Intimate Otherness: Immigration in Recent Spanish Narrative

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INTIMATE OTHERNESS: IMMIGRATION IN RECENT SPANISH NARRATIVE

By

Lennie Coleman

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INTIMATE OTHERNESS: IMMIGRATION IN RECENT SPANISH NARRATIVE

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This dissertation explores the personal spaces shared by Spaniards and immigrants in recent fiction. Traditional gender models and stereotypical images of immigrants are employed but modified, informing new models of Spanish identities in novels such as José Ovejero's *Nunca pasa nada*, Pablo Aranda's *Ucrania*, Lucía Etxebarria’s *Cosmofobia*, and young adult fiction. This work addresses how the sociocultural negotiations occurring in present-day Spain are represented in narrative. Building on migration studies, Spanish literary history, and concepts of hospitality and intimacy, I show that, whereas most current work on immigration in Spanish literary studies has focused on the public social sphere, intimacy is paramount to questions of gender constructions, race relations, and hospitality. Personal encounters take place in settings where racism, prejudice and cultural intolerance coalesce. However, they also function as sites for interethnic and intercultural affection and dialogue. By prioritizing the study of relationships and immigration, this project offers alternative ways to theorize how intimacy and otherness function together, without automatically characterizing immigrants as postcolonial phantoms or specters returned to haunt a guilty Spanish imaginary.
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Introduction: Intimate Others

From the late 1990s up until approximately 2010, the Spanish telediario has bombarded its viewers with images of immigrant bodies, predominantly black ones, aboard old fishing boats called cayucos or pateras, or of lifeless bodies washed up on Andalusian beaches.\(^1\) These images are shown precisely at three o’clock in the afternoon when families sit down for lunch in front of the television, impacting everyday Spanish consciousness. Black and brown immigrant bodies in the media become images of otherness, of “outsider others” (Santaolalla, “Ethnic and Racial” 61), whereas light-skinned Moroccan and Algerian immigrants can blend in with the darker breed of Andalusian citizens, unless their foreign names give them away (Dietz 89). Often, ethnic immigrants are Orientalized and criminalized (Barata 265-266) as Spain tries to distance itself from the Global South. When Spaniards purposely distance themselves from immigrants in terms of ethnicity, culture, and social behavior by making immigrants out to be Orientalized and criminal “others,” Spain can identify more readily with hegemonic democratic countries. Non-communitarian immigrants, the ones that do not belong to the European Union, are negatively stigmatized and they become the origin of all that is unwelcomed: delinquency (Pajares 257), the traffic of contraband, and the unemployment rate of native Spaniards (van Dijk 32-33). Whereas Spain’s large service economy carefully welcomes well-to-do tourists from all over the world, ethnic immigrants are shunned and blamed for destroying Spain.

\(^1\) Presently in 2013, the media is focused on the double-dip economic recession in Spain and the unpopular austerity measures executed to reduce Spanish debt after a devastating housing crash. In my experience, human trafficking news stories and interviews with anonymous victims were abundant on television from 2002 to 2010, but now I rarely see a story on pateras or cayucos.
Despite the references of real immigrant bodies in the media and film, contemporary literary representations of immigrants have taken away their bodies and have consigned them to a spectral ontology. Literary immigrants remind Spaniards of medieval holy wars, colonial abuses, and civil war. Like ghosts, literary immigrants are trapped in a material world that does not belong to them. Because both ghosts and real-life undocumented immigrants must operate in the shadows, they do not officially exist. Nonetheless, the precarious presence of postcolonial immigrants and their latent connection to a bygone Spanish Empire should not demote them to the status of spooky beings. In this study, I analyze novels with immigrant characters from Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Throughout my dissertation, I discuss the cultural assumptions that have led Spaniards to imagine Latin American and African immigrants, in particular, as specters. I contrast these assumptions to my notion of “intimate otherness.” Intimate relationships between Spaniards and foreigners ultimately draw attention to the real corporality of immigrants. Affective exchanges not only reify the immigrant, but also modify the allegorical relationship between the fictional family and the condition of Spain itself.

In my reading of novels with significant immigrant characters, immigrants are not always ghosts still lingering in the house as witnesses of a traumatic event, nor are they terrorists threatening to sequester the hosts in their own homes. Effectively, instead of haunting or terrorizing the house, they help rebuild it. The presence of these intimate strangers facilitates a reworking of the Spanish family and of the nation, and considers the interethnic social unit (perhaps a family or community) as dynamic in shaping contemporary identity. More importantly, the interethnic social unit in the works I study
becomes a critical force in renewing Spanish nationality. By Spanish “nationality,” I am referring to the Spanish government’s understanding that addresses, above all, a legal relationship to the state, regardless of one’s ethnic identity.\(^2\) A stronger Spanish nationality signifies a solid number of citizens invested in the wellbeing of the nation state. Regenerating the nation-state entails nationalizing the most desirable foreigners capable of fostering a forward-thinking Spain.

In my dissertation I analyze five Spanish novels: Eliacer Cansino’s *Una habitación en Babel* (2009), Lucía Etxebarria’s *Cosmofobia* (2007), José Ovejero’s *Nunca pasa nada* (2007), Pablo Aranda’s *Ucrania* (2006) and Fernando Lalana’s *El paso del Estrecho* (1997). In the first chapter of my dissertation, I analyze the fictional Spanish family and its South American housekeeper in *Nunca pasa nada* as an allegory for a contemporary Spain that is still capable of producing a patriarchal society. Intimacy—specifically the care work the foreign maid performs for the Spanish child and the child’s father—does not necessarily integrate otherness into the domestic space when the substitute mother/wife is not legally supposed to take on that role. In the novel, the dependence on an “illegal” caregiver highlights the parents’ dependence on patriarchy despite overtly rejecting it for themselves. Next, I focus on the platonic relationship that turns romantic between a Spanish man and a Ukrainian immigrant woman in *Ucrania*. Here, intimacy is uncanny in that the protagonist’s love interest makes him feel at home and confident despite her foreignness. The protagonist’s intimate contact with an

\(^2\) According to the Spanish Ministry of Justice’s website, “La nacionalidad es el vincula jurídico que une a la persona con el estado y tiene la doble vertiente de ser un derecho fundamental y constituir el estatuto jurídico de las personas. […] La nacionalidad, en definitiva, es la maxima expresión jurídica de la integración de una persona en una comunidad estatal…” (“Nationality is the juridical link that unites a person with the state and has the double advantage of being a fundamental right and constituting the lawful statute of people […] Nationality, definitively, is the maximum lawful expression of the integration of a person in a community body…”) (Gobierno de España).
educated and attractive Eastern European woman affects his masculinity. Elena allows him to find the courage to embrace a model of masculinity that is different from a traditional Spanish patriarch. In the third chapter, about *Cosmofobia*, intimate otherness liberates some of the characters by breaking down racial and ethnic barriers as the characters engage in platonic and sexual relationships with one another. But the narrator ultimately abandons the idea of successful interethnic relationships once she starts to suspect her own Moroccan male friend of illicit acts. *Cosmofobia* suggests that intimacy, whether public or private, is always personal. When the narrator feels duped Yamal, an elusive Moroccan male character, the narrator personally invests in condemning him and all of the immigrant characters of Lavapiés as guilty of deception. In the fourth chapter on young adult fiction, shared intimacy between Spaniards and immigrants alone cannot integrate foreign teenagers into Spanish society. Intimacy is only successful when the Spaniard’s intimate friend becomes like him or is discovered to be ethnologically Spanish. In all five of the novels I study, intimate otherness reveals how contemporary Spanish society is adapting to foreignness without necessarily wanting to relinquish long-standing gender paradigms.

Whereas other novels focus on Spaniards’ discriminatory practices towards foreigners and on the hardships immigrants face during their voyages to the Spanish mainland, the narratives I examine show how immigrants settle alongside and within the personal spaces of their hosts. These novels, for their treatments of intimacy and otherness, provide the context for identity-affirming intimacy—an experience in many narratives and films. Scholars have explored the undesirable outcomes of miscegenation as something that complicates racial and/or religious identity (Flesler, Ballesteros,
Bakhtiavora and Leone), but they have not examined in depth how interethnic romances rebuild self-confidence in Spanish men and women.

Cultural and technological experiences (email, webcams, online dating, and social networking spaces) have transformed intimacy in that “home” is not simply contingent on domesticity, living spaces, family, national borders, or actual physical spaces, but identity is still shaped by these factors. Beyond the conventional motifs explored thus far in literary analyses of immigration: risky odysseys, racism and discrimination, poverty, and exploitation (Andrés-Suárez, Kunz, d’Ors, and Abrighach) to examine how the presence of global migrants affects Spain, an exploration of bodily encounters will provide another angle from which otherness can be studied.

Current scholarship in Spanish cultural studies addresses the representation of immigrants in Spain in literature, film, and the media with a particular focus on the negative way in which immigrants are portrayed. I am searching for an alternative to fearing foreignness. But I must first address the theories that explore how immigrants have come to symbolize real and imagined threats to Spanish identity. Just as Daniela Flesler makes the connection between Moroccan immigration and the medieval Moorish invasion in fictional narratives and popular customs, Rosalía Cornejo Parriego links African and Afro-Latin American immigration in popular texts to the transatlantic slave trade. Similarly Parvati Nair focuses on the negotiation of identity in the border cities of Ceuta and Melilla (literally surrounded by Morocco) where differences—ethnic and socioeconomic—are apparent. In all three cases, immigrants remind Spaniards of the
interethnic ancestry they would prefer to forget in order to imagine a completely white European identity.

Flesler argues that the memory of the Spanish Reconquest, in which medieval Christians battled for the absolute occupation of the Iberian Peninsula, explains Spain’s current hostility against Moroccan immigrants. In “Battle of Identity, or Playing ‘Guest’ and ‘Host’: the Festivals of Moors and Christians in the Context of Moroccan Immigration in Spain,” Flesler describes how the increasingly popular battle reenactments between Moors and Christians compare to the figurative battle between Maghrebians and Spaniards in contemporary society. The battle reenactors take turns playing the Moor or Christian (155); the advertisements portray the same face for both sides (151); and the alternating status of host and guest (155) all complicate what it means to be Spanish. Flesler states, “The Festivals provide the symbolic structure through which Moroccan immigration is perceived simultaneously as a return to the period of conflict predating the origin of the Festivals, and as an announcement of a threatening future” (165). As Sara Ahmed indicates in The Cultural Politics of Emotion, “Fear involves an anticipation of hurt or injury. Fear projects us from the present into a future. But the feeling of fear presses us into that future as an intense bodily experience in the present” (65). In this way, the battle reenactments might be considered a way of physically dealing with anxiety. The performance allows imaginary Spanish Christians and Moors to intimately connect with one another, even as enemies.

Flesler further meditates on the concept of Moorish immigrants as ghosts in her book, The Return of the Moor: Spanish Responses to Contemporary Moroccan Immigration, in which she traces the repulsion Spaniards feel toward Moroccans back to
an “anxiety over symbolic and literal boundaries, which results in an attempt to establish
Spanish identity as unequivocally ‘European’ and sets up clear-cut differences with those
debemed as outsiders” (10). In this sense, the uncanny link Spaniards and Moroccans share
purports to undermine the Spaniards’ claim to an authentically Spanish/Christian identity.
Flesler bases her readings on fictional and cultural narratives in which Moroccan
immigrants represent frightening ghosts:

Moroccan immigrants, in the Spanish collective imaginary, thus become
the embodiment of everything there is to fear from their history, the ghosts
of a past that has not stopped haunting them, the return of the repressed.
Both literary representations of the arrival of Moroccan immigrants in
Spain and social confrontations between them and Spaniards are
structured and determined by the perception of their common past as
trauma, a perception that has transformed this past into a phantasmagoric
presence in the present. (81)

Likewise, Rosalía Cornejo Parriego, editor of Memoria colonial e inmigración: La
negritud en la España posfranquista, explains in her introduction that black immigrants
force Spain to realize that its goal of becoming more European has become difficult to
achieve as blackness begins to taint its white European identity (18). At the same time,
the subalternity of blacks in Spain helps reposition autochthonous Spaniards as agents in
European hegemony.

Although Flesler and Cornejo Parriego do not use the word hauntology, the idea
of postcolonial immigrants as ghosts is well established in Spanish cultural studies. The
original term “hauntology” stems from Derrida’s Spectres of Marx. Derrida uses the term
to refer to the idea of ghosts not being real-life bodies, although they are still beings and
therefore are ontological (10). The term hauntology is a portmanteau of “haunt” and
“ontology.” Derrida argues that communism, even after its fall, will eventually incite
postindustrial nations to revisit Marxism. Marxism haunts the West because the belief in
a functional utopia is very present though repressed. The idea of a just society not bound to capitalism will keep resurfacing as people become disillusioned with the system. Spanish cultural theorist have taken the idea of a specter haunting Europe to apply it to the specific case of Spain, but without adopting all of Derrida’s argument. Whereas Derrida speaks of Marx as a specter, Spanish cultural theorist explore the coined term itself to refer to the ghosts of the Spanish Civil War, which have become a recurring motif in contemporary literature and film.

Spanish cultural studies scholars, such as Flesler, Joseba Gabilondo, and Labanyi, have alluded to the phantasmagoric relationships between certain groups of immigrants and Spaniards by using history as the basis for theorizing contemporary Spain, despite some of the sociological realities that could dismantle their arguments. These scholars use Spanish hauntology as a theoretical framework to discuss African and Latin American immigration in regards to Spanish cultural studies. Hauntologists acknowledge that society makes sense of its present by summoning or repressing its past, especially the members of society that were unable to tell their stories. As ghosts, history’s losers attempt to communicate with the living of the present. The initial use of hauntology in Spanish cultural studies can be found in scholarly work on the Spanish Transition to Democracy. According to these scholars, the transition was made possible by inducing a collective amnesia of Francoist atrocities so that a capitalist and postmodern image of Spain could be projected home and abroad (Resina, “Introduction,” 9-12). Likewise, art, music, literature and film subtly and directly invoked the ghosts that were unsuccessfully repressed in Postwar Spain. Spanish hauntology looks at what memories were retained and which ones were suppressed in reformulating Spanish collective memory.
Jo Labanyi, in “History and Hauntology; or, What Does One Do with the Ghosts of the Past? Reflections on Spanish Film and Fiction of the Post-Franco Period,” references the term “hauntology” as “a new philosophical category of being—an alternative to ontology—appropriate to describe the status of history: that is, the past as that which is not and yet is there—or rather, here” (66). She further asserts that the post-Franco period itself is “haunted by a spectral Francoist past” as the repressed memories of the civil war emerge in film and fiction (68). Because Spaniards were never able to properly work through the trauma of war immediately after the death of Franco in 1975, the ghosts of the past cannot rest silent. In Constructing Identity in Twentieth-Century Spain, Labanyi proposes that Spanish culture “[engages] with ghosts,” with the victims who otherwise would not be permitted to tell their stories (1). Employed in the context of contemporary immigration to Spain, the notion of spectral beings gets attached to victims of the Spanish Empire. Appropriately, a number of post-Franco novels treat immigrants as phantasmagoric entities.  

I am aware that, in many written, graphic, visual and audiovisual texts, some immigrants still might function as representatives of Spain’s repressed memory of being colonized. Their presence is familiar, yet strange like a ghost who will not go away (Flesler, Return 86). This is why Flesler reads the testimonial Dormir al raso, by Pasqual Moreno Torregrosa and Mohamed El Gheryb, and the novel Las voces del Estrecho, by Andrés Sorel, as evoking ghosts and recalling Al-Andalus. Interestingly, these “Moors” are not presented as ancestors but are confined to otherness, as if they had always existed apart as enemies of Spanishness and not implicated in that identity (Flesler, Return 94-  

3 Narratives that portray immigrants as ghostly include Andrés Sorel’s Las voces del Estrecho (2000); Gerardo Muñoz Lorente’s Ramito de Hierbabuena, José María Merino’s “El séptimo viaje” (1999); and Lourdes Ortiz’s “Fátima de los naufragios” (1998).
Following Flesler’s analysis, certain ghostly presences pertain to Spain’s cultural and ethnic identity. In the narratives and cultural practices Flesler analyzes, she finds that hostility towards present-day Moroccans is directly connected to the fear of Moorish invasion and conquest and also to the anxiety of the sameness of the Moor, since he is an other that is not quiet other enough. This suggests an exhumable uncanniness in contemporary Spanish narrative about Maghrebian immigration. Hauntologists, by uncovering a potential blood kinship between Spaniards and Moroccans, paint the mythic Moor as attractively familiar yet strange enough to be “other.” In the novels I analyze, the Spanish characters sometimes perceive the Moor to be responsible for the collapse of domestic and social spaces that allegorically relate to the Spanish nation, but in other cases, the Moroccan characters are similarly responsible for rebuilding or sustaining a community.

The fact that immigrants are associated with ghosts in literature is problematic because it shows that Spanish narrative does not attempt to accept or understand immigrants as real life people living in present-day Spain. Instead, nostalgia and the fear of losing a mythical understanding of Spanishness—the fear of not being completely European—forces Spaniards to recall negative images of the Moors. These narratives turn neighbors, lovers, friends, and employees into ghosts, rather than into real people. I pose the question: Does the possibility of a friendly ghost exist? Maybe there are ghosts who make transitioning into the new global order easier for Spaniards, as in the 1947 film, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, in which the ghost’s memoirs provide the young widow, Mrs. Muir, with delightful company and even the subject matter for a bestselling novel. In this case, a friendly ghost gives one a sense of comfort and belonging.
However, I would rather consider other theories that address the contributions of immigrants in society, both figurative and literal. I propose that scholars acknowledge the intimate bodily experiences and affective bonds shared between Spaniards and foreigners. Recent Spanish narrative is not defined by necromantic confrontations between foreign spirits and neurotic Spaniards, even if turn-of-the-century fiction (roughly 1998-2004) has exploited this theme. I chose 1998 as the starting point of my study because notable sociologists, including Francisco Checa and Miguel Pajares, begin to pay more attention to the “immigration problem” before the first Law of Immigration was passed in 2000. The closing date of 2004—the same year of the terrorist train attack in Madrid—is not an end for haunted immigration stories, but a starting point for imagining different roles for foreigners. The desire to squash terrorism has a way of transforming suspicious and mysterious spirits into real-life threatening bodies. By 2007 the Historical Memory Law passed. In it the children and grandchildren of Spaniards were able to seek Spanish nationality. New second generation Spanish authors—Salah Jamal, Najat El Hachmi, and Laila Karrouch—have emerged who write about their families and experiences of immigration without resorting to the ghostly stereotypes that plagued earlier novels authored by autochthonous Spaniards.

The study of intimacy makes the literary critic look at new Spanish narrative beyond neogothic tropes because intimacy necessitates a body—something a phantom lacks. Moreover, the affective bonds that positively shape the Spanish characters’ healthy attachment to the immigrant other ultimately work to exorcise the spirits who threaten his or her security. In the case of *Cosmofobia*, unsuccessful attachments cannot eliminate threatening others, so intimacy must be extinguished immediately. In this novel, the
intimacy shared between interethnic characters does not positively affirm the each other’s identity or provide security. Still, in all cases, intimacy gives presence to immigrants through a desiring body. Their bodies exist because they engage in intimate exchanges, even if not always on equal terms, with Spaniards. Certain characters, like Carmela from *Nunca pasa nada*, aim for a democratic form of intimacy while the implied author of *Cosmofobia* exercises her power to curtail the positive effects of interethnic intimacy. In the novels I examine, only one of the characters brings to mind the idea of a ghost, but the remainder do not linger in the shadows as beings without bodies. I do not believe that the Reconquest, the colonization of the Americas, and the slave trade are the only appropriate referents for hostility towards African and Latin American immigrants.

Immigrants do not only inhabit Spanish spaces, they come into physical contact with them through sex, housework, and childcare, whereas ghosts can only do this through a mediator. Fiction writers such as Lourdes Ortiz, Andrés Sorel, and Dulce Chacón have served as mediators connecting the Moorish spirits from the Middle Ages to contemporary characters, but they do not necessarily give the ghosts—North African immigrants—the opportunity to fully tell their own stories. Fátima from “Fátima de los naufragios,” the deceased *paterista* characters of *Las voces del Estrecho*, and Aisha from *Háblame, musa, de aquel varón*, both portray Moroccan women who are effectively voiceless. In the former, the townspeople turn a grief-stricken mother whose son has died in a *patera* shipwreck into an immaculate Mary figure by renaming her “Our Lady of Shipwrecks.” In the latter, the second-person narrator exposes the hostility some Spaniards feel toward Moors, but her real purpose in the story is simply to make a shy
and insecure Spanish female character feel more confident. Disabling the voices of these Moroccan women allow the narrators to represent mythical or archetypal Moors.

Although hauntology may be the paradigm for theorizing Spanish cultural studies as perpetually engaged with ghosts—whether they speak for medieval, postcolonial or civil war victims—its grasp on twenty-first-century literature is waning. Hauntological readings of the novels with significant immigrant characters are gendered and xenophobic. Foreign masculinities are almost always menaces to the nation, whereas many immigrant female characters attempt to build a shared home space. Why are female characters permitted to contribute positively to Spanish ideas of an ideal “mother” nation while male characters must challenge and threaten it? Foreign masculinities in the narratives are aggressive, goal-oriented, and in many cases, more physically attractive than Spanish male characters. They are mostly “macho” entrepreneurs with illegal and legitimate businesses who seem to outperform Spanish men in terms of their bodies and their business. Perhaps the suspicion of foreign masculinities in current scholarship overshadows alternate interpretations of their identity-affirming roles in fictional texts. Isolina Ballesteros has already pointed out the scarcity of positive male immigrant figures in Spanish film (“Foreign and racial” 169).

One starting point to move beyond the ghostly narratives that define immigrants can be found in Parvati Nair’s work, Rumbo al Norte: inmigración y movimientos culturales entre el Magreb y España. Nair uses a sociocultural approach to examine the border between Spain and Morocco and the borders that separate the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla from their neighboring Moroccan cities. For Nair, geography links the culture of the Spanish border cities to Morocco, whereas socioeconomic practices further
separate them (41). Nair also addresses the role of September 11, 2001 in New York in considering the border in relation to national security (50). Spain’s confrontation with fundamentalist Islamic ideology at its borders in the present may be partly responsible for the anti-Islamist sentiment in Spain. In this view, the political rhetoric that surrounds protecting national security may have helped to create the notion of “islamophobia,” which contrasts with Daniela Flesler’s argument that Spaniards collectively remember the Moorish invasion. According to Carlos Moya, September 11, 2001 “produjo un espasmo psicótico en la sociedad norteamericana” ‘produced a psychotic spasm in American society’ (Moya 217) and a similar fear emerged in Spain after the Madrid train bombings on March 11, 2004 were confirmed to be the work of Islamic terrorists and not ETA (Moya 221-222). The reality of Spain as a Western target of Islamic terrorism allows cultural narratives to reinscribe Maghrebian immigrants as threats to national security, thus violating intimacy. As terrorists, their impact is not only sensed, but also physically witnessed. At the same time, they may have helped to shore up Spain’s sense of belonging to the global North “under attack” by Islamists.

In the novels, some Moroccan characters are frightening, not because they are specters, but because the narratives reveal that they actually have bodies. The terrorist, unlike the ghost, is frightening precisely because he has an auto destructive body that simultaneously destroys the target. Hauntology serves to understand the relationship between the past and present, but the present situation of fear post September 11, 2001 and March 11, 2004 must also be considered. Terrorism inside the nation-state, and inside the very spaces where one usually feels comfortable and safe, frightens even those who

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4 ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) which means “Basque Homeland and Freedom” in Euskera, wants independence from Spain. ETA periodically utilizes terrorists tactics such as car and street bombs to advertise its declaration of independence.
do not believe in ghosts. Nonetheless, Flesler’s historic view of the Christians versus the Muslims is relevant because Islamism is very much imagined as threatening the very notions of democracy, the Western domination of capitalism, and the superiority of secularism. Although the notion of terror always brings the body into question, I do not think portraying Moorish immigrants as terrorists is the only way Moorish immigrants can get their bodies back. By reading what negotiations take place within the frame of personal interactions, scholars can trace fear and anxiety—but also love, lust, and curiosity—in reconfiguring the new Spain.

Besides specters and terrorists, the potential for foreigners to ruin the nation, or for strangers to destroy the home, is further noted in a couple of the chapters in La inmigración en la literatura española contemporánea. In “Léxico de la emigración,” Inés d’Ors shows how the words Spaniards use to describe immigrants and immigration reflect their hostility towards foreignness. Some slurs include “moromierda” ‘shitty Moor’ and “negrata” ‘nigger’ (d’Ors 55); I would add “sudaca” ‘South American spics’ and “me cago en los moros” ‘Screw the Moors’ as frequently-used derogatory expressions that hint at the casualness with which racist language is employed and also the abjectness of the foreign body. These insulting words suggest that the real presence of brownness and blackness taints Spanishness. Moreover, “Sudaca” characterizes Spaniards’ revulsion toward the Global South despite Spain’s own “southern” position

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5 The word moro is also used to described almost anyone who appears to be of North African or Arab descent. In Spain, it is normal to hear Spaniards call women who wear hijabs, mora, although they are not from North Africa. The word moro can be used to refer to one’s religion, not just his or her ethnicity and nationality. In American films dubbed into Spanish, I have noticed that the word “nigger” or “nigga” is often translated as “negrata.” Sudaca is a derogatory term used to refer to South American immigrants (Diccionario de la Real Academia Española), especially those who appear to have indigenous physical traits. The expression “me cago en los moros” or “me chachis en los moros” is usually used when someone makes a mistake or there is some kind of small bodily injury. It literally translates as “I shit on the Moors.” This expression is very commonly used without the malicious intent to offend Muslim people.
in Europe. The negative images mentioned above recognize that immigrants have bodies even if they are abjected.

Moreover, immigrants living in developed host countries are referred to as “cuarto mundo” ‘the fourth world,’ in which “se da a entender que los emigrantes constituirán una especie de enclave de subdesarrollo dentro del próspero mundo occidental, situándolos además en un nivel inferior aún al de los países menos desarrollados, designados habitualmente como tercer mundo” [it is understood that emigrants constitute a type of underdeveloped enclave within the prosperous western world, situating them moreover on a level even more inferior to those of the least developed countries, usually designated as the third world] (D’Ors 36). Immigrants are “ni en el lugar de origen ni en el de destino, sino en otro, distinto, exclusivo—y, sobre todo, excluyente” [neither in their place of origin nor in their place of destination, but in a different, exclusive and above all else, excluding place] (D’Ors 35). Furthermore, the words used to describe the movement of people to Spain indicate that immigrants are destroying Spanish landscapes: *oleada, avalancha, estampida, and invasión* (wave, avalanche, stampede, and invasion) (D’Ors 44). These words depict nature (D’Ors 44), forceful images of displacement, and the destruction of peaceful land or sea bodies. The words (nicknames, insults, and metaphors of disaster) the media and average citizens use to talk about migration suggest that immigration to Spain is problematic. Immigrants destroy nature and contaminate spaces. D’Ors’s observations are far reaching because immigration has become, by extension, a metaphor to describe destruction and underdevelopment. However, when immigrant characters engage in personal relationships with Spaniards, not all of them are agents of destruction in the novels. Instead, some immigrant characters are examples of
national regeneration in the literature. Spanish characters that interact with immigrants ultimately reorganize their homes, gain confidence, build friendships, and find meaning in their lives. Still in many cases, the positive changes happening for Spanish characters are founded on restoring certain oppressive gender and racial paradigms. Regeneration at the cost of reinstituting patriarchal models and subaltern roles for ethnic immigrants remains as another example of Spain’s inability to move forward without taking a step backwards because these “positive” immigrant images are comfortable, safe, and familiar. Although the wrapper of Conguitos chocolate candies has been rebranded to replace the offensive image of a big-lipped dark-skinned boy with with a teenager who has no lips, the original racist image of the chocolate brown M&M-like candy remains in the Spanish imaginary. The Conguitos brand stripped away the candy’s black face minstrel characterists but some wrappers and commercials depict the character as a hip-hop artist, which presumably characterizes it as black. The transformation of the candy brand from minstrel to rapper illustrates Spain’s dependence on familiar, and sometimes racist, images for rebranding itself. Rebranding, like regeneration in literary Spain unfortunately relies on reclaiming discriminating traditions such as sexist and racist practices. The new Spain still takes comfort in not straying far from the images that speak to the old Spain.

The phenomenon of contemporary immigration to Spain is responsible for the growing interest in the field of immigration. Currently, immigration is addressed in two general kinds of literary texts: fiction (including film and narrative) and testimonials (including documentary film). In fiction, the themes commonly explored include the
plight of immigrants—*pateras*,\(^6\) prostitution, discrimination, racism, and xenophobia. In “La inmigración en la literatura española contemporánea: un panorama crítico,” Marco Kunz provides a critical bibliography of narrative and theatre; he poses the question, “¿Cómo reaccionan los escritores españoles de lengua castellana ante el cambio de su sociedad debido a la presencia cada vez más cuantiosa de extranjeros residentes en un antiguo país de emigración?” [How do Spanish writers who write in Spanish react to the change in their society due to the growing presence of foreign residents in an old country of emigration?] (“La inmigración” 109). For Kunz, these writers react by representing the reality of the voyage, the migration experience itself. For example, Andrés Sorel’s *Las voces del Estrecho* (2000) narrates “el fracaso de las tentativas de inmigrar (nafragios, explotación sexual de las mujeres), episodios con una clara base documental en la prensa” [the failure of the attempts to immigrate (shipwrecks, sexual exploitation of women), episodes with a clear documentary base in the press] (Kunz, “La inmigración” 116). Other themes in narrative include immigration as adventure (Kunz 117), the contraband of drugs (Kunz 117), survival (Kunz 121), prostitution (Kunz 121) and marginalization (Kunz 132). Kunz observes that these writers are more interested in the act of immigrating and settling in the host country, rather than the life of immigrants (135). Furthermore, in “La inmigración en la cuentística española contemporánea,” Irene Andrés-Suárez states that short stories about immigration center on the factors that cause Maghrebian immigration: “Los que ficcionalizan la inmigración magrebi (Nieves García Benito, Lourdes Ortiz, etc.) suelen centrarse en las causas que generan el éxodo, en las mafias y organizaciones que se lucran con los sueños de los emigrantes” [Those that

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\(^6\) *Las pateras* are the boats that carry undocumented African immigrants to Spain by way of the Strait of Gibraltar. They can be old fishing boats or also inflatable boats, which are easily disassembled at the risk of being seen by *La Guardia Civil*, the Spanish National Police.
fictionalize Maghrebian immigration (Nieves García Benito, Lourdes Ortiz, etc.) often center on the causes that generate the exodus, on the mafias and organizations that profit from the dreams of the emigrant] (Andrés-Suárez 306).

Testimonials, in addition to fictional texts, often have a clear objective of denouncing discrimination, racism, or intolerance. They display more intimate views of the plights of immigrants either through the recollection of personal stories told by immigrants and compiled by Spaniards, or in a few cases, through the memoirs of the immigrant writer. A number of testimonials address immigration to Spain. Juan Goytisolo’s and Sami Naïr’s *El peaje de la vida* (2000) discusses how Spaniards discriminate against Maghrebian immigrants; José Naranjo’s essay book, *Cayucos* (2006), uses personal testimonials from Sub-Saharan immigrants to denounce the way in which the Spanish government treats Black African immigrants; Rafael Torres’s *Yo, Mohamed: Historias de inmigrantes en un país de emigrantes* (1995) is a collection of immigrant interviews; Eduardo del Campo Cortés’s *Odiseas: al otro lado de la frontera: historias de la inmigración en España* (2007) is a collection of immigrant testimonials in which their stories are arranged and then explained in relation to the general social, economic or legal context of the immigrants’ situations; Elba Bermudez Quintana’s *Mujeres Inmigrantes y salud: Testimonios colombianos* (2007) expresses the opinions of Spaniards who work in the health services and the testimonials of Colombian women; and Agnès Agboton, in *Más alla del mar de arena* (2005), tells her story of immigrating to and living in Barcelona.

Spain’s ethnic makeup includes its own population of in-house migrants—the Roma. Whatever their origin, gypsies ironically contribute to the national picture of Spain
when they are not recognized as being authentically Spanish. According to Isabel Santaolalla, otherness in Spain can be divided into two groups, the Spanish gypsies or “insider others” and the immigrants, the “outsider others.” Whereas the imaginary of the gypsy makes up a part of Spanish popular artistic culture, the immigrant is too foreign to assimilate (Santaolalla, “Ethnic and Racial” 58-61). Gypsies have been Spain’s intimate others for centuries, so much so that Spain’s folkloric or popular image is deeply rooted in its gypsy patrimony. In addition, Spain is a nation-state that is divided into 17 autonomous regions, in which three of those regions have distinct languages (Galicia, Basque Country, and Catalonia), making the concept of otherness in the Iberian Peninsula complex (Sánchez Conejero, ¿Identidades? 27). While not all Spaniards identify with the Castilian-centered national identity, many Spaniards from different regions in Spain view immigration as a problem. Although regional nationalism have challenged the idea that Spain is a monolingual nation-state, immigration further challenges those regionalisms. Despite the strong sense of regional identity developed openly after the death of Franco in 1975, Spanish identity is still defined in terms of clichéd cultural, religious, and ethnic specificities when juxtaposed with the immigrant. It is as if to say, “we are not Spaniards, except when we compare ourselves with immigrants.” Even gypsies can be Spaniards since they are not outsiders. To make sure the other is not welcomed, racial slurs become common—the meaning and the intent nearly become disconnected. After hearing the idiom “trabajar como una negra” (working like a black woman), I tried it out a few times.

7 In 10 years of visiting Southern Spain where many people have tan skin, I still cannot identify Spanish Roma based solely on skin color and facial features. It seems that being gypsy is based more on the exaggerated performances of ethnicity that Spaniards often find disgraceful—lifestyle and fashion choices, and manners of walking and speaking.

8 The difference Spanish tourism promotes is still very much related to flamenco music and dance, including the ruffles and polka-dotted souvenirs, inherited from gypsy culture.

9 Catalonia has rigorously established steps to integrate immigrants into Catalan culture, making Catalan language a requirement for immigrant children, with few conditions on learning Spanish.
I presumed someone would catch the irony, since I am indeed a black woman. Instead, my interlocutors simply understood that I was working very long hours, without even connecting the image to the expression.

Whether as terrorists, natural disasters, or abject beings, foreign characters in Spanish literature have a physical relationship to Spain. They have the capacity to destroy and to contaminate, but can they not build and purify Spanish spaces too? If anything, intimate physical contact reifies their corporality and turns them into something more than a ghost. Yes, foreigners may interrupt the intimacy between Spaniards, but the only models for them are not ghosts, terrorists and natural disasters. Another reading interrogates these paradigms to offer an alternative found through examining the personal contact between Spaniards and immigrants. Intimate otherness transforms the Spanish home and by extension, the nation; it rebuilds what was thought to be lost in the initial intrusion by threatening foreigners. Twenty-first-century narratives challenge enduring notions of suspicious otherness.

Since a nation-state might be read as a house—particularly a domestic national space where citizenship expresses one’s right to be in the house and the work visa is a key card with limited access, welcoming a stranger is indeed tricky. One’s intimacy may be disrupted at any given moment. To address the role of intimacy in reestablishing the home space, and by extension the nation, I consider scholarship on hospitality. First, Jacques Derrida’s exploration of the “host” in relation to its semantic field: hospitality, hostility, hostage, hospital, and hotel characterizes how immigrants are linked to the intimate spaces where both carework and assault are achieved (*Of Hospitality*). Drawing on Derrida’s work, Mireille Rosello’s *Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest* (2001)
discusses immigration policies in France. Rosello analyzes contemporary French narrative and film, ultimately concluding that, considering diverse cultural practices and specific national immigration policies, we can speak of multiple hospitalities. Regarding the similarities and differences between French and Spanish experiences, I deploy Derrida’s and Rosello’s illumination of hospitality as a springboard for my own theoretical framework. Uncomfortable things can happen when someone from the outside manages your home—from your dirty dishes to your loved ones. The householder has to remind the guests that s/he is still in control no matter how much access to the house s/he gives them. Intimate others can make their way into the home, destroying it from the inside, but, as I will demonstrate, they can also construct something in its place. Intimacy—whether produced through acts of terror or caring—is transformative.

In Derrida’s model, true hospitality means welcoming an anonymous stranger into one’s home and treating him as a guest. Opening one’s home also means assuming the risk that the guest may challenge the host’s authority as the head of the house. Rosello determines that global hospitality operates on a business model giving preference to those who can pay to be treated like guests. She exposes the notion of “guest worker” as an oxymoron that attempts to downplay the ultimate function of immigrants who possess a temporary work visa. To build on concepts of hospitality, I use Bonnie Honig’s *Democracy and the Foreigner* as a way to understand how foreigners have boldly entered what was supposed to be an exclusive community. Honig argues that the founding of so many nations paradoxically implicates a foreigner, someone from outside the community (5-7). They are able to revitalize the nation, and make them recognize their own value (Honig 7-9). Biblical stories such as that of Moses and Ruth illustrate the notion of
founding foreigners. For Honig, a community absorbs the stranger to form its own national identity (5).

Honig reads democracy as a national romance. Normally, the reader knows exactly who the hero, friends and foes are. In a gothic novel, however, the suitable neighbor is just as suspicious as the foreigner. Honig notes, “Often in gothics it turns out that it is not the apparently scary foreigner but the nice man next door, meek and wild, who is the real murderer” (118-119). Mysteries are solved in the end, but readers of the gothic are always suspicious (Honig 119). If democracy is read as the plot of a gothic novel, then the foundational foreigner makes sense. Since nationality in a contemporary democracy is based on civic and not ethnic ties, otherness can be incorporated into the nation based on citizenship. Honig’s approach to democracy points to the uncanny way in which national identity is built. Her model can work in conjunction with hauntology since ghosts, suspicious characters, and medieval throwbacks abound in gothic narratives, and her model serves to highlight the intimacy that takes place as national identity is transformed. I take Honig’s concept of “the intimate founding foreigner” and I show that it does not only signify a contradicting fear and desire for the other, but in some cases, the intimate foreigner provides security, confidence, and companionship to the autochthonous citizen. I explore intimacy in relation to the metaphors and allegories that define Spanish nationality. Other scholars have examined romance as a way of allegorically explaining how nation-building works. In *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*, Doris Sommer reveals how nineteenth-century romance novels provided the epitome for consolidating the new Latin American nation. She states that her thesis is based on finding a contact point between sexuality and the
affairs of state:

It is to locate an erotics of politics, to show how a variety of novel national ideals are all ostensibly grounded in “natural” heterosexual love and in the marriages that provided a figure for apparently nonviolent consolidation during internecine conflicts at midcentury. Romantic passion, on my reading, gave a rhetoric for the hegemonic projects in Gramsci’s sense of conquering the antagonist through mutual interest, or “love,” rather than through coercion. (6)

These narratives made interethnic relationships not only possible, but also a model for integrating difference. The fantasy of romance makes intimacy desirable because star-crossed lovers can unite as equals despite socio-economic or ethnic difference.

In contrast, colonial rule demanded that social hierarchies be maintained, as to discourage a consolidated identity independent from the empire. In *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Anna Laura Stoler argues that the categories of race were necessary to maintain colonial power in the domestic sphere:

It was not interracial sexual contact that was seen as dangerous but its public legitimation in marriage. Similarly, it was not the progeny of such unions who were problematic but the possibility that they might be recognized as heirs to European inheritance. The point should be obvious: colonial control and profits depended on a continual readjustment of the parameters of European membership, limiting who had access to property and privilege and who did not. (39)

Hierarchies in intimacy maintained colonial rule through the boundaries of the domestic sphere. In the contemporary age, the rhetoric of colonial rule seems archaic since postcolonial subjects now inhabit the territory of former empires. Although an examination of the intimate encounters that occurred within the colony, the postcolony, and ancient civilizations inform my theoretical framework, intimacy works differently in recent Spanish fiction. I am suggesting that the white male Spaniard needs the intimate
foreign founder female to re-masculate him, even if his emerging masculinity no longer gives him complete authority as the head of household. In the novels I analyze, intimacy does not exactly meld difference into the ideal for national identity. Rather, it exposes the anxieties the Spaniards feel when confronted with the other. Through intimate relationships with foreigners, Spaniards—especially the male characters—are forced to recognize their own incompetence against the foreigners’ skills. In other words, many of the immigrant characters are better at parenting, business, and intellectual activity. Absorbing the foreigner involves accepting one’s own failure to reproduce the national ideal.

In some ways, immigrant women help to restore gender hierarchies, as Susan Martin-Márquez points out in “A World of Difference in Home-Making: The Films of Icíar Bollaín”: “Consequently, it is the immigrant woman who facilitates the revival of the traditional Spanish household” (268). While immigrant women do provide this service as intimate counterparts to Spaniards, I believe they are likewise implicated in developing conceptions of Spanish masculinity beyond that of the Iberian macho, whose comfortable lifestyle and relative sexual liberation paralleled Spain’s transformation into a competent and capitalist democracy. However, Spanish men can no longer claim their power as automatically hegemonic in the twenty-first century as they face their unstable positions in the national labor market and in their own households.

Although the instability of Spain’s market—traditionally a masculine enterprise—could allegorically explain revisions to or perhaps even the collapse of the ideal of the Iberian macho, my inquiry focuses on the transformation of identity brought about through intimate exchanges. To do that, I read Anthony Giddens’ *The
Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality and Eroticism in Modern Societies to understand how the sexual revolution has changed the way in which women and men view sex, romantic love, and intimacy. According to Giddens, sex has come to be viewed as a non-reproductive and pleasurable experience, whereas intimacy reflects a democratic new global world era in that, increasingly, there is communication among equal citizens bound by certain rights and obligations (1-2, 62). Viewing intimacy as a reciprocal exchange instead of an oppressive demand, Giddens writes, “Seen, however, as a transactional negotiation of personal ties by equals, it appears in a completely different light. Intimacy implies a wholesale democratizing of the interpersonal domain, in a manner fully compatible with democracy in the public sphere” (3). Presumably, Giddens’s concept of intimacy is based on the personal relationships between the citizens of post-industrial societies in which foreign otherness is not considered. But I can take his explanations of how intimacy has transformed to illustrate what happens to Spanish female and male characters in novels. Egalitarian as contemporary intimacy applied to the relationship between Western citizens may be, Giddens concept of intimacy between Spaniards and noncitizens would imply an unequal exchange in which someone benefits greatly while the other one is exploited. In my readings of the novels, intimacy does not equally benefit everyone involved, but it does not always exploit the noncitizen either. Through intimacy, Spaniards negotiate to feel more like an equal amidst his or her insecurities. Engaging in intimacy—whether it involves consuming or sharing with the other—gives the Spaniard confidence.

I examine novels by Spanish authors who write about immigrants because I want to understand how this literature documents the changes taking place in Spanish society
as it receives immigrants. My research contributes to Spanish Peninsular studies and the underdeveloped study of intimacy, because I consider personal negotiations that take place in narrative between immigrant groups—even those who have no postcolonial ties to Spain—and Spaniards, including teenagers in young adult fiction. I explore contemporary Spanish identity from within Spanish personal spaces—the house, neighborhood bar, or high school—transversed by immigrants. These intimate encounters uncannily reconstitute the Spaniard’s sense of self and belonging in and outside that space. By bringing the study of intimacy into the field of immigration, I have found instances of the revisions immigration causes in Spanish personal spaces, and by extension, in Spanish identity.

In my view, this revision is an event: a starting point for dialogue, even if that dialogue is not successful or reproduces negative representations of immigrants. I aim to start a conversation in which literary scholars can begin to illustrate how Spaniards and immigrants communicate with one another and consider what productive dialogue results. They can consider the role intimate foreigners and Spaniards might play in forging a multicultural Spain that can think of itself beyond the Middle Ages, the Civil War, and Franco. Just as Spanish cultural studies theorists have examined the emergence of new intimacies fashioned by Spain’s transition to democracy and the movida of the 1980s, I investigate how the phenomenon of immigration—African as well as Eastern European—has further altered the way intimacies are articulated. These intimacies operate parallel to nation building.

From this inquiry, I have observed that the intimate relationships between Spaniards and immigrants lead to a renegotiation of Spanish, and in some cases,
immigrant identity. For example, the foreign women who are intimate with Spaniards restore the Spanish home, albeit through validating old concepts of patriarchy. The home becomes the refuge of a patriarchal Spanish family and some intimacies are, therefore, hierarchal (Nunca pasa nada). Similarly, the immigrant woman is responsible for creating a sense of home where it did not exist, thereby helping the male protagonist to shape an alternative to traditional masculinities through homemaking (Ucrania). In both Nunca pasa nada and Ucrania, the foreign domestic worker complicates the division between guest/worker and employer/host. Maids and nannies are employees, but they have also been invited into the home as a paid extension of the family. In the case of the ethnic enclave in Cosmofobia, intimacy happens though interethnic dialogue that is ultimately unsuccessful. Personal exchanges link immigrants and Spaniards temporarily, but they do not create the same sense of security they do in the other novels. In the multicultural ethnic neighborhood of Lavapiés, intimate foreignness is suspect and eventually rejected. Finally, just as immigration changes the way public institutions function,10 the foreigner in intimate spaces changes the way Spaniards view themselves and others. Intimacy between Spaniards and immigrants in young adult fiction is desirable only when intelligent Moroccan men can be made into dynamic citizens who can improve Spain. Only those deserving young men are permitted to engage in intimacy with Spaniards. Citizenship gives immigrant youth rights to intimate spaces (El paso del Estrecho). Still, intimacy does not yield advantages for a Moroccan young man who

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10 For example, the Spanish education system has had to adapt to the growing immigrant population by providing specialized teachers in language acquisition. Based on my own experience of working in two different elementary schools, the Moroccan and Romanian students were taken out of one of their regular classes to work on their language skills each day during another instructor’s free hour. During their regular classes, the two Moroccan brothers would color and doodle because they did not understand what was going on. The teachers ignored them except when an activity involved singing or reciting. The language specialist only came to visit them once a week. The need for teachers of Spanish as a foreign language is growing tremendously in Spain, even in places that were not major destinations for immigrants.
breaks the laws of intellectual property. Intimacy between immigrants and Spaniards is only productive when it strengthens Spanish nationality (Una habitación en Babel). Therefore, these products are still very problematic.

Since the spaces where immigrants and Spaniards encounter one another are mostly urban and exterior, rather than interior and homely, I have not limited my research to the house. Through the unfolding of these urban stories, the reader learns how personal connections to their significant others influence them. These novels not only present the consequences of the immigrants’ thoughts, but also the thought processes that lead up to their actions. In this way, intimacy involves the space, the emotion, and the experience. These novels permit the reader to analyze the feelings of both immigrants and Spaniards because the authors emphasize more than just descriptions of immigrant bodies. Immigrants can reflect on the world and their place in it, although their statements and actions may be grounded in racial stereotypes and generalizations. By looking at how subjectivity and identity are represented in these narratives, we can better interpret the immigrant’s and the Spaniard’s reflections on belonging. I posit that, through homemaking with immigrant others, new kinds of Spanish identities are produced. The main characters in the novels are looking to form a home with their intimate others, but being at home with oneself is only possible with the entrance of immigrants into one’s intimate space. The fictional characters practice making a home and working through

Novels such as Las espinas del Edén by José María Deira, Los prinicipes nubios by Juan Bonilla, El metro by Donato Ndongo, and Donde mueren los ríos by Antonio Lozano occur primarily in the city. In the film Salvajes (2001), directed by Carlos Moliner, the spaces shared momentarily by the foreigner and the autochthonous are hostile even when the authorities come into a Senegalese home. The same can be said for other films such as Montxo Armendáriz’s Cartas de Alou (1990), where the director places Alou in two hostile environments: urban and agricultural spaces, or similarly in Princesas (2005), directed by Fernando León de Aranoa, street prostitution provides the setting.
difference, but only a few of them are successful. Homemaking does not always work, just like nation building is not always successful either.

I include two young adult novels, *Una habitación en Babel* and *El paso del Estrecho*, in my dissertation because these novels characterize, at the micro-level, the intimate relationships between Spaniards and immigrants and they mark the point at which Spanish narrative begins to imagine a global Spain by creating a community of young readers and thinkers who can contribute to society. Only talented immigrants are worthy of making a home in Spain, according to these novels. In respect to Maghrebian immigration in young adult fiction, the young “Moor” can only be integrated into the intimate spaces of Spaniards through mentoring, or else he is excluded from participating in society. The “unsuccessful Moor” is sent to jail where presumably lawbreakers can no longer disturb society’s sense of security.

The abundance of immigration narrative for young readers speaks to young people’s interest in learning about people of different races, religions, languages and cultures, but also to the necessity of shaping Spain’s youth towards accepting and processing the presence of otherness by exemplifying Spain’s multicultural educational prerogatives. In my view, this fiction contributes to the changing dynamics in Spanish society and the conceptualization of Spanishness more directly than adult fiction does, because in these narratives examples of Spanish youth adopting aspects of foreign popular culture abound. First, second-generation immigration and the adoption of foreign-born children cause Spaniards to rethink the definition of Spanish nationality. Furthermore, the understanding of Spanish nationality has been altered by the passing of *La ley de Memoria Histórica* ‘Historic Memory Law’ (also referred to as the “Ley de
Nietos’ ‘Grandchildren’s Law’) in 2007 under Zapatero (Gobierno de España, Ministerio de la Presidencia). It gives the sons and daughters of exiled or emigrant Spaniards their right to Spanish nationality, without having to renounce their current nationality. Anyone of Spanish parentage, regardless of race, language, religion or culture, can be a Spaniard. This law is sure to provoke all kinds of anxiety in the future and will redefine Spanish ethnicity. Second, from the last year of primary school up through secondary school, Spanish youth have been taught the importance of participating in a fair society.\textsuperscript{12} Third, there are more immigrant writers publishing young adult fiction than writers of adult narrative and more immigrant directors in film.\textsuperscript{13} Contrary to adult fiction, young adult literature popularizes immigration, and in some cases, provides a voice for immigrant writers. In addition to bringing intimacy and young adult fiction into the field of immigration, I also consider other immigrant groups besides Africans and Latin Americans. By not limiting my research to African or Latin American immigration, which has predominated in other scholarly studies, I have contemplated immigration beyond postcolonial relationships between Europe and the postcolony. As I have discussed, there is a current in contemporary Spanish cultural studies that interprets narratives and film about Spanish identity in relation to post-colonial nationalities through the metaphors of spectrality and haunting, based on the historical relationships that Spain shares with the countries of origin of the immigrants in the texts. Contrary to

\textsuperscript{12} In 2006 the Law on \textit{La Educación para la Ciudadanía} ‘Education for Citizenship,’ was passed (Boletín Oficial del Estado). This law required that secondary school students take an ethics class, in which they learn about different social issues and laws in order to encourage the youth to be good citizens. In May of 2013, the new \textit{Ley Orgánica para la Mejora Educativa} was passed by the conservative Partido Popular, which gives high school students the choice of taking a Catholic religion course, an alternative, or both. The Ministry of Education sees the values of the former citizenship class as transferable to the general curriculum and thus have disbanded the course (Sanmartín).

\textsuperscript{13} In children’s and young adult literature, there are a number of immigrants or second-generation immigrant authors, according to Sáiz Ripoll in “La inmigración en la LÍJ actual.” However, in adult narrative there are very few, such as Donato Ndongo, Agnes Agobotón, Najat el Hachmi, etc.
many scholars in the field, I do not see all immigrants as scary ghosts that haunt Spain, for the following reasons: There are more ethnicities among immigrants than Maghrebian Latin American. For example, Eastern Europeans are not historically tied to Spain. Africa and the Americas have a history of colonization, and the transatlantic slave trade, whereas Eastern European immigration appears to have its origin in the fall of communism coupled with the transformation of Spain into an economically competent first world nation-state. It appears that globalization and the rising global economic position of Spain has opened the door to new flows of immigrants who have no prior cultural or political ties to Spain.

Furthermore, whereas African immigration is the most visible due to its large demographics and the racialization of black and brown skinned immigrants, the corpus of literature and thus scholarly work about Eastern European immigrants is scarce. Nonetheless, the presence of Slavonic immigrants is very visible in many cities due to the recent establishments of organizations, consulates, cultural centers and Slavonic-Spanish online dating agencies in Spain, indicating a growing Eastern European presence. In addition to Eastern Europeans, my project examines Guinean and Moroccan characters in *Cosmofobia*, Ecuadorians in *Nunca pasa nada*, Ukrainians in *Ucrania*, and Moroccan teens in *El paso del Estrecho* and *Una habitación en Babel* while also focusing on the Spanish characters.

Finally, by looking at intimacy, young adult fiction, and immigrant groups besides African and Latin Americans, I can interpret immigration beyond the arguments which position African and Latin American immigrants as ghostly reminders of a terrifying past of reconquest, colonization, and enslavement by Spaniards. In my readings, many
characters do not bring to mind ghosts. As far as Eastern European immigration is concerned, there are other relationships that are uncanny and sometimes frightening because Eastern European represents the political and economic backwardness Spain is trying to overcome. These relationships can be found in the roles that Eastern and Central Europeans perform or are perceived to perform in Spain, such as domestic work, construction work, and theft. Perhaps Spaniards characterize Eastern and Central Europeans specifically as thieves because, unlike many economic immigrants originating from Latin Americans and Africans, Eastern Europeans may not be viewed as settlers, but rather as opportunists who are motivated by making money abroad. They tend to be more highly educated and to reside in the cities with the largest economic activity for the service sector and construction (Anchuelo Grego 65, 67).

In the novels I analyze with significant female immigrant characters, these women are not scary ghosts, but become, instead, interpreters for ghosts. For example, in Ucrania, Elena helps Jorge decipher the mystery identity of his deceased father, just as Mustafá, in El paso del Estrecho, is able to decode archaic texts to benefit Spain’s historical patrimony. Doesn’t a ghost need a human medium to communicate to the living? The immigrant characters intimately communicate with Spaniards. Still, in most of the novels, the idea of immigrants as invaders and specters is gendered; men tend to be represented overwhelmingly as aggressive characters, whereas female immigrants are represented as exotic go-betweens. Despite their foreignness, female characters are still subject to the care work involved in raising Spanish men to be good citizens. Foreign men, however, with their presumably developing-world traditional manliness, threaten newly emerging Spanish masculinities. Furthermore, the role of female characters
highlights Spain’s international presence as a service economy that manufactures hospitality—tourism and culinary products. If, like in the novels, Spain absorbs foreign caretakers and intellectuals while trying to expel aggressive and destructive men, it is because contemporary national identity reconsolidation calls for returning to traditional gender paradigms. In young adult fiction, all of these concepts are at play.

In the novels I analyze, immigrant men are armed burglars and women-beaters (*Ucrania*), extortionists and gang members (*Nunca pasa nada*), suspicious Moors (*El paso del Estrecho*), drug dealers and ruthless businessmen (*Cosmofobia*). In contrast, female immigrants are just companions who comfort their Spanish friends (*Nunca pasa nada* and *Cosmofobia*). Immigrants, both male and female, operate between the Spanish home and their own transnational communities. In some cases, their presence helps to teach Spaniards how to dialogue with people of other cultures. Contrary to the work done thus far on immigration, I show how relationships between Spaniards and Maghrebian, Sub-Saharan, Latin American, and also Eastern European immigrants function in these novels to remodel notions of national identity and self. For example, I evaluate whether Eastern European immigration may be studied under the prevailing methodology of “hauntology” or whether literary representations of Eastern European immigrants provide new paradigms for studying immigration in Spain. This way of looking at immigration opens up the field to look beyond the specters of Spain’s Black Legend, the idea of Spain as a ruthless colonizer and slave trader, to look at how relations with recent immigrants, such as Eastern Europeans, redefine analytical tools.

Latin American and African—Sub-Saharan and North African—immigration suggests the return of a repressed historical memory threatening to taint Spanish
collective memory. In my analysis, I consider whether all immigrants in contemporary narrative are ghosts or whether some of them have bodies. By contemplating the roles of immigrants in the narratives I examine, I can shed light on alternatives to immigrants as ghosts. Through the study of intimacy, I show that personal encounters function to reconfigure Spanish nationality in different ways. Intimacy with the foreigner recreates traditional family paradigms (chapter one), reconstitutes white Spanish masculinity (chapter two), is shut off before it can damage Spanish ethnicity (chapter three), and integrates foreign talent into Spain’s intellectual history (chapter four).

The first two chapters of this work start at the private space of the home and the next two chapters extend to the public intimate spaces of the bar, school and other gathering places within the neighborhood. I present how my notion of the “intimacy of otherness” offers an alternative reading of immigration in Spanish cultural studies. Although hauntology is instrumental in analyzing the representations of some Maghrebian and Sub-Saharan immigrants as evoking colonial and medieval pasts, it cannot be used unproblematically to address all narratives, nor can hauntology speak for immigrant groups without historical or cultural ties to Spain, such as Eastern Europeans or even Southeast Asians and the Chinese.

“Intimate otherness” ultimately argues for a transformation of Spanish identity through recognizing the foreign lover or friend as a body and a subjectivity in contact. I believe that by looking at the Spanish home—where intimacy and otherness intersect—I can provide an alternative to interpreting immigrants as ghosts, phantoms and specters to bring their ontology back into existence. In the cases in which they appear ghostly, I also consider how these spirits work to redefine or transform contemporary notions of Spanish
identity. Maybe the ghosts of the colonial and imperial Spanish pasts are friendly, making the Spaniard feel at home, or maybe they are not ghosts at all. Intimate encounters between Spaniards and foreigners ultimately produce an interethnic dialogue in which each interlocutor reveals who s/he is. Those engaging in such an intimate dialogue influence the ensuing identity.
Chapter One: Between Mother, Lover and Maid: Intimacy in José Ovejero’s \textit{Nunca pasa nada}

Otherness and intimacy intersect to reconfigure and/or dismantle notions of national identity and nationality in Spain. In this chapter, I focus on the daily intimacy foreign domestic workers provide for Spaniards by analyzing José Ovejero’s \textit{Nunca pasa nada} (2007). I argue that, even as public and non-normative intimacies become more accessible in quotidian family life, a form of the traditional family intimacy founded on patriarchy survives due to the roles foreign domestic workers perform in Spanish homes. I reveal how new intimacies do not necessarily uproot old-fashioned ways of managing the household despite contemporary leaps toward gender equality and democratic principles.


\textit{Nunca pasa nada} is divided into eight parts, each containing various chapters in which the third-person omniscient narrator focalizes a particular character’s thoughts and experiences. The reader becomes more deeply informed as s/he reads about the events according to each character’s perspective. The plot centers around a Spanish middle-class married couple, Nico and Carmela, their live-out domestic help, Olivia, and a set of minor characters, including Julián, the gardener, and Claudio, Nico’s student, all of
whom live in Pinilla de Guadarrama, a small mountain city outside of Madrid. Nico, a high school Latin teacher, and Carmela, a part-time receptionist for a real estate agency, hire a nineteen-year-old Ecuadorian woman, Olivia, to take care of the house and their four-year old daughter, Berta. Carmela, who never wanted to be a mother in the first place, endeavors to enjoy her life as she did before motherhood by maintaining a regular sexual relationship with Max. Accepting his wife’s need for independence in their relationship, Nico acquiesces to her extramarital sexual activity. Nico, no longer feeling his wife’s loving gaze on him, engages in virtual sexual play with his online chat buddies, and later on, in foreplay with the nanny, Olivia.

Once Olivia and Nico become closer, he offers to pay for her schooling on the condition that she pays him back in caring for Berta and housekeeping. Nico believes that, for Olivia, education will result in upward mobility, but because Olivia owes a large sum of money to Julián, the family gardener and go-between for international human smugglers, she accepts Nico’s deal provided that she is given all of the money up front (222). Carmela, sensing that Nico is attracted to the nanny, takes Berta on a weekend trip, giving Nico the opportunity to seduce Olivia (133). This way, Carmela would not feel guilty for being with her lover. However, while Carmela is setting up a sadomasochistic sex scene with her yoga instructor, Max, an edgy Nico calls her to report an accident at home (136). Worried that something has happened to Berta Carmela is relieved to find that the maid is the victim (135-6). Carmela feels that the inopportune death of the maid will make it hard for her to find for Berta another nanny as good as Olivia. Carmela and Nico cover up Olivia’s death by lying about her function as illegal housekeeper and write her off as Nico’s mistress to avoid charges for employing an undocumented immigrant.
Nunca pasa nada explores the power dynamics of marriage, motherhood, irregular immigration, uninsured care work, and secrets, illustrating that “en la vida siempre pasan cosas, y a menudo muy dramáticas” (“in life, things always happen, and often very dramatic things”) (Sanz Villanueva). Even as the characters are intimately bound together, all attempts to create a final act of solidarity are undone when Nico and Carmela ultimately lie in the official reports about Olivia’s real function as an uninsured care worker to protect their financial security. This is why Ovejero remarks about his novel, “[m]e interesaba demostrar cómo en España coexisten dos sociedades diferenciadas que conviven juntas pero que se ignoran bastante. Son parte del paisaje urbano, pero su integración es muy marginal. Están pero no cuentan” (“I was interested in demonstrating how, in Spain, two differentiated societies coexist, but they ignore each other quite a lot. They are part of the urban scenery, but their integration is marginal. They are there but they don’t matter”) (Intxausti). Just as in Las vidas ajenas, Ovejero employs the individual stories of the choral novel structure to show how the characters mirror and model one another, although the characters are ideologically ignorant of each other.

This mirroring and modeling reflects Ovejero’s view that “Ahora mismo hay poca integración, digamos que hay una coexistencia pacífica, pero no hay una convivencia, y no creo que la haya hasta la próxima generación, hasta que los hijos de los que se han quedado aquí hayan estudiado y hayan conseguido un ascenso social distinto del de sus padres” (“Right now there is little integration; we can say that there is a pacific coexistence, but there is no living together, and I don’t think that there will be until the next generation, until the children that have remained here have studied and have attained
Nunca pasa nada reflects how even in the most intimate space of Nico and Carmela’s home, coexistence is not necessarily synonymous with co-living. In Spanish, *convivencia* not only refers to being in company with others, it also connotes a relationship of mutual benefit between different groups of people based on understanding, respecting, and sharing. *Convivencia*, a term coined by historian Américo Castro, is partly utopian in that it has been used to describe historical periods of peace and cultural prosperity when Christians, Muslims and Jews coexisted in medieval Spain, but it has also been used to describe the passionate will to destroy one another. It describes a hate-tolerance relationship, where the three religious groups’ economic and cultural existence depended on living among one another.

According to what he has expressed in interviews, Ovejero seems to privilege a utopian society where immigrants assimilate into Spanish culture, rather than where Spaniards adapt with and to them.

My analysis of Ovejero’s *Nunca pasa nada* explores the ways in which the nanny, Olivia, becomes a reference for both her employers’ wellbeing, by establishing an altered form of the traditional patriarchal home. Her presence gives Carmela a sense of freedom from domesticity and Claudio a sense of masculinity and power amidst his own vulnerability as an emotionally dependent husband. Taking the family dynamics of this novel as an example of how intimacy and otherness intersect, I ponder the possibility of intimacy as a new metaphor to describe Spanish nationality, which conceivably complicates the long-established metaphor of family/nation. Being released from the walls of the home and the boundaries of marriage and kinship, intimacy escapes domesticity and established gender roles as it emerges in public places. The right to be
intimate with whomever one chooses and to protect one’s intimacy from a meddlesome audience of viewers involves power structures, where certain individuals are more empowered than others. In this chapter, I explore intimacy as it relates to the system of democracy—equality, privileges, and rights—in which irregular immigrants exist outside of that paradigm although they participate in it.

To explore intimacy in *Nunca pasa nada*, it is important to offer a brief literary, and by extension, political and economic history of Spain, since throughout the middle part of the twentieth century following the divisive effects of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Francoism effectively resorted to nineteenth-century gender dynamics amidst political and economic isolation from the rest of the world in order to reconsolidate Spanish identity. Spain’s entry into democracy in the late 1970s and the global north in the 1990s quickly changed its landscapes and cityscapes, leading to new ways in which social relations were formed and maintained. The home becomes a space that transforms from a completely private space where the rules and regulations of the public sphere did not always apply, to a more public space where even the official norms of employment and interpersonal contact are to be maintained throughout intimate spaces. Because of the policies created to protect immigrants, or rather to incriminate unlawful Spaniards for not complying with national labor laws when hiring domestic workers, immigrant nannies and maids are no longer simply extensions of the home. Specifically housekeepers and babysitters without visas become commodities regulated by the state despite their possible irregular relationship to it. That is, caregivers who are not sponsored or insured by their employers are like human contraband for which the national economy is incapable of receiving a profit. The presence of domestic workers in
middle-class homes allows working men and especially women to conduct and benefit from successful lives in the public domain, both financially and socially. Moreover, foreigners also serve to reinstate, in some ways, the traditional abode of patriarchy, since the toil of care workers ultimately endows their employers (often male) with a sense of freedom, emotional and sexual support, confidence, and power, while maintaining the comfort and security of the traditional female-run domestic space.

Traditionally, intimacy refers to a deep familiarity with a person or people, limited to a special place—the home. Naturally this kind of intimacy triumphed in nineteenth-century Spain because the home was the antithesis of the callous capitalist outside world in which genuine affective relationships between acquaintances were unlikely to be cultivated. In democratic Spain, as intimacy extends to spaces outside the home space, intimacy becomes plural. My exploration of the multiple intimacies shared between immigrants and Spaniards in *Nunca pasa nada* bares not only the anxieties and anticipations Spain faces in light of an increasingly diverse demographic, but also the changing dynamics of family and national identity.

The structure of this modern-day Spanish family is different from that of the traditional patriarchal family, which rested on the belief that intimacy was to be contained inside the home within the family. As Nancy F. Cott notes, the domestic space as a private sanctuary was a product of “merchant capitalism” in the late eighteenth century, which fashioned the busy factory as the opposite of home life (24). Without a family business to help maintain, women became subjected to “the central convention of domesticity” (64) whereby the home became the fulltime occupation of the wife (74). Likewise, men lost some influence in the house as maintaining family intimacy became
the wife’s primary vocation. Anthony Giddens, in *The Transformation of Intimacy*, adds that husbands “held ultimate power, to be sure, but a growing emphasis upon the importance of emotional warmth between parents and children frequently softened his use of it” (42). Thus the home was correlated with intimacy, privacy, and protection, as opposed to the insecure public sphere.

Nineteenth-century Spanish literature sought to exemplify the idea of intimacy as a private affair linked exclusively to the home. Bridget A. Aldaraca shows that domesticity was based on a “belief in the radical separation of social existence into two contiguous but distinct and unrelated spheres of public and private, the stated belief in the social and political equality of men and women—the idea of ‘woman’s influence’ compensating for direct political participation, and a newly emphasized importance of the child as the center of family life” (*El Ángel* 18-19). Furthermore, women’s duties were institutionalized by Christianity, creating a paradox that linked “the intimacy of domestic life” to the functioning of the State in the face of radical separation between the two spheres (Aldaraca 55). The Spanish bourgeois woman was an ángel del hogar ‘angel in the house,’ the perfect ideal of domesticity and grace (57) and accordingly, “the home, defined not as a physical space but as a spiritual atmosphere, is, on the contrary, the creation of the woman who occupies this domain” (Aldaraca 58). The wife was responsible for maintaining a kind of spiritual and peaceful intimacy after her husband’s day of work in the competitive sphere of the public domain.

Fittingly, the perfect family of nineteenth-century Spain also represented the prospect of a great Spanish state. Canonical Spanish realist novels often reflected what actually occurred in such familial spaces despite the desire to uphold the ideals so heavily
propagandized in a significant amount of popular women’s domestic narrative.\textsuperscript{14}

Repeatedly, the bourgeois home is exposed as a static and decadent space where spouses and lovers intrinsically agree to perpetrate the semblance of propriety and perfection while one spouse engages in sexual infidelity.\textsuperscript{15} For example, in Benito Pérez Galdós’s *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1887), Juan Santa Cruz, the spoiled son of an affluent urban Madrilenian bourgeois family, becomes temporarily enamored with a proletariat woman, Fortunata. After losing interest in Fortunata, he marries Jacinta, the perfect image of a domestic angel, yet infertile. Fixated on being a mother, she bears the constant infidelities of her husband in hopes of purchasing the baby Fortunata had with Juan, but unfortunately for Jacinta, the baby has already died. Once Fortunata is cured from her promiscuity, she and Juan renew their sexual relationship and she becomes pregnant. Fortunata, close to her death after medical complications, writes Jacinta a letter giving custody of her baby to Jacinta.

In *Fortunata y Jacinta*, sex acts occurring between Juan and his mistress are not exposed, but the reader can deduct that many of the later sexual encounters could not have occurred at either one of their homes. Intimacy was supposed to be bounded to the home within the legitimate family, but literary history discloses how marital intimacy was not always maintained at a time when it was the predominant ideal. Since sexual offenses committed within the family could be allegorically read as representative of criminal activity within the Spanish state, sexual morality could be viewed as a threat to

\textsuperscript{14} Lou Charnon-Deutsch’s *Narratives of Desire: Nineteenth-Century Spanish Fiction by Women* shows how Spanish women writers used the conventions of domesticity in their narrative as a means to “disguise” their “oppression by encouraging women to accept oppression through a masochistic sublimation of their pain and sacrifice” (42). This narrative helped to consolidate women’s place in society since any divergence from those gender roles would mean “silence, isolation, loss of talent, abandonment…” (43).

\textsuperscript{15} I am referring to realist novels such as Galdós’s *Fortunata y Jacinta* and Clarín’s *La Regenta* because both of these novels present models of the angel in the house alongside their faulty opposites.
the governance of the nation itself. Just as long as sexual crimes were hushed and ultimately resolved without any lingering scandal, the semblance of marital intimacy could engender a sound image of statehood.¹⁶

In theory, nineteenth-century bourgeois rhetoric held that women and men belong to equal but different spheres of influence, although in actuality, all power ultimately belonged to men. By the Second Republic (1931-36),¹⁷ after the economically devastating Guerra del Rif (1911-1926), the ideal of separate spheres could not be maintained in light of dismal demographics for male Spanish citizens, which produced a decrease in the available labor force. In addition, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) resulted in greater national poverty, especially among women who could no longer depend on the head of household for sustainability. Women were faced with prostitution,¹⁸ agricultural work, domestic work, and dangerous family planning practices to survive.

During the Francoist regime following the civil war, family continued as an institution aimed to combat the so-called moral decadence of the Second Republic. As Juan Eslava Galán puts it, “España se convirtió en un país ferventemente masturbatorio” (“Spain became a fervently masturbating country”) because the rigorous regulation of sexual conduct made premarital and extramarital intimacy a forbidden activity (266). The

¹⁶ A number of nineteenth-century fiction has been read as nation-building or at least as critiques of Spain by focusing on the family or the mother: Sylvia López’s “From Monstrous to Mythical: The Mother Figure in Galdós’s Casandra and El caballero encantado;” Jo Labanyi’s “City, Country and Adultery in La Regenta;” and Francisco D. López-Herrera’s “La madre galdosiana en Fortunata y Jacinta.”
¹⁷ The Spanish Second Republic was a progressive government, in which some women were actually making significant strides for their place in history as lawyers, professors and other professions.
¹⁸ Interestingly, prostitution often took place publically and within casas de tolerancia ‘tolerance houses’: Juan Eslava Galán notes that “las pajilleras, hábiles y ambidextras masturbadoras, acotaban en parques, zonas deficientemente iluminadas y en la última fila de los cines del barrio” ‘the female blow-job givers, skillful and ambidextrous masturbators, did their jobs in parks, badly lit zones and in the last row of the neighborhood movie theatre’ (270). Moreover, according to Vázquez García and Moreno Mengíbar, the casas de tolerancia, a euphemism for brothel, were made legal again by Franco between 1941 and 1956 (44).
rhetoric of nineteenth-century domesticity was recycled in hopes of protecting both morally and economically what Francisco Vázquez García and Andrés Moreno Mengíbar call the “Estado-Familia” ‘Family-State’ (45). For Anny Brookesbank Jones, in *Women in Contemporary Spain*, Francoism’s desire for “national economic self-sufficiency” (until the late 1950s) was responsible for managing the home (74). She describes the invisible economy in which women worked in agriculture and at home without pay: “This [female employment rate] was despite the regime’s postwar demographic policy, which used a range of threats and incentives to enlist women’s help in rebuilding the nation by making them stay in the home” (75). According to Kathleen Richmond, to keep up this ideal of “thrift,” the administration of domestic finances was also associated with the well-being of the nation (43). Richmond insists that domesticity was at the center of building the nation:

> Housekeeping and childcare—both undisputed areas for the woman—could become areas of expertise, benefiting from specialist courses and the latest information. The same applied to cottage industries, such as traditional crafts and small-scale domestic agriculture, where women’s work generally did not compete with that of men but served to bolster the family income. The usefulness of this in the stabilization of the post-war economy reinforced the authority of the message. Domestic efficiency was necessary for national regeneration (8).

The self-sufficient home, and by extension, the economy of the nation was partly maintained by the invisibility of the labor done by women. However, post-civil war literature also reflected the negative national outcome of errant mothers.

> In literary representations—novels in particular—mothers allegorically represented the nation. Even in the case of defective mothers, family was a metaphor for the Spanish people. The intimate surroundings of the main characters, in part produced
by the influence of women, had a direct effect on the social identity of the characters.

Gonzalo Sobejano describes the post-civil war novel in his critical text, *Novela española contemporánea 1940-1995*:

Si la guerra, con sus defectos tajantes, sacudidores y dispersivos, ha generado en la novela española un nuevo realismo, éste ha tendido, pues, hacia tres objetos principales: la existencia del hombre español actual, transida de incertidumbre; el estado de la sociedad española actual, partida en soledades; y la exploración de la conciencia de la persona a través de su inserción o deserción respecto a la estructura de toda la sociedad española actual (13).

If the war, with its unequivocal, vacuous and dispersive defects, has generated in the Spanish novel a new realism, which has laid out three principal objectives: the existence of the current Spanish man, stricken with uncertainty; the state of current Spanish society, split in solitudes; and the exploration of the conscience of the person via his insertion or desertion in respect to the structure of the whole current Spanish society.

We understand that the personal is always linked to the social in many of the novels being produced in this period, such that the social self is often the product of its family life. For example, in Camilo José Cela’s social realist novel, *La familia de Pascual Duarte* ‘Pascual Duarte’s Family’ (1942), one of the most important novels of the early post-civil war era, the dysfunctional structure of Pascual’s family seems to biologically determine his destiny. As he faces execution, Pascual writes a memoir of his upbringing, blaming his sordid family environment for his malice.

Furthermore in Carmen Martín Gaite’s *Entre visillos ‘Between Lace Curtains’* (1957), another important post-civil war novel, the domestic world of young women looking from their windows to the outside world becomes a space for subtle feminist criticism through which women writers employed “multiplicity and multivocality” to “become more audible” (Ordoñez 26). Women authors favored a number of characters with notably different voices to emphasize the diverse plights of Spanish women. *Entre*
visillos was published towards the end of strong isolationism, as tourism began to stabilize the Spanish economy. Except for a couple of female characters, such as Natalia and Julia, most of the women in the novel are rigidly socialized to believe that through their domestic efforts, they will acquire happiness. A successful marriage renders a healthy Spain. The race for young women to find the right husband and start a family of their own resembles Spain’s preoccupation with maintaining an image of a united Catholic nation even as exotic foreign cultures and peoples (i.e. Pablo Klein, the German teacher) begin to influence, rather unevenly, public and private Spanish spaces. In novels such as Entre visillos, the everyday details of life reflect how domestic intimacy was a logic in which the livelihood and survival of young women were invested. Intimacy appears as a pattern of daily performances, where young women tell secrets in codes and gestures and dress attire can communicate news events. In Entre visillos, gossip is not only a personal activity to kill time, but an implicit discussion of the Spanish political and economic panorama. The scenes where the women talk about their desires for having a Citroën (French import) car and marrying successful men illustrate Spain’s aperture to the rest of Europe, including the consumerist mentality emerging in Spain after years of national self-sufficiency.

Even so, a conservative government mediated Spain’s aperture to the international economic and cultural scene. Similar to the Cold War politics of the United States that emphasized the “corporate family” as a “bulwark against foreign dominion” (Umansky 23), isolation was similarly at the heart of Francoism. The home was like a border

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19 Umansky argues that “‘Domesticity’ and ‘containment,’ required that the family be seen as a corporate whole, a single defensive apparatus in which individuals could fulfill certain prescribed roles, but which ultimately, took meaning in its functional wholeness” (23-24). This idea of Cold War U.S. is comparable
against foreignness. Even strangers from out of town, known as forasteros are hardly welcome in regional and municipal areas. The nuclear family, the primary social group to which parents and children belong traditionally, fosters patriarchy: wives are attached to house and child, whereas husbands are free to engage in the outside world for play and work. However, once Spain’s economic situation began to improve, the fortress-home became more vulnerable to foreign influence.

The division between the public and private spheres became considerably more relaxed after Franco died in 1975 and Spain initiated its transition to democracy. Joan Ramon Resina remarks that during the transition, “history itself was ignored or tampered with in order to foster the idea of a new modern Spain” (Disremembering 8-12). In 1976, censorship was abolished in cinema, giving name to a phenomenon referred to as the destape ‘the uncovering’ in which a significant number of films with erotic content were being circulated, and for the first time respectable actors and actresses were exposing their nude bodies. La movida, ‘The Movement,’ an aesthetic and social movement in which Spanish counter cultures and youth cultures sought acknowledgment for their emerging modern identities, forever changed the way Spaniards related to one another in the streets of urban cities, namely Barcelona and Madrid.20 In this decade following the ratification of the constitution in 1978, la movida forged an urban culture in which intimacy was no longer contained in the home and new kinds of intimacies were being created. If before this movement, intimacy referred singularly to a contractual heteronormative private relationship endorsed by the Catholic Church, then the intimacies that came out of la movida were risky, unconventional, queer, and public.

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20 In the following years, the street culture of Madrid spread to smaller university cities around Spain.
As intimacy changes, the metaphor of family as nation becomes more complex since one’s identity could be negotiated in the streets as well as the home. Political and religious conservatism lost its sturdy grip on the nation-state and, with the victory of the PSOE ‘Spanish Worker’s Socialist Party’ in 1982, Spanish society, like the family, could no longer be conceived as confined to the domestic front subjected to an oppressive regime. According to Gema Pérez-Sánchez, post-civil war novels such as La familia de Pascual Duarte have allegorically reflected the image of Francoist Spain as “a castrating mother deserving of male violence,” (87) who is responsible for her son’s (the Spanish citizen’s) crisis of masculinity. All of this has functioned together to demonstrate Spain’s own vulnerability as a feminized, and thus marginalized, nation-state of Europe (Pérez-Sánchez 8). Years after the transition to democracy, Spain is now a constitutional democratic monarchy competing alongside other flourishing Western European nation-states. As Pérez-Sánchez indicates, “the new Spain is no longer the castrating bitch” (112). In other words, the metaphor comparing the nation to the promiscuous mother who effectively raises children powerless to make life decisions for themselves or Spanish society. Yet in Nunca pasa nada, the independent mother/wife promiscuity still triggers her husband’s insecurities with masculinity. Although the post-civil war metaphor of family/nation begins to erode, intimacy increasingly becomes part of a new metaphor to describe affects and sexual relationships in both private and public spaces.

In “Sex in Public,” Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner contrast the notion of normal intimacy (559) with “counter intimacies” (562) that include non-reproductive sex (564), public sex (558) and non-heterosex. They effectively argue that “the space of sexual culture has become obnoxiously cramped from doing the work of maintaining a
normal metaculture” by considering how the United States media is adamantly invested in disclosing sexual scandals involving politicians and religious authorities (557). Although they rightly note that “normal intimacies” are bound to the home and practiced by heterosexual couples, in Spain, the need to depict a normal or superior form of intimacy in the media is not as important as it is in the United States. Berlant and Warner’s context is specifically that of the U.S., in an age where sexual scandal involving politicians and religious authorities is continuously dissected in the media. In Spain, the same stories of celebrity and politician infidelity are confined to the gossip press, but are not typically considered newsworthy for hard news media. Public intimacy, or more specifically, sexual intercourse itself, is boldly advertised in newspapers and on public television, therefore I cannot say that there is an active demand to maintain an ideal “normal intimacy” in Spanish media, even if it might be true within familial social spaces. Although the sex of which Berlant and Warner speak is public, the idea of changing boundaries of intimacy is relevant to the way intimacy is understood in contemporary Spanish society, especially where different forms of intimacy are expressed publically.

21 A close look at American and Spanish television programs (the news, sitcoms, dramas, and variety shows) would reveal that so called “normal intimacy” is not as common in the Spanish context. Popular exported American syndicated sitcoms from the 90s such as “The Fresh Prince of Bel-air” (1990), “Frasier” (1993), and “Friends” (1994), aimed to depict normative intimacies, whereas Spanish programs such as “Farmacia de Guardia” (1991) highlighted a club de alterne ‘gentlemen’s sex bar’ and “7 Vidas” (1999) often included gay and lesbian characters. So often, Spanish “family” programs deal with racier themes than American prime time television.

22 Sex and companionship are advertised on the back page of many free newspapers such as Metro, 20 Minutos and ¿Qué? and also on the bottom of the screen during some television programs, especially game shows, gossip programs, and fortune teller shows.

23 Although television widely portrays non-normative intimacies, this is not to say that this is reflective of a general acceptance of those intimacies. If this were the case, perhaps the copious use of idiomatic expressions in everyday environments to describe people suspected of engaging in non-traditional lifestyles, sexual or otherwise, would not be so commonplace in familial and personal situations.
In addition to *la movida* and *el destape*, questions of intimacy and sexuality became major issues in the literature of the 1980s, a period known as the women writers’ boom of the 80s. At that time, many women writers, often journalists, successfully published their debut novels, but this literature is also criticized for lacking literary quality and being pushed on consumers mainly by women publishers. (Urioste 282-84).  

Out of this boom and the following decade, narrative written by women includes a significant quantity of erotica, rewritings of history and fairy tales, and biotexts (memoirs, biographies, and pseudo-autobiographies) in which intimate contact is not necessarily bound to the home or within marriage, and women exercise independence from maternity and domesticity. Intimacy then begins to refer to the different types of affects between friends, family, and lovers that are performed in private spaces as well as public social spaces. Especially particular to women’s writing of the 80s and 90s, intimacy becomes a metaphor that signifies more than just the exchange of affects, because through describing the intimate, the everyday personal becomes political and aesthetic. Not only do women vindicate their rights to engage in intimacy on their terms, the linguistic and narrative innovation of their writing created a space for new images of women to emerge. Some women writers wrote themselves into history and society (Urioste 286-87). Forms of intimacy—romantic, mother/daughter and friendly intimacies—become significant subject matter for narrative in the new Spanish economy. As a result of the transition to democracy, the national imaginary experienced a transformation in intimacy. More specifically, the family/nation model moves closer to one that privileges plural intimacies over the traditional family intimacy idealized in post-

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24 I am referring to writers such as Soledad Puértolas, Ana Rossetti, Rosa Montero, and Consuelo García who all wrote on themes of female sexuality and intimacy.
Civil war literature. Giddens shows how the politics and poetics of intimacy have changed since the nineteenth century as masculinity is being problematized and the views of women are changing (59). According to Giddens, individual sexuality has become “the one factor that has to be negotiated as part of a relationship” in what he refers to as “confluent love” (63). “Confluent love” is based on a conjugal relationship in which each partner “presumes equality in emotional give and take” (62). In this way, Giddens is able to correlate contemporary intimacy and democracy.

Some have claimed that intimacy can be oppressive, and clearly this may be so if it is regarded as a demand for constant emotional closeness. Seen, however, as a transactional negotiation of personal ties by equals, it appears in a completely different light. Intimacy implies a wholesale democratizing of the interpersonal domain, in a manner fully compatible with democracy in the public sphere (3).

Giddens’s comparison of contemporary intimacy to democracy illustrates a contractual relationship in which equal individuals are bound to “rights and obligations” (Giddens 190), for the well-being of intimate relationships, just as they are for the welfare of the state. Although individuals are free to express themselves and make their own decisions, their actions and words have repercussions, making intimacy and democracy oppressive at times. If the personal is political, as second-wave feminism argues, then even personal relationships are subject to the same inescapable logic that runs the government. Neither democracy is utopian, nor is intimacy as romantic as one would like to think. As long as the sharing of space—personal and political—requires individuals to surrender certain freedoms, intimacy will be somewhat oppressive, despite being democratic. Emerging intimacies represent a conflict of interests as they move toward an alternative libertarianism where family members choose their responsibilities based on needs,
desires and aptitude, as opposed to the patriarchal families where order is based on the established roles each member of a heterosexual couple is expected to achieve.

I develop the democracy/intimacy analogy to illustrate how notions of intimacy have changed in Spanish literature by inspecting the intimate relationships in *Nunca pasa nada*. Focusing on the intimacy shared between the main characters, Olivia, the nanny, Carmela, the wife, and Nico, the husband, I explain how Carmela’s and Nico’s relationships resemble Lauren Berlant’s observation of how “intimate lives absorb and repel the rhetorics, laws, ethics, and ideologies of the hegemonic public sphere, but also personalize the effects of the public sphere and reproduce a fantasy that private life is the real in contrast to collective life: the surreal, the elsewhere, the fallen, the irrelevant” (*Intimacy* 2). Intimate life challenges hegemony because power structures existing in the public sphere can be significantly altered or emulated at the personal level. Since the private space is thought to be a safe place where one can disrobe, unmask and pursue desires, it has become aligned with one’s real self as opposed to a regulated public self. Intimacy, even as the most private of acts, is not void of performances of power and knowledge. In the novel, the intimate lives of Carmela and Nico point to how Spaniards are reacting to the revisions immigrants are producing within their intimate spaces through childcare and housework and the general conceptual changes occurring in democratic Spain with the expansion of information technologies. Some of these reactions to change can be seen as progressive, while others as defensive. Nico and Carmela have a model democratic marriage that, just like Western democracies, requires illegal hired help.
Marriage is the legal and intimate union of two individuals whose expressions of sexual intimacy are confined to the couple (often heterosexual) model. When sexual activity pushes beyond the boundaries of marriage, the unfaithful spouse has broken a legal (and/or spiritual) promise. By expanding Giddens’s idea that intimacy and democracy are related because they both require individuals to abide by certain regulations, Laura Kipnis in “Adultery,” illustrates how breaking the rules in a marriage is ideologically the same as political treason. That is, marriage is to citizenship, as adultery is to being an undesirable citizen:

In the nation of marriage, adultery is traitorship, divorce means having your passport revoked, and who mediates your subjection to the state but your spouse? Infidelity makes you an infidel to the law, for which your spouse becomes an emblem, the hinge between the privacy of your desires and the power of the state installed right there in your master bedroom” (19-20).

Giddens emphasizes the jointly negotiated aspect of modern intimacy, while Kipnis understands the couple form as a performance of roles that the individual follows in order to be part of the couple. Adultery, “the favored metonym for all broken promises, intimate and national, a transparent sign for tawdriness and bad behavior” (Kipnis 14), can strip away an individual’s rights and privileges and the cuckolded spouse who denounces the unfaithful partner can make his/her weakness to temptation a very public matter. But Carmela and Nico’s marriage does not resemble the traditional arrangements of patriarchal Spanish literary marriages, because they have a verbal contract that does not bind them to monogamy. Since Carmela and Nico never make monogamy a condition of their marriage, Carmela cannot be seen as seditious. In this sense, their relationship aligns with Giddens’s notion that intimacy involves a compromise of desires.
Although Nico limits his extramarital sexual activity to the virtual intimacy shared with a female chat buddy, Carmela, on the other hand, freely engages in sexual relationships with other men. For Carmela, engaging in sexual intimacy outside of her marriage is not an act of weakness, but of excitement and freedom from the constraints of marriage. By not confining her sexual desire to her husband or within her home, Carmela refuses to conform to the covenant of marital intimacy—a closed partnership of affective and sexual exchange. After Carmela reflects on her role as mother and wife, the narrator remarks, “Huir del papel de cónyuge y madre; convertirse en amante apasionada, desesperada, irresponsable, era la única manera de conservar parte de su dignidad” (“Fleeing from her role as spouse and mother; becoming a passionate, desperate, irresponsible lover, was the only way to preserve part of her dignity”) (89). For Carmela, freedom involves being able to temporarily release oneself from responsibilities, from the “rights and obligations” that supposedly sustain marital intimacy. By seeking sexual bonds outside of her marriage and occasionally ditching the “reproductive work” associated with mothering, Carmela does not espouse a conventional marriage ethic.

Carmela feels bad that Nico is emotionally wounded by her sexual play with other men, but she is unwilling to be faithful. As a compromise, she tells Nico that he needs to have his own extramarital relationships. “Que prefería que vivieses un poco más, que te falta un acelerón de vez en cuando…Haz una vez las cosas como tú las quieres” (“I’d prefer that you live a little more; have a thrill once in a while”) (107). Nico’s life, according to Carmela, is boring and without passion because he is too “bueno y comprensivo” (“good and understanding”) (107). Following Kipnis’s logic, Carmela is not being a good spouse, and by extension a good citizen, because marriages “take work,
but unfortunately, in erotic life, trying is always trying too hard: work doesn’t work. Erotically speaking, play is what works” (17). Nico needs affection and sex from Carmela, “pero tenía la impresión de que el afecto de Carmela era sólo una manera de tranquilizar su mala conciencia, igual que hablas con cariño al perro que has dejado encerrado en casa todo el día, pero a él esa ternura le parecía ya un prodigio” (“but he had the impression that Carmela’s affection was just a way to calm her bad conscience, just like when you tenderly speak to a dog that has been enclosed in the house all day, but to the dog, this tenderness already seems like a wonder”) [213]. By giving Nico the minimum amount of affection, Carmela distances herself from the economy of intimacy as explained by Kipnis:

Wage labor, intimacy labor—are you ever not on the clock? If you’re working at monogamy, you’ve already entered a system of exchange; an economy of intimacy governed—as such economies are—by scarcity, threat, and internalized prohibitions; secured ideologically—as such economies are—by incessant assurances that there are no viable alternatives (“Adultery” 11).

Carmela does not subscribe to sustaining marital intimacy, because she does not follow the principles of the capitalist work ethic outlined by Kipnis. In fact, she is an unambitious part-time receptionist for a real estate agent. For Carmela, “el mundo empresarial era un espacio de ansia y estafa, vender una forma de violencia, y comprar una necesidad engorrosa” (“the business world was a space of cravings and fraud, selling a form of violence, and buying a cumbersome necessity”) (114). Although she has thought about different life projects, she has never started them (113). Even as the narration vilifies Carmela for her insensitivity towards Nico’s feelings and for her candor concerning motherhood, Carmela is evidently aware of her responsibilities in raising Berta and maintaining a friendship with her husband. For Carmela, marriage is
convenient, because as an unambitious part-time receptionist who wants her daughter to grow up in a stable middle-class environment, she produces a modern marriage ethic based on economic and psycho-social stability.

Not only has she engaged in occasional sex with her boss, she also maintains a relationship with her yoga instructor, Max. Carmela does not feel threatened by the lack of security or alternatives because she is not bound by the rules of marital intimacy. Her sexuality is not contained contractually by marriage because it is circumscribed in accordance to her own desires. When Nico asks whether she could ever fall in love with him again, she responds, “No, cariño. Una vez que se pasa, el enamoramiento no vuelve…Uno se enamora porque no conoce al otro, lo idealiza, y se idealiza a sí mismo para estar a su altura. El enamoramiento es como los espejismos: si te acercas mucho desaparecen” (“No honey. Once it leaves, being in love doesn’t return. One falls in love because s/he doesn’t know the other; he idealizes him or her and idealizes oneself to be at his or her level. Infatuation is like a mirage; if you get too close, it disappears”) (112).

Carmela’s concept of passionate love as a fleeting and idealized reflection of oneself does not fit into the established system of democratic intimacy. Perhaps, Carmela’s ideology behind creating relationships beyond the boundaries of marriage demonstrates a kind of cosmopolitanism because it relies on multiple cultural and sexual exchanges that are not bound to the marriage/nation. In this respect, she could be considered a deficient national citizen or simply a cosmopolite or a feminist.

Carmela is definitely cosmopolitan in the way she chooses to live her life. She is a hip and sexy independent woman with her own homeopath and yoga instructor (Nunca 13; 26). The fact that Carmela pays for a homeopath, a charlatan whose non-
pharmacological cures are not scientifically supported, illustrates her willingness to subject her body and mind to alternative experiences. Likewise, the comical tantric sex scene with Max, the yoga instructor, suggests her openness to Eastern philosophies and sexual pleasure from outside the marriage. Carmela arrives at Max’s bedroom and Max asks, “Haz conmigo lo que quieras,” (“Do with me whatever you want”) but Carmela interprets that he really means to say “Haz conmigo lo que quiero y nunca me he atrevido a pedir” (Do with me whatever I want but have never dared to ask for”) (131). She prepares his fantasy scene by tying his feet and hands to the bedposts, and tracing his body with her fingers. As Carmela pours drops of hot wax over Max’s body in a crucified position, she explains out loud the chakras she is opening, further exciting Max. “¿Soy o no soy una buena alumna?...Éste es el chacra Muladhara...Su función es la de refinar la energía sexual. En él se unen la alegría física y la espiritual” (“Am I or am I not a good student?...This is the Muladhara chakra…Its function is to refine sexual energy. In it, physical and spiritual happiness are united.”) (133). When she sensually repeats the roles of the chakras, Carmela affirms for Max the spiritual image “que deseaba que los demás tuviesen de él y lo que él fuera, fundamental y secretamente, y no deseaba que nadie supiera, salvo en ese momento del deseo y la entrega, en el que la exigencia tanto tiempo guardada en secreto eliminaba toda prudencia y toda vergüenza” (“that he desired that everyone else had of him and what he actually was, fundamentally and secretly, and didn’t want anyone to know, except in this moment of desire and surrender, in which the desire kept in secret for so long, eliminated all prudence and shame”) (131). Although Carmela performs what Max professes to be a spiritual act, she is aware that this role-play sex scene is just a manifestation of Max’s masochistic primal desires.
Throughout the novel, Carmela unashamedly asserts sex to her partners—her boss, Nico, and Max—what she wants sexually, in such a way that her sexual adventures seem like deliberate performances to get a reaction out of Nico. She is annoyed that Nico does not react to her infidelity: “Ni siquiera te enfadas conmigo porque te pongo los cuernos” (“You don’t even get mad with me because I cheat on you”) (107). Similarly, the fact that Olivia, in the short time she has been with the family, “había visto a Carmela desnuda más de treinta veces” (“has seen Carmela naked over thirty times”) (57) and has seen Carmela wear provocative evening wear when she goes out (26), demonstrates that Carmela makes a point to invent a carefree sexy woman persona aside from her role as mother and wife.

By performing her modern cosmopolitan role, Carmela defines herself beyond maternity and domesticity, breaking with the image of women prominently cast in postwar literature—the mother who reproduces the future citizens of the nation, well-raised children according to Francoist ideological tenets. In contemporary Spain, motherhood, and specifically, housewifery has become somewhat devalued (Brooksbank Jones 56). Carmela makes a point not to reproduce the angel in the house not because she is errant and selfish, but because she is ideologically opposed to that ideal. This act then disassociates her from the “gender regimes in which household and care work organization can be seen as the expression of a specifically gendered cultural script” (Lutz 2). For Carmela, motherhood is what limits her from expressing her sexual desire, an identity from which a woman can never completely separate herself:

Si no había querido tener hijos era, sobre todo, porque convertirse en madre era un acto irreversible. Se puede empezar a estudiar una carrera y pasarse a otra; casarse y divorciarse; encontrar un empleo y despedirse; enfermar y curarse. Pero una vez que eres madre no hay marcha atrás. No
If she had not wanted children it was, most of all, because to become a mother was an irreversible act. One can begin studying a major and switch to another one; marry and divorce; find a job and leave it; get sick and be cured. But once you are a mother there is no turning back. There isn’t anything so defining and limiting as maternity. She didn’t believe in reincarnation; karma doesn’t look for another body after death, rather the mother transfers in life part of her own karma to her children, turning them into an incomplete being from there on. There are women who murder their newborn because they refuse to accept them, but it’s already too late: the mother is in the dead child, and the corpse will live in the mother like a parasite.

For Carmela, not only is motherhood permanent no matter the circumstances, mothers are vessels for the transmission of bad fortune to their children. Moreover, the relationship between mother and child is parasitic and simultaneously deficient for both. Not only is motherhood oppressive (Umansky 17), for Carmela, the act of being a mother irreversibly changes the way she can define herself.

According to Tina Miller in *Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach*, “As soon as her child is born, a woman becomes a mother, this powerful new identity overriding all others” includes “a loss of a recognizable self” (103). Carmela narrates her own selfhood as a mother above all else, despite the limits and irreversibility of motherhood:

> Si había tenido una niña fue por el asedio de Nico, al que acabó rindiéndose con una condición tajante: tú eres el responsable principal, yo le daré el amor que me sea posible, pero sin coartar mi libertad; saldré por

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25 Tina Miller is speaking specifically about the experiences of early motherhood, but I think her observations can be used to describe Carmela’s feelings about motherhood in whatever stage.
If she had a child it was only because Nico badgered her into it, so she ended up giving in with one precise condition: you are the one who is mainly responsible, I will give her the love that I’m capable of, but without restricting my freedom; I will go out at night if I want, have a life independent of motherhood, I won’t remain a slave at the side of her crib and at the entrance of her daycare.

Carmela’s self-reflexivity shows that she, even with her unabashed realism and promiscuity, feels connected to her daughter, whether or not she wants this bond. Her alternate persona is a way of rebelling from the mother label, but ultimately she accepts responsibility for the future wellbeing of her daughter. Carmela’s system of raising her child is based on the recommendations of experts (211), reflecting her desire to be a good mother.

Perhaps some of Carmela’s anxieties about being a mother relate to the roles assigned to women. In this day and age, the domestic sphere, particularly housewifery, is devalued and linked to depression among women (Brooksbank Jones 56). Carmela wants to be valued as a person and as a body of pleasure. Whereas the mother in postwar novels, such as Pascual Duarte, directly conveys a stagnant, isolated, and castrating Spain, Carmela’s character allegorically works to foreground an independent, comfortable, liberal and democratic Spain. As a mother and wife, Carmela actively regulates the household. For example, she discourages Olivia from imitating traditional family roles while playing dolls with Berta (92-91). Likewise, she does not want Olivia teaching Berta to pray (108), perhaps because these actions effectively reproduce the conservative religious ideologies of a bygone Francoist era, and she applies a strict bedtime schedule: “Berta…insistía en que la niña tenía que irse a la cama a más tardar a
las ocho. Porque si no, en su opinión, estaba cansada al día siguiente, y de ahí su mal humor, su fragilidad, sus ganas de llorar por nada; el cansancio le impedía disfrutar del día” (“Berta…insisted that her daughter had to go to bed no later than eight. Because if she didn’t, in her opinion, she was tired the next day, and from there on her she’d be ill-humored, fragile, and feel like crying for nothing: her tiredness would prevent her from enjoying the day”) (210-11). Because she endeavors to keep Berta on a strict bedtime routine that Nico hates, he considers her parenting techniques fascist. Thus, Carmela responds that she is only concerned with providing her daughter with an everyday positive life experience. Ironically, Carmela is also responsible for Berta’s occasional break from school so they can have a mother-daughter day. Carmela’s parenting is based on keeping her daughter happy and stress-free.

Even as an independent woman finding fault with the common plot of domesticity, Carmela consciously partakes in upholding the semblance of a patriarchal family structure by procuring a child care provider who also doubles as housekeeper. Contrary to common belief, the presence of the nanny does not directly allow Carmela to enter the public sphere. Actually, the nanny just permits her to feel less guilty about being away from her daughter and unfaithful to her husband. Spain, like many western countries of the North, is shifting from the male breadwinner model to the working adult model, in which every eligible person is responsible for the household income. Carmela is not expected to be the self-sacrificing nurturer confined to the house while household intimacy and childrearing are becoming roles shared by both husband and wife. Even so, certain norms for mothers are still idealized, which Carmela considers oppressive. Olivia

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26 Shirley Jordan comments, “Feminism has progressively re-written the private sphere as a problematic site” (202).
is not only a substitute for Carmela; she is the one that makes escaping from the household viable. As a paid addition to the household, Olivia makes it function better. Because she serves as a secondary object of desire for Nico (224, 230), a fascinating playmate for Berta (99) and a helping hand in organizing the house for Carmela (95), Olivia’s role is more like that of a sex toy or home appliance that makes intimacy and domesticity easier.

As Bridget Anderson indicates in *Doing the Dirty Work*, “The domestic worker, like the prostitute, occupies the imaginary space between two worlds, symbolically ordered and imagined in very different ways” (4). In relation to the global market, the differences between domestic worker and prostitute are ambiguous as human smugglers commonly conflate the two roles tricking domestics into prostitution to pay off travel debts. As the “bridge between the domains” that permits Spanish women to circulate between the public and private spheres (*Dirty Work* Anderson 4-5), domestic workers can provide intimacy for another’s husband, especially for someone like Nico, who is securely bound to the home space while Carmela is away—translating ancient texts in his home office and enjoying being a father (201). When the novel begins, Olivia assesses Nico and his family; she notes that Nico “se ocupaba de la niña como pocos padres a los que conociese Olivia” (“looked after the child unlike the fathers Olivia knew”) (14). Obviously, the traditional role of public man versus private woman is complicated in the novel, attesting to the working adult model.

Carmela uses Olivia so that she can provide care to both daughter and husband. For Nico, Olivia provides him with a sense of a private intimacy shared exclusively within the couple structure, something that Carmela refuses to give him, all the while
cooking, cleaning and taking care of their daughter. When the gardener, Julián, tells Carmela that Olivia’s mother is ill, she immediately thinks that she will have a hard time finding another nanny that she can trust and who Berta could adore (128) because Carmela needs someone to give stability and affection to Berta while she is away. Similarly, Carmela uses Olivia to provide Nico with sex. She offers to take Berta to her mother’s house “para dar a Nico la oportunidad de quedar a solas con Olivia” (“to give Nico the opportunity to be alone with Olivia”) (133).

Carmela uses Olivia so that she can continue practicing her undomesticated sexuality outside the marriage without feeling guilty for neglecting her husband’s emotional needs. She supports the idea that the domestic help should have sex with her husband, such that Nico will stop complaining about Carmela not desiring to be with him. In fact, Carmela is the one who arranges to be out of town so that Nico can seduce the virginal nanny. Bridget Anderson asks, “So is employing a migrant domestic worker an act of sisterhood toward a woman in need or of complicity with abusive structures?” (“Just another Job?” 110). Anderson also refers to the hierarchies that categorize women based on skin color and beauty, which in turn demonstrate the superiority of the female employer (“Just another Job” 108). Olivia appears to supplement Carmela’s role as mother and wife, as long as Carmela is the one with all of the authority.

In this way, the role of domestic help in this novel is both similar and dissimilar to that of earlier times. In the nineteenth century the servant was there as an aide, as a worker bee that permitted the bourgeois mother/wife to remain as the administrator of the house, placed on a pedestal, and without getting dirty. Her beauty, grace, and femininity as the angel in the house were contrasted to her female servant running behind the angel
to make sure everything was perfect and in its place. Similar to the paid domestic worker in contemporary times, nineteenth-century black slave women were historically excluded from feminist agendas—equality and suffrage—promoted by white female activists.

According to bell hooks, black women functioned as buffers for the morality of white women:

> When the women’s movement was at its peak and white women were rejecting the role of breeder, burden bearer and sex object, black women were celebrated for their unique devotion to the task of mothering; for their ‘innate’ ability to bear tremendous burdens; and for their ever-increasing availability as sex object. We appeared to have been unanimously elected to take up where white women were leaving off (*Ain’t I a Woman* 6).

In the same way, according to Ann Laura Stoler, domesticity in colonialism “included the forced and financed arrangements of domestic and sexual service by housekeepers kept as live-in lovers and by live-in maids whose children were fathered by their European employers” (2). Although hooks is speaking specifically about the relationship between the slave mistress and the black slave woman in nineteenth-century America, and Stoler about how intimacy operated during the late colonial period in the tropics, their insights about the roles of the servant woman might help us identify similar practices today.

This discrimination towards non-white females within the domestic sphere of the nineteenth century speaks, in part, to the condition of third-world women who regularly become the sex objects of their employers, even as paid domestic workers. Although hooks laments the inexistence of a global female solidarity in opposition to the oppression of patriarchy in relation to black women, in this novel, Carmela, a white middle-class professional woman, is not preoccupied with maintaining a feminist solidarity with Olivia. Even her acts of kindness can be interpreted as consolidations of
power. Her role actually mimics the white slave mistress’s attitude towards the black female slave of which bell hooks speaks, except that Carmela does not objectify Olivia in order to maintain her own white female morality.

One day, when Carmela decides that Berta deserves a free day from school, something that Olivia finds strange and at least irresponsible for a mother, Carmela and Berta give Olivia a makeover. Carmela waxes Olivia’s legs, offers to give her a bikini wax to which Olivia refuses, and the mother/daughter team makes up Olivia’s face (59). Olivia feels the most beautiful she has ever felt and cries away her makeup; they wash Olivia’s face so that she can go back to working in the house (62). Without make-up, Olivia is now unmasked and unable to enter the public sphere, so she must return to the chores of the house. This homosocial-bonding scene is not an act of kindness. Making her beautiful might as well be a way to stabilize power since “friendliness between the women works to confirm the employer’s sense of her own kindness and of the worker’s childlike inferiority” (Anderson 110). The body waxing scene demonstrates how Carmela does not feel threatened by Olivia’s youth or beauty, because she sees the nanny as naïve and simple. For Carmela, Olivia’s commitment to sexual modesty and Christian morals is oppressive.

Carmela’s self-proclaimed atheism (93) and preference for an older child with whom she can joke and talk about boys are examples of her unwillingness to reproduce notions of traditional motherhood, demonstrating her investment in a vision of a worldly Spain—ideologically and sexually liberated from the right/wrong Manichaeism that has been used to raise small children. That is why she looks forward to Berta’s adolescence.

Carmela estaba deseando que la niña creciera. Su infancia se le hacía innecesariamente prolongada; su extrema dependencia, una carga
excesiva. Ella quería abandonar esa especie de simbiosis forzada; ansiaba encontrar con la adolescente, pelearse con ella, aguantar incluso su insatisfacción y sus reproches, su desprecio si era necesario; prefería una hija que pudiese ser cómplice pero también contrincante, cariñosa o distante, exaltada o encerrada en sí misma (88).

Carmela was wishing that her daughter would grow up. Her childhood seemed unnecessarily prolonged; her extreme dependence, an excessive burden. She wanted to abandon this kind of forced symbiosis; she was eager to find herself with the adolescent, to argue with her, to even stand her dissatisfaction and her reproaches, her disdain if it was necessary; she preferred a daughter that could be her accomplice but also an opponent, affectionate or distant, hotheaded or self-absorbed.

Carmela wants to be able to connect to her daughter as two independent women. In order to lessen her feeling of being trapped in motherhood, Carmela, like many working Spanish women, hires Olivia to assist with her daughter and around the house. Like many nations of the North, the need for child care has created a dependence on immigrant women, referred to as “the nanny chain” (Hochschild 33), which reflects the improved position Spain currently holds in the world economy. Olivia’s work, in this sense, is defined within the logic of supply and demand, even though it is “not just another labour market” given that care work is intimate, gendered, and “characterized by mutual dependency (Lutz 1).

The entry of women into the public work force (Alemán Páez 66) coupled with the reduction of welfare services in Spain (Brooksbank Jones 55) is partly responsible for an increase in international female migration. Nevertheless, before the arrival of immigrant women, Spanish domestic workers were an integral part of the Spanish family structure. The Spanish nanny, the tata, was often an unschooled young woman emigrating from a rural area (Escriva and Skinner 115) or from a less developed Spanish region (Galicia or Andalusia for example) to work in the homes of affluent urban families.
or in some cases, the grandmother or unmarried older sister. In the case that the tata was a family outsider, she was still Spanish, even if her unsophisticated accent was often the subject of mockery. In aristocratic European homes, ‘imperialistic servants,’ mostly French and English, were “servants hired to carry the language and customs of their own countries into the families of their employers” in order to civilize and govern the home. In the colonies, European indentured servants were used to foster the European migration needed to civilize the empire (Sarti 78-79).

Spain now imports, rather than exports, its domestic help (Sarti 87; Escriva and Skinner 115). Today, in recent Spanish literature, Spanish nannies and maids have been replaced by immigrant women, or in Isabel Santaolalla’s words, an “outsider other.” She is unfamiliar, from somewhere outside of the nation-state (Santaolalla, “Ethnic and Racial” 61). Presently, a diverse number of immigrants have altered Spanish ethnicity. Immigrants of different ethnic and racial backgrounds settle in Spain, and the interethnic grandchildren who have acquired their citizenship through their parents living in exile, return to claim Spain as their nationality. Following Escriva and Skinner’s account of domestic workers, “First came Filipinos and Portuguese. Later Polish, Moroccans, Dominicans, Peruvians and Colombians, and more recently Ecuadorians, Bulgarians, Romanians, Bolivians and Paraguayans” (113).

In Spain, before the first Ley de Extranjería (Immigration Law) in 1985, Spain was not recognized as a country of immigration. Until the 1980s, Spanish laborers, artists, intellectuals, and political dissidents resided abroad in Latin America and wealthier European countries. By the 1985 Immigration Law, however, immigrants were required to have legal resident status with a work permit to be eligible for citizenship.
This law favored most South Americans since they were not required to have visas for citizenship. However, those who worked primarily in the informal domestic sector—Cubans, Dominicans and Peruvians—were required to have visas to obtain their citizenship in Spain (Anderson *Dirty Work* 57). Legally speaking, this law demonstrates that foreign domestic workers were already seen as a problem by the 80s. The Immigration Law was revised in 2000, 2003, 2005, and again in 2009. Part of the perceived problem concerning irregular immigrants is their inability to contribute to Spain’s economy. In Spain, residency and social security are cross-referenced, so it is impossible for illegal immigrants to be declared, and thus be made responsible for paying taxes (Cyrus 180). This leads to irregular residents involved in informal work and a general animosity towards irregular immigrants who cannot relieve the social security drain induced by an aging Spain.

However, even if Spain has changed in terms of the role of women, there is still the expectation that the mother is primarily responsible for maintaining a loving family-based home, in which children stay home and are not in daycare (Escriva and Skinner116). Fiona Williams and Anna Gavanas attribute the high need for foreign labor in domestic and family services to the fact that the Spanish “childcare culture favours mother or mother substitution (grandmother or home-based carer)” (18). The expectations to have personal nannies in place of daycare centers have even become a

27 In the United States, it is quite common for irregular immigrants to pay taxes because U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services and the Internal Revenue Service do not share documents. As long as one has a social security number, he can declare his work, although he may not be able to get a state or federally issued identification document.

28 Due to the increasing age of Spain and the relative low number of working young adults, there is a major concern for the future of social security benefits for the baby boomers. The problem of irregular immigrants who cannot pay taxes coupled with the high unemployment rate for working-aged adults leads to a bankrupting of social security.
marker of socioeconomic status. Childcare and migration regimes intersect bringing about changes in notions of family, nation, work, and even maternal identities, particularly in Spain, where foreign domestic work has become normalized, even for smaller middle-class families (Escriva and Skinner 114). Whereas in the past, domestic workers stayed with a family for years, today they are mostly needed during specific moments—birth, early childhood and old age (Escriva and Skinner 114). Spain, an aging nation, demands elderly care, which is increasingly fulfilled by immigrant men (Sarti 90-91). In the novel, Olivia’s loan shark, Julián, is paid to take care of Carmela’s alcoholic father while stealing from him.

Olivia is a nineteen-year-old from Ecuador. She suffers from aortic coartation and her mother, still living in her hometown, requires expensive cancer treatments. Olivia immigrated to Spain with the help of Julián, a fellow Ecuadorian. Olivia was to turn in a bag of money or merchandise upon her arrival, but instead, she spent the money (23). She owes Julián the money with accrued interest, thus Julián suggests that she work as a hostess at a gentlemen’s club, in other words, as a prostitute (31). After her church pastor laments that the church is unable to help her financially (38-39), her flat mates help her to think of a way to ask her employers for money (47). Nico, ignorant of Olivia’s real financial problems, offers to put her through school because he believes that education is the only way in which Olivia could gain upward mobility. Now that Olivia and Nico have become more intimate, although not sexually active, she insists on having the money up

29 Although daycares are not as popular as grandmothers, nannies and babysitters, there appear to be increasingly more private preschools, at least in Sevilla. For school-age children, English centers and centros de apoyo escolar (tutoring centers) are very popular and give the children of the families that can afford the afterschool support an academic advantage at school. In the summers, children attend the colegios de verano which are similar to daycamps held at a neighborhood elementary school. All of these alternatives save the same purpose of watching after children without the ugly stigma of sending one’s child to daycare.
front. For Olivia’s flat mate, asking for money from a boss “con las manos largas” ‘with long hands’ is doing him a service because that way he feels like he is doing something humanitarian. On the surface, this relationship reflects the asymmetry of power involved between domestic workers and their employers, a relationship of vulnerability and exploitation, but even so, Nico is not exactly the powerful man of traditional patriarchy.

The traditional woman of the house engaged in reproductive work; since her entire reason for being was defined by the daily labor of family and house work, then the man was responsible for productive work—creative and competitive employment in the public domain. However, Nico is an unambitious Latin high school teacher without any real-life friends, besides his four-year-old daughter, whom he covertly teaches to recite Latin (216-217). His wife is opposed to Nico teaching her daughter something useless, but then she decides that it is better than videogames (217-18). Nico, the erudite, assiduously works on his translations of Roman texts, immersing himself in epic and comedy (201). He is a throwback to the classical era, and as such, he does not share much in common with his modern wife. Nico’s pursuits of deciphering archaic texts and enthusiasm for teaching a dead language to uninterested teenagers further demonstrates his distance from the way contemporary affective relationships function. Whereas Nico yearns for a passionate, perhaps epic love relationship with his wife, Carmela is conscientious of the fugacity of passionate love and thus refuses to work at preserving

30 Although here I am specifically referencing the relationship between Olivia and Nico, Bridget Anderson’s observation of the relationship between female employers and domestic workers will help to illuminate these power dynamics: “Significantly, domestic work is deeply embedded in status relationships, some of them overt, but others less so. And these relationships are all the more complex because they fall along multiple axes. They are relationships among women, but often women of different races or nationalities—certainly of different classes. They take place in a space that can be intimate, loving and private but that can also be a form of social plumage, demonstrating to visitors the home owner’s comfort and leisure. And the worker, often a migrant without legal protection or proper papers, may depend on the employer for more than her elbow grease” (“Just another Job” 104).
what she considers to be impossible. Feeling rejected as no longer the object of
Carmela’s gaze, Nico yearns to be loved by Carmela like she once did. The narrator notes
how Nico feels now that the words “mi amor” ‘my love’ are directed primarily at Berta,
and no longer at Nico:

Pero poco a poco el significado de las dos palabras había ido
desplazándose, manifestando su polisemia, ya no pertenecían al mismo
campo semántico que Nico, marido, esposo, pareja, amado, pues entraron
a formar parte de otro en el que también cabían bebé, Berta, Tita, niña,
hija, Ber. Y en su contexto semántico ya no se encontraban palabras como
deseo, desnuda, fóllame o así, sustituidas por biberón, cinco lobitos, ajito
o, más recientemente, orinal. Quizá la única palabra que compartían
ambos contextos era “pechos,” un mismo significante para dos
significados totalmente diversos (215-16).

But little by little the meaning of the two words was becoming displaced,
manifesting its polysemy, they no longer belonged to the same semantic
field as Nico, husband, spouse, partner, loved one, well they started to
form part of another one in which baby, Berta, Tita, girl, daughter, Bert
also fit. And in its semantic context words like desire, naked, fuck me or
like this were no longer found, substituted for baby bottle, five little
wolves,31 baby giggles, or more recently, potty. Maybe the only word both
contexts would share was “breasts,” the same signifier for two totally
different meanings.

The words that Carmela uses to describe her relationship with her daughter refer to the
body and bonding—the baby bottle, the five wolves counted on five fingers, and the
toilet. They are examples of Carmela’s love for Berta and not Nico. Sexual imagery such
as breasts is replaced with maternal ones. Her non-reproductive and somewhat
entertaining sexual experience is shared with Max, someone whom she gradually
considers a loser, “un santón en pantuflas” (“a guru in house slippers”) (90), while she
only occasionally has sex with her husband (213).

31 Cinco lobitos is a fun song for children to sing because they can make gestures and count their hands. It
is a game like “Ten Little Indians.”
The virtual intimacy Nico shares with his online chat buddy, Ladydi, is just another example of how intimacy, albeit through the Internet, becomes a significant metaphor of the contemporary era, especially in literature. In contemporary society, non-normative and queer intimacies are explored within and outside family structures. If the traditional sense of the family has indeed succumbed to the reality of a hypermobile and global culture, then the reigning metaphor of the family as the nation becomes somewhat outdated. The image of Spain moves to one that is understood in terms of intimacy with national and non-national others.³²

Although Olivia is not a main actor in the new global Spanish culture, she is part of Spain’s transition from cultural and economic isolation to global integration. Saskia Sassen shows that one aspect distinguishing foreign “low-paid service workers” from professional migrants is that the latter enjoys “hypermobility” (Sassen, “Global Cities” 254), whereas the former operates within “survival circuits” (255). Nico expresses to Olivia his desire to travel to exotic places for leisure, and she responds that her only desire is to return back home (Nunca 27-28). Similarly, Nico tries to convince her that education will bring her upward mobility. He is frustrated that she does not understand: “No entendía; francamente, no entendía por qué se ponía así. Le estaban ofreciendo sufragarle los estudios, regalárselos, y ella era tan orgullosa que prefería un préstamo a un regalo” (“He didn’t understand; frankly, he didn’t understand why she was being like that. He was offering to pay for her studies, to give them to her, and she was so proud that she preferred a loan to a gift”) (222). Nico is not aware that her motivations for money are different from his middle-class aspirations. Olivia is mobile, but in relation to the

³² In the last couple of decades, a large corpus of narrative represented intimate relationships between Spaniards and immigrants, often turning immigrants into fantastic, spectral or flat characters unable to defend themselves from discrimination and exploitation.
market, which functions on the backs of low end service workers (Sassen “Global Cities” 256-57). Moreover, as Lynn May Rivas puts it, “Immigrant women are easily cast into roles that require invisibility, because they already belong to a category that is socially invisible. Furthermore, when care activities are naturalized and essentialized, the work they entail is effectively erased” (Rivas 76). Olivia is in a vulnerable position in relation to her immigrant status, her role as caregiver and object of desire for Nico, and even her own migrant community.

Nico makes Olivia feel “tonta” ‘dumb’ (26) by asking provocative statements and laughing at her ingenuity. Moreover, he casts her into the identity of the buen salvaje ‘the good savage,’ the notion that the native Indian of colonial America was an exotic, but because of his or her innocent connection to the natural state of men, without the materialism that corrupts people, essentially a good savage. When Nico thinks of Olivia, he remarks, “En eso había tenido suerte: era una chica quizá no muy inteligente, pero sí muy honesta. Una mujer muy buena…Daban ganas de protegerla, de ayudarla, y a veces también de abrazarla y besarla, no tanto porque fuese una mujer seductora, sino por esa ingenuidad” (“In that he was lucky: she was a girl, perhaps not very intelligent, but very honest. A good woman…She made him want to protect her, help her, and at times hug and kiss her, not so much because she was a seductive woman, but because of her ingenuity”) (224-25). Moreover, Carmela and Nico are implicated in infantilizing Olivia by having her sleep in Berta’s bed with her. Furthermore, by having to give Berta whatever she wants (15), Olivia has no authority over anyone, not even the child for whom she cares. By making her into a child-like figure, Nico feels obligated to help her with his first-world charity. Olivia’s vulnerability and good savage persona supports the
idea that the third world is backwards or premodern, although Olivia sometimes views Spaniards as savage-like (57). For example, when Olivia observes Carmela and Berta engaging in body waxing, she compares them to monkeys (59). Similarly, she is reminded of pre-Columbian natives when she sees how comfortable Carmela is flaunting her body (57).

One of the most significant differences between Olivia’s culture and what she perceives as Spanish culture is the way intimacy works. Olivia considers that in Spain “había más confianza entre los señores y la gente que trabajaba para ellos. Se trataban de tú…quizá no fuese tan raro que la hubiese besado, era una manera como otra cualquiera de expresar afecto” (“there was more trust between employers and those who worked for them. They used the informal you…maybe it wasn’t so strange that he had kissed her, it was a way like any other to display his affection”) (52). Olivia thinks that she is invading Nico’s intimacy when she enters his personal spaces in the house (26), but in fact Nico slyly takes advantage of intimate situations. He slips in goodnight kisses on the lip (30) and slight caresses on her hips (52), but Olivia thinks that Spaniards just touch more than Ecuadorians (52). Olivia, although uncomfortable with Nico’s advances, is also attracted to him (80) and she does not want to jeopardize her employment.

Nico’s gaze upon Olivia is different from his gaze on Carmela. Giddens explains that “ideas about romantic love were plainly allied to women’s subordination in the home, and her relative separation from the outside world” (43). Nico lies awake thinking of Olivia: “Nico se giró en la cama dispuesto a dormir aún un rato acompañado de esas sensaciones placenteras, a fantasear con Olivia, que lo llamaba, que quería que estuviese con ella” (“Nico turned in the bed ready to sleep a little while more accompanied by
pleasant feelings, what he called, fantasizing about Olivia, that he wanted to be with her”)

(230). If notions of romantic love were traditionally reserved for women, then Nico’s feelings about being in love illustrate his affiliation with “femininity.” He does not perform like a typical Spanish “macho” in the household. Nico is emasculated by his need for intimacy whereas Carmela is empowered by choosing how, when and with whom she engages in intimacy.

Following the metaphor of the Spanish nation and the family, then, the immigrant is the only way to preserve what is left of traditional Spain while also guiding the new multiethnic Spain. Olivia’s presence represents the revision foreign care workers make to the nation-state as both involved in the preservation of traditional family roles and the liberation of Spanish women from domesticity. The irony that Spanish society still calls for mothers to take care of the home and the children even though the economic culture and sustainability of the household in contemporary Spain requires both adults to work outside the home is upheld by the necessary work of underpaid and mostly undocumented immigrant care workers. By giving Berta, Nico, and Carmela each a section of the novel where their interior monologues reveal their preoccupations and contemplations about their purpose in life, the narratological structure Ovejero employs works to critique the success of gender equality and democracy. Although Carmela refuses to be considered an extension of the home, she still needs someone to fulfill that role.

Nico’s feelings for Olivia are connected to the role she performs as an intimate member of the house, not just to the paid housework and caring for Berta she performs. Her implicit duty is to be intimate, since care work involves some depth of attachment to
the family, especially Berta. Anderson demonstrates that the “domestic worker is not just doing a set of tasks but is fulfilling a role. This already suggests that it is not simply her labour power that is being commoditized” (109). Domestic workers are paid to be intimate—to care and feel emotionally attached to the family in addition to their regular work. Domestic workers are supposed to be available for the family. They are paid to be patient, caring, and empathetic (Lutz 55). Since Olivia is described as pretty in a natural way and a virgin, Nico can actively seduce her. Giddens comments, “‘Seduction’ has lost much of its meaning in a society in which women have become much more sexually ‘available’ to men than ever before, although—and this is crucial—only as more equal. Womanising reflects this fundamental change at the same time as it grates against it” (83). Nico’s wife, a sexually confident experienced woman, apparently surpasses him sexually, illustrating Giddens point that: “Since the ‘kill’ of the seducer depends upon destroying virtue, the pursuit loses its principal dynamic. That ‘integrity’ which the seducer sought to despoil, or bring within his power, is no longer the same as sexual innocence, and it is no longer gendered” (Giddens 84). Seduction requires unequal power dynamics, and in this case, Olivia is more vulnerable than Nico, bolstering his traditional male subjectivity.

Nico is obviously not a don juan, but even for him, it is a bonus that Olivia is sexually inexperienced. His power over her is contrasted with his actual vulnerability outside the home and within his marriage. Just because Nico is socio-economically comfortable (Ovejero, Nunca 223), does not mean that his masculinity is secure. Historically, vulnerability is a condition particular to women, since they were relegated to foster positive family sentiments within the home. Nico is attached to the home, his
daughter, his dog, and presently his nanny. In terms of the dichotomies that separate masculinity from femininity, there are some role reversals between Nico and Carmela: when Nico feels bad about making his daughter follow a precise bedtime schedule and Carmela is unapologetic (212-14), when Nico allows his alcoholic father-in-law to see Berta because he misses his granddaughter although Carmela forbids it. Nico remarks, “Carmela tenía razón, y sin embargo esa falta de flexibilidad, de compasión, le resultaba a Nico difícil de aceptar” (“Carmela was right, however this lack of flexibility, of compassion, was difficult for Nico to accept” [203-04]. Similarly, Nico recalls how Carmela can easily let go of negative feelings:

De la ira a la alegría, de la tristeza a la ternura. On/off. Era como una radio en la que se pudiera ir de una emisora a otra sin pasar por estaciones con mala recepción. Mientras que a él le sucedía lo contrario sus estados de ánimo eran como esas frecuencias en las que se confunden voces de varias emisoras, ruido de electricidad estática, alteraciones en el volumen (212).

From fury to happiness, from sadness to affection. On/off. She was like a radio that could go from one station to another without passing through bad reception. While for him, the opposite happened; his states of mind were like those frequencies where the voices and stations are confused, static noise, and changes in volume.

Nico is emotionally insecure whereas Carmela exudes confidence and is mostly unsympathetic. This vulnerability is related to his inability to control his multiple emotions, unlike Carmela who distances herself from them to concentrate on what is practical and efficient. This reversal of traditional gender roles portrays Nico as an emasculated father with no real power to rule as head of the house. Carmela, on the other hand, controls her feelings and makes her own lifestyle choices.

Olivia, as the maid that cleans, cooks and also serves as a passive interlocutor to whom Nico can explain, teach and demonstrate his knowledge. She empowers him to
some degree because her presence helps to restore his sense of masculinity through intimate contact with someone more vulnerable, juvenile, and exotic since she is young, not very well educated and from the jungle. Carmela tells Nico, “Esta chica lo que necesita es que la follen” (“This girl needs someone to fuck her”) (108) and compares her to the helpless Olive Oil of *Popeye*, whose name itself morphologically contains the word “viola” ‘rape’ (158). Even Carmela, who appears to be feminist, refers to the rape of another woman, further illustrating the oppression of the nanny and the lack of any feminist solidarity. Olivia, then, becomes a body to be used for sexual pleasure in addition to her other domestic work. Olivia’s presence in the home as worker, mother, and lover reshapes the Spanish home by reestablishing the traditional patriarchal family so that Nico can feel at home. She is able to comfort Berta through Christian prayer and playing house. Carmela is able to maintain her premarital and prematernal lifestyle without feeling guilty, as long as Olivia serves to buffer Carmela’s sexual adventures and nightlife by providing Nico with eye candy. Paradoxically, patriarchy fits in and is readjusted in the novel when Olivia assumes the “reproductive” labor of the mother/wife so that Carmela can perform her independence and promiscuity. Instead of Nico assuming more responsibilities with housework, cooking and caring for Berta, the couple hires someone that mitigates the burden of caring and cleaning. This leaves the traditional patriarchal structure virtually untouched.

Aware that her husband is attracted to the nanny, Carmela devises a plan for Nico to deflower Olivia (133). Unfortunately, while taking a bath in anticipation of having sex with Nico, Olivia’s heart stops and she drowns (264, 269). Nico finds her and is devastated by her death (268-710). After the ambulance has taken Olivia away and the
police have questioned him, Carmela cuts a sexual adventure short and arrives at the
house (136). She shows no remorse for Olivia’s death and is more preoccupied with
Nico’s pain and the new responsibility of finding a replacement nanny. She repeats “No
pasa nada” (270), a common saying in Spain that negates that any harm could have been
done, and thus releases the perpetrator from blame. “No pasa nada” is like saying, “don’t
worry about it” and, at the same time, “it’s not anyone’s fault.”

After Olivia’s death, the police commissioner suggests that Nico lie about having
hired an undocumented and uninsured immigrant as domestic help because that would
make him guilty of breaking immigration laws: “Le aviso que le pueden buscar la
ruina; y si usted se niega a pagar una cantidad exorbitante, lo más probable es que
intenten sacar el caso por la tele, que se pongan en contacto con una ONG que les
defienda...¿Me sigue? La familia de la chica le va a exprimir” (I warn you that they can
ruin you; and if you refuse to pay an exorbitant amount of money, they will probably try
to take it to TV, they will get in touch with a non-for-profit that will defend them...Do
you follow? The girl’s family is going to ring you dry” [278]). By denying the true nature
of her work in their house, Nico and Carmela could avoid government fines and
indemnities solicited on behalf of Olivia’s family in Ecuador. Hence, she is explained
away as his “mistress,” despite her virginity, to avoid legal ramifications. This refusal to
recognize her as nanny turns her into a guest whose real labor function is disregarded.
She did not really exist as the caring, chaste, and shy nanny that she really was, but is
officially written down as an ordinary foreign sex object.

Two of the characters who gain access to the house, Claudio and Julián, are
saboteurs that disrupt the appearance of marital intimacy. Claudio, Nico’s best student
and a computer whiz, is recruited by Nico to actually downgrade his Macintosh, because Nico wants to download older programs onto his computer (143). Downgrading, rather than upgrading his computer is just another example of Nico being outdated and reluctant to enter modernity, a modernity that puts his masculinity into question. Claudio hacks into Nico’s computer, retrieving the information about his online sexual, virtual life.

Claudio sets up a camera across the street from the house to get Nico on tape, expecting to get his teacher in a compromising position. Before faking his death by drowning his clothes in a nearby lake, Claudio uploads onto the high school’s webpage a video of Nico masturbating at his computer (280). Nico must deal with the shame of his secretive intimacy being exposed to his colleagues and students, the morning after Olivia’s death. This scene demonstrates Fairfield’s observation that “technology is increasingly the medium of social life” (42), and in this case, intimate life throughout the age of information: “Information privacy relates to the circulation of personal information within public and professional domains, information of varying degrees of sensitivity to individuals” (Fairfield 36). Now Nico’s failed masculinity is available to the entire high school population to whom he is supposed to be a role model. Although masturbation is more accepted as natural, the fact that he is marred and exposed as an online masturbator further demonstrates his inability to engage in sexual activity with his wife or even real-life people. Even Nico considers his online flirting shameful because it “era como el recurso de quien, incapaz de atraer a una mujer, se paga una prostituta o va a un peep show o se masturba. Actos sin épica ni lírica” (“was like the recourse of

33 The Spanish male characters are more dependent on women for their self-identity than male immigrant characters are in most of the novels I treat in my dissertation. The crisis of masculinity Spanish men are experiencing suggests that a conceptual transformation of gender roles and a reluctance to adapt to it is taking place in contemporary Spain.
someone, incapable of attracting a woman, pays for a prostitute or goes to a peep shop or masturbates. Acts without epic or lyric proportions”) (226). Nico is obviously not the hero of his ancient epic texts.

Claudio has exposed an image of Nico of which he is ashamed. His presence highlights the contemporary fear of intrusion wherein society seeks the right of privacy more adamantly. Fairfield defines this right:

In particular, a right of privacy secures persons against unwanted intrusions into areas of life that more profoundly touch on who we are and what meaning our lives hold for us. It creates a jurisdiction of personal choice within which one is free to experiment with conceptions of the good life, which may be conventional or unconventional (18).

The right to privacy is a result of the home becoming more public and public spaces becoming more intimate. Accordingly, Nico is exposed to the public the one time he actually masturbates in front of the computer screen, whereas his wife, who engages in many extramarital intimacies, is never exposed. Information technology redefines the private life, so that it too is accessible by strangers. As a spy, Claudio is an intimate stranger of the family, capable of destroying Nico’s reputation in high school. This works however to distract Nico from thinking about Olivia’s death, and it reinforces Nico’s failed masculinity.

In a similar way, Julián, their gardener and moneylender to Olivia, serves as the caretaker for Carmela’s alcoholic father, to make sure he does not do anything stupid while he is on house arrest for verbally abusing Carmela’s mother. By watching over the disruptive father, the harmony of Carmela and Nico’s home space can be maintained. However, we learn that Julián has been stealing from the father and is possibly responsible for mutilating the family’s old dog, Laika. In contrast to Olivia who
regenerates the home and family, Julián is responsible for its disruption and ruin. The opposing roles Julián and Olivia assume in the plot disclose a threatening foreign masculinity capable of destroying the home from the inside and a foreign mother figure working to make the home once again familiar to Spaniards. The death of Olivia hints at the impossibility of recreating a post-civil war gender dynamics, just as the malicious work of Julián betrays a profound distrust of immigrant men.

Ultimately, Julián digs up the body of the family’s dead dog in the backyard, making it impossible for the family to bury their culpability for lying about Olivia’s role in the house so easily. Julián, a compatriot of Olivia who lent her the money to come to Spain in the first place and also had her placed with Carmela and Nico, plans to leave a ransom note in order to recover the money that Olivia owed him. Carmela and Nico lastly must pay for concealing their crime of employing an undocumented immigrant, revealing the conflict between two Spain’s, the new and the old. The democratic European Spain prioritizes the minimum standards established by extra domestic governments such as the EU or the UN for the treatment of employees, whereas in the old Spain, foreign domestic workers exist primarily in relation to their bodies, their affection, and their reproductive work. In the new Spain, domestic and care workers, both male and female, provide a taxable and insurable service for families with children, the elderly and people with special needs. Employers and employees must abide by certain regulations guaranteeing fairness and appropriate conduct. Just as in old Spain, where nannies were still Spanish, the domestic help of today are exploited and vulnerable to the whims of their
employers. Nevertheless, the State can benefit from their presence since employers are required to insure their employees and contribute to their government retirement funds.

Although Olivia came to Spain hoping to take advantage of the domestic’s dream, she is ultimately written into the role of mistress. The denial of Olivia’s real function in the home as caretaker shows that the labor contract trumps the civil marriage contract. Because the institution of marriage is so tenuous in contemporary western society, the appearance of a sound matrimony between monogamous partners is not a priority for Nico and Carmela when facing expensive fines. This denial also shows that Olivia, like many “intimate foreigners,” are trapped between the laws of contemporary hospitality defined by immigration policy and a nineteenth-century logic in which the domestic mistress did not have recourse to justice. To disregard Olivia’s affective and care services and to turn them into sexual services paints the family as self-sufficient in that they did not need an immigrant worker to make their home function. It makes Nico out to be less vulnerable, since his relationship to her is written to be about nothing but sex.

Even at Olivia’s death, the image of a law-abiding family is maintained since the mistress role falls within the acceptable. The mistress, also an intimate of the house/family, falls within the acceptable because, although scandalous, she is only

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34 Before the latest measures of austerity instituted by Mariano Rajoy (president since 2011), it was commonplace for recently fired employees on fixed contracts to receive a significant amount of severance pay. Domestic workers, however, were not routinely compensated for lost wages and were subject to working without any formal contracts, definite or indefinite.

35 The most favorable domestic positions involve cotizando or having one’s employer pay towards retirement. Only those with 15 years of contributions will receive the maximum monthly retirement pay. Sometimes an employer offers two different wages—a significantly reduced one if she has to pay contributions or a more seductive wage that liberates her of paying the high taxes. Unfortunately, too many Spaniards and immigrants choose to have more cash in hand despite the future consequences.

36 According to Escriva and Skinner, many domestic workers share a common aspiration: “Consequently, sooner or later women will want to be reunited with their family by bringing them to their new place of settlement. For this to happen, women first need to become legal residents, then apply for family reunion…and finally to obtain a live-out job, if they wish to be able to live with their dependants” (115).
responsible for temporarily satisfying the libido, whereas the undocumented domestic represents a double criminality for the family. The family takes advantage of Olivia’s legal status and then they lie about it. If this family romance stands for Spain’s presence in relation to global migration and the world market, then Spain’s comfortable economic position during the early twenty-first century has been possible by exploiting its immigrants. By employing Olivia, the family would be charged for their bad citizen behavior, of harboring an unlawful individual and employing her without having insured her, but as a mistress, she can restore national order (albeit temporarily) though the intimacy she provides.

When Claudio exposed Nico’s masturbation and Julián reminded the husband and wife of their secrets by digging up the dead dog and leaving a ransom note, these intimate strangers ultimately make the family pay for their secrets. Ovejero’s Nunca pasa nada ultimately confirms the message that immigrants are both victims and aggressors in the exploitive nature of irregular immigration and that a new global Spain is responsible for pathetic and dangerous masculinities.  

The transversal of the immigrant domestic worker through the Spanish intimate space reveals a paradoxical relationship where foreignness actually complements intimacy because Nico and Carmela feel that having Olivia in their home will release them from parenting duties and will also improve their marriage. Olivia is a familiar object of use since she does the work Carmela would be expected to do. The Spanish family needs the foreign other to make the home function “properly.” Thus, immigration in this novel is not necessarily what reconstitutes family dynamics, but it reveals how Spanish notions of home have changed. Olivia makes these new dynamics feasible—

In chapter two, I will explore more concretely how masculinities function in contemporary Spain.
Carmela’s public and sexual life and Nico’s private virtual life. Perhaps this is due to the fact that families of the global North are getting smaller; women have fewer children; and more grandparents reside in nursing homes. Grandmothers and Spanish migrants took care of the household in the past. Now foreign nannies and maids work for Spaniards belonging to middle and working-class households. They frame the Spanish family by providing childcare, cleaning assistance, affection, and at times, sexual services, although the family has no kinship with, and often, no legal obligation to their caretakers. Olivia’s presence in the home as worker, mother, and lover reshapes the Spanish home by reestablishing the traditional patriarchal family so that the family can function “correctly.”

In this chapter I wanted to emphasize that Spain, maybe as a condition of its uneven modernization, is moving towards new notions of intimacies, intimacies that are not bound to the house, that take place outside the couple-form, that involve non-national others, and that occur in virtual spaces. But at the same time, old school patriarchal norms are still prized even when families engage in non-normative or non-traditional forms of intimacies. In the case of this novel, Nico, the father, struggles with his vulnerable masculinity, so in turn he takes advantage of Olivia, who as a foreign domestic worker is even more vulnerable than he is, but he sees this endeavor as charitable and good.

Carmela, as an independent woman, assumes what might be traditionally referred as a masculine role, since she maintains extramarital sexual relationships and does not like to reconcile her self-identity with motherhood. Their solution to these role reversals is Olivia, since she can fill in for any loss of affect between mother and daughter and also between husband and wife. When the couple lies to protect their own pockets, this
demonstrates Olivia’s precarious situation as an undocumented and uninsured care worker. More importantly, Nunca pasa nada presents a paradox in which the global market and feminism have changed the way families are run and by whom. Domestic workers are recruited to reconcile those new divergences. This reconciliation may lead to a readjustment of the Spanish family that actually leads towards maintaining a form of patriarchy by having domestic workers take up the role of “reproductive” laborers that contemporary Spanish women have renounced. In the case of Ovejero’s Nunca pasa nada, Nico’s crisis of masculinity is alleviated by the presence of Olivia, someone who is more vulnerable than he is.

Although I have used a few sociological texts to show the relationship of foreign domestic workers to their employees, I have taken concepts of this relationship (housekeepers as dirty, the precarious situation of undocumented guest workers, and negative attitudes toward public childcare in Southern Europe) to address a fictional text as symptomatic of the simultaneous development of progressive roles for Spanish men and women while certain traditional gender paradigms persist. I have not wanted to reproduce the idea that the Spanish family in narrative is representative of the nation, because Spain is no longer the highly censored post-civil war society where social criticism could only be expressed via allegories of familial structures. In the literature of the greater half of the twentieth-century, the literary family, and more specifically, the intimate relationships within and outside the family, is indicative of the nation. Whereas the dysfunctional family was indicative of a dysfunctional Francoist society, the intimacy we see now in the novel is related to a new Spain, but one that still struggles
simultaneously with an uneven entry into the democratic global world order and its own conservative desire for an idealized, patriarchal past.

In the next chapter, I continue to explore the intimate relationships shared between Spaniards and immigrants, focusing on how immigration to Spain can be comforting in that the foreigner provides the insecure Spaniard with a feeling of home and importance that can lead to his or hers own self-discovery.
Chapter Two: Homemaking and Masculinity in Pablo Aranda’s *Ucrania*

Homemaking is an unsuccessful enterprise. The home as hearth is the remnant of a nineteenth-century ideal where public and private spaces were artificially separated to maintain some sense of security from an increasingly unfamiliar outside world, as I indicated in the previous chapter. But the home has always been a site of conflict because it depends on the presence of an outside other to establish the difference between home and elsewhere. Even within the home, the intimacy between familiar others can comfort just as much as it stifles. Family members, partners, friends and roommates annoy, scold, and control us, but their gaze reminds us that we exist. Intimate others affect us even when we ignore them. In the home, we are supposed to experience love, but literary history shows us that hate is an equally suitable emotion within an intimate setting. In Sarah Ahmed’s words, “As an investment, hate involves the negotiation of an intimate relationship between a subject and an imagined other, as another that cannot be relegated to the outside” (*Cultural Politics* Ahmed 49). Love and hate are alike because they both express intimate relationships of attachment that seem to bring the image of the self back to oneself via the other. Unfortunately the object of hate is threatening whereas the object of love is desirable. This is the paradox of xenophobia: Hating others involves an intimate attachment to them, not indifference.

Antagonism informs how the home is defined. Home, literally as the place where one dwells and figuratively as the embodiment of belonging, exposes a relationship of power. In both cases the right of others to make the home space *theirs* disturbs us because we must reconsider what is really *ours*. Derrida puts it best when he discusses the undesirable outcome of hospitality: “I want to be master at home […] Anyone who
encroaches on my ‘at home,’ on my ipseity, on my power of hospitality, on my sovereignty as host, I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner, and virtually as an enemy. This other becomes a hostile subject, and I risk becoming their hostage” (Of Hospitality Derrida 53-55). However, in this chapter I show that when the master’s ipseity is already delicate, the stranger can serve to strengthen it. Perhaps the presence of the other is necessary to rebuild a falling house. I take the domestic/foreign paradigm through which political relationships are articulated to the concept of homemaking as nation building to highlight the contributions of foreigners to the new Spain.

As in many nation-states of the North, homemaking and household intimacy increasingly entail the presence of foreigners and, therefore, a certain degree of foreignness within the familiar and familial space, since immigrants often share intimate spaces with Spaniards. In Spanish society, domestic work, construction, agriculture, convenience stores, cheap shops, street markets, Internet cafés, and prostitution have become devalued as “immigrant” work. Eastern European dating/marriage agencies import beautiful women and “Chinese” shops\(^3\) import cheaper products, demonstrating a contemporary consumer mentality different from the self-sufficiency of the past.

Interestingly, even as xenophobic and racist ideologies resurface in democratic Spain, Spaniards require these familiar foreigners to maintain certain standards of living, even lower-middle class ones, because they provide childcare and products required for everyday living. With the decline of the Spanish market and employment rates reaching as high as 20% in Spain in the last four years, the conservative Partido Popular, lead by

\(^3\) The bazaars, similar to dollar stores in the United States, are primarily run and owned by the Chinese as well as Moroccans. The Chinese-owned shops are typically open during the siesta break (from 2pm to 6pm) and on Sundays when most Spanish business are closed. Although cheap shops are often small, there are many of them in any moderate to large Spanish city; one can find anything from beer to undergarments.
the adamant Mariano Rajoy, has argued for a contract by which foreign residents must abide if they want to maintain their legal status. In his plan, legal residents must learn the language and customs of Spain, while maintaining legal employment in order not to exhaust the depleting national unemployment insurance despite a dreadful economy in Southern Europe. The Partido Popularr’s measures against legal and illegal immigration are gaining popularity as Spaniards are worried about foreigners competing for limited national resources. Since the Spanish Civil War and up until the recent economic recession, Spain had become increasingly dependent on foreigners for labor and love.

After the Spanish Civil War, the number of young men was greatly decimated and this fact was widely propagandized by clichéd films, known as españoladas, in which beautiful women search for a good match amidst the scarcity of marriageable men. In the last ten years, these women have primarily been immigrants traveling in busses, trains, boats and airplanes in search of financial security. Even the town halls of rural villages are organizing caravans of women to repopulate desolate rural villages, where the most promising young women have left in hopes of upgrading their circumstances. In fact, dating and nanny agencies are promoting their women in relation to their nationalities and ethnicities since their backgrounds are viewed as synonymous with their personalities and skills. Having spoken with Spaniards who employ foreign women,

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39 Since Rajoy’s election in 2011, there is much less talk in the media about undocumented immigrants. Currently in 2012, I seldom see any stories about shipwrecked African immigrants on the main public access channels because la crisis (the economic recession) is the most newsworthy and marketable event. In my perhaps callous view, this is partly due to the realization that despite hard economic times, young educated Spaniards refuse to work in jobs beneath their status when unemployment compensation can help them save face and partly because the present economic situation makes immigration to Spain less attractive.

40 The United States film, Westward the Women (1951), translated as Caravana de mujeres traces how a caravan of women from Chicago was organized to populate the West and thus, inspire men to settle in the region. Although it is a story about the journey of the enterprising American spirit and the desire to civilize the West under the guise of establishing a happy and loving home, this film was wholeheartedly received, perhaps inspiring Spanish romance comedy films of the era.
have heard a number of racial and ethnic generalizations that inform their decisions concerning whom they should hire. As significant others and housekeepers, female immigrant women from different places of the South join Spanish families and establish themselves in their homes. Even *guiris*, a term used to describe foreigners who are often fair-skinned tourists and students, are welcomed in Spanish households to offset the rising costs of living. In many ways, intimacy and foreignness intersect in quotidian life, but the presence of foreigners in Spanish homes can be unsettling. Recognizing the other often leads to a renegotiation of one’s identity.

In this chapter, I examine Pablo Aranda’s novel *Ucrania* (2006), to reveal that the protagonist’s ability to feel at home is contingent on the presence of a foreign love interest in his life. Belonging and selfhood depend on the stranger’s ability to restore the home through love and companionship. The fostering of community and interethnic kinship intersects with nationality, race and gender to create a dialogue where both sides attempt to negotiate home. This dialogue in *Ucrania*, nonetheless, signals a restoration and redefinition of the prerogatives of masculinity through homemaking. Whereas miscegenation with the immigrant of African or Indian descent involves racially darkening Spanish ethnicity, homemaking with the Eastern European immigrant signifies a union between two European peripheries and the safekeeping of white ethnicity. The problem of mixing is even further delegitimized as the reader learns that Jorge, the protagonist, is biologically half Ukrainian. Elena, his Ukrainian love interest, is

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41 For a discussion of how immigrants are involved in homemaking in film, see Susan Martin-Márquez’s “A World of Difference in Home-Making: The Films of Icíar Bollaín.” The opening scene of Bollaín’s film, *Flores de otro mundo*, begins with a caravan of women traveling to an imaginary Spanish town lacking marriageable women. Ultimately, one of the immigrant women stays and forms one great family with her Spanish husband and his mother. This film obviously dialogues with *Westward the Women* and the Spanish films of the Francoist era.
responsible for creating a home where Western Civilization and Culture is valued and therefore challenges Jorge to learn about the world apart from his immediate surroundings. Elena “elevates” Jorge to a higher status of a civilized Western, white ethnicity.

_Ucrania_ centers on Jorge, a young working-class Malagueñan. Virtually a loser incapable of competing with his best friend for the love of his high school crush and even with his inmate brother for his mother’s affection, Jorge is a good guy who struggles with self-confidence issues. After his coworker introduces him to an online dating service, Jorge creates a profile in which he enhances his socio-economic status to be more appealing in the online dating market. He sends a message to Elena, an attractive 30 year-old woman, who he assumes to be Russian. Elena, an underpaid schoolteacher hoping to find work in Spain to support financially her son in the Ukraine, is able to secure a tourist visa for Germany by lying to the consulate. She continues on to Spain where there is still a need for cheap housekeeping and care for children and the elderly. Jorge offers to give Elena a place to stay, but since he is not really a technical engineer with his own auto shop, Elena must share Jorge’s bedroom in his mother’s house.

Elena’s stay in Jorge’s bedroom makes him feel at home in his mother’s otherwise hostile house. Elena’s warm body permeates his bedroom—which is his whole world—ultimately aiding Jorge to develop a sense of control over his surroundings and a sense of belonging to the real world. His new confidence permits him to move beyond the fictional world of the martial arts film posters that adorn his bedroom walls and, therefore, to grow up. Jorge arranges to marry Elena to facilitate her legal residency and
thus makes sponsoring her son, Viktor, possible. Jorge eventually grows on Elena and she responds to his need for affection by ultimately marrying him for love.

In the novel, the events are internally focalized through different characters, namely Jorge, Elena and Laura, a high school friend of Jorge’s. The free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness interior monologue and short non-chronological chapters illustrate the fragmentary nature of the characters’ identity. All of their hang-ups reveal a desire to find happiness, companionship, and most importantly, create their own notions of home. For each of the main characters, “home” is constituted differently. Jorge’s home is the sense of completeness he feels when he is with Elena, a maternal figure to whom he has become attached. Laura’s home is the place where she does not feel like a stranger, back in her hometown and preferable with someone she is emotionally attached to. Elena’s “home” is her son in the Ukraine, but not the material place where he and her mother live. Eventually, Jorge’s personal growth is proved by his commitment to building a home and a family with Elena, whereas Laura does not get what she desires.

Besides the main characters, other male characters such as Anatoli, Alexander, Julián, Ricardo and Rafa make up the narrative. Ricardo, a former best friend from high school and present boss, is a jerk who constantly endeavors to undermine Jorge’s success and intelligence. Rafa, a cohort, is just as clueless about the world as Jorge, but ironically, makes a point to give Jorge advice about women, dating and his career, which Jorge eventually rejects. Julián, Jorge’s brother, partakes in a bank robbery supposedly to protest his status as a proletariat worker victimized by a capitalist market. But in reality, Julián is just an ignorant hothead enticed by the charisma and communist rhetoric of his
bookworm coworker. Anatoli, a Ukrainian burglar, is a menacing immigrant figure who works for Alexander and el Polaco, mafiosos who live in Elena’s home city, Lvov. By making the three male Ukrainian characters disproportionately violent in relation to Jorge, his friends, Rafa and Ricardo, and even his convict brother, Spain appears vulnerable. Likewise, the fact that Jorge is from Málaga, Spain, a costal port city susceptible to undocumented immigration by way of the Mediterranean, and not from the centrally located Madrid, further shows Jorge’s position in the periphery just as the Ukraine is at the other periphery of Europe. Nevertheless, Elena and Jorge’s relationship proves that, through companionship, cultural difference can be overcome and this liaison mutually benefits individuals and society. Yet, again, the female immigrant is a “civilizing” force, whereas the male immigrants are always violent threats.

Jorge bears similarities with Paco from La otra ciudad, another of Aranda’s novels set in Malaga, in which the Spanish male protagonist falls in love with an immigrant, Nadia. In that novel, his object of desire is Moroccan but her fair skin and dark eyes and hair reminds Paco of a gypsy girl he once knew. Because gypsies are a part of the Spanish imaginary or “insider others” as Isabel Santaolalla states in “Ethnic and Racial Configurations in Contemporary Spanish Culture” (59), Nadia does not appear to disrupt Spanish subjectivity in the way that a more distant exotic other would. For Santaolalla, gypsies are part of shaping Spanish heritage, even if they are considered others. Since gypsies are Spanish, they are not as foreign. Nadia’s Moroccan nationality, however, evokes the contemporary conflict of hostile borders—geographical and religious.42 The urban backdrop of Muslim immigration in Malaga and the city’s own

42 For an exploration of the literal and figurative borders existing between Morocco and Spain, see Parvati Nair’s Rumbo al Norte: inmigración y movimientos culturales entre el Magreb y España. I will explore
medieval Arab past are linked to connect the circular coexistence between Moors and Christians, Nadia and Paco. The baby Nadia is carrying represents the culmination of this coexistence in spite of the aggressiveness of the city backdrop.

Emily Ann Knudson-Vilaseca, in her dissertation “Embodying the un/home: African immigration to Portugal and Spain,” illustrates how the uncanny relationship between Paco and Nadia functions. Knudson-Vilaseca argues that, although previous scholarship shows Moroccan immigration is thought of as “undesirable and unwanted” because it is “unhomely—they make their Spanish home feel violated,” by making Nadia physically similar to a Spanish woman, (she speaks Spanish and is not a practicing Muslim), her presence creates a façade that breaks down borders, the real ones of cities (geographical difference between Morocco and Spain) and cultural ones of language and religion (390). Knudson-Vilaseca adds that borders are simultaneously maintained since Nadia’s physical appearance reaffirms that this union is only possible because of her likeness to a woman to which Paco had been attracted. According to Knudson-Vilaseca’s reading, Paco’s experience with Nadia is of familiarity and strangeness, but her presence does not represent the “frightening ghosts” that constitutes an uncanny experience. That is, Knudson-Vilaseca maintains that, contrary to previous scholarship on Moroccan characters in fiction, Aranda’s character does not represent what Flesler calls “the return of the Moor,” in which contemporary Moroccan immigration is understood in terms of the medieval Moors returning to invade Spain and transform society. In my reading of the

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Moroccan immigration in further detail in chapter 3 when I examine orientalism. Daniela Flesler’s text *The Return of the Moor: Spanish Responses to Contemporary Moroccan Immigration* provides a significant historical framework for comparing Maghrebian immigration to Spain with the presence of the Moors in medieval Spain and Susan Martin-Márquez’s *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity* addresses the relationship between Spain and Islamic-Africa as constantly changing depending on whether the consolidation of national identity requires reifying a fixed border or accepting the Muslim other as part of Spain’s cultural identity.
novel, Nadia may not represent a ghostly Moor either, but she does bring up the issue of ethnicity in Spain, because according to Paco, Nadia reminds him of a gypsy girl that used to live in the same apartment building. The uncanny may not be the correct term to employ, because I do not perceive that the Moorish girl unsettles Spaniards, but her gypsy aesthetic probably stirs suspicion or criticism. Her skin color contains just enough brown for her Spanish identity to be questioned. She is not scary, but definitively recognizable as other.

I mention Aranda’s earlier work because it sets up certain tropes that are present in many narratives about Moroccan immigrants—the Arab patrimony from medieval Spain and ethnic difference, especially in southern Spain. I will not expound on the literary allusions to Moorish Spain until chapter three, but it bears to point out here that, in *Ucrania*, the inclusion of a Ukrainian immigrant worker helps to distance Spain from Africa and position the Ukraine further from Russia, the former USSR. Additionally, with the Ukraine and Spain at two different peripheries of Europe, Aranda creatively exposes the myth of white Europeanness and of whiteness. In both *La otra ciudad* and *Ucrania*, the women are not brown or black-skinned, which would physically make them more obvious outsiders, but there is something ever so slightly different that turns them into strangers. In *Ucrania*, ethnic difference is probably more apparent since Elena is whiter and blonder than the average Andalusian Spaniard. Whereas in *La otra ciudad*, Nadia and Paco’s cohabitation reveals a reconciliation of the historical, cultural and even ethnic borders between Morocco and Southern Spain, in *Ucrania*, the most salient element is that new liaisons with Eastern Europeans are being created that both threaten and strengthen Spanish institutions, particularly the home.
Perhaps Pablo Aranda’s fixation with how intimate foreigners reshape Spanish identity can be found partly in his biography. Aranda (Málaga, 1968) was a teacher of literature and language arts in Málaga and the University of Oran in Algiers. He also worked with the mentally ill and juvenile delinquents before making his name as an award-winning novelist (Campo Cortés). Aranda’s debut novel, *La otra ciudad* (2003) was a finalist for the Premio Primavera de Novela; his novel *Desprendimiento de rutina* (2003) won the Premio Novela Corta Diario Sur, and *Ucrania* received the Premio Málaga de Novela. According to Aranda, *Ucrania* is a social novel that seeks to examine “la gente que no cumple con las convenciones” (“the people that don’t follow conventions”) (Mellado). For Aranda, “Las casualidades me gustan y me divierten” (“I like chance and I enjoy it.”) (Mellado). In the novel, his use of chance and parallel stories helps him to illustrate the considerable number of citizens and immigrants who are sacrificing to pursue new destinies.

Eastern European immigration to Spain is particularly unique because there is no postcolonial or specific cultural tie from which cultural theorists can draw connections. In fact, post-Civil War Spain vilified communism and the countries that adopted its ideology. After the fall of the USSR, former soviet countries were forced to deal with government corruption and high unemployment rates. Western European countries with stronger markets, such as Germany and Austria received a number of Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Romanians, Turks and Poles, just as Southern European countries’ economies began to strengthen. More specifically, the Ukraine, the European continent’s largest country, gained its independence in 1991, but unfortunately an eight-year
recession followed. The economy began to recover, but the country suffers from a surprisingly high mortality rate, low birth rate and the migration of Ukrainians to other European nations.

In Spain, Eastern Europeans typically work in construction, the hospitality industry, and domestic work (Generalitat Valenciana). As far as the domestic sphere is concerned, there appears to be some anxiety concerning the criminality of Eastern Europeans who work in Spanish homes due to the phenomenon of *asaltos a chalets* ‘armed attacks in suburban houses.’ This is a very organized type of armed burglary in *chalets*, middle and upper class houses located on the outskirts of the city. High gates usually protect the houses or they have security systems in place, but the windows are not barred like many first floor urban flats. Often, the media shows these crimes as being committed by Eastern European immigrants linked to transnational mafias. There is an abundance of news reports of Ukrainian, Russian, and Romanian domestic workers supplying the mafia with the keys and security codes to enter the houses in which they work or the blurred images of foreign men shamelessly speaking about their exploits as armed burglars. In this case, the Spanish house is not seen as being haunted by medieval ghosts or postcolonial specters, but attacked by real armed bodies.

Whereas African immigration is the most visible due to its large demographics and the racialization of black and brown skinned immigrants, Eastern European immigration is hard to address because it is recognizable in a different way. Registered organizations, consulates, cultural centers and Slavonic-Spanish online dating agencies have been established, mainly in cities such as Málaga and Barcelona, but Spaniards might pass them by on the street without immediately noticing their difference.
Seemingly, the connection between the Ukraine and Spain is weak, but after a deeper examination of the novel, one realizes that, for Aranda, the Ukraine serves a metaphor for Spain. Whereas the rhetoric about the Orient gave Europeans the license to envision their own fantasies through travel literature otherwise repressed in nineteenth-century society, the Ukraine—metonym for Eastern Europe in the novel—provides a platform for underscoring Spain’s marginality in Western Europe. Eastern Europe is not the negative of Western Europe as with orientalism, but a concept through which the author can talk about Spain. Moreover, instead of civilizing the former USSR, the Spanish protagonist can learn about culture from the distant other. Homemaking can civilize Spain, or at least Jorge, through an intimate institution that educates its citizens.

Although Elena and Jorge have never been sexually active nor has Elena agreed to perform any affective roles, Jorge becomes enamored with Elena’s sensory aspects and intrigued by her difference. Jorge’s uncanny experience with his object of desire recasts his own subjectivity not as the totalizing white Western subjectivity of which Edward Said speaks, but more as Homi Bhabha’s “recognition of difference and disavowal of it” (74-5). Still we must consider what “difference” means in the context of the novel. Elena is white and she speaks Spanish perfectly, although the reader never knows how prominent her accent is. The narrator only makes note of difference by mentioning her education level and Jorge’s recognition that his whiteness is different than that of the Ukrainian people. Elena is different from Jorge because she has a university degree and

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43 In chapter three, I will show how orientalism works to imagine Moroccan immigrants as culturally opposite from Western cultures such as contemporary Spain, while at the same time, the orientalist otherness seems familiar and intimate. Orientalism evokes Spain’s own otherness.
can speak Spanish and German fluently. In this way, her “skin/race/culture” are familiar to Jorge, but not exactly the same.

When Jorge is in the Ukraine searching for Elena after she has moved out of his apartment, the experience in a foreign land is unsettling. The culture shock he experiences is linguistic, but he cannot figure out why he, of the same skin color, could be imagined as “different” “strange” from the native Ukrainians on the train:

Un tren, Ucrania es un tren lento donde la gente le miraba, por qué, en qué notan que no soy de aquí, se preguntaba Jorge, cuál es la diferencia si ellos son blancos y yo también. La piel blanca y los ojos oscuros, grises, fíjos en Jorge que mientras piensa habla en voz alta, solo, sin darse cuenta, apartando en comprender que lo ofrecido por ese hombre en un vaso de plástico es vodka, para que él beba (9).

[A train, the Ukraine is a slow train where the people look at you, why, how do they know that I am not from here?, Jorge wondered, what is the difference if they are white and me too? White skin and dark eyes, gray ones, were fixed on Jorge, who while thinking was speaking out loud, to himself, without realizing it, just now understanding that what was offered by that man was a plastic cup of vodka, for him to drink].

Of course he stands out. A man talking to himself in a strange language in public is reason enough to stare. His difference is not based on more than just skin color or language, but also on social pathology. Crazy people speak aloud to themselves in indecipherable languages. When one of the passengers extends his arm to offer him a piece of cake and vodka, he is too wrapped up in his ramblings to even realize the hospitality being extended to him:

Acompaña sus gestos con ese murmullo incomprendible para los otros, no quiere vodka, lo que me faltaba a mí, que no, emborracharme si no sé ni dónde estoy, que ni entiendo las señales con el nombre de las estaciones, letras raras, jeroglíficos, moro, o chino (9).

[He accompanies his gestures with that incomprehensible murmur for the others, he doesn’t want vodka, it’s the last thing I need, I said no, getting drunk when I don’t even know where I’m at, I can’t even understand the
signs with the names of the train stations, strange letters, hieroglyphics, Moorish, Chinese”]

Jorge is out of his element. His rejection of the alcohol, of inebriation, relates to his fear of being vulnerable and having little control over his competence in finding Elena’s town and humiliating himself among strangers. Alcohol would make him more vulnerable than he already feels. By not understanding the linguistic codes, he cannot understand the maps and train timetables necessary to get to his destination. He equates the Ukrainian writing system (similar to other Eastern Slavonic languages) to absolutely distinct forms of “strange letters”—Arabic and Chinese. This contiguous grouping of Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and Southeast Asia illustrates Jorge’s ignorance of geography and language. Since in everyday Spanish, “moro” can colloquially refer to any kind of Muslim, and Chinese to almost any person with minute or no eyelid creases, this stream of conscious rambling actually sets up an orientalized dichotomy between Western Europe’s Roman patrimony and other distant geographies where people drink vodka in the train as if it were beer. Thus, the Ukraine is orientalized, not in the sense of associating it with exotic perfumes, colors, and emasculated men, but in the sense that it is dichotomized as being a region unlike Western Europe.

This idea is epitomized in the very first line of the novel: “Ucrania es un trozo de bizcocho envuelto en papel de estraza” (9). [The Ukraine is a piece of cake wrapped up in parchment paper]. To compare a country to a piece of cake that is wrapped in parchment paper shows that Jorge thinks of the country as something edible, decomposable, delectable and tangible and can be preserved by a flimsy piece of paper for later consumption. The Ukraine is not a piece of meat, which might give it a masculine or primitive quality, but rather a homemade treat mixed and baked in
someone’s kitchen. In one way, this metaphor turns the Ukraine into a feminine geographical space, and as a piece of cake, it positively positions the Ukraine as civilized for its capacity to produce complex pastries.

Jorge does not represent a consolidated Western subjectivity because there are so many fragments that make up his subjectivity. Jorge is not economically successful as an entry-level mechanic who is only qualified to change automobile tires (42). He still lives with his mother who spends the day watching television, obsessively eating sunflower seeds, and complaining (106, 167). He does not know his father (48, 281-3) and he escapes his reality by imagining himself as the hero in Kung-Fu films (93, 111-2) or surfing the net at the cybercafé (24). Jorge even loses his job when he impulsively leaves for the Ukraine (276, 278). The descriptions of the Ukraine and Elena position him as an active explorer, thus a significant person, but at the same time, they also illustrate his inadequacies and failures (23). Although the Ukraine is an edible bizcocho, he is linguistically unable to negotiate a piece, which excludes him from belonging. In addition, Elena is attractive, making Jorge appear to be in possession of a prize wife (104), but since she is smarter than he is, he appears less intelligent. In both the Ukraine and Spain, he feels inadequate. Only when he shared his room with Elena did he feel confident (78). Still, the roles Eastern Europeans are perceived to perform in this novel indicate building up and destroying Spain. Whereas Elena’s motherly care toward Jorge and the children of her employers suggest taking care of Spanish citizens, her hostile male counterparts burglarize the spaces where global enterprise takes place—the industrial park. The menacing foreigners undermine the (re)productive services Elena provides in Spanish homes.
In the novel, Anatoli is an “asaltador en chalets” (house burglar) and hitman. Anatoli forcibly breaks into Spanish homes while families are sleeping, by climbing the walls and trees to invade their seemingly protected spaces, or by entering with a key strategically acquired from an insider (117). He constantly thinks about violent acts and even kills a Spanish construction worker, who refers to Anatoli as “English,” from his apartment window because he was annoyed by the noise of the machine (144-5). This undesirable immigrant effectively murders the presumably hardworking Spaniard who is responsible for repairing the city. Anatoli is not preoccupied with killing an innocent man, but with the expensive bullet he wasted in carrying out an unplanned act of violence. Furthermore, his accomplices’ violent enterprise reflects ambitious entrepreneurial immigrants who acquire what they desire by destroying Spanish buildings and builders. Anatoli, Alexander and El Polaco carry out the armed robbery of the industrial yard’s bank in which Jorge’s brother is involved (91). Anatoli and his accomplices appear to have entered Spain through some deceitful means, just as his accomplices tried to use Jorge to get them into Europe as professional athletes. Since international hospitality welcomes promising athletes, even countries with strict immigration policies can become accessible. In the novel, this immigration loophole leaves Spain vulnerable to violence and theft. The three Eastern European male characters—Anatoli, El Polaco, and Alexander—have entered Spain, and Western Europe in general, through transnational criminal activity. When Jorge goes to the Ukraine in search of Elena, Alexander was almost able to bribe Jorge into sponsoring him and his associates as scouted players for Jorge’s nonexistent fencing team (53). Surprisingly, Jorge was able to renege without being murdered, because his Ukrainian
women, Elena and her mother, tell him how to get away. Their ability to keep him out of danger and possibly keeping Alexander from entering Spain to run an illegal business shows their desire to protect Jorge and Spain from danger. The fact that the mafiosos want to use fencing as a cover for their illegal activity, fits with Jorge’s fantasy of being worth as much as his namesake, St. George, who slew the dragon (94).

Jorge’s decisions to begin an online friendship with Elena who resides in the Ukraine, to accommodate her at his mother’s flat, to search for her in the Ukraine when he thinks she has left Spain, and to ask her to marry him illustrate his desire to make a home with her. Jorge’s homemaking is a strategic activity. Michel de Certau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, points out that daily practices are tactical decisions that reshape spaces:

> Many everyday practices (talking, reading, moving about, shopping, cooking, etc.) are tactical in character. And so are, more generally, many “ways of operating”: victories of the “weak” over the “strong” (whether the strength be that of powerful people of the violence of things or of an imposed order, etc.), clever tricks, polymorphic situations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike (xix).

The everyday practices Jorge experiences living with his mother have not provided him with a sense of home. His mother sits in front of the television all day showing little affection or concern for Jorge. Although Jorge pays the mortgage, his mother does not respect him or considers his ideas. She appears to care more for Jorge’s older brother who is currently in jail for participating in a robbery at his factory job, instigated and planned by a sabotaging Ukrainian coworker, Anton. Jorge’s desire to build a loving home and family with Elena is related to the lack of feeling at home with his mother. The defective Spanish mother is blamed for engendering two male losers: a convict and a grown-up child.
In addition to the lack Jorge already feels because of his brother’s absence, his mom invites strangers, study abroad students, to rent his brother’s room for extra income. The family’s dependence on foreigners for economic sustainability turns the home into a business. According to Mireille Rosello in *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*, this enterprise of hospitality is an imitation of the real thing:

The commercial logic that governs hotels and inns, restaurants and coffee shops is a very specific form of hospitality: it may be said that that type of hospitality mimics the ‘real’ one, that it imitates the signs of generosity the better to justify an exchange of goods that continues to seduce customers precisely at the moment it forgets that they are paying for the attention they receive, for the comfort they are able to indulge in, sometimes in the midst of poverty (34).

This false hospitality motivated by income does not satisfy Jorge’s affective needs, but Elena does. Once Elena has left his bedroom to live in her apartment, her absence depresses Jorge, making his own room an uncomfortable space. For Jorge, Elena’s presence is needed for his emotional comfort. Jorge’s bedroom, the intimate space he shared with Elena while she was looking for a job as a domestic worker, is not comfortable without Elena’s presence.

Una casa sin libros. Una habitación con una cama, un armario y una silla, sin mesa, sin el olor de Elena.
No desprendía la presencia de Elena un aroma fabuloso, una esencia exquisita, más bien un olor denso, pesado, oscuro, como de abrigo húmedo, un olor neutro, apegado a ella, señal inequívoca de su paso.
Una habitación como una celda, una cama vacía, un hombre que se gira sobre sí mismo para captar una panorámica completa de su dormitorio (29).

[A house without books. A bedroom with a bed, a closet, and a chair without a table, without the smell of Elena.
It didn’t give off Elena’s presence as a fabulous aroma, an exquisite essence, but more of a dense odor, heavy, dark, like a wet coat, a neutral odor, attached to her, an unequivocal sign of her presence.
A bedroom like a cell, an empty bed, a man that spins around to capture a complete panoramic view of his bedroom.]
Elena’s presence is described by her smell. Because Jorge compares her to a wet coat, instead of the fragrance of perfume typically expressed in romantic expressions, Elena is not the exotic oriental figure we seen in passages describing beautiful foreign women. The image in this passage evokes a woman as a clothing item that protects Jorge’s body from the cold but, paradoxically, its wetness has an adverse effect, giving a chilling sensation. This smell by which Jorge identifies Elena gives him a sense of protection and neutrality. She is a neutral smell in contrast to a fragrant exotic smell. She is not the fetish object of desire capable of seducing the colonizing male figure. Elena, although beautiful according to Jorge and his male friends, effectively seduces Jorge’s mind. She is responsible for him expanding his knowledge and literally discovering new geographies. Elena had populated his room with books and now without them, he feels less cultured. Elena’s books, just like her smell, protected and inspired him to seek knowledge. Elena sparked his curiosity, making learning a new part of his daily life. Without Elena, he is back in the world where he feels insecure. The room, just like Jorge, is incomplete and insecure without Elena’s presence. The room is like a cell because it is empty; it lacks Elena and any décor that would make it truly home-like. The panoramic look he takes emphasizes the attention he places on photographs and films. Jorge’s thoughts about moving or still pictures suggests that he is not able to deal with the reality before his own eyes. The characters in the films he consumes and the dated photos he views give him the settings with which he can imagine a more rewarding life.

Jorge’s fixation with Elena highlights his sensitivity. Although she is attractive, for Jorge, the intangible senses that constitute her presence positively affect his self-esteem. Besides Elena’s smell, her voice hypnotizes him.
Elena es su olor. Una respiración que cambia. Un cuerpo cálida. Ahora que Julián no está, que los ronquidos suyos no acechan las noches de Jorge, éstas son mundos completos, habitáculos donde no falta nada, momentos plenos. Ella duerme, su respiración lo anuncia, la delata. Jorge no se atreverá a buscarla con la mano, hacer tangible esa proximidad caliente, esa respiración sosegada. Atrás las últimas palabras, los últimos susurros. Cuando avanza la noche, toma cuerpo la voz de Elena, acumulada densidad, y son esos minutos antes de alcanzar el sueño, esa conversación lenta, entrecortada, íntima, lo más pleno de una noche plena en la que Jorge no necesita buscar otros mundos, otras vidas (78).

[Elena is her smell. A breath that changes. A warm body. Now that Julian isn’t here, that his snoring doesn’t threaten Jorge’s nights, these are complete worlds, living quarters where nothing is lacking, complete moments. She sleeps, her breath announces it, it gives her away. Jorge would not dare to look for her with his hand, to make her hot closeness tangible, a calm breath. After the last words, the last whispers. When the night advances, Elena’s voice takes shape, accumulated density, and in these minutes before she falls asleep, this slow conversation, labored, intimate, the most complete of a full night in which Jorge does not need to look for other worlds or other lives.]

Elena as a smell, a hot body, and a voice emphasizes her physicality. She is not a doll, one of the posters that adorn his room, or the newspaper photograph that he retains of his brother, but a subject that returns back his own subjectivity. Elena’s real-life image and words give him enough information for him to narrate his own present, and not a fantasy one. Even as Elena treats these nightly conversations unemotionally, for Jorge they are sensual experiences. The unintelligible words Elena utters before falling asleep ultimately construct the precise space Jorge desires. Her presence as a foreigner in Jorge’s intimate space is responsible for creating Jorge’s sense of place and existence, even if it is fleeting. He does not have “to look for other worlds, other lives” because the couple’s nightly routine has built Jorge a home out of his bedroom (78). To some degree, Jorge takes advantage of Elena’s vulnerability as an undocumented immigrant by turning her into his companion, but Elena is not without agency, because she is resourceful. Elena
only agrees to marry Jorge to obtain her permanent residency, although Jorge has hopes of a genuine romantic relationship from the beginning of their platonic relationship.

Jorge’s attraction to Elena is Oedipal in that her maternal presence provides him with a sense of belonging and identity, but the process of homemaking, of maintaining that attachment is his ultimate goal. Similarly, homemaking is a way for Jorge to work through a failed masculinity and thus gain self-confidence. According to R.W. Connell in *Masculinities*, hegemonic masculinity involves “the configuration of gender practices which embodies the currently accepted answer to the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77). Furthermore, Connell emphasizes “true masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men’s bodies—to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body” (45). Sport, similar to sexual conquest, reveals the “highly specific skills” one must possess to participate in the “competition and hierarchy among men” (54). However, Jorge does not establish himself as a legitimate upholder of patriarchy and male dominance through the use of his body. There are no physical descriptions of Jorge and no apparent phallic symbols that might reflect the “true masculinity” of which Connell speaks (45).

Interestingly, Jorge is an automotive mechanic, but the extent of his professional duties is changing tires. Cars are powerful instruments that transport people and he is similarly involved in providing mobility for Elena as an undocumented immigrant. Jorge is in the most inferior position, even under his friend Ricardo, who is a technical engineer, a rank below professional engineer.44 He works under the man who had always

44 An *ingeniero técnico* would have the equivalency of an Associate’s or level 1 Bachelor’s degree depending on the credit whereas an *ingeniero* receives a *licenciatura*, which is equivalent to a Bachelor of
competed with him for the attention of Jorge’s high school crush, Laura. Jorge’s job is “masculine” because it involves machinery, speed and skill, but in the post-industrial economy, Jorge continuously performs the uncreative and repetitive job of changing tires for a menial salary. Jorge is just a worker who follows directions from his superiors. Although he participates in the mobility of machines and people, he is just a minor actor and a result of the increasing demand for faster and cheaper service.

Connell further shows how that which constitutes hegemonic masculinities is changing, just as gender and social practices change, giving legitimacy to new norms. Although I agree that hegemonic masculinity definitions are changing with the times, I do not support Connell’s groups of masculinity patterns: hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization (77-79) because they set up a hierarchy of masculinity based on heterosexual men’s relationship to women, where their dominance over women is what secures their hegemonic status. Actually, the novel illustrates that Jorge does not fit into any of these configurations. Subordinating women, being feminized by other men, complying with men to reap the benefits of hegemony and being completely excluded from hegemonic masculinity do not define Jorge’s masculinity. In some instances he resembles the subordinate masculinity, the configuration to which homosexual and feminized masculinities are relegated according to Connell’s descriptions, since he is emotionally affected by Elena’s presence. However, that relation would not offer a productive theoretical framework with which to explore his masculinity.

Science in the United States higher education system. This shows that Ricardo is not as significant as he would like to portray himself to be, since having an Associate’s degree is not as remarkable in Spanish society as it is in the United States, where the majority of young men and women have attended at least three years of university.
As I explored in chapter one, the legitimacy of patriarchy is problematic in light of the changing notions of intimacy and the roles women perform in contemporary Spain. If new ways of understanding patriarchy and dominance are occurring, then the premise of hegemonic masculinity must be reconsidered. Not only are new hegemonies of masculinities challenging old values as Connell argues (77), but old values function on the same plane as new ones without ever really replacing the old ones. In chapter one, I showed how women’s sexual liberation and non-hegemonic masculinity can be complicit with patriarchy by taking advantage of the foreign domestic worker. In this chapter, I complicate Jorge’s masculinity to show what allegorical significance his character might have in relation to a multicultural and global Spain. Jorge, more cowardly than St. George and clumsier than his friends, is not an Iberian macho outperforming other national characters. He just makes do with what he has, until Elena inspires him to do more. Perhaps then, a multicultural society inspires Spain to be worthy of its place in the world.

Increasingly, access to information technology is associated with power and dissolving national borders. Once his coworker introduces him to online dating, writing Elena messages becomes the highlight of his day. Jorge lies about his occupation, purporting himself as a successful engineer. The picture of himself that information technology allows him to create gives him a sense of confidence and a feeling that he can compete for Elena’s attention within the culture of online dating. This illustrates Arjun Appadurai’s concept of “technoscape,” which refers to the rapid, yet uneven movement of all kinds of technologies throughout the globe. Thus, Jorge is able to think outside of the nation-state. However, his ignorance of geography does not let him get beyond Elena
as a “Russian” woman. They email each other regularly; Elena responds in long
thoughtfully composed letters, while Jorge’s writing is representative of his education
level. He writes to her, “He buscado Rusia en un mapa pero no he encontrado tu ciudad,
es que tenía un poco de prisa y no me podía entretener, pero mañana voy a mirarlo otra
vez” [I’ve looked for Russia in a map but I haven’t found your city, it’s that I was in a
hurry and I couldn’t get distracted, but tomorrow I’m going look at it again] (85). The
Internet is a “technoscape” and Jorge cannot make sense to which nation-state she
belongs. In Jorge’s reasoning, all Eastern Europe is frozen in a Soviet Union imaginary.
Before traveling to the Ukraine, Jorge constantly confuses nationalities: Chinese and
Japanese, Mexican and Ecuadorian, and Ukrainian and Russian, because he, like most of
the characters in the novel, is ignorant and indifferent to recognizing difference. After
having housed Elena in his bedroom, he begins to realize the effects of his ignorance:

Qué más da si Ucrania o Rusia o internet. Internet es un país muy grande
donde te puedes asomar y ver todo, pero hay que tener cuidado: yo me
asomé y me caí. Elena podría haberme amado, aunque yo no supiera
idiomas, aunque no tuviera libros (24).

[Who cares if the Ukraine or Russia or the Internet. The Internet is a very
big country where you can lean over and see everything, but you have to
be careful: I leaned over and fell. Elena could have loved me, although I
didn’t know languages, although I didn’t have books.]

To call the Internet a country gives it a geography and turns it into a nation-state, but
rather than being a description of a homogenized space, it is a plural country where
people speak different languages and have diverse cultural competencies. Jorge connects
the Internet’s largeness to his insecurity, because he is not a valuable member of this
“very big country” known as the Internet. He looks onto the Internet as if looking through
a window and cannot keep his balance. This describes not only the vulnerabilities that
openness to the world implies, but also his lack of worldly knowledge, which makes him unprepared to compete for Elena’s love. His vertigo in cyberspace further suggests the inability to imagine his place in a hazy future.

Although I take Appadurai’s concept of the “technoscape” as that which complicates national borders, I believe that, in the case of this novel, nationality is individually defined in relation to one’s idea of home. Everyone’s notion of home is different. Elena is an attractive young woman and obviously intelligent and educated, but she needs Jorge for her permanent residency in Spain. Marrying him will allow her to bring her son to Spain. For Elena, her son is her home and her country: “Viktor, mi hijo, mi principio. Eso es Ucrania, Ucrania es Viktor. Pero es que eso soy yo también; yo soy Viktor” [Viktor, my son, my beginning. This Ukraine, Ukraine is Viktor. But it’s that I’m that too; I am Viktor] (122). But towards the end of the novel, when Elena and Jorge have begun to make a life together, she slips up and calls her son Jorge: “Ucrania no es un país: es un estado de ánimo, una situación, un conjunto de fotos gastadas, movidas, la comida de mamá, el chillerío de los niños al salir de colegio cuando recojo a Jorge. Cuando recojo a Jorge. Sonrió Elena al darse cuenta de que había confundido a Jorge con Viktor” [Ukraine isn’t a country: it’s an emotion, a situation, a stack of worn-out, lively photos, mamma’s food, the shouting of children when they get out school when I pick up Jorge. When I pick up Jorge. Elena laughed when she realized that she had confused Jorge with Viktor] (263). I think all mothers mix up names, but in this text, Elena is identifying home with Jorge just as she does with her son. This shows how national identification is more of an affective attachment than belonging to a particular geography. The narrator’s insistence on linking Elena’s maternity with home can be read as a gesture
that strips her of her individuality, as she can only define herself in relation to her offspring. Then, by mixing up Jorge and Viktor, her identity is connected to the ones for whom she feels affection and must take care of, thus infantilizing Jorge. If the Ukraine is her son and she is her son, then her Ukrainian identity is also negotiated through maternity. Her motherly affection for Jorge further suggests Jorge’s asexuality or inaction. Furthermore, Elena’s national identification with her son and Jorge’s sensory identification with Elena both reveal that making a home outweighs one’s allegiance to one’s country. For this reason, Elena does not necessarily identify with a country, but with people. For Elena, homemaking is survival:

Yo busco en España calor, como los cachorros de los que habló aquel profesor, cachorros que pretenden el lomo cálido de la madre, la teta. España es una teta, un pecho enorme que yo reclamo. ¿Qué es esto sino enfriamiento, vivir como vivo, si al menos no estuviera Viktor, pero claro que está, y él no se merece esto, él busca calor, mi teta, mi lomo cálido, pero yo siento frío, qué es, si no, la desesperación, y persigo en España templar mi lomo para calentar a Viktor que a su vez es el calor de mi vida (170).

[I look for warmth in Spain, like the puppies that a professor talked about, puppies that try to get at the warm haunches of their mother, the boob. Spain is a nipple, a big breast that I claim. What is this but a chilling, to live like I live, if at least Viktor wasn’t there, but of course he is, and he doesn’t deserve this, he is looking for warmth, my nipple, my warm haunches, but I feel cold, what is that, if not desperation, and I continue warming my haunches in Spain to heat Viktor who at the same time is the warmth of my life.]

The passage illustrates that home is traditional in the sense that it involves warmth and attachment and it links Elena to the mother-nation metaphor. Spain is the mother of all mothers—a gigantic canine nipple—giving Elena the sense of home she needs for her own son. Of course the author uses a female dog for a simile of Spain instead of a more
neutral image of motherhood. By comparing Spain to a bitch—literally a female dog and more reductively to a nipple—the author subtly repeats the misogynist discourse of post Civil-war literature, except that the new mother is a foreigner who wants to be adopted by Spain.

Similarly, Laura, Jorge’s childhood friend who works as a nurse in the U.K., links “home” and country to people. As she contemplates her life with her boyfriend John, she thinks about Ricardo in Spain. Because she constantly imagines him to be with her, he is like a ghost compared to the reality of John with whom she has settled:

Porque un fantasma no abre el grifo de la ducha, no aparta la cortina del baño y sale envuelto en una toalla, me sonríe, me mira extrañamente al saberme extraña, oh, my God, don’t think too much, le sonrío, sonrío al hombre real que irrumpio en mi espacio, le pregunto si quiere té y cuando dice que great le digo que he hecho café y me lanza la almohada y nos reímos, me insulta fucking Spanish, go home, riendo, y yo me reconcilio con lo real, aunque no maravilloso, me conformo, y qué, ¿acaso no es eso sobrevivir?

Laura feels out of place in London for various reasons. The city is not as she had imagined because affordable housing is only available in the outskirts of the city where life is monotonous. Abroad, she is just a Spanish immigrant, someone from a less-prosperous country with a thick accent. Still, this unhappiness abroad ultimately is

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45 In the Spanish language, the name for some of the female animals is derogatory. For example, female wolf (loba), female dog (perra), and female fox (zorra) all allude to promiscuous or shameless women, whereas the male animals get a better reputation.
connected to her feelings towards an unrequited love. For Elena, Jorge, and Laura, people, not geography, define what home means to them.

Although Elena is culturally superior to Jorge, the economic situation of her country and her desire to provide her son with a better life propels her to migrate to Spain. Elena gets her first job as a live-in domestic worker. Even as a “lettered” individual, she must perform “the dirty work” expected of undocumented immigrants. Elena recalls her mother’s disapproval of her working in the care industry, and Elena herself worries whether her trip to Spain has been in vain:

¿terminas una licenciatura para ponerte a limpiar suelos, a limpiar culos de niños españoles?, y no le dejaba hablar, explicarle, que era una buena familia, que se trataba de un trabajo digno, que a ver en qué creía ella que consistía el trabajo de los miles de ucranianas con las que compartía ciudad, y lo que era peor, lo que le dolía, como un anzuelo hincado bajo una costilla que se clava a cada paso, muriendo en cada movimiento, lo peor pensar si no tendría razón su madre, si valía la pena, todo, dejar a Viktor, salir de Ucrania, para acabar empleada en una casa de limpiadora, interna, saliendo apenas los domingos, habiendo leído probablemente más libros que los que entre el señor y la señora de la casa—el papel con la dirección apretado en la mano—fuesen a leer jamás, pero limpiando sus suelos, preparando sus comidas, aunque ella misma, menos mal, se topó rápido con las respuestas, es que esto no es acabar, esto no es el fin, esto sólo es el medio, ser interna significa no tener gastos, sólo ingresos (223).

[you finish a degree to come and clean floors, to clean the asses of Spanish children? And she didn’t let her speak, to explain to her that it was a good family, that this was about a dignified job, in what did she think the job of thousands of Ukrainian women consisted, with whom she shared the city, and what was worse, what hurt her, like a hook driven into your rib that is hammered with each step, dying in each movement, the worst was to think whether her mother was right, if it was worth it all, to leave Viktor, to leave the Ukraine, to end up a worker in a house as the cleaner, live-in, hardly leaving on Sundays, having probably read more books than both the mister and misses of the house—the paper with the address squeezed in her hand—were ever going to read, but cleaning their floors, preparing their meals, although she, herself, at least, quickly found the answer, it’s that this is not finishing, this is not the end, this is only a means, being a live-in means not having expenses, only income.]
In this passage the limits of Europe, the economic, but not cultural, disparity between former Soviet-block countries and the more prosperous nation-states of the European Union are evident even in the informal sectors. The word “interna” to describe live-in domestic workers links many foreign women to the Spanish home where they work. They belong to an enclosed inescapable place. In Spanish, to “internar” someone means to confine the person to an insane asylum and the generic “interno” can refer to a prison inmate or a student of a boarding school. In both cases, the “interno” is subject to the logic of a place which functions as housing accommodation, but can never be a home. Elena is interned, confined and domesticated. Elena repeats to herself that this is not a permanent situation; her role in Spain is not to “clean the asses of Spanish children.”

Whereas in chapter one, Bridget Anderson’s observation about the relationship between domestic workers and their female employers worked to explain racial and social status differences, in this chapter, her theory works paradoxically. To reiterate, Anderson posits that the presence of the domestic worker highlights her boss’s white and clean identity: “Her presence emphasizes and reinforces her employer’s identity—as a competent household manager, as middle-class, as white—and her own as its opposite” (19-20). Typically, or at least before the influx of Eastern European Immigration in Southern Europe, foreign domestic work was mostly performed by Caribbean and Filipina women who did not look like their employers. For Anderson, not only does domestic work position the worker as ethnic, but also as dirtier while the employer enjoys the luxury of being whiter and cleaner. The same logic applied to the nineteenth-century American South between the black slave woman and her mistress, and in imperial British India between the light-skinned Indian and the darker servant woman of a lower caste.
Yet, in this novel, Elena does not represent the servant stereotype. The orientalist distancing necessary to uphold the semblance of difference does not always function in Elena’s situation.

Instead, it is my view that Elena’s presence characterizes an alternative to what is seen as the frightening darkening of Spain by its African immigrants. To illustrate the current preoccupation with Spain being darkened by its dark-skinned immigrants, I cite Rosalía Cornejo Parriego in the introduction to *Memoria colonial e inmigración: la negritud en la España postfranquista*:

> Es decir, el blanqueamiento simbólico de la identidad española que aporta la europeización coincide, no solo con el progresivo «oscurecimiento» de la población europea, en general, sino también, y aquí reside la ironía, con la aparición en el territorio nacional de individuos africanos que no dejan de interpelar y desconectar a la cultura española, haciendo que el tema racial adquiera un protagonismo inusitado (18).

[That is to say, the symbolic whitening of Spanish identity that contributes to Europeanization coincides, not only with the progressive “darkening” of the European population, generally, but also with the appearance of African individuals in national territory who do not cease to interpellate and disconnect Spanish culture, making the racial theme acquire an unusual protagonism; that is where the irony lies.]

If African immigration to Spain indicates a darkening of Spanish ethnicity, then Eastern Europeans would hint at whitening it. Moreover, Elena’s intelligence and sophistication figuratively pushes Spain back into European civilization.46

Eastern European domestic workers, in the case of southern Spain, Ukrainian domestic workers, may be physically “whiter” than their bosses. Second, Elena’s educational background in the western humanities, her proficiency in various languages, and the fact that she is middle-class in her homeland positions Elena as more European.

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46 It is important to note that the Ukrainian criminals are trying to get into Spain by inventing a phony fencing team. Since fencing is normally a high society sport, their entrance to Spain would be through a traditional and sophisticated sport not practiced by the common Spaniard, suggesting that the Eastern Europeans are sophisticating Spain. In a similar way, Elena brings books, i.e., knowledge, to Jorge’s room.
and more cultured than her uncultured female employer. Elena’s mother and son, to whom Elena sends remittances, depend on Elena’s employment in Spain. She must convince herself that domestic work is only a means to an end, and so her domestic role in Spain does not reflect her identity.

Despite Elena’s education and economic backgrounds, she is regulated by the whims of her boss, who monitors her phone calls and infantilizes her. Because her domesticity—cooking, cleaning, care taking—rather than her intellectual capacities are prized, Elena’s worth is only defined by the work she performs. For Jorge, however, he values her for her intangible qualities—voice, heat, smell, and intellect. Jorge’s hospitality towards Elena affirms his need to create a comfortable space where he feels at home. Derrida addresses how extending one’s space to the other ultimately secures one’s identity: “We had also recalled the fact, at one point, that the problem of hospitality was coextensive with the ethical problem. It is always about answering for a dwelling place, for one’s identity, one’s space, one’s limits, for the ethos as abode, habitation, house, hearth, family, home” (Of Hospitality 149-151). For Jorge, extending hospitality to Elena does alter his identity. The space she occupies in his room gives him a sense of security, family, and home, which he did not possess before.

Besides Jorge and Elena, different migrant characters, such as Laura and Anton, play an important role in the narrative. Jorge’s high school friend and former crush, Laura, a Spanish nurse who lives in London with her English boyfriend, eventually tires of the drudgery of recreating her life in a foreign land and returns to the familiar Málaga. Laura’s story represents the contemporary emigration of educated Spaniards to northern European countries in search of work in the health care industry. Laura’s experiences in
the UK reveal that European integration is unrealistic as long as she is considered to be just a “Dago” an immigrant in a more developed northern European country. Her migration highlights Spain’s own history as a country of migrants and status as providers of cheaper labor for more developed economies. Laura’s inability to adjust in a foreign land despite being in a serious relationship and having a profession illustrates her attachment to Spain and, more specifically, to the people that make her feel like herself and not like a stranger. Similarly, Laura, who lives with her English boyfriend, does not consider her living space in a foreign land as a home and so decides to return to her hometown. She is unable to reconcile her present reality with her hopes of intimacy with Ricardo, her high school crush. The intimacy shared with her English boyfriend makes her feel like the stranger encroaching on someone else’s home. That is why she hides in the bathroom, the only space where she feels at home with herself, where she can think. It is significant that she hides in the bathroom, a place where one gets rid of waste and washes oneself. This suggests that Laura must continually purge herself of the growing nostalgia she has for home and Ricardo. Eventually, her time spent at the toilet is not enough to keep her away from Málaga. She returns, but since Ricardo is in a relationship, she does not get the happy ending like Jorge.

Jorge finally becomes Elena’s object of affection because he grows on her. The story ends with Jorge, Elena and Viktor at a classical music concert, which reveals Jorge’s cultural growth. Elena squeezes Jorge’s hand and he responds with the same affection (289). This happy ending reveals that national identities, such as Spanish or Ukrainian, are myths. Places and the people one loves ultimately provide a sense of belonging. Ironically, Jorge also learns that his unknown father was a Ukrainian
footballer for Málaga who was physically abusive to his mother (281-3). Jorge had imagined him to be a Spanish soldier, a war hero who died in a foreign war although he knew he must have been a deadbeat. His connection to Elena is a link to his identity because now Jorge can finally feel like he fits in a family.

In *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Bonnie Honig shows how the founding of so many nations paradoxically implicates a foreigner, someone from outside the house. They are able to revitalize the nation, and make them recognize their own value, e.g., Moses and Ruth as founding foreigners. For Honig, the need for the foreigner to redirect or choose a certain people for its survival is uncanny because they absorb a stranger to form their own national identity. Honig examines the gothic novel to illustrate how democracy functions. For Honig, democracy is always viewed in terms of a national romance, where we know exactly who the hero is and what he has come to do. We know exactly who the friends and foes are. By contrast, in the gothic novel, everyone is equally suspect. Instead of reading democracy as a national romance, Honig reads it as a gothic novel. The foreigner or stranger is always part of foundational stories even when it is not obvious.

Honig’s perspective on democracy as a gothic novel points to the uncanny way in which national identity is built. In Honig’s reading of the Bible, Ruth is not the innocent woman who easily gives up her gods and traditions to be assimilated into the Israelite nation. She asserts herself by convincing an Israelite to marry her (probably by way of sexual seduction) so that her descendants have the right to the land she is unable to claim as a woman. Additionally, she chooses to follow Naomi out of affection, illustrating that founding a home is not just based on roots or place, but attachment. In this sense, Ruth is
more than just a refugee without recourse, but a settler. Honig contemplates the value of immigrants in society:

Either immigrants are valued for what “they” bring to “us”—diversity, energy, talents, industry, innovative cuisines, and new recipes, plus renewed appreciation of our own regime whose virtues are so great that they draw immigrants to join us—or they are feared for what they will do to us: consume our welfare benefits, dilute our common heritage, fragment our politics, undermine our democratic culture. Both responses judge the immigrant in terms of what she will do for—or to—as a nation (46).

Ruth’s contribution is that she is the vessel for a great line of Israelite kings. Ruth thus “(re)founds ‘a people’” despite her foreignness (41).

Jorge desires to be a good father to Elena’s son Viktor. From Jorge’s experience, a father is a jerk: “Un padre es … un hijo de puta que no está, y no sabemos por qué no está, yo al menos no lo sé…” [A father is… a son of a bitch who isn’t there, and we don’t know why he isn’t there, at least I don’t know] (95). As a way to reconcile his own past and to integrate himself into Elena’s family, he imagines himself as a stepfather to Viktor and a husband to Elena although he is aware that his marriage is based on Elena’s immigration status:

…y si algún día llegaba a casarse con Elena, casarse de verdad, es decir, vivir como casados, en ese caso jamás abandonaría tampoco a Viktor, que no era su hijo, ni lo sería, porque él tenía un padre, aunque fuese un hijoputa como el mío, pero que tampoco le abandonaria yo, y si él quisiese yo le diria que convirtiéramos el día del padre en el día de san Jorge, que no sé cuándo es, que nunca me han regalado nada por mi santo, pero que san Jorge mató un dragón, salió en unos dibujos animados (248).

[… and if some day she ended up he ended up marrying Elena, marrying for real, that is, living like married people, in that case he would never abandon Viktor, who wasn’t his son, nor would he be, because he had a father, even if he were a son of a bitch like mine, but he wouldn’t abandon him, and if he wanted, I would tell him that we will turn father’s day into Saint George’s Day, that I don’t know when it is, because no one has ever given me anything for the day of my saint, but that Saint George killed a dragon, that is what I saw in a cartoon.]
With Elena, St. George’s Day would be celebrated and he would receive congratulations and praise, a day his friends and family never valued. Moreover the non-sexual intimacy shared between Elena and Jorge is another example of an official alternative to the non-contractual and/or illicit coupling we see between Africans and Spaniards in contemporary literature. The marriage between Eastern and Southern European legitimizes their affective link, revealing a positive and gendered liaison with Eastern Europe. Matrimony functions to rebuild Spain, whereas the illegal immigration of the Ukrainian mafiosos, Anton and his male compatriots, only serves to destroy Spain.

Furthermore, when he thinks about Elena sharing his room, Jorge emphasizes that they are a real couple, regardless of the absence of sexual intimacy. He considers, “por qué iban a tener que ser las parejas como las de las películas, quién había dicho que existía un esquema fijo que hubiese que seguir. Sí, Elena era su mujer. Y yo estoy vivo” [why did they have to be the couple of the movies, who said there was a fixed schema that had to be followed. Yes, Elena was his wife. And I am alive] (115). Jorge’s acceptance of a non-normative understanding of what makes a legitimate married couple implies his foremost desire to be appreciated. He reveres a contractual companionship over sexual intimacy, despite the insensitive remarks of his male friends, because it would give him what his friends cannot have—a home where he feels confident. Jorge makes the best out of his situation by refusing to follow any established models. His positivity, in spite of his reality, hints at a way to get out of the trap of performing hegemonic masculinity and conforming to patriarchy. The fact that his heterosexual masculinity is attached to homemaking reveals an alternative way of imagining Spanish
masculinities. Elena’s presence—her beauty, intellect, and high culture—is responsible for securing Jorge’s masculinity. Through making a home with her, he feels smarter, braver and more confident. Moreover, by including Viktor in the relationship, Jorge becomes like a father, a man responsible for the welfare of someone who needs his guidance. On another plane, Elena effectively “whitens” Spain. She is responsible for portraying an image of the new Spain that is not threatened by a racial darkening or a deculturation of European culture. In this novel, Elena, as representative of the increasing Eastern European demographics in Spain figuratively positions Spain further away from Africa and closer to Western Europe. Her presence presents a multiethnic but not multiracial Spain.

In Ucrania, Aranda reconstructs the global movement of people beyond current events by touching on the intimate spaces to which individuals are connected. We see how migration not only affects migrant identity, but also that of the receiving countries, and specifically the host’s home. Immigrants are often charged with vulgarizing European/Spanish culture and corrupting their traditions, but the Ukrainian woman in this novel helps to preserve the preeminence of whiteness and shore up the value of high culture in Spain. The uncanny experience between immigrants and Spaniards is based on the familiarity of whiteness and European culture combined with the uneasiness of recognizable difference.

In this chapter, I examined how intimacy affects contemporary Spanish masculinity. In the case of this novel, the protagonist’s desire to make a home with his object of desire provides a model of masculinity that does not fit within traditional

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47 Most present work on Spanish masculinities examines film, perhaps because the audiovisual dynamics provides a platform to talk about the male body. As far as narrative, most work emphasizes homosexual or queer masculinities in texts written by authors such as Juan Goytisolo.
patriarchy, but rather hints at alternative ways of linking family and home with masculinity. Furthermore, I ponder the importance of Elena’s white race in relation to Jorge’s identity to identify some specifics about Eastern European immigrants in contrast to darker-skinned immigrant groups. Although, I am speaking specifically about the relationship between a white male Spaniard and a white female Ukrainian, the theoretical overview I presented might shed light on how to disconnect masculinity from patriarchy and can be adjusted to describe different variables, conceivably in other Mediterranean countries.
Chapter Three: The Roaming Phantoms of Lavapiés in Lucía Etxebarria’s *Cosmofobia*

In the last decade, Spain has experienced radical changes regarding its ethnic makeup. The establishment of ethnic enclaves has existed as a survival technique for many immigrants denied decent housing in the more desirable areas of the cities. Immigrant neighborhoods in large Spanish cities typically exist in central locations that communicate with public transportation, the cultural venues and government buildings constituting the urban landscape. The ethnic, religious and linguistic sameness of Spain’s Francoist past has been replaced by a diverse secular nation-state where regional difference is celebrated. Educational institutions, the media, and the service industry have had to adjust rather rapidly to the multicultural background now characteristic of the biggest cities and the smallest villages. Lavapiés, a peculiar yet representative ethnic enclave of Madrid demonstrates how Spain has transformed, while representations of the neighborhood invoke the ghosts of Spain’s medieval past in Lucía Etxebarria’s novel *Cosmofobia* (2008).

In this chapter, I illustrate how Lavapiés becomes an allegory for the new multicultural Spain in *Cosmofobia*. The descriptions of the immigrant characters in the novel foreground the preoccupations Spaniards have concerning an increasingly foreign national domestic space. Not only are the contributions of immigrants to Spanish society deemphasized, the capacity of Spaniards to make positive changes are negated by not giving the central character, Yamal, his own voice. The *cosmophobic* society of the novel eventually results in a Spain that is culturally stagnant despite its diversity. Through deploying Orientalist tropes falling into racist assumptions when portraying immigrants and fictional testimonial first-person narratives, the novel suggests that these stories are
important historical memories documenting present history. That is, the characters tell their own stories, but their histories are almost always informed by stereotypes reiterated in a Spanish society that is often xenophobic. By representing a Moroccan bar owner as an exotic Arab and portraying his bar as an allegory for a multicultural Spain, the narrative opens up a cosmopolitan space where diverse groups may ultimately encounter one another. However, the novel ultimately rejects the notion of a successful multicultural Spain where intercultural dialogue is cut off when the implied author silences the voices of the characters she has interviewed and looks inward to contemplate her own daughter.

Lucía Etxebarria (Valencia, 1966) is mostly known for her novels Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas (1997) and Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes (1998), which represent a spectrum of traditional and divergent femininities coexisting in democratic Spain. As a member of the 1990s literary group Generación X or Generación Kronen, Etxebarria and her contemporaries reflected the consumerism, violence, generational conflicts, boredom, drug dependency and angst of the urban youth in post-Franco society. Ten years after the publication of her debut novel, many of the characters in Cosmofobia try to relive the decadent past of the 1990s with little success, while others try, rather unsuccessfully, to integrate into a society that refuses to accept its diversity.

Cosmofobia is a collection of fictitious testimonies of people who live in or frequent Lavapiés, a significant immigrant borough in Madrid. The narrator, assuming the name of the author, Lucía Etxebarria, becomes simultaneously narrator and narratee

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48 Lo Generace Kronen refers to Josè Ángel Maña’s novel, Historias de Kronen (1994), which touched on the adventures of young Madrilenians caught up in sex, drugs and rock music. The language, pop culture elements, and representation of cityscapes marked a “dirty” realism representative of international youth culture (Christine Hensler and Randolph D. Pope xi-xiii).
since some of the characters speak directly to her. In the story, most of the characters are acquaintances, and Lucía, one of the residents of the neighborhood, is writing a novel about her neighbors. She frequents the park with her daughter, the only girl with blond hair, and observes the people of Lavapiés. Each chapter is an instance in the life of a character, in which his or her emotional issues are presented. Each character helps to construct a fuller picture of the other characters, since most of them are intimately linked to one another by romance, sex or friendship. The novel is like a series of therapy sessions in which the narrator occasionally interjects. The narrator constantly interprets the characters’ problems of loneliness, dependency, infidelity, low self-esteem, and their needs for companionship and sex. Immigrants and Spaniards are psychologically and emotionally disturbed. By giving almost every character the opportunity to explain his or her problems, she conveys equality among the autochthonous and the foreigner; both have a subjectivity and depth to their selfhood. The description and speech of the characters bring Lavapiés alive but, at the same time, these descriptions must be questioned, since Orientalism and Africanism are still at play.

The neighborhood of Lavapiés in Madrid is an interesting mix of ethnic diversity and the popular cultural remnants of the 1990s as artists, intellectuals, and musicians reside alongside African, Chinese and Indian immigrants. The borough of Lavapiés was originally a Jewish neighborhood until the expulsion of members of this ethnicity in 1492. This centrally located neighborhood is symbolic in that the plaza and its fountain were the center of the Jewish quarter; Lavapiés literally means “wash feet,” because the residents in the twentieth century probably ritually washed their feet before entering the synagogue. The Christians later converted the Jewish temple into the Church of San
Lorenzo and for the following centuries it was a notable working class neighborhood. Because many of the residents were Republicans, the losers of the Spanish Civil War, the neighborhood degenerated decades later. Now within the last two decades, the neighborhood consists mainly of immigrants, Spanish elderly and *los okupa*—squatters of different backgrounds and nationalities who occupy abandoned homes. From the late 1980s on, different immigrant groups have settled there, making nearly half of its residents foreign. The local government has attempted to revitalize the neighborhood, advertising it as young and hip, but the stigma of “immigrant neighborhood” still remains. Interestingly it has become a unique multicultural scene, busy with bars, art galleries, restaurants and cafés.

In the novel, Lavapiés, one of the oldest Madrilenian neighborhoods, is representative of Spain’s heterogeneous past and present. Lavapiés, on a symbolic level, is a reminder of the expulsion of the Spanish Jews from the city and the resignification of their temples into Christian churches. Although the narrator never makes a direct reference to the history of Lavapiés, this intertext facilitates the connection between the mythical birth of Spain as a nation and the role of foreigners in its creation. The emergence of the Iberian peninsula follows a history of foreign settlement—the lost Tartesso civilization, the Celts, Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthagians, Romans and finally the Visigoths and Moors until the expulsion of the latter by 1492. Now in present Spain, Lavapiés is no longer the reconquered site for Iberian Christian civilization, but a heterogeneous milieu for a diverse background of socio-economic classes, education levels, ethnicities, languages, religions and ages. This diversity is often seen as threatening to the “original” Spanish inhabitants of Lavapiés.
Short story anthologies, such as *Lavapiés: microrelatos* and the documentary film, *Al otro lado: un acercamiento a Lavapiés*, point out Spaniards’ feelings towards the growing immigrant populations, citing increased street violence and immigrant entrepreneur opportunism as the causes for Lavapiés becoming a ghetto, despite the fact that a ghetto refers to an ethnically homogeneous group of people living within a particular quarter of the city. Interestingly, in the local media, the ever present Spanish squatters and drug addicts are not conceived as harmful to portraying a positive Spanish self-image, but illegal activity performed by foreigners is represented as threatening Spaniards’ quality of living.

The medieval past gives Etxebarria the backdrop to bring orientalism alive in Lavapiés. According to Edward Said, orientalism explains how Western political, social, and academic institutions cast the Orient as morally weak, penetrable and barbaric in order to exercise its “will to power over the Orient” (Said 206; 222). The classic Orient is an image of backwardness and erotic femininity, an image that advances the colonizing project when the Orient is painted as a penetrable space that can be dominated and mastered by the Occident. In this sense, a fetish becomes the thing that represents this asymmetry of power and civilization. Orientalism requires the self to distance himself from the other to define his own identity and form one’s identity through a negative association with the other imagined as diametrically different. Said’s notion of orientalism is widely used to explain white (male) Western desire for Asian, Middle Eastern, African and Native American others because many nineteenth-century romantic and travel texts use masculine/feminine dichotomies to situate the power of the colonizers over the colonized.
The Orient/West dichotomy is ultimately “an imaginative geography” which refers to “the mapping, conquest, and annexation of territory” (Said, “Invention, Memory, and Place” 181). To understand what occurs at the site of contact, Homi Bhabha complicates the automatic distance between the self and the other through his theory of hybridity. For Bhabha in “Of Mimicry and Man,” the postcolonial subject grossly impersonates the colonizer. Mimicry is a compromise because repeating the colonial discourse is a performance different from the colonizer. The thesis that “mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge” does not always function because the subaltern acquires, through imitation, the discourse of the oppressor, and since discourse many times equals knowledge, the subaltern threatens the “‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers of the colonizers when he produces something not quite the same” (Location of Culture114).

With this ambiguity between colonizer and colonized, the whole “civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double” (Bhabha, Location of Culture 115), because there is no longer a direct relationship between superior and inferior or subject and object (115). Imitation creates a double of the colonizer that ultimately fragments the colonial self.

This fragmentation of the colonial self can be related to another of Bhabha’s writings on the definition of fetishism. In Location of Culture, fetishism is a question of the subconscious recognition of lack and being unable to completely compensate for that trauma. The self looks to the stereotyped other to bring back what is missing, as with the lack a female child feels when she realizes she does not have male genitals. Bhabha
compares Freudian psychoanalysts’ preoccupation with sex to the postcolonialists’ emphasis on skin, race and culture.

For Freud: ‘Some do not have penises’; for us: ‘Some do not have the same skin/race/culture.’ Within discourse, the fetish represents the simultaneous play between metaphor as substitution (making absence and difference) and metonymy (which contiguously registers the perceived lack). The fetish stereotype gives access to an identity, which is predicated as much on mastery, and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defense, for it is a form of multiple contradictory beliefs in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it (107).

By using Freud’s idea of how the realization of genital differences forms heterosexual desire, Bhabha substitutes the male sex organ for “skin/race/culture” to make the point that the self desires that which is different and that it is an act of self-preservation. The recognition of difference can produce pleasure or anxiety because fetishism can be both a way of protecting one’s identity and exerting one’s power over the other. Bhabha’s idea of fetishism takes us closer to how female immigrants are presented by the Spanish characters in these novels. The subject does not have to be so far away from the object to gaze upon it, and in fact it needs the fetish object both to recognize difference and to disavow it while fearing it and being attracted to it at the same time. Bhabha’s understanding of fetishism does not however address particularly the presence of the other in the colonizer’s land but rather at the contact zone of the postcolony. In *Cosmofobia*, the ethnic enclave is not only a postcolonial space in that many immigrants have a postcolonial relationship with European countries, and by extension Spain, but also a border space where Spain physically and historically communicates with Africa. The novel employs fetishism not only because the characters recognize difference, but also because they invent and recycle stories to explain the bodily presence of others.
Ahmed picks up the process of fetishism through the bodily encounter between the self and the stranger. The stranger is not unknown, but becomes recognized as a stranger: “Stranger fetishism is a fetishism of figures: it invests the figure of the stranger with a life of its own insofar as it cuts ‘the stranger’ off from the histories of its determination” (Strange Encounters 55). The history of the other is invented; the difference is registered on the body and felt emotionally whether the reaction is fear, attraction or disgust. Ahmed brings the fetish object within the realm of intimacy by showing that “the stranger is always in proximity: a body that is out of place because it has come too close” (Strange Encounters 49). Unlike the Other thought to be in a distant land reined by fantasy rulers, the stranger is the one who reduces the imaginative space and approaches towards the self. Some of the ways for dealing with the stranger include “the appropriation of strangerness” through ethnographic translation (Ahmed, Strange Encounters 69), creating a common denominator through multiculturalism (Ahmed 95), and nearing the other, which “prevents us from fleshing out her body as ‘the stranger’s body’” (Ahmed 158). For Ahmed, the latter is the ethical choice, but I will focus on multiculturalism, not as a solution to fetishism, but as a way to explain some dynamics present in Cosmofobia. Multiculturalism serves as a dominant paradigm by which Spaniards are trying to figure out how to mediate the presence of “strangers.”

Multiculturalism generally refers to the coexistence between different ethnic groups, but the term does not necessarily indicate that there is a community of cultural exchange. Interculturalism, a more utopian term, requires the productive communication between different groups where no specific culture is considered superior. Ahmed contests the idea of multiculturalism as “‘a way of living with difference’ because that
evokes and then erases particular histories of racial differentiation: racial difference, already construed as ethnic difference, is redefined in terms of cultural diversity, that is, in terms that erase any distinction between groups” (95). Ahmed offers Australia as an example of how ethnic difference is transformed into everyone’s difference since integrating the stranger into national identity involves “neutraliz[ing] the difference that it [multiculturalism] apparently celebrates” (105). Australia and the United States are similar in that multiculturalism has become a way of accounting for a unique national identity that considers diversity strength, even if that diversity is not constructed as difference. I think that Spain, on the other hand, understands its cultural diversity in one of two ways: medieval history or present immigration regardless of the European cultural diversity resulting from events such as the migration of post-World War II German exiles or the English vacationers who stayed in Spain taking advantage of the low real estate boom from the early 1990s until it busted in 2007. With all its contemporary diversity, Spain appears only to unify temporarily under multicultural slogans as the national football team wins the European and World Cup games. All the same, many local football teams have their own neo-fascist fanatics to thwart whatever interethnic dialogue is created among an international community of footballers.

In the novel, the term “multiculturalism” relates to *convivencia*, the idea that the Jews, Muslims and Christians coexisted rather harmoniously during the cultural height of Medieval Spain because they needed each other.⁴⁹ The discourse on multiculturalism often reiterates an ambiguous medieval past where religious others coexisted as dignified enemies and/or lovers. With these constant references clouding the reality of North

⁴⁹ Américo Castro used the term *convivencia* in *España en su historica: ensayos sobre historia y literatura*, as a way of describing how the Christians, Moors and Jews dealt with religious difference despite the fact that they depended on each other for resources (183).
African immigration to Spain, multicultural projects fail. The average Spaniard can only “remember” medieval Iberia through the creative battle reenactment festivals of the Reconquest and the late-night televised documentaries whose dry voice-overs make the distant past seem irrelevant. Despite many Spaniards’ knowledge of Moorish ancestry through the constant architectural, linguistic and musical reminders, this knowledge does not bear on their current identity as Spanish, which many times distantly follows their regional identities. Furthermore, in Madrid, the reference is somewhat lost, since Muslim Spain is associated with Andalusia despite’s the Moorish stronghold established elsewhere in Spain.

Despite the indifference of Spaniards to “remember” a medieval past, the fiction on immigration characteristically employs this trope. Testimonials, in addition to fictional texts, often have a clear objective of denouncing discrimination, racism, or intolerance. They display more intimate views on the plights of immigrants either through the recollection of personal stories told by immigrants and compiled by Spaniards, or in a few cases, through the memoirs of the immigrant writer. A number of testimonials address immigration to Spain.50 By playing on the testimony genre, Cosmofobia seeks to document a current history of Lavapiés. Etxeburia’s alter ego becomes like an ethnographer who attempts to erase the asymmetry of power between informer and writer

50 Juan Goytisolo’s and Sami Nair’s El peaje de la vida (2000) discusses how Spaniards discriminate against Maghrebian immigrants; José Naranjo’s essay book, Cayucos (2006), uses personal testimonials from Sub-Saharan immigrants to denounce the way in which the Spanish government treats Black African immigrants; Rafael Torres’s Yo, Mohamed: Historias de inmigrantes en un país de emigrantes (1995) is a collection of immigrant interviews; Eduardo del Campo Cortés’s Odiseas: al otro lado de la frontera: historias de la inmigración en España (2007) is a collection of immigrant testimonials in which their stories are arranged and then explained in relation to the general social, economic or legal context of the immigrants’ situations; Elba Bermúdez Quintana’s Mujeres Inmigrantes y salud: Testimonios colombianos (2007) expresses the opinions of Spaniards who work in the health services and the testimonials of Colombian women; and Agnès Agboton, in Más alla del mar de arena (2005), is an autobiographical illustrated story of her migration and residence in Barcelona. Recent authors such as Najat El Hachmi are producing a corpus of immigrant literature.
by giving most characters the chance to speak directly to her without apparent mediation on her part. But since we know this is fiction as reiterated in the foreword of the novel, we know that all of these characters are imaginary and perhaps alter egos and fantasies relived by the narrator. Testimony as a genre is supposed to highlight an injustice recounted by an individual to an outsider who can document it. The informant ultimately reflects a condition of a people. Etxebarria invents characters based on stereotypes and generalizations cutting off the possibility of them speaking out as unique individuals.

In the novel, Susana, the overweight daughter of Equatorial Guinean parents, develops an addiction to chocolate and silently permits her closeted homosexual Spanish boyfriend to physically and psychologically abuse her. Because she works at Mango, a young women’s apparel chain that regularly employs thin attractive women, Susana is fired for gaining weight. After being rejected from a number of retail jobs based on her weight and black race, she is finally hired by a store specializing in plus-size clothing. Susana’s low self-esteem is related to her having been committed to a mental hospital, because she feels that her addictive behavior is genetically related to her mother’s insanity. Although she celebrates her Guinean heritage through maintaining strong transnational ties with family members and participating in cultural practices, her double identification as Spanish and Guinean does not make Susana emotionally strong. Because blackness and Spanishness are constructed as an oxymoron, incapable of hybridity, despite Spain’s presence in colonial Equatorial Guinea, Susana must envision her true home in her parents’ birthplace. As with many diasporic subjects, home is a frozen imaginary space impossible to retrieve. Susana speaks of Guinea as her home and of Spanish as her official nationality:
Yo es que cuando hablo de Guinea hablo de mi casa, aunque no viva ya allí. Mi madre es guineana, mi padre es guineano y yo me empeño en decir que soy española porque lo soy, qué coño, pero también soy guineana, y con orgullo (53).

[It’s that when I speak about Guinea, I am talking about my home, even though I didn’t live there anymore. My mother is Guinean. My father is Guinean and I make a point to say that I’m Spanish because I am. What the hell? But I’m also Guinean, and proud.]

Although Susana was born in Spain, she imagines herself having lived in Equatorial Guinea because this would biographically legitimize her heritage. Still, it is problematic that her Guinean identity in the novel is characteristically based on typical food dishes and celebrations with her family. This portrait of the only black African woman in the novel is one of Etxebarria’s racist moments in the text. The author defines Susana by her skin color, body type, and cultural traditions but does not let her character develop past racial stereotypes. Her assertion of Guinean identity becomes a comfort strategy to deal with the cycle of domestic abuse and an escape from the European beauty ideals that affect her body confidence.

Susana’s Spanish nationality and language do not protect her from unwarranted stares. While working at a clothing store, she recalls an episode with a customer who turns around and is startled by her skin color after having listened to Susan’s voice:

«Perdone, ¿puedo ayudarla en algo?», y la mujer se gira y me ve y pega un grito como si se le hubiese aparecido el mismo diablo: «¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaay!», y luego, cuando se da cuenta de la metedura de pata, para intentar arreglarla, va y me suelta: «Perdona, es que me has asustado; como hablas tan bien…». Lo dicho, que me veía masai y los masais no hablan castellano (31).

[“Excuse me, can I help you with something?” And the woman turns around and sees me and screams as if the devil himself had appeared. “Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” And later, she goes, “Sorry, it’s that you scared me; since you speak so well…” Whatever, because she saw me masai, and the masai don’t speak Castilian.]
The familiarity of Susan’s language—accent and tone—is juxtaposed by her nontraditionally Spanish phenotype. Susana’s character can be viewed as the colonized subject who has appropriated the language of the colonizer. For Bhabha, this ability to mimic the colonizer, subverts the whole “civilizing mission” (*Location of Culture* 85). Mistaking Susana for a white Spaniard reveals how the hybridity of the postcolonial subject puts into question the direct connection between whiteness and Spanishness. The customer feels embarrassed about reacting to her skin color in such a xenophobic way, because she has been socialized in a multicultural Spain where racism is denounced. The client’s instinctual reaction reflects an original anxiety towards the black other as expressed in Fanon’s writings. She has to explain away this anxiety towards blackness by claiming whiteness as a part of being Spanish. Her ignorance of the history of Spanish colonization justifies her reaction.

Susana has a similar experience with a little girl in the store. In this case, her otherness becomes fetishized when the girl’s mother compares Susana to her daughter’s black doll.

\[Y\] entonces yo, toda educada y gentil y sonriente, le digo: «Hola, bonita», y la cría: «¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay!», y sale disparada hacia su madre, berreando: «¡Mamá!, ¡Mamá!, ¡LA MUÑECA HABLA!, ¡LA MUÑECA HABLA!». Claro, yo de aquella casi me vuelvo blanca, del susto. Y la madre me viene toda aturullada intentando explicarme: «No, mira, es que…¿Sabes?, que la niña tiene una muñequita que es igual que tú, ¿sabes?, y…, o sea, que como que tiene las mismas trencitas…». Vamos, que lo que me venía a decir era que la niña no había visto una negra en su vida, porque la niña vive en un barrio donde no hay negros\(^{51}\) (62).

And then I, all educated and courteous and smiling, say to her: “Hello, pretty girl,” and the child goes: “¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay!” and shoots out

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\(^{51}\) This episode reminds me of when my husband’s 3-year-old cousin called me “china.” I told him that I was not Chinese, and then he called me “gitana.” For him, my blackness just meant difference. As far as he knows, the Chinese and the Gypsies are different, so I must be one of them.
of there to her mother, bawling: “Mamma! Mamma! THE DOLL IS SPEAKING! THE DOLL IS SPEAKING!” Of course, after that I almost turned white from shock. And the mother comes to me all in a tizzy trying to explain to me: “No, look, it’s because…You know, it’s that my daughter has a baby doll that looks like you. You know, and…, well, being that it has the same braids…” I mean, what she was meaning to say was that my daughter hadn’t ever seen a black woman in her life, because the girl lives in a neighborhood where there aren’t any black people.

Judging by the number of a’s in this exclamation, we can see that the little girl is startled, but her surprise is not related to an instinctual fear of blackness, rather the uncanny experience of a life-sized speaking doll. To compare Susana to a doll shows a metonymic relationship between the doll—a miniature representation of all black women—and one particular black woman. Susana’s skin color and braids make her “just like” the doll, despite all the other specific physical traits that dolls, because of their generic features, do not have. Just as in the first example, the client attempts to explain her daughter’s reaction to Susana’s skin color because she does not want to come off as racist. Susana then interprets that her mother’s explanation covers up the fact that her daughter is sheltered from black otherness. To explain away her daughter’s ignorance by comparing Susana to her child’s black doll, her daughter’s ignorance can be conceived as innocence.

The doll objectification of Susana has two functions: it brings the Other into an intimate contact with the Spaniard and at that same time it turns her into a fetish. In the first scene, we see that blackness is imagined along the line of the barbarie, the “masai,” “[las] negras en la tele, en los documentales, de éas dando saltos con las tetas al aire pidiendo que llueva” [the black women on TV, in documentaries, those women jumping around with their tits in the air calling for it to rain] (61). In the second scene, Susana

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52 It is my experience that black Spanish and American dolls are like white dolls colored brown. Usually there are no differences in hair texture or facial features, whereas “las chinas” (Chinese dolls) have slanted eyes. In a storefront window for children’s clothes, it is typical to see a black doll (at least in Seville, Granada and Málaga).
represents all black dolls and all black dolls represent her. Fetishism requires that the subject have some kind of mania for the object of desire, for possessing it by means of the sex act or through collectionism. We are not talking about a colonizing male subjectivity over a passive feminine geography, but rather an encounter between two Spanish women. Although Susana’s clients initially essentialize Spanishness as white, they immediately recognize the fallacy in that claim, and so do not perpetuate racist discourses.

The fact that Susana suffers from domestic abuse despite her sassiness turns her into an object of violence. According to Alberto Villamandos, black and mulatto women in Hispanic cultures have always been viewed as objects. He states the following:

La representación de la negra o mulata parece responder a una objetivación del deseo del hombre blanco heterosexual y a su ansia de señalar su poder sobre el cuerpo oscuro, marcado por la marginalidad y un carácter animal/amenazante para la sociedad colonial (116).

[The representation of the black or mulatto woman seems to respond to an objectifying of the desire of the white heterosexual male and to his anxiety to affirm his power over the black body, marked by marginality and an animal/threatening nature for colonial society.]

By gaining weight, Susana is subconsciously trying to detract attention from her as exotic other and to transform herself into a more accessible black figure. The paradox of her Spanish speech coupled with a hefty black body categorizes her into a familiar domestic role. Susana’s binge eating can be interpreted as her incapacity to be satiated or to reveal how black and mulatto women never can obtain love for themselves as long as they are treated as objects of desire. Chocolate, as an aphrodisiac that is said to give a person a euphoric feeling of being in love, becomes Susana’s way of acquiring a temporary moment of pleasure. Unfortunately her consumption of chocolate does nothing to placate
her frustration with her circumstances. Instead, the implied parallel between the chocolate color of her skin and the chocolate candy bars she devours portrays a woman being consumed by all of her irrational thoughts and feelings. Fat Susana not only describes the typical image of a big black woman on the label of the most popular chocolate milk powder brand, *Cola Cao*, she also becomes an overweight other that does not easily fit into the slender Spanish woman imaginary. By choosing chocolate as Susana’s craving, the author subtly is caricaturizing her while simultaneously emphasizing her marginality in Spanish society. Etxebarria also reinstates a pernicious racist stereotype that black women are like “Conguitos,” the chocolate-covered peanut candies sold in Spain that used to have a black golliwog character on its wrappers. Not only is she an easily available consumable sweet, she is a rag doll that can be tossed around and dressed up. By placing Susana in a clothing store, the author further emphasizes Susana’s vocation of service—assisting plus-size women find garments that make them feel attractive. As a doll, a piece of chocolate, a good retail sales assistant, and a punching bag to her boyfriend, Susana is above all else a servant to others.

Another important immigrant character in the novel, Amina, is a second-generation Moroccan housekeeper who begins having panic attacks after supposedly seeing the nude body of her employer, Yamal, an educated, high-society Moroccan, and owner of a trendy neighborhood bar frequented by immigrants and all sorts of artists: actors, painters, writers, musicians and filmmakers. Isaac, the Spanish group therapy leader at the local community center, interprets that Amina probably did have sex with Yamal and, because of her strict Muslim upbringing, has repressed this memory. To deal with that trauma, Amina, according to Isaac, has turned Yamal into a kind of sinister

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53 An obese young woman can warrant many negative stares and comments in Spain.
spirit who has her spellbound. Thus, Amina’s family contacts a witchdoctor to cure her of Yamal’s spell, which is actually a way for her to atone for her illicit relationship with Yamal. Although Isaac’s psychological analysis of Amina’s situation is convincing, the question concerning Yamal’s true identity in the novel remains dubious.

Amina meets at the local community center for group therapy sessions with other women, both foreign and Spanish, to discuss everything from domestic abuse to anorexia. The group therapy creates a space where women of all nationalities can discuss issues that universally affect women and serves as an example of interethnic dialogue, bringing to light Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s call for the inclusion of “the feminist politics of third world women” within feminism because, while each woman’s struggle is different due to cultural and historical markers, their testimony serves as “a discourse of oppositional consciousness and agency” (Mohanty 213). Even as the narrator reiterates that Lavapiés is not multicultural, the community center contests the idea that dialogue is inexistent. Unfortunately, most of the dialogue is gendered in a way that discourages community among men. Only women characters are given the opportunity to discuss their problems among friends. Although the emasculated Spanish therapist, Susana’s closeted homosexual boyfriend, and the nearly homeless black immigrant do express their feelings during their testimonies, their only interlocutor is the implied narrator, Lucía. The absence of community among men hints at a cosmos managed by women, albeit many insecure women who are mostly unsuccessful with heterosexual intimate relationships. The women share their problems but they do not seem to get anywhere.
These images of immigrant women are sympathetic whereas the immigrant’s men ambition causes them to be ignorant in other aspects of their lives. Ferba, a successful Senegalese man, is a workaholic and neglects his children.

Ferba está muy ocupado supervisando sus otros negocios, unos locutorios y una empresa de importación de artesanía africana. Fagueye, su mujer, la madre de Mahamud, trabaja en el locutorio. El niño pasa mucho tiempo solo, pero Ferba está convencido de que le está dando a su hijo una buena vida. En unos años, el niño heredaría sus negocios y una gran casa en Senegal (109).

Ferba is very busy supervising his other businesses, some calling centers and an importing business that imports African artwork. Fagueye, his wife, Mahamud’s mother, works at the calling center. The boy spends a lot of time by himself, but Ferba is convinced that he is giving his son a good life. In a few years, the boy will inherit his businesses and a big house in Senegal.

Ferba occupies himself with business and delegates some of that work to his wife, older sons and family friends. His local convenience store, a calling center/cybercafé and an importation business for African artwork illustrates his ownership of a transnational presence between his West African community and Spain, but also his connection to all kinds of immigrants and Spaniards that pay to use his computers and telephones. He is responsible for facilitating community just as Yamal does with his bar and Isaac does with the group therapy. Ferba has a connection to the private lives of his clients—either through their telephone and online conversations, or the African replicas that Spaniards and tourist readily purchase to display in their houses. Still, even with his success, Ferba is ignorant about his son’s learning disability. The effects of Ferba’s affluence and shrewd entrepreneurial talents in the receiving country seem to result in a subsequent generation of idiots. The author refuses to recognize a truly successful immigrant entrepreneur by making him ignorant of his offspring’s intellectual disability. Again,
Ferba’s character brings to mind the nineteenth-century phrenologists’ notion of black people as lacking the mental capacity of whites.\textsuperscript{54} Ferba’s European dream is not really possible because his child will not be able to take over the business.

The whole novel actually centers on the mythic Arab character, Yamal. According to Flesler, “two representations of the Moor stand out within the symbolic paradigm. One portrays him as an exotic, sensual being admired for his courage as a warrior and for his outstanding scientific and artistic creativity and sophistication. The other one depicts him as a treacherous, violent and cruel figure that wants to seize territories away from the Christians” (“Battle of Identity”\textsuperscript{151}). Yamal is the only significant character in the novel that is not permitted to tell his story. Other characters or the narrator mediatizes all of Yamal’s words, yet he is central to the development of the plot and the characters’ personal histories. Perhaps, this is because Yamal is not portrayed as human. His quest for immortality, his endeavor to portray himself as a throwback to the exotic Goytisoloian\textsuperscript{55} Arab and his inability to speak for himself in the narrative show that he is not worthy of bearing testimonials, because testimonies record the story of mortals, the lives of real people. They document their survival, in spite of adversity. Yamal is not the subject of testimony; he is the son of an ex-minister for the Moroccan government and his mother is living comfortably in a Parisian apartment. His relatively high-society lifestyle does not fit into the stories of poor Moroccans crossing the Strait in jam-packed \textit{pateras} of those who are being discriminated by Spaniards.

\textsuperscript{54} I am referring to the phrenologist François-Joseph-Victor Broussais (1772-1838), who believed the measurements of Caucasian skulls made them superior (Staum 59).

\textsuperscript{55} I am referring to Juan Goytisolo’s treatment of Arabness in his narratives because Arabs are described wearing sensual ethnic clothing in addition to being mysterious, beautiful, and of ambiguous sexuality. See Inger Enkvist’s “Juan Goytisolo: A Special Kind of Orientalism,” Luce López-Baralt’s ”Makbara: Juan Goytisolo's Fictionalized Version of 'Orientalism',” or Robert Richmond Ellis’s “A Passage to the Self: Homoerotic Orientalism and Hispanic Life-Writing.”
Yamal is a beautiful man, intelligent, charismatic and a shrewd businessman. In fact, he allures everyone, men and women; he does not evoke pity, but elicits sex and he suggests power.

Most of the characters have talked about him in their stories—about his sinister beauty accentuated by the traditional Moroccan clothes he wears and his Quaranic wisdom. Many characters desire to have or have had sex with Yamal. The narrator directly compares Yamal’s essence with the neighborhood just as the bar and his body have become a site for intercultural relationship. This connection further highlights the superficiality of desire, as Yamal can only be desired when he elicits the desires of the other characters. In hindsight, after knowing Yamal’s real ambitions, the narrator compares Yamal’s pretense with the character of Lavapiés:

A veces, tengo la impresión de que Yamal siempre me fascinó porque representa la esencia misma del barrio, que se va escondiendo tras tantos disfraces distintos, el corazón místico y latente de todas estas gentes que viven juntas pero que no se conocen ni se reconocen, de esta masa limítrofe enfrentada a una inevitable peripecia vital en la que avanzan administrativamente adscritos a una patria, pero emocionalmente fieles a otra. En este punto de encuentro, en este eje cartesiano de contrarios en el que se destila el jugo de lo que va a ser, probablemente, el mundo del futuro, Yamal es el Todo al que él mismo se refería porque es el barrio mismo: un superviviente, un misterio, un abismo (363).

[Sometimes, I have the impression that Yamal always fascinated me because he represents the essence of the neighborhood, that goes hiding itself behind so many different costumes, the mystical and latent heart of all of these people that live together but neither know or recognize one another, of this neighboring mass confronted with an inevitable vital adventure in which they advance administratively ascribed to a country, but emotionally faithful to another. At this meeting point, at this Cartesian axis of contraries in which the juice of what is going to be is filtered, probably, the world of the future: a survivor, a mystery, an abysm.]

Yamal’s bar represents a public space habitually shared by people from different backgrounds and his body has also been shared by a number of people in the
neighborhood. The narrator concludes that Yamal’s role, as a sex object, is also that of the neighborhood, even though she believes Yamal to be a fake. The narrator is aware that he has plagiarized artists, and even plays up an invented exoticism to get what he wants. Perhaps in this sense, he is the essence of the neighborhood because, just like him, the people of the borough disguise themselves and play up their ethnicity to maintain a link with their homelands, making it hard for them to really know one another. Yamal is a mystery to the reader; he literalizes the Orientalist fantasy. Towards the end of the novel, the author finally learns that Yamal’s bar is a headquarters for drug trafficking, and that he might be responsible for the death of an art curator. Hence, Yamal’s devotion to art and high culture is trumped by his involvement in ordinary drug dealing and murder. Yamal’s real ambition is immortality, to be written into history, which is accomplished through the narrative of the novel. Art for Yamal is not “art for art’s sake,” but a means to eternal presence. This is yet another instance of how Etxebarria ultimately portrays a presumably successful immigrant character in a negative light. The author destroys the mysterious seductive artist and turns him into a dreadful suspect.

Interestingly, Etxebarria uses a man to allegorize the neighborhood instead of using the body of a woman to symbolize an entire community that the implied narrator deems unsuccessful at integrating everyone as equals. This further highlights the negative perception of men in the novel, and the distrust Lucía feels toward Yamal and toward other male characters. Moreover, the comparison of Yamal to the immigrant neighborhood of Lavapiés shows that the narrator considers him to be a negative space and a geometric abstraction: a meeting place, a Cartesian axis, and an abyss (363). Yamal’s bar and body serves as the meeting place for many different nationalities. At the
same time, Yamal is more like a ghost since he is never described in the same human way as the other characters. All of the other characters have a voice and speak directly to the narrator, but he is silent. Nevertheless, he is the most significant person in making the neighborhood of Lavapiés what it is. Yamal is responsible for the coming together of diverse people to his bar.

The neighborhood as an axis is juxtaposed by more negative descriptions such as abyss. Since an abyss refers to an incomprehensible and inconceivable space, and also an insurmountable gap between people, the word reflects Yamal’s non-human, eternal and mysterious existence. If we interpret his bar as an abyss, then we can conclude that everyone’s problems are ever-present and insolvable because there is no possibility of overcoming the cultural divide among the residents of Lavapiés. However, the novel actually contradicts this idea, because the intercultural and interracial romances and friendships chronicled in its pages actually break down ethnic barriers. The community center and Yamal’s bar are places where this happens.

In this sense, Yamal is this “everything” for two reasons: first, because he is not described as a mere mortal and, second, because his bar represents a contemporary Spain where differences of nationality, education and economic levels are momentarily indistinguishable. In the novel, many characters repeat the idea that the neighborhood is multicultural because different nationalities live parallel to each other without mixing, yet Yamal is evidence of the intimate mixing between races, classes, and nationalities, even when the characters deny it. It is important to note that Yamal is a cosmopolitan high-class Arab man and not a humble paterista immigrant because his background does not reflect the experience of the many Maghrebian immigrants who are constantly being
discriminated against by Spaniards. Yamal does not represent the contemporary Moroccan, but rather the mythic regal Moor of the past. He cannot speak his own story, because he is indeed a kind of phantom by whom the other characters are seduced and whom they cannot exorcise from their minds.

Yamal’s bar allegorically represents an increasingly ethnic Spain. Yamal, the silent founding foreigner, is ghostly. Yamal’s bar as the main shared public space is representative of the new plural Spain. In this way, Cosmofobia refers to the fear of accepting and recognizing a changing society while dealing with the simultaneous uncontrollable desire to intermix. The characters in the novel have anxieties about the cosmos and they are unable to see where they fit within it, but Yamal’s bar offers a cosmopolitan space where diverse groups of people encounter one another on a daily basis. The bar functions to assuage the fear of the cosmos because it brings the scary world into a comfortable intimate setting. The intimacy of the bar, different from that of the home, is transient and transversable. Culturally diverse people can share their preoccupations and good fortune with strangers without having to invite them into their homes—into the private spaces where otherness can be intimidating.

In this chapter, I have deployed concepts of Spanishness and cultural plurality because, even as the narrators and characters attempt to define Spanishness by recalling race, language, culinary choices, and even the manner of dress, many of these supposedly Spanish referents and immigrant referents are obvious stereotypes and generalizations. I aim to understand how the immigrants in this neighborhood affect the dominant host culture. In Remaking the American Mainstream, immigration sociologists Richard Alba and Victor Nee show that immigrants are not simply assimilated or integrated into the
host country, but rather they participate in changing the dynamics of the mainstream; they
remake the popular host culture (19). In the case of immigrants who live in ethnic
enclaves, the question is whether immigrants have assimilated or whether the
autochthonous Spaniards have assimilated to the immigrants residing in ethnic enclaves
such as Lavapiés. Some of the Spanish characters in the novel are intrigued by Lavapiés
and others are apprehensive towards it, but there is no question that everyone, Spaniards
and immigrants, are influenced by the different immigrant cultures. The fictional narrator
of the stories in the novel vehemently denies the possibility of multiculturalism, but the
actions of the characters confirm that there are few differences actually separating
immigrants from Spaniards, emotionally and intimately.

This novel also relates to the idea of the foreign founder I mentioned in chapter
two. Yamal is responsible for providing the space in which Spaniards and immigrants can
intimately meet. Even his body is the thing that links the different characters together.
But once the narrator discovers him to be a fake—a drug dealer, conman and social
climber, the contemporary multicultural microcosm for which Yamal is responsible, is
questioned. If Yamal’s bar is understood allegorically, then perhaps contemporary
Spanish society is a product of criminal activity—illegal immigration, human smuggling,
narcotraffic and even plagiarized artistic achievements. The typical neighborhood-bar,
managed by a non-Spaniard, is a product of fraternity and socializing. Yamal is involved
in replacing the former Spanish space with an international space. The novel ends with
the narrator summarizing what the characters are doing now and with whom they are
intimately linked. Ultimately, the characters settle with people with ethnically or
culturally similar backgrounds. The narrator’s final thought is a memory of her daughter
being born. The placenta covering the baby’s skin “causa una emoción que hace llorar, una mezcla de amor profundo y asco” (causes an emotion that makes one cry, a mix of profound love and disgust (366). The implied author’s ambivalence toward her maternal role springs from the fact that her body has simultaneously delivered a beautiful human being and afterward, a bloody organ. The disgust and love the implied author feels for someone she has nurtured before birth symbolically relates to the creative process of writing a novel. The narrator, through conversations and interviews with the testimonial figures she wants to use in her forthcoming novel, intends to nurture these characters but most of them are foreign. They are not created in her womb, so she ultimately turns away from them and leaves the reader unable to care for any of them. The narrator ultimately abandons her characters and brings the story full circle by contemplating her daughter’s place in the world and her emotional relation to her. Love for one’s own is the theme of the final scene, revealing that the fear of the cosmos can only be overcome by turning inward to the familiar, instead of reaching out to others in the world. Yet, the familiar is actually uncanny and abject. The narrator does not really want to turn Lavapiés into an interethnic community because the people that inhabit this neighborhood are too strange to integrate into Spanish nationality, especially since Spanish citizens like the narrator’s own daughter are already abject. Lucía’s blonde daughter barely fits in at the park in Lavapiés and perhaps every other park in Spain. Lucía refuses to be part of the community if she is not in charge of creating it.

The multicultural project is rendered unsuccessful, and the intimacy between Spaniards and foreigners is safely contained. Her means of dealing with cosmophobia is closing herself within the familiar maternal space and rejecting the larger community that
even as author, she cannot control. Yamal was a disappointment for the narrator because she has realized that she was not the only one writing the story. The mysterious spirit from which she was drawing inspiration was a real-life person who was responsible for creating a cosmos in which she was just another character. The realization that she was duped, as were the other less insightful characters, causes her to turn inward to focus on her relationship with her daughter. The narrator’s belief that the entire neighborhood is suspect of disguising itself and lying reveals the failure of her ethnographic research and her inability to be the master of the cosmos she set out to create. Etxebarria’s cosmophobia is the anxiety caused by the inability to control a world that is already in place, yet she “represents” each of the characters by writing their thoughts. Perhaps *Cosmophobia* itself is haunted, making it impossible for the narrator to simply document the people of the neighborhood as she set out to do in the beginning of the novel.
In this chapter, I examine two young adult novels: Fernando Lalana’s *El paso del Estrecho* (1996) and Eliacer Cansino’s *Una habitación en Babel* (2009) because they illustrate the link between intellectual activity and integration into an improved Spanish society. Intelligence not only grants immigrant youth access to education, but also allows teenagers to engage in platonic, filial, and romantic intimacy with Spaniards. Even as these young adult novels teach young Spaniards how to be global citizens who respect and value foreign others in a multicultural Spain, they paradoxically reveal that only productive immigrants deserve to form interethnic relationships. The individuals with enough intellectual and moral aptitude to contribute to a culturally rich nation-state are worthy of being accepted into Spanish civil society. In both novels, immigrant youth are tolerated as long as their participation in their communities is heroic and their heroism is attainable through a positive mix of their inherent ethical convictions and their intellectual engagement in Spanish literary, philosophical or historical thought.

Responding to the multicultural pedagogical objectives in Spain, the society that integrates young potential criminals is a community of readers and thinkers conveniently educated by teacher-philosophers and formed by independent learning. In *Una habitación en Babel*, the mentorship adult male characters provide to a Guinean boy produce an idea future citizen, whereas the romantic connection between a Spanish Moroccan produces a valuable citizen whose discovery gives international recognition to Spain in *El paso del Estrecho*. 

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Una habitación en Babel, set in a fictional city in Southern Spain, follows Ángel, a high school philosophy teacher and Berta, a student who wants to be a novelist. By the end of the novel, Ángel locates a missing Guinean student, Nor, who has run away to find his brother who arrives by patera. But the Moroccan young man, Rashid, who accompanies Ángel on his journey to rescue Nor, is ultimately confined to prison.

Because Nor served as the pupil of an elderly Spanish erudite and his philosophy teacher, Nor has the potential to be successful whereas Rashid fails at establishing a meaningful mentee relationship with Ángel, thus refusing the offer of professional friendship and protection that the Spanish mentor offers him. Rashid is ultimately removed from society when he is sent to prison. Nor inherits a valuable antique book that can pay for his future university studies. Surprisingly, the narrator drops Rashid’s story line, even though he has had a significant presence in the novel. Nor is able to affect emotionally his teacher through a well-written letter but Rashid’s tears are not enough for Ángel to remember him with warm regards after Rashid is arrested. Rachid is narratologically punished by disappearing him from the novel because his Spanish mentor does not value him as a teachable intellectual. The Spanish mentors in the novel only care for those who share their academic interests. Although the omniscient narrator speaks for different characters, Ángel is the most developed since he has personal access to most of the characters in the novel. The choral novel structure, which focalizes on different characters whose stories ultimately intersect with each other, gives the illusion of democratically and “objectively” representing ethnic differences and capturing experiences in metropolitan Spain just as it displaces the views of the bestselling author from some of the dramatized voices in the novel. Fittingly, the choral structure is popular in narrative with immigrant characters,

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56 Be bestselling choral novels with immigrant voices alongside Spanish characters set in metropolitan cities.
in my view, because the stereotypical and negative portrayals of these characters have no direct origin, i.e., no clearly discernible omniscient narrative voice that can be held responsible. In young adult novels, the authors often make misunderstood immigrant characters into people who ultimately share the same values and experiences as Spanish characters.

By setting *Una habitación en Babel* in the fictitious city of Alfarache, supposedly the ancestral origin of Mateo Aleman’s fictional rogue character in the picaresque novel, *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599-1604), and outside of Seville where one of the most dangerous ghettos presently exists, the reader might notice a double parallel between the underworld of child scoundrels in picaresque literature and juvenile delinquents in the real-life neighborhood, Las Tres Mil Viviendas. This borough, translated as “The Three Thousand Dwellings” is arguably the worst neighborhood of Seville.57 Because of the violence, the city discontinued public transportation and it was deemed impractical for the local police to patrol there. In the late 1960s, the city government supplied apartments to impoverished people, mostly of gypsy descent, who had previously lived in shanty-towns outside the city. Now alongside Spanish gypsies, the neighborhood is fairly diverse with undocumented immigrants from Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, and Romania. Any teenager from Seville reading this novel would recognize the fictional

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57 There is a film directed by the French dancer Dominique Abel called *Polígono Sur: el Arte de Las Tres Mil* (2003), that celebrates flamenco’s presence in the borough without judging the lifestyle of the residents. In the film, you can see the donkey, the “Indian,” a crazy squatter who I met once in downtown Seville, and the over-the-top lifestyles of some of the so-called unemployed residents of the neighborhood. I have a friend who teaches biology at a high school in Las Tres Mil and he struggles with just getting his students to attend class. Because of the high truancy rate and low literacy, the city government awards these schools extra funds for field trips and fun hands-on activities to divert students from undesirable activities during school hours. Just like Ángel in the novel, who has basically given up on his students, the city government has accepted that very few students will make it through the mandatory education requirement of age 16, let alone graduate from the college preparatory track (age 18).
Tower as the apartment building named Las Vegas because everyone has heard about the donkey living in the building and the mystery of how the donkey got there without the help of a working elevator. The failure of the Las Tres Mil project can be blamed on the shortsightedness of City Hall to solve the “gypsy” problem by providing affordable housing before first addressing the cultural practices that support their nomadic lifestyles. Now neglected by City Hall, Las Tres Mil has become an example of how Seville consigns its “unwanted” to the margins without access to the civilized city center and outside the protection of the law.

The title, *Una habitación en Babel*, reveals a lack of communication and progress. According to Genesis, chapter 11, everyone who survived the Great Flood spoke the same language. The survivors wanted to build a strong city with the tallest of towers—which represented the city’s proximity to heaven—but God had ordered that they scatter and populate the Earth. The sin appears to be civilization’s pride and independence from God, but the idea of rejecting God’s demand that they reproduce beyond the boundaries of the city is also present in the story. For their sins, the people of Babel were no longer able to communicate and live peacefully together. The Tower of Babel was abandoned and never completed. So the existence of different languages, with their respective cultures, is effectively a curse for humankind. This conception of diversity obviously does not bring to mind the notion of coexistence or multiculturalism, since pluralism is viewed as divisive. Describing a high-rise apartment building in one of the towns from the Seville province, the first lines of the novel highlight the challenge of shared dialogue among marginalized individuals:

La Torre no es Babel, pero podría serlo: por las ansias desmedidas, por la confusión que contiene. Nada más llegar al pueblo se la ve. Su imponente
La Torre no es Babel, pero podría serlo: por el excesivo nerviosismo,
bajo de los conflictos que contiene. Al momento en el que llegas a la ciudad,
ve la torre. Su figura imponente de un gigante emaciado del desarrollo económico de los años sesenta
la deja torpemente evidente, como un gigante jubilado, junto al resto de los edificios. Nadie puede permanecer en su puerta más de dos minutos: un río de vida y confusión se precipita hacia dentro y hacia fuera incesantemente y arrastra al que allí permanece.

The Tower isn’t Babel, but it could be: because of the excessive anxieties, because of the confusion it contains. Right when you arrive in the city, you see it. Its imposing figure of an emaciated giant from the economic development of the 60s awkwardly makes it ridiculous, like a retired giant, next to the rest of the buildings. No one can remain in its door more than two minutes: a river of life and confusion incessantly plunges inside and outside and drags anyone who remains there.

The deteriorated housing apartment building cut off from mainstream laws and culture, as are so many “gypsy” neighborhoods in Seville, is compared to the postdiluvian Biblical city of Babel, a skinny giant, a retired person, and a destructive river to emphasize both the tower’s lack of communication with the more-advanced town’s center and its decrepitude. As the first thing one sees when coming in from the highway, the apartment building announces the city’s failure to integrate its inhabitants into safe and suitable housing. Just like Babel, La Torre is synonymous with confusion and inarticulateness.

The decrepit torre, like the Tower of Babel, represents a civilization that cannot communicate with one another, but unlike the story of the Old Testament, the torre brings different nationalities together, even if sometimes antagonistically. Similarly, as a feeble giant and retired person, possibly suffering from the confusion of dementia, the building no longer works. It is no longer capable of contributing to the more developed surrounding areas. Read allegorically, Spain is at the margins; it is an eyesore shamefully standing next to its European neighbors. Its gigantic but frail stature further emphasizes its lethargy in a time when quickness is required. The description might be compared to Francisco de Quevedo’s baroque poem, “Miré los muros,” in which the poetic voice
reflects on the economic and social decline of Spain through contemplating his decaying house and body. The apartment building in *Babel*, just as the outside walls of Quevedo’s poem, speaks of the social problems the country is facing. Moreover, the metaphorical river dragging the inhabitants into and outside the ugly façade characterizes the negative view that both immigrants and the underserving Spanish poor (i.e., gypsies, drug addicts, hustlers and gang members) will ultimately destroy Spain instead of reconstruct it. The river of people further characterizes the negative views of immigration. As I mentioned in the introduction of my work, natural disaster terms used to describe immigration such as “avalanche” or “flood” portray the movement of immigrants as a natural but ultimately destructive event that changes the landscape (D’Ors 44). Despite the constant traffic of diverse people, all of the inhabitants of the Tower appear to be trapped and unable to communicate with one another. Since intimacy is produced by communicating with words and bodies, only those who learn to use language well can be close.

The lack of future for the Spanish underclass is further demonstrated by the commentaries the narrator offers about the Tower’s inhabitants:

Viven también en la Torre indios, marroquíes, ecuatorianos, españoles, guineanos, nigerianos…Trasiegan de un lado para otro, trapichean, traen y llevan el sustento de sus vidas, las historias con que arman sus conciencias, la memoria polvorienta de los desiertos, los caracoles, el baile de maíz y cumbia, el temblor del citar, la voz apocalíptica que nace de los alminares (10).

[Indians, Moroccans, Ecuadorians, Spaniards, Guineans, and Nigerians also live in the Tower…They shuffle about from one side to the other, they hustle, they bring and they take their means of support, the stories with which their consciences are armed, the dusty memory of deserts, of snails, corn dances and cumbia, the trembling of the sitar, the apocalyptic voice that springs from the minarets.]
Although the neighborhood is ethnically diverse, everyone, including the Spaniards, is without a hopeful future. Their movement is mischievous since their actions are illicit. The word trapichear can translate as “hustle,” which conveys the act of “getting by” through engaging in illegal or unethical practices on a small scale. Besides presenting their movement as criminal, the narrative voice portrays the residents’ personal stories as an armor protecting their sense of right and wrong, as if to say that their experiences, and not their education, have dictated their moral aptitude. In this passage, it appears that although the people of the Tower can barely remember the exotic places from where they have come, they remember enough of the hardship to fear going back. Just like the apocalyptic messages pontificated from the tallest point of the mosques, their fear of being called out for their unethical behavior makes them not want to go back.

The idea that the Tower represents the uneducated underclass of the Spanish suburbs doomed to fail without proper mentorship is further demonstrated by a comment about Gil, the neighborhood’s elderly erudite, being the only one who owns books. After mentioning that some residents of the sixth floor broke the elevator during their move and even brought up a donkey, the narrator comments that “Gil, [es] el solitario de la Torre, el único que tiene una habitación con libros en esta colmena donde el papel escrito es casi siempre una desgracia” [Gil, [is] the loner of the Tower, the only one who has a room with books in this beehive where written works are almost always a misfortune] (18). It is not a coincidence that the author uses the word colmena, (beehive) to describe the neighborhood because it helps him to allude to Camilo José Cela’s masterpiece, La colmena, in which the seemingly insignificant details of the lives of over 300 characters are described to reveal how individuals are intimately connected and rely on each other
more than they think. Just like the articulate and obviously well-read narrative voice of *La Colmena* that contrasts with the banal voices of the uneducated characters, the narrator of *Una habitación en Babel* aims to separate himself from the faulty reasoning of some of the characters and sometimes appears to identify with Gil, a judgmental hermit. Although outside the context of this novel and Cela’s, the beehive can be read optimistically as an example of how every bee, like the individual, is essential for healthy industry, the high school reader can recognize the literary allusion to Cela’s work. The beehive does not bring to mind the spirit of hard work to achieve a collective goal; it connotes an enclosed space in which people fruitlessly shuffle about with no real hopes of progress. That is why written work is not viewed as a blessing, but a disgrace because the ignorant or illiterate residents of the Tower are not intelligent enough to grasp the power of reading and writing as way to escape from their surroundings as Gil does through his reading. As a hermit devouring books, Gil’s access to intimacy would be confined to the creative experience of bringing literary worlds to life if it were not for his desire to teach Nor the value of literature.

The Tower in the novel, however, is not as marginal as the real-life Las Tres Mil neighborhood, because the elevator does work sometimes and most of the teenagers attend school. The neighborhood has an intermediate social location between indigence and comfort as the Tower is surrounded by shanty huts on one side and cookie-cutter townhomes on the other. Effectively, the inhabitants of the Tower are neither the non-citizens, like the *chabolistas* [shanty town dwellers], nor the civically-engaged middle class citizens who keep their streets clean. Trapped between a space of squalor and a space of affluence, this enormous eyesore that blocks the view of the middle class,
emphasizes the breaking down of shared narratives between both sides. At the same time, this in-between space reveals the Tower’s capacity to communicate with both sides, making intimacy possible. Accordingly, the narrator points out that Alfarache is the result of a medieval history of coexistence in order to link it with the present multiethnic housing complex, but also to reference its potential contribution to historical patrimony:

Hay que subir hasta esa colina desde donde hace siglos han ido aparcardo sucesivamente fenicios y romanos, visigodos y árabes, y donde hoy los arqueólogos, aprovechando la carcoma del metro, intentan descubrir las claves enigmáticas de un cerro llamado Chaboya, donde al parecer los musulmanes instalaron el castillo que da nombre a la localidad: Alfarache (9-10).

[You have to go up to that hill where some centuries ago Phoenicians and Romans, Visigoths and Arabs, have settled one after another, and where today archeologists, taking advantage of the preoccupation with the subway, are trying to discover the enigmatic codes of a hill called Chaboya, where seemingly the Muslims installed a castle for which the city is named: Alfarache.]

The fictional town of Alfarache is not without hope because it is based on a splendorous history where a castle existed and it is significant enough that archeologists are in a frenzy to learn more about its past civilizations. Although the reference to the Moorish era is predictable in a number of novels where immigrant characters are central to the plot, in the novel, this historical connection also functions to give an example of a lasting dialogue. That is, by mentioning the archeologists’ interest in this neighborhood to understand a dead civilization and the city’s interest in running a subway line through the town, Alfarache becomes significant (9-10; 50). Just as the metro will connect the Tower to the city center, the information about its history will link it to great civilizations.

Although the apartment tower is not conducive to intercultural dialogue because of the

58 In the introduction of my work, I address the persistent link between medieval Iberia and today's multiethnic Spain as a way authors have created ghosts out of African immigrants.
linguistic and cultural barriers between the characters, teenage characters and their mentors work to bridge the gaps through prioritizing the language arts and critical thinking.59

Throughout the novel, the literary and philosophical allusions suggest that reading, writing and critical thinking are necessary in forming good citizens, though virtuous citizenship involves being civilized into Western thought. This acculturation begins with personal relationships between a knowledgeable Spanish mentor and a student. Predictably, the novel references a few picaresque novels for a number of reasons: to provide a loose parallel for the unjust society in which the young characters live, to provide an easily recognizable literary reference with which the young adult reader can make connections, and in my view to acknowledge the importance of one’s problem solving skills for improving one’s fortune in life. Only through the rigor of intellectual work can potential juvenile delinquents overcome adversity. That is why the two tomes of Mateo Alemán’s seventeenth-century picaresque novel, Guzmán de Alfarache are significant. The intertextuality with Guzmán as well as Lazarillo de Tormes and Rinconete y Cortadillo, set up the narrative plot as yet another picaresque story to enjoy,60 but the absence of comedy performed by the characters makes the principled message of “be cool; stay in school” even more evident. Unlike the picaresque novel, the young person’s mind must be cultivated through formal and Western thought.

59 Significantly, a website called Torre de Babel Ediciones: Portal de Filosofía, Psicología, y Humanidades en Internet, contains countless links to online libraries, dictionaries, summaries and full texts.
60 Guzmán de Alfarache (1599 and 1604) is a hilarious picaresque novel about a man sentenced to live who recounts all of his misadventures of hustling and failed relationships with women. The motifs of travel, tutelage (for delinquent purposes), piracy, and maturity are very much a part of juvenile fiction and picaresque narrative. Lazarillo de Tormes (1554) is one of the most popular picaresque texts for mandatory reading in postsecondary education, probably due to its length, intelligibility, and humor. This curricular choice explains the preference for continuing the picaresque genre for contemporary writers of young adult fiction.
Some of the young characters are picaros or tricksters. The fact that Gil, “el viejo del séptimo” [the old man from the 7th floor], has retained an original edition of Guzmán de Alfarache is significant (239). Gil explains to a fascinated Ángel the story about how he acquired the novel from a Nationalist family forced to abandon its home during the Spanish Civil War (136). As a Republican soldier, Gil and his comrades occupied the Madrilenian house in 1939, but while his friends partied, he entertained himself by reading the old manuscript words of the novel (136-7). Since the Nationalists took over the city, Gil carried the book with him into exile in France and adopted an anti-war philosophy. Then, in the 1970s he decided to move to the ancestral place of his favorite fictional protagonist, Guzmán (137-8). So for Gil, reading the novel was a way for him to escape from “demasiadas cosas atroces” [too many atrocious things] he had witnessed (135). The reference to Guzmán also brings up the call for maturity and virtuousness despite the naughtiness of one’s youth. Besides entertaining the reader, Guzmán is saturated with preachy lectures as if the rehabilitated adult narrative voice wanted to make the reader laugh out loud then chastise him for it. Ultimately the misadventures of the protagonist land him in prison with a death sentence, but because he snitches on a group of inmates planning an escape, Guzmán is released from jail and becomes an upright citizen. In effect, the confessional narrator presents an example of what not to do. Still, since Guzmán is not a typical required reading because of its length, the reader is probably ignorant of the novel’s plot. The significance of the book is related to its monetary worth of “dos millones de las antiguas pesetas,” equal to approximately

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61 One of the actual towns outside of Sevilla is Aljarafe, not Alfarache. It is close to the gypsy market Charco de la Pava, which is where Rashid, the Moroccan high school drop out, sells the pirated CDs and videogames. It seems that the author invents Alfarache through combining characteristics and landmarks of Aljarafe with other industrial park areas outside of Sevilla.
That is why Gil leaves it as an inheritance to be cashed in for his pupil Nor. The antique object is more valuable than the story it tells because it will provide a financial solution to his circumstances. The cash is meant to help ease the financial burden of higher education. Because Nor would no longer have the book in his possession, the absence of it actually negates the power of the novel in transforming more lives as it probably will be sold to a collector or museum where it cannot be enjoyed by an ordinary reader. Although Guzmán’s worth relates to its price, a number of philosophical texts outline the characters’ ethical responses to adversity and illustrate the value of critical thinking to overcome hardship.

As with Guzmán, texts are significant in the novel and different philosophical thoughts trace the character development of Ángel. Before Ángel decides to locate Nor, he returns a book by Aristotle to the high school library and remembers the sentence, “Todo hombre, por naturaleza, desea saber” [All men, by nature, desire to know]. So from the very beginning of the plot, Ángel firmly believes in the value of knowledge and throughout the novel he wants others to seek out knowledge, regardless of their circumstances. This assertion however contrasts with the neglected high school library.

To keep students from stealing the videos and disorganizing the shelves, the other teachers prefer to keep it locked. Barring the students from unaccompanied reading disturbs Ángel, as the narrator expresses his thoughts about the activity of reading:

> En realidad la biblioteca es el calabozo de los libros. Se les oye gritar, removerse en los estantes, golpear los cristales de las vitrinas, quieren salir, quieren que alguien los lea. Sus historias no avanzan sin los lectores.

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62 I assume Gil is referring to the cash from the book helping to pay for all of the living costs while attending college. $15,000 is definitely enough to cover 5 years of studies at the University of Seville and because of Nor’s study ethic, one would think that he would receive scholarships from the city government to pay his tuition in full.

63 This is the first line of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (350 BCE).
[Actually the library is a dungeon of books. You can hear them yelling, move around on the shelves, bang the glass cases, they want to leave, they want someone to read them. Their stories don’t move forward without readers.] (113).

For Ángel, reading permits the characters to realize their narrative fates. Readers release the storylines from atrophy since, by choosing a particular text, they free it from the confines of a page and into the imagination of the readers. In this passage, Ángel’s interior monologue continues by considering the specific moments that would not be read if there were no readers to finish the canonical texts he mentions. For example, Calixto would have never shown up while Melibea waited and no one would hear Hamlet’s dilemma or the rationality of Don Quixote’s irrationality (114). Effectively, texts encourage readers to hope, just as Melibea waited for her lover, to reflect on one’s existential purpose just as Hamlet contemplated his commitment to vengeance, and explore the paradoxes of life just as the Quixote’s chivalric journey reveals.

Throughout the novel, the narrator exemplifies the power of reading by reminding the young adult reader of the literary and philosophical canon, thereby creating a dialogue with the cultured student who has actually read these texts. Because abridged texts, excerpts, and notes are more accessible for young people and for teachers who must cover a large amount of literary and philosophical history, an average high school student might recognize authors and basic storylines but they might not be able to catch the intention of the allusions. Unlike the other two novels I discuss in this chapter, the intended reader of Babel decidedly enjoys engaging with classic texts whereas a typical student would prefer popular fantasy and detective novels, some of which are translated
from English and Japanese.\textsuperscript{64} For this reason, I believe the author uses the investigative journey, on which Ángel and Rashid embark, as a familiar outline for the young adult reader. Still, the streams of conscious literary contemplations pervade the plot leaving the action sequences underdeveloped and the dialogue sparse. The philosophical seriousness of the novel further contrasts with the dialogue-centered stories of popular Japanese graphic fiction—referred to as manga—making this novel somewhat elitist and an unlikely candidate for pleasure reading versus assigned reading. When raising consciousness about immigration feels like a chore for young adult readers, the universal messages of human dignity are ultimately contained in the classroom. They also seem to transmit the message that being anti-xenophobic is a chore. That is, whatever meaningful discussions might take place in a literature lesson about this book, they do not even spread beyond the classroom.\textsuperscript{65} Communicating the universal values of required readings is a difficult task, but one of the themes of this novel hints at mentorship and one-on-one instruction as a successful enterprise. The personal connection between teacher and student ultimately inspire both parties to become better stewards.

Since the omniscient narrator appears to be most attuned to Ángel’s thoughts, the reader gets a sense of the narrator’s feelings about taking serious action after contemplating grave philosophical theory. That is why Ángel, upon viewing Gil’s immense collection of books, remarks about Dan Brown’s \textit{The Da Vinci Code}: “Confío en que no tendrá ese libro, pues si él está aquí, ahora mismo me voy yo” [I trust that you

\textsuperscript{64} Just like in the U.S., young adults read novels about vampires, wizards, and all sorts of mythical beasts. Currently, the most popular fantasy series in Spain appears to be \textit{The Mortal Instruments}, translated as \textit{Cazadores de Sombras (Shadow Hunters)} by American young-adult fiction writer Cassandra Clare.

\textsuperscript{65} On the other hand, classical literature lessons might extend beyond the classroom since Herder Editorial already publishes manga versions of canonical literary and philosophical texts such as Marx’s \textit{Capital}; Machiavelli’s \textit{The Prince}; Rousseau’s \textit{The Social Contract}; and Dante’s \textit{The Divine Comedy} (Maruo). Originally published in Japanese, these Western masterpieces were translated into Spanish.
won’t have that book, but if it’s here, then I’m leaving right now] (79). Gil and Ángel agree that the bestselling mystery novel does not belong in their libraries, thereby demonstrating their disdain for mass-market pseudo philosophy. Although only a few of his brightest students understand his complex philosophy lessons, Ángel continues to use philosophy as a way to reach out to his students (55). By the end of the novel, he understands that the classroom is not enough and he has to adopt a philosophy of action as Gil calls him to put his beliefs into practice.

Gil explains that the purpose of philosophy involves changing the world and not just thinking about it, but Ángel responds: “Prefiero a Pascal: todos los problemas proceden de no quedarnos tranquilos en nuestra habitación” (132). He is alluding to the French mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), who developed the theory of probabilities.  

At this point, Ángel is not ready to risk his safety for a student he barely knew, but each subsequent citing of a philosopher marks his commitment to bringing Nor home. By the time he drives Nor and Rashid back to Alfarache, he alludes to Kant’s categorical imperative to “actuar por deber” (215). That is, regardless of the consequences—good or bad—one must always act according to rules of universal morality. For example, Ángel must save Nor from the mafia, deportation, or other unfavorable outcomes because helping someone in need is the right thing to do.

Similarly, Ángel finally understands what Gil meant when he spoke of “una broma machadiana” [A Machadian joke]. (58). Soon after Gil is buried, the thug probably

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66 Taking Blaise Pascal’s theory of probabilities makes it easy for Ángel to say no to performing risky tasks because not participating in anything would yield the least possible risk.

67 Machadian refers to Antonio Machado (1875-1939), a Spanish modernist poet whose sentimental writing has been remixed into popular songs and Holy Week processional music. Since he is from Seville, his work is especially appreciated in Southern Spain and forms part of the language arts curriculum in elementary and secondary schools.
responsible for his murder, clears out all of Gil’s books from his apartment in order to resell them (239-40). When Ángel recognizes who is stealing the books, he punches him and throws Antonio Machado’s Poesías at him. Ángel reads a poem that Gil has circled, in which the poetic voice laments the fugacity of life and the regrets one has in life. (243). At that moment, Ángel understand the Machadian joke as the concept of evolving into a civilized humanity through the disavowal of ignorant bliss of paradise. Ángel interprets the poem vis-à-vis the history of Genesis: “Ahora lo entendía. Entendía que el tiempo nos arrebata el paraíso y nos destierra al mundo. Oro por cobre, manzana por sabiduría, naturaleza por cultura, confianza por libertad: todo eso hemos cambiado. Un trueque demasiado desventajoso por la ganancia de ser hombres” [Now he understood. He understood that time snatches us away from paradise and banishes us to the world. Gold for copper, an apple for wisdom, nature for culture, confidence for liberty: we have exchange all of this. A barter too disadvantageous for the profit of being men] (244). By making Machado’s poem an example of a philosophical dilemma, literature’s significance stretches beyond pleasure reading to engage the intellect. Literature ultimately appeals to his heart, since the references in the novel become increasingly more sentimental. Moreover, Antonio Machado, effectively the literary patron of Seville, bridges the gap between high culture and popular culture since twelve of his poems have been made into popular folk songs by singer-songwriter Joan Manuel Serrat. Perhaps the allusion to Machado in the novel serves to make philosophy more accessible, since some readers may be familiar with Joan Manuel Serrat’s versions of Antonio Machado’s poetry.
In the novel, the young people are similarly called to seek knowledge and accept the duty-based ethics Ángel espouses. The teenage characters’ ability to use and grasp language ultimately defines their histories. The best communicators, like Nor, are permitted to engage in friendly interethnic relationships whereas Rashid, who struggles with reading and writing, is cut off from the privilege of having a protective, intimate friendship with a “sage” Spanish mentor. Nor, Berta and side characters, such as Marcos and Lolo, can successfully transition into valuable individuals because they positively respond to adult tutelage, whereas society casts out Rashid, his illiterate friend, and Stéfano from a developing neighborhood community. Interestingly, the characters’ consumption of the Spanish dictionary and their perfection of the Spanish language correlate with the young immigrants’ virtue.

Nor takes advantage of the dictionary and books that his teacher Ángel gave him (34). Ángel notices that Nor’s letter does not have any mistakes and is happy to see Nor’s progress. He thinks, “Ni una falta. Seguro que había usado el diccionario” (33). Just as Nor determines to improve his writing skills, he eagerly follows the Humanities lessons that his mentor Gil imparts. Nor’s intellect eventually overshadows his blackness and helps to give corporeal presence to his “ghostliness.” Unlike the medieval Moorish ghosts in *El paso del Estrecho*, Nor is described as a different kind of phantom by the narrator:

De la familia de Nor y del mismo Nor apenas nadie sabía nada. Como todas las familias llegadas de África procedentes de la inmigración ilegal, habían entrado en el país clandestinamente y habían procurado vivir como fantasmas en sitios desconocidos, hasta que la confianza y ciertos apoyos legales les permitian mostrarse a la luz como seres reales y existentes (59).

[No one hardly knew anything about Nor’s family or Nor. Like all families arriving from Africa through illegal immigration, they had entered clandestinely in the country and had endeavored to live like ghosts]
in unknown places, until trust and certain legal support permitted them to show themselves in the light like real existing beings.

The author chooses to use “illegal” rather than undocumented or irregular, which already sets up these adolescents as criminals who need to be rehabilitated, instead of victims of globalization. Nor’s illegality relates to lacking the trust and legal support he needs to participate in society. Gil’s legal knowledge and the confidence he gains from Ángel’s academic support transforms Nor from a useless ghost onto an actual nbody capable of contributing to society. Because Nor can adapt to the Western philosophical standards set by Ángel and Gil, he no longer evokes anxiety in others as does Rashid. The narrator focalized on Ángel’s thoughts, paints Nor as innocent, hardworking and eager to learn. Although he and Rashid were friends at one time, Rashid grew to despise him for being naïve, which Ángel regards as innocence. Rashid’s insecurities are directly related to the way he is perceived in society, whereas Nor effectively resembles a noble savage of for his nobility and puerility combined with the stoic patience of a martyr. Nor sacrifices his present existence to protect his brother, and if need be, resolves to return to Guinea where his prospects for success are dismal. Effectively, Nor is admirable and thus, desirable.

Nor’s sensible nature makes him ripe for tutelage. Gil teaches Nor to be an independent thinker, not bound to religious dogma, in search of his own system of ethics. Gil teaches him a phrase: “Llega a ser lo que eres” [Become what you are], which Nor translates into his native language (79-80). Although Ángel recognizes the phrase as classic, he cannot remember the author. The original phrase is from the ancient Greek lyric poet Pindar in his “Second Pythian Ode,” verse 72, but the ancient Greek verse has
baffled translators.\textsuperscript{68} By not capturing the idea of learning that is inherent in the original version, Gil actually refers to Nietzsche’s imperative in \textit{The Gay Science}: “You shall become the person you are” (219). According to Babette E. Babich in “Nietzsche’s Imperative as a Friend’s Encomium,” the philosopher chooses to elide the reference to learning in order to emphasize becoming who one already is. She reasons, “Your only task would thus be: simply to be what you \textit{already} are, what you have \textit{already} become” (30). In this same way, Nor and his mentors either cite Pindar incorrectly or they are referring to Nietzsche’s call for action. In Nietzsche’s \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None}, he remarks in the section entitled “On Reading and Writing”: “I hate reading idlers. Whoever knows the reader will henceforth do nothing for the reader. Another century of readers—and the spirit itself will stink”(152). In this sense, reading without action is useless and that is why the characters must also adopt a philosophy of action. The phrase, “Become what you are” becomes the anthem for the relationship between scholar and boy. The homosocial bond allows a space for the pupil to mature into a cultured man and the filial intimacy they share helps to erase Nor’s otherness. Nor has proved to be an intellect, which eclipses his blackness.

Their bond also reinscribes the Western fantasies of colonizing and civilizing the good savage and makes Nor into a Pygmalion figure. Gil remarks that Nor is like a son to him: “Quiero decir mi hijo intelectual. No quiero ser presuntuoso, pero casi todo lo que

\textsuperscript{68} There are wildly different translations of Pindar’s “Second Pythian Ode.” In Hugh Seymour Tremenehere’s \textit{Translations from Pindar: The Odes into English Blank Verse}, the line reads this way: “Still remain the man you are, well knowing what you are,” but the translator does not maintain the same verse numbers as Pindar (Ln 38-37). In Francis David Morice’s version, he translates the verse: “Learn thy true self, and live it” (Ln 72). Here there is an emphasis on learning to be oneself. In Spanish, Rubén Bonifaz Nuño translates the following “Sé tú siempre como has aprendido a ser” [Be always how you have learned to be] (Ln 72). In José Alsina’s version, the phrase again focuses on learning: “Aprende a ser quien eres” [Learn to be who you are] (73). It was easier to find more current translations of Pindar’s in Spanish than in English, which probably illustrates the importance of the classic Humanities in the Spanish education system.
sabe Nor de español, de geografía, de literatura, de filosofía y de política, me lo debe a mí” [I mean that he’s my intellectual son. I don’t want to be presumptuous, but almost everything Nor knows of Spanish, of geography, literature, philosophy and politics, he owes to me] (80-81). Gil takes ownership of his academic formation as if he were a tabula rasa on which the mentor can sketch what he deems to be appropriate knowledge. This reveals that Nor, a successful experiment, must be brought back under Gil and Ángel’s tutelage so they can sculpt a model Spanish citizen. Nor’s forgiveness of the people who have harmed him, his quest to save his brother, and his gratitude towards Ángel and Gil for their instruction depict Nor as a good-hearted young man who deserves society’s love.

Besides Nor, the successful characters are young Spaniards who have an aptitude for assimilating information at school and they maintain affective relationships with Ángel. Berta is composing a novel about a philosophy teacher who embarks on a life-changing journey and participates in the poetry reading at school (248; 96). Similarly, her friend Marcos effortlessly devours poetry and philosophy and their classmate Lolo is the “mejor analista sociológico de su propio barrio” [the best sociological analyst of his own neighborhood] (47). Regardless of Berta’s atheism (19) and Marco’s lying about throwing away Berta’s journal (248), Berta’s and Marco’s strong academic performance make them suitable for society.

In contrast, Rashid and his Moroccan friend are regarded as seedy in the neighborhood precisely because the institution of school no longer contains them. They are no longer part of anyone’s intimate circles. Berta considers Rashid’s friend, “el de los bolígrafos” [the one with the pens] because he always stands on the corner peddling ink
pens with his broken Spanish when presumably he cannot read or write Spanish very well (16, 24). Rashid’s nameless sidekick serves to emphasize Rashid’s lack of education and inability to productively contribute to society. Because Rashid does not accept Ángel’s praise of knowledge and instead adopts a survival mentality, his existence cannot advance civilization. Rashid explains to “Ángel his feelings on education: “No todo el mundo tiene que estudiar. Yo tengo que ganar dinero y tengo que buscarlo […] Nadie ha dicho que solo pueda vivirse estudiando. Algunas personas no lo necesitan, hablan, escuchan, miran…es suficiente. Su meta no es conocer sino vivir” [Not everybody needs to study. I have to make money and I have to look for it […] No one said you could get through life by studying. Some people don’t need to, they talk, listen, watch… and that’s enough] (158). Before discussing his reasons, Rashid revealed that he dropped out of school because he had a hard time reading and understanding Ángel’s assignments (147). Unlike Nor, Rashid does not successfully utilize the Spanish dictionary to contemplate the existential questions that amuse clever students like Nor, Berta, Marcos and Lolo. Instead, he chooses to sell pirated CDs and video games at the gypsy market (93-4). Rashid’s argument that his street savvy will sustain him ultimately breaks down as we learn that he has been sent to prison.

Although Rashid’s copyright infringement does not originate from his own ingenuity, his crimes receive a heavy punishment: incarceration. Copying intellectual property seriously affects others by decreasing the earning potential of both multinational record labels and independent artists, even though infringement does not violently injure its victims. In fact, in Spain, the Law of Intellectual Property, formally known as the Digital Canon, levies a tax on hardware such as recordable DVD players, rewritable CDs,
flash drives and scanners, to minimize the loss of profits due to illegally copying intellectual property. In this way, anyone who buys a blank CD is charged with compensating artists whether or not she plans to copy someone else’s work. The law protects authorship at the price of making everyone equally responsible for copyright infringement.

Rashid and Stéfano, however, not only earn non-taxable income cash, they also appropriate the creative and intellectual work of the recording artists and video game creators for their own benefit. They are incapable of applying the ethics and critical thinking they should have learned in school and their disrespect for authorship leads to a heavy punishment: incarceration. Rashid’s departure from school only aggravates his poor social status in the already marginalized neighborhood just as his incarceration essentially erases him from society. Some days pass and the narrator does not mention Rashid. Only when Berta repeats gossip about Stéfano’s apartment being raided by the police does Ángel contemplate Rashid’s future. Immediately thereafter, life returns to normal as if Rashid did not matter (236). The reader does not have enough time to lament the absence of Rashid even after s/he has learned about the adversity with which he has dealt.

Rashid is not the object of pity, because he is not the romanticized Arab young man struggling to survive in a society of immense economic disparity south of the Mediterranean, but a creepy moro profiting from hustling in a society where good citizens are supposed to pay taxes and abide by the laws. Regardless of the way Rashid’s

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69 According to the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, the Law of Intellectual Property protects anyone who has created a literary, artistic, or scientific work. “La condición de autor tiene un carácter irrenunciable” [The condition of the author has an unrenounceable character]. The protection pertains to all mediums and the passing of time cannot change authorship.
character is portrayed as a victim of an unjust society in the beginning, there is no ultimate redemption for his character. His ambiguous paternity, poverty, and peddling appears to make him a picaresque character who is supposed to overcome hardship, but who does not heed Ángel’s European tutelage. His permission to be a rogue is reneged because Rashid is too old to grasp the transformative value of Western education and he is too old to be taken care of. Only kids inspire compassion in adults. Assimilation into civil society has a deadline. Moreover, as a nineteen year old passing for seventeen, Rashid chooses not to accept responsibility for his actions since pretending to be a minor prevents him from being deported or going to jail. The author punishes him with silence by not allowing Rashid to comment once he has served his purpose of guiding Ángel through the underground world of human smuggling. Rashid’s character functions to present a cross-section of the most undesirable members of society, not to solicit solidarity with Moroccan immigrants. Nothing about Rashid makes him desirable. Because Rashid proves to be an ordinary immigrant incapable of initiating the progress needed to advance civilization, he disappears from the text. By writing Rashid as a loser (a high school dropout with very little ambition in life), Nor’s virtue stands out and the young reader must consider the alternative of dropping out of school.

Stéfano, also a dropout, understands the value of language better than Rashid. Although he too is punished, his ability to utilize the rhetoric that shapes a cultured society allows him to move successfully through it. At school, Stéfano is known as “el poeta de las pizzas” [the poet of pizzas], because his father owns a pizzeria and Stéfano “tenía además la habilidad de hacerse querer y solía recitar unos poemas ripiosos, memorizados en su infancia, pero que dichos con el encanto inusual para ella [Berta] de
la lengua italiana aceleraban el corazón de Berta” (68). Stéfano, like Rashid, is a delinquent and an immigrant, but his Italian nationality secures his social status. His communitarian citizenship in the European Union, his Casanova charisma, and his socially legitimate position as pizza maker safeguard him from social exclusion. Furthermore, to prove his literary knowledge, Stéfano makes references to the only book he has read in Spanish, the German novel *El Perfume* by Peter Süskind (24). The allusion to *El Perfume* reinforces Stéfano’s sensuality and identifies Stéfano with a lady-killer, yet he is not the author of anything. Berta, once enamored by him for his ability to romanticize her with words, learned firsthand that he plagiarizes because Stéfano stole her essay about the picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes* to pass off as his own (70). *Lazarillo* frames Stéfano’s juvenile mischief since he plagiarizes homework assignments, pirates creative work, and steals others’ belongings. Stéfano’s fraudulence grants him access to affective, scholastic and financial benefits, but the author ultimately punishes him because he is revealed as a fake. Genuine intimacy involves sharing one’s true feelings to connect with others, not a scripted declaration. In my reading, Rashid and Stéfano’s imprisonment aims to solve the larger economic and creative problem of pirating intellectual property just as their incarceration removes them from potentially affecting society in a negative way. Because they do not channel their energy into creative or critical work and ignore the ethical conventions they should follow, Rashid and Stéfano do not deserve freedom.

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70 *El Perfume* revolves around an eighteenth-century French orphan, Jean-Baptiste, who has no body odor of his own. To better integrate in society, he wears a scent that imitates natural human pheromones and goes about murdering women, particularly virgins, to extract their body scents with the purpose of creating the ultimate perfume. On his execution day, the scent he has created is released producing a mass orgy in the public. Jean-Baptiste is vindicated and later on decides to wear some of the magical scent. A crowd of people attracted to the scent, devour his body.
In the end, the book-smart and good-hearted sub-Saharan is rewarded despite his provisional resident visa for minors and his involvement in facilitating his brother’s undocumented immigration, because he whole-heartedly accepted the civilizing programs of his Spanish tutors. He was worthy of being found by his pessimistic philosophy teacher, because Nor exhibited an aptitude to be a model citizen in the future. Nevertheless, as a barely literate high school dropout who cannot intellectually process formal logic as a useful tool for street survival, Rashid’s fate is consigned to the correctional--his new place of residence where transgressors are isolated from society in hopes of rehabilitating them back into civil society. The novel displaces the worse characteristics on the two groups most ethnically similar to Spaniards—the Moroccans and the Italians—by making Rashid and Stéfano intellectual property pirates. The novel suggests that without correction through academic preparation, Mediterranean people are doomed to fail.

In a different manner from Una habitación en Babel, the narrator of El paso del Estrecho focalizes on the characters but he does not seem to know everything about them. Because the narrator slowly provides more information, Mustafá goes from being a suspicious undocumented immigrant to a heroic Spanish Moor. The narrator focalizes mainly on Detective Mohedano, who is investigating a homicide connected to a patera, and Violeta, who disguises herself as a man, called Chirlas, to sell contraband to and from Morocco. Mustafá, the paterista teen rescued from drowning in the Strait of Gibraltar by Violeta, is searching for a book of prophesies from Islamic Spain. As a team, Mustafá and Violeta discover that Mustafá is the natural heir of an Al-Andalus empire,
making him a Moor of Spanish descent, and not the anonymous Berber man who is often stereotyped in Spanish culture.

Similarly, in Lalana’s *Paso del Estrecho*, the capacity of young readers to use their critical thinking skills to solve problems of national interest presents a Spanish civil society that invests in those who participate in reimagining an intellectual Spain. Curiously, the cross-dressing orphan, Violeța, and the undocumented Moroccan immigrant, Mustafâ, uncover the lost history that connects the country’s intellectual and cultural past to the present. Despite the absence of a family—the primary social institution that connects individuals to their genealogical history—Violeța and Mustafâ are responsible for recovering the objects that prove Zaragoza’s past splendor while defeating a human smuggling ring. These teenagers have helped to create an exclusive Spain that champions ethics and intellect.

Violeța, who is posing as a young man, Chirlas, welcomes an intelligent and beautiful undocumented immigrant into her house. Her hospitality symbolizes Spain’s potential role as an international cultural and economic power that will integrate foreignness as long as the stranger can promote Spain’s splendor. Although the author establishes that Violeța engages in criminal activity so that she can financially support herself outside the foster-care and secondary education systems, her cross dressing and physical home space can also be read as an alternative way of understanding Spain’s domestic space as permeable and vulnerable yet capable of reformation.

Because Violeța lives in a shipyard on the bay of Algeciras, a southern city on the Bay of Gibraltar, her home is vulnerable to the elements of nature and penetrable by the African immigrants crossing the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain. The narrator paints Violeța’s
dwelling as an open and cold space whose structure reminds one of its former utility: “La vivienda que compartía con su tío no era sino las instalaciones del en otro tiempo prestigioso ‘Astillero Mayorga, S.A.’, en Puente Mayorga, […] Un hogar de chapa y uralita, gélido en invierno y abrasador en verano. Pero era más suyo que cualquier otra casa en la que hubiera vivido hasta la fecha” [The dwelling that Chirlas shared with his uncle weren’t but facilities from some other prestigious time ‘Mayorga Shipyard, S.A.’, in Puente Mayorga […] A home of sheet metal and asbestos, icy in the winter and scorching in the summer. But it was more his own than any other house he had ever lived in thus far] (28). Despite the strength of its metal structure, the shipyard is decrepit. The asbestos—an outdated building material now understood as a toxic crystal responsible for lung cancer—and the sheet metal further emphasize the contrast between strength and decrepitude. Neither of these materials creates a hearth that protects its inhabitants from extreme weather conditions, because the shipyard is meant to be a temporary vessel where commodities, not people, are traded for money. No longing serving as a site for legal capitalist entrepreneurship, the contaminated shipyard serves to house contraband merchandise and an orphan teenager.

With no parents and now a dead guardian, Violeta does not have a family—the primary social unit that first instills social norms such as gender expressions and moral codes. Orphans, often main characters in young adult fiction, must navigate through an unjust society that appears to be hostile to their existence outside the normal community of kinships, yet glad they exist to blame as scape-goats. The difference between an orphan and a rogue relates to their ingenuity—the ability to use the system to their advantage and then make a fool of those who endeavor to oppress them. An orphan is
rescued by the compassionate hero of a dramatic tale whose good work seeks to reify the virtue of the abandoned child. Orphans are saved and rogues must save themselves. Intimate, usually filial connections with the hero allow orphans to reveal how valuable they are to society. In other words, orphans are good people with good hearts whereas the rogue (el picaro) easily manipulates others. In this novel, Violeta starts out as a rogue—a witty teenage boy who understands the world better than some adults, but who, by finally accepting Mohedano after he has rescued her from the villain, becomes an orphan who has just been welcomed home. Accepting Mohedano as her new father grants her access to a comfortable life.

As a rogue character, dressing up to portray a hyper masculine criminal self protects her from becoming the open vessel the shipyard represents. The extra clothes she wears, loose garments and a chest binding, ironically relates to the illicit clothing she sells. Violeta’s illegal economic activity involves selling contraband intimate wear across the Strait—underwear that is supposedly too sexy for nearby Morocco’s mores. Since European clothing is readily available in Morocco, the illicit lingerie actually suggests the intimate yet suspect relationship between both nations. The profitability of such an intimate contraband intends to speak to a westernized and modern image of Moroccan consumers in that Violeta points out that Moroccans don’t want out-of-date lingerie (15). It also hints at a sexualized intimacy between the two countries. Ironically, Spanish lingerie is the fantasy for Morocco, suggesting that it is on display for less-developed nations to desire. Since Violeta can acquire what Spaniards and Moroccans desire, she has the capability of becoming an excellent host. She is a host who sells fantasies to her guests.
Nevertheless, because these exports are not legal, the use value of these objects must be questioned. Successful operators of sex slavery often brand foreign prostitutes into western fantasies to market them internationally. The beautiful but underpriced underwear brings into play the vulnerability of women forced to reveal their bodies as objects bought and sold in an illegal, yet profitable global market. Like the intimate wear she sells to Moroccans, the cheap tax-free cigarettes Violeta smuggles for Spanish consumption highlight the bigger issues of violence and corruption, but because lingerie and cigarettes are legal when taxed and traded within the constraints of economic regulations, these examples actually downplay the harmful consequences of Violeta’s engagement in contraband activity. That is, she does not sell hashish or mushrooms because peddling those items is illegal under any circumstances. Moroccan women’s demand for luxurious lingerie in the novel sets up the orientalist image on which the rest of the story is based. The fact that neither Violeta nor Mohedano are punished for their role in selling contraband makes lingerie acceptable compared to the pernicious tracking of humans. Fostering the fantasy of intimacy is not the same as selling sex. The good Spanish characters’ interest in trading culturally acceptable items and not people can be read as Spain’s commitment to legal capitalism. Cigarettes and lingerie do not disrupt Spanish demographics like international prostitution drug trafficking or illegal immigration.

Mustafá, the undocumented Moroccan rescued from drowning, threatens Spanish demographics until his status as heir to Spain’s medieval cultural legacy changes his position from being a potential threat to Spanish society to becoming the beloved prodigal son returning home to reclaim his place in the family. The move from potential
terrorist to valued citizen is characterized by the work he does to recover Spanish history. Once Mustafá and Violeta locate the book of prophecies, Mustafá’s true identity is revealed. He is Mustafá al-Muqtadir, the surname of his ancestors who ruled the empire of Saraqusta—specifically during one of the greatest intellectual and artistic periods of Muslim settlement—and not the declining Berber-Muslim dynasty of the Almoravids. The Aljafería, Mustafá’s ancestral home, is where notable philosophers, artists and scientists held tertulias (Corral Lafuente). Mustafá’s heritage reifies his Arabness and intellectual/artistic aptitude versus a Berber identity that would categorize him as an uneducated member of an indigenous Northwestern African ethnicity still struggling under Arab oppression in contemporary Maghreb. Thus, Mustafá is not an ordinary illegal undocumented Moor; he is Hispano-Arab royalty.

The fact that he is also “undocumented” in his mountain town in Morocco further illustrates that he is not Berber, or even Moroccan. His “papers” or his identity can only be found in the medieval texts in a secret subterranean room of a Spanish palace, now a museum emphasizing the splendor of a bygone era. The author writes Mustafá out of Morocco and into Spanish history, by making old Spanish and old Arabic his ancestral languages. As a descendent of a Spanish king, Mustafá learned Spanish from his grandfather, who learned it from his father and so on. By passing down the family’s history and language, Mustafá’s family maintained a strong connection to Zaragoza. His knowledge is so intimate that he and his ancestors even memorized the floor plans of the

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71 If the Berbers were the soldiers of the initial Arab expansion, the Arabs were the rulers. The Arabized Berber became an integral part of Muslim Spain and the Maghreb, but even today, working-class and rural Berbers are discriminated against by those claiming Arab heritage in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria (Maddy-Weitzman).

72 Mustafá speaks classical Arabic whereas most Moroccans speak Darija Arabic—a simplified dialect that has integrated French and Spanish words. Official documents and literature are written in modern standard Arabic to maintain communication between Arabic-speaking countries.
Aljafería and the eleventh-century mosque by heart. Furthermore, Mustafá’s ancestors did not belong to the group expelled in 1492 during the Reconquest, but to those overthrown by the Almoravids, a Berber-led dynasty of presumably darker-skinned conservative Muslims (from Senegal to South-Morocco) who, according to historians, did little in the way of cultural advancement (Codera y Zaidín). The religious teachers of Yusuf ibn Tashfin, leader of the Almoravids, gave him a pardon to remove the native Iberian Muslims from power because of their heterodoxy and religious indifference. Thus, this sets up Mustafá’s family as a cosmopolitan native Iberian integrated into everyday Al-Andalus society and not as another undocumented paterista. Mustafá never represents a ghostly “Moor” that unsettles Spaniards because of his origins to medieval Spain, but his character does, however, bring up the notion of welcoming one’s exiled family back to Spain. His “return” evokes the “lost al-Andalus” of which Daniela Flesler speaks (56), but as an ancient civilization that provides Spain with a unique cultural identity of which it can be proud. For this reason, Mustafá is fully welcomed back home once Mohedano and the reader realize that the teenager is not a terrorist.

To understand Mustafá as Spaniard, I apply the same logic Spaniards use to claim Ceuta and Melillas as fully Spanish. Ceutans and Melillans emphasize that the Al-Andalus caliphs at the height of cultural splendor were native Iberian Moors, since the nation of Morocco did not yet exist (Esparza). By claiming the Moors as theirs, Ceuta and Melilla’s origins were always Spanish; therefore they were not enclaves within the border of another sovereign nation, but central to Spanish imperialism. Since Morocco did not yet exist as a modern nation-state, then it cannot claim Ceuta and Melilla as its own cities. This is how Juan Jesús Vivas, the mayor-president of Ceuta can affirm that
both cities “se sienten españolas, pero tabién lo tienen que parecer; su realidad no ha de
diferir del resto de España” [feel Spanish, but they also have to look that way; their
reality should not differ from the rest of Spain] (“Ceuta y Melilla”). Presumably, Vivas is
speaking about the immigration laws that do not give the cities’ law enforcement the right
to immediately deport those who have illegally entered the border, but this statement
likewise speaks to a desire to make Spain uniform, to look like itself via the laws that
govern the nation-state. I bring up this brief exploration of Spain in North Africa to
highlight a dominant message in young-adult fiction: rhetoric informs virtuous
citizenship. Ceutans and Melillans are just as Spanish as the mainlanders because history,
literature, journalism and television have imagined them that way. Even though medieval
Saraqusta cannot really be called Spanish since Spain did not yet have a consolidated
identity, Spanish schoolbooks present it as the precursor of Zaragoza and no less Spanish
than Castile itself. By imagining Zaragoza or Ceuta and Melilla as having always been
Spanish, their inhabitants can live with ethnic difference.

In this way, Mustafá can be claimed as Spanish. His undocumented status from
his mountain region in Morocco further demonstrates that he does not belong there. His
birthright is Spanish, down to the ancient Spanish he speaks. Since he uncovers the
national treasures, the disinherited son of Spain is accepted into Spain. He can become a
lawful citizen. Mustafá, once a nameless son of Spain, has provided his legitimacy. As
Derrida puts it, “Hospitable right is reserved for someone with a name or social status,
not anonymous people. The anonymous are just ‘barbarians’” (25). Spain can welcome
Mustafá once they realize he has a name. The question is raised as to whether Mustafá
can be integrated into Spanish society and claim Spanish nationality, because of his
ancestral relationship to Spain, or because he is responsible for locating national treasures that would effectively support Zaragoza’s claim to a magnificent patrimony. First, being invited into a warehouse for merchandise and then sneaking into a palace that no longer belongs to his family, Mustafá’s journey changes him from being el moro for whom the police are looking, to Mustafá al-Muqtadir, last heir of Saraqusta, just as he goes from victim of a Spanish human tracking mafia, in which the detective’s own father-in-law is implicated, to a champion of knowledge. Mustafá’s critical thinking skills and Violeta’s street smarts get them to the goal—a sacred historical text and a place to call home.

Both novels seek to accomplish a similar goal of imagining a community of well-informed, rational cosmopolites capable of protecting society from racism and intolerance, while safeguarding the economy from piracy and contraband. In the first part of this chapter, I argued that Nor, the virtuous African teenager in Una habitación en Babel, ultimately accepts his natural role as scholar instead of that of a stereotypical undocumented immigrant like Rashid. Because of Nor’s adherence to Western philosophical principles and the rules of the Spanish language, he gets an opportunity to become a Spaniard. Rashid, on the other hand, does not accept the rules and is ultimately punished for it. His disrespect for intellectual piracy laws and refusal to cultivate his reading skills despite his teacher’s attention ultimately lands him in prison. This story of the neighbors in the working class and immigrant borough of Alfarache effectively illustrates that only the educated foreigners are capable of improving their situations. Moreover, Spain is only willing to incorporate into the nation-state a particular kind of immigrant.
Similarly in *El paso del Estrecho*, the clever foreigner is allowed to stay in Spain once he has uncovered valuable national artifacts that would make Zaragozan history even more complete. On the surface the novel illustrates the global values now taught in high school—interethnic community, respect for individuals, and social justice—but a deeper reading reveals that immigrants are only worth what they can bring to the host country. More specifically, Mustafá gives Zaragoza a more impressive history. Only then, can he be considered a foreign son returning to his original home.

Spain is exclusive, welcoming those who are capable of making the country culturally significant. Nor and Mustafá are the only foreign characters successfully integrated into a Spanish community because they can bring value to the nation. Their commitment to the language arts guarantees their place in a society and helps them to feel worthy of Spanish citizenship. They have the qualities—ethics and intellect—that will make them ideal future citizens, and grant them access to personal encounters with Spaniards. These novels mark their participation in an established system of rights and obligations. Participation makes them worthy of love from their society. In both novels, intimacy—whether based on a filial relationship between mentor and mentee or a romantic encounter between two teenagers—is strengthened as the immigrant characters become more engaged in intellectual work. Intimacy is not just a shared emotional connection, but also a discriminatory practice in which potential partners are first screened to find out what talents they can bring to the relationship and by extension, society in general.
Conclusion: From Phantoms to Bodies

Spain is a nation of nations (Sánchez Conejero 18), in which the memory of colonialism, imperialism and Medieval Reconquest has been underplayed to foster distinct regional identities (Gabilondo, “Uncanny Racial” 276). Basically, otherness is complicated in Spain since regional and ethnic identities come before national ones. Gypsies, Galicians, Catalanians, Basque people and even Andalusians, Valencians, and Asturians do not identify with a Castilian-centered national identity, questioning the hegemony of a minority center. Otherness had existed long before the arrival of immigrant others, but somehow the old Francoist rhetoric of Spanishness is recalled when new others enter the national domestic space—postcolonial immigrants and migrants with little historical connection to the Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish media often call Spain a “receptor de inmigrantes,” [receiving country of immigrants]. Spain as receptor reveals that there is a message that has to be assimilated between receptor and transmitter, between the receiving country and the sending one. Furthermore, reception is a positive concept where positive communication begins and the receiver respects the guest as well as celebrates his admission into a society. Reception awards the guests for his accomplishments or his aptitude for entertaining everyone else.

Unlike people, ghosts are not invited. They just show up. Spanish hauntologists such as Daniela Flesler and Rosalía Cornejo Parriego have rightly identified how immigrants have come to be understood metaphorically as specters that have returned to reclaim what was taken from them—their land, their language and their culture. Fictional and testimonial narrative shows an overwhelming correlation between Medieval Spain, the transatlantic slave trade and even twentieth-century colonial exploits. Despite the
undocumented or illegal entry of immigrants into Spain and the postcolonial connections that a majority of the immigrants share, they are not specters. Intimacy gives them back their bodies. Discussing the phenomenon of global immigration involves recontextualizing the way immigrants are viewed in Spanish narrative, and maybe by extension, in Spanish society.

In the first two chapters, I showed how the presence of the female domestic worker is responsible for restoring the home. In the first chapter where I discuss *Nunca pasa nada*, the Ecuadorian maid/lover, Olivia, is needed to reproduce patriarchal values and uphold a hierarchal concept of intimacy so that the Spanish woman, Carmela, is not culpable of abandoning the traditional gender roles historically expected of her. Olivia’s domestic role in addition to her undocumented status point out Spain’s uneven adoption of the economic and social values shared by other Western world powers. Hiring an “illegal” nanny, instead of resorting to the daycare programs instituted in other countries, shows that Carmela and Nico are not willing to abandon traditional childrearing practices even as they seek freedom from participating themselves in a patriarchal system. At the same time, by telling the authorities that Olivia was Nico’s mistress and thereby denying her true function in the house, the Spanish family ultimately denies their dependence on foreign childcare so that they cannot be held accountable for breaking national employment laws. As a mistress, Olivia’s beneficiaries have no claim to her rights. Read allegorically, the family represents a Spain that upholds traditions that are not necessarily a part of the developed Western world.

In the second chapter, *Ucrania*, the protagonist’s masculinity is shaped through homemaking and high culture. The Ukrainian female immigrant’s role involves
facilitating this process to eliminate ethnic, cultural and educational difference. Elena, in contrast to African immigrants, represents the preservation of whiteness and Europeanness. Her excellent academic background and beauty further emphasize a need for high culture in Spain. For the protagonist, Jorge, Elena facilitates him in gaining confidence since she inspires him to learn about the world and make his own decisions. The intimacy they share allows Jorge to develop a confident masculinity without adopting the gender norms that surround him.

In the third chapter on *Cosmofobia*, the central character of the novel, Yamal, is voiceless, as he only exists through the comments of the other characters. Although he appears to be the kind of specter about which Flelser and other hauntologists speak, he is a real person responsible for creating a cosmos that makes the narrator anxious, revealing that hauntology has very little to do with the immigrants and more to do with the fears of the narrator. The cosmophobic narrator ultimately abandons her characters and focuses on her own Spanish daughter, suggesting that the interethnic intimacy occurring in the novel is frightening and must be contained.

The fourth chapter, “A Community of Delinquents: Immigration in Spanish Young Adult Fiction,” I show how integration into Spain is exclusive and has a time limit in the novels *Una habitación en Babel* and *El paso del Estrecho*. Only the foreign teenagers capable of contributing to Spanish society are allowed to remain in Spain. Their academic skills and civic engagement make them desirable while they are still minors because they have absorbed Spanish cultural values. With the proper education and home, young immigrants have the potential to positively shape Spain as long as they abide by the laws and are receptive to learning.
In my dissertation, I have explored different relationships between fictional immigrant characters and Spaniards that I believe, if read allegorically, represent new ways to describe Spain’s national identity. Through analyzing the personal encounters between these groups, I have found that immigrants profoundly affect the Spanish characters’ sense of self in ways that are both positive and negative. The foreign other can be comforting or he can be frightening. It surprised me to learn that the narrator in Lucía Etxebarria’s *Cosmofobia* seems threatened by foreign others. Likewise, in all of the primary tests I examined, there are always foils to the positive immigrant characters. This reveals that some fictional texts are complicit in producing anxiety about immigrants. The image of the “good” immigrant is ultimately a compassionate educated person, and in two cases, notably beautiful. If this image is the only acceptable one, then immigration will continue to be viewed as negative.

Another aspect I believe calls for more attention is the different concepts of masculinity I have explored in all of the texts I have read. Not only is the masculinity of the immigrant characters problematic because most of them are portrayed as criminal or deceitful, the masculinity of the Spanish characters is also problematic because most of them seem to be vulnerable. In my future research, I plan to incorporate masculinity studies and theories of affect and intimacy to better understand these characters.
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