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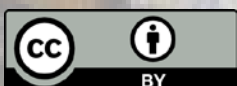
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Novelas originales y americanas

A Digital Analysis of References to Identity in Subtitles of Spanish American 19th Century Novels

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1. Introduction

1.1. Literary texts, identity constitution, and genre

Literature is one of the central media through which identities are represented and constructed. “Identity” is a status that is achieved by means of identification processes and it can concern the personal identity of individuals as well as the collective identity of groups. To constitute identity means to integrate disparate experiences and conceptions of the self and the world, differing expectations and cultural role models into a relatively static and harmonic whole (cf. Horatschek 2013, 323). One of the areas in which the special role that literary texts play for the constitution of identities has been discussed is in cultural studies of memory. From that perspective, literary texts are a medium of collective memory and they fulfill specific functions in the culture of remembrance. They can form ideas about past worlds, convey images of history, serve to reflect on processes and problems of collective memory, and also shape concepts of identity. As “collective texts”, they circulate in specific cultural contexts and contribute to generate, communicate, and provide perspectives on collective memory and identity (cf. Erll 2017, 167–190).

A characteristic of collective identities is that they are bound to the development of group-specific cultural forms. Collective identities can be related to different kinds of groups, for instance linguistic communities, political entities such as nation states, or cultural groups on local, regional, cross-regional, or supra-national levels. Feldman (2001), for example, examines narratives of American national identity as group narratives and discusses the relationship between identity stories and literary genres as specific cultural forms. In general, group-defining stories are

highly patterned and genres provide such patterns for literary texts. In the case of national narratives, they have been expected to relate to the romance genre, with a “superior hero” and a “high mimetic mode” as opposed to an “ordinary hero” and “comedy and modern realistic fiction” (Feldman 2001, 130, referring to Frye 1957). However, in her analysis, Feldman finds, that “[n]ational identity stories may have a distinctive genre, but which genre is chosen is bound to vary. We may find a tragedy in one place, a romance in another” (Feldman 2021, 130). So, although there is a relationship between literary genres as patterns for group-specific cultural forms which serve to represent and constitute collective identities, this relationship is not fixed and pre-established but can instead be considered the result of group-specific identification processes.

The special role that literary texts and genres play in these processes is set forth by Erll, who describes the characteristics of literary texts as one specific symbolic form of memory culture. Through processes of convergence, in literary texts, complex events are concentrated in specific topoi, narratives, places, or characters. Furthermore, collective memory is built through narrative processes which are also central for narrative literary genres. What is narrated is selected and combined from a wealth of impressions and data, and genre patterns can be understood as conventions of the codification of events. As fictional texts, literary texts have a restricted claim to be referential and objective. This provides them, however, with the privilege to construct realities which can contribute to the constitution of collective memories and identities (cf. Erll 2017, 167–172).

Here, these general considerations on the relationship between literary texts, identity constitution, and genre are taken into account as a basis for a digital analysis of 19th century Spanish American novels, of their subgenres, and their function in the formation of collective identities, starting from references to identity which were found in the subtitles of the novels.

1.2. Spanish American novels in the 19th century and questions of identity

In Spanish America, the 19th century was marked by the independence movements of the Spanish American colonies, which aspired and, in most cases, achieved to become independent from the mother country Spain in the course of the century. During the colonial period, access to novels had been limited, but in the 19th century, the genre became popular and spread in connection with the development of local literary markets. For Argentina, for instance, a comprehensive study of the novel’s emerging reality in the 19th century cultural system has been undertaken by Molina, who compares the novels with mushrooms springing up (cf. Molina 2011).

In many cases, the novels served to address social, political, and historical issues, and they fulfilled important functions in the formation of distinct national identities. For Latin America as a whole, Sommer writes about “foundational fictions” and “national romances” (Sommer 1993), discussing the role that romantic novels played in the process of national consolidation. Also, Lindstrom

dedicates several chapters of her book on early Spanish American narrative to the interconnections between narratives and nationhood: “The Struggle for Nationhood and the Rise of Fiction”, “The Mid-Nineteenth Century: Romanticism, Realism, and Nationalism”, “Late-Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Social Commentary and National Self-Reflection” (Lindstrom 2004). The significance of narrative fiction and the novel genre in processes of political emancipation and the definition of national spaces and identities has also been addressed for individual Spanish American countries, for example by Hanway (2003) for Argentina, Brushwood (1966) for Mexico, or Ferrer (2018) for Cuba.

As the number of different studies on the topic shows, the question of national Spanish American identities and of decolonialization has been in the focus of research on 19th century Spanish American novels. However, there are other types of identity issues that are significant in relation to the Spanish American novels. Towards the end of the 19th and in the early 20th century, a genuine, supranational, and cultural Spanish American identity began to develop in the wake of the Modernist current. This was a current that aimed to provide the industrialized and modernized society with an equally modern literature, oriented towards contemporary French literary currents. Following this, there was again a turn to regional themes that foregrounded rural settings (Gálvez 1990, 148–194). This means that in addition to the question of a political, national identity, the novels also addressed aspects of cultural identity that related to spaces of a different scale and nature. As Julio Ortega puts it in the introduction to a volume dedicated to the search for a distinct and universal Hispanic American literature, although 19th and 20th century narratives are part of collective memories of nation-building, they cannot be reduced to the definition of a single and unambiguous identity, but represent and shape it in a process of productive creativity:

Si la narrativa es una memoria de la formación nacional, cuya fábula o romance es un proceso de autoidentificación, la identidad deja de ser un catálogo de deudas impagables y se construye, más bien, como alteridad y pluralidad; al punto que esta narrativa demuestra, más bien, la identidad como proceso abierto, que en lugar de definirse como carencia, se define como exceso de filiaciones, alianzas y consensos. La literatura parece decirnos que en vez de un “problema de identidad” (de legitimidad, autoconocimiento, pertenencia, comunidad), tenemos una re-solución de identidades. Así, el relato de la identidad, donde se despliega y pone a prueba, no sólo sostiene al “yo” heroico sino a su interlocutor, en el espacio de concurrencia donde forjan su libertad mutua (Ortega 2011, 17).

This observation about the function of Spanish American narratives for cultural and national identities is in line with the considerations from memory research referred to above, which describe that literary texts can open up different perspectives on collective identities, that they can themselves contribute to the constitution of identity in a variety of ways, and that even genre patterns used to define group identities are applied in different ways in specific historical and cultural contexts.

1.3. Identity references in subtitles of novels

The different aspects of identity constitution by means of narratives, that have been raised in the previous section on 19th century Spanish American novels, shall be examined in this article from a specific perspective, that of identity references

in subtitles of novels. In order to explain how this particular investigation came about, it is necessary to go into its more general background, which is the study *Genre Analysis and Corpus Design: 19th Century Spanish American Novels (1830-1910)*, a dissertation which has been produced by the author of this article in the context of the project *Computational Literary Genre Stylistics (CLiGS)* at the University of Würzburg¹ and to be published soon. The goal of the dissertation was to analyze thematic subgenres of the novels and literary currents on the basis of stylistic features and distributions of topics in the texts and to investigate how well they can be classified with different quantitative methods. Another central question was to analyze which textual features are distinctive for the different subgenres and literary currents in question. To be able to conduct the empirical study, a corpus of 256 novels from Argentina, Mexico, and Cuba, which had been published between 1830 and 1910, was compiled and prepared in digital formats.² The corpus has been published under the name of *Corpus de novelas hispanoamericanas del siglo XIX* (Conha19, cf. Henny-Krahmer 2021). Besides the corpus, a more comprehensive collection of bibliographical data about 829 novels from the same historical context was developed. It is called *Bib-ACMé: Bibliografía digital de novelas argentinas, cubanas y mexicanas (1830-1910)* and has been published as data (cf. Henny-Krahmer 2017a) as well as in the form of a web application (cf. Henny-Krahmer 2017b).

Both the corpus and the bibliography contain detailed metadata about the subgenres of the novels and the literary currents that they have been attributed to. The information about the subgenres and currents was collected from literary histories, monographs, and research articles on Spanish American novels, but also from title pages of the novels' historical editions. All the genre labels that were found were collected and classified regarding their source – literary historical or contemporary – and their type. The following types of subgenre labels were identified in the corpus and the bibliography: (1) thematic labels such as “novela histórica” or “novela sentimental”, (2) those referring to literary currents, as for example “novela romántica” or “novela naturalista”, (3) identity labels connected to linguistic, cultural, geographical, regional, or national identity as for instance “novela original”, “novela mexicana”, or “novela habanera”, (4) labels related to the mode of the narration in terms of its relationship to reality, its form of representation, its medium, attitude, or intention, for example “cuadros”, “estudio”, “memorias”, “novela satírica”, or “novela de propaganda”. The groups of genre labels were developed starting from semiotic models of genre, especially those formulated by Raible (1980) and Schaeffer (1983), which emphasize the role of genre names as complex linguistic signs that point to different levels of meaning. Whenever a literary work is associated with such a genre name, the generic signal

¹ The project ran between 2015 and 2020 and was funded by the German Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF). The primary goal of the research group was “to provide a methodological linkage between new techniques of quantitative analysis of literary texts and the fundamental issues of literary studies in the domain of genre theory and stylistics [...] on the basis of several large text collections that consist of French dramas of the classical period and the Enlightenment as well as French and Spanish novels of the 19th century” (CLiGS n.d.).

² To be able to focus on specific literary historical contexts, only novels from three selected Spanish American countries were chosen.

opens up an interpretive framework and specific genre conventions, against the background of which the text can be analyzed and understood.

The dissertation focused on the first two levels of genre labels, i.e., the thematic subgenres and literary currents, both of which have been at the centre of literary historical research. Here, the third group of genre labels, which relate to different forms of identity, is addressed. During the preparation of the corpus and the bibliography, it became clear that this type of genre label frequently occurs in the subtitles of the novels as they appear on the covers of historical editions of the texts, for example “Esqueletos sociales. Novela original de J. Rivera y Rio” (Mexico, edition of 1873), “Otilia. Novela americana” (written by the author Ventura Aguilar, who was probably Argentine, edition of 1895), or “La campana de la tarde, o vivir muriendo. Novela cubana por Julio Rosas” (Cuba, edition of 1873), to mention some individual cases.

However, these historical references to identity which occur in the subtitles of the novels have not been analyzed systematically so far, even though questions of identity are a prominent subject in literary historical research on 19th century Spanish American novels. A reason for this might be that most – though not all – studies on Spanish American novels concentrate on a relatively small number of canonical works and that it has not yet been noticed how often these references to some kind of identity occur. A second reason is probably that historical genre labels, that is, labels that have been added to titles of works either by authors or editors, must in no way be systematic or especially meaningful. They may point to textual characteristics of the novels in question, but they can as well express extra-textual functions of the novels or indicate that certain designations for the novels were in vogue and were used to sell the books well and attract readers. Moreover, since they may be the result of both authorial decision and editor influence, it is not clear to what extent they correspond to an authorial will.

Some discussions of this kind of genre labels can however be found. Botrel, who discusses the Spanish novel between 1830 and 1930 as an editorial genre, mentions the designation “novela original” and remarks:

Las normas/formas tipográficas bibliográficas permiten también observar cómo después de un período en el que se precisa el origen de la novela («novela escrita en francés por Mr.» o «Madama...», «en inglés por Mistress...» o «Sr...» y «traducida al castellano por...» iniciales) la preeminencia del título unida con la hispanización casi sistemática de los nombres de los autores traducidos (Javier de Montepín, Pablo Feval, etc.) y la importancia numérica de las traducciones, con la desaparición de la mención del traductor, al menos en las referencias bibliográficas, hace que el género novela venga disociado de una por otra parte deseada hispanidad y asociado con una patronímica y toponimia extranjerizante, como producto extranjero o, más probablemente, asimilado. La mención «novela original» o «española» introducirá durante cierto tiempo una distinción poco decisiva, estadísticamente al menos (Botrel, 2001, paragraph 12, footnotes omitted).

Botrel thus analyzes the designation “novela original” as a marker indicating that the novels were originally written in Spanish and are not translations, a label which became necessary to distinguish these novels from others originally written by foreign authors in foreign languages. Also, Molina mentions the label “novela original” in her discussion of subtitles of Argentine novels published between 1838

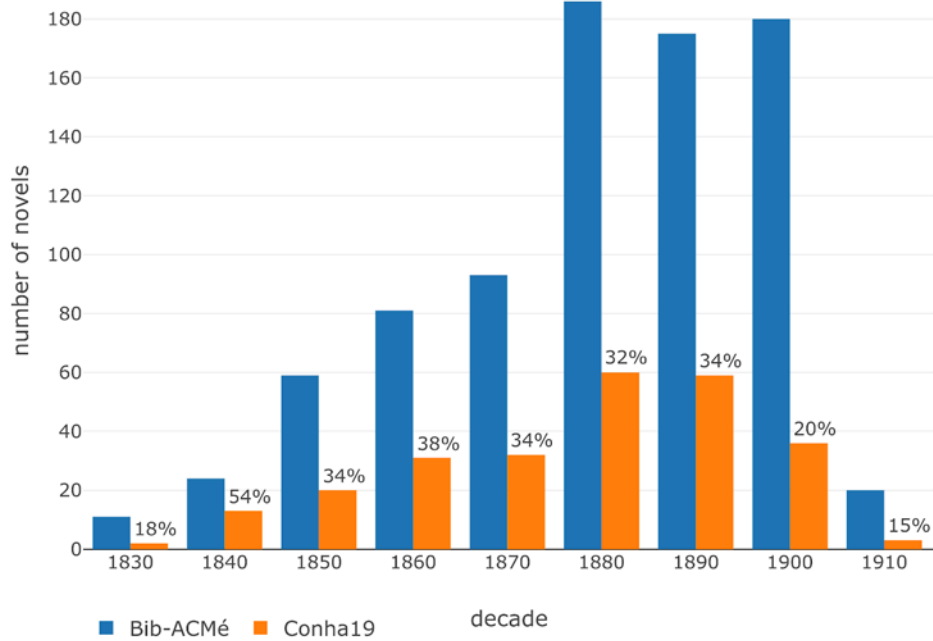
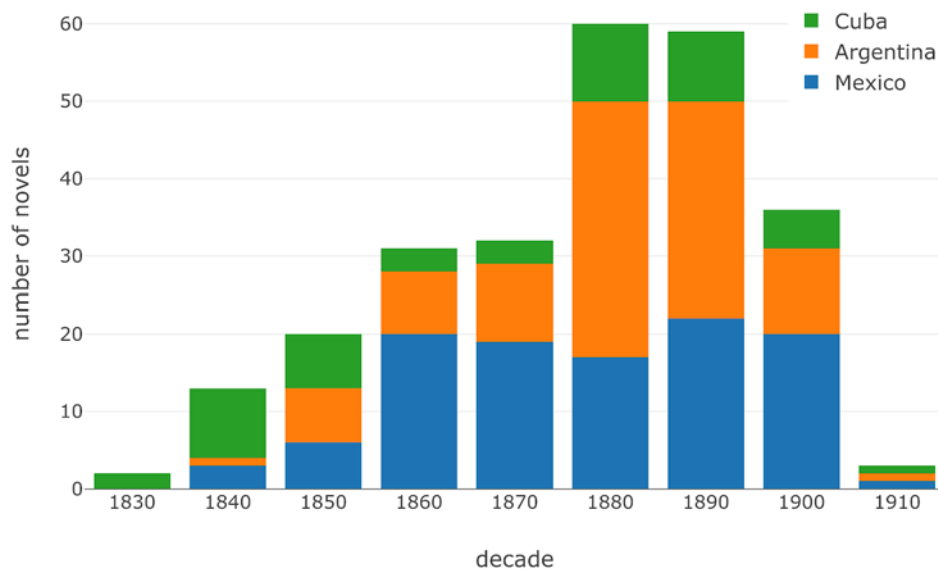
und 1872 and interprets it in the same way as Botrel, as a marker of local authorship: “Hacia mediados de la década de 1850, el apelativo ‘original’ empieza a leerse en la portada de libros editados en Buenos Aires; y con él quiere significarse que se trata de un texto escrito por autor local, que no es una traducción” (Molina 2011, 54) and “El adjetivo ‘original’ – según se explicó más arriba – señala las obras producidas por autores locales; aparece en un 21 % de nuestro corpus” (Molina 2011, 231). Both Botrel and Molina point out that a large proportion of the novels sold in Spain and Argentina in the early nineteenth century came from abroad (see the quote from Botrel above and Molina 2011, 25–26), so it seems particularly necessary to mark novels of local origin.

From the perspective of historically oriented, empirical genre research, the identity references that appear in the subtitles of the novels are certainly of interest. In a broader context, it would be instructive to investigate whether identity references in subtitles of novels in the nineteenth century occurred predominantly in Spanish-speaking countries, or, for example, in French- or English-speaking countries as well. Such an approach, however, goes far beyond the present study, in which the focus is on the corpus of Spanish American novels and in which the following questions are posed: Which kind of identity labels occur and how frequent and numerous are they? Are they connected to extra-textual features such as the nationalities or cultural identities of the authors or the period in which they were published? And do they relate to other levels of genre, for example the thematic subgenres or literary currents? How about their relationship to the content and style of the texts, is there a pattern and a correspondence between certain identity labels and the kind of novels to which they were attached? Or are the labels used rather randomly by authors or editors? Finally, what can be learned about the concepts of identity that the 19th century Spanish American novels represented and constituted? In the following, these questions are examined with a digital analysis of the identity references that occur in the corpus *Conha19* and the bibliography *Bib-ACMé*.

2. Digital analysis of identity references in *Bib-ACMé* and *Conha19*

2.1. Starting point: data, data modeling, and methods

The digital analysis of identity references is based on the two resources *Bib-ACMé* and *Conha19*, which comprise 829 and 256 novels each. In both cases, novels were chosen that were published between 1830 and 1910 and that were either written by Argentine, Mexican, and Cuban authors or had first been published in the respective countries. Only novels that were originally written in Spanish are considered. Fig. 1 and 2 illustrate the distribution of novels per decade, to give an impression of the contents of the bibliography and the corpus:

1 | Number of novels per decade in *Bib-ACM * and *Conha19*2 | Number of novels per decade and by country in *Conha19*

In the first figure, for each decade, the number of novels in *Bib-ACM * is compared to *Conha19*, showing that the corpus contains approximately one third of the novels that are part of the bibliography. The main difference between these two resources is that the bibliography consists only of metadata about the novels – in particular about their authors, editions, and subgenre labels – while the corpus also contains the digital full texts of the novels. This means that the bibliography can be used in its entirety for an analysis of the metadata, but only the corpus is suitable for text analysis. In this contribution, both aspects are combined, which means that the metadata analysis with the bigger data set is complemented by textual analyses

of the corpus to be able to take into account text-internal features, as well. Fig. 2 illustrates the distribution of novels in the corpus by country and decade. *Conha19* contains 108 novels from Mexico, 99 novels from Argentina, and 49 novels from Cuba. Both figures show that the number of novels is highest in the 1880s and 1890s. This reflects the fact that from the middle of the 19th century more and more novels were published. On the other hand, the number of novels from 1900 onwards is again lower in the digital resources, because some of the texts in the 20th century are still subject to copyright and are therefore not as accessible as the earlier texts.

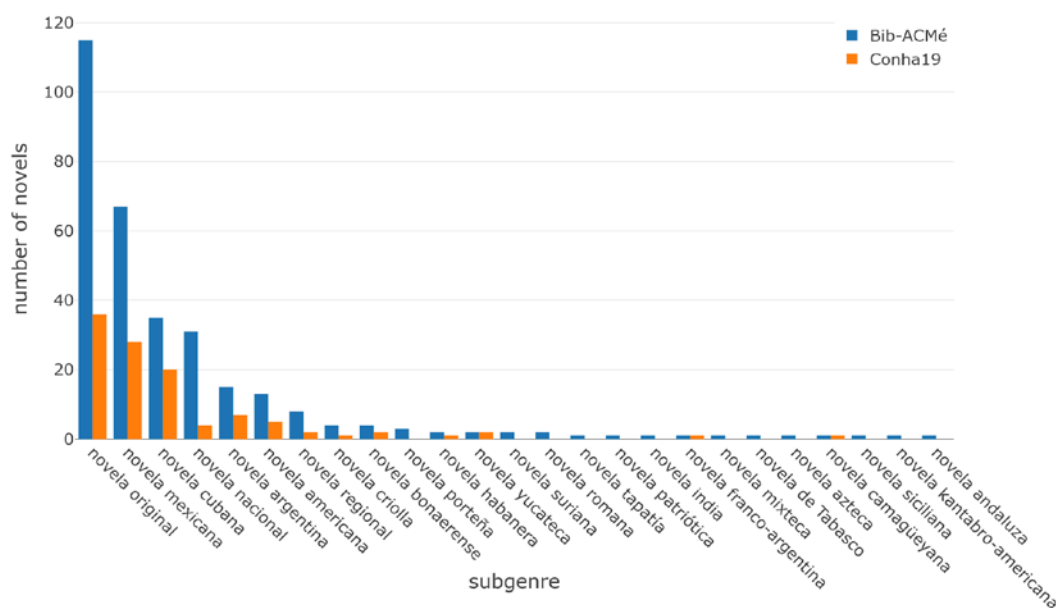
Before the results of the analyses can be presented, three important methodological issues need to be addressed. First, how were the genre labels referring to different kinds of identity collected and treated? Second, which other extra- and intratextual aspects of the texts are considered and linked to the identity references, and how were these data obtained? Third, which digital methods are used to analyze the identity references in the subtitles of the novels in connection with the other metadata and textual data?

The first methodological issue concerns the identity references in the subtitles of the novels themselves. In *Bib-ACMé*, for each novel, all the editions that could be found and that were published between 1830 and 1910 were registered. This means that each novel as an individual work of art can be represented by several different editions. The titles and subtitles of the works are found on those historical editions, which amount to 1,220 instances in *Bib-ACMé*. For each edition, it was checked whether the subtitle contained some kind of reference to identity, such as “novela original”, “novela americana”, “novela cubana”, etc. These references were then collected for each novel and it is on the level of the individual novels as works of art that the identity references are analyzed here. The decision to derive the references from the editions but to analyze them on the level of the novels as literary works was made because the references to identity were treated as genre labels here and genre is considered an aspect that is attributed to the work of art, not to individual editions of the work. This methodological choice has several consequences. It prevents certain novels that have been published very often from dominating over those for which there is only a single edition. If the results were recorded at the level of editions, individual novels could distort them. However, the disadvantage of this modeling is that subtle differences of subtitle assignment that may exist between different editions are not taken into account.

To be able to analyze references to identity quantitatively, they were normalized, which means that grammatical and orthographic differences in the forms and different reference words of the identity attributes were homogenized. However, the original forms were also retained in the metadata so that the standardization process can be tracked. For example, labels such as “novela histórica original”, “novela de costumbres mexicanas”, “cuento camagüeyano” were normalized to “novela original”, “novela mexicana”, and “novela camagüeyana” for the purpose of identity analysis. A further step was taken by grouping the identity references to geographical and cultural units at a higher level. The goal of this grouping was to create more homogeneous groups that could be analyzed quantitatively, since

references to local, historical, or indigenous identities in particular were very sporadic. As in the case of the linguistic normalization, also here the original forms were kept to ensure a transparent methodology. As an example for grouping, references such as “novela cubana”, “novela camagüeyana”, or “novela habanera” are all considered “novelas cubanas”. On an even higher level, “novela cubana”, “novela mexicana”, “novela argentina”, “novela americana”, or “novela criolla” are all considered part of the group “novela americana”, as opposed to novels attributed to non-American identities or to no kind of identity at all. These groupings provide additional levels for quantitative analysis, but of course they introduce a form of interpretation and abstraction, which has to be kept in mind. All the information about identity references in the subtitles of the novels is part of the metadata that has been collected for *Bib-ACMé*, and it is retained in the digital bibliography, where it is encoded in XML, following the standard of the *Text Encoding Initiative* (TEI Consortium 2022).

The first question that can be answered by analyzing this metadata is which kind of identity labels occur in the bibliography and corpus and how frequent and numerous they are. In *Bib-ACMé*, 33 % of the novels carry some kind of identity label and in *Conha19*, 39 % of the novels have such a label. An overview of which labels occur how often in each resource is given in Fig. 3:



3 | Number of novels with identity references in their subtitles, in *Bib-ACMé* and *Conha19*

In the following, the evaluation focuses on the occurrences of the labels in the bibliography (how often these occur in the corpus in comparison can be seen in Fig. 3). All in all, there are 25 different subgenre labels related to the linguistic, geographical and socio-cultural identity. The most important identity label is the general term “novela original”, carried by 113 (14 %) of the works in the bibliography. It is followed by the labels related to the three selected countries (“novela mexicana”, “novela cubana”, “novela argentina”), by other general labels (“novela nacional”, “novela regional”) and by labels referring to the American continent (“novela americana”, “novela criolla”, “novela india”). Among the various

identity labels of minor importance, there are several related to the countries' capitals ("novela bonaerense", "novela porteña", "novela habanera")³, to specific regions or cities in Mexico or Cuba ("novela yucateca", "novela suriana",⁴ "novela tapatía",⁵ "novela de Tabasco", "novela camagüeyana"), and to Mexican indigenous people ("novela mixteca", "novela azteca"). Also, there are references to European regions and culture ("novela romana", "novela franco-argentina", "novela siciliana", "novela kantabro-americana", "novela andaluza"). How these different labels are grouped for further analysis is summarized in Tab. 1 below.

group	labels
novela americana	novela americana, novela argentina, novela azteca, novela bonaerense, novela camagüeyana, novela criolla, novela cubana, novela de Tabasco, novela franco-argentina, novela habanera, novela india, novela kantabro-americana, novela mexicana, novela mixteca, novela porteña, novela suriana, novela tapatía, novela yucateca
novela argentina	novela argentina, novela bonaerense, novela franco-argentina, novela porteña
novela cubana	novela camagüeyana, novela cubana, novela habanera
novela mexicana	novela azteca, novela de Tabasco, novela mexicana, novela mixteca, novela suriana, novela tapatía, novela yucateca

Tab. 1 | Groupings of identity labels

Besides the treatment of the identity references found in the subtitles on historical editions of the novels, the second methodological aspect that needs to be clarified is which other extra- and intratextual aspects of the texts are taken into account in the metadata and text analysis of the identity references and how this data was gathered. The following features that are external to the texts are analyzed:

- the years of publication of the novels, for which the year of the novels' first edition is decisive; this allows to check if references to identity occurred primarily in certain subperiods of the 19th century;
- the country that the novels are associated with; which is either the nationality of the author or the country in which the novel was first published (if the author is not Argentine, Mexican, or Cuban); with that, it can be analyzed if references to identity were used more often in one of the Spanish American countries than in another;
- the primary thematic subgenre of the novels as indicated by literary historians or explicitly given on historical editions; the question here is if there are thematic subgenres that were more often used in combination with identity references than others;

³ In the case of the "novela mexicana" it cannot be decided if it refers to the country or the capital.

⁴ According to the "Diccionario de la lengua española" of the Spanish Royal Academy, "suriana" means "coming from the south of Mexico" (Real Academia Española 2021a).

⁵ "Coming from Guadalajara" (Real Academia Española 2021b).

- the literary current that the novels were associated with by literary historians; also, here it is checked whether there are correlations with the identity references⁶.

All this information is available for all the novels in *Bib-ACMé*. There are further text-internal characteristics that are only available for the subset of novels that is part of *Conha19*, because access to the full texts was needed to be able to determine these features that are related to the content, plot, and style of the texts themselves:

- the continent of the setting (America or Europe)⁷;
- the time period of the setting (past, recent past, or contemporary)⁸;
- the narrative perspective (first person or third person)⁹;
- words preferred and avoided (in comparison to novels not carrying the same kind of identity reference).

Because there can be shifts in the course of the text, for the categories “continent of the setting”, “time period of the setting”, and “narrative perspective”, the modes that were predominant throughout the texts were chosen. To look for correlations between the narrative perspective and identity references is of interest because it reveals ways in which identity is communicated in the novels – through interior views and individual perspectives of characters or from a more neutral and panoramic perspective that is independent of single characters.

For all the kinds of extra-textual and text-internal features listed above, the goal of the analysis is to look for correlations between them and the identity references that are attributed to the novels in their subtitles. The different features cover contextual aspects (period, authorship, publication place, thematic genre, literary current) as well as textual ones (aspects of the setting, narrative perspective, and stylistic features).

⁶ Of course the thematic subgenres and literary currents that the novels have been associated with by literary historians and by contemporaries are not only text-external characteristics, in the sense of generic conventions applied to the texts, but relate to text-internal features. They are listed here as aspects that are external to the texts because the genre labels were collected in that way – not by analyzing the contents and style of the novels, but by gathering genre attributions that have been made by others.

⁷ “Setting” refers to the geographic location or time (including the historical period) of a narrative and can also be designated as the “story world”.

⁸ The time period of the setting is determined in relation to the publication years of the novels’ first edition. “Past” means that the narrated time is more than 60 years before the publication date, “recent past” that it is between 30 and 60 years before the publication date, and “contemporary” that the narrated time is within 30 years before or after the publication date or that it is not marked at all.

⁹ The term “narrative perspective” refers to the point of view that the narrator of a story has. This can be, for example, an autodiegetic perspective, which means that the narrator is at the same time the protagonist and tells from her or his perspective, or a homodiegetic perspective, which means that the narrator holds the view of a minor character, or a heterodiegetic perspective, which corresponds to an omniscient narrator. For the purpose of this analysis, autodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators are subsumed under the category “first person” and heterodiegetic narrators under “third person” because the difference in linguistic style (first person vs. third person form) mattered most for the corpus analysis.

With this range of features, various aspects of the novels are covered and related to the question of identity construction. The content and style of the novels are not analyzed here directly in terms of identity, though, but in relation to the explicit identity references found in subtitles with which the novels were marked on the historical editions. These are understood as signals or indicators of identity functions that the novels had.

The third aspect that needs to be explained regarding the methodology of the analysis is how correlations between identity references and other features of the novels are determined and interpreted. For all the information that is encoded as metadata – publication years, countries, thematic subgenres, literary currents, continent and time period of the setting, and narrative perspective – it is examined whether certain identity references occur relatively more frequent for some of the metadata categories than for others. The kinds of questions asked are for example: Is the share of “novelas originales” in the bibliography higher in some decades of the 19th century than in others? Do “novelas mexicanas” have a higher proportion of a setting in the recent past than novels that do not bear this kind of identity label? The results of these comparisons of the proportion of novels associated with certain identity labels and textual categories can only be interpreted as tendencies. As a rule of thumb, each time that there is a difference of 5 % or more in the proportion of novels with a certain identity label, it is considered for the results of the analysis here. The differences can however not be expected to be statistically significant in all cases because the number of novels in *Bib-ACMé* and *Conha19* is not very high in statistical terms, especially if only one third of the novels carry identity references and subgroups of them are analyzed.

For the stylistic analyses, which identify words that are preferred or avoided by novels carrying certain identity references, contrastive analyses are performed with the tool *stylo* (Eder et al., 2016). In a contrastive analysis, the corpus is divided into two partitions to determine the differences between the two subsets of the corpus. In this way, stylistic features of the sub-corpora can be worked out, in the form of words that are preferred or avoided in one sub-corpus over the other, which means that certain words that are overrepresented can be interpreted as distinctive or characteristic for the sub-corpus in question. A contrastive measure that is implemented in *stylo* and used for the analyses here is Craig’s Zeta (Craig & Kinney, 2009).¹⁰

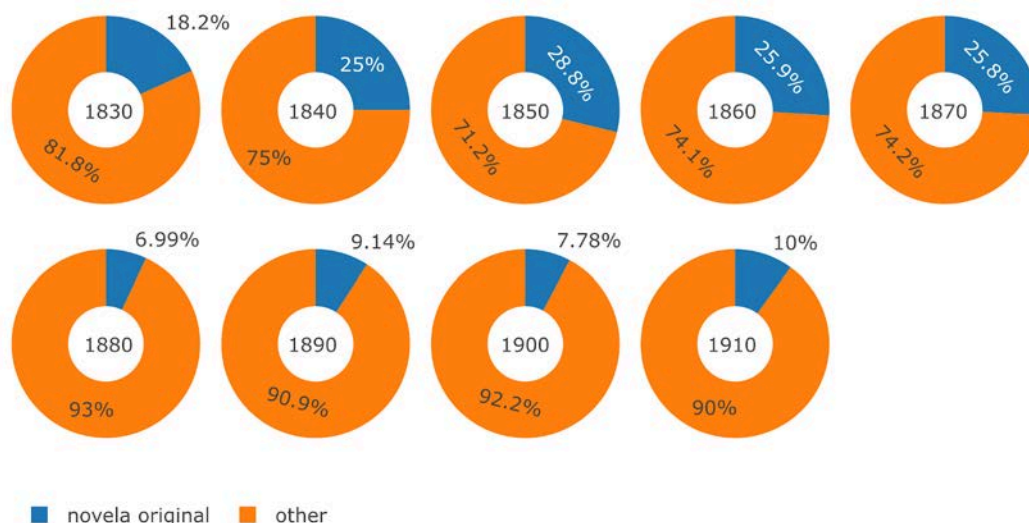
In the following, the analysis focuses on those identity references that occur most frequently or form the largest groups. First, the most frequent type of identity reference in *Bib-ACMé* and *Conha19*, the “novelas originales”, are examined, followed by all the references that can be grouped as “novelas americanas”. Finally, the three groups of references referring to the three countries, “novelas mexicanas”, “novelas argentinas”, and “novelas cubanas”, are analyzed. Thus,

¹⁰ Craig’s Zeta is a further development of the contrastive measure Burrow’s Zeta (cf. Burrows 2007). Both measures provide interpretative lists of words that are distinctive for sub-corpora because they focus on words from the middle frequency spectrum (neither the most common nor the rarest words). Craig’s Zeta is used here because it provides both words preferred and avoided in the sub-corpus that is contrasted with another one.

emphasis is placed on linguistic identity, on the question of a trans- and supranational Spanish American identity, and on national identities.¹¹

2.2. Novelas originales

The first aspect of the novels that carried the label “novela original” that is examined here is their distribution over time. How many percent of the novels published in each decade between 1830 and 1910 had this kind of reference in their subtitles? The results are shown in Fig. 4 below:



4 | “Novelas originales” vs. other novels by decade

Up to the 1870s, the proportion of “novelas originales” ranges between approximately one fifth and one fourth of the novels. In contrast, from the 1880s onwards, only 10 % or less of the novels carry that kind of identity reference. The “novela original” clearly is a phenomenon of the earlier decades in the 19th century. Apparently, the need to mark the linguistic originality of the novels, i.e., that they were originally written in Spanish and are not translations of foreign works, was not as strong anymore when more and more novels were published in the Spanish American countries around 1880.

If we look at the shares of novels with the label “novela original” in the novels from the three countries Mexico, Argentina and Cuba, we notice that they are lower for Argentina (6 % below average) than for the other two countries.¹² This observation is probably related to the fact that there are more Mexican and Cuban novels in the early decades of the 19th century and because the number of novels from Argentina only increases later in the century, when the label “novela original” was not used so much anymore.

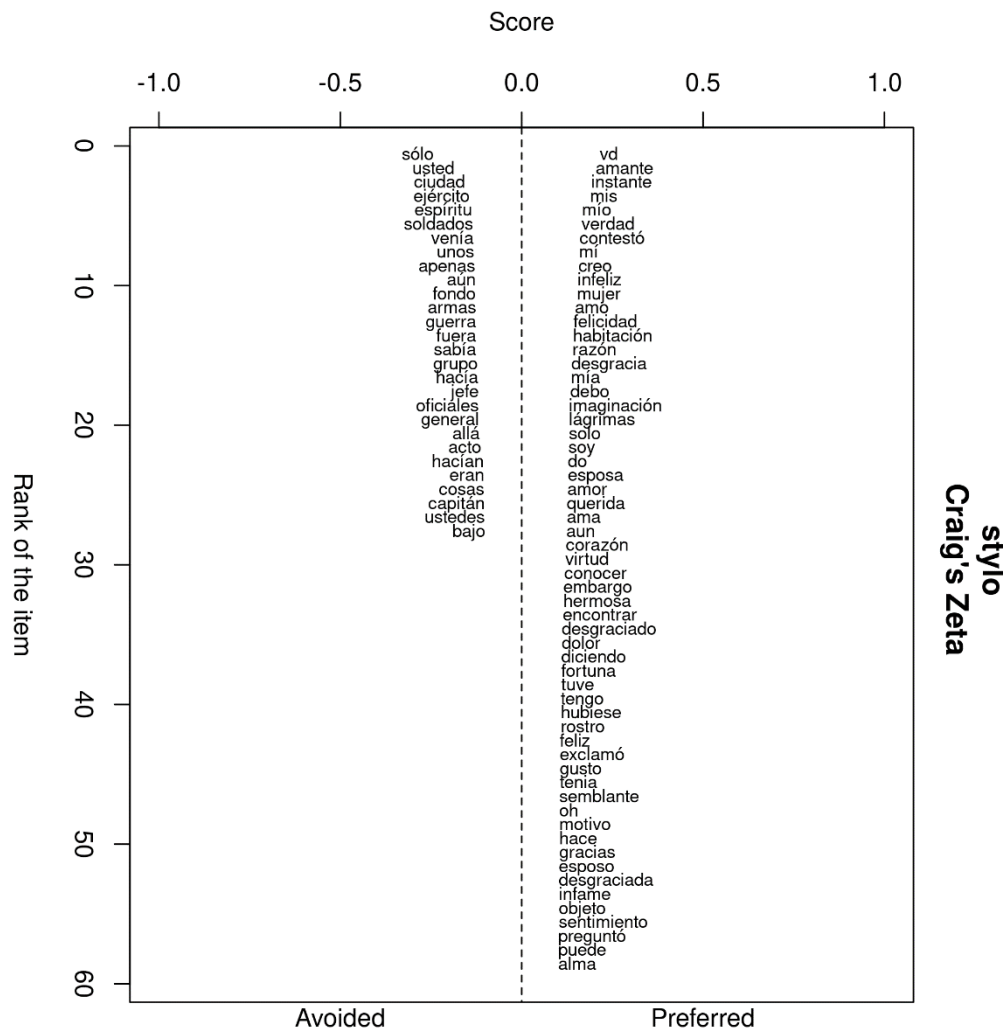
¹¹ The scripts that were used to perform the analyses and their results are published on GitHub (cf. Henry-Krahmer 2022).

¹² Charts which show the numbers mentioned in this article are available at <https://github.com/hennyu/original_american_romtag21/tree/main/images> 27.2.2022. All the percentages that are given in this article are rounded.

Turning to the thematic subgenres, “novelas originales” are overrepresented in sentimental novels (7 % above average) and underrepresented in novels of customs (“novelas de costumbres”, with -5 %), with the other thematic subgenres ranging in between these values. Both sentimental novels and novels of customs can be found in the whole 19th century, so the different proportion of “novelas originales” in the novels attributed to these two thematic subgenres is an interesting finding. One hypothesis to explain this result is that the sentimental novel as a subgenre was also very common in non-Spanish speaking countries, so here it was necessary to signal the local origin, while the “novelas de costumbres” were a subgenre typical of novels from Spain and Spanish America, so perhaps in the case of these novels it was not so urgent to indicate the own, linguistic identity. Regarding the literary currents, the biggest proportion of “novelas originales” is found in the group of romantic novels (+6 %), while the proportions are much smaller for realist novels (-6 %) and naturalistic novels (-12 %). This again confirms that the “novelas originales” occur primarily in the early 19th century because the realist and naturalistic currents begin to dominate around 1880.

The next step is to analyze the results for those text features that are only available for the novels in the *Conha19* corpus, that is, for a subset of all novels. For the continent of the setting, it can be stated that the “novelas originales” are clearly overrepresented in the group of novels with a European setting (+28 %), which suggests that the custom to label novels as “novelas originales” has a European origin. This assumption is supported by the observations made by Botrel (2001, paragraph 12) and could be tested by further empirical investigation of the occurrence of this subtitle in nineteenth century novels from Spain. An examination of the temporal setting also reveals interesting differences, because “novelas originales” with a setting in the past are underrepresented (-11 %) in comparison to novels with a setting in contemporary times or the recent past. This may be correlated to the number of sentimental novels with that label, as these are usually not set in the past, in contrast to historical novels. Finally, for the narrative perspective, there is no difference between novels written in first person or in third person with regards to the share of “novelas originales”.

In addition to the various metadata related to text-external and internal factors, textual features themselves will now be analyzed in terms of their relationship to the identity reference “novela original.” Fig. 5 illustrates the words preferred and avoided by novels carrying the label “novela original”, when compared to all other novels in the corpus.



5 | Words avoided and preferred in “novelas originales”

The words that are underrepresented in “novelas originales” can be related to historical themes, as there are several words from the word fields of fight and army: “ejército”, “soldados”, “armas”, “guerra”, “jefe”, “oficiales”, “general”, and “capitán”. Furthermore, there are several words in perfect tense: “venía”, “sabía”, “hacia”, “hacían”, “eran”. The words that are overrepresented in “novelas originales” can be associated with a sentimental theme: “amante”, “instante”, “infeliz”, “amo”, “felicidad”, “habitación”, “desgracia”, “lágrimas”, “esposa”, “amor”, etc. The stylistic analysis of the “novelas originales” confirms the tendency of the novels to belong to the sentimental subgenre and not to the historical one.

2.3. Novelas americanas

After the novels with the label “novela original”, we will now look at those that have an identity reference that points to the American continent, either in a general form as in “novela americana” or “novela criolla”, or in a form that is specific for an individual Spanish American country, region, city, or a certain cultural or indigenous group, for instance “novela mexicana”, “novela tapatía”, or “novela azteca”. In this section, these novels are however analyzed from a quantitative point of view and

therefore the different individual labels are grouped by country or for the whole continent.¹³

Looking at the development of the American labels over time, there is no clear tendency as for the “novelas originales”. Only novels which carry an explicit label referring to the Argentine context tend to have been published in the later decades of the 19th century. The first novels with such an identity reference appeared in the 1860s and in the 1900s there were eight novels of this kind. So this trend must be interpreted with caution because the overall number of novels carrying a label from the group “novela argentina” is low. Besides that, it was already mentioned that the number of Argentine novels is in general lower in the first half of the 19th century when compared to Mexican and Cuban novels.

To examine the “novelas americanas” by country makes most sense for the group as a whole because obviously “novelas mexicanas” were always Mexican, “novelas argentinas” always Argentine, and “novelas cubanas” Cuban. Still, the proportion of novels that carried a national identity label may vary for each country. Of the Cuban novels, 33 % (14 % above average) had an American identity reference and 30 % a particular Cuban one. On the other hand, only 12 % (7 % below average) of the Argentine novels had a reference as “novela americana”, of which 7 % referred specifically to the Argentine context. The novels from Mexico have average proportions in this regard. Apparently, in the case of the Cuban novels it was most important to signal the American and especially Cuban identity by means of explicit references in subtitles of the novels, which might be related to the long struggle for independence of the Cuban colony, which lasted until the end of the 19th century. In contrast, when the number of novels from Argentina increased, the country had been independent for more than half a century. In quantitative terms, the Mexican novel developed earlier than the Argentine one. At the same time, Mexico became independent much earlier than Cuba. Both aspects might explain the average number of American (and Mexican) references to identity in the subtitles of Mexican novels.

When the thematic subgenres are concerned, “novelas de costumbres” are most overrepresented for novels with a label of the type “novelas americanas” (+29 %), while political (-11 %) and sentimental novels (-10 %) are most underrepresented in the same group of novels. This is in contrast to the “novelas originales”. So, an explicit indication of Spanish American identity seems to be related to the depiction of local customs in the novels, as opposed to novels with a political or a “classic” sentimental theme of European origin. If one considers the identity labels of the individual countries in connection with thematic subgenres and how they differ from one country to another, the “novelas mexicanas” have a comparatively high share of historical novels (+11 %), while the “novelas argentinas” and “novelas cubanas” do not occur in political novels (0 %, each) and less frequently in historical ones (-2 % and -3 %, respectively). The numbers of explicit “novelas argentinas” and

¹³ As for the “novelas originales”, all the results can be found in the GitHub repository mentioned above (Henny-Krahmer 2022).

“novelas cubanas” are however quite low, so that it is hard to speak of any trends in these cases.

As to the literary currents, the highest proportion of novels with explicit references to an American identity are realist novels (+11 %). The same holds for the “novelas mexicanas” (+9 %), the “novelas argentinas” (+5 % for the realist and equally +5 % for the naturalistic novels), but not for the “novelas cubanas”, for which the realist current is slightly underrepresented (-3 %). So unlike the “novelas originales”, the novels with references to American identities tend to belong to the realist current.

With regard to those text features that were only collected for *Conha19*, it can be stated that the continent of the setting is American for all the novels whose subtitles include identity references to the American continent or to individual Spanish American countries. Among the different time periods of the setting, the “novelas americanas” are overrepresented in the group of novels set in the recent past (+9 %), but this is only due to the “novelas mexicanas” and “novelas cubanas”, because there are no “novelas argentinas” with that kind of temporal setting. This can be interpreted to mean that in Spanish American novels, coming to terms with one's recent past was an important aspect in the process of identity constitution.

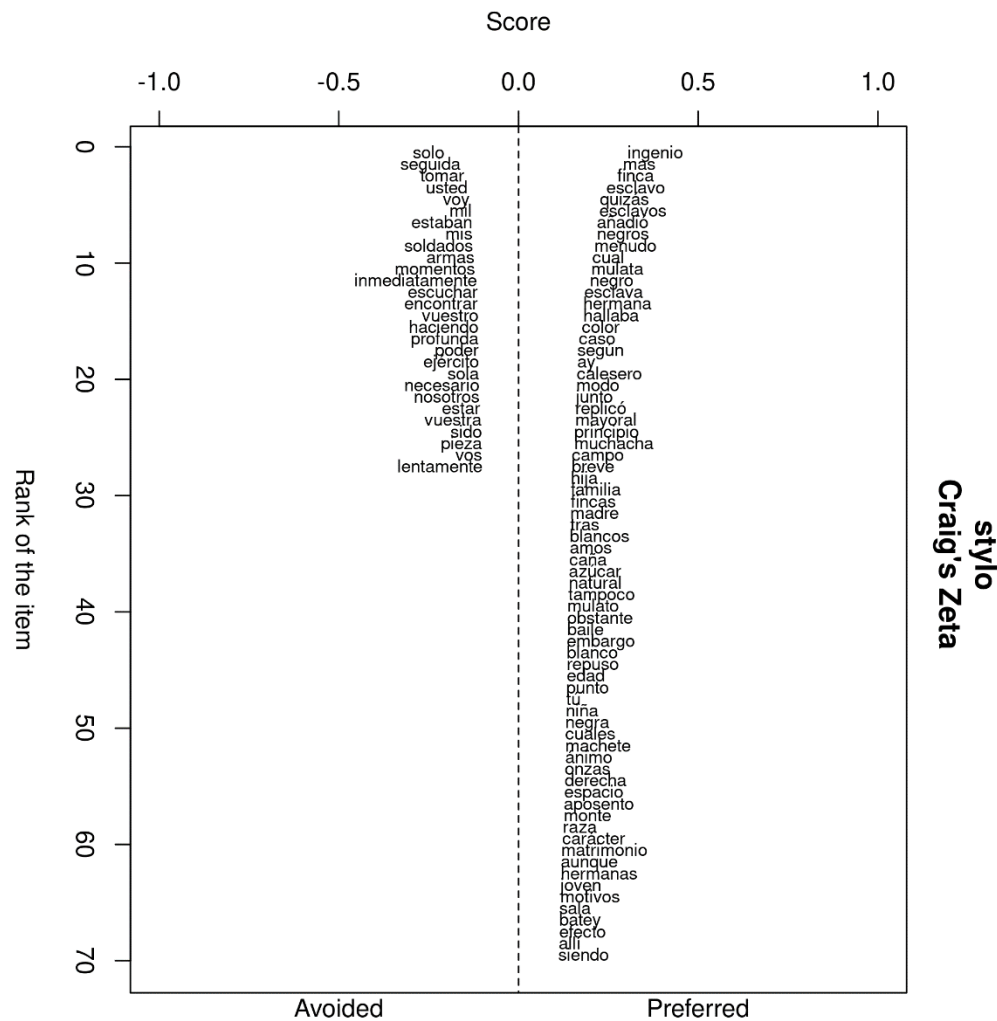
For the connection between identity references that refer to the Spanish-American space and the narrative perspective of the novels, the following observations can be made: for the “novelas americanas”, narrations in first person are underrepresented (-9 %), which is also the case for “novelas mexicanas” (- 10 %) and “novelas cubanas” (- 7 %), but not for the “novelas argentinas”. So, except for the “novelas argentinas”, for which no trend deviating from the average is visible, the novels with American identity references tend to avoid first person narratives in favor of narrations in third person. The representation and constitution of identity in these novels is thus more strongly connected to a perspective that is external to the view of individual characters, which fits well with their tendency to be part of the realist current and to depict local customs as opposed to the romantic and sentimental novels in which narrations in first person are not so rare.

Also, for the “novelas americanas” and the novels with national identity references, the words that are preferred and avoided in them when compared to the group of other novels in contrastive analyses were analyzed. For the group of “novelas americanas” as a whole, the words preferred are mainly forms of address and specific words designating people: “señor”, “usted”, “señora”, “muchacha”, “niña”, “caballero”, “hermana”, and “padre”. Furthermore, there are some adverbs and an interjection that are preferred by the “novelas americanas” (“conque”, “luego”, and “ay”), as well as the verb forms “vamos” and “comenzó”. The only words avoided are “solo” and “hacia”, but this result may be related to orthographic issues in the full texts of the novels, because the form “sólo” with accent appears in the list of words preferred and “hacia” may occur as a form where the accent is missing because it was not used in historical spelling of the verb form “hacía”. These results can be interpreted to mean that the novels with explicit references to American identity are stylistically distinguished from the other novels primarily by linguistic characteristics, especially by specific forms of address, that do not occur in this way in the group of other novels. On the other hand, the “novelas americanas” basically

do not show any words that are underrepresented, which means that beyond the overrepresented words, they operate with the same vocabulary as the other novels in the corpus. However, there is no thematic vocabulary that all the “novelas americanas” have in common, in contrast to the “novelas originales”. This means that there is not the one common American theme associated with these novels, so that one has to look for characteristic themes in the individual national novels.

The lists of words preferred and avoided by the “novelas mexicanas” shows that terms that can be associated with sentimental novels because they are used to describe physical features of characters (“expresión”, “labios”, “semblante”, “belleza”, “espíritu”, “bella”, “sonrisa”), dialogue and interaction (“añadió”, “mirar”, “repuso”, “miró”), or a sentimental theme (“dolor”), are underrepresented. On the other side, terms that can be related to the depiction in particular of rural customs are overrepresented in the “novelas mexicanas” (“negocio”, “sombrero”, “pesos”, “caballero”, “pueblo”, “hacienda”, “multitud”, “justicia”, “lance”), as are some specific verb forms (e.g. “comenzó”, “vaya”, “voy”, “gritó”). These results correspond to the observation that “novelas mexicanas” are more often associated with the subgenre “novelas de costumbres” than with sentimental novels.

Among the words preferred by “novelas argentinas”, above all distinctive forms of address and nouns for people stick out: “tío”, “tía”, “misia”, “viejo”, “madre”, “hermana”, “marido”, “joven”, “hermano”, “familia”, “niña”, “niño”, “mamá”, “hijita”, “jóvenes”, “padre”, “papá”, “pareja”, “vieja”, “doctor”, and “padrino”. The list of words avoided, on the other hand, is not so easy to interpret and is made up of verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and conjunctions. Nouns that are underrepresented are for example “pueblo”, “justicia”, “crimen”, “poder”, and “dinero”. So, the novels with Argentine identity references seem to have a quite specific linguistic style – in so far as a whole list of words from different grammatical categories is avoided – and they also avoid some specific content words. On the other side there are distinctive forms of address and mentions of people in them, but the words preferred do not reveal any specific themes. Finally, the words preferred and avoided by “novelas cubanas” are shown in Fig. 6 below:



6 | Words avoided and preferred in “novelas cubanas”

In the list of words preferred by “novelas cubanas”, some terms turn up that can be associated with novels of customs and in particular description of plantation settings and slavery, for instance “ingenio”, “finca”, “esclavo”, “negros”, “mulata”, “calesero”, “mayoral”, “azúcar”, “machete”, “monte”, “batey”, so a specific Cuban theme becomes visible here. Some of the words avoided can be attributed to a military theme, which would be typical of historical novels: “soldados”, “armas”, “poder”, “ejército”. As was seen before, the “novelas cubanas” are underrepresented in the subgenre of historical novels. In addition, there are also some other verb forms, adverbs, and pronouns which are avoided in the novels with Cuban identity references.

2.4. Synthesis: identity types of novels

In Tab. 2 depicted below, the results of the comparison of proportions of novels by period, country, thematic subgenre, literary current, continent and time period of the setting, narrative perspective as well as words preferred and avoided are summarized for all the different kinds of identity references that were analyzed, i.e. the “novelas originales”, “novelas americanas”, “novelas argentinas”, “novelas

mexicanas”, and “novelas cubanas”. The “+” sign is used to mark all the aspects that are overrepresented in the novels with a certain identity reference when compared to their average proportion in the bibliography and corpus. Correspondingly, the “-” sign serves to indicate that the identity references are underrepresented for the extra-textual or text-internal feature in question. An “=” sign means that there is no difference in one direction or the other. For the three kinds of national novels, the “novelas mexicanas”, “novelas argentinas”, and “novelas cubanas”, those values that deviate from the “novelas americanas” in general are highlighted in red to stress the differences between these three types of national identity references.

identity reference / property	<i>novela original</i>	<i>novela americana</i>	<i>novela mexicana</i>	<i>novela argentina</i>	<i>novela cubana</i>
period	+early	=	=	+late	=
country	-Argentina	+Cuba =Mexico -Argentina	+Mexico	+Argentina	+Cuba
thematic subgenre	+sentimental - <i>costumbres</i>	+ <i>costumbres</i> -political -sentimental	+ <i>costumbres</i> +historical -sentimental	+ <i>costumbres</i> -political -historical	+ <i>costumbres</i> -political -historical
literary current	+romantic -realist -naturalistic	+realist	+realist	+realist +naturalistic	-realist
continent of setting	+Europe	+America -Europe	+America -Europe	+America -Europe	+America -Europe
time period of setting	-past	+recent past	+recent past	-recent past	+recent past
narrative perspective	=	-first person	-first person	=	-first person +third person
words preferred / avoided	+sentimental -historical	+forms of address	+ <i>costumbres</i> -sentimental	+people (forms of address) -mixed	+ <i>costumbres</i> (plantation) -military

Tab. 2 | Overview of identity types of novels

In summary, the “novelas originales” can be characterized as novels which tend to have been published early in the 19th century, and which tend to be Mexican and Cuban novels with a sentimental theme. They belong mostly to the romantic current, tend to have a European setting and to treat events that are contemporary or set in the recent past. No preference for a specific narrative perspective can be found in them, and the words preferred by these novels also point in the direction of sentimental novels.

Compared to that, the “novelas americanas” occur in the whole 19th century, are inclined towards novels of customs and the realist current. They obviously all have an American setting and the narrated events belong preferably to the recent past. In these novels, first person narrators tend to be avoided and stylistically, they are marked by specific forms of address. In several regards, they are quite the opposite as the “novelas originales”.

Looking closer at the national variants, the “novelas mexicanas” have a tendency towards historical themes, the “novelas argentinas” occur rather lately, and are connected to the naturalistic current. Furthermore, they are not so often set in the recent past, rather in contemporary times or a more remote past. First person narratives are not avoided by the “novelas argentinas”. The “novelas cubanas”, on the other hand, tend to avoid historical themes and are less inclined towards the realist current. The words preferred by these novels show specific Cuban themes.

3. Conclusions

The digital analysis of identity references in subtitles of Spanish American 19th century novels revealed that different types of novels show up when the various types of identity labels are analyzed in connection with a range of extra-textual and text-internal features. The “novela original” tends to be more European and in the tradition of romances than the novels with American identity references. Furthermore, it was found out that each type of national novel, that is, novels with explicit references to a national context in their subtitle, has its own characteristics. There is not the one common genre, theme, or style that serves to represent, express, and form national identity, but there are forms that are specific for each case, a result which corresponds with the general considerations from memory studies. Several tendencies of the novels with identity references could be worked out, whereby one can assume that these references were not just arbitrarily assigned by authors or editors. Still, the varying proportions and distinctive words cannot be understood as statistically significant differences, just as quantitative inclinations or trends, because in the whole, the share of novels with explicit identity references is rather low.

A meaningful extension or variation of the analysis presented here would be to analyze the identity references on the level of individual editions instead of literary works as more abstract categories. Like that, also the places of publications of individual editions and the publishing houses and editors behind them could be taken into account. This would, however, require to model the data about identity references on the level of the individual editions and also to identify all the publishers and editors of the novels, a work which still has to be done.

Beyond a quantitative analysis of the most frequent identity references and the types of novels that they are linked to, it could also be fruitful to take a look at the whole spectrum of different identity labels and to analyze individual novels by close reading. The comprehensive overview of identity references in the bibliography and corpus given here can be seen as a good starting point for such a more in-depth, qualitative analysis that can take into account more and other kinds of Spanish American novels than the ones most often analyzed in terms of linguistic, cultural, or political identity.

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Abstract

Relationships between literary texts, identity constitution, and genre are explored in this digital analysis of 19th century Spanish American novels from Mexico, Argentina, and Cuba, of their subgenres, and their function in the formation of collective identities, starting from references to identity which were found in the subtitles of the novels. In particular, the label “novela original”, as well as identity references that can be subsumed under the terms “novela americana”, “novela mexicana”, “novela argentina”, and “novela cubana” are analyzed. It is found that each type of identity novel, that is, novels with explicit references to a linguistic, cultural, or national context in their subtitle, has its own characteristics. There is not the one genre, theme, or style that serves to represent and constitute identity, but there are forms that are specific for each case, a result which corresponds with findings from memory studies on group-defining stories.

Zusammenfassung

In der vorliegenden digitalen Analyse hispanoamerikanischer Romane des 19. Jahrhunderts aus Mexiko, Argentinien und Kuba werden Zusammenhänge zwischen literarischen Texten, Identitätskonstitution und Gattungen untersucht. Berücksichtigt werden die Untergattungen der Texte sowie ihre Funktion für die Herausbildung kollektiver Identitäten. Hierzu werden Identitätsbezüge in den Untertiteln der Romane als Ausgangspunkt herangezogen. Insbesondere werden die Bezeichnung als “novela original” sowie Identitätsbezüge durch die Begriffe “novela americana”, “novela mexicana”, “novela argentina” und “novela cubana” analysiert. Es lässt sich feststellen, dass jede Art von Identitätsroman, d. h. Romane, die sich im Untertitel explizit auf einen sprachlichen, kulturellen oder nationalen Kontext beziehen, spezifische Eigenschaften aufweist. Es gibt keine einheitliche Gattung, Thema oder Stil, um Identität zu repräsentieren oder zu konstituieren; vielmehr weist jeder Fall spezifische Formen auf. Dieses Ergebnis deckt sich mit Ergebnissen aus der Gedächtnisforschung (*memory studies*) zu identitätsstiftenden Erzählungen.