* (Free Women), for example,

strongly condemned the interclass sexual oppression of women by men, thus contradicting the prevailing left-wing view that prostitution is a bourgeois institution. These anarchists understood that it was a consequence of the double sexual standard, that tolerated premarital or extramarital sex in men but condemned it in women. (Nash, 1999, p. 125)

In a symbolic and supportive homologation, the aforementioned group aspired to end the difference between women. They did not accept that some could be “decent” while others were not. This was the first phase of equality and the ultimate goal was that prostitution should cease to exist:

By generalizing the category of the prostitute to encompass all women, “*Mujeres Libres*” believed that no woman could be decent until prostitution had been eradicated. This elimination, therefore, constituted a gender-specific “liberating mission” (Nash, 1999, p. 125).

It would require a detailed study to go into the very complex issue of sex workers, something that, of course, goes beyond the

scope of this work, but it is feasible to show how complex this issue is, considering that there is an underlying network of dangers caused by the vulnerability of women in different countries and continents.

In *Vientos de agua*, although the central stories focus – and it is logical for the plot they do so – on the vicissitudes of the protagonists – male migrants moving in both transatlantic directions, father and son –, female situations are also covered in detail. The bodies of several exiled migrant women suffer physical violence. The verbal expression of some women is limited because they are not fluent in Spanish.

There are specific passages in Andrés Olaya's memoirs that expose aspects of the prostitution of European women in Buenos Aires during the 20th century. A central character in this sense is Laia, the Catalan woman whom Andrés meets on the Atlantic crossing from Spain to America, and who, although socio-economically she is never as exposed as Adetoun – the young Senegalese woman we will refer to later – sustains herself from the beginning of her immersion in Argentina at the expense of her body. Over the years, her position will improve, as we have seen, but there will always be a glimmer of perception on Laia that has pigeonholed her as a woman who acts in the realm of the forbidden, a position that “does not correspond to a lady”.

Going back to the 21st century, the migrant woman in *Vientos de agua* who is focus of a violent and extreme scene of abuse is a woman from Senegal who works as a sex worker in Madrid.

Ernesto Olaya, a migrant in Spain after Argentina's 2001 economic collapse, goes with his colleagues and bosses to a nightclub. Ernesto, who is an architect, has managed – after some difficulties for insertion – to get a job in a studio where someone else signs the plans that he designs. Until he obtains citizenship, it is illegal for him to work. As his father's name (José/ Andrés), Ernesto's name remains erased. For various reasons, the individual who is “out of place” must somehow hide his identity.

One night, when a project is being signed (by others), Ernesto invites his Spanish colleagues to celebrate. This is the first time he can invite them (and he does it with the help of Mara, the Colombian migrant, who works there). There will be some frictions at dinner that reveal certain views on migration worth of attention. It is not

the specific topic of this article, but the perception that Ernesto Olaya's colleagues – especially the one who signs the plans for him – have about migrants, in general, is relevant to contextualise a situation that will worsen in regard to women. One of the three Spaniards present at the dinner mocks his Argentinian colleague using particular features of the Argentinian pronunciation and exposes an undeniably discriminatory stance that the other two companions try to cushion, and which will lead to a major clash of opinions. In the exchange – which we transcribe in considerable detail below – the Argentinian migrant and the three Spaniards with whom he works in the architecture studio discuss something that begins with laughter and ends up in an atmosphere of great tension:

- *Hey, bring me another bottle of wine!* (...) [In italics, emphasis to indicate the terms pronounced by the Spaniard with marked Argentinian articulation] Was there any Argentinian left in Buenos Aires? [Also in a mocking tone, to which Ernesto initially celebrates and laughs, although he looks uncomfortable].

[Another colleague from the architecture studio:] – It's an invasion. *Dame tu mina, dame tu mina* [“Give me your girl, give me your girl”; “mina” is a colloquial form of original Argentinian *lunfardo* (a kind of slang) of referring to a woman].

[The third colleague, calming down the conversation:]

- Well, it's not just the Argentinians. There are immigrants of all kinds.

[The first one:]

- But what are you saying, man? Argentinians are like us, they are not immigrants.

[The second, ironically, in response to the person who made the previous comment:]

- Yes, they are white boys ... [Awkward silence]. Oh what's wrong with you, man? Why are you such a bigot? What's your problem with immigrants, man?

- Me? None. As long as they are people like Ernesto, who come to work, to do good things. Because others just come to take your job. You don't ... [again imitating an Argentinian accent].

[Ernesto intervenes:] - Well, the truth is that anyone ... At least me, I don't know, just to feed my family, I would get on a boat. I don't know, don't you?

[Long and awkward silence, in this case from the three colleagues. Then one of them takes up the conversation again, taking the drama out of it].

- Well, multiculturalism, that's very good.

[And another:] - Well, I think so. If not, look where she's coming from, from the right [referring to the approaching waitress, which is, by the way, the Colombian Mara].

(Campanella, 2005, episode 7, 0:11:45 - 0:12:33)

After this dialogue, we can see a discriminatory scene in which the Spaniards ask Mara where she comes from, and Ernesto himself – driven by the intention of looking good with his colleagues – mocks the girl's inability to open the wine. At the height of Mara's anger, Ernesto's apparently more tolerant colleague, when the young woman asks Ernesto to accompany him to the kitchen for a minute, ends with the phrase: “Be careful, there are many kidnappings in Colombia!” (Campanella, 2005, episode 7, 0:13:12 - 0:13:16).

After this situation, they go to a nightclub, where a few conversations take place in which Ernesto's Spanish colleagues are even more *macho* than before, but at the same time feel tempted by the attractiveness of the women of different nationalities who dance there, entertain the clients and, we presume – although it is out of the picture –, engage in prostitution.

The colleague who seemed more serious invites: “But look at these Russian girls! They are like *mamushkas*! They are like *mamushkas*! They are so beautiful!” (Campanella, 2005, episode 7, 0:18:16 - 0:18:2). The same man who earlier referred more contemptuously to immigrants offers Ernesto the services of the workers there: “The best ones are the black girls. There are a couple of them that are... Do you want one? I'll get you one (Campanella, 2005, episode 7, 0:18:25 - 0:18:28). Ernesto, very uncomfortable, decides to leave. Suddenly, a woman of African origin arrives. She does not speak Spanish. She is injured and desperately running away from a man. The Argentinian migrant runs away with her in the car, which belongs to the company where Ernesto works. Through a very difficult communication that includes gestural language and an exchange of words barely recognisable for the interlocutors who give her asylum for the night – Mara and Ernesto, and then a friend of theirs, Ana – we know that the girl's name is Adetoun. She comes from Senegal and has family in Holland.

Adetoun is the ultimate expression of migrant woman's desperation: there is no way out or possibility of verbalising a request for help. If she manages to be – in part – understood, it is because her whole body shows a situation of danger and abuse (she is hurt, she cannot stop crying, and exclaims, in incipient Spanish: “Bad man. He fucks me. He fucks me a lot”), but she does not speak

more than a few single words of Spanish, so there is no way of channelling her catharsis in detail.

Her eventual protectors – Ernesto, Mara and Ana – are also in a situation of vulnerability, undoubtedly much less extreme; but they are still, respectively, two migrants who are still illegal in Europe (the Argentinian man – who at that time has not yet obtained Spanish citizenship – and the Colombian woman) and a young idealist Spaniard who helps in a not entirely formal way.

Official protection and health care (police and hospital) are not for the Senegalese women. Under normal circumstances, she should turn to these institutions. Her wounded body and the threat of a violent pimp prevent her from seeking redress. Access to a cure or a complaint would mean her immediate deportation. In a short time, the improvised “three musketeers” who have held her at a critical moment will discover that, resigned, Adetoun has returned to the nightclub, exposing her body once again to humiliation and punishment. The apparent self-flagellation is, at the bottom, a more realistic assumption than the romantic pose of Ernesto, who had ephemeral but hopeful dreams of going to Holland to look for Adetoun’s relatives. Not only is rescue not possible, it is also clear that the Argentinian's mobility is limited, and crossing borders is something that is currently forbidden to him.

Curiously, the name of the woman who plays the role of Adetoun does not appear in the cast of the episode (episode 7). There is no trace of her real name, and this is surprising. The episode presents at the beginning the names of the actors who play the main characters and the main cast, in this case, with their respective images, and at the end of the chapter we can see the listings of the secondary representations, divided between “Past” and “Present”. In this episode, the only performances that refer to the present are “Blonde prostitute” and “Drunk whore”. Adetoun is conspicuous by her absence and, just as she will be lost again in the nightclub, she is lost in the titles. It is not a minor detail and, although we do not have elements to completely rule out a technical error, it is strange that the names of other illegal migrant characters are not referenced in the cast either.

There are two more characters concerning the same problem. Ernesto and two employees of the architecture studio are in danger,

when an inspection arrives. They lock themselves in the bathroom. They share a very emotional dialogue in which the three of them show each other photos and talk about their families, all with an obvious nauseating smell in the background (which gives the idea that something smells bad, not only in the bathroom but also, symbolically, in the treatment given to these people). Would those who played these roles, as well as Adetoun, really be illegal migrants, and does the series make a nod towards empathy and protection for working and suffering migrants? At the risk of being an over-interpretation or simply a germinal hypothesis, these absences are striking. It is worth mentioning, for example, that, in contrast to this absence, the names of each of the members of a girls' choir appear in detail in the same episode for the cast of "Past". The final sentence, after the titles, "All facts and characters in this story are fictitious. Any resemblance to reality or persons living or dead is a mere coincidence", is clearly a formality or almost an anti-poetic license.

### *Conclusions*

In times when the production of a large number of series sometimes makes us doubt about the care taken in narrative details, *Vientos de agua* exposes uncomfortable and unresolved social aspects, even beyond the focuses that it intends to develop more extensively.

Far from being mere entertainment, the series raises human issues of profound relevance, situated in time and space and showing all their complexity. The fact that it has suffered the vicissitudes of schedule changes and invisibilisation in Spain is no coincidence. The television product exposes realities that are too close, too current. The series has been described as part of the "Malditismo" (Mejino, 2016) to which some quality products that are not sufficiently understood or well received are condemned.

*Vientos de agua* is a committed series that does not hesitate to air the miseries on both sides of the ocean, which the defenceless protagonists are dealing with in the best possible way, but with a dramatic tone that predominates at all times over



some lighter moments, ideal to deflate the tensions of the series. (Mejino, 2016, paragraph 25)

It is not that the series is not equally moving about the vicissitudes of migration in Argentina during the 20th century, but the immediacy of certain concrete episodes of Mediterranean migration has an undeniable effect that is still very much awaiting discussion and viable solutions. However, over the years and with new viewing platforms, a new trajectory is possible.

Arellano Torres analyses the 'failure' of *Vientos de agua*. Among other aspects, he works on stereotypes and configurations that would prevent the development of other migratory identities: "The rhetoric of simplification and stereotypes perpetuates the division of discursive power structures that the series apparently comes to deny" (Arellano Torres, 2017, p. 436). He focuses on the case of, for example, a Bolivian migrant. Stereotypes and the centrality of certain migrant figures would prevent us from any further deepening. For us, however, such a point only implies a supposed failure, or at least we should say that the series has failed in some respects. Because of the multiplicity of readings that *Vientos de agua* allows, and even because of the less focused areas, apparently subsidiaries of the central plot – as in the case of the vicissitudes of migrant women – the series does not obscure meanings. From the social sciences and humanities, the challenge is to analyse those characters and stories that, despite being a little more in the shadows, allow us to project what is most susceptible to problematize. We have tried to do this, not to negatively criticise the series, but to investigate destabilising realities, which question the undeniable complexity of a discourse and a creative format that has been gaining more and more ground in this first part of the 21st century.

The challenge is to transcend, through an analysis of the narrative offered by the series, the dichotomies posed by the Atlantic axis. Varying the focus of observation and focusing on migrant women allowed us to trace narrative cores that *interpellate* the way of considering forced displacements to and from Mediterranean countries. Therefore the geographical matter turns into a more complex issue.

The multiplicity of women subjected to forced displacement and imposed roles are replicated in the multiplicity of origins and destinations. A new horizon of readings is opened up by the consideration of Spain as origin and destination and the inclusion of other geographical points as Italy or Senegal, which breaks down the apparent two-faced approach of one side and the other of the Atlantic Ocean. One of the issues that most affects us as a society is forced displacement. The focus of observation and illumination of areas not so immediate or not so obvious can lead us to new questions. A group such as migrant women to look at and to reflect on with renewed and increased tools must be a topic of consideration on an updated critical agenda.

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