

Christine Arkinstall, *Women on War in Spain's Long Nineteenth Century: Virtue, Patriotism, Citizenship*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, Toronto Iberic, 2022, 296 pp., ISBN 9781487546267.

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Christine Arkinstall's manuscript offers an analysis of the works of six late 19th-century Spanish female authors, focusing on their engagement with the theme of war. Situated within the broader contexts of Spanish literature, female authorship, and gender studies, this volume represents a significant scholarly contribution, marking her fourth publication in this field after her previous works (Arkinstall, 2009; Arkinstall, 2014). The context of this study has prior knowledge about the stories of women who actively participated as fighters, war correspondents and activists in a historical period dominated by men (Murray & Tsuchiya, 2019; Mullenbach, 2022).

Arkinstall's latest book is structured into nine chapters, each one analysing a specific author and literary work. In the Introduction, Arkinstall acknowledges the extent of potential subjects, citing figures like Teresa de Escoriaza, Matilde Ras, and Sofía Casanova, but explains her decision to focus on a selective and primarily literary scope. This choice leaves room for future research into underexplored areas, such as female journalism and drama. A comprehensive appendix of bibliographical details and critical references is provided for further consultation, enhancing the accessibility of her study.

Underscoring the interaction between the personal and political, Arkinstall moves beyond binary frameworks in turn-of-the-century literature to examine how women's writing needed new approaches to historical and social issues.

Through a feminine perspective, the selected works critique masculine stereotypes while reimagining traditional female roles such as mother, wife, and virgin. For instance, *Amor a la patria* (de Acuña, 1877), set during the War of Independence (1808-1814), constructs a genealogy of female heroes whose patriotism and societal duties intertwine. Arkinstall highlights the female protagonists, Inés and María, as virtuous figures who transcend gendered constraints to protect their *patria* through self-sacrifice. The realism of this kind of characters often extends beyond the narrative, embracing fields like the film industry and theatre (Coffey & Versteeg, 2019).

Arkinstall examines central themes of 19th-century Spanish society, including honour, virtue, blood purity, homeland (*patria*) and *casticismo*. These emerge especially in the works *Sangre española* (de los Ríos, 1899) and *La niña de Sanabria* (de los Ríos, 1907). While the analysis remains close to the plot and the protagonists, with limited contextualization of the era or other authors' works, it offers a precise critique of the texts. In particular, the *Mater Dolorosa* topic portrays the nation as a grieving mother mourning the loss of her sons and daughters, yearning for peace and justice. Power dynamics also find their way into these pages: imperialism, hierarchical relations, colonialism, and national identity dialogue with humanized fictional characters, struggling for the common good, even at the cost of sacrificing their own lives.

A key passage of the text critically examines the dehumanizing representation of war and its consequences. The author claims how the military language removes humanity, converts soldiers into symbolic empty containers, and makes them nameless and easily replaced. Concepción Arenal, known for her work in legal studies and humanitarian law, highlights women's active role in war, not merely as nurses or 'angels in the house', but as heroines and soldiers. She suggests that the frontline and home front are interconnected yet separated by a barrier of nationalistic and patriarchal morals. While her *Ensayo sobre el Derecho de Gentes* (1895) is cited and was positively reviewed by the press of the time, limited space is dedicated to her legal experience and the development of humanitarian law in Spain, presenting a potential area for future research on women and jurisprudence. It should also be remembered that the power of female writing is often studied from an interdisciplinary perspective, and its often related with emotions. Examples of this approach include contributions from history, literary and cultural studies, anthropology and the philosophy of science, all aiming to explore the complexity and effects of emotions in Spanish society (Hernández Sandoica, 2012; Krauel, 2013; Delgado, Fernández & Labanyi, 2016).

Chapters on Empire and the colonising mission begin with a few works written by Carmen de Burgos. *En la guerra (Episodios de Melilla)* (1909) critiques patriarchal power structures and challenges gender roles, particularly in the context of war. Based on her experience as a war correspondent, Burgos uses fiction to explore issues including female adultery, romance and women's civil rights. Even her essays on World War I reflect on gender equality, though the text focuses primarily on literary aspects, with limited attention to Burgos's personal background as a nurse and reporter. Her novellas highlight gendered issues in war, such as rape, infanticide and abortion, critiquing the patriarchal society. Arkinstall also considers the effect of these narratives on female audiences, a perspective not addressed in earlier chapters. Furthermore, the European reception of international law and the condemnation of rape as a weapon of war are briefly discussed, supporting Burgos's beliefs. In fact, it should be mentioned that in many of the stories analysed, war is seen as a constant and abstract presence in everyday life, but only later academic contributions will shape the perception of war and the formation of the modern concept of 'wartime' (Edensor, 2002; Favret, 2010).

Overall, Christine Arkinstall's analysis is precise, and it emphasizes a narrative structure tied to gender issues. Her challenge to masculine conceptions of public and domestic spheres is well-supported by academic references, enabling readers to explore various aspects independently. While these themes have appeared in her prior works, the merit lies in its continuity. By recovering and recognizing, Arkinstall enriches the scholarly framework she has been building for years. Her analysis of texts, characters, behaviours and actings, illustrates the mentalities of late 19th-century Spain. The cultural and historical contexts are examined, while gender and women's studies explored the lives and beliefs of the selected authors. Though no linguistic or semiotic analysis is conducted, the study of metaphors is prevalent.

The manuscript does not merely compile women's war writings, but it aims to fill gaps in critical literature, providing tools to rebuild a narrative long ignored or undervalued. Arkinstall acknowledges the merit of women who used writing as a means of emancipation and self-affirmation. She guides the readers through multiple connections between war and women, inextricably intertwined with gender, social class, discrimination, and equal rights.

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