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## THE NARRATIVE OF AMANDA LABARCA AND THE CRIOLLISMO: NOTES FOR INSERTING IT INTO CHILEAN LITERARY HISTORY (OR NARRATING IT TO DEPICT AND CHANGE CHILE)<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores a set of narratives that the writer, educator and feminist leader Amanda Labarca published in the first quarter of the 20th century, namely the novel *En tierras extrañas* (1915), the short novel *La lámpara maravillosa* and the collection of stories *Cuentos a mi señor* (both 1921). We are interested in inscribing this corpus of Labarca's work mainly in the *criollismo*, thought of as the Latin American and Chilean literary sensibility of the first half of the 20th century. With this, we contribute to the studies that have set out to explore one of Labarca's most unknown areas: her literature. Specifically, it traces the spirit that runs through these texts, emphasizing the typification of discourses, characters and social contexts that allow sustaining the proposal of analyzing this prose from the point of view of *criollismo*. Indeed, the results show the presence of several characteristics of this trend, such as the presence of the peripheral or marginal element, the traveler as protagonist or the enhancement of local customs. It is concluded that Labarca's lyrics dialogue with the proposals of Chilean *criollismo*, although they are also inspired by other aesthetic and ideological proposals of her time.

**KEYWORDS**

Amanda Labarca,  
*criollismo*, literature,  
narrative, women,  
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## Introduction

It is not simply to demonstrate her literate culture that Amanda Labarca<sup>2</sup>, in the introduction to her 1934 essay *¿A dónde va la mujer?* [Where does the woman go?] titled “As a prologue. The lamp and the mirror”, begins by saying:

I embrace Cervantes with renewed pleasure. He is like a wide and generous river. His thoughts flow without haste, without pettiness and without artifice. They spring from the magnificent fountain of his personality and are certain of their richness ... his characters are lavished with reasons ... In search of this deep delight I have reread his *Novelas ejemplares* [Exemplary Novels] *La gitánilla* [*The Little Gypsy Girl*] and *La ilustre fregona* [*The Illustrious Scullery-Maid*]. (Labarca 2022: 31)<sup>3</sup>

She then develops an argument based on her analysis of the women protagonists of these novels, ending with a reflection that can be summarized as follows: although Cervantes’ protagonists are independent women endowed with their own strength, they finally abdicate their will and end their days by accepting what the family and society want from them. They are different, Labarca tells us, from the characters of the 20th century in, for example, Henrik Ibsen or Herbert George Wells, who are women who rebel against social impositions in acts of profound will.

That is to say, through observation of the literature of the two eras, Labarca establishes a position in which “woman” finds herself in her time, and with this she suggests that women are no longer “mirrors” of men and society, as in Cervantes. Rather, the “women of today, small lamps lit by the economic revolutions of the last century, lamps that laboriously burn the oil of their will to cast an uncertain flame that contrary winds still try to extinguish!” (Labarca 2022: 34–35).

The use of the “lamp” concept is neither curious nor coincidental, but rather an itinerary that fits in with Labarca’s influences and ideals. For instance, we know that in 1921 she published the short novel *La lámpara maravillosa* [*The Marvellous Lamp*], which takes place in the intricate daily world of Matilde, the wife of a bohemian and wasteful artist who has created an award-winning painting inspired by her, in which a young woman appears in front of a waterfall. In view of his first success, the bohemian wishes to paint its sequel, and he describes to Matilde and his friend Andrés how the young woman could appear “in the instant in which, her eyes open to love, she discovers the world for the first time ..., the hidden beauty, the marvelous mystery of life” (Labarca 1921: 24). In this point, his friend reminds him of “the old symbol of the marvelous lamp: what is Aladdin’s lamp but triumphant love, the love that blooms life,

2 For more information on Amanda Labarca and her literary work see: Salas and Hurtado (2022) and Salas (2024).

3 This and all translations of textual quotations from Spanish to English are the responsibility of the authors. This is important since they may not represent precisely what Amanda Labarca stated in her original work.

populates it with illusionary geniuses ...?” (ibid.: 25). To which the artist replies: “That will be the title of my painting. The marvelous lamp of life, which is love. And I will paint it on the face of a woman in such a way that it can be guessed that the fire springs from her entrails and that she is at the same time the lamp, the oil and the bearer of the light” (ibid.: 25).

Undoubtedly, Labarca exposes the dynamics between art and life, philosophical symbolism and love, both physical and emotional. Let us recall that the Spaniard Ramón del Valle Inclán published *La lámpara maravillosa, ejercicios espirituales* [*The Marvellous Lamp, Spiritual Exercises*] in 1916 (with a revised reprint in 1922; Del Valle Inclán 1922).<sup>4</sup> The work pursues an itinerary of self-knowledge based on various occult, aesthetic and philosophical theories. Possibly the title of Amanda Labarca’s novel was inspired by the work of this Spanish author; she had known it very well since the beginning of the 20th century, as he was one of the writers that she commented on in her *Impresiones de juventud* [*Impressions of Youth*] in 1909:

The novels and comedies of Valle Inclán leave the impression of greatness, of heroism, and the reader, placed in that plane of subjection, does not feel obscene in his phrases, sometimes frightening, nor looks ashamed at the picture of the forbidden and sensual loves. And this impression emanates not only from his way of creating characters and scenes, but also from that talent with which he puts the surrounding nature in exact harmony with the soul of man and his current emotional state (for if there is something tragic and august in his paintings, it is surely the state of the soul that his landscapes reflect); it flows more than from any other factor from his grandiloquent and wise language. (Labarca 1909: 84)

Although Labarca, a writer, educator and feminist, was closed to the spiritualist or occultist currents favored by other writers of her time (*Mente* 1921),<sup>5</sup> such as Iris or Gabriela Mistral (Rubio Rubio 2011; Graña 2014; Arre-Marfull 2017, 2020), she does not show disdain for the literature of Spanish modernism or contemporary literary sensibilities, which dialogue with these philosophical and artistic trends as a way of extracting meaning from life through art or aesthetic appreciation.

In this article, we are interested in demonstrating, on the one hand, the importance per se of the literature written by Amanda Labarca, although it does not represent the bulk of her published work. We will work with three narrative works in book format: the novel *En tierras extrañas* [*In Strange Lands*] (1915), the short novel *La lámpara maravillosa* and the collection of short stories *Cuentos a mi señor* [*Stories to My Lord*], the latter two published in the same volume in

4 This edition states on the cover: “Live life as if it were a work of art. The most beautiful work of Spanish modernism and the most singular of the great Valle-Inclán in its original edition”.

5 This idea is reinforced by the mention in the magazine *Mente* of an article written by literary critic Hernán Díaz Arrieta in the newspaper *La Nación*, in which he quotes Amanda Labarca as strongly criticizing “those theosophical, spiritualist and orientalist mysticisms”.

1921. Although we understand that it is impossible to classify the works of an author with a single label, we believe that, although she drinks from Hispanic, American, French and European literary sources in general, her vocation is to understand the Chilean idiosyncrasy in order to contribute with a critical and national view to the improvement of our society. In this sense, and considering that *criollismo* – school, tendency or artistic sensibility – is one of the frames of reference for a good part of the Chilean writers of the first half of the 20th century, we want to inscribe – not without good reason and in general terms – the narrative work of Amanda Labarca in the literary history within this sensibility.

## 1. *Criollismo* and Chilean Literature in the First Decades of the 20th Century

According to writer and critic José Miguel Oviedo, many things happened simultaneously during the first two decades of the 20th century. As he explains,

it is not easy neither to order them nor to recognize them with clarity. In the congested literary panorama, the lines are crisscrossed and chronologies are of little help. On the one hand, it should not be forgotten that – despite everything – the modernist spirit disappeared very slowly from the scene and has reflexes even in the decade of the 30's [*sic*] ... even fin-de-siècle naturalism had not disappeared. (Oviedo 1998: 25)

In 1909, in the midst of a modernist boom and the naturalist decline of Hispanic and Latin American literature, the critical Amanda Labarca introduces us to her youthful literary impressions by turning to the Castilian novel of her time and analyzing some of the relevant Spanish authors of the generation of 1898. Emilia Pardo Bazán, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Pío Baroja, Manuel Ciges Aparicio, Francisco Acebal, Gregorio Martínez Sierra, Azorín, Ramón del Valle Inclán and Felipe Trigo are the ones chosen to show us the synthesis and overcoming that modernism meant against the naturalist (physiologist) and psychologist (subjectivist) tendencies of the second half of the 19th century.

Without delving into Chilean literature at that time, Labarca makes clear her literary preferences toward the end of the first decade of the 20th century, indicating that the previous realist novel (naturalist and psychologist), although it shows the miseries, is “the most bitter document that Art has produced” (Labarca 1909: 23), although modernism, with other literary strategies, also receives the sad inheritance of realism, but with more frightening forms: abulia, boredom “resulting negatively in the currents of moral progress” (ibid.: 23). Thus, the “new” literary works reveal “that her ideal was to bring restlessness to all souls. Most of her writings are a question mark, a formidable question mark placed on some transcendental problem of life, on a question of principles, whether philosophical, social or merely individual” (ibid.: 25). Thus, Labarca concludes, modernism relies on the new philosophical theories rather than on science, exposing the “voluptuousness of pain” and the “beauty of melancholy” (ibid.: 25).

The multifaceted Ricardo Latcham speaks of the “quarrel of criollismo” that confuses peasant or *costumbrista* literature with the narratives developed since the 1910s that possess, in addition to a local and criollo – or autochthonous – tinge, a marked taste for naturalistic sensibility. American and Chilean *criollismo*<sup>6</sup>, although it has antecedents in the *costumbrismo* of the 19th century, will not be established as a “school” until the 20th century (Latcham 1954, 1963a, 1963b). Its main exponent in Chile, and this has not been open to discussion to date, was Mariano Latorre, who wrote his first works in the decade of the Centenary of Chilean Independence.

For Latcham, what in Spain occurred around 1900 as a conflict between naturalist and psychologist schools, as Labarca told us in her *Impresiones de juventud*, would occur in Chile around 1928 between the first *criollismo* and imagism (Latcham 1963b: 317). Nevertheless, it is necessary to return to what Oviedo indicated to us, on the complexity of falling into the pigeonholing of the sensibilities of this time, when great changes were taking place at all levels. In addition, we must not forget the diversification of the multiple Vanguards – which began to appear with the *futurism* of Marinetti in 1909 and the *creationism* of Vicente Huidobro in 1916 – and the emergence of socialist realism following the Russian Revolution, both of which impacted the processes of literary creation of Hispanic America (Alegria 1967; Subercaseaux 2004; Arre-Marfull 2018).

The sensibilities of the Chilean Centenary (around 1910), diverse in their back and forth between foreign influences and local inspirations, permeates Labarca’s literary aesthetics. She was a great reader, as is well evidenced by her numerous articles of criticism and literary production published in specialized magazines, such as *Atenea* (of the *Universidad de Concepción*), and in others, such as *Familia* (Ramos-Vera, Arre-Marfull & Salas 2022). We must not forget that Guillermo Labarca Hubertson, Amanda’s husband since 1905, was one of the exponents of the *criollista* tendency of the Centenary, with his two works *Al Amor de la Tierra* [*To the Love of the Land*] (1908) and *Mirando al Océano* [*Looking at the Ocean*] (1911), although he would later devote himself fully to politics (Latcham 1954).

Another of the elements that will shape the writing of the Centenary, and not only in Labarca, is the question of the identity crisis experienced by the political and intellectual world that has seen progress – or the idea of progress

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6 The concept of *criollo* has a long history in America, with some different interpretations depending on the area of the continent where it is used. In Chile, *criollo* defines the person of Spanish descent born in the New World, and by extension all the traditional culture that arises from the new society forged by this European migration that draws on various influences on the continent. Therefore, *Criollismo* is a sensibility or literary tendency that, although it has a continental manifestation in the Americas, specifically in Chile, it frames the first generation of professional writers that emerged in a critical moment of Chilean society, one hundred years after Chilean independence. *Criollismo* is also relevant for Chilean intellectual and literary democratization, since its main representatives are not from the aristocracy, but from the middle class.

– threatened since the last years of the 19th century (Gazmuri 1980; Subercaeaux 2004). This crisis emerged with the rise of nationalism, typical of a moment of strong Chileanization of spaces considered peripheral and wild, as was the so-called Norte Grande, as well as Araucanía and Patagonia (Soler Escalona 2017; Osorio Soto 2021). It is precisely in these dates and scenarios that the first initiatives of the later named *criollista* trend are forged, narratives that seek to collect the local color, the “authentic” spirit of the rural or non-urban space – supposedly more authentic than the urban, cosmopolitan and modern – from proposals linked mainly to naturalism by way of describing explicitly and starkly the local types, their vices and singularities. In the words of Patrick Barr-Melej, “as urbanization, industrialization and the export economy altered the life and rhythms of society during the oligarchy-controlled Parliamentary Republic (1891–1925), many urban Chileans began to cling to images of the countryside and peasants in their search for traits of national and cultural uniqueness” (Barr-Melej 2010: 93).

However, this local color, presumably typical of that autochthonous Chileanness hidden in corners and “small homelands,” is sought as a tributary of a centralized Chileanness emerging from a metropolis containing in its national discourse all those particular manifestations. What Mario Verdugo tells us about the “criollo topogen” (Verdugo 2013: 49)<sup>7</sup> is significant, affirming “its specific spacing operations in the absolute availability of the corner or the *patria chica*, ready to function – both economically and symbolically – as a zone of primary supplies or as a virgin land whose only function is to increase the treasure of Chileanness” (ibid.: 62).

What is more, according to Barr-Melej, although one might assume that representations of the rural emerged from the landed elite, *criollismo* was a genre promoted especially “by the urban middle class that was realizing its political and cultural power during the first decades of the last century ... inspired by European naturalist authors such as Zola, Maupassant, Daudet, and Flaubert, ... criollistas sought to portray the everyday existence of their subaltern compatriots” (Barr-Melej 2010: 94). Labarca belonged to this middle class, by the way.

In this sense, the *criollista* sensibility, school or tendency would be not only related to the intention of narrating customs and aspects of hidden, marginal or virgin places to the occupation of the national state but also expressed in the narrative through the topic of travel and the foreign observer’s relation to the place observed, where it is the curiosity of the traveler that allows capturing the observations of the experienced, from a supposedly neutral and realistic outlook. Thus, moving toward the periphery, with apparently unsuspecting eyes, “constitutes a typical scene of *criollismo*, and helps to naturalize the activity of the look-holders of the center” (Verdugo 2013: 52).

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<sup>7</sup> Topogen is defined as a real space that generates meaning within a text or set of texts. In this case, the *criollo* topogen is the metropolis, the city of Santiago, whence the narrating observer emerges. Verdugo says about the topogen that it is “a spatial foundation, a founding order, the ‘order of Chile’ that is original to *criollismo*” (Verdugo 2013: 49).



At this point we can bring up Amanda Labarca's first published novel, *En tierras extrañas* (Labarca 1915). Although the journey of the protagonist Carlos Solar is not to peripheral spaces of the national territory, as the son of a businessman from La Serena, in this sense an inhabitant of a region of traditional Chile or of colonial roots – and therefore the central simile of the work<sup>8</sup> – he embarks on a journey to the core of cosmopolitanism and English-speaking modernity that was New York in 1912, which in a sense is the periphery to Chile. Even so, we can make a reading from *criollismo* in this work, if we follow Verdugo: the heroes of these novels “enter, move away, travel through territories and mark novelties according to a criterion that not only provides a physical or geographical position, but also axiological, aesthetic and political, since the mapping correlates with other types of values (good/bad, beautiful/ugly, civilized/barbaric) in respect of which space plays the role of metalanguage” (Verdugo 2013: 52). We will return to this point later.

In the case of *La lámpara maravillosa* and the *Cuentos a mi señor*, the relationship with *criollismo* is more oblique; they possibly pay tribute to a sensibility that appeals more to modernism and even to the late naturalism inscribed in the narrative that Labarca analyzes in 1909, although she does not exempt herself from describing local color or social types in, especially, some of the stories. A possible entrance to the narrative of marginality proper to *criollismo* that is told from an organizing center of meaning where the male/national reader is found is to think of these works from these peripheral spaces as signifying the experiences of women and childhood or the feminine and infantile “corners”; those *patrias chicas* where the masculine and adult national narrator/reader is not situated (Pinto 1990: 142).

## 2. Amanda's Literary Sensibility: Between Naturalism and Modernism in *Criollista* Synthesis

We agree with the position of Ernesto Montenegro, who states that when one closely examines the work of a “real” writer, of a “literary artist,” “what remains as original value, is always a way of his own, a personal style, in short, something that defines and separates a novelist before identifying him with a school. In literature, the idea of school, because of its didactic implications, does not agree with the work of individual creation, free and even rebellious to classification” (Montenegro 1956: 53). Nevertheless, we recognize our exercise of ascribing Labarca to *criollismo*, but not as a mere literary chronology; rather, it is to understand her in her complex sensibility as a narrative writer.

The set of stories *Cuentos a mi señor* contains nine texts ordered as follows: “Los cuatro”, “La historia que no ha ocurrido”, “Poema de amor”, “Sin madre”,

8 The city of La Serena, founded in 1544, was the second city established by the Spaniards during the conquest of Chile. It functioned as the capital of the northern limit of the colonial Kingdom of Chile and was one of the northernmost cities of republican Chile until the triumph in the War of the Pacific, which allowed Chile to considerably extend its northern border over Peruvian and Bolivian territories.

“Las Cattreras”, “Monotonía”, “Se llamaba Raquel”, “Amor que pasas” and “El reyecito”, all set in central Chile, rural or urban, except “La historia que no ha ocurrido” which takes place in an imaginary context in the purest modernist fairy-tale style (Portillo 2005).<sup>9</sup> That story features a princess for whom hundreds of noble suitors are waiting; her only love obsession is the evening star; and a shepherd will be the only one to risk going in search of such a precious treasure, dying when he reaches the feet of the princess, burned by the fire of the star he had kept in his heart.

Marisanta, the princess, is the archetypal character of the “woman who waits”, like Penelope (Pérez Miranda 2007), who is tied to a single love but, because of her social position and characteristics, is sought after by many. The character of the shepherd is the archetype of the “hero” in his journey toward the reward, which in this case is the love of the princess, an unattainable character for him ordinarily but one who, if he manages to bring her what she craves, she could be his. Of course, a shepherd could never marry a princess, so the journey to the star and back will be his undoing. In this act of sacrifice, although his body does not stay with his beloved, because he dies and ascends to heaven, he unknowingly transmits the sensation of warmth (love) to the princess. In this relationship, we are faced with the literary topic of impossible love, which is reiterated in various ways in several of the stories, although in a writing style that is closer to naturalistic or modernist realism.

In five of the nine stories the framed narration or story-frame (story inside a story)<sup>10</sup> is used, where there is a narrator who tells the story to “my lord” or “my owner”, hence the series title, and it is expressed on brief occasions, except in the aforementioned story “La historia que no ha ocurrido,” where the reference to the “lord” is made at several points in the story; even the environment in which the narrator begins to tell the story is described. The stories, those with story-frame and those without, are placed in an apparently random order. In the other story-frame tales, namely, “Poema de amor”, “Las Cattreras”, “Monotonía” and “Se llamaba Raquel” the narrator appeals to her listener, “my lord,” at brief unexpected moments, either in the middle of the story or at the end, though never at the beginning. The ending of “Las Cattreras” a story in which three sisters who harbored romantic illusions in their youth end up in painful circumstances, due to the family’s ruin caused by the death of the mother and the father’s alcoholism, is striking. In this story the archetype of “the woman who waits” is subverted, for two of the sisters did not wait for romantic love; instead, they took what was at hand, yet it went badly for them. The story tells us that, specifically, they only “hoped to die,” and it is here that the narrator intervenes: “Die! They did not know that with each illusion we

9 At the thematic level in modernism, the use of the fairy tale is made possible by the influence of French symbolism, which employs Greco-Latin aspects such as mermaids, nymphs and satyrs as well as the princesses of the Middle Ages. On a structural level, the modernists follow the outline of the classical fairy tale, which is based on the compilations of Charles Perrault.

10 In the style of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

abandon, life kills us relentlessly, until the moment comes when we are – like you, lord, and like me – nothing more than the memory, the specter of what we wanted to be and could not” (Labarca 1921: 128).

This wink to a certain mood or state of mind that overwhelms the narrator and “her lord” can be traced and compared in the other stories, observing the precise moment in which she alludes to her “lord” and, above all, making the connection with the first story in which this frame of the story appears:

It rains! There are shades of mother-of-pearl in the atmosphere, in the ambience, whispers of water falling with the murmur of kisses, in the bedroom, the warmth of love. Do not ask me, my owner, to tell you reliable stories. From the truth of life, my heart bleeds today; let me besot my sorrows in the sweet lie of fantasy ... (Labarca 1921: 91) [It ends with:] But do not be sad, sir; this story has never happened: this princess and this shepherd ... this princess and this shepherd have never existed. (ibid.: 95)

This story-frame in which we perceive the narrator and her owner telling and listening to these tales, all with sad outcomes (except “El reyecito”), gives the series the backdrop of this work: They begin as a couple in love in a warm and sensual setting “in the atmosphere, whisper of water falling with the murmur of kisses, in the bedroom, warmth of love”, ready to listen to sad but fantastic stories; however, the narrator can no longer create fantasies, and simply turns to narrate real-life stories, which turn the lovers into “nothing more than the memory, the specter of what we wanted to be and could not”.

This dialogue between the story-frame and each of the stories appeals to the reader’s awareness, with the intention of stirring the spirits through literature. As Labarca said in her *Impressions* on the new modernist or naturalist literary works of the 20th century: “It would seem that its ideal is to bring restlessness to all souls” (Labarca 1909: 25). And that is precisely what our author does: she shows us the crudest stories of real life that her sensitive imagination can achieve, with the intention of disturbing us. But what is *criollista* in all those texts? We shall see.

Within the set there are two stories that could be established as closer to the *criollista* sensibility owing to the types of character and peasant scenario they portray; and they are the first and the last: “Los cuatro” and “El reyecito”. We do not think it is a coincidence that they are placed in this order, opening and closing the series. Also, because of their contents, they are different in certain points from the others: the first one has no child or juvenile characters like the rest, nor are there mothers or fathers; its protagonists are five adults, four men and a woman, all of them part of a band of rustlers. This first story deserves special mention for being, in our opinion, the most palpably feminist of them all.

On the other hand, the last story has as its essential characteristic that it is an uplifting story with a happy ending. It tells of a single man, a rich landowner, who sponsors and raises a child, the seventh son of the gardener of his land. Thanks to the love that unites them, the landowner begins to take care of the problems of all the children of his tenants: he installs an infirmary with a

doctor in the empty rooms of his mansion, creates a school, and is concerned that all the children have the basics to clothe themselves. Labarca tries to give it naturalistic overtones in the description of certain characters, but, even so, the narrator makes it clear that she does not want to give it a sad ending.

This resistance to happy endings (in the rest of her narratives, including her novels) seems to emerge from the deep conviction she has of literature as a means to impact readers and to make visible, in addition, the admiration she feels for the renowned European writers of her generation. To this can be added the meliorism that our author emphasizes, for example, José María Eça De Queirós, which she has made her own, according to what she writes in “*La Torre de Santa Ireneia*,” a text referring to the Portuguese writer published in “*Las Veladas del Ateneo*” (Labarca 1906).

A macro thread running through almost all these stories is the theme of care and the caregivers of children and adolescents. Mothers and fathers, present or absent, other caregivers by obligation or decision, and children and adolescents who experience the process of growing up and facing the world of affection and social and work relationships are portrayed in almost all the stories. Alongside the concern for society and childhood and its various problems, consistently and artistically represented in *Cuentos a mi señor*, is the issue of the situation of women and their economic and social dependence on men, which appears in several of the texts.

A story that does not speak to us of this dynamic of care and does not refer to childhood, as we had anticipated, is “Los cuatro”. In this story, it is the female figure disrupting male gender solidarity that is clearly represented; in these areas of sociability among men – which could be equated to the public space of society in general – when a woman breaks into it, she must be eliminated. While the woman performs tasks in the shadows, in the private space of care and servitude, she is accepted, just as the quartet of bandits accepted Mena, the girlfriend of Pedro, the boss. What the story shows us is that if a woman wishes to establish herself in the spaces of male access, she is already a danger to the group of men who see themselves, by the mere fact of her presence, as threatened. We believe that this is the properly feminist story in the series. The others, while slipping in more or less explicit criticisms of the situation of women, focus mainly on the experiences of childhood and care.

According to what we explained above, the Chilean literature of *criollismo* that began to emerge in the generation of the Centenary has several observable characteristics in its exponents: they deal with the theme of the non-urban periphery or the “patria chica”; their main character is a traveler or foreign observer who measures his or her observations on the basis of value contrasts (the good/bad, the beautiful/ugly, etc.) that appeal to the national referent of the country whence the narrator comes; there is the explicit or implicit presence of the center that represents the synthesis of Chileanness; there are typical characters, natural spaces and customs that appeal to traditional contexts.

On the other hand, the stark way of narrating the facts and describing the characters, the tendency to expose open or unhappy endings, the existence of

characters with their *chiaroscuros*: there are no great villains or holy doves, in addition to a concern for the social, or, to go into a kind of literary sociology, all point to the influence of naturalism in this type of narrative. It is, above all, these elements that we observe in Labarca's stories. However, as mentioned, each author is a world, and each work will have its own logics and formulas.

To return to *En tierras extrañas*, from our *criollista* reading to be the work that fits more properly into this sensibility, as it has as protagonist the travel-observer who evaluates and differentiates the here and there of his experience (López-Torres 2022), since part of the protagonist's experience is looking outside the national center – of the geographical center, as represented by the traditional Chile – to affirm his own Chileanness. That is the operation that Carlos Solar performs when he finds or searches in the foreign space for the variety of Chilean social types that represent the essence of Chileanness, varied, but at the same time only one. The nationalism that emanates from the proposal of this novel, very much in consonance with the generation of the centenary, is clearly observed in several episodes and, above all, in the final speech of Carlos, who speaks to the Chilean men and women – to the *criolla* race – in an effort to exalt the view that they have of themselves, thus predicting an august future of progress (Arre-Marfull & Amigo Dürre 2024; Amigo Dürre & Sanzana Sáez 2024).

As for *La lámpara maravillosa*, it is the placing of the marginal alongside the national/male reader that could situate this novel in a *criollista* reading, as well as its narrative that mixes naturalistic and modernist elements. Thinking, however, that Labarca writes for a mainly female audience – perhaps not only by choice but also because of the literary field's prejudice against women's writing – (Luongo 2007) we propose that in each female reader there subsists, likewise, a national/masculine self. In this sense, it is these feminine realities and subaltern masculinities that are exposed, to be integrated into the national narrative or excluded from it. We can make a similar reading of *Cuentos a mi señor*, as we have already mentioned, in this case, integrating the peripheries of the national narrative contained in the childhood and youth experiences, placing the narrator and the “lord” in the foreign observers who look toward these social edges.

## Final Reflections

Considering the above, we believe that the narrative works of Amanda Labarca show, in many cases, a *criollismo* more akin to the modernist sensibility than the naturalist one. Emerging in her stories, also, is the concern for national and social progress so typical of the literature of the centenary. This is evidenced by the multiple components that the author developed in the works analyzed.

In the first place, the experience of many narrators takes place mainly in the central areas of the country, showing sociocultural transit in the rural-urban binomial; however, they also travel to those peripheral and forgotten areas – both geographical and social – where the homeland is also made. Precisely, in

this journey to scattered areas of the country or even to distant lands, readers are accompanied by the traveler/observer, a character who shares his impressions and visions of the customs that refuse to perish and those that seem to flourish in a Chile that is in social and literary turmoil.

Another aspect that can be appreciated in a good part of the narrative is the comparison, sometimes more explicit, sometimes more hidden, of the usual dyads of *criollismo*, as was the case of the rural versus the urban or the idea of center versus periphery. At the same time, Labarca presents us with the simplicity of diverse characters who share dialogues and experiences with sophisticated characters, portraying the dichotomies that were accentuated at the time, in addition to the detailed description of beautiful and welcoming spaces, in contrast to the other reality, that of earth and dust.

We are also interested in emphasizing these other Labarquian peripheries, those located outside the male/national reader, at the social edges, spaces that account for private, feminine and infantile places. This *sui generis criollismo* of our author's works emerges from her pen to lead us to reflect on those other characters that usually lack name and voice in canonical and "adult" literature.

Finally, this work also intends to invite us to explore other literary spaces that Amanda Labarca used to dialogue with the community of national literature, such as magazines, meetings, talks and gatherings, which, together with analysis of the new documents by this author that have been discovered in recent years, may allow us to refine our look toward the deep and detailed analysis of the literary trajectory and the aesthetic imagery of this relevant Latin American intellectual.

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#### Apstrakt

Ovaj rad istražuje skup narativa koje je spisateljica, prosvetiteljka i feministička vođa Amanda Labarca objavila u prvoj četvrtini 20. veka, a to su roman *En tierras extrañas* (1915), kratki roman *La lámpara maravillosa* i zbirka priča *Cuentos a mi señor* (objavljeni 1921). Zainteresovani smo da ovaj korpus Labarkinog dela razumemo kroz *kriolizam*, zamišljen kao latinoamerički i čileanski književni senzibilitet prve polovine 20. veka. Ovim doprinosimo studijama koje su imale za cilj da istraže jedno od Labarkinih najnepoznatijih oblasti: njenu književnost. Konkretno, ovaj rad prati duh koji se provlači kroz ove tekstove, naglašavajući tipizaciju diskursa, likova i društvenih konteksta koji omogućavaju da se održi predlog analize ove proze sa staništa *kriolizma*. Zaista, rezultati pokazuju prisustvo nekoliko karakteristika ovog trenda, kao što je prisustvo perifernog ili marginalnog elementa, putnika kao protagoniste ili unapređenje lokalnih običaja. Zaključujemo da Labarkina lirika ima dijalog sa predlozima čileanskog *kriolizma*, iako je inspirisana i drugim estetskim i ideološkim predlozima njenog vremena.

Ključne reči: Amanda Labarca, *kriolizam*, književnost, narativ, žene, Čile.