To my family
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The demographics of the immigrant population arriving to Spain have changed dramatically over the past few decades as a result of globalization. With an increasing diversity of ethnic groups residing together in Spanish society, the issues of difference and integration come into question in a multicultural context. This dissertation analyzes the portrayal of recent immigration to Spain in women’s narratives that feature women immigrants and the particular issues they face. I examine works produced between 1997-2011 to see if there are identifiable changes in the representation of the woman immigrant: her power, autonomy, and voice. I have chosen to concentrate on written and cinematographic texts, in Spanish and Catalan, by the following authors and directors: Dulce Chacón, Najat El Hachmi, Lucía Extебarria, Nieves García Benito, Clara Obligado, Lourdes Ortiz, Juana Salabert, Iciar Bollaín, Irene Cardona, Isabel Coixet, Chus Guitérrez, Ariadna Pujol, Helena Taberna, and Ana Torres. I also include a brief analysis of various images of “arpilleras” (tapestries) gathered in a catalog titled Arpíleras, dones cosint històries published by the Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc in Barcelona. The inclusion of these tapestries in this study enriches its content by recognizing cultural production in an alternative form as a valuable complement to
literature and film produced by women on the topic of the representation of women immigrants in Spain. Drawing from the theories of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Josefina Ludmer in literature, and Bill Nichols, Ella Shohat, and Robert Stam in film, this study focuses on the racial and socio-cultural differences presented within my corpus that not only define these women, but also affect their integration into the hegemonic Spanish culture and society, resulting in the formation of a new sense of identity and community among the immigrants. I will demonstrate this through an analysis of the portrayal of women immigrants as the Other and of the physical and metaphorical spaces they occupy.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Figure 1-1. Aprendemos unas de otras (picture provided by the Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc)

(I would like to thank the Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc for providing the picture images of all the arpilleras included in this dissertation.)

Arpillera

The arpillera titled “Aprendemos unas de otras” was crafted by a forty-year old native of Barcelona, Aurora Flores Moreno. In her written description of the tapestry, she emphasizes the collaboration of women, both Moroccan and Gypsy, as they learn to read and write at the Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc. She states, “Estamos aprendiendo
todas juntas, las mujeres marroquíes y las mujeres gitanas. Unas aprendemos de las otras, nosotras aprendemos de ellas y ellas de nosotras” (46).

The warm colors chosen for the background are inviting to the viewer as are the rainbow of colors that comprise the written portion of the tapestry along with the buttons and ribbons that surround what appears to be either a table or blackboard. This selection of colors and themes reflects the multicultural setting in which these women live. The words “estamos contentas” are woven into the fabric; women from different backgrounds, some immigrant and others not, set their differences aside as they come together to learn and empower themselves at a cultural center in the neighborhood of Sant Roc.¹

**Description of Project**

Most of the twentieth century, Spain was a nation of emigrants whose citizens left for other European countries as well as for Latin America and the United States. They did so for political and economic reasons, including the Spanish Civil War and subsequent economic hardship throughout the country.² This trend changed in the 1970’s as a wave of immigrants, primarily African and Portuguese, came to Spain in search of economic betterment. Irene Andres-Suárez dates the most recent wave of immigration to Spain to 1970, and attributes its subsequent rise to several factors: “La integración a la Unión Europea, las relaciones privilegiadas con América Latina, la proximidad geográfica con África, el desarrollo de la industria del turismo, y el fuerte

¹ In her essay, “Ethnic and Racial Configurations in Contemporary Spanish Culture,” Isabel Santaolalla designates the Spanish Gypsies as “Insider Others” and immigrants as “Outsider Others” (58; 61). These two groups share a marginalized existence in contemporary Spain.

² The number of emigrants reached 3,719,725 between 1961-70. Emigration subsequently declined in the early seventies and reached a standstill after Franco’s death and the beginning of Spain’s democracy (Andres-Suárez 10).
descenso de la natalidad entre 1975 y 1985, son factores que van a favorecer e intensificar la inmigración en nuestro país” (10).

This sharp increase in immigration has wrought profound changes in Spain over the past few decades and the demographics of the immigrant population itself have changed dramatically as a result of globalization. The increasing diversity of ethnic groups residing together in Spanish society brings the issues of difference and integration into relief. The salience of this phenomenon can be traced, as I will show, in cultural artifacts and media coverage. Given the large corpus of works dealing with this topic, I have focused my study on literature and film featuring women immigrants and produced by women writers and directors, both Spanish and non-Spanish.\(^3\) This dissertation will examine the portrayal of recent women immigrants and their particular issues in women’s narratives produced between 1997-2011. As I trace the development of this material I will seek to contextualize it in an ever-changing Spain.

I posit that the racial and socio-cultural differences presented in these works not only define these women, but also affect their integration into the hegemonic Spanish culture and society. This has resulted, at least in the works considered, in the formation of a new sense of identity and community among the immigrants.\(^4\) I will demonstrate this through an analysis of the portrayal of women immigrants as the Other and of the physical and metaphorical spaces they occupy. My study will trace the evolution of

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\(^3\) Andres-Suárez’s *La inmigración en la literatura española contemporánea* and Monterde’s *El sueño de Europa: cine y migraciones desde el sur* present a comprehensive outline of literature and film dealing with the topic of immigration to Spain.

\(^4\) I will borrow Carlota Solé and Sónia Parella’s definition of cultural integration: “we understand the socio-cultural integration of migrants as the process by which the latter are incorporated into the occupational and social structures and progressively accepts the institutions, beliefs, values and symbols of the receiving society without renouncing their own (Solé 1981)” (62).
portraits of the woman immigrant between earlier and more recent works, taking the narratives produced up to the year 2000 as “earlier” and subsequent works as “more recent.” Women immigrants are portrayed with more frequency over the years, and have been given new roles and increased agency; indeed some are self-representations. Still, the issues of identity and integration persist. While the small size of my corpus precludes categorical assertions, I will also show differences in the representation of immigrants between Spanish and non-Spanish artists in their portrayal of these women.5


The cinematic narratives include the fictional films Flores de otro mundo (1999), directed by Icíar Bollaín; Un novio para Yasmina (2008), by Irene Cardona; Retorno a Hansala (2009), by Chus Guitérrez; and the documentary works Extranjeras (2003),

5 I will use the terms “Spanish” and “Spaniard” to denote native born Spaniards; naturalized Spanish citizens will be noted as they occur.

6 The narratives included were works produced in Spanish and Catalan, the only other language of the peninsula I have studied. I have included Najat El Hachmi’s text in my corpus because she is well-known both inside and outside Catalonia; her novel L’últim patriarca was translated into five languages. Jo també sóc catalana is one of the few first-person accounts that I was able to find on this topic.
directed by Helena Taberna; *Si nos dejan* (2004), by Ana Torres; *Aguaviva* (2006), by Ariadna Pujol; and the short film “Cartas a Nora” in *Invisibles* (2007), by Isabel Coixet.

I will also include an analysis of various tapestries or “arpilleras” gathered in a catalog titled *Arpilleras, dones cosint històries* [Arpilleras, Women Sewing Stories], published by the Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc in Barcelona. These pieces are the work of sixty-eight women in Barcelona (Spanish and non-Spanish) who gathered to create a material representation of their emigration or immigration stories, collective and individual (3). The tapestries in this collection offer a unique insight into different life experiences by a diverse group of women coexisting in a multicultural society. The image of an arpillera and a brief analysis will be presented as an introductory component to each chapter.

It was only in the mid-to late nineties that women writers and directors began portraying women immigrants from the latest wave of immigration, but there has been a consistent flow of narratives since then.⁷ I selected works by well-known writers and directors whose reflections on the topic encompass a range of literary and cinematographic styles and provide a feminine perspective on the lives of immigrant women in contemporary Spain.⁸

In their study of arpilleras, Alba Pérez and María Viñolo refer to Chilean arpilleras who, within the context of Pinochet’s dictatorship “alzan sus voces de hilo y aguja en denuncia a la situación política del país que les dejaba sin acceso a bienes

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⁷ The literature section of Chapter 2 presents a more detailed review of male- and female-authored narratives featuring women immigrants.

⁸ Although my study focuses on women immigrants to Spain, (the “Outsider Others” as defined by Santaolalla), they are not the only marginalized female “others” in contemporary Spain: Gypsies have been otherized for centuries. In fact, Gypsy women are the authors of several of the tapestries in the “Arpilleras, dones cosint històries.”
públicos como la educación, la sanidad, la justicia o el trabajo” (45). These women were “agentes de cambio social,” as are the women that created the tapestries I have included in this project, who are mentioned by Pérez and Viñolo. They affirm that “En España, el primer taller de arpilleras se realizó, los cinco primeros meses del año 2009, en la localidad catalana de Badalona, en Sant Roc” (47). Pérez and Viñolo aver that the tapestry art form has been elevated to a “superior” level, visible in public spaces and exhibits around the world (52). They propose that there has been a “resignificación de la tradicional función de las labores artesanales femeninas, recuperando ese espacio como lugar de comunicación e intercambio para las mujeres, que les permite expresar su especificidad, es decir, su manera de experimentar el mundo, y su desacuerdo, su negativa a aceptar el orden establecido” (52).

The women of Sant Roc (immigrants and Spaniards alike) who participated in the workshop in Badalona, also raise their voices in response to their current socio-political situation by creating tapestries that express their hopes and fears in a rapidly changing multicultural Spanish society. The inclusion of these tapestries in my project enriches its content by recognizing cultural production in an alternative form as a valuable complement to literature and film produced by women on the topic of the representation of women immigrants in Spain.

This project is divided into six chapters, including the introductory chapter. The second chapter details the socio-political context of emigration and immigration patterns to and from Spain, media response to the immigration phenomenon, a literature review, and an introduction to the theoretical concepts that will be used to illuminate the changes in representation of the woman immigrant Other. It will include statistics for
this latest migration to Spain as well as official documents that outline changes in laws and regulations affecting the immigrant population, particularly women. I will also discuss statistics gathered from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, and information from the Ley de Extranjería and the Plan Estratégico de Ciudadanía e Integración (PECI). Several articles and continuing sections of varied news and media sources will serve to suggest how the media treat and how they present the image of the immigrant woman.

The third chapter explores issues of identity, noting the many differences ascribed to women immigrants in their search for a sense of belonging in their new surroundings. Their otherness tends to be defined in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic factors. I will discuss those shown to be different with respect to ethnicity and gender, who are portrayed in terms of their African, Latin American, and Caribbean heritages, or, in a few cases, their Chinese or Eastern European background. I will also consider the representation of socioeconomic differences. I will first present earlier works and then the more recent; there are changes in strategic ‘othering’ of the women over this time span, but the phenomenon nonetheless persists. Given the limited size of my corpus, conclusions will be tentative.

The fourth chapter focuses on the manifestations of resistance by the woman immigrant observable in the characters’ response to language, relationships, and their own differences. I focus specifically on the woman immigrant’s adoption or rejection of a different language, their dealings with Spaniards, and the affirmation or rejection of

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9 I will study Caribbean women separately; the unique characteristics and differences they portray vary significantly from other Latin American women.
their own otherness. This chapter reveals the ambivalence felt by women immigrants as they adapt to their new environment.

The fifth chapter explores the immigrant woman’s occupation of space, both literal and metaphoric. I will first address the personal and professional loci in which they move, exploring any shifts from peripheral or rural spaces to central or urban settings. I will then consider their occupation of metaphoric spaces, drawing from Dolores Juliano and Josefina Ludmer. Lastly, I will explore the women immigrants’ search for community in response to persistent marginalization in the hegemonic culture. The final chapter will summarize the conclusions reached in the course of this study as presented in prior chapters. It will also note areas of research that remain to be explored.

Globalization and the emigration it has precipitated is an important topic for study. Spain, gateway between Africa and Europe and Latin America and Europe, has had an unprecedented growth in immigration in the past few decades, paralleled by increased production of cultural artifacts that explore the topic. My analysis of the changes in the representation of immigrants in literature and film in the past fourteen years and more specifically, of women immigrants as portrayed by women writers and directors, will contribute to understanding the complexities of this transformational stage in Spain, and by extension, in the world.
Arpillera

This tapestry was made by Sadaf Akram, a 20 year old woman from Pakistan. In her written description of the arpillera, she affirms that she has only flown three times: the first with her family to join her father already living in Barcelona, the second from Barcelona to Pakistan to be married, and the third, back to Barcelona. The first flight was the only time she travelled in company, and she expresses some fear of travelling...
alone. Currently awaiting the arrival of her new husband from Pakistan, she mentions the amount of paperwork that lies ahead of them (10).

The arpillera displays a very dark, deep blue shade as its background. It contains a large plane and four triangular shapes that represent a mountainous landscape at the top of the tapestry, probably suggesting that those objects are distant. The woman portrays herself wearing traditional clothing and standing alone beside a door. This representation of home is suspended in empty space. I conjecture that the dark colors chosen as the backdrop represent the fear she conveys in her description: fear of travel, of change, of being alone. Presumably the door is in Barcelona since she states “Me gusta mucho Barcelona y quiero quedarme aquí a vivir” (10), but the artist leaves us to question whether or not that door, representing home and a sense of belonging, is in Barcelona or Pakistan. In the following section, statistics and research will show that women immigrants are increasingly taking the initiative to migrate independently; many are uncertain of the reception and “home” that awaits them in their adopted country.

**Socio-political Context and Media**

There has been a significant increase in media attention to the topic of immigration in Spain in the past couple of decades, catalyzed by the dramatic demographic change that the country has experienced since the seventies. A newly multicultural Spanish society has initiated a conversation on immigration in the media, one that often leads to opposing points of view. This chapter will discuss the mediatic portrayal of immigration, more specifically of women immigrants. I will also review earlier research and findings on the topic and outline the primary theoretical approaches that will be used to analyze the narratives selected and assess the changes found between earlier and more recent works.
The first focus of attention is the portrayal of women immigrants and related demographic data in news and cultural reports available online, as well as in governmental and non-profit organization reports. The sources include the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), the newspapers *El País* and *El Mundo*, the Secretaría de Estado de Inmigración y Emigración and the Spanish Red Cross, and other web pages highlighting cultural events and artifacts.¹

After a brief look at the sources of information available to readers or viewers, I will consider the discourse and representations that emerge therefrom. These, in turn, are echoed in my corpus like veritable intertexts. According to *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, intertextuality is:

> a text’s dependence on prior words, concepts, connotations, codes, conventions, unconscious practices, and texts. Every text is an intertext that borrows, knowingly or not, from the immense archive of previous culture.

The term (inter)textuality, with the parenthesis, captures the sense of textuality as being conditioned by this inescapable historical intertext. (21)

The depiction of women immigrants in these sources is problematic, as it is in the narratives of my corpus. Examination of the “reality” presented by the media will show a disparity between the official statistics on (women) immigrants and images projected in the media.

¹ The news media sample is limited to articles from two Spanish newspapers, *El País* and *El Mundo*, although I also reviewed items from *ABC*. I chose *El País* and *El Mundo* because of their high circulation and differing ideological inclinations. John Hooper affirms: “*El País* has been Spain’s best-selling newspaper since the early eighties” and “earned its reputation as one of Europe’s best centre-left newspapers” (355). He also confirms that *El Mundo* supported the PP during Aznar’s presidency and “is today by far Spain’s most popular newspaper website” (357). As for *ABC*, it has supported the conservative PP since Spain’s return to democracy (354). The majority of the titles I found in the *ABC* index related to immigration deal primarily with images of pateras, crime, and unemployment. A recent article about illegal immigration, “El cerco a las redes de tráfico de personas se cede con 35 detenidos en Andalucía” (abc.es), was published on Nov. 3, 2012.
In 2011, the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) placed the total foreign population in Spain at 5,730,667 (12.2% of the total population), 47.8% of which are women (ine.es). The principle countries of origin are: Romania, 15.1%; Morocco, 13.4%; the UK, 6.8%; Ecuador, 6.3%; and Colombia, 4.7% (ine.es). The proportion of female to male immigrants varies enormously by region of origin. Women constitute 60.1% of the Central American and Caribbean immigrant population, 47.5% of those from the EU 27, 56.0% of those from other European countries, 55.1% of the South Americans, 54.7% of North Americans, 40.1 % of the Asian immigrant population, and 37.1% of the Africans (ine.es). The four regions in Spain with the highest representation of women immigrants are: Cataluña with 553,293 women, the Comunidad de Madrid with 537,546, the Communitat Valenciana with 423,210, and Andalucía with 336,000 (II PECI, 31). The majority of the immigrant population resides in urban centers, with women constituting almost half of their total number. There has been a steady rise in the immigrant population for years, although the census projects a slight decrease in the total registered foreign population for 2012.²

The government has developed several strategies in recent years to address this newly multicultural society, now in grips of a serious economic recession. One example is the “II Plan Estratégico de Ciudadanía e Integración 2011-2014,” a 262-page initiative of the Secretaria de Estado de Inmigración y Emigración whose objective is to “Reforzar la integración como uno de los ejes centrales de la política de inmigración que,

² The INE’s most recent report on the 2012 projected census indicates that the total foreign population “se estabiliza” at 5,711,040 (12.1% of the total registered population), although compared with 2011, there is actually a 0.7% decrease, according to their statistics. The report affirms that the countries that represent the biggest increase from the previous year (in order from highest to lowest) are Romania, Pakistan, Morocco, and China. Those countries that represent the biggest decrease are Ecuador, Colombia, and Argentina. Women comprise 48.1% (2,746,809) of the total registered foreign population for this year compared to men, a 0.3% increase from 2011 (47.8%, 2,741,061) (ine.es).
teniendo en cuenta el acervo de la Unión Europea en materia de inmigración y protección internacional, apuesta por lograr un marco de convivencia de identidades y culturas” (extranjeros.mtin.es, 27). Key terms such as “ciudadanía, interculturalidad, y democracia” are used throughout the text to evaluate the previous plan (2007-2010) and to implement new strategies to facilitate integration and a “nivel óptimo de convivencia.”

Several figures attest to immigrants’ increasing involvement in socio-political activities. The Plan states that in 2009 there were 488 registered foreign associations in Andalucía, Madrid, Murcia, Valencia and Barcelona (the majority formed after 2005) (43). In the economic sector, the II PECI shows that although statistics are currently unreliable because of the economic crisis in Spain, in Feb. 2011, 11.19% of immigrants were registered as independent workers according to Social Security charts (46). It is noted that women are “sobrerrepresentadas en los trabajos más precarios, duración determinada o tiempo parcial” (216). In addition, the PECI affirms: “Algunas personas inmigrantes se han convertido en líderes cívicos dentro de sus comunidades y han dado el salto hacia la política local, autonómica y nacional” (55).

The Plan acknowledges that the economic crisis has had a significant impact on its strategies and evaluations; although the majority of the Spanish population supports the immigrant’s right to pursue citizenship and to vote, this endorsement is contingent upon the immigrants abiding by Spanish law. The Plan states: “La crisis económica que se vive en el momento de redactar este nuevo Plan coincide con un incremento del discurso limitador. Sería un error que avanzara la percepción equivocada de que la
igualdad no es una necesidad básica, sino “una cuestión secundaria de la que se puede prescindir en tiempo de crisis” (emphasis in the original, 54).

The section dedicated to “Género” advocates equal rights for women, emphasizing the need to effect their “mainstreaming” into Spanish society:

Es por ello que, aunque el principio de igualdad de trato es un principio rector de todo el Plan, incorporado en todas las áreas de intervención de modo transversal, se ha querido incorporar, en el conjunto de las áreas transversales, este Área de Género, con la intención de reforzar la aplicación del mainstreaming de género al conjunto de políticas públicas de ciudadanía e integración y, al mismo tiempo, visibilizar la necesidad de contemplar acciones positivas dirigidas específicamente a situaciones de especial vulnerabilidad que afectan fundamentalmente a las mujeres...
(216)

Lastly, the plan discusses the new phenomenon of the “proceso de feminización de la inmigración en España” and reiterates that 47% of the population is female, an 18% increase in the past fifteen years (248). The PECI affirms:

Por un lado, se ha incrementado el número de mujeres que migran, y, por otro lado, se ha producido una importante transformación cualitativa en sus proyectos migratorios: las mujeres han pasado de formar parte de un proyecto migratorio familiar, iniciado por un varón, generalmente su pareja, a desempeñar un rol más independiente y autónomo; son ellas las que, cada vez más, toman la iniciativa y el protagonismo de la cadena migratoria. (248)

The Plan also addresses changes made over the years to the Ley de Extranjería. The growing debate and concern regarding the integration (or lack thereof) of the immigrant population into Spanish society is evident, although the foregoing statistics show that immigrants are participating in social, economic, and political activities in Spanish society (as demonstrated by the number of foreign associations, the percentage of business owners, and emerging civic leadership). That is not well portrayed in the media, as the news articles, stories, and images discussed below will demonstrate.
The first image that appears on the main page of the permanent site titled “Inmigración, Guía de recursos,” in the online version of the newspaper *El País* is that of a crowded group of immigrants waiting in line with paperwork in hand for what is probably a governmental administrative process. On this web page, there are links to news regarding immigration, to several organizations dedicated to immigration (such as Red Acoge and ATIME –Asociación de trabajadores e inmigrantes marroquíes), and to documents that outline statistics, laws and regulations regarding immigration in Spain. The photographs in the news section primarily show men and items related to “pateras” arriving in Spain.

The online edition of *El Mundo* featured a special report in 2006, “Inmigrantes, en busca de futuro.” It includes several sub-sections that provide the reader with statistics, testimonials, laws and regulations, and photographs. The collage of portraits in the “Voces” section includes the brief, audible testimony of several immigrants of different nationalities commenting on their experiences in Spain. The majority present immigrants (both women and men) with various accents; they discuss the trials they face in their new environment: hunger, solitude (as many have sold all of their personal belongings and left their families behind), the challenge of acquiring legal status in Spain, their hope for a better life, and a longing to return to their country of origin. The gallery of photos that appear in a separate section highlight despair, tragedy, immigrants arriving in “pateras,” bodies washed ashore, and tears; they are portrayed as a vulnerable population in their new surroundings.

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3 John Hooper describes the “patera” as “the local Spanish name for a kind of flat-bottomed boat equipped with an outboard motor, which is used for inshore fishing on both sides of the Straits. Most *pateras* are designed for up to seven people, but the immigrant traffickers were soon packing in as many as twenty-five. In any case, *pateras* are fragile, easily capsized vessels that are not intended for the open seas…” (290-291).
The Spanish Red Cross recently featured an online magazine, “Memoria 2010,” on their website. One section, “Colectivos vulnerables,” includes the immigrant population as a group in need of assistance; the accompanying image is of a young man crouched down and covered with a Red Cross blanket. According to their statistics, 195,524 immigrants benefited from the organization’s “intervención social” that year.

Such examples show or stress the vulnerability of the immigrant population in general. The following relate specifically to women, the focus of this study. In the article, “Peio Aierbe: ‘la mujer inmigrante es invisibilizada en los medios de comunicación,’” written for AmecoPress in 2008, Bonnie Rodríguez reviews a conference that was held at Casa América, “La Mujer Inmigrante en los Medios de Comunicación.” In this review, she quotes one of the panelists, who affirms:

La invisibilidad de las mujeres inmigrantes extracomunitarias se inscribe en un fenómeno de mayor alcance hasta llegar a una total desvalorización del papel que tienen como ‘actoras y protagonistas en el ámbito económico y social’, ha señalado Peio Aierbe, citando las palabras de Dolores Juliano. También reflexiona sobre cómo los medios más relevantes del país sitúan a las mujeres inmigrantes en personas involuntarias y que no son dueñas de su destino, ‘estas características tienen un nexo bastante común’.

(amecopress.net)

According to Aierbe, the majority of the articles published about women immigrants deal with domestic violence, prostitution, (un)employment, and other topics that point to their victimization. Another panelist, Cristina P. Fraga, noted that drama and bias are what sells, and that the media primarily focus on “irregular” immigrants in the news. Rodríguez reports on Fraga’s discussion:

Las mujeres inmigrantes ‘son hiperinvisibilizadas’ en los medios y, [sic] están cargadas de estereotipos y prejuicios, la información muchas veces no se contrasta con la realidad, no se tiene en cuenta que ‘la relevancia de la mujer extranjera en la sociedad española se ha transformado en los últimos años’. Así mismo resalta que el colectivo inmigrante, [sic] decide salir de sus países para buscar ‘nuevas estrategias de vida’, pero a su
The panelists stress that the media present women immigrants as vulnerable, or they ignore them, and these are the depictions that ultimately reach the Spanish and global population. After decades of presence in the Spanish community, and in spite of statistics that show a steady increase of the percentage of female immigrants, biased representations persist.

Another example of the victimization of women immigrants in the Spanish news media is a recent article, “Un idioma para aprender a coser” (elpais.com), by J. Sérvulo González. It features two women from Nigeria and Morocco who participated in a workshop for the unemployed provided by the City Hall that would teach them to “Coser y Cantar.” They receive a salary and, upon completion of this year-long course, special consideration for employment in the private sector. They were both “let go” from the workshop because they failed to comply with language requirements. “La directora del taller había enviado un informe a los responsables municipales en el [sic] decía: ‘Se ha podido detectar una falta de integración y problemas con el lenguaje por lo que no es capaz de seguir la dinámica del resto del grupos [sic] por la correcta comprensión del idioma’” (“Un idioma…”, elpais.com). The governmental report calls for democracy, “mainstreaming,” and an intercultural society, yet the news items continue to stereotype.

In contrast to the news and its presentation of immigrants as a “colectivo vulnerable” or as not really visible, writers, filmmakers and artists have shown an interest in representing and exploring immigration in their works. For example, an article published in El País in 2007, “El arte no tiene fronteras,” features the
documentary *El artista emigrado* by David Orejas, which follows the daily life of three immigrant artists (one a Colombian painter, Libia Inés Toro).

Another attempt to demonstrate the presence of immigrant artists who are active participants in cultural production in Spain is the Fundación Directa’s project, “Entre dos Orillas,” a catalog of artists published in 2008 to promote the arts of the immigrant population. This ongoing project, subsidized by the Ministerio de Trabajo e Inmigración and the Fondo Social Europeo, presents the works of over 200 immigrant artists as a way to promote the ties between “cultura, integración y desarrollo” (7). It features artists, musicians, photographers, and writers, female and male, with samples of their work. One of these is María Fernanda Ampuero, an Ecuadorian writer, who has written a narrative about the relationship between a Spanish woman suffering from Alzheimer’s and her Ecuadorian caretaker.

The news media seems to have taken note that women comprise almost half of the immigrant population, focusing more attention on them, albeit still mostly in victimized situations. The recent conference at Casa América shows that this bias has not escaped notice. Aierbe reports that 53% of the news dedicated to women immigrants deals with domestic violence, 30% with the trafficking and prostitution, and 22% with employment issues based on news articles published for a period of 50 days prior to the conference), clearly there is little opportunity for other representations. As long as the news reports primarily on such issues among women immigrants, the public will continue to envision these women as victims or pariahs, lacking individuality and voice, rather than as active participants in their communities.
There is a disconnect between the news about the immigrant population in Spain—including reports on tragedy, crime, homelessness and unemployment among male immigrants—and governmental NGO projects such as “Entre dos orillas” designed to encourage immigrant participation in socio-cultural activities and public awareness of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Spain’s population. Self-representation is essential in promoting a better understanding of women immigrants’ socio-political situation, something that is presently lacking in the media.

More recently, news coverage reflects concern by the public that the immigrant population is taxing the country’s resources (unemployment, social security). María Bruquetas and Francisco Javier Moreno found that while the immigrant population has had a positive statistical effect on the “Estado de bienestar” in Spain, nonetheless: “En 2008, la mayoría de la población española se mostraba, por primera vez, partidaria de restringir la entrada de inmigrantes a nuestro país” (elpais.com).

This brief sample suggests what is available to the readers of these widely-circulated newspapers on the topic of immigration in Spain. Artists who create narratives on immigration do so for an audience whose ideas about the topic are based on biased media presentations. Some writers and directors strive to problematize this portrayal in their works. In an interview with María Camí-Vela, Icíar Bollaín states: “…el cine es un medio fabuloso para denunciar, y si no para denunciar, por lo menos para hacer reflexionar. Eso es una parte del cine, pero es una parte, no es la única” (53). The earlier narratives we will consider clearly show women immigrants as victims, whether of a shipwreck or of a loss ultimately leading to suicide (Fátima de los naufragios) or of the need to secure legal status in Spain (Flores de otro mundo).
More recent texts portray the subtle transition that has taken place in the past several decades as women immigrants arrive of their own volition, begin to occupy mainstream jobs (although many are still portrayed in service-oriented jobs), receive education and become active in their communities. For example, in the documentary *Extranjeras*, the women interviewed are given a voice of their own and discuss the range of activities and employment in which they participate. Street vendors, nannies, business owners, university students and entertainers: these immigrants show a diverse range of skills and involvement in their communities. In contraposition to this new portrayal of their achievement, women continue to report xenophobic attitudes, a sense of dislocation, and little daily interaction with the dominant social class or with other ethnic communities.

In a study of multiculturalism and the media, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue: “The contemporary media shape identity; indeed, many argue that they now exist close to the very core of identity production. In a transnational world typified by the global circulation of images and sounds, goods and peoples, media spectatorship impacts complexly on national identity and communal belonging” (7). Both the Spanish media and the narratives selected for my corpus present women immigrants as a “vulnerable collective,” primarily victims in their new surroundings. But this seems to be changing, and we begin to see increased diversity, agency, representation, and self-representation in cultural production.

**Literature Review**

Although various media sources have played a significant role in the development of the woman immigrant’s image, immigration has also figured increasingly in literature and film created for the most part by native born Spaniards. Consequently, there has
been an increase in research and analysis on the topic in academia, which I will explore in the following section and refer to throughout the dissertation.

*La inmigración en la literatura española contemporánea* (2002), by Irene Andres-Suárez, Marco Kunz, and Inés d’Ors, is a significant study of the topic. It presents detailed statistics on recent immigration, as well as an overview of the literary works published on the topic up to 2002. The authors catalog recurrent themes and evaluate the quality of literature being produced. Kunz affirms that *Los espejismos* by Gonzalo Hernández Guarch is one of the earliest narratives on the topic of immigration; it is a novel that follows the plight of two immigrants, a Maghrebi and a Croatian, in their travels throughout Europe. It was written in 1972, but not published until 1998 (114).

As for women writers, he presents Nieves García Benito, Alicia Giménez Bartlett, Lourdes Ortiz, and Encarna Cabello. He cites Cabello’s *La cazadora*, 1995, as the earliest narrative on the topic of immigration by a woman author. Of the works he cited, Salabert’s short story, “América Colón” (1997), is one of the first narratives written by a woman to develop the role of a woman immigrant.

Kunz finds that women immigrants are rare in Spanish literature: “Se busca casi en vano al extranjero como vecino, amigo o compañero del trabajo, y raras son las mujeres inmigradas como personajes literarios” (134). He concludes: “Por el momento...la literatura de España está todavía tan alejada de una adecuada integración del pluralismo cultural como lo está su sociedad” (136). I concur with Kunz’s conclusions, and consider my study complementary to his in some ways, and different in others. My time frame—late nineties through 2011—covers a Spain that has more years of experience with immigrants; my corpus consists solely of works written or
directed by women; the authors considered are both Spanish and immigrant. My findings, based on a different corpus, lead me to disagree with Kunz's statement: “Los escritores españoles que se ocupan seriamente del tema lo hacen sobre todo por un compromiso humanitario y por solidaridad, pero, desde el punto de vista estético, los resultados suelen decepcionar” (135). Thanks in part to the increasing number of published works on this topic in more recent years, I have found a group of authors who have incorporated immigrants into excellent works of art.

Another significant contribution to the field of immigrant studies is José Monterde’s *El sueño de Europa: cine y migraciones desde el sur*, a comprehensive look at films on immigration into various European countries over the past several decades which also provides an extensive list of common themes that appear therein. María Camí-Vela’s *Mujeres detrás de la cámara* is another critical resource; it underlines the minimal presence of women directors in Spain: only ten prior to 1988, thirty-five in the 1990’s and only eight who debuted between 2000-2004 (17; 309). From this small group, it was a further challenge to find directors that focus on women immigrants.  

Yet another important contribution is Isabel Santaolalla’s *Los “Otros”: etnicidad y “raza” en el cine español contemporáneo* (2005). The author focuses on the representation in film of the ethnic “Other” from the early twentieth century to the present. Her research reveals that the Spanish gypsy was the “Other” in early twentieth-century Spanish cinematography whereas diverse groups of immigrants represent the “Other” at the turn of the twenty-first century. She affirms: “También en

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4 I am very grateful to Professor María Camí-Vela for suggesting several of the films that I have chosen to include in this dissertation and to Professors Geraldine Nichols, Ángeles Encinar, and Carmen Valcárcel for suggesting several of the novels and short stories included in my corpus.
España hubo que esperar hasta los años noventa para que, con el estreno de Las cartas de Alou (Montxo Armendáriz, 1990), se viera proyectada en las pantallas de cine una realidad social que ya llevaba tiempo siendo visible en las calles” (23).\(^5\) Flores de otro mundo (Icíar Bollaín, 1999) es el primero de los filmes citados; Bollaín también asignó papeles principales a mujeres inmigrantes (24). Lastly, Santaolalla señala la falta de representación de los grupos mínimos en el cine español (21). Concurremos con esta observación; sólo logré hallar una mujer inmigrante como directora con lo que agrego Ana Torres.

El estudio anterior, así como otros académicos que se han hecho con el tema, muestran que ha habido un retraso entre el momento de la llegada de los inmigrantes a España y su representación. Para las mujeres, sólo comienzan a aparecer en las narrativas y producciones dirigidas por mujeres a mediados de la década de 1990, pero su representación ha evolucionado desde entonces, como veremos más adelante.

**Theoretical Concepts**

Algunos conceptos teóricos han sido particularmente útiles en el estudio de las narrativas analizadas en este proyecto. Los escritos de Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, y Trinh T. Minh-ha enriquecieron mi comprensión de la “oterness” de la inmigrante. Los escritos de Homi Bhabha y Josefina Ludmer me permitieron comprender mejor la situación de la inmigrante.

\(^5\) Cartas de Alou (1990) by Dir. Montxo Armendáriz (recipient of the Goya Award for best screenplay and cinematography in 1991) and Bwana (1996) by Dir. Imanol Uribe (recipient of awards at the San Sebastian Film Festival) are two of the earliest films depicting the latest wave of immigration. They portray a male immigrant’s struggle to survive in Spain and are key predecessors to the films I have chosen for this project.
a better understanding of the representation of spaces they occupy. In addition, essays by Stuart Hall and Iain Chambers illuminated the multiculturalism presented in the narratives; their insights are complemented by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam’s studies of the topic in diverse visual media. Some of these studies are more germane to earlier works and others for the later texts, but all sharpened my understanding of the issues of identity and space.

Said dates Orientalism back to the late eighteenth century, and defines it as a “corporate institution” (3) which has endured the test of time and expanded its geographical reach in order to maintain the dominance of European-Atlantic powers, designated as “‘us’ Europeans as against all ‘those’ non-Europeans…” (7). For Edward Said, the Occident’s creation of the image of the Orient as the “Other” was a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3). This “positional superiority” (7) that he ascribes to “us” is evident in the narratives within my corpus.

Spain, as a member of the European Union, falls within the “Europe = West” categorization, although Spain also has its own contradictory historical identity and has long been considered an exotic destination for intellectuals and tourists.6 In spite of this history, Said includes Spain among the European countries with a tradition of Orientalism, less marked than in France or Britain, but still observable:

Unlike the Americans, the French and the British—less so the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss—have had a long tradition of what I shall be calling Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with

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6 Lou Charnon-Deutsch explores this phenomenon in “Travels of the Imaginary Spanish Gypsy,” affirming: “Spanish culture has had a dual relation with the master narrative of Orientalism, both as a culture that has repressed a constitutive element of its historical identity, projecting it onto the figure of the exoticized gypsy (Colmeiro 1998), and one that has represented, from the 1700s onward, an exoticized Other to its northern European counterparts” (22).
the Orient based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilization and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. (1)

He affirms that the European identity was ultimately defined by contrasting images such as: Europe/West/Occident/us in comparison to the Rest/East/Orient/them.

This notion of European and Western culture as hegemonic and all the rest as inferior explains the otherness persistently ascribed to the immigrant woman. The “Oriental” woman who arrives in Spain in search of a better future for herself and for her family is instantly assigned an identity by virtue of her differences: she is the woman immigrant Other who struggles to retain what is “hers” while at the same time striving to integrate into the hegemonic culture.

Said also affirms: “The Orient at large, therefore, vacillates between the West’s contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in—or fear of—novelty” (59). In the earlier works of my corpus, this conception of the Other is patent in the portrayal of the woman immigrant. They are clearly defined as the Other; they elicit emotions alternating between contempt and fear or delight, as Said notes. They are observed, marveled at, and judged, often targets of voyeuristic tendencies by the autochthonous population. At the same time, they are rejected and feared because of their differences; their otherness and marginalized existence often leads to tragic ends.

In addition to Said’s study of Orientalism and the Other, I use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s concept of the subaltern and Trinh T. Minh-ha’s analysis of the ambivalent nature of the postcolonial woman to analyze the woman immigrant’s issues of identity based on gender, race, and socio-cultural differences vis à vis the adopted country.
To analyze the spaces that this group occupies, theoretical concepts by Homi Bhabha and Josefina Ludmer have been especially useful, among others. In her book titled *Aquí América Latina: una especulación*, Ludmer considers temporal and spatial approaches to the contemporary Latin American novel. I will borrow her conception of “territorios” in Latin American narratives published in the twenty-first century to consider works in my corpus published in the same time frame. More specifically, I will explore her concept of the “urban island” that reinforces the blurring of the bipolar scheme as new agency and territories are presented in novels after the nineties (127).

In her study of the Latin American cities portrayed in her corpus, she affirms: “Las ciudades brutalmente divididas del presente tienen en su interior áreas, edificios, habitaciones y otros espacios que funcionan como islas, con límites precisos” (130). The inhabitants of these urban islands (including immigrants, according to Ludmer) are outsiders and insiders at the same time; they are outside of the hegemonic culture and at the same time inside the city (131). I will apply this concept to the “urban islands” presented in Madrid and Barcelona by the artists in my corpus.

Her approach attempts to obviate binary oppositions and views territories as a fusion of a “noción electrónica-geográfica-económica-social-cultural-política-estética-legal-afectiva-género-y-de-sexo, todo al mismo tiempo” (122). Much like the novels Ludmer describes, the contemporary narratives I study present new territories in new literary structures and styles. In the more recent texts of my corpus, there is an increased tendency to present women immigrants in testimonial, autobiographical, and documentary narratives, allowing a multifaceted representation of ethnicities and differences. Within these texts, their differences are no longer homogenized “as one,”
binary oppositions are diffused, and the women immigrants speak from an imaginary conceptualized space.

Homi Bhabha also studies metaphorical spaces and presents them as a “Third Space of enunciation” in his writings on hybridity. It is in this liminal space that the articulation of differences and cultural identity is in constant negotiation; it becomes a potential site of agency and resistance (67). His book, *Location of Culture*, offers a contrast to the *Imagined Communities* of Benedict Anderson, in which “nation” is defined as “an imagined political community— and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). But in today’s globalized communities identity is no longer tied to a homogeneous nation-state; rather new interpretations of identity (such as Bhabha’s) emerge in post-colonial studies as globalization (and its cultural products) obviate the boundaries of nations and blur binary oppositions.

This study encompasses issues of identity and space within a multicultural contemporary Spanish society. Because of the predominance of a multicultural community within all of the narratives, it is imperative to include a theoretical framework from the field of cultural studies. Stuart Hall’s “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity” problematizes the decline of the nation-state in this era of globalization, suggesting that the response to this deterioration is two-fold: “It goes global and local in the same moment” (178). Hall refers to the global postmodern world as one that has reached unimaginable limits and he asks: “Is this the final moment of the global postmodern, a moment in which it gets hold of everybody, of everything, where there is no difference that it cannot contain, no otherness it cannot speak, no marginality that it cannot take pleasure out of?” (182).
His final reflections in the article point to the local responses to globalization, which will be evident in my narratives. He highlights two forms of globalization:

(1) an older, corporate, enclosed, increasingly defensive one that has to go back to nationalism and national cultural-identity in a highly defensive way and to try to build barriers around it before it is eroded; and (2) a form of the global postmodern that is trying to live with—and at the same moment overcome, sublate, get hold of, and incorporate—difference. (183)

Hall affirms that a local response to globalization can be seen in the significant increase in representation of and by marginalized groups in the arts (183). These “local responses” in my corpus are revealed when the characters within my narratives “reach for those groundings” (which Hall calls “ethnicity”) as a demonstration of empowerment and resistance. Among the writers and directors that offer representations of women immigrants in my corpus, there are only three examples of self-representation that offer unique perspectives on the life-stories of women immigrants in Spain: Najat El Hachmi’s autobiography, Clara Obligado’s novel, and Ana Torres’ video documentary.

Moving into specific theoretical approaches related to film, I will be using concepts developed by Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, and Bill Nichols. In Unthinking Eurocentrism, Shohat and Stam define multiculturalism in contemporary media. They present the term “polycentric multiculturalism” as a response to a long history of Eurocentrism and “binaristic hierarchies” and define it as:

about dispersing power, about empowering the disempowered, about transforming subordinating institutions and discourses. … Its sympathies clearly go the underrepresented, the marginalized, and the oppressed. …It thinks and imagines “from the margins,” seeing minoritarian communities not as “interest groups” … but rather as active, generative participants at the very core of shared, conflictual history. (48)

Their idea illuminates the more recent works in my corpus; although the women are portrayed as retaining their “Otherness” and continue to be marginalized, they are
shown to be active participants in their new surroundings. The works successfully blur the center/periphery boundaries by presenting marginalized characters who assume agency and occupy a place of resistance.

As several of the films selected for this project are documentaries, I will refer to Shohat and Stam’s analysis of “realism” in the representation of different ethnic groups in film. They refer to Mikhail Bakhtin and observe: “Rather than directly reflecting the real, or even refracting the real, artistic discourse constitutes a refraction of a refraction; that is, a mediated version of an already textualized and ‘discursivized socioideological world.’” Even so, they affirm that “Bakhtin rejects naïve formulations of realism…without abandoning the notion that artistic representations are at the same time thoroughly and irrevocably social, precisely because the discourses that art represents are themselves social and historical” (180). The authors note that beyond analyzing the texts themselves, one should also draw attention to the institutions that generate, distribute, and arrange the reception of the media representations (184). Within my corpus, the majority of the films are directed by native born Spaniards, although one online documentary video was directed and produced by an Argentine. All of these factors will be taken into consideration in the analysis of the “realism” of each film.

In addition to Shohat and Stam, Bill Nichols is useful for the analysis of the documentary films in my corpus. I will apply his definition of the “performative” documentary to the films selected for this project; this type of documentary evokes a response from its viewer through suggestion rather than argumentation (100). It “seeks to evoke not the quality of a people’s worldview but the specific qualities that surround particular people, discrete events, social subjectivities, and historically situated
encounters between filmmakers and their subjects” (101). There are no explanations, and no specific argument; using both interview and observational techniques, the directors elicit responses from their viewers regarding the immigrant woman’s life in contemporary Spain.

Because I have chosen to focus solely on women migrants portrayed by women artists, I have also included research that considers gendered aspects of migration. Floya Anthias’ investigation on the “feminization” of the migratory process in Southern Europe is of particular importance for a study that focuses solely on women immigrants to Spain. Her work looks at “the role of gender processes and discourses, as well as identities, in the migration and settlement process” (15). She warns against homogenizing female migrations by documenting some of the diversity of migratory patterns in contemporary Southern Europe (16). Many factors contribute to this multiplicity: the motivation for migration, transnational ties to families and countries of origin, a potential for “downward economic mobility,” legal status, and the “solo migration project” (20). She affirms: “The paradigms used to explain earlier forms of migration, with their focus on economic migrants from poorer sectors of their communities, primarily men or families led by men, can no longer yield a fruitful conceptual basis for understanding migration today” (20). The new migratory patterns that she identifies are reflected in the narratives I have selected and affirm the importance of studies like mine that cast light on a largely neglected phenomenon in Spanish literature and film. In addition, the relationship between the immigrant woman as the Other and her “ideal” counterpart (for Anthias the European woman is the “ideal,”
16) will be explored not only within the narratives, but also as seen by the artists who produce them.

The theoretical concepts presented in this chapter, devoted to identity, space, and multiculturalism, are essential to a multi-faceted study like this one which explores each of these concepts. This will facilitate the evaluation of the changes between earlier and later works in my corpus, and highlight the persistent invisibility of women immigrants in Spain. The term “hiperinvisibilizada” has been used to describe this collective’s status in contemporary Spanish society. Shohat and Stam assert: “While on one level film is mimesis, representation; it is also utterance, an act of contextualized interlocution between socially situated producers and receivers” (180). Considering all of the works in my corpus, and several of the “realistic” modes that have been chosen by the writers/directors (including testimonial, autobiographical, and documentary narratives), it is important to recognize that, as Shohat and Stam affirm, they are both representations and historically situated “utterances.” In the following chapters, the works of my corpus will be examined in relation to such issues, and in the process problematic representations and “utterances” within the narratives will become evident.
Arpillera

Three women created this tapestry: Parveen Akhtar, Shazia Munawar, and Nusrat Parveen. The written description of the tapestry emphasizes not only the utility of these hands, but also their beauty, adorned as they are with henna coloring and bracelets, “como a mí me gustan” (p. 8). The author of the accompanying text notes that she was a seamstress in Pakistan, but her current daily routine is limited to working in the home.
and caring for her five children. The description concludes: “Mis manos saben coser, bordar, cocinar, limpiar, peinar, escribir y mucho más” (p.8). The image above the hands is described as a mirror “con less, flecos en urdu” (p. 8).

The viewer’s eyes are instantly drawn to the range of vivid colors chosen for the henna-painted hands. The image brings an important custom to our attention, one that will be a source of internal conflict in Najat El Hachmi’s autobiographical novel. The women affirm their customs with this arpillera, and assert their skills in the written description: they are as capable as anyone, even when they appear different from those within the cultural norm of their adopted country. The inclusion of an image of a mirror above the hands invites viewers to perceive the artists’ differences as well as their own, which may be a first step toward building a truly pluralistic community. This arpillera project is an invaluable opportunity for self-representation, and for expressing resistance to the cultural norm through the portrayal of their own customs.

Diverse ethnic communities are coming to Spain from all corners of the globe, a reality that is gaining representation in literature and film. As a new multicultural society evolves, issues of difference and integration come to the fore. Spain, inheritor to a limited extent of the European sense of superiority (not to forget that Spain has also been seen as the exotic Other to northern Europeans, as we have seen in Chapter 2, pp. 34-35), now has varied ethnic groups co-existing within its society, brought there by the economic dislocation of globalization.¹ The demographics have changed, as has the representation of the Other in Spanish literature and film over the past few decades.

¹ Although I will use the term Eurocentric to refer to Spain, which shares the continent’s sense of superiority and has been colonizing empire, Helma Lutz’s discussion of the difference between “eurocentrismo” and “europeísmo” is worthy of consideration. She cites Philomena Essed’s term “europeísmo” and indicates that there is increased evidence of a shift to the latter term: “El eurocentrismo
Sandra Martín discusses Spain’s (and Europe’s) current “exclusivista” stance vis à vis the immigrant population, speaking of the European Union: “que ha formado la llamada ‘Fortress Europa’ para cerrar físicamente las fronteras del continente Europeo contra los inmigrantes. Al sumarse a este movimiento exclusivista, España intenta demostrar su pertenencia a la Europa contemporánea…” (28). The associated xenophobia that Martín considers, and a “superior” positioning, contribute to the problematic integration of immigrants (both legally and culturally) into the host country.

The earlier works of my corpus, primarily show African and Caribbean communities as the Other, but in more recent works, portray the otherness of Eastern European, Chinese, and several other Latin American and African collectives. The women of these communities are shown to be marginalized in their adopted country, not only in terms of gender, but also in terms of ethnic, religious, and cultural differences.

In Edward Said’s analysis of the concept of Orientalism and the Western creation of the image of Orient as the “Other,” he maintains:

Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient, the Oriental, and his world…. [T]he Oriental is depicted as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual). The point is that in each of these cases the Oriental is *contained and represented* by dominating frameworks. (40)

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2 Ana Rueda defines “Fortress Europa”: “A raíz del tratado de ‘Schengen’, que elimina las fronteras para los miembros de los estados europeos, se establece una línea fronteriza, como si se tratase de una Fortaleza amurallada, que restringe la entrada a inmigrantes a la Comunidad Europa” (283). I use Rueda’s definition for “Eurocentrism,” throughout this project: “Basado en la premisa modernista de que los valores europeos son superiores, tiende a la homogeneización de las personas dentro del imaginario europeo como único punto de referencia para la normativa cultural, política y económica” (283).
This essay will explore the portrayal of women immigrants as the Other in a selection of contemporary Spanish written and cinematographic narratives. I will note the racial and socio-cultural differences that the authors highlight as a way to define these women (and by extension, their communities), and to limit their integration into Spanish society. I will explore the idea that the (re)presentation of these differences is a potential form of resistance within a previously homogeneous culture.

The increased diversity of the immigrant population in Spain (and the growth in total foreign population, reaching over 12% in 2011) has led writers and filmmakers alike to explore this new society. The integration of the immigrant population into Spanish society has been prominent in governmental studies and media news. The recently published second “Plan Estratégico de Ciudadanía e Integración 2011-2014” affirms, as we saw in Chapter 1, that integration is a primary goal; the blueprint is significantly more ambitious than that of the previous PECl 2007-2010, seeking “el paso de un nivel satisfactorio de coexistencia—una coincidencia en tiempo y espacio de carácter pacífico—a un nivel óptimo de convivencia, la cual supone la interacción y relación armoniosas.” Terms such as “ciudadanía, interculturalidad y democracia” further define the objective of the Plan (extranjeros.mtin.es). It is in this sociopolitical context that women writers and filmmakers in Spain have undertaken to represent their newly multicultural environment and the challenges it presents in Spanish society.

3 Although I refer to the “problem” of the woman immigrant’s integration, it cannot be assumed that such assimilation is their desire or objective (although some of the narratives clearly state it as a goal). Their portrayals as the Other in this chapter, and as forging new hybrid identities in Chapter 4 work to maintain their subordinate position outside the dominant culture. The images perpetuate a cycle of exclusion based on their differences. The producers of these narratives work to problematize these issues, often hoping to evoke a response of solidarity on part of the readers/spectators.

4 In a “preliminary study” in Ana Rueda’s book on “hispano-marroquí” literature, Sandra Martín explains the often ambiguous and overlapping terms, multiculturalism and pluralism: “Giovanni Sartori clarifica los
In the corpus selected for this chapter, the ethnic and socio-cultural differences attributed to the female immigrant define her as the Other and perpetuate an existence “outside” the dominant culture. The women in my corpus are subalterns by virtue of their ethnic origins and their gender; they confront a double marginalization. Isabel Santaolalla proposes different categorizations of alterity within the representation of diverse ethnic communities. She states:

Es importante tener en cuenta la distinta carga de alteridad que acarrean aquellos individuos o grupos identificados con las antiguas colonias españolas, (especialmente Hispanoamérica) y los provenientes, por ejemplo, de países asiáticos o africanos que, incluso en aquellos pocos casos en los que hubo una relación colonial, como es el caso de Marruecos, el Sahara o Guinea Ecuatorial, se siguen viendo como esencialmente ajenos a la cultura e identidad españolas. (25)

The following pages will describe the alterity of three loosely grouped collectives: African female immigrants, Latin American female immigrants, and women immigrants from lesser represented ethnic groups. We will consider examples of Otherness presented in my texts and then analyze the changes in representation between earlier and more recent works.

In Homi Bhabha’s study of the Other and its associated stereotypes, he refers to “the object of colonial discourse — that ‘otherness’ which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity” (67). The alterity of female African immigrants in the works studied here is...
evident: they are mystified, objectified, marginalized in terms of ethnicity, personal relationships, appearance and behavior. The Latin American population is differentiated as well; although they speak the language of the autochthonous population, their work ethic is questioned and they are portrayed as assertive in claiming equality due in part to their colonial past. The Caribbean immigrant women are often sexualized: they are bewitching, but assigned marginalized service-oriented jobs. The Chinese population in *Extranjeras* is depicted as isolated and insistent on retaining their language and cultural norms. Let us consider specific examples of the ways these narratives define immigrant women in terms of their difference and within what Said describes as a “supreme fictions”:

Neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other. That these supreme fictions lend themselves easily to manipulations and the organization of collective passion has never been more evident than in our time... (xvii)

**African Women Immigrants**

There are representations of the alterity of women immigrants in the following works: *Fátima de los naufragios* (Ortiz), *Háblame musa, de aquel varón* (Chacón), *Cosmofobia* (Etxebarria), *Jo també sóc catalana* (El Hachmi), and *Extranjeras* (Taberna). Ortiz’s Fátima and Chacon’s Aisha are earlier representations, while Susana and Amina in Etxebarria’s novel, the protagonist Najat in El Hachmi’s autobiographical narrative, and the women in Taberna’s documentary film are the later incarnations.

Santaolalla studies the portrayal of difference in Spanish film in her book *Los Otros*. With respect to Sub-Saharan, she notes:
La comunidad subsahariana no es la más numerosa; sin embargo es una de las más visibles, debido en parte a que el alto porcentaje de esta que se encuentra en situación legal irregular le fuerza a ganarse la vida en trabajos ambulantes, a menudo en la calle. A pesar de ello, no son los inmigrantes subsaharianos los que son objeto de más discriminación. Al contrario... es una de las comunidades más aceptadas por la población autóctona, sólo por detrás de la hispana. (120)

The most highly represented African immigrant group in Spain, the Maghrebi, bears the brunt of discriminatory behavior on part of the autochthonous population: “ocupan la primera posición ... tanto en términos numéricos como en ser la que más prejuicios y rechazo despierta en la población nativa” (134). Let us consider examples from our texts of the African immigrant woman; I will point out differences among the women as well as between earlier and more recent narratives.

In Chacon’s Háblame musa, de aquel varón, Aisha is a Moroccan immigrant who works as a caretaker and housekeeper on a ranch in Punta Algorba, Spain. Although she befriends Matilde, an urban Spanish woman who accompanies her husband and other “friends” as guests to the ranch as they work on a script for a movie, her differences ultimately lead to her death. The reader learns of some of Aisha’s customs and traditions which she shares with Matilde as they work together in the kitchen. She discusses her imaginary wedding in Morocco with the fiancé she lost on the crossing from Africa to Spain. She also describes the traditional festive clothing, the custom of painting henna on the hands and feet of the bride and wedding party and the “arbórbolas,” which she refuses to demonstrate for Matilde: “Sólo en fiesta. Contrimás, los seniores trabajan más muy cerca. Susto grande si Aisha uel uel” (106).^5

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^5 In her conversation with Matilde, Aisha refers to “arbórbolas.” The definition of an “albórbola” (spelled here “al” instead of an “ar”) according to the Real Academia Española is: “Vocería o algazara, y especialmente aquella con que se demuestra alegría” (rae.es). I will further explore the representation of the Other’s language in Chapter 4.
Aisha, her husband Pedro, and their Maghrebian immigrant friends, Farida and Yunes, are invited to a movie premiere in town by the ranch owner Ulises, who is a film director. He is fond of the caretakers, but their presence turns into a spectacle:

Aisha se deslizaba luminosa entre la gente, como un destello irresistible, y cada persona que dejaba atrás se volvía para mirarla. No era extraño que Estela se recelara de su belleza, que envidiara la naturalidad de su encanto, la magia que desprendía su exotismo involuntario, su vestido color azafrán, la gracia con que paseaba sus babuchas por el salón repleto de mujeres calzadas con tacones altos. (151)

Aisha’s brilliance fades in the final chapters of the narrative. As everyone gathers at the after-party on the beach, the immigrant women stay at the perimeter to preserve their formal gowns, but standing apart they are set upon and killed by five local men: “Los cazadores tenían acorraladas a sus presas ... ¡Hola, hola, cerdita! ... ¡Dile a esta perra que me mire!” (152). The animalization of the women and the violence that ensues in their final moments in comparison to the exoticism portrayed in earlier events highlights the ambiguous demonstration of both fascination of the Other and xenophobic behavior on part of the dominant social class.

The protagonist in Ortiz’s “Fátima de los naufragios” is one of two survivors of a patera which capsized en route to Spain; her husband and young son perish. Yet, she awaits their arrival for over four years at the water’s edge in Almería. The narrator relates the town’s perception and treatment of this mysterious woman who has no contact with the townspeople. The rumors escalate, and there are several interpretations of her presence. For example, one fisherman maintains, “Está pa’ allá, decía Antonio, el pescador. A mí al principio casi me daba miedo. Pero ahora sé que es sólo una pobre mujer, una chiflada que no hace daño a nadie” (8). She is called a
“Macarena tostada por el sol” and “la loca de la playa para los turistas, la mendiga africana” (8).

Her presence both disturbs and fascinates onlookers. She is the object of the townspeople’s gaze at all times and is never given a voice. Antonio’s son observed the town priest set a blanket at her side and shortly after she dons it, the narrator explains:

y Lucas, el hijo de Antonio, afirma que cuando se cubrió con aquella manta de franjas rojas y morada hubo una luz, un aura, que la encendía toda, y Lucas niño, asustado, se echó la mano a la boca por el espanto y fue corriendo a su madre gritando que la mujer no era mujer sino fantasma, aparición o sueño, y que desprendía el fulgor de los peces sin desescamar. (9)

Fátima’s mystifying nature is solidified when an unidentifiable young man’s body washes up ashore; after cradling the young man for some time and drawing an audience, Fátima stands up, walks into the ocean and disappears into the horizon. At this moment the local women revere her as “la Virgen de las pateras, nuestra señora de los naufragios” (22).

In her study of “Fátima de los naufragios,” Maryanne Leonne also finds that: “Many people gaze upon her: the narrator, townspeople, tourists, and Mohammed…” (451). Only the latter, the other survivor, could potentially confirm her name and her story. As a recent fellow immigrant, his gaze is of particular interest. He initially tells the locals in his broken language, “Raro. Raro que mujer se salve, mujer mas débil, mujer bruja o fantasma” (14). He is the only one to approach her directly, and after their encounter he wavers on her identity and states: “Sí que es la Fátima. Lo juraría con permiso de Alá. Pero es una Fátima cambiada. La Fátima que yo vi era más joven, más…” (15). He then proceeds to shrug his shoulders in doubt and the narrator continues: “dando a entender que podía ser, pero que él no habría asegurado, que su
reconocimiento ya había concluido y que no decía ni que sí ni que no…” (16). Since not even he, who sat beside her on the ill-fated patera, can affirm with certainty who she is, her identity is assigned by onlookers: she is clearly the woman immigrant Other without a voice. Unable to see her as a member of their community or even their world, they ascribe her mystical powers and after her disappearance into the seas, they exalt her to sainthood: “Nuestra señora de los naufragios, virgen de las pateras, madre amantísima, ruega por nosotros” (20).

As the object of their gaze, Fátima is like a performer on stage.6 Wearing her mask: “pero era imposible percibir la edad tras aquel rostro convertido en máscara que guardaba señales de lágrimas…” (7), she assumes an identity imposed upon her by her audience. She is gazed upon by her spectators and remains silent throughout. Bhabha affirms: “The disturbance of your voyeuristic look enacts the complexity and contradictions of your desire to see, to fix cultural difference in a containable, visible object” (50).7 In this manner, both Fátima and Aisha are contained in a conceptual category of fixed Otherness, unable to overcome the binary oppositions such as West/Self/us v. East/Other/them.

6 Santaolalla refers to Kaja Silverman to define the term “gaze” in her analysis of the film Bwana. She comments: “Silverman distingue entre look, mirada como expression de deseo, y gaze, mirada en la que el deseo esta imbricado con el poder, es decir, que construye al objeto de contemplación como un ‘subdito’ y que, por lo tanto, contribuye a su situación de opresión” (164). I draw from this definition to discuss several of the women immigrants in my corpus as objects of a (voyeuristic) gaze, including Fátima.

7 Although Cornejo-Parriego finds that Fátima undergoes a metamorphosis during the story and that “Todo ello apunta a la construcción de un icono híbrido y sincrético en el que el mestizaje es a la vez cultural, estético, religioso y racial” (524), my view is that her isolation and fixed otherness don’t permit this transformation. Her exaltation to sainthood only further sets her apart from her onlookers. I agree with Leone’s finding: “this very inclusion as someone supernatural and mysterious simultaneously excludes her from the community” (464).
The portrayal of African women immigrants in more recent works introduces some notable differences. Etxebarria’s Susana, a second-generation immigrant whose parents are from Guinea, and Amina, also a second-generation immigrant whose parents are from Morocco, struggle to adapt to their cosmopolitan surroundings, in this case Lavapies, a centrally located neighborhood in Madrid. Susana’s story is narrated in the chapter titled “La Negra,” and Amina’s appears in the chapters, “Los molinos de viento” and “La sihr.”

This novel intertwines the stories of Spanish and immigrant women who come together at an activity sponsored by the Comunidad de Madrid’s social services, the “taller de autoayuda.”

The narrative is presented as a series of interviews with these women, including Susana and Amina. The reader determines the objective of the interviews when one of the women at the Center responds: “Verá usted, yo creo que para su libro yo no le voy a servir de nada. Porque usted está escribiendo un libro sobre el barrio, ¿no? Pues eso, que yo le cuento lo que usted quiera, que ya les he dicho en el Centro que colaboraría…” (149). Amina voices her trust in the interviewer: “Sí, ya sé que usted no juzga y que no lo contará nunca, que es como si se lo contara a un médico … Además, usted es mujer, es diferente, claro” (169). The women are no longer speaking to their male psychologist, Isaac, at the Center; they are clearly aware of the difference in

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8 “La sihr” is referred to in the text as what placed Amina in an altered mental state: Amina explains: “Y el alfaquí llenó una palangana con agua hirviendo y luego me hizo beber unas hierbas que me hicieron vomitar y le dijo a mi madre que sí, que alguien había hecho uso de la sihr para tenerme bajo su influencia…” (172).

9 The “taller de autoayuda” presented in Etxebarría’s Cosmolobia parallels the multi-faceted talleres that the Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc offers its community members. The arpillería project and the taller de autoayuda provide immigrant women an alternative space to learn, share their life-stories, and develop a sense of community with other immigrants and Spaniards. Both of these workshops (one fictional and one existent) are dedicated specifically to women.
sharing their stories with a woman. The author chooses to present these women with a voice of their own as they share their trials in first-person narrative.

Susana obtains employment at the clothing store Mango, where she deals with customers who clearly see her as different: “las señoras de la tienda sólo habían visto negras en la tele, en los documentales, de esas dando saltos con las tetas al aire pidiendo que llueva, y claro, pues me veían un poco masai” (73). In one instance, she encounters a Spanish woman in the store who is startled by her perfect Spanish accent: “pega un grito como si le hubiese aparecido el mismo diablo: ‘¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay!’, 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’...” (73). She describes another instance where a young girl is startled by her appearance and yells: “¡Mamá!, ¡Mamá!, ¡LA MUÑECA HABLA!, ¡LA MUÑECA HABLA!” (74). The mother apologizes by explaining to Susana that her daughter has a doll that looks just like her at home and that she has never seen a black person before in their neighborhood. Susana is marginalized in her personal relationships and socio-economically; she is victimized and resorts to counseling at the center. She is presented as crazy (her boyfriend Silvio insists on this), as black, as a doll, as economically disadvantaged, as violent (she hits Silvio in one instance), and as a victim (she resorts to the community service center for counseling).

Amina also tells her story to the interviewer. She begins: “Yo no nací en Madrid, nací en Algeciras. Mi padre vivía en Tánger, pero trabajaba en Algeciras, en la costa, de vendedor ambulante, con un carrito” (161). Amina’s otherness is illuminated by her account of a “magical” experience that occurred when she was approached by Yamal,
the owner of the apartment she cleaned. She had recently left an emotionally abusive partner (Karim) and had begun dating another more ideal man (Hisham, also of Moroccan descent.) Amina can only recount the beginning of the sexual advances made by Yamal as she was working, and the passionate kiss they shared, but claims to have fainted and woken up alone, unable to recall what happened in the interim. Shortly thereafter, Yamal brought a gift (a large plant) to her home and she claims: “Poco después empezaron los sueños. Yo soñaba con el dragón todas las noches, me despertaba aterrorizada. Y después recuerdo poco. Mi madre dice que empecé a hablar con otras voces, que hablaba sin parar y que gritaba…” (171). Her concerned mother refers to the “chouwaffa” who confirms her suspicions and maintains that a spell was cast upon her; she is immediately taken to Tangier to receive a cure from the “alfaqi,” “que alguien había hecho uso de la sihr para tenerme bajo su influencia” (172).

Amina’s psychologist, Isaac, writes an article on her special case (using a pseudonym for patient confidentiality) and insists that these occurrences were a result of a strong imagination: “Malika evita admitir sus propios deseos y apetencias al elaborar un discurso mágico según el cual ella no pudo rechazar los avances de su seductor dado que este la había hechizado” (236-37). Her psychologist also affirms in his article: “Su historia nos ejemplifica cómo la enfermedad mental y la experiencia religiosa son inseparables en algunos casos. La explicación de este caso nos sirve para entender por qué debemos conocer el marco cultural de nuestro pacientes … cada cultura facilita cierto tipo de comportamiento” (235). Amina is aware of Isaac’s incredulity but insists: “pero creo que Isaac hay cosas que no entiende, que en nuestro
país y en nuestro mundo las cosas son diferentes y que yo sé lo que viví, pero no
intento convencerle de lo que no le puedo convencer” (172). Amina’s otherness is
manifested in her cultural and religious beliefs. Her personal experience is discounted
by her counselor, and she becomes simply a case to be researched and discussed by
other professionals. Not only is she portrayed as being bewitched by Yamal, she is
misunderstood by the clinicians at the Center. She is defined by Isaac with myriad
terms and symptoms:

cambios en el tono de voz, sensación de presencia extraña en diferentes
partes del cuerpo, pérdidas de conciencia, agitación, delirio, anorexia,
discursos incoherentes, alteración dramática del humor e, incluso, algunas
crisis que pudieran ser manifestaciones sintomáticas de tipo epiléptico.
(235)

Interestingly, Isaac has a slight change of heart after his own experience with Yamal; he
too wonders if he wasn’t put under a spell when he met with Yamal in Lavapies.

 Another, more recent portrayal of an African woman immigrant is El Hachmi’s
autobiographical narrative, Jo també sóc catalana. Its protagonist is presented with a
series of challenges in her new country; she arrives in Vic at age eight. 10 In the
prologue, Najat addresses the phenomenon of immigration and reflects on the effects of
globalization and migrations. She affirms that above all the socio-political issues
surrounding a migrant’s adaptation to their adopted country, people are still at the base
of the discussion: “pero totes aquestes vies d’apropararse a l’altre, al que es diferent,
deixen en segon terme un fet cabdal: en tots aquests casos, tant si són deu o deu mil
els nouvinguts, tant si mostren voluntat d’integrar-se com si el seu viatje ha quedat

10 Ana Rueda provides the following details about El Hachmi: she was born in 1979 in Nador, Morocco
and moved to Spain in 1987. “Se licencia en Filología Árabe por la Universidad de Barcelona y se
establece en Cataluña. Actualmente porta DNI español. Aunque su lengua materna es bereber, de
tradición oral, la primera lengua en que recibe instrucción académica y con la que se identifica es la
catalana” (97).
Her story recounts struggles of adaptation during her childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood in Vic and Barcelona.

As a young girl, Najat is thrilled to have her hands painted with henna to celebrate the eve of the final day of Ramadan. Her mother does it carefully and the protagonist proclaims: “Me les mirava una vegada i una altra i em fascinava la intensitat del color, els matisos entre els plecs de pell” (66). Delighted with the work of art on her hands and eager to share it with others, she encounters a local saleswoman who asks her what she has on her hands: “Aquella dona grassa que no s’apartava de la màquina escurabutxaques, de vegades ben rossa, de vegades pèl-roja, em mirava mig sorpresa, mig fastiguejada--. Renta’t les mans, nena, les portes brutes” (66).

Shocked by this disapproval and completely humiliated, Najat has a life-changing moment: “Des d’quell moment, van existir dues Najats al món: una, la marroquina, seguia amb els costums anhelats, jugava a fer de núvia amb els mocadors de la mare, somiava en festes de dones ballant la dansa del ventre, de portes endins, i l’altra, la catalana, es mostrava de portes enfora” (67). She fears judgment from the native population and struggles with an identity crisis as she longs to express and explore her cultural and religious customs, yet also take part in the traditions of her adopted country. Najat muses: “Quan algú et diu que t’integris, el que en realitat t’està demanant es que et desintegris, que esborris qualsevol rastre de temps anteriors, de vestigis culturals or religiosos, que ho oblidis tot i només recordis els seus records, el seu passat” (90).

The documentary Extranjeras presents interviews with several African women. One young Senegalese woman who sells scarves, hats, and gloves on the street for
income comments: “Hay muchos blancos que no quieren ver negro” (*Extranjeras*). This young woman works on the streets, helps her sister with the baby, and prepares food to feed over forty people in their apartment. She recalls that the police investigated to ensure they did not have an illegal restaurant in their home. Another group of African women interviewed—Rasha, Paz, and Mila—forms part of the band “Africa Lisanga”; they discuss their lives and current situation in Spain. In fluent Spanish they express different opinions about racism that they encounter in their surroundings. After mentioning her difficulty in merely hailing a taxi cab, one of the women summarizes: “Hay mucho racismo en España” (*Extranjeras*).

Although literary and cinematographic critics have affirmed that, among African immigrants, the Maghrebian population encounters the greatest discrimination in Spain, the women portrayed in both the earlier and more recent works of my corpus are equally marginalized and defined by their differences, ethnic origins, and socio-cultural practices. Fátima is mystified and Aisha is objectified and animalized. Susana’s racial differences lead to her objectification, Amina becomes “possessed,” Najat suffers an identity crisis because of her differences and cultural practices, and the women in *Extranjeras* discuss the xenophobic attitudes of the locals. They are clearly the Other in their adopted country.

One notable difference between earlier and more recent portrayals of African women immigrants is the increased agency ascribed to the women. In the earlier works, Fátima is voiceless and Aisha’s story is told in third person: she is spoken for. More recently, there is an increase in first person narrative: the fictional characters Susana and Aisha recount their own hardships in an interview; Najat’s account is
autobiographical (the only autobiography written by a woman immigrant in Spain that I was able to find), and the women in *Extranjeras* are interviewed for the documentary. These changes, giving the woman immigrant different roles and new agency, allow readers or viewers to better understand their life stories. In a sociological context, Floya Anthias and Gabriella Lazaridis comment on the benefits of such a changed perspective:

> Some attempts to gender migration have tended to overemphasize the role of structures and constraints and at times have produced an impression that women are victims of circumstances. Introducing agency into migration theory, whilst also recognizing that such agency is conducted in given structural and institutional contexts, enables a more multifaceted approach that can pay attention to the lived experiences of migrant women. (6)

**Latin American Women Immigrants**

Moving into the otherness ascribed to the Latin American woman immigrant in Spanish literature and film, the following paragraphs will demonstrate that they too are marginalized by virtue of their ethnic and socio-cultural differences. We see this in the earlier works: Marcelinda in Ortiz’s “La piel de Marcelinda,” América in Salabert’s “América Colón,” Milady in Bollain’s *Flores de otro mundo*. It is also evident in more recent works: Omara in Obligado’s *Salsa*, Graciela and Angela in Pujol’s *Aguaviva*, Benedicta in Ortiz’s “La virgen milagrera,” several women in Taberna’s *Extranjeras*, and MaryCarmen in Torres’ *Si nos dejan*. Although these women often share a language and certain historical periods with the native population, their otherness prevents them from full integration. Because the Caribbean woman’s portrayal is often dramatically different than the rest of the Latin American community, I will discuss them separately.

In his comprehensive study of migrations in European film, José Monterde contends:

> Ese factor digamos mitológico sobre la sensualidad caribeña, tanto femenina como masculina, es la que diferencia netamente el tratamiento de
la inmigración caribeña respecto a los restantes inmigrantes latinoamericanos, que sin embargo pertenecen a una misma comunidad lingüística, geopolítica e histórica. (134, note 68)

The Caribbean woman immigrant is defined by her differences and her victimization in the narratives selected; she is overly sexualized and often works in service-oriented jobs such as prostitution or caretaker positions. The eponymous protagonist of Ortiz’s “La piel de Marcelinda”, is a young Jamaican immigrant who works as a prostitute in the Casa de Campo in Madrid: “el lote venía de Jamaica o algo así, un sitio exótico y caribeño, y daba gloria verlas con aquellas piernas como troncos, duras, perfectas y esas bocas con unos dientes tan blancos y una delantera imponente de agárrate para no caer. Empinaditas y bien puestas, como debe ser...” (26). Marcelinda’s chulo, Chano, falls in love with her and is killed when he tries to protect her from four local young men who attempt to take advantage of her. The narrator (Chano’s co-worker and side-kick, another “vigilante” for the prostitutes) remarks: “Pues lo mismo con las de color, que los atraen y los excitan, precisamente porque, bueno, les da asco y se creen por encima, pero es precisamente lo que buscan, lo que los enciende...” (38). Marcelinda, who had also grown fond of her chulo, commits suicide at his side with the knife used by his killers: “la Marcelinda desangrándose sobre el Chano, que tenía los ojos muy abiertos; una escena de Romeo y Julieta...” (41). Her voice is silenced as was Fatima’s and Aisha’s. The narrator recalls the haunting appearance of Marcelinda’s lifeless body with these final words: “Que desde aquel día se me congela la saliva y apenas duermo. Era una piel marrón como de cera, de museo de terror, una muñeca disecada con los ojos de cristal, como esos alfileres de los acericos. ¡Había que verla!” (42). She is overly sexualized as a young prostitute in life and objectified as a terrifying doll upon her death.
We are introduced to América in Salabert’s short story, “América Colón,” by Bobby, the adolescent narrator. According to him, she is a forty-something woman who emigrated from her native Caribbean island to New York, where her children were born. Later in the story the reader finds that she is from Santo Domingo. She is Bobby’s caretaker and both reside in Madrid during the events of the narrative. América invites Bobby into her world; she takes him to a dance hall she frequents in the city. Bobby is magnetized by her appearance as they prepare for their excursion: “Calzaba unos altísimos zapatos rojos con lazadas negras sobre las medias color harina, y llevaba un vestido amarillo, aretes en los lóbulos y una diadema muy historiadora sobre el pelo crespo y engominado” (400). He recalls the ritual she performed prior to their outing: “antes de salir nos había protegido a ambos contra el mal de ojo perfilándonos los cuerpos de arriba abajo con la cáscara de un huevo” (401). Anticipating potential issues with the locals, she wishes to protect them both in a ritual that clearly foreshadows the tragic event to follow.

Bobby is introduced to her friends at the dance hall and continues to be mesmerized by América’s presence, as are the rest of the attendees: “Los demás habían dejado de bailar a su alrededor, la miraban igual que unos hipnotizados, y ahora ella se deslizaba sola, y doblaba las rodillas y la cintura y giraba y giraba, como si fuese una figura de humo” (402). As the object of this voyeuristic gaze, she has a hypnotizing effect upon her onlookers, clearly the sexualized Other. She is the object of the young narrator’s innocent first love: “Entonces, me enamoré de ella” (402).

Shortly after this eventful night, Bobby has to move back to the U.S. with his mother while América stays in Madrid with his father. After being unable to convince
América to go with them, the narrator becomes upset and refuses to give her a last kiss and yells at her, insisting that he would not keep in touch: “De todos modos no podrías leerla” (403). He finds out about her death shortly after sending her a taped apology from the U.S., guilt ridden because of his behavior: “Al poco llegar a Wisconsin, a la casa del abuelo Frank, le envié una cinta donde le pedía perdón. No sé si llegó a escucharla antes de que la mataran a palos y a cadenazos unos skins en una madrugada de sábado, de regreso, sin duda, de ese salón de baile donde ella se convertía en la elegida del mundo, en la dueña del ritmo…” (403). The voice of América is also silenced with a violent and untimely death.

The film *Flores de otro mundo* portrays two Caribbean women, Milady from Cuba and Patricia from the Dominican Republic; they stand out in the village by virtue of their ethnicity, gender and immigrant status. A theatrical spectacle ensues in the small rural town, Santa Eulalia, as soon as the busload of women (including several immigrants) arrives for the special singles/mixer event organized to introduce and potentially marry off the visitors to local men in order to increase their town’s population. As the women step off the bus, the Guardia Civil, a local marching band, and countless townspeople gather to receive them. Cheers, whistles, music and curious onlookers accompany the women as they parade towards the town hall in a carnivalesque fashion; the camera zooms in on one of the Afro-Caribbean women’s shapely hips draped in a tight yellow leotard. These women are sexualized from the moment they arrive.

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11 *Flores de otro mundo* has been the subject of several academic studies. Particularly useful studies on Otherness and mestizaje in the film include: Ballesteros, Van Liew, Martin-Márquez, and Martín-Cabrera. See bibliography.
Milady, an Afro-Cuban who had been brought to Santa Eulalia by her “boyfriend” Carmelo, is treated similarly from the moment of her arrival. She first appears stepping out of Carmelo’s truck, wearing a fitted halter top, sunglasses, and tight red, white and blue (with stars and stripes) leggings and tennis-shoe heels. Maria Van Liew affirms: “Milady’s spectacular arrival with all its imperialist symbolism of displacement contributes to the notion that there is no dress code for the immigrant woman”; her outfit “over-determines her sexualized body to the point of parody” (4-5).

The older local men are dumbfounded by her exotic appearance as are the onlookers from the local bar. Carmelo quickly covers her up with his jacket; her provider, her protector. The camera focuses on her expression of disdain as she raises her glasses to find older men gawking at her as they sit on the fountain and stare. Later in the film, she is harassed by young locals who visit the bar where she is briefly employed. One of the men asks the barkeep: “Las negras, ¿dónde las tenéis?”; his companion responds: “Llegando a Aranda, allí en el mismo cruce, allí tienes de todo … las tienes negras, feas, malas…” (Flores de otro mundo). The Spaniards’ attitude towards Milady contrasts with the welcome given to the immigrants in the opening scene (cheers, whistles, and a banner stating “Hola, estáis en vuestra casa”). Clearly, Milady is not at home in Santa Eulalia. She is the erotic Other that is both desired and disdained.

In attempts to escape Carmelo’s grasp (his vision that Milady be a housewife is not part of her ultimate plan), she hitches a ride to Valencia to seek entertainment at a night club. The cinematographer chooses close-ups and freeze frame shots of Milady’s face as she dances the night away at the disco. This technique mirrors Laura Mulvey’s
statement: “Similarly, conventional close-ups of legs ... or a face ... integrate into the narrative a different mode of eroticism. One part of a fragmented body destroys the Renaissance space, the illusion of depth demanded by the narrative, it gives flatness, the quality of a cut-out or icon rather than verisimilitude to the screen” (4). Milady is an erotic icon, for a brief moment in time. The last freeze frame in the disco is an image of Milady’s face lifted upward with a huge smile that portrays pure happiness; this is the last time we see joy in her demeanor.

Her confidence, her provocative appearance, and her excitement quickly diminish when she returns to the village; Carmelo hits her in the face in a fit of rage after he finds out she has been away, suspicious of her mysterious adventures; the fantasy dims. In the following scenes we see Milady’s bruised face as she dons sweatpants and a sweatshirt; a drastic change in appearance in comparison to earlier scenes. She transforms from an erotic object to a subdued possession; Carmelo’s abuse is an effort to dominate and control the same qualities that attracted him initially. Milady eventually disappears, unable to adapt to an imposed domestic lifestyle in her new surroundings. Not only was she harassed by Carmelo, but also by young men at the bar, as well as by a local woman threatened by the arrival of these immigrant women. As Dolores Juliano notes in her article, “La inmigración sospechosa y las mujeres globalizadas”:

Se produce con respecto a las mujeres inmigrantes, un fenómeno de distorsión de su imagen, que hace que a pesar de que la inmensa mayoría de ellas se desempeñan en actividades no relacionadas con la sexualidad—principalmente como asistentas domésticas, cuidadoras de ancianos y niños, venta, hostelería o restauración—solo se visualicen aquellas cuyas actividades se relacionan con el ámbito sexual. (126)
She claims that migrant women’s invisibility is replaced now by a “hipervisibilidad” as they become the center of attention of medical and legal discourses, and because they are “indutoras de un crecimiento excesivo de la minoría ética de la que forman parte”.

Marcelinda, América, and Milady are observed and judged by the locals; their “stage” presence is both exciting and threatening at the same time. They are erotic figures and often objects of a voyeuristic gaze; these “distorted” images perpetuate the cycle of marginalization. Said affirms that:

A field is often an enclosed space. The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. (63)

They are ultimately contained in this closed space that Said describes, and therefore the possibility of their true integration is put in question. América’s stage presence at the dance party, Marcelinda’s prostitution and Romeo and Juliet-like suicide, and the procession of immigrant women in Flores de otro mundo are all performances that reinforce the participants’ ethnic and cultural otherness in a Eurocentric Spanish society.

The Latin Americans portrayed in more recent works include Caribbeans as well as immigrants from several other countries in Latin America, a significantly more diverse group of women than in earlier narratives. Monterde maintains: “Será sólo en los últimos veinte años cuando llega una verdadera emigración económica, sea de forma paulatina y continuada (desde Ecuador, Perú, Colombia, Bolivia, etc.), sea de forma explosiva y coyuntural, caso de las consecuencias del ‘corralito’ argentino a principios
Andres-Suárez confirms that more recent Latin American immigration came to Spain out of economic hardship:

Intelectuales, técnicos y profesionales primero, y más tarde una abundante población inculta y mal preparada para afrontar las exigencias del mercado español. Se produjo entonces en los autóctonos un sentimiento de saturación que generó cierta xenofobia como demuestra la acuñación por esta época del término despectivo “sudaca.” (16)

Women in more recent narratives are portrayed in various guises, not simply as a monolithic Other, as we shall see.

Omara, an Afro-Cuban immigrant in Claro Obligado’s Salsa, is still the Other; she frequents the underground Salsa club in Madrid, works as a nanny for a Spanish family, performs witchcraft and believes she has absorbed the alter ego of one of her female acquaintances at the Club, an Argentinean writer: “¡Se le ha montado un muerto!” (76).

Omara is fired from one of her jobs as a nanny after frightening the children with stories about the alter ego she absorbed:

Her “bizarre” cultural practices make her threatening; it is “logical” to fire a person who demonstrates drastic differences and has not been assimilated into the host culture.

She is eventually employed again as a nanny by an acquaintance at the Club, and continues her witchcraft throughout the novel. Omara’s portrayal differs little from those of earlier works.
The Latin American women immigrants in later works are also defined by their difference, but they are assigned new roles. In Ariadna Pujol’s documentary film *Aguaviva* (2006), Angela, an Argentinean-Chilean mother of four and Graciela, an Argentinean wife and mother, emigrate to the small depopulated town of Aguaviva, Spain. They are assured employment upon the condition they stay for at least five years in town. These women and their families were brought to Spain by the mayor, who carefully selected Argentinean families that would easily integrate (the families are white and speak Spanish), but they are isolated within their new surroundings. Angela, whose family struggles economically and who works different seasonal jobs (as a pool attendant in the summer and laborer at a rabbit farm in the winter), is only seen interacting with her immediate family. Graciela and her husband acquire ownership of an abandoned restaurant along the highway; she discusses the xenophobic attitudes of the locals and is often shown alone, using the public payphone to report news to her family in Argentina; at the restaurant; or with another Argentinean family. In one of her phone conversations she states: “Ahora que yo estoy lejos, entiendo lo que le pasaba” (*Aguaviva*). Her loneliness and isolation consume her; Graciela sympathizes with her Aunt (recently deceased) who migrated to Spain before her.

In this documentary, there is a scene where the local men discuss the arrival of Eastern European men prior to these Latin American families and plainly assert that the former were much more willing to “integrate” than the latter. One of the locals proclaims: “Los que son trabajadores son los rumanos. Los argentinos, los sudamericanos, todos, son poco trabajadores” (*Aguaviva*). Their work ethic is called into question by the locals and their evident isolation from the autochthonous population points to a lack of
integration into Spanish society. In one of the frames, the camera focuses on graffiti on an abandoned building. Its bold black letters, complete with misspellings reads: “NI ARGENTINO, NI RUMAN, Ni…” It is apparent that not all of the locals are heeding the words we hear from the Priest in the Church Mass: “Por el mundo de la inmigración, que seamos acogedores, generosos, roguemos al Señor” (Aguaviva).

Thirteen years after the publication of her collection of short stories in Fátima de los naufragios, Lourdes Ortiz published a second collection, Ojos de gato (2011). This offers an excellent opportunity to compare women immigrants portrayed by the same author at two significantly different moments in Spain’s immigration history. “La virgen milagrera” is the only story in the collection that assigns a significant role to a woman immigrant; from the title alone we can infer that Ortiz’s woman immigrant will continue to be defined by her Otherness.

Donato is a successful businessman from Albacete who attends a social event organized by his work at a brothel, La curva empinada, on the outskirts of Madrid. It is his first visit to such an establishment. He was so intrigued by his experience and his desire to re-live the fantasy, that he returns on his next visit to Madrid: “No podía recordar a la mulata—en realidad casi no podía recordarla al día siguiente—pero la imaginaba tersa, hermosa, joven. Una mujer salvaje, casi una diosa que se entregaba a él en un rito de iniciación, un himeneo sagrado. Mucha fantasía que le ponía los dientes largos” (19). He returns to the locale in the afternoon, prior to its opening, only to find a petite young woman cleaning one of the rooms: “y él pudo ver su nariz chata, sus rasgos aindicados, su desconcierto” and “la mujer casi niña parecía envuelta en un halo, que le daba un sorprendente encanto” (20). From these first descriptions of the young
girl, the reader is able to determine that not only is she an immigrant, but she is also attributed angelic qualities beyond this world, clearly the Other.

Donato approaches this young girl, Benedicta, and after their physical encounter, he recalls it thus: “al recordar, le parecía la aceptación de la víctima que se entrega en sacrificio” (21). Afterwards, he leaves the money beside the bed, and begins to feel guilty, so he attempts to justify his actions: “Una nariz chata y un color…¿aceitunado? ¡De todas formas la muchacha era rara de cojones! Medio anormal. Tenía una expresión inquietante, de alucinada” (22). Uncertain of whether or not she was a virgen, or of her age, his encounter absorbs his thoughts and he returns once again to the establishment: “—el recuerdo de la mulata, aquella música—quizás una habanera peligrosa, sensual, que salía del pequeño transistor de la muchacha” (23). Once he arrives, a man at the front lets him know that “La loca” no longer works there: “como muchas de su tierra. Dice que ha visto a dios. Ya sabe … Ven dioses por todas partes, como si todavía estuvieran en la selva o en el páramo o donde quiera que vivan en sus tierras” (25).

Donato is told that this young girl was approximately thirteen years old and discovers that she now stays at home (still in Spain), “Hace milagros,” and is visited by many to cure their ailments. Thanks to Mercedes, another “employee” at the establishment—the man at the front desk refers to her as a possible acquaintance of the girl: “ Todas son del mismo lugar y supongo que mantienen contacto” (25)—Donato gets the address and visits her home where he finds her lying in a bed with her arms folded across her chest as several men and women kneel on the staircase and all around her. A woman whispers to him: “Allá en la otra habitación está el infante. Es un
niño bendito como la madre, un angelito. Récele, ande, récele. No tenga miedo. Dicen que no sangró, que fue un milagro, así que ella es virgen, lo mismo que la Madre que está en los cielos” (26). Benedicta is “Una elegida,” and in Donato’s final thoughts, he claims she was just a vision. Her assigned otherness ultimately allows Donato to escape responsibility, his feelings of guilt, and continue his successful modern lifestyle.

There is not much change in the portrayal of the woman immigrant from Ortiz’s earlier to more recent collection of short stories. Fátima, Marcelinda, and Benedicta are all presented in third person, without a voice of their own. Each is assigned a role that leads to victimization and exacerbates otherness. Both Fátima and Benedicta are exalted as a blessed Virgin, and all three are ultimately silenced: Fátima and Marcelinda commit suicide, and Benedicta lies silent in her bed, described by the narrator as an “ataud,” no longer functioning as a citizen of this world. They each inhabit or work in marginalized spaces; integration into the hegemonic culture is far from reach.

Taberna’s documentary, Extranjeras, presents various Latin American immigrant women. Filmed as a series of interviews, it presents images and voices from a multicultural group of women (Ecuador, Peru, Poland, Romania, Senegal, China, etc). The South Americans include immigrants from Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and Peru. One Ecuadorian cuts hair at the Retiro Park to earn a living and claims, “Los españoles emigraron a nuestro país y se trajeron la mejor riqueza, entonces ellos también deben de darnos esa oportunidad para nosotros y para toda la gente que necesite”. Shortly after this statement, police arrive to close down the illegal street businesses; desperate to make a living, another woman yells out at them asking if they would prefer they prostitute themselves. She pleads: “les pido encarecidamente a las
autoridades, que por favor, entiendan, que somos inmigrantes … por favor” (Extranjeras). These women are marginalized socio-economically and forced to work illegally on the streets.

Ana Torres’ documentary, Si nos dejan, also presents South American women living in Barcelona. In a series of interviews with immigrants, MaryCarmen, a Venezuelan, is a barkeep at the establishment where the film’s director, Ana, is seeking employment. At the time of the documentary, MaryCarmen had been living in Barcelona for ten years (three of them illegally). She claims that she came with “ilusiones” and that now she will just accept what she has. She identifies with her fellow Venezuelan co-workers and states, “Yo no me siento catalana, yo no me siento española, yo me siento sudaca. Y mientras más racismo veo, más sudaca me siento” (Si nos dejan). The difficulty of integrating with the locals, the trials of obtaining legal status, and her current occupation all marginalize her in her adopted country.

**Under-Represented Groups**

Other under-represented ethnic groups only appear in the more recent narratives of my corpus; they include immigrants from China and Eastern European countries such as Romania, the Ukraine, and Poland. The only narrative in my corpus that assigns a primary role to women from these countries is Extranjeras. Although statistics show that these groups represent a large percentage of the immigrant population, their representation continues to be minimal in contemporary Spanish literature and film. With respect to the Chinese population, Santaolalla affirms that in Spanish film, “A menudo se ha recurrido a justificar la escasa presencia de lo chino en las manifestaciones culturales españolas haciendo referencia a la actitud cerrada del grupo…” (148). Andres-Suárez corroborates this idea in her analysis of the minimal
representation of the Asian population in literature and maintains: “Por razones culturales y religiosas tienen tendencia a permanecer entre ellos y a no mezclarse con los aborígenes. Para estos, los asiáticos suelen construir un verdadero enigma…” (17).

In regard to the Eastern European countries, Santaolalla recognizes an increased presence in contemporary film and affirms, “Desde la perspectiva de la Europa occidental, la Europa del Este comienza a ser ‘parte de’ pero también muy ‘diferente a’, o más bien, ‘desigual a’, la Europa hegemónica” and “sin embargo, su físico no les marca en principio como diferentes a la comunidad nativa” (153). Extranjeras is unique in its presentation of women from varied ethnic backgrounds living in Madrid, including from these under-represented countries. The interviews allow the spectator to hear the women’s voices and view them closely; the director uses mainly close-up shots of the women as they tell their stories.

The immigrant women portrayed represent communities from all over the world, each with socio-cultural differences that are shown to perpetuate their marginal position in Spanish society. The Chinese women discuss ties to their culture of origin and the importance of passing on their language and traditions to future generations. One woman discusses the fact that there are very few Chinese women with Spanish men due to “diferentes costumbres y diferente cultura, es muy difícil.” A second-generation Chinese teen who speaks fluent Spanish, Lily Lin Chen, discusses her interaction with classmates and their cultural differences; she asserts that she is laughed at on the

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12 An exception to this finding is the film Biutiful (2010), directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, who presents a multicultural group of immigrants residing in Barcelona, including the Chinese population (among others).
streets by her peers, “pero, porque por ejemplo, en su colegio no tienen un chino, o un africano, o un americano. Pero la verdad es que sí, siempre por mucho que le caiga bien, siempre al final dice, acaba diciendo, pero es china” (Extranjeras). Lily recognizes her otherness and even manages to find a way to justify the behavior of the locals.

Extranjeras also presents several Polish women including Anna and Kamila, a mother and daughter team who work at a bar in Alcalá; they discuss their difficulties adapting to their adopted country. In fluent Spanish, the daughter discusses her challenges at a school she used to attend and states that she was called: “lo típico de polaca de mierda, cosas de ese estilo, ¿no?” She also mentions at that same school the majority of students were gypsies and states, “era lo peor” and she says: “me dieron una paliza por ser polaca, no por otra cosa” (Extranjeras). Even so, over time, she maintains that things improved and that now, “Soy como una más.” All of the women belonging to this third group of immigrants considered the “under-represented” discuss the xenophobic attitudes they face in the community and their difficulty adapting to their new surroundings.

The women immigrants seen or portrayed in these narratives are all set or kept apart from the hegemonic culture by racial, religious or cultural differences. The representation of their otherness persists in both the earlier and more recent narratives in my corpus, and integration remains a key issue throughout. However, the artists ascribe increased agency in more recent works, permitting new voices to be heard. The women’s persistent victimization and marginalization, as women, as immigrants, as different, as the Other, limits the possibility of integration into Spanish society. Said maintains: “The construction of identity … involves the construction of opposites and
'others’ whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from ‘us’. Each age and society re-creates its ‘Others’” (332).

Although the immigrants in more recent works exercise resistance, have increased agency, and take on new roles, as we will see in the following chapter, their socio-economic marginalization persists. The portrayal shifts from marginalized individuals in earlier works to marginalized collectives in more recent narratives. First, the individuals, and later the collectives, are contained and the divisive issues of race and socio-economic disadvantage persist and seem to impede their integration into Spanish society, if that is indeed what they seek. What is their response to this migrant “status”? The answer to this question will be explored in the following two chapters by analyzing manifestations of resistance and the spaces occupied by women immigrants portrayed.

Bhabha states: “The study of world literature might be a study of the way in which cultures recognize themselves through their projection of ‘otherness’” (12). The significant changes observed in the portrayal of immigrant women in Spain between the earlier and more recent works in my corpus reflect the changing concept of alterity in an increasingly multicultural Spanish society. In more recent works, the women are represented in a variety of roles and spaces; they begin to negotiate their new place and to transcend some of the stereotyping that the perception of Otherness abets and perpetuates.
CHAPTER 4
LANGUAGE, RELATIONSHIPS, AND DIFFERENCES: MANIFESTATION OF RESISTANCE

Figure 4-1. Nuestra clase de castellano (picture provided by the Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc)

Arpillera

A twenty-eight year-old Moroccan woman, Fatima Oldwen, created this tapestry. In the accompanying description, she states that she studied until she was thirteen and then worked in her home: “así es la vida…” (88). She expresses her desire to learn to
read and write well and talks about the class she is currently taking at the Foundation. She also expresses the need to learn Spanish to deal with administrative and medical procedures; for the present she has to depend on her husband to translate paperwork. She notes that the class provides a chance to learn to read and write and the opportunity to form community: "He co[s]ido una clase, donde mujeres extranjeras de todos los sitios vienen para aprender a leer y escribir. Y no sólo para eso, sino también para conocer gente y pasar el tiempo" (88).

The four women portrayed in this tapestry represent a diverse group; the variety of colors used for their hair (from black and brown to green and rainbow-like colors) and their different types of clothing depict a multicultural group. They sit around a table facing each other, a grouping that promotes conversation and interaction, reflecting Fatima’s desire for community. The date is written on a blackboard in the background, and the black block-like figures in the middle of the table represent what appears to be a computer, something that Fatima also indicates that she enjoys using in the classes. The year that is written on the blackboard, 2009, is a critical element in the piece. This Foundation provides valuable resources to remedy illiteracy and lower language barriers for locals and foreigners in its community well into the twenty-first century. The women in this tapestry, much like those of my narrative corpus, search out opportunities to improve language skills in order to better maneuver within their socio-political context.

The representation of women immigrants as the Other has changed significantly over the past fifteen years, as can be observed in depictions of her power, autonomy, and voice. These changes do not, however, imply the women’s integration into the dominant culture. They are “contained” in conceptual categories propagated through
stereotyping and this perpetuates their marginal position in society. In Chapter 3 we saw examples of “Othering” in the corpus, drawing on Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism and its associated binary oppositions: Orient/Occident, East/West, Other/Self. In this chapter, I will discuss Homi Bhabha’s concept of a “Third Space” of enunciation and his discourse on hybridity, which allows us to perceive the ways in which difference is articulated as a strategy of resistance. This chapter will also consider the often ambivalent nature of the woman immigrant’s efforts to retain her cultural identity at the same time as adapt to Spanish society. As Bhabha asserts: “The borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual” or may be “antagonistic or affiliative” (2). Such opposing expressions of cultural engagement are seen particularly in the newer works.

Trinh T. Minh-ha explores the ambivalence of immigrants in her essay, “Not you/Like you…”:

Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both not quite an insider and not quite an outsider. She is, in other words, this inappropriate “other” or “same” who moves about with always at least two gestures: that of affirming “I am like you” while persisting in her difference and that of reminding “I am different” while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at. (418)

It is through this “unsettling” brought about by their differences that the women portrayed find a place of resistance. I will focus specifically here on this community’s adoption or rejection of a different language, their relationships with Spaniards, and their affirmation or rejection of their own difference as a way of exploring changes I have observed in the representation of this group’s power, autonomy, and voice. The latter works portray increased agency among the women immigrants.
Another noteworthy change in the narratives produced after 2001 is the increase in testimonial, autobiographical, and documentary discourse, which facilitates representation of varied ethnicities and differences. Divergences are no longer homogenized, binary oppositions are diffused, and the woman immigrant speaks from the metaphorical liminal space that Homi Bhabha calls the “Third Space” of enunciation. To develop this idea, Bhabha builds on Renee Green’s metaphor of the stairwell as a liminal space which allows for displacement of binary oppositions:

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. The interstitial passage between fixed identification opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (4)

A threshold, where articulation of differences and cultural identity is constantly negotiated, offers a potential venue for agency and resistance (2).

Adoption or Rejection of a Different Language

In several of the earlier narratives considered, little attention was paid to the immigrant’s use of Spanish. In Dulce Chacón’s short stories, Fátima is not given a voice and Marcelinda articulates only a few words and phrases in broken Spanish. The narrator of “Fátima de los naufragios” asserts: “La muda, la llamaban los niños y los ‘maderos’ pasaban a su lado sin pedirle papeles, como si, viéndola a ella, de pie, inmóvil sobre la playa, transformada en estatua de dolor, ellos pudieran pagar su culpa” (7). Fátima’s silence permits an identity to be imposed upon her; she has no voice of her own. Ana Rueda mentions this lack of voice in her study of migration literature: “la literatura de la migración delata también la falta de voz del inmigrante, ya que sin
identidad propia es difícil hablar por uno mismo” (59). With respect to Fátima, she observes: “Su silencio permite que incluso los vecinos mas caritativos proyecten sobre ella identidades dispares, contradictorias, quizá gratuitas, llegando a mitificarla como Madonna o Virgen milagrosa” (59).

The young Jamaican protagonist of Ortiz’s “La piel de Marcelinda,” can only muster a few broken phrases in efforts to communicate with her chulo, Chano, and her customers. The few words she enunciates are ridiculed by the narrator: “Cuatro o cinco palabras para que pudieran manejarse, y era gracioso oírlas con aquellas eses tan marcadas y las vocales al revés cuando decían: ‘Ti lu hajo farato, sinco mil la meimada’ (26). The narrator initially thinks that Marcelinda and the group of women she works with are from Angola or Brazil, but finally determines: “Pero no, estas no … el lote venía de Jamaica o algo así, un sitio exótico y caribeño…” (26). Marcelinda’s identity is also assigned to her, in this case by her “employer”; she is obligated to prostitute herself, and she is even given the name “Marcelinda,” which she mispronounces as “Meircilinda.” According to the narrator, this young girl also says “thank you” with an accent, but not in Spanish: “sanquiu.” That she has learned little hardly matters in the end; she is rendered speechless and commits suicide after her “Cheinito” is stabbed.

Of the earlier narratives, Aisha in Chacon’s Háblame musa, de aquel varón has a more significant relationship to the language. Although her Spanish is also broken (the omniscient narrator recounts the events that led up to her death using a dialogue that demonstrates Aisha’s use of an inter-language with limited vocabulary), she is able to develop relationships with Spaniards thanks to having some ability to use their language. Aisha wishes to learn Spanish as a means to an end: “La vida empuje a
Aisha a aprender, para papeles neciso espaniol” (93). The phonetic spelling of her words indicates to the reader that she speaks with an accent, and this distances her from the native population. Her broken syntax and her accent set her apart; she is the Other who, regardless of her efforts to communicate, is still seen as different. She clearly desires to learn the language to secure legal residency in the country. She met her Spanish husband, Pedro, in one of her classes: “Aisha llevaba siete años casada con Pedro. Se encontraron en una clase de alfabetización, ella había ido a aprender el idioma y Pedro a leer y a escribir” (93). While her Spanish is superior to Fátima’s and Marcelinda’s, she too is silenced in the end; all three die suddenly.

The more recent works in my corpus portray a range of proficiency and attitudes to learning Spanish; some wish to affirm their cultural identity by expressing themselves in their own language. Some narratives continue to deny the principal character a voice. Nora, in Isabel Coixet’s “Cartas a Nora,” is one of the voiceless; we hear the family’s story thanks to the letters she receives from her sister who is living in Bolivia, Rosa.¹ The camera follows Nora in her daily activities in Madrid while the viewer hears Rosa’s voice as she reads the letters she has written to her sister. The film begins with Nora awaking on a mattress in a crowded bathroom where another woman also sleeps. Her long day consists of taking various means of public transportation and working two service-oriented jobs: she is a caretaker at a center for older adults and a nanny for a Spanish family. Nora’s young daughter died of Chagas disease in Bolivia, and she subsequently migrated to Madrid and sends money back to her family.² In the letters,

¹ “Cartas a Nora” is one of five short documentaries in Invisibles (2007), a “Médico sin fronteras” production.
Rosa asks Nora if she remembers a game they used to play as little girls, the “juego de invisibles”; she thinks that Chagas, rampant in Latin America, is making them even more invisible as a group.

Nora’s story is communicated through this series of letters, and although the viewer gets an idea of her desperate situation, her voice is never heard. The use of silence is an “evocative” tool in this performative documentary eliciting a response from the spectator with respect to the socio-economic conditions in Bolivia and the solitary life of an immigrant woman surviving in Madrid. She is just as invisible in her present-day situation in Madrid as she was playing a childhood game with her sister in Bolivia.

Despite this recent example of a voiceless immigrant, many women in the newer narratives demonstrate increased agency and are able to express themselves both in Spanish and in their native language (when it differs). Discussing recurrent themes in migration narratives, Ana Rueda notes: “El desconocimiento del idioma del país receptor se constituye a menudo en barrera cultural para el inmigrante … No obstante, el bilingüismo y el poliglotismo (beréber, árabe, francés, español) son un arma poderosa para los personajes fronterizos” (58). Mastery of Spanish will prove to be a powerful tool for many of the women in my corpus. I will consider the language issues presented in the portrayal of several women: Viviana in Obligado’s Salsa, the Chinese women in Taberna’s Extranjeras, and Najat in El Hachmi’s Jo també sóc catalana.

2 In the final segment of the documentary, the viewer learns more about the Chagas disease; a written description of the illness is presented as voices of children are heard singing about it. The text presented includes: “El Chagas es una enfermedad infecciosa que se transmite a través de la picadura de un chinché que habita en el adobe de las chabolas: la vinchuca. También se la conoce por la enfermedad de la muerte súbita … Afecta a 18 millones de personas en Latinoamérica que viven en la pobreza … En este momento ningún laboratorio del mundo está investigando para desarrollar un remedio contra la enfermedad de Chagas. En este momento hay 1800 medicamentos pendientes de patente destinados al adelgazamiento” (Invisibles, “Cartas a Nora”).
Viviana's first language is Spanish; she is an Argentinean writer residing in Madrid, a probable alter ego of the author. Although she shares a language with the autochthonous population, she is marginalized because of her dialect. She is rejected both in Spain and Argentina because of her blended language. Attempting to adapt to her current situation dooms her as a writer; she is unable to publish in Argentina or in Spain. On one of her trips to Argentina to meet with her editor, she asserts: “cinco años trabajando en este manuscrito y tengo que oír lo que estoy oyendo: allá, que es demasiado argentino, en Argentina que es demasiado español. Tendré que conformarme, tengo que aceptar la realidad: como escritora, estoy muerta” (58). Her editor's criticism and his rejection of her manuscript infuriate Viviana. She thinks: “—Mierda (joder), dijo Viviana, o mas bien lo pensó, porque nadie le suelta una puteada (un taco) a un editor en la cara aunque te esté rechazando un libro a menos que sea suicida, qué pelotudeces me está largando este boludo (qué coño me está soltando este gilipollas)” (55). The back and forth, the state of being “in-between” two dialects of the same language, is an internal form of defiance for Viviana. But she is at the mercy of the publisher, and her actions comply with the powerful hegemonic culture; she submits to the editor’s offer of drinks and a movie after their meeting even though she is offended by his behavior.

Upon her return to Madrid, she abandons her pseudonym, Felicitas Coliqueo, and lays her pen aside.³ Maria Bernath finds that although Omara continues to tell Viviana’s story through Felicitas Coliqueo, it is done so orally, outside the dominant cultural norm. She maintains: “Al igual que Viviana, que sólo tiene voz desde la marginalidad

³ Omara, an acquaintance from the Salsa club, absorbs Viviana’s character/pseudonym through witchcraft and later in the novel, transmits Felicitas Coliqueo’s story to the young girl she cares for.
lingüística impuesta por la cultura dominante, es decir, desde fuera de la ciudad—
masculina—letrada, la cautiva sólo logra contar su historia oralmente” (14).

This defiance results in submission; taking the advice of Omara, Viviana writes
down a long list of Argentinean words and expressions and literally freeze them,
hoping to bury them and erase them permanently from use. She acknowledges that
upon doing so she not only eliminates many of the struggles she has encountered as an
exile, but also much of her identity. “Palabras inútiles, palabras borradas del mapa,
pobres palabras exiliadas; y pobre de ella también, obligada a vivir en otra lengua:
desde ahora su idioma será clandestino, un boca a boca, una clave secreta. Y, poco a
poco, se irá disolviendo” (70).

Viviana is unable to tolerate this state of ambivalence, living in-between two worlds
and two languages. She finds solace at the underground Salsa club, among other
immigrants and Spaniards, where dance and rhythm serve as the primary language of
communication, and the conflicts, struggles, and judgment “out there” disappear.
Although Viviana never achieves success as a writer, there is hope in her story when
she recuperates her dialect at the end of the novel. Bernath notes that the author
suggests Omara’s oral transmission of Vivana’s story (using her pseudonym) is an
“espacio alternativo” that the women acquire to communicate their life-experiences (14).
In addition, her resistance to assimilation is demonstrated in the conclusion, where she
has the final say, in Argentine. She is at the club with the owner Jamaica, and declares:
“La vida no es un culebrón, Jamaica; la vida, como dicen en mi tierra, es una
telenovela” (188).
The Chinese collective portrayed in the documentary *Extranjeras* provides another example of the changes in representation of immigrants. They have greater agency, and express resistance to the dominant culture through language use more so than earlier characters. These women are the first group in Helena Taberna’s documentary; they are a united and cohesive band that seeks to maintain their culture by continuing to speak their own language. The director of a Chinese school in Madrid discusses its growth from an initial size of 70 students to its current total of over 300. We see a few minutes of a classroom session with Chinese children; afterwards, the teacher, Wang Jue, addresses the camera and comments: “Su sangre es chino. Entonces si ese chino nació aquí, si no sabe cultura china, no sabe letra china. Yo creo que para todos chinos es mucha, mucha pena” (my transcription, *Extranjeras*). Many of the women interviewed speak fairly fluent Spanish, but they stress that they speak Chinese at home and they reiterate the importance of passing on their language to their children. The adults interviewed speak with an accent, but the teenagers speak native Spanish.

Taberna also includes a Sudanese business owner in this series of interviews. Fanta Faustino Roro owns a hair salon, where she is interviewed alongside her employees. She is tri-lingual [Arabic, English, and Spanish] and comments on the fact that Spaniards don’t frequent her locale. She affirms: “Extranjero no significa que no eres persona, tengas estudios o que no pienses” (*Extranjeras*). Fanta has lived in Spain for eight years; she is a passionate and energetic woman whose otherness impacts her business. Her language abilities and drive are eclipsed by her alterity, as we see when Taberna invites the spectator inside and presents an image of potential success thwarted by cultural barriers. Both the Chinese women as a group and Fanta
as an individual take a stand and demonstrate that they can maintain their language of origin (and in some case several other languages) alongside Spanish. These women accept that knowing Spanish is vital for improving their personal and economic situations, yet have no plans to abandon their language of origin, as they proudly state.

In her analysis of *Extranjeras*, Cristina Martínez-Carazo observes: “se desdibuja la dicotomía entre nativo e inmigrante ya que el recién llegado monopoliza la pantalla, invirtiendo así la realidad al otorgar una posición central al otro, relegado en la realidad a los márgenes de la sociedad española” (268). The series of close-up shots in each of the interviews grants this central position to the immigrants as their stories unfold before the viewers.

El Hachmi’s protagonist in *Jo també sóc catalana* demonstrates both a desire to integrate and a drive to retain her own language and culture. These goals, that develop over time as she acclimates to her new surroundings, provoke an internal conflict in this young immigrant who as an eight year old, arrives in Vic. El Hachmi relates this tale (or autobiography) chronologically, first through the eyes of a young child, and later as an adolescent and young adult. 4 She did not see herself as different until others told her she was. In the prologue, she states that for her, writing is a means of understanding; the text is an exploration of her life experiences and “una manera de buscar la felicitat a cavall entre dos móns” (14).

One of the work’s five parts is dedicated to language: “Les llengües maternes.” The protagonist recalls her fervor for learning Catalan as a young girl; it meant the

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4 In the prologue, there is an indication that this novel contains autobiographical elements: “Després d’escriure aquest llibre, però, veig que en realitat només escric per superar les meves pròpies barreres, per navegar entre els records (i no només en aquest relat de tipus autobiogràfic, sinó en tots els relats que inicio hi ha un bocí de mi)” (14).
possibility of studying, making friends, and feeling part of a community: “La llengua era una necessitat vital, hi havia pocs marroquins a Vic, entendre el català era obrir-se les portes a un nou món, tenir les claus per accedir a la intimitat dels habitants d’aquell país de boira” (38). She learned the language at a very young age and spoke it at school and with friends, but every time she attempted to speak it to the locals they answered her in Castilian. She vents her frustration: “No sé ben bé per què a alguns catalans els ofèn que es parli la seva llengua, tot plegat deu tenir més a veure amb la manera d’estimar-se-la. ¿O és que en el fons tota aquesta gent que em contesten sempre en castellà, continuem pensant com a parlants de llengua minoritària?” (52). As an adult with a young child, she continues to wonder if they will also address her son in Castilian as he grows up in Catalonia.

The protagonist’s mastery of Catalan is greater than that of her friend, La Cati. Once she corrected the girl’s Castilianized mispronunciation of “incens,” stating that it should be pronounced “encens.” Irrate, La Cati responds: “No cal, tota la vida que he dit incens i no vindràs tu, de fora, a dir-me com haig de parlar la meva llengua” (53).

This conversation demonstrates, as far as her Catalan interlocutors are concerned, that her immigrant status deprives her of the right to show her superior knowledge of Catalan; the girls’ friendship ends. She persists in speaking Catalan, even though she is consistently addressed in Castilian. She also continues to speak in “amazic” (a Berber language) with her family and her son. El Hachmi refuses to abandon these minoritariian languages, demonstrating her willingness to buck the cultural norm. Rueda states that Jo també sóc catalana is a: “novela en la que el idioma opera al mismo
tiempo como instrumento identificador de la protagonista y también de resistencia contra el rechazo del entorno” (58).

The protagonist’s cultural identity is tied to her identification with the Berber language as well as Catalan, but her desire to adapt and become an integral part of her new surroundings is frustrated by locals who look at her and see a stereotype instead of an individual. In a discussion with her Catalan language teacher, she is made aware of the fact that she is the only one in her class (“plena de castellanoparlants i amazicòfons”) that actually thinks in her adopted language, Catalan. She states: “No tenia cap punt de referència, algú que em digués: no t’hi amoïnis, això és normal, que et sentis de dos llocs alhora, que tings dues llengües maternes, encara que una sigui adoptada” (47). Uncertain of her normalcy, she persists in her otherness. She finds a place of resistance between these two worlds, her voice is heard and her story is told; she is an immigrant writer living in Spain who accesses the dominant culture by publishing her autobiographical novel in a Catalan editorial, Columna.

Language is tied to cultural identity, and in many of the recent works in my corpus, immigrant women acclimate to their adopted country by learning Castilian or Catalan, while refusing to abandon their language of origin. This in-between state is indicative of their migrant status. They are not quite the same, yet not quite the other, in Minh-ha’s formulation. Such indeterminacy often leads to internal conflict, as demonstrated by the protagonist in El Hachmi’s novel. Iain Chambers discusses the complexity of this status. Unlike travel, he notes, “Migrancy … involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation” (5).
The ambivalence expressed by the women immigrants with respect to language use, and the evidence of conflicts over cultural identity, are not surprising. The following section will explore the women immigrants' relationships with native Spaniards and note any observable changes in the depiction of their agency and resistance to assimilation to the cultural norm.

**Relationships with Native-Born Spaniards**

Women immigrants portrayed in this corpus form some sort of personal relationships with Spaniards, yet they are also shown as disconnected from them, particularly in earlier works. More recently, they are seen in varied intercultural relationships, although disjunction persists. Some are completely isolated, while others form work and personal relationships with Spaniards. The women often express ambivalence about their relationships; they desire to belong as well as uphold their cultural traditions and customs.

Beginning with the earlier texts, the protagonist of “Fátima de los naufragios” is a solitary Moroccan immigrant who is voiceless and isolated. She is the Other who has no interaction with the locals, although they develop a unilateral relationship with her: she is the object of their gaze and curiosity. They exalt her to sainthood for her stoic dedication to awaiting the arrival of her husband and son, lost—as the reader knows—when their boat capsized on the voyage from Africa. She keeps vigil for more than four years at the shoreline. Despite her isolation, local women empathize with her; they attempt to put themselves in her place and relate to her situation and story (one they have invented for her when she arrived in their small fishing village). One of the local women claims:
Si a mí la mar se me llevara un hijo y un esposo que tenía la fuerza de un roble, ¡quieta iba a estarme yo! … ¡Bastante hace ella con soportar lo que tiene que soportar! Yo no sé si está loca o está cuerda. Pero a veces, cuando la veo allí fija, me dan ganas de ponerme a su lado y … no sé, quedarme allí quieta a su vera, porque yo sé bien lo que es perder a un padre y a un abuelo, ¡que el mar es muy suyo y muy traicionero!, y no sabe el que no lo ha pasado lo que es el dolor, lo que es la desesperación, lo que es… (17)

Even though this woman finds a common tie (loss of a loved one at sea), this unilateral sentiment is expressed from afar; she never tries to befriend Fátima. Another moment of empathy comes at the end of the story, when Fátima embraces a young boy’s lifeless body recently washed ashore. The townspeople assume that he is her son, although Marcelino recognizes: “Te digo que está muerto, que es otro más de los muchos que escupen las aguas últimamente, que no tiene nada que ver con la mora, que ese es de tierra más adentro, del Senegal o del Congo o de sabe Dios dónde” (19).

Ignoring this claim, the local women approach Fátima: “y poco a poco una a una se fueron acercando las mujeres del pueblo con su ofrenda de flores amarillas y rojas y violetas…” (21). One falls to her knees, and they all start praying to the grieving woman. Their actions reflect sympathy, but also fear. They have revered Fátima as a saint, but while drawing “near” to her, they keep her at a distance as the Other immigrant woman with whom they never truly develop a meaningful relationship. They do not attempt to stop her as she enters into the sea and disappears.

The Otherness ascribed to women immigrants in earlier narratives leads at times to destructive or dependent relationships with Spaniards. For example, the protagonist of “La piel de Marcelinda” is an impressionable teen prostitute who grows fond of her chulo, Chano. She is the Other to the narrator, to her boss, and to her clients: “que hay muchos que los pone a cien llamarlas negras y decirles que se vayan pa’ su tierra,
tratarlas como esclavas’’ (38). She is so marginalized socially that her only comfort is from the young man who works to maintain prostitution in the area, although it exploits the young girl he has fallen for. The narrator states: “‘Es una chavala, tú, una niña. No tendrá más de trece’, decía y se ponía en plan sentimental, de salvamundos: que pobrecilla, que fuera de su tierra, que a lo mejor la habían vendido sus padres o algo así, o que la habían engañao” (27). Both Fátima and Marcelinda serve the locals as some form of escape from their own realities or they are the objects of patronizing attitudes; at the same time they are marginalized because of their alterity.

Aisha in Chacón’s novel is married to Pedro, an uneducated Spaniard, and they work as caretakers for Ulises. Although she is fond of her husband, she frequently remembers and refers to the fiancée she lost on the crossing from Morocco to Spain. Ulises is very fond of his staff, but he is still their boss. One of his guests, the screenplay writer’s wife, Estela, employs an arrogant and condescending tone in her conversations with “the help.” Aisha’s relationship with Matilde, who is Spanish, is more meaningful than that with any other guest at Ulises’ home. It is Matilde who is most fond of Aisha and they spend many hours in the kitchen together: “Trabajaron juntas, rieron juntas. Y a partir de entonces, Matilde acudió a la cocina cada día y pasó las horas hablando con Aisha y perdiéndole el miedo a su gata. La confianza dio paso al cariño” (92). Yet, Matilde only stumbles upon this relationship with Aisha as an escape from her failing marriage; she slips away from her husband by working with Aisha in the kitchen. Like Fátima and Marcelinda, Aisha fills a gap in a Spaniard’s life.⁵ We never

⁵ In her analysis of Dulce Chacón’s novels (including Háblame musa, de aquel varón) María del Mar López-Cabrales finds: “La altura y la huida son estrategias que las mujeres … utilizan para salir del sufrimiento, abandono, infelicidad e incommunicación” (192). This corresponds with my interpretation of Matilde’s fondness for Aisha as an escape from her unsatisfactory reality.
hear directly from any of them, and their voices are as marginal as their position in society.

Among the earlier narratives, Bolláin’s *Flores de otro mundo* explores more deeply the relationships between immigrant women and native-born Spaniards. Milady is physically abused by her Spanish boyfriend, who brought her to Santa Eulalia from Cuba. This destructive relationship ends in despair; Milady arrives as a young, confident, and provocative woman but leaves a subdued and defeated possession; even her clothing changes from tight-fitting and revealing outfits to baggy clothes that fully cover her body. Her previous training and studies to be a lab technician for a sugar company in Cuba prove worthless in Santa Eulalia. Hired at a local bar, she is even criticized by a woman who works there: “Vamos a ver lo que dura ésta aquí. El dinero y los papeles, y en cuánto los tienen, aire” (*Flores de otro mundo*). Unable to withstand the abuse, isolation, and imposed domestic duties, she flees from town.

In the same film, Patricia, a Dominican immigrant who has resided in Spain for four years, marries Damián, a local farmer, to secure her legal status in Spain (although later we find out that she is legally still married to her ex-husband, Fran, also an immigrant). Her two children are her priority and she attends the singles event in this isolated rural town in an attempt to find a husband, become a legal resident, build a home for her family, and feel some sense of permanency in Spain. Although initially their marriage is one of convenience, they do eventually fall in love. Patricia’s personal relationship with Damián is a success; they respect and care for each other.

On the other hand, Patricia’s relationship with Damián’s mother, a traditional Spanish housewife, is strained and painful. The new daughter-in-law cannot do
anything right: she fails in the kitchen (she cooks the beans without broth), she invites her immigrant friends from Madrid without asking permission, and she befriends the only other immigrant woman in town, of whom the mother also disapproves. The initial close-up of Damian’s mother observing her son and Patricia’s first meeting and conversation prepares us for what follows. Her face mirrors severe disapproval of this Dominican immigrant, far from the ideal Spanish woman that she would have preferred for her son. Helma Lutz comments on the relationship between the European woman and the one defined as Other: “El antagonismo entre la ‘europea’ y la ‘otra’ se basa en estos discursos de alteridad radical, étnica y nacional, más que en la diferencia sexual. En esta oposición la mujer europea sirve de modelo con el que medir a las mujeres provenientes de otros lugares” (137). In this light, it is practically impossible for Patricia to measure up to her model Spanish counterpart.

Although Patricia is never truly seen interacting with anyone in town other than her Spanish family and immigrant friends, on several occasions she resists the stereotyping that surrounds her. An example of this resistance can be found in the dialogue with Damián when she confesses that she is still legally married to her ex-husband. Her deception infuriates Damián, who questions whether or not she was a prostitute in Madrid before her arrival in Santa Eulalia (a clear demonstration that stereotyping persists among the locals). Patricia attempts to break free from this image, and insists that is not something she would ever do. She confesses that evidently she came there to find a husband, to get her papers and to secure a home for her children. Eventually, Damián forgives her and after insisting that she leave, unpacks the car and asks her to
stay. Patricia achieves her goals in Santa Eulalia and finds her voice and place of resistance, albeit from a marginal position.

Some of the newer narratives also portray isolation among the women immigrant population. In *Invisibles* (a fitting title for this series of short documentaries), Nora is another example of a voiceless “extranjera” who has no sense of community. We see her interacting with others only as she prepares for her day, competing for space with her immigrant roommate in the very bathroom where they both sleep. Her arduous day and her trajectory to and from work is completely solitary; in one of the letters she receives from her sister, Rosa writes about: “lo sola que estás en España”.

In the film *Aguaviva* (2006), Graciela, Angela, and their families, all from Argentina, are also isolated from the locals in the village. They have some minimal interaction with members of the elderly community and an occasional visit from the priest, but we see them interacting primarily with their families or other immigrant friends. The film evokes a sense of isolation and loneliness as the camera follows the families in their daily activities, without any significant contact with Spaniards. Graciela is visited by the priest after receiving news of her young niece’s death in Argentina. In a distanced tone, he suggests a book for her to read and asks her if she is taking anything for her grief. For this woman, this outsider, who is clearly distressed in these shots, the priest’s only suggestion for emotional relief is medication and a book. Such superficiality perpetuates the invisible barriers between them.

Many of the texts produced after 2000 feature more significant relationships between women immigrants and Spaniards, and although these continue to be problematic, they allow the women more room to maneuver and dissent. They also
experience increased ambivalence, as seen by their behavior and decisions. Susana in Etxebarria’s Cosmofobia (2008) enters into a relationship with a Spanish man, Silvio, that becomes abusive, at first emotionally but then physically as well. Unable to leave him for economic and personal reasons—she lacks self-esteem—she gets counseling at the Comunidad de Madrid’s social services center. She is a Spanish citizen whose parents are from Guinea, as she tells her interviewer; she speaks as well about her relationship with Silvio: the abuse, their parents’ rejection of their interracial relationship, her struggle with her appearance, and her challenges at work. Born in Alcalá de Henares, she identifies herself as a Spaniard but is seen as different. Silvio’s mother disapproves of her: “La negrita, me llamaba, al principio. ‘Es que mi hijo está con una negrita —le decía a las vecinas—, y yo no soy racista ni nada de eso, faltaría más, pero pienso, claro, que si el día de mañana tienen un niño, en el colegio al crío le pueden llamar de todo...’” (84).

Unsure of herself and of what her life would be like without Silvio, she withstands five years of unhappiness and abuse. Although oppressed at work and at home, Susana resists the stereotyping forced upon her as a black woman in Spain and she defies her family in pursuing a relationship with someone from a different ethnic background. She responds to Silvio’s physical violence in kind: she is not passive. She explains what happened during one heated argument: “La situación aterradora se entromete en la escena como una obsesión cargada de ecos y lo veo todo en retrospectiva. Y, como ahora no tengo seis años, puedo defenderme. Y veo en Silvio a mi padre y le pego una bofetada, porque le odio. Y entonces él coge lo que tiene más a mano, un cenicero, y me lo rompe en la cabeza” (82-83). Susana is doubly
marginalized, as a woman and as someone of African descent. Although she recognizes her own bravery, she knows that the consequences will be serious. He will eventually return, which frightens her, but at the same time she does not want to be alone; her ambivalence is perpetuated by her dependency on Silvio and results in the sacrifice of her well-being.

Working within the confines of her marginalized existence, she inevitably compares herself to her European counterpart and is critical of her own physical and emotional state. Susana comments on her inadequacies: “Y yo pienso que tengo que dejar a Silvio, pero luego me miro en el espejo y me veo tan gorda que pienso que nadie me va a querer; sí, además soy una histérica y una perfeccionista y una castradora, y tengo un humor de perros que no hay quien me lo aguante” (68). In the chapter titled “The Woman of Color and the White Man,” Fanon discusses the “neurotic orientation” of the behaviors demonstrated by the inferiority of the black man and superiority of the white man. He affirms that: “the Negro, having been made inferior, proceeds from humiliating insecurity through strongly voiced self-accusation to despair. The attitude of the black man toward the white, or toward his own race, often duplicates almost completely a constellation of delirium, frequently bordering on the region of the pathological” (60). Susana’s behavior in Cosmofobia mirrors this finding as she frequently is self-critical and voices her insecurities regarding her physical and emotional states.

Claude Rheal Malary finds that for the immigrant woman in Spain: “todos los signos contribuyen a que forme su identidad social a base de la internalización de la represión. Las invitaciones a verse a sí misma como inferior a otro(a) son discernibles
en los términos binarios, casi maniqueístas, que la sociedad ofrece: blanca/no blanca, española/extranjera, rica/pobre” (182). The reader sympathizes with Susana, searching for her voice and identity and trying unsuccessfully to move towards the “center.” She dreams of another reality: “Me gustaría trepar por el patio, colarme por una ventana y entrar en el hogar de una de esas familias felices” (91).

Amina, another main character in Cosmófobia, comments on the interaction between Spaniards and immigrants in the neighborhood (Lavapies). She was born in Algeciras because her father, who lived in Tangier, worked in that city as a “vendedor ambulante”. Her father found work in Madrid in the construction business and in other “cosas raras”; he was eventually incarcerated for obscure reasons not revealed to the reader (162). Amina was born in Spain and went to school all throughout her childhood and adolescence in Spain. This second-generation Moroccan woman remarks: “Pero también sabía que no me casaría con un español, porque aquí de mestizaje nada. Los diferentes grupos se toleran, pero no se relacionan. Por eso no hay graves problemas, pero hay convivencia, no intercambios, no hay mestizaje, no hay nada de eso” (163). She is resigned to the fact that “mestizaje” is practically non-existent and furthermore, her boyfriend would have to convert to Islam to marry her. She states: “y sé que los españoles no lo hacen” (163).

The Moroccan protagonist of Cardona’s Un novio para Yasmina also develops personal relationships with Spaniards.6 In one of the first scenes, Yasmina is seen walking confidently down the street in a rural Spanish town. She is wearing a tank top, knee length skirt, and flip flops; her wavy hair, worn loosely, falls to her shoulders. She

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6 Un novio para Yasmina is a 2008 “coproducción hispano-marroquí” that was filmed in Puebla de la Calzada, Badajoz, and Mortijo.
is the image of a contemporary Moroccan woman living in Spain and provides a contrast to the traditional Moroccan woman, as presented in the “Association’s” language classroom, who wears full length clothing and a head scarf. At the beginning of the film, she meets with her Spanish boyfriend, a policeman, and she raises the topic of marriage. Noting Javi’s hesitation, she states: “Javi, yo quiero estar contigo, pero, puedo casarme con otro sólo para la residencia” (*Un novio para Yasmina*). Soon after, the two pay a visit to Javi’s family home to have dinner and discuss the possibility of marriage; they meet immediate resistance from his father and siblings. Javi’s father is worried about her work situation (at the beginning of the film Yasmina works as a checker in a local grocery store) and his siblings are suspicious of her intentions. A confused Javi runs out of his home and Yasmina runs after him; he yells “¡Quita!” and their relationship comes to an end. Later in the film Javi pursues Yasmina again, but realizes he is too late when he discovers she has married another.

Yasmina, who is fluent in Spanish and one of the best students in the Association’s Spanish language classes, befriends Lola and Mari, two local women who work at the Center. When Yasmina is kicked out of her brother’s home and rejected by Javi, Lola takes her in and decides to help find her a Spanish boyfriend in order to secure her legal status in Spain. This camaraderie soon turns to mistrust: Lola becomes suspicious of Yasmina’s intentions with her husband. In a conversation with Mari, she claims: “¿Por qué hacemos todo esto? Nosotros nos involucramos con ellos, y luego ellos…” (*Un novio para Yasmina*).

Through the eyes of Lola’s husband, Jorge, who looks through the half-opened door into her bedroom, we see Yasmina performing her prayer ritual on a rug while
wearing a head scarf. Jorge, sympathetic to her desperate situation, decides to find a solution to her problem; he will pay a local man to marry her. His friend Alfredo agrees to the arrangement. At the celebration, with fellow Moroccans and local employees of the Association, Alfredo tries to exchange his life story with Yasmina and she pulls away from him, firmly stating that they don’t need to share any further information about each other and that he received his 500 Euros, which should be enough. He comments: “Qué carácter la morita.” Yasmina refuses to make this arrangement anything more than it is, and continues working toward educational and professional goals during the year it takes to secure her papers and be able to apply for a divorce.

The other immigrant women at the Center, students at the language class that Yasmina now teaches, are curious about Yasmina’s new situation. They ask her which is better, a relationship with a Moroccan or a Spanish man. Yasmina responds that the latter “es mejor.” The spectator knows that her relationship with Javi has ended and the marriage to Alfredo is purely instrumental. We are left to wonder about the veracity of her response. Although we see her pursue her goals with determination, in the final scene she runs into Alfredo on their one year anniversary. She apologizes to him for her abrupt behavior the previous year and suggests they not be precipitate: “demos un tiempo, pensar lo un poco mejor,” implying that she does not want a divorce just yet. In a sense, she defers to Alfredo, a man who initially expressed opposition to everything she valued and required to achieve her goals: the institution of marriage and education. He appears to comply with her request in the final scene, leaving the viewer to speculate about their future relationship. This development contradicts Yasmina’s prior actions in the film and the end is thus ambiguous.
Yasmina affirms her cultural identity in the confines of her own home and personal space while asserting her modern “Spanishness” in her relationships, use of the Spanish language, and her contemporary dress. She, too, fluctuates between two worlds, and two identities. But Yasmina also breaks new ground in the portrayal of women immigrants; she never abandons her goals and maneuvers her pawns so as to assert her status as an independent woman living in Spain. Assigned a significant role as the protagonist of this film, she speaks from Bhabha’s “Third Space” of enunciation. In her analysis of women film directors in Spain, María Camí-Vela notes: “lo que sí ha interesado a muchas de ellas es el género de cine de personajes o ‘intimista’, que explora principalmente las relaciones de pareja o la amistad entre las mujeres” (29). Camí-Vela also discusses the prevalence of a “proceso de autobúsqueda”; Cardona’s film is an excellent example of this “intimate” genre featuring a woman searching for a sense of belonging yet retaining her cultural ties as demonstrated through her varying relationships with both Spaniards and other immigrants.

The women immigrants presented, whether they are isolated from the autochthonous population or form some sort of relationship with native Spaniards, remain in a peripheral position vis-à-vis their new affiliations. Although some of the more recent works show the women in intercultural relationships, these are often problematic, destructive, or exploitative. The alterity ascribed to these outsiders impedes the development of a truly pluralistic community.

**Affirming or Rejecting Differences**

Women immigrants express resistance to or acceptance of their own ethnic and cultural differences in all the works of my corpus. Beginning with Aisha in *Háblame musa, de aquel varón*, the women are shown to value their traditions. Aisha tells
Matilde about the wedding gifts from her marriage to Pedro, and relates how her imagined marriage to Munir in Esuira would have been, had he not died. The compromises she makes in wedding Pedro in Spain—few gifts, for example—owe partly to their economic situation, but they do not negate the fact that many of the ceremonial rituals were retained, including trying to convert Pedro into a “marroquí” for the celebration: “Pedro también guapo, más raro en chilaba blanca grande, zaragüel grande blanco, babuchas también raro en pies de Pedro. Tarbouch grande también en cabeza de Pedro. Pedro se pone de marroquí para boda pero no parece marroquí en ropa de marroquí” (110).

Pedro only dressed in traditional Moroccan clothing for the wedding, but he also converted to the Muslim faith: “—A mí me hizo que me hiciera musurman, porque ésta no se casaba con un cristiano. Ven mal eso de casarse con un cristiano, ¿sabe? Y yo tuve que pasar por el aro, y pasé, claro que pasé, porque esta cosa tan chica me tenía sorbío el seso. Y todavía me lo tiene y son muchos años pa mayo. Pero el nombre no me lo cambió, no señora … aunque por casi lo consigue la morita” (102-03). Although Aisha insists on these matters, she also accepts gifts from her Spanish boss, Ulises, who brings her incense from “La Meca” and “una mantilla española” to wear at the wedding that was held on his property, in Aguamarena.

In this way, Aisha portrays a hybrid identity; the reader envisions her wearing her “caftán azafrán” and a Spanish “mantilla”; she is in-between two worlds, negotiating the terms. Although marginalized, she maintains her rituals and customs in the celebration of her marriage to a Spaniard. She also finds a voice and affirms her differences by refusing to compromise her cultural traditions.
Another earlier narrative, *Flores de otro mundo*, also portrays an immigrant woman affirming her differences as a method of resistance to her socio-political circumstances. During a gathering with her friends and family from Madrid, Patricia has an encounter with her disapproving mother-in-law. As she and the guests cook, chat, laugh, and dance to Caribbean music, Patricia’s mother-in-law walks in. She is appalled and protests this get together in her home. She asks Patricia to consult with her prior to inviting visitors into their home again. A frustrated and embarrassed Patricia takes a stand and yells back at her; she exclaims that these people are “mi gente” and that they will always be welcome and have a meal and home wherever she may be.

Patricia is marginalized in this small town; this visit from her family and friends reaffirms her identification with them as well as her isolation in her new surroundings. At the same time, she struggles to adapt to her new family and social situation as a married housewife in a half-deserted rural town. In the end, she repairs her relationship with her mother-in-law and commits to staying in Santa Eulalia in hopes to secure a better future for her family.\(^7\)

Luis Martin-Cabrera explores the power found within the margins in this film and corroborates: “In this sense, *Flores de otro mundo* represents nothing other than the rupture of the linear history of modernity and the emergence of (opening up to) a space of power within those margins that, until now, have been occluded or obfuscated by the contradictory experience of Spanish modernity” (46).

Graciela in *Aguaviva* is another example of this ambivalence as women attempt to retain their ethnic and cultural identities, yet adapt to their new surroundings. She

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\(^7\) Patricia’s story may have been quite different had she not migrated to Santa Eulalia and remained in Madrid.
hangs the Argentinean flag outside of her restaurant in a demonstration of identification with her country of origin. She is unnerved by the xenophobic attitudes of the locals and ultimately takes down the flag; she is shocked to find that business improves and concludes that the lack of clients was due to the Argentinean flag. She is determined to hang it again and she does; business improves and in the final segments of the documentary the viewer sees the flag flying once again. In his analysis of third millennium documentary films, Jean-Claude Seguin notes: “lo que sorprende de este nuevo documental es la capacidad no sólo de decir la realidad múltiple, sino de convertirse en discurso de protesta, de lucha, de contestación frente al sistema” (56).

Graciela’s gesture and final say in the film, when she hangs her country’s flag in front of her restaurant, demonstrates her quiet resistance to her socio-political and personal situation in Aguaviva.

The protagonist in Jo també sóc catalana presents a fervid desire to integrate into her new environment in Vic. Her constant struggles to be accepted as one of “them” push her to question her own identity at a very young age. The narrator recalls that one of her teachers encouraged her to participate in a writing contest, and she won; the headlines read: “Jove marroquina guanya un premi en català” (43). Although she is thrilled by the prize, she is bothered that she is identified as a Moroccan and not simply as a “writer,” as previous winners had been. The narrator offers several examples of such episodes that lead to an internal conflict resulting in the affirmation of her ethnic roots. She states: “Quan algú et diu que t’integris, el que en realitat t’està demanant és que et desintegris, que esborris qualsevol rastre de temps anteriors, de vestigis culturals o religiosos, que ho oblidis tot i només recordis els seus records, el seu
passat” (90). Unwilling to make this compromise years later, she instills the importance of both cultures and languages in her son, Rida. The narrator addresses him in the section “Les llengües maternes,” insisting on the importance of retaining their native language, “amazic”: “No donar-te l’oportunitat d’aprendre la llengua dels teus avantpassats hauria sigut un crim contra la teva formació i contra els llaços cada vegada més febles que t’uneixen amb el Marroc” (21). The ultimate demonstration of resistance is the publication of this autobiographical novel in Catalan, by which she gains access to the channels of representation and affirms her hybrid identity.

The “Cocina Intercultural” in the documentary *Extranjeras* provides another example of immigrant women affirming their cultural differences. This group of women gathers in Alcobendas to share cooking recipes from their native countries; immigrants from Colombia, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and several others participate. The Colombian Angel a Botero introduces the organization and discusses the type of cooking shared: “cocina ecuatoriana, colombiana, Perú, mahoritania, Argelia [sic]…” A Venezuelan woman then teaches the others about a traditional meal in her country and presents her dish to the viewers. In doing so, she mentions: “adaptación difícil … estoy aquí sola” (*Extranjeras*). The organizer Ángela discusses the need for this type of intercultural space:

> Que estar en la cocina nos junta, es un ritual. Más que llenarnos es alimentarnos de los saberes y de la compañía de mujeres que vienen de otros países, y que la mejor manera para comenzar a confiar y a creer en las otras es haciendo cosas juntas y hacer un plato de cocina entre todas. (*Extranjeras*)

These women find a space to affirm their identities, form an intercultural group and express their differences. Such spaces and the inherent human need for a sense of community will be explored more in depth in the following chapter.
Bill Nichols, in an article written in 1983, discusses the “reinstitution of direct address through the interview”: “The emergence of so many recent documentaries built around strings of interviews strikes me as a strategic response to the recognition that neither can events speak for themselves nor can a single voice speak with ultimate authority” (23). Thirty years later his findings are still applicable to recent documentary films by women directors in Spain about immigrants. *Extranjeras*, a series of interviews without a commentator, elicits a response from its viewers by presenting the personal testimony of a diverse group of women about the satisfactions and challenges they face as immigrants in contemporary Spain.

All of the women depicted in the works discussed in this chapter vacillate between attempting to retain their cultural identity of origin and accommodating to their new surroundings. Bhabha asserts:

> What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovate sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (1-2)

The women highlighted here speak, each in her own way, from these “in-between spaces” to affirm her ethnic origin and cultural traditions and to express the desire to adapt to her new surroundings. In Clara Obligado’s collection of short stories *Las otras vidas*, the principal character in “El grito y el silencio”—an Argentinian doctoral student in Madrid in the 1980’s—discusses her identity in a conversation with her new Spanish friend Nora. She affirms that she feels: “—Argeñola —catapulté, definiendo por fin mi identidad. No hay casa cuando se deja un país, se vive a la intemperie, el corte no cicatriza” (33).
Identity in the globalized, interconnected world is no longer tied to a homogeneous nation-state; rather new interpretations of identity emerge in post-colonial studies that obviate the boundaries of nations and transcend binary oppositions. Global migrations permit new subjectivities to emerge at the same time as racism and xenophobia persist. Women immigrants in more recent narratives of my corpus transcend some of the stereotyping associated with Othering, permitting a different sense of identity and community to emerge. They voice literally or metaphorically their resistance to the xenophobic attitudes that continue to marginalize them in Spanish society.

The emergence of multicultural societies in a globalized context diffuses such binary oppositions as Orient/Occident or Other/Self. Stuart Hall observes:

New subjects, new genders, new ethnicities, new regions, and new communities—all hitherto excluded from the major forms of cultural representation, unable to locate themselves except as decentered or subaltern—have emerged and have acquired through struggles, sometimes in very marginalized ways, the means to speak for themselves for the first time. And the discourse of power in our society, the discourses of the dominant regimes, have been certainly threatened by this decentered cultural empowerment of the marginal and the local. (183)

We have in fact observed a hybrid cultural identity being shaped with this latest wave of women immigrants in the newer narratives of our corpus, one that affirms the women’s ties to place of origin, while at the same time asserting a desire to acclimate to their adopted country. They are neither fully here nor there, they are “in-between.” The protagonist in El Hachmi’s novel claims: “Ja se sap que estar en dos llocs és no estar enlloc, és estar suspès en el no-res” (193).

The contemporary women immigrants in my corpus, many of whom lack the socioeconomic privilege of the native population, speak from the margins in the “Third Space” that Bhabha describes in his discussion on postcolonial subjects. It is a place of
resistance, even if the women’s thoughts and actions often betray ambivalence (in terms of language, relationships, and their own differences) and even if their spot lies outside the dominant culture. In a sense, they broaden the marginal space of enunciation for future voices.

In this chapter we have seen three examples of women immigrants who produced their own narratives within their adopted country. Two published their works in publishing houses based in Spain (El Hachmi and Obligado) and Ana Torres’ video documentary has been made available on a global platform, YouTube. Each author has inserted herself at least partially in her narrative. This self-representation and intimate portrayal of their personal lives and experiences allows others to see more clearly the changing cultural identities of such communities and the reasons for their ambivalence. They are in search of a new identity, one that lies both outside and inside the dominant culture, a hybrid identity; they are the same, yet different. Readers or spectators gain a deeper understanding of the life-experiences of migrants permitting them to understand how their differences perpetuate a non-integrated existence.

In his analysis of migrant populations, Chambers affirms: “The migrant’s sense of being rootless, of living between worlds, between a lost past and a non-integrated present is perhaps the most fitting metaphor of this (post) modern condition” (27). The woman immigrant faces a significant challenge in finding her place in European society. Spivak places her in a doubly marginalized group: “Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced ... If, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern female is even more deeply in shadow” (41).
Although the more recent narratives show the persistence of stereotyping and xenophobic attitudes, they demonstrate a significant change from earlier texts in presenting a diverse range of voices and a heterogeneous mix of women immigrants. The women in these newer texts negotiate to retain their ethnic ties while adapting to their new milieu. They are also shown not as solitary and peripheral but as a diverse community of women. The following chapter explores the transition between earlier and more recent narratives, and considers the types of community formed in the texts as a more diverse group of immigrant women are portrayed in a multicultural environment in their adopted country.
CHAPTER 5
SPACES OCCUPIED, LITERAL AND METAPHORIC, BY IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Figure 5-1. La plaza roja II (picture provided by the Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc)

Arpillera

Two Spanish women created this arpillera: Francisca Carmona Cabezas and María Ruiz Rubio. According to the accompanying text, their intent was to present an image of their neighborhood, the Plaza Roja. This pessimistic vision of the main plaza in their barrio represents the reality that surrounds them: “con los bancos de hierro rotos, la papelera sin soportes que le sujeten, el árbol sin flores, el parterre muy agrietado…”
The dark green coloring, the seemingly uncomfortable brown benches, and the leafless tree are uninviting to the viewer. The written text implies that this plaza is at the center of a multicultural community—“Los que estamos viviendo en el barrio, seamos de la etnia que seamos tampoco lo cuidamos bien…” (32)—yet the park is empty. The narrative voice explains that she has lived in the neighborhood for forty-four years, and that in years past, the plaza was a meeting place where children and families gathered for conversation and social activities.

This arpillera is a call for action; the spaces available for “community” as shown in this multicultural neighborhood are unwelcoming. The glimmer of hope lies in the bright yellow image of the sun shining over the park. This representation is a step towards awareness of current community spaces available such as the Plaza Roja (and its current condition), and demonstrates that this group of women, “Dones i Barri en Xarxa,” desire change and are eager to work towards their goal. Earlier narratives in my corpus reflect the absence of community as demonstrated here; the plaza is empty. Yet the different groups of women in more recent narratives are often seen congregating in visible and public spaces such as the Plaza Roja. Such increased visibility of immigrant women and the spaces they occupy raises awareness of the types of community they form in their new surroundings.

Zygmunt Bauman problematizes the issue of overpopulation in today’s globalized world and its effects on the “outcasts” that inhabit it. In his book, Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts, the epigraph to the chapter titled, “Are there too many of them?” reads: “There are always too many of them. ‘Them’ are the fellows of whom there should be fewer—or better still none at all. And there are never enough of us. ‘Us’
are the folks of whom there should be more” (34). He reinforces the idea that the persistent “images of ‘economic migrants’ and of ‘asylum seekers’ both stand for ‘wasted humans’…” (58); they evoke resentment and work to uphold the division “between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ in a globalizing world that pays it little respect and routinely violates it” (58). This chapter explores the spaces occupied by migrant ‘outcasts’ and the sub-communities they form as they negotiate between inside and outside positions in contemporary Spanish society.

With the sharp increase in immigration to Spain in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, not only has cultural production begun to explore the identity (and often ambivalent nature) of the woman immigrant as Other, but also the spaces occupied by these women in their adopted country. This chapter first presents the physical spaces occupied by women immigrants within the narratives and subsequently discusses the metaphorical spaces they inhabit, drawing from concepts developed by Dolores Juliano and Josefina Ludmer. In discussing physical spaces, I will refer to the home, and personal and professional spaces. I also present metaphorical spaces designated as “islas urbanas” by Ludmer to demonstrate a new sense of “sub”-community among the immigrants. This chapter presents the change in the spaces occupied by these protagonists between earlier and more recent works.

In an article that explores the conceptualization of space, Doreen Massey affirms: “precisely because it is the sphere of the potential juxtaposition of different narratives, of the potential forging of new relations, spatiality is also a source of the production of new trajectories, new stories. It is a source of the production of new spaces, new identities, new relations and differences” (38). The narratives selected show a change in
“spatiality” as women immigrants acquire new agency and new relations in their shift from peripheral to central spaces, both literal and metaphorical, between earlier and more recent texts. Massey asserts that “multiplicity” is necessary for there to be ‘space’, and this, in turn, allows for the existence of more than one voice in that space (28). This multiplicity is primarily evident in the more recent narratives in my corpus and serves to present a certain resistance to the socio-cultural norm.

**Physical Spaces Occupied: from the Periphery to the Center**

The characters in this corpus occupy spaces that range—and in some cases progress—from peripheral to more central positions. One of the latter is the “contemporary metropolis” where, as Iain Chambers affirms: “Here, at least, the living evidence of repressed histories and dead empires is not so easily consigned to oblivion: the ‘natives’ have come home to haunt their ‘origins’” (109). The marginal positioning is seen particularly in the earlier works: *Fátima de los naufragios, Háblame musa, de aquel varón,* “Al’Yaza’ir,” and *Flores de otro mundo.* The more recent narratives, in contrast, place the characters in urban areas (although some continue in marginal positions): *Aguaviva, Si nos dejan, Retorno a Hansala,* and *Cosmofobia, Extranjeras, Salsa, Jo també sóc catalana,* and *Un novio para Yasmina.*

In “Fátima de los naufragios,” as we have seen, Fátima dwells at the water’s edge, never leaving her spot on the outskirts of the small fishing village. She eventually becomes part of the landscape: “aquella estatua hecha de arena y sufrimiento que de algún modo perturbaba el paisaje y ponía una nota oscura en el horizonte” (10). She is

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1 In their ‘Introduction: Women on the Move in Southern Europe,’ Floya Anthias and Gabriella Lazaridis discuss “the notion of ‘periphractic’ space (from the Greek ‘fencing in’), to denote the spatial dimensions of marginalization and social exclusion…” (7-8).
in a fixed position, literally and metaphorically, and becomes one with her surroundings. At the end she is enveloped by the sea; her permanent marginal presence is never compromised.

Another example of a woman immigrant who remains fixed on the perimeter of society is the eponymous protagonist of “La piel de Marcelinda”; a young Jamaican prostitute who works in the Casa de Campo, a park located on the outskirts of Madrid, where “viene mucho recatado” (30). The narrator refers to these reserved working-class men who are cautious about their affairs at the Casa de Campo, and prefer to maintain as much anonymity as possible with the “chulos” always lurking behind the scenes. Marcelinda’s character is never depicted outside of this environment; there she lives and dies (by suicide just as Fátima does) there. Aisha in Dulce Chacón’s novel also resides on the perimeter of her living and working space; she and her husband are caretakers at a secluded ranch in southern Spain, “Pedro y Aisha se encontraban en la casita de los guardeses, una pequeña vivienda aislada del edificio central” (70). They are not only marginalized in their living and working space, but also in the community; they frequently go into town to attend “las reuniones periódicas en casas abandonadas” (92) to interact with other immigrants searching for missing friends and family members.

At the beach party after the film premiere, Aisha chooses to stay at a distance as she is worried about ruining her dress: “se quedó en un banco del paseo marítimo, junto a Farida” (159). This distance from the others invites the five men “on the hunt” to target and kill them. Andrea, the movie star and organizer of the party, regrets not insisting they join the group on the beach: “Se reprocharía haber permitido que no se integraran, haber consentido que asistieran sin asistir” (160). After their death, the
narrator reveals the significance of their names: “—Aisha es ‘La que vive’, y murió su novio en el naufragios, y ella no” (174). Ironically, she is one that dies at the hands of locals in the end. The narrator also reveals that “Algorba” from the name of the fictional town they reside in, Punto Algorba, means “Expatriación” or “Abandonar la patria,” and then recalls what Estela (a guest at the ranch who treated “the help” condescendingly had said: “—Un alegoría muy cruel…que dejen su país y lleguen a Punto Algorba, y sea para morir” (174).

Nieves Garcia Benito’s “Al-Yaza‘ir” portrays a seventeen-year old Moroccan who is summoned by her father to join him and her brothers in Murcia. This first person narrative depicts the isolation and despair of an immigrant woman who is marginalized first by her own family and customs (she is blamed for her the death of her mother who suffered complications after her birth and ultimately died), and subsequently by the autochthonous population and her family in her adopted country. She makes the treacherous crossing on a patera alone, and finds no one waiting for her on the “other” side. Immediately after her arrival, and fleeing from the police, she runs into a local and his donkey in the mountains: “un hombre desgastado como sus botas” (166). Isla, as they call her, stays with and submits to this man: “En una cama, no tuve tiempo al miedo: un cansancio más viejo que el de mi abuela se apoderó de mis sueños. No pude volver a Kenifra” (166).

Her father finds her (pregnant), negotiates her release from her “dueño,” and physically abuses her “sin piedad” (167). She narrates her story from the confines of her current “home” in Spain: “Mi padre me encerró aquí, donde ahora estoy, en una habitación de su casa, sin luz y sin ventanas, esperando que él nazca vivo o muerto y
oliendo a humedad sin una lágrima. Sólo Karim, el niño-vecino, da tres golpes en la pared por las tardes. Yo le contesto" (167). She lives on a “plantación” and is kept locked up while the men are working. She tells her story of physical and emotional isolation, certain that death awaits her as soon as the baby is born. She finds consolation in talking to the walls that surround her, walls that literally and metaphorically keep her in a tightly-sealed and contained space, far from any true interaction or integration into society.

In the film, Flores de otro mundo, Patricia moves from Madrid to rural Santa Eulalia, in hopes of meeting a local man to marry and thus secure her residency in Spain. Because Santa Eulalia is sponsoring a match-making weekend, and Patricia is searching for route to legal residence in Spain which marriage with a Spaniard would provide, she boards the bus for this rural location. Shortly after her arrival, she marries Damián and stays in town to begin a family with him; this secluded and abandoned environment strips her of her occupation as a beautician and of her ties to friends and family (her cultural identity). Her occupation as a housewife keeps her in a marginal role at home. Patricia’s servant-like role at home has her running errands, taking care of the animals, and cleaning house. In one scene, her Aunt and friends come from Madrid to visit and as they come through the main entrance of the home where the animals are kept, they joke that she not only cares for but lives with the animals. Patricia’s role, like the others we have seen, highlights the invisibility of immigrant women. In their study of female migrations in Spain, Carlota Solé and Sònia Parella note: “Social marginalization of migrant women involves their invisibility, both in the work sphere (given the kind of job carried out and the conditions accepted) and in the
socio-economic sphere (they are not considered as social actors or agents who decide and/or participate in public life)” (73).

In the more recent narratives of the corpus, women continue to inhabit the margins, but some have moved into new spaces as well. Graciela in *Aguaviva* is an example of the persistent peripheral positioning of the woman immigrant: she and her husband live in town, but the restaurant they are given to run is an isolated locale on the outskirts of town. The first image of their new space is an old, rusted sign, and the establishment sits behind a padlocked gate; images of abandonment, entrapment and seclusion underline the marginalization she encounters in the town. As they prepare for the opening of the restaurant, we hear Graciela speaking with her husband while the camera scans the layout of the kitchen of “El Quesito.” In the final scene of this segment, the camera focuses on a window through which we view the town at a distance. Graciela is physically removed from the town center in an abandoned restaurant that she now runs.

Although restaurant ownership is a new role designated to some of the women immigrants in newer narratives, Graciela and her husband gain employment at the establishment on specific terms. In 2000, the mayor of Aguaviva undertook to repopulate Aguaviva with immigrants from South America and Romania. The initiative is outlined in “Se busca inmigrante para repoblar,” published in *El País* in 2006:

La noticia surgió en 2000 a 21 kilómetros de Foz-Calanda, en Aguaviva. Este pueblo fue pionero en la repoblación con inmigrantes. Su alcalde, Luis Bricio, del PP, hizo un llamamiento a familias que ayudasen a paliar el éxodo que les había llevado en 70 años a perder las dos terceras partes de su población. “Nos dimos cuenta de que en 20 años el pueblo estaría desierto. Se iban entre 20 y 30 habitantes al año y teníamos 600”. Así que voló a Argentina y se trajo a 10 familias, de las que quedan tres en Aguaviva. (elpais.com)
In exchange for their papers and a job opportunity, the immigrants were required to stay and work in Aguaviva for five years. Although this sounds like an ideal situation for these new neighbors, an article in an Argentinean newspaper, *La Nación* (2001), presents the struggles that the Argentinean immigrants suffered upon arrival; the pay for their work was minimal and their spending was monitored by the mayor. One of the immigrants proclaimed in an interview, "Me siento vigilado. Y eso es lo peor. El alcalde controla hasta lo que compramos en el mercado" (*lanacion.com*).

Graciela and Angela (another Argentinean-Chilean woman who appears in this documentary) are assigned different jobs in Aguaviva, but these do not assure their economic security; Graciela struggles to attract clients to her restaurant, and Angela is seen discussing the challenge of paying bills with her seasonal jobs (as a pool attendant and hired-hand on a rabbit farm). Pujol’s documentary presents the isolation of these families who maintain a peripheral position as the camera follows them around in their daily lives. Because of the cyclic nature of the film, which begins and ends in the winter season, the spectator might conclude that the marginalization of women immigrants will persist in their uncertain future in Aguaviva. However, the final segment of the film offers some hope; an elderly man who is watching the immigrant children play in a park affectionately reaches out to pat the head of one of the children, suggesting the possibility of future acceptance and acknowledgement by the locals of new multicultural neighbors in this small rural town.

Ana Torres’ interview documentary *Si nos dejan* also portrays the socio-economic marginalization of women immigrants, focusing on Barcelona.\(^2\) Juanita, an Ecuadorian

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\(^2\) Jose Monterde includes Ana Torres’ documentary in his extensive review of migration film: “Y finalmente hay que reseñar el cortometraje *Si nos dejan* (2004), donde la argentina Ana Torres, ella misma
who migrated to Spain alone, sells drinks on the beach out of a portable cooler; she works to send money to her family in Ecuador. She confirms that she is an illegal immigrant and states: “Muy difícil, no sé por qué. No es como te encuentras en tu tierra” (Si nos dejan). She comments that her roots are in Ecuador and that she was raised, married, had children, and was divorced in her home country. Despite her commentary, she is portrayed walking up and down the beach—literally the margins of the country—smiling and singing to some of her clients. In a haunting and beautiful voice, she sings “Si nos dejan,” which includes the following lyrics: “Nos vamos a vivir a un mundo nuevo. Yo creo podemos ver, el nuevo amanecer, de un nuevo día” (Si nos dejan). This love song (originally a Mexican mariachi song) is full of hope and the lyrics anticipate a brighter future for its protagonists, yet the “new world” that Juanita has found has not fulfilled the dreams associated with it. Shohat and Stam emphasize the importance of music in the spectator’s identification with specific characters or groups in a film:

Music, both diegetic and non-diegetic, is crucial for spectatorial identification. Lubricating the spectatorial psyche and oiling the wheels of narrative continuity, music ‘conducts’ our emotional responses, regulates our sympathies, extracts our tears, excites our glands, relaxes our pulses, and triggers our fears, in conjunction with the image and in the service of the larger purposes of the film. (209)

The song’s importance is underlined when Juanita sings it and by the fact that it serves as title of the film. Spectators identify with this immigrant woman, singing about hope and the future, yet visibly struggling to make ends meet. Juanita’s peripheral positioning as an illegal “street” salesperson is indicative of her marginal socio-
Ana Torres inserts herself into the documentary; we hear her voice on occasion, see her reflection, or see the shadow of her bike as she rides through the streets of Barcelona (using a point of view camera shot) looking for work and making her film. At the beginning she states: “Miedo. Tal vez de perder algo aunque no tuviese nada. Todos los que fuimos de nuestro lugar tal vez tengamos eso. Algo, un objetivo incierto, una esperanza. Y aunque no hemos logrado eso, no queremos perder. Perder la decisión, la difícil decisión, ya tomada” (*Si nos dejan*). These initial words foreshadow the disappointment and in some cases, despair, that the immigrants face in Barcelona.

In one of the final scenes, several immigrants are dancing at a hair salon as the song “Barcelona es la capital del mediterráneo,” by Arturo y la Máquina del Sabor, plays in the background. The immigrants interviewed there express dismay at the xenophobic attitudes they face and the difficulties of adaptation. At the end of the film we see a side shot of the director seated at her computer working on the documentary. Written text is displayed on screen that informs us what the interviewees are currently doing: “Juanita sigue en la playa de San Sebastián vendiendo latas y cantando para sus amigos” (*Si nos dejan*). Torres still doesn’t have her work papers, but instead of cleaning houses as she was doing in one of the earlier segments (shown from a point of view shot), she is working on this documentary. She is also marginalized in her new surroundings, and even in her own film. She chooses to include herself, but using a technique that does not allow us to see a close-up shot of her as we do the other immigrants; she places and maintains herself at the periphery. This deliberate placement demonstrates Torres’
identification with a marginal status as she is an immigrant herself facing daily challenges in her new surroundings.

Leila, in *Retorno a Hansala*, is a Moroccan immigrant living in Los Barrios, Spain; she also struggles to adapt to her new home. She shares a run-down apartment with several other families; there are images of garbage outside and inside, as well. There are mattresses lined up against the walls and duffle bags packed with belongings stacked on top of each other. After having lived in Spain for five years, she has legal status and works in a fish-packaging factory; she sends money to her family in Hansala regularly. She feels guilty about the death of her brother, Rachid, in the crossing from Africa as she had sent him the money for the trip. A special friendship forms between Leila and the owner of the morgue, Martín, a Spanish man whose recent separation from his adulterous wife allows him to focus his time on one of his professional goals: to return drowned immigrants’ bodies to their families. Leila depends on Martín to help transport her brother’s body back home, and much of the plot develops in Hansala. In the final segment, we see Leila and Martín sitting on a bench overlooking the ocean with Africa visible in the distance. Leila, who is marginalized by virtue of her living conditions and her work, turns to a Spaniard for help.

Although some of the newer films show women immigrants in marginal personal and professional spaces, several of the more recent narratives also portray them in new spaces and roles. The women of *Cosmofobia, Extranjeras*, and *Salsa* all occupy metropolitan loci; they reside in Madrid. In speaking about urban spaces, Chambers affirms that there is a “shifting, mixing, contaminating, experimenting, revisiting and recomposing that the wider horizons and the inter- and trans-cultural networks of the
city both permit and encourage” (94). Susana (Cosmofobia) works at a corporate clothing store, and the diverse group of women presented in Extranjeras occupy jobs ranging from illegal street vendors to business owners. Viviana is a writer in Salsa, and Najat is a university professor in Jo també sóc catalana.

The “mainstreaming” of Susana as an employee of a major corporation raises several issues. Her interviewer for the job displays discriminatory behavior (although she is hired regardless), the job is only part-time and pays too little to support her. Susana is one of many immigrants depicted in the novel; all live in Lavapiés, the oldest and most centrally located “barrio” in Madrid. Valero-Costa finds that in Cosmofobia: “Los españoles quieren recuperar el barrio de Lavapies pero se quedan en la periferia” (37), corroborating that at least part of the immigrant population in Madrid lives inside the traditional city center in this novel. Miriam, a Spaniard who lives in the barrio, takes her children to a park outside of Lavapiés, in a more affluent neighborhood: “Allí los niños todos son blancos…” (93). The invisible walls that divide the Spaniards from the “rest” within Lavapies is clearly outlined in the text:

Es curioso que a dos mundos tan diferentes los separe sólo una calle ancha. A un lado, el Barrio de las Letras, los lofts de diseño, los bares para turistas, los teatros, los hoteles y las cafeterías; al otro, los inmigrantes, los niños derivados de los Servicios Sociales, los borrachos con sus litronas, los latin kings, las maras, las navajas, los traficantes de hachís. (94)

The immigrants are grouped together with delinquents and drug users. The multicultural groups co-exist in the heart of the city, forced to confront their fear of the “other” (in the workplace, on the streets, and in the Centro Social).

There is also new subject positioning in the documentary Extranjeras; the women are owners of restaurants, hair salons and “locutorios,” and are teachers. (Alongside these occupations there are more traditional ones for immigrant women: domestic-
service related jobs or selling on the streets as they struggle to meet their basic needs.)
The women in *Extranjeras* (both mainstream and marginal) frequent El Retiro Park for
cultural gatherings, they meet at the Atocha train station to mingle, they attend the
University, they form part of musical groups such as “Africa Lisanga,” and they perform
in clubs. It is noteworthy that these characters occupy spaces in central Madrid. They
are seen frequenting very visible public places; a subversive strategy in these novels
that challenges the homogenizing norm of the dominant culture.  

*Extranjeras* offers new representations of women immigrants living, working and
participating in social activities within an ethnically diverse cosmopolitan society. The
interviews in the film present women such as an exiled Peruvian women’s rights activist
who recently opened up her own restaurant, “La flor de la canela,” and her daughter,
who is a University law student. We are also introduced to the tri-lingual Sudanese hair
salon business owner, an Ecuadorian woman who bought the “locutorio” where her
dughter works, a Chinese woman dedicated to teaching her language to future
generations, a young Polish lawyer seeking employment, and a group of African
dancers and musicians called “Africa Lisanga” that performs at local venues.

In an interview with Professor María Camí-Vela, the director of this documentary,
Helena Taberna, revealed that she intentionally chose to exclude the types of
immigrants who are over-represented in the media:

Las mujeres inmigrantes que yo muestro jamás tienen un titular en un periódico. Ese fue mi reto: tomar las vidas más pequeñas, las
aparentemente menos interesantes puesto que no son noticia nunca y huir

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3 Cristina Martinez-Carazo offers an excellent analysis of the spaces occupied by women immigrants in *Extranjeras*. She states that there is a “resignificación” of these public spaces and that: “los espacios emblemáticos como La Cibeles, Atocha y el Retiro se vacían de su valor tradicional como iconos nacionales y en cierto sentido universales en la medida en que funcionan como símbolos de España reconocibles desde el exterior y se reformulan a partir de la presencia del otro” (269).
de los elementos más dramáticos como son las pateras y la prostitución. Además, quería demostrar que existe una inmigración, que es la mayoritaria, que está perfectamente integrada socialmente… (Guía didáctica: Extranjeras, 52)

Taberna’s criteria for selecting her subjects parallel those of the other authors and directors of the more recent narratives; very few portray women prostitutes or the vicissitudes of crossing to Spain on a patera. Their works challenge the predominant images in the media and offer an intimate view of the daily life, struggles, and concerns of women immigrants, thus offering the public an alternate vision of this population. The women portrayed or interviewed are more like Bauman’s “us” and less like “them,” a strategy that attempts to obviate the persistent binary oppositions that grip societies beset by globalization.

The protagonists of Salsa and Jo també sòc catalana also present alternative images of the contemporary woman immigrant living in Spain: one is a writer and the other is a university professor. In Un novio para Yasmina, the protagonist also exemplifies this tendency to portray women immigrants in more central roles. As an independent Moroccan woman, she clearly states her goal of acquiring a doctorate at a university in Spain. Although her living arrangements are unstable (she goes from her brother’s house to her workmate’s home), her clear professional goals and work status set her apart from earlier representations.

Yasmina acquires a position teaching Spanish to other Moroccan women and children, and towards the end of the film, she is shown driving a car to a school to provide translation services. This image of independent mobility is a first in the corpus; other characters have been depicted using primarily public means of transportation such as the bus, train, metro, or simply walking or bicycling. Geographers Mona
Domash and Joni Seager discuss the mobility of women, commenting on the effect of freeing them from traditional “fixedness” or “homeboundedness”: “Changes in the mobility balance of power can disrupt communities and liberate women almost as quickly as any other social transformation. The patriarchal grip slips when women get cars of their own, or bicycles, or wings…” (121).

Towards the end of the film, Yasmina acquires the position of “mediadora intercultural” at the Association. She radiates confidence and independence as she strives to reach her personal and professional goals. She is even criticized by other Moroccan women for her “Spanishness.” One of the immigrant women who is the mother of a boy who gets into trouble at school yells at Yasmina: “¡A ti te da igual! Tú tienes buen trabajo, buen sueldo. Con esa pinta te crees española, te has olvidado de dónde vienes” (Un novio para Yasmina). Both Spaniards and Moroccans question her success and motives throughout the film. Her attempt to “de-marginalize” herself receives criticism from both ends. Discriminatory attitudes persist as seen in the same scene when the local teacher discusses the immigrant student in trouble: “Contamina a los demás.”

All of these examples demonstrate that in more recent portrayals, the woman immigrant is no longer limited to roles in prostitution, selling on the streets or service jobs. Business owners and economically independent women emerge; new subjectivities come to the fore within the discourse on immigration. In earlier narratives, women are physically marginalized in rural and obscure spaces and are prostitutes, occupy domestic jobs, or are homebound. In recent narratives urban spaces predominate and women hold a diverse range of jobs, or are business owners.
Metaphoric Spaces: New Sub-Communities are Formed

The newer narratives portray a multicultural group of women immigrants pursuing a different sense of community. This was impossible for characters in earlier works, who lived in isolating circumstances. I will denote these new groupings as sub-communities as they are formed outside the dominant culture, and are shown to be multi- or inter-cultural. These groups coalesce and function in the city, yet very seldom mix with the autochthonous population and therefore remain outside the hegemonic culture. In her book, Las que saben: subculturas de mujeres, Dolores Juliano examines the concept of a “subcultura femenina”:

los sectores desvalorizados, incluidos por la cultura dominante en categorías particulares y homogeneizadoras (las mujeres, los indios, los negros que “son” de tal o cual manera), generan sus propias interpretaciones del mundo, a la vez que continúan y cuestionan las propuestas dominantes, pues por el hecho de generarse como mensajes o como conductas alternativas subvierten la presunta universalidad de las categorías conceptuales a partir de las cuales se las define … En realidad, lo que caracteriza una subcultura es su fragmentación y carencia de objetivos explícitos. (18)

As we shall see, the differences portrayed in these narratives contribute to the discourse of multiculturalism and cultural “mestizaje” by incorporating the formation of new multicultural sub-communities. Each demonstrates resistance to the dominant culture by affirming difference in public spaces.

These collectives permit the expression of native religious and socio-cultural practices in their adopted country and function as what Josefina Ludmer calls an “isla urbana”: “Están afuera y adentro al mismo tiempo: afuera de la sociedad, en la isla, y a la vez adentro de la ciudad, que es lo social, donde se demarcan nítidamente los niveles y ocurre la historia y también ‘la subversión’ … Esa es su posición exterior-
interior de la ciudad (la sociedad, la nación, la ley, la historia o la razón)” (131). We will look at the communities formed in Extranjeras, Cosmofobia, and Salsa.

Extranjeras portrays one of the most diverse group of women in a single narrative. The majority of the women interact (or speak of doing so) solely with other members of their ethnic group, or with other minority communities, such as the “Cocina Intercultural” that brings together women from Venezuela, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, etc. in Alcobendas to share recipes and stories with each other and build trust and awareness of their differences and similarities. The camera also follows a couple of young immigrant women from Ecuador (Paulina and Andrea) as they attend their weekly Sunday gathering with other Ecuadorians in the Retiro Park. This single cultural group socializes together: they cook a feast of typical Ecuadorian food and play games, and they work together, cutting hair, selling drinks to tourists, and performing as musicians for onlookers. They work illegally to make ends meet in a defined space clearly set apart to express their cultural traditions and affirm their ethnicity. Paulina and Andrea sit at the park and discuss these gatherings as a “réplica” of what they might find in Ecuador and one comments: “Me siento muy identificada” (Extranjeras). They see the purpose of these weekly meetings to be: “sentirse más vinculados y organizados más que nada” (Extranjeras). Chambers discusses the disruptive quality of the metropolitan migrant’s visibility:

For the modern metropolitan figure is the migrant: she and he are the active formulators of metropolitan aesthetics and life styles, reinventing the languages and appropriating the streets of the master. This presence disturbs a previous order. Such an interruption enlarges the potential as the urban script is rewritten and an earlier social order and cultural authority is now turned inside out and dispersed. (23)
*Extranjeras* also presents a group of Polish and Ukrainian women. Through their experiences and stories, the spectator views another inter-cultural community in Madrid. Joanna is a Polish lawyer who came to Madrid to join her boyfriend; the camera follows her to the neighborhood of Aluche where she meets with other Polish women (and men) to look for work and make connections. There is a weekly open air market; a space for them to converse with each other and make connections, send and receive packages, and buy magazines or newspapers from “home” each Sunday. The women then go to the Atocha train station in the afternoon to read and enjoy each other’s company.

All of these examples in *Extranjeras* demonstrate a lack of interaction with the autochthonous population. Taberna comments on this in her *Guía didáctica*; she discusses the separation of the immigrant population from the dominant culture:

> Hasta ahora están aportando su mano de obra y existe una separación de la sociedad española y la del emigrante. No se mezclan. Existen guetos incluso de las propias comunidades. Los chinos no se mezclan con los de Bangladesh y los ecuatorianos no se mezclan con los argentinos o peruanos. O sea, tampoco hay interacción entre ellos. No es un fenómeno social exclusivo de España. En todos los países receptores de flujos migratorios se producen estos guetos que, si por un lado frenan el proceso de integración, por otro les permiten mantener la lengua y les proporcionan un refugio en cuanto a los elementos afectivos… (51)

*Extranjeras*, like many recent narratives in my corpus, illustrates the existence of sub-communities that form and function outside/inside Spanish society.⁴

There are a few narratives that portray immigrants developing a sense of community with Spaniards. When this occurs, however, it is because the locals are

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⁴ Martínez-Carazo states: “La sustitución de una imagen dislocada del inmigrante, perfilada a partir de su victimización o de su criminalidad, por una visión de su acoplamiento y de su relativa integración laboral (a pesar de vivir una cultura del gueto) abre paso a una percepción mas abierta e inclusiva de la otredad” (273). In my view, the presentation of an alternative image of the woman immigrant in *Extranjeras* reinforces their lack of cultural integration; the women presented form sub-communities outside the dominant culture.
“escaping” to these sub-communities or are marginalized for emotional or physical reasons. The inter-cultural gathering at the “Centro de Autoayuda” in Cosmofobia is an example of a Spanish and immigrant sub-community. The various characters in the novel present different perspectives on life and relationships in Madrid. Much of the action centers around friendships and connections that are formed at the “Caserón Grande” whose services include: support for women and older adults, Spanish language classes for immigrants, transcultural mental health, immigration and law services, workshops, daycare, etc:

Mi hija suele ser la única niña rubia. Los demás niños casi siempre son morenos. Los hay chinos, pakistaniés [sic], marroquíes, de Bangla Desh [sic], ecuatorianos, colombianos, senegaleses, nigerianos … Hay madres marroquíes y egipcias con velo y yilaba, ecuatorianas con vaqueros ceñidísimos, senegaleses con túnicas estampadas, y alguna española—las menos—vestida con vaqueros de su talla. (17)

No character is given more importance than another and the novel portrays the development of relationships between them: Spaniards and immigrants, wealthy and poor, artists and working professionals, etc. Etxebarria’s novel illustrates the concept of polycentric multiculturalism by presenting both Spanish and immigrant characters (without developing one more than the other) and by interweaving their life stories and demonstrating connections between them all. One of the women asserts: “Allí se crean relaciones muy profundas, si te haces amiga de alguien del grupo, se convierte en algo muy serio; es como si la conocieras de toda la vida, aunque siempre nos dicen que fuera del Centro no debemos vernos, pero eso ninguna lo cumple” (160).

In the novel, the center/periphery boundaries blur, but the parallel portrayal of the lack of a truly intercultural environment outside the Center reinforces the divisions that persist in Spanish society. This sub-community of women is positioned outside the
dominant culture because of the circumstances of their personal and professional encounters; all confront either emotional or physical abuse or problems that bring them to the Center for help. Their victimization brings them together as they share their stories on the inside, yet they are not encouraged to maintain these relationships with the group on the outside. One of the interviewees comments: “Si es lo que dice la Claudia, que es la novia de Isaac, que este es un barrio multicultural, pero no intercultural…” (176).

Obligado’s Salsa portrays another intercultural sub-community; it gathers at a Salsa club, located in “los bajos de Azca” in Madrid, Los Bongoseros de Bratislava. This locale unites the protagonists in the narrative: Omara, Ulises, Viviana, Jamaica, Marga, Gloria, and Jotabé. Both immigrants and Spaniards frequent the establishment to escape from their lives on the outside. Ludmer discusses a different sense of territory portrayed in the Latin American novel she studies, developing the idea of the “urban island” as a space where binary divisions are blurred. This space: “iguala a sus habitantes porque los une por rasgos preindividuales, biológicos, postsubjetivos; por un fondo ‘natural’ como la sangre, el sexo, la edad, las enfermedades o la muerte” (133). The Salsa Club, this “subsuelo,” invites all classes and races to interact and forget about their lives on the outside within the confines of the club’s walls: “En esos pasadizos que recorren los subsuelos hay una plaza tomada por la población oscura que de día se busca la vida y de noche se junta para bailar” (80).

What unites this group is the “fondo natural” that Ludmer proposes, but in this case it is desire and the sensual Salsa dance that binds them together and eliminates the differences so evident on the outside. In this “tugurio” that those on the outside call
“super under,” pre-biologic tendencies reign: desire and passion. Just as Ludmer finds in the “urban islands” of Latin American novels, in Los Bongoseros de Bratislava:

Los habitantes de la isla … parecen haber perdido la sociedad o algo que la representa en la forma de familia, clase, trabajo, razón y ley, y a veces nación. Se definen en plural y forman una comunidad que no es la familia ni la del trabajo ni tampoco la de la clase social, sino algo diferente que puede incluir todas esas categorías al mismo tiempo, en sincro y en fusión. (131)

This synchronization, much like dance, allows them to experience a harmonious retreat, even if it is for a brief period of time, and break away from the dominant culture that otherizes them in their outside lives. Here their differences are negligible; their lives are temporarily fused into one common denominator, their rhythm and dance, in their harmonious urban island.

All of these communities represent novel spaces being occupied in the more recent narratives; like those loci presented by Ludmer, they have strict boundaries: “y los límites o cesura identifican a la isla como zona exterior/interior: como territorio adentro de la ciudad (y por ende de la sociedad) y a la vez afuera, en la división misma” (131).

This chapter has shown a change in the portrayals of immigrant women: if in the works of the nineties they occupy marginal and peripheral personal and professional spaces, often in rural settings, the more recent works portray the women in more central and urban positions and spaces. The transition from a homogeneous representation of the immigrant Other in earlier texts to heterogeneous portrayals of a diverse group of immigrant women in the newer narratives is evident. Yet even though more central spaces are occupied, the women still remain outside the dominant culture. The sub-communities that they form with each other, with other ethnic groups, and on occasion
with Spaniards, can be viewed as subversive insofar as these associations allow the immigrants to assert their ethnicity and practice their traditional customs in very visible, public spaces. Bhabha maintains:

Political empowerment, and the enlargement of the multiculturalist cause, come from posing questions of solidarity and community from the interstitial perspective. Social differences are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project… (3)

The immigrant women portrayed in these narratives are empowered in these interstitial spaces; although they are persistently marginalized, their agency is portrayed in a variety of personal and professional spaces, and in their sub-communities, which not only increase their visibility, but in some cases, diffuse their differences (as in Salsa). Fiction and film of the new millennium question binary classifications, such that the division between center and periphery begins to blur as Ludmer observes of contemporary Latin American novel: “después de 1990 se ven nítidamente otros territorios y sujetos, otras temporalidades y configuraciones narrativas: otros mundos que no reconocen los moldes bipolares tradicionales. Que absorben, contaminan y desdiferencian lo separado y opuesto y trazan otras fronteras” (127). Bauman corroborates this “contamination” in his study and proposes: “The planet is now full” (69), and since the “wasted humans” can no longer be disposed of out of site, they must be “sealed off in tightly closed containers” (85). These “containers” that limit their integration into Spanish society, these sub-communities that the women immigrants form in their adopted country, are places of agency and resistance within the dominant culture that persistently marginalizes them.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

The objective of this study has been to analyze the portrayal of women immigrants to Spain in various literary, cinematographic, and visual narratives produced solely by women. It has explored the significant changes in that portrayal over several decades. The earlier texts of the corpus, from 1997-2000, underscore the invisibility of immigrant women: they are otherized and depicted in marginalized professional and personal spaces. Chacon’s Aisha, Ortiz’s Fátima and Marcelinda, Salabert’s América, García Benito’s Al-Yaza’ir, and Bollain’s Milady and Patricia are prostitutes or hold domestic or service jobs and live in peripheral spaces, literally and metaphorically. They are outsiders in their adopted country and isolated in what are often deplorable living conditions. These images align with those published contemporaneously in the press, which continue to predominate in the media.

In contrast, the women appearing in the narratives dating from 2001-2011 are adjudicated a certain level of agency and consequently find a place of resistance within the homogenizing cultural norm. El Hachmi’s Najat, Etxebarría’s Amina and Susana, Obligado’s Viviana, Pujol’s Graciela, Cardona’s Yasmina, and Taberna’s diverse group of women forge new hybrid identities, occupy more central spaces in urban settings, own businesses, and begin to form a new sense of community. While the spaces they occupy continue to lie outside the dominant culture, they are a place of resistance and self-expression. Their hybrid identities and the sub-communities or “islas urbanas” they inhabit provide interstitial spaces of power that permit a heterogeneous expression of culture and ethnicity in often visible public arenas.
The authors and directors of the newer narratives choose different narrative styles and structures to communicate their stories. There is an increase in documentary films, autobiographies, and testimonial fiction. Another significant change is the presence of authors, directors, and artisans who are themselves immigrants. These two changes permit deeper exploration and development of the women’s characters. Helena Taberna specifically chooses the documentary form to convey her message about immigration in Madrid:

Por eso a mí me gustaría que mi documental ayudase a abrir puentes, a conocer a estas mujeres, a los inmigrantes. El conocimiento profundo nos acerca. Para poder resolver los conflictos, hay que hablar de ellos, hay que mirarlos desde muchos ángulos, hay que observar, hay que sentir, conocer, saber como piensa el otro. Hay que perder el miedo al otro, al diferente. (*Guía didáctica*, 52)

I have chosen to concentrate specifically on works produced by women and I have identified significant changes in their portrayals of this demographic. In Camí-Vela’s interviews of women directors and López-Cabrales’ of women writers, what is evident is their common resistance to any sort of categorization. Most, including many of the women studied here, reject the idea of being labeled or grouped under such terms as “escritura de mujer” or “femenina” or “feminista” (López-Cabrales, 50-51). Similarly, women directors denounce the concept of “cine de mujer” (Camí-Vela 22). Yet both critics argue that there is a specific feminine point of view behind the narratives that place women in central roles and challenge patriarchal representations (Camí-Vela, 22). I agree with this observation that women occupy central roles and that these works give voice to previously silenced groups, as evidenced in my corpus. The authors’ and directors’ resistance to categorization is understandable given that they themselves are attempting to break free from labels and stereotypes in a patriarchal society.
Each of the women immigrants in my corpus is assigned a central role, whether it be to highlight her otherness and marginalization or show her strength and voice in challenging circumstances. This close-up portrayal of women by women is effective in presenting an alternative to the stereotype of the woman immigrant, often that of the homogeneous Other who is a victim in her adopted country. Women writers offer new visions for their readers, yet also continue to convey the often isolating and oppressive circumstances that this group continues to endure.

Theoretical concepts developed by Said, Bhabha, and Ludmer, among others, have allowed me to explore more deeply the portrayal of the woman immigrant. Their persistent otherness drives the emergence of hybrid identities. The marginalization they endure in the dominant culture leads them to form sub-communities which permit the forging of new attitudes and cultural expressions. These interstitial spaces provide a site of resistance to the hegemonic culture which persistently labels them as outcasts or victims.

In the course of my research, I identified several areas of interest for future research. One would be a comparative analysis of the portrayal of men and women immigrants in contemporary Spanish narratives by women and by men. My findings were limited due partly to the very contemporaneousness of the topic and partly to the necessarily restricted size of my corpus, but those should not be obstacles to future researchers. I would have liked to find more self-representations, but that proved impossible: in time, more will surface. The scarcity of narratives by women immigrants demonstrates their limited access to channels of representation. What will be (re)presented in the next twenty years? Will the portrayal of women immigrants
continue on the path demonstrated here, or will xenophobia exacerbated by Spain’s fiscal crisis, affect integration and cultural production? What types of communities will grow up among immigrants and the autochthonous population? Will second and third-generation immigrants offer new images of women? All of these questions merit attention in a rapidly changing Spanish society.

We can only wonder what will be the effect of the current mass exodus of immigrants from Spain on future narratives. A page titled “Maleta de vuelta” in the online newspaper *El País* lists several short videos and articles published in June 2012 that highlight the return of immigrants to their native countries. Faced by the economic hardship brought about by the crisis, some agreed to accept the “help” offered by the Spanish government to return home. In an article by Natalia Junquera, “Para vivir mal en España, vivo mal en mi país,” she reports on a family being separated by the return of some of its members to Ecuador. The grandfather stays behind: “Ahora ha empezado a despedirlos en el aeropuerto porque el único dinero que tienen es el que les ha dado el Gobierno para marcharse, el del plan de Retorno: 400 euros por persona y un billete sin vuelta” (elpais.com). This dramatic shift in migratory patterns will certainly have an effect on future cultural production about the immigrant community.

Issues of difference and integration continue to dominate the lives of immigrant women and cultural production related to immigrants living in Spain. As the multicultural face of Spanish society continues to morph, so will its portrayal in contemporary narratives. We have seen significant changes in the depiction of women immigrants over the past fourteen years. As newer portrayals of women occupying different roles in Spanish society become available, it is to be hoped that there will be a more inclusive
and heterogeneous representation of immigrant women as well as more examples of self-representation. In an interview with María Camí-Vela, Helena Taberna states quite simply: “El abrazo es posible” (Guía didáctica, 53). She is referring to the final scene in her documentary when the immigrant women she is filming at the music club embrace her and include her in the final camera shot. Her interpretation of this final act is one of hope and positivity. We can only await with interest the picture to be drawn in the future, as testimonials, autobiographies, novels and documentaries present the varied countenances of women immigrants to Spain.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Donna Gillespie received her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and Zoology from Miami University in 1995 and her Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1999. She received her Master of Arts from the Saint Louis University-Madrid campus in 2007. At the University of Florida, she was awarded the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies 2012 Summer Doctoral Student Scholarship and the Award for Cooperative Leadership in Teaching Spanish in 2011.