Colonizing Voices and Visions: Lourdes Ortiz's "Fátima de los naufragios" and "La piel de Marcelinda"

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Se explora en este artículo la representación narrativa de dos experiencias prototípicas de la inmigración reciente a España: la llegada de gente en pateras a las costas suramericanas y el tráfico internacional de seres humanos para abastecer el mercado sexual. El análisis de dos cuentos de Lourdes Ortiz no sólo contribuye a la crítica existente sobre su obra, la cual se centra en sus novelas y teatro, sino también examina el concepto de identidades fronterizas dentro de este ámbito migratorio y la construcción ficticia de la identidad del Otro. A través del estudio de las visiones y las voces en ambos cuentos se disierne una crítica de la hibridación cultural. Esta se presenta por medio de los vestigios coloniales y la dinámica global que transforma la identidad del inmigrante, enfatizando así tanto la cultura como el poder autóctono y hegemónico, dejando al margen la posibilidad de nuevas comprensiones interétnicas.

Spain's 1978 constitution officially recognized and endorsed a multicultural nation, expressed in the creation of seventeen autonomous communities, including the distinct cultural identities of Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia. In 1986, Spain became a member of the European Union, an association that affords its nations' citizens the freedom to travel, live, and work in this geographical space. Coterminal with Spain's democracy and its international partnerships, people from less developed countries are immigrating in record numbers, transforming the country in 1991 from one of emigration to one of immigration. Although national identity was the subject of often intense debates during the transition from a dictatorship to a democracy and continued to be a theme of public discussion at the time of entry into the EU, one may surmise that the nation's citizens did not anticipate the even greater challenge of the more than 635,000 resident foreigners who have immigrated to Spain from Latin America, Africa, and Asia since Franco's death in 1975. While the number of foreign residents from all countries accounts for only 3% (1,109,060 individuals) of the total population of 39 million, compared to less than .5% (165,289 individuals) in 1970, these numbers represent a significant demo-
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graphic change.¹ In contrast to the virtually uninhibited movement that Europeans enjoy, recent immigrants to Spain face considerable restrictions to entry and residency, whether they intend to remain in the country or pass through en route to other European nations. Spanish author Lourdes Ortiz expresses the global reality of immigration and the ironies of Spain's vision of a multicultural identity in two stories from her collection Fátima de los naufragios: relatos de tierra y mar (1998). In "Fátima de los naufragios" and "La piel de Marcelinda," she presents the barriers that people from outside the Union encounter within the political and cultural boundaries of Spain and the resistance of Spaniards to expanding the borders, so to speak, of the nation's identity.²

As I analyse these short stories, I shall consider the tensions and negotiations of the boundaries of national identity that these recent border crossings and this dramatic demographic change imply. Ortiz's works highlight the complexity of the immigration issue in Spain, exposing contradictory reactions and realities, not only within communities but also within individuals.³ In her article Rosalía Cornejo-Parriego, too, focuses on hybrid constructions of national identity in Ortiz's "Fátima de los naufragios." Yet, while this critic argues that Ortiz proposes an idealized interethnic mixing, I argue that with this text and "La piel de Marcelinda," the author, consciously or unconsciously, points to the difficulty of creating a representation that is not concurrently a contemporary reiteration of colonization. In her study of "Fátima de los naufragios" and director Fernando León de Aranoa's 1998 film Barrio, Cornejo-Parriego states that these narratives explore globalization in "su dimensión más fértil" (517) and that "ofrecen una dimensión visionaria que presagia nuevas realidades" (518). My analysis proposes that, contrary to a "conciencia de una nueva identidad colectiva" (524), the locals impose their culture on the immigrant characters. Irene Andrés-Suárez, who briefly discusses Ortiz's two narratives within her panoramic study of immigration in the contemporary Spanish short story, recounts the narratives' plots and, like Cornejo-Parriego, notes a mythification of the immigrant character in "Fátima de los naufragios." In her discussion of "La piel de Marcelinda," Andrés-Suárez highlights Ortiz's denunciation of racial discrimination and hypocritical behaviour by Spaniards who see themselves as ethical models, yet take advantage of the immigrants' undocumented situation. My reading seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of the stories within the theoretical context of a borderland paradigm as a means of questioning hybridity and examining the racial discrimination presented in these two fictional works.⁴

Drawing on her own frontier existence, as a resident of the US/Mexican border, Gloria Anzaldúa articulates her particular hybridity and constant flux. Rather than a geographical and cultural divide, Anzaldúa conceives of the borderlands as an interstitial space, or crossroads, a place where two or more cultures meet and the multiplicity of a person's sexual, psychological, and spiritual
identities emerge. From her mestiza heritage, a mix of pre-Columbian, colonial, and postcolonial Mexican cultural histories, she crafts a vision of herself and her people that enables her to address the discrimination that she has faced as a Mexican-American, lesbian woman living on the border. In a related vein, Homi Bhabha’s writing on hybridity emphasizes empowered minority viewpoints that rise from a transitional, fluctuating, cultural and political environment. During times of historical social transformation, traditions, often seen as timeless, may take on new, hybrid forms as people come into contact with customs different from their own. Significantly, postcolonial contexts inspire these writers’ borderland consciousnesses, for Anzaldua, as noted, the US and Mexican border and, for Bhabha, former European colonies, such as India. Although a past colonizer, Spain, too, is a nation of multiple cultural and political borders. For centuries, centralizing kingdoms and then governments sought to contain the peripheral ethnicities within the Iberian Peninsula, yet these cultural identities co-existed and mixed, in varying degrees, with the dominant Castilian political, linguistic, and cultural model. Today, as immigrants, many from the lands of Spain’s former colonies, cross the nation’s frontiers in search of better economic, social, or political conditions – or borderlands – are created. In this light, do Ortiz’s stories, which present a moment of social change and intensified cultural and ethnic encounters, posit the kind of progress that Bhabha theorizes? Do the narratives present the transformative self-realization of minority persons that Anzaldua articulates in her borderland experience? How do the narrations, and the material realities, compare to such theoretical musings?

“Fátima de los naufragios,” the first story in the collection, centers on a North African woman named Fátima who has stood on the beach of a small fishing town in Almería for almost four years. She looks out to the sea in silence and, according to various sources, waits for her son and her husband to appear. Her muteness emphasizes the main thrust of the story: Fátima is an object for interpretation. Many people gaze upon her: the narrator, townspeople, tourists, and Mohamed, a male immigrant from the Maghreb who claims to have traveled from Africa with Fátima, her family, and approximately twenty others in a patera, or small boat, that sank before reaching the Spanish shore. The narrator does not participate in the story as a character; yet this person’s comments imply that he or she has visited or lived in the town, knows the locals, and has talked to them about Fátima. In addition, the narrator’s viewpoint concurrs with the locals’ perspective. Although his or her nationality is not revealed, language use and concordance with local opinion suggest that the narrator is Spanish. Along with the narrator, the townspeople and Mohamed recount, or imagine, Fátima’s personal story, even though these characters know little about her. One day, the residents find Fátima cradling a young, African man who has washed up onto the beach. Shortly thereafter, as the townswomen deposit flow-
ers near his corpse, Fátima covers the body with a blanket that a local has given her and then walks into the sea. The women watch over the man’s body until the following day, when the authorities arrive and carelessly put the cadaver in a black plastic bag. The narration ends with a description of a small pile of stones that the townspeople maintain on the beach in homage to Fátima.

While this first text addresses immigration from Africa to southern Spain, the second narrative turns to another common phenomenon, sexual trafficking, in this case, of women from an unnamed Caribbean island brought to Madrid to work as prostitutes, soliciting clients in the park Casa de Campo. Two bodyguards watch over the women, going with them to the park to make sure that they work and do not escape and to ensure that clients do not damage this human property, owned by their boss Goyo. The story centers on one woman in particular, Marcelinda, the youngest of the group, with whom Chano, one of the guards, claims to be in love. The second bodyguard narrates the story of this relationship. Although the narrator of this tale also does not disclose his national origin, the vocabulary he uses ("tío"; "guay"; "una pasada" 25) suggests that he too is Spanish. As the bodyguard recounts this supposed love story, he inadvertently tells of the business of international sex trafficking and of prostitution in Madrid.

Fundamental to a consideration of the socio-political realities with which Ortiz’s stories engage, the author’s use of narrative voice and focalization suggests that viewpoint is a site of power and that representation is always partial and biased: experience is subjective and events and relations are always interpreted, never neutral. Ortiz’s texts illustrate the processes by which a homogenizing ethnic perspective erases and distorts some categories of difference and, concurrently, edifies ethnic frontiers. These fictional works stress that race and ethnicity are intertwined with the way that people feel about, view, and interact with one another. Unlike the empowered minority voices and interior visions of which Anzaldúa and Bhabha speak, in both of the short stories Spaniards narrate and focalize, regulating the flow of information about the immigrants. Relative to the immigrant characters, the locals are dominant. Even when the locals intend to treat recent arrivals with kindness, their narrative positions as viewers and tellers keep non-natives subordinate in this Andalusian community, a region in which the Moors once wielded great cultural and political power. Placing the autochthonous population in control of the narrative suggests in literary form the real life surveillance, policing, and laws that monitor the physical movement of immigrants at the contemporary frontiers of Spain.

In the case of “Fátima de los naufragios,” the narration showcases that race permeates observations of an Other. Moreover, the dominant viewpoint results in a performance of ethnic erasure. The locals continually refer to the dark or black skin of the immigrants and, most often, do not distinguish shades of black: "aquella estatua hecha de arena y sufrimiento que de algún modo pertur-
baba el paisaje y ponía una nota oscura en el horizonte" (10); "La sombra de la mujer allá lejos, inmóvil, recortada contra el azul oscuro del horizonte, ligeramente iluminada por la luna" (16). Even when a towns-person acknowledges a racial distinction, that the skin color of the young man Fátima cradles indicates that he is from farther south than the Maghreb, the towns-person is unable to and not interested in identifying the country of origin: "es de tierra más adentro, del Senegal o del Congo o de sabe Dios dónde" (19). Ultimately, he erases these ethnic distinctions without a second thought. In contrast, in another instance, the narrator recognizes geographical and ethnic specificity when he describes Mohamed as "un muchacho magrebi" (11). At the same time, the narrator's observation of an isolated whiteness on this Maghreb body, the smile, reveals the racial point of view as white and the ethnic perspective as Christian. The narration alludes to a comparison of Mohamed with Christ: the care that one couple provides leads to his resuscitation. Further, the observer links not just a smile, but in particular a white smile to a positive human quality, the ability to inspire trust: "Sabía trabajar. Tenía una risa blanca de resucitado y daba confianza a los patrones y a los mozos" (11). Unlike Christ, the narrator specifically associates the desirable trait of inspiring confidence with the Maghreb man's economic value and subject position as a worker. The owners and employees can trust Mohamed in his later described work in the large greenhouses, or "invernadero[s]" (13), that occupy the landscape of southern Spain. As with Mohamed, the autochthonous population expects Fátima to seek and accept low-paying, low-skilled, and strenuous work: "Hubo quien le ofreció trabajar en los invernaderos, y una señora de postín se acercó un día a brindarle un trabajo por horas" (8). These southern Spaniards simply may wish to help out these new arrivals and, in fact, they do offer Fátima "la sopa de pobre" (8) and talk to her about social assistance and political asylum. The locals generalize about the immigrants based on ethnicity and, sometimes, just race. More than as individuals, the townspeople view Fátima and Mohamed as a socio-economic phenomenon – the North African immigrants who travel in pateras to Spain's southern shores, part of a continuous flow of impoverished people. The townspeople are not malicious; in fact, they are unaware of the ethnic whitewashing they perform. Yet, how would the people from Almería feel if someone from Africa thought that they were Italian or even French? And what if these locals were thought to be Galician or Catalan or Basque? The townspeople homogenize much of the African continent, but they likely would not agree if someone were to merge all of Spain into one cultural and national identity. That they decide what categories are valid and where these immigrants belong in this ethnic map emphasizes that power rests with the townspeople.

In the one exception to the Spanish-dominated focalization, the reader hears the voice of the Other when Mohamed narrates his version of Fátima's story. As a storyteller, he briefly wields authority. Nonetheless, while Mohamed
is not silent, he still remains segregated and subordinated. As noted, the economic value of his white smile ultimately subsumes his power to a Spanish landowner. Contrasting with the rest of the narration, Mohamed focuses on differences other than race. For Mohamed, a fellow North African, Fátima's African-ness and skin color do not stand out, but rather her gender. He is surprised to learn that she survived the boat's sinking: as a weak female, she should have drowned and her strong husband should have lived. He concludes that she must be a “mujer bruja o fantasma” (14). Mohamed's patriarchal interpretation supposes that Fátima's survival is possible only if she has abnormal, supernatural powers. Her defiance of his expectations about women, not her dark skin, makes her strange.

In the story “La piel de Marcelinda,” patriarchal and racist perspectives combine to critique another aspect of immigration to Spain and, more broadly, global migrations: international sex trafficking. Central to this transnational transaction is the conceptualization of women as commercial products: "Ella [Marcelinda] había llegado a principios de setiembre con un lote guay de negritas que quitaban el hipo; buen material que, colocado allí junto a la carretera, impresionaba, tío" (25). With this statement that punctuates the complicity of ethnicity, sexuality, and commerce, the narrator introduces an unidentified audience to Marcelinda. First, the vocabulary that he uses to describe the group's arrival positions the women as merchandise ("un lote"). Then, the analogy continues as he depicts the women standing on the roadside as material items displayed on a shelf. Notably, the narrator does not compare the girls and the merchandise; instead, he conflates the two. They are not like material goods; they are material goods. This fusion is apparent, too, when the narrator gives more detail of their physical appearance: "Muslazos, caderas y esa piel negra suave y con un brillo de zapatos recién lustrados de charol de bailarín de claqué, ¡una pasada para la vista y para el tacto, que hizo que los clientes se multiplicaran" (25). He reduces these individuals to soft, voluptuous body parts and, specifically, black skin. Comparing their cuticle to a highly shined dancer's shoe accentuates, for this man and the clients, the women as objects whose only role is to entertain men with their bodies. They are there for the narrator and other men to view and handle, basically, for them to consume. Further, the blackness of the girls' skin, their racial difference, enhances their commercial value. Here, as in “Fátima de los naufragios,” the narrator does not distinguish shades of black, thus erasing ethnic distinctions.

This erasure becomes even more apparent in the act of naming. When Chano is unable to understand the name the youngest girl calls herself, he christens her Marcelinda, a name that she has difficulty pronouncing: "Marcelinda, que es un nombre que te va de chipén. Así que con Marcelinda se quedó" (32). The narrator finds humor in Marcelinda's articulation of her new name, "Meirclinda" (32); yet, far from humorous, Chano's action and the nar-
ator's reaction are displays of cultural dominance. Not only Chano, but also the narrator and his boss Goyo, impose the Spanish language on the women as they rename them. In doing so, these men change a fundamental aspect of the Caribbean women's ethnic and personal identities. The practice of changing the names of newly imported sex workers recalls a similar custom of the slave trade. Slave owners changed the names of black laborers to force them to conform to hegemonic cultural standards. The act of naming, then, connects the idea of property and economic commodity to these immigrant women, as well as colonization to globalization.

These name changes impact the perceived sexual value of the women, both deconstructing and constructing ethnic barriers. Marcelinda's name takes on a Spanish pronunciation while the alteration of another woman's name to la Morosca points to an historic ethnic divide and cultural influence in Spain. Sociologist Joane Nagel studies the interdependence of ethnicity and sexuality in shaping identity and argues that sex, race, ethnicity, and nationality are intimate bedfellows, all complicit in forming perceptions of oneself and of ethnic Others. She proposes the term "ethnosexual frontiers" to characterize spaces of imagined or real sexual contact between people of different ethnicities: "erotic locations and exotic destinations that are surveilled and supervised, patrolled and policed, regulated and restricted, but that are constantly penetrated by individuals forging sexual links with ethnic Others across ethnic borders" (14). In these spaces of interethnic contact, people engage in sexual relations despite and, sometimes, because of social taboos.

The concept of ethnosexual frontiers is a productive means of considering the sexual contacts presented in "La piel de Marcelinda." The Caribbean women's race enhances their sexual appeal for Spanish men, for the financial benefit of the trafickers. Ethnic difference attracts clients, even when, or especially when, coupled with a xenophobic repulsion of a racially distinct Other. As in "Fátima de los naufragios," the local characters equate the possible national origins of the immigrants. Expressing his lack of interest in the actual national identity of the women, the narrator of "La piel de Marcelinda" comments that this "lote" (25) of women come from "Jamaica o algo así, un sitio exótico y caribeño" (26). Any Caribbean country will do, as they all fuel an imagined exoticism and lust. Moreover, feelings of power and possession of an ethnic Other implicate erotic desire:

que hay muchos [clientes] que los pone a cien a llamarlas negras y decirles que se vayan pa' su tierra, tratarlas como esclavas, que eso forma parte de la cuestión ... 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)
Their assumed superiority suggests a contemporary re-enactment of colonialist attitudes. Colonial accounts characterize men and women from the African continent as excessively sexual. With this rationale, Europeans violated African women and seized the people and their lands in so-called civilizing missions to tame a supposed savage attribute (Nagel 91-96). In this scenario, the white man uses the black woman’s body not only to mark his territory, or property, but also for his economic gain, creating offspring who translate into more slaves to work his land and, hence, more power. Ortiz’s text reiterates this structure with slight modification: white clients pay for the black woman’s body and, in doing so, assert social power and augment the economic power of the Caribbean women’s white owners. In both the contemporary and colonial contexts, the black man does not exert a comparable power over the white woman’s body.

Notably, the narration specifies that the clients come from mainstream society: office workers, family men, spoiled bourgeois boys (pijos), and policemen. In pointing out the conventional social status of these men, Ortiz’s story suggests the orthodoxy of these racist views, a critical consideration in a country experiencing greater ethnic diversity within its borders everyday. While this attitude does not mean that all Spaniards view immigrants negatively, a study by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas in 2000 found that while 95% of Spaniards considered themselves tolerant of immigrants, 48.6% said that there was little or no tolerance in Spanish society for the traditions and peoples of other ethnicities. Further, the Instituto de la Juventud reports that 54% of the youth in Spain think that immigration will be “perjudicial para la raza,” or will negatively impact Spanish morals and traditions (“La sociedad española ante la inmigración”).

The townspeople’s treatment of Fátima concurs with these statistics. In contrast with the tourists, the locals come to accept this newcomer and expect her presence on the beach; yet, acceptance comes through turning her into a mythic figure. The women in particular change Fátima’s religious identity as they craft her into several Catholic icons: the Macarena, the Virgin of Carmen, and “la moreneta” (10), a reference to the Virgin of Montserrat, patron saint of Catalonia, a black Madonna. With this last characterization, the women acknowledge and attach a positive image to Fátima’s race. Further, associating Fátima with images of the Virgin points to the character’s potential universal significance as a protective and suffering mother and wife. Through this shared experience, the wives of the local fishermen identify with Fátima’s loss of loved ones at sea and see a sameness that supercedes racial and ethnic differences. Still, in imagining this Muslim figure as Catholic, the Spanish locals make Fátima more familiar to them; in effect, they domesticate her Muslim otherness. As an icon of their faith, Fátima serves the ends of the local population, acting as a channel for their prayers and confessions: “la mora era como una proyección de sus miedos y una especie de garantía de pacto con las aguas” (18);
"lo 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). Although the narration does not reveal the source of this guilt, it does link this feeling to Fátima's illegal status. The police may feel guilty about strict border controls that they enforce and that cause Fátima and others like her to risk their lives crossing the sea between Africa and Spain. Perhaps, too, the locals feel uneasy about a global system that encourages people to leave their homelands in search of better economic conditions.

The mythification process that transforms Fátima, a mother and wife, into various Catholic virgins not only makes her culturally more similar to the townspeople, but effectively also neutralizes her sexuality. While sexuality is a primary issue in "La piel de Marcelinda," in "Fátima de los naufragios" its absence provides insight into social constructions of race, ethnicity, and sex. Erasing sexual attributes serves as a means of controlling the potential threat of miscegenation that her sexuality might pose. Although worn from her travels and her stay on the beach, the townspeople imagine her former physical beauty: "todos completaron las caderas más firmes de la mujer, la piel más tibia; quitaron las arrugas de los ojos y las huellas de lágrimas en las mejillas: una mujer hermosa y calida, erguida, con los pechos firmes y las manos diestras" (15-16). Confirming her former attractiveness, as well as her chattiness, Mohamed adds that Fátima was a "mujer que hay que vigilar" (16). However, as a symbol of piety and Christian faith, Fátima loses materiality. By converting her into not just a virgin, but the Virgin, the locals erect an impenetrable sexual border, her chastity, defusing the risk, so-to-speak, of ethnosocial border crossings, which again, according to more than 50% of Spanish youth, would endanger Spanish culture.

Of course, unlike Fátima, the women brought to Madrid by a sex trafficking network undergo forced ethnosocial encounters. In both stories, however, the immigrant characters experience a cultural transformation. Not only do the locals convert Fátima to Christianity through the power of their imagination, but they also turn Fátima and the young man from an unidentified African country into a symbol of Western civilization, Michelangelo's Pietà statue:

With this work of art, Michelangelo established his reputation in Rome and returned to Florence a well-respected sculptor. Thus, the statue stands as a
symbol of canonical acceptance and a high point in the artistic history of not only Italy, but also Western Europe. While one might interpret the scene in Ortiz's story as the narrator's and the locals' acceptance of this immigrant, and a harmonious cultural mestizaje, consideration of the narrative voice and focalization points to the imposition of Western culture on individuals who originate from former colonized regions, where western European countries also subjugated their ancestors' ethnic heritage. Although the narrator may not intend the cultural colonization he performs with this artistic allusion, in beautifying the scene, the narrator escapes from rather than confronts the harsh reality of border control and illegal immigration.15

At the same time, while such a famous work of art might seem unchangeable, the re-envisioning of the statue as a pair of immigrants from the African continent on the shore of southern Spain five hundred years after Michelangelo crafted his masterpiece highlights that even a well-established norm can change. Taking a moment to consider Bhabha's postulation that moments of social flux encourage a revision of cultural borders and social power structures, does Ortiz's story present this transformative hybrid potential? Although the townspeople associate the Pietà with Africans, changing the statue's ethnic and racial composition, still a Euro-Christian perspective prevails in this scene. The collective Spanish vision subsumes the African characters' own cultural identities. The Catholic-inspired conception of Fátima is not simply the Macarena, for example, but rather “una Macarena tostada por el sol ... la Macarena de los Moros” (7). And, despite the Muslim faith of most drowned immigrants from North Africa, Fátima becomes “la Virgen de las pateras, nuestra señora de los naufragios” (22). Thus these figures do undergo an ethnic mixing and alteration. Nonetheless, the re-positioning of these individuals from Africa recalls Nagel's observation that “an individual's ethnicity is a negotiated social fact – what you think is your ethnicity versus what others think is your ethnicity” (42). In this narration directed by and viewed from a Spanish perspective, the Spanish characters control the ethnicity of the immigrants, casting them as assimilators of local culture rather than agents of change.

In contrast to the de-materialization of Fátima and the man the locals imagine as her son, the narrator and his cohorts in “La piel de Marcelinda” use both local and global culture to increase the material value of the immigrant women. In addition to translating the women's names to Spanish, Chano and the narrator take advantage of their unfamiliarity with the language, or their silence in the country's dominant language, to consolidate control and improve profits. As the narrator notes: “no chapurreaban una palabra de español y al principio Chano y yo, con buena voluntad y para facilitar las cosas, aprovechábamos los ratos muertos para ponerlas al día. Cuatro o cinco palabras para que pudieran manejarla” (26). Despite his assertion of good will (“buena voluntad”), Chano and the narrator teach them some Spanish not to help them
become part of mainstream Spanish society or gain independence, but rather so that they better serve clients in the Casa de Campo and, thus, raise their market value.

In a similar manner to the cultural references in “Fátima de los naufragios,” the narrator alters the Caribbean women’s identity as he views them through a Western European framework. The raconteur of Marcelinda’s story chooses to erase the brutal macro- and micro-reality of exploitation and, instead, construct a tale of pure, idealistic love between Chano and Marcelinda, modeled on the classic love stories of Cupid and Psyche and Romeo and Juliet. Evoking Cupid’s arrow, the storyteller comments: “Lo del Chano con la Marcelinda fue de flechazo, como de película” (27). Upon further consideration, however, this metaphor points to the imposition of one person’s feelings on another. With his arrow, Cupid controls Psyche’s emotions. In the classic tale, the gods bless Cupid and Psyche’s love, formalize their marriage, and confer immortality upon Psyche. In Ortiz’s narrative, there is no such divine, or even earthly, acceptance of the love between a chulo and a trafficked child. When Chano falls to the ground bathed in blood after a knife fight with a group of drunk píjos, who taunt Marcelinda, the narrator compares the girl to Mary Magdalena, as the former tearfully covers the dying Chano with her body. Unlike the biblical figure, the contemporary character receives no final pardon. In a comparison to Romeo and Juliet’s tragic love, the narration’s critical voice accentuates that the contemporary couple faces very distinct barriers than their fifteenth-century counterparts, notwithstanding some shared narrative events. While Romeo and Juliet’s love leads to their feuding families’ reconciliation, in “La piel de Marcelinda,” there is no happy turn of fate after the couple’s death. Rather than a conflict of two feuding families, Ortiz’s story tells of global patterns of inequity upon which the couple’s death will have no impact. Within the context of the story, no social healing or justice occurs; the narrator only vows to avenge the deaths should he cross paths with the men who stabbed his friend. This threat does little to perturb the hegemonic system that enables international human trafficking. Unlike the optimistic mythological, Elizabethan, and Catholic stories of overriding solidarity, the critical voice in “La piel de Marcelinda” highlights a global demand for exotic sexual encounters and the (unromantic) exploitative economic and social dimensions of this desire. Far from immortality and holy redemption, when Marcelinda takes her own life, the narrator speculates that her death is irrelevant to the bodies in charge, in this case, the institution of the State: “¿Qué coño le importa a la poli la muerte de un chulo y una puta?” (42). According to the narrator, the police afford more protection to the park flora than to the prostitutes. Even though in these proclamations the narrator opposes a state system that ignores human rights abuses, in prostituting the women, he himself takes part in an abusive power structure.
At a global level, there are those who argue that US culture has come to dominate the cultures of other countries and that this uniform global culture is a purchasable commodity (Beck 71-72). In contrast, other scholars of globalization point to a dialogic dynamic in which cultures mutually influence one another to create a hybrid mix. Roland Robertson, Arjun Appadurai, and Néstor García Canclini, for example, all assert that globalization promotes heterogeneity rather than homogenization. In "La piel de Marcelinda," the influence of US-based culture is evident in the manner in which the Caribbean women dress to attract clients, or, more precisely, in the manner in which the men who market and sell these women dress them. Through the choice of apparel, the narrative emphasizes a common conflation of culture, consumption, and sex. Consciously or unconsciously, today, people consume sex regularly as they read, listen to, or view sexually charged images and messages in advertisements, on television shows, and in movies, songs, music videos, spam messages, and other mass media. Simply put, sex is ubiquitous and it sells. One recent example is Madonna and Britney Spears's kiss on the televised 2003 MTV awards, an act that, I would venture, was more a promotional device than a socio-political statement about sexual transgression and freedom.

In associating Marcelinda with two American pop stars, Madonna and Janet Jackson, Ortiz's story brings attention to this cultural environment:

¡que daba gusto verla con aquellos pantalóncitos azul claro de licra bien ajustados y aquel corsé en plan Madonna con las tetas al aire!, que el Goyo entiende de vestimenta y presenta a las chicas como hay que presentarlas: buen envoltorio y contenido de calidad. Y ella, con aquellas botas en plan Janet Jackson ... parecía sacada de una revista de hit parade. (28)

To enhance Marcelinda's commercial value, the pimp appeals to the erotic fantasies of potential clients and makes available these popular sexual icons to the general public; in other words, you do not have to have connections in Hollywood and with the jet set to sleep with Madonna or Janet Jackson. Nonetheless, as reproductions of these cultural icons, the narrative emphasizes the differences between the actual singers and the young girl imported to Madrid to work in the sex trade. Juxtaposing the glamour lifestyles of the real pop stars with Marcelinda's youth and the enslaved existence of these migrant women, the implicit authorial voice draws attention to mass acceptance of sex and commerce as intimate partners. Far from a utopian view of cultural heterogeneity, with these images of the American pop stars, Ortiz presents a local hybridization that critiques the ubiquitous diffusion and global sale of the "American dream," the imposition of cultural assimilation, and the international trafficking of human beings.
In contrast, in both short stories, the narrators portray the locals' treatment of the immigrants as not only generous, but indicative of a global solidarity. The narrator of “La piel de Marcelinda” would like his audience to think that the world of sex trafficking is an agreeable business offering opportunity for women from impoverished countries to improve their personal and financial lot. Recalling his boss Goyo’s explanation of the equalizing effects of the transnational economic system, the narrator states:

Así que cada cosa en su sitio, que yo entendía al Goyo y el que mete mucho dinero en esto quiere como cada quisqui sacar su beneficio, que él no es un desconsiderado y las chicas, como el Goyo nos dice, allá en su tierra pasaban hambre y aquí mal que bien pueden manejar se y las que van salen pa’ alante. (35)

Thus, an unregulated market global system is the answer to human need; where there is demand for a product, in this case, exotic women, supply migrates. The narrator readily subscribes to Goyo’s argument that the market delivers favorable results for managers and workers alike, generating a return on investment for their owner while also liberating the women from their former poverty. In other words, Goyo and the narrator contend that a free market economy is democratic. At one moment in the story, during a period of extremely cold weather, Chano comments: “qué si yo fuera ellas me cruzaba de brazos y decía que nones, que trabaje tu padre con este tiempo que el coño se queda helado” (33). Yet as illegal immigrants imported to work in prostitution in an unfamiliar city, and most likely without knowledge of the laws that would protect them, it is not so easy for the women to exercise the freedom of choice of which Chano speaks. Further, Goyo asserts that the girls like the work, yet practically admits that the women have no choice when he says that he will deprive them of a basic necessity, food, should they refuse to solicit clients. His only goal is to extract the most money possible from his investment. As the narrator notes, despite the bitter weather, “que si no ven las tetas y las nalgas no es lo mismo, chaval ... que los hombres somos así” (35). With a claim of generic male instinctual need, the narrator affirms that male desire and profit motives must be fulfilled, while the women’s physical comfort is dispensable. Moreover, Goyo the head pimp tells Chano that instead of speaking for the women by protesting the little clothing in cold weather, he should ask them what they think about their living conditions. As one might expect, neither of these men actually ask the women their opinion. In fact, Goyo notes: “yo sé muy bien cómo llevar mi negocio y que estas tías son duras como robles y si las retiro, a ver de qué comen, que tú crees que les haces un favor [por protestar], pero pregúntales, pregúntales a ellas. Que además les gusta” (33). As the narrator never turns the narration over to any of the women, and we never see the story through their perspective, they do not have the opportunity to voice their views. Rather, they are verbally and sexually
spoken for by Spanish men, a narrative strategy that points to the dominance of patriarchal, and even colonialist, power and the women's position of economic, social, and cultural disadvantage.

In comparison with the local traffickers in "La piel de Marcelinda," in "Fátima de los naufragios" the townspeople express a more benign solidarity with the immigrants with whom they come into contact. As noted, the elderly couple offers Mohamed shelter and food when he first arrives on Spanish soil, nursing him back to health, and people from the coastal town suggest that Fátima access social services. The allegorical names of the immigrant characters, Fátima and Mohamed, suggest an ideological fantasy, a pairing of the Catholic and Muslim faiths. Nevertheless, the overriding, or double, voice points to a chasm between these utopias and the real stories of immigration in contemporary Spain. Even though the women from this fishing town empathize with Fátima and her anxious relationship with the sea, their experiences are not exactly the same as hers. As black and Latina feminists have emphasized, gender alone does not translate into a shared perspective. Race, class, and sexual orientation shape social interactions and individual realities (Abel; Smith). Fátima’s ethnicity and particular situation distinguish how she feels about and reacts to the loss of her husband and child. Unlike the townswomen, Fátima is far from home and alone, without a community of familiar people to support her emotionally during a time of loss and, so it seems, without the Spanish language skills that would help express her thoughts and desires to the community that surrounds her. More so, rather than treat Fátima as an equal, the townswomen and men envision her as an icon with miraculous powers who protects their families from harm at sea: "hubo una luz, un aura" (9); "una Fátima maga, una mujer de ninguna parte, salida de las aguas" (16). The sounds that Fátima makes also distance her from not only the townspeople, but also the human: "creyeron percibir un gorgoteo, un sollozo que no parecía humano" (8). In effect, imagining Fátima as magical creates a border, a difference from the locals, positioning her between the human and the superhuman, as an intermediary between the townspeople and God.

Through their thoughts and words, the Almerians alter the ethnic composition and the sexuality of this married North African woman, giving her a transitory condition. At the same time, Fátima’s transformations are not simply imagined. More than a cartographic crossing, the voyage from the Maghreb to southern Spain prompts an emotional and physical change. Mohamed comments on her transformation from young, vibrant, and talkative to aged, wrinkled, and silent, adding that, from a distance, the woman looks like the Fátima he knew, yet, seen up close, he is uncertain. This remark situates her in an in-between state – she is and is not Fátima – and alludes to a homelessness, or lack of social place.
In descriptions of her borderland existence, Gloria Anzaldúa seems to convey the migratory experiences of Ortiz’s female immigrant characters. Continually negotiating linguistic, sexual, national, racial, and cultural delineations, Anzaldúa characterizes life in the borderlands as “intimate terrorism”: “Alienated from her mother culture, ‘alien’ in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can’t respond, her face caught between los intersticios, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits” (20). Notwithstanding her sense of homelessness, Anzaldúa finds space in this interstitial existence to affirm a hybrid sense of self and source of personal power, which she calls a mestiza consciousness. In contrast, the interstitial conceptions of Ortiz’s characters impede their self-expression and reinforce social, economic, cultural, and racial hierarchies that place the Spanish population in dominant positions. Indeed, Fátima becomes part of the Almerian community, and Marcelinda expresses passion towards Chano at his death. Yet, on what terms and at what cost do the characters assimilate and integrate into the respective Spanish “communities”? Although the narrator depicts Marcelinda as a carefree child, “que parecía que se iba a poner a jugar a un pibe le regalan un balón” (36), he soon after tells of Marcelinda’s discomfort in her new home and in her work of forced prostitution:

que es eso lo que solía hacer, mirar para bajo y decir tierra trágame pa’ ver si se hacía invisible, que la verdad es que yo creo que la cosa no le iba ni un poquito y que lo pasaba fatal cada vez que, pero ¡fuutea! el mundo es como es y seguramente en su tierra estaba buscando comida en las basuras ... así que agradecida debería estar. (38)

That Marcelinda must sacrifice her body to eat points to the unacceptable conditions of her, mostly sexual, integration and her global reality. In response to a visitor’s apprehension about Fátima, one of the local women comments reassuringly: “No es mala, ¿sabe usted? ... Es del otro lado del mar. Llegó aquí un día y se quedó. No es mendiga tampoco. Vive como viven los peces, casi del aire. No pide, no. Ni molesta” (10). Yet, if Fátima had broken her silence, or had insisted on openly observing Muslim customs, or had had sexual relations with a person from Almeria and together they had produced children, how would the townspeople have reacted? If there were not just one, but instead hundreds or thousands of Fátimas, as is the situation in many towns of southern Spain, how might the locals have responded? Fátima does not place demands on the town’s services, compete with the locals for employment or relationships, or actively practice her culture; rather, she aids them in performing Spanish culture (as Catholic or artistic icon) and in alleviating their emotional distress. As with Marcelinda, her ethnic in-between-ness is not self-designed, but imposed and, thus, lacks the liberating potential that Anzaldúa experiences and Bhabha
espouses. Although the townspeople include Fatima in the narratives of their faith, this very inclusion as someone supernaturally and mysteriously simultaneously excludes her from the community. In effect, similar to Marcelinda, the locals take over Fatima’s self, a confluence of identities that the reader never knows. From a utopian perspective, Fatima might be viewed as a projection of harmonious hybridity for she embodies a masala of Spanish and African cultures. With comparisons to pop stars, Catholic, and western European literary and mythological figures, Marcelinda, too, might be seen as a mix of Caribbean and European culture. Yet, as narrated, these characters exist only from the perspective of Spanish people and their cultural referents. Their silence signals an acceptance conditional upon segregation and subordination.

These narratives, even so, express some hope for interethnic understanding and social change during this period of intensified cultural and ethnic contact in contemporary Spain. The locals in “Fatima de los naufragios” express frustration at the inequalities that underpin these global migrations, as one character remarks elliptically: “Demasiados muertos, muchos muertos; el mar se los traga, pero el mar nos la ha devuelto a ella, para que sepa mos que las cosas no están bien, que no es bueno que...” (14). Even in the final image of “La piel de Marcelinda,” the narrator does not gloss over the protagonist’s appearance after she commits suicide: “Era una piel marrón como de cera, de museo de terror, una muñeca disecada con los ojos de cristal, como esos alfile res de los acerricos. ¡Había que verla!” (42). Postcolonial theorist Bhabha (Nation 2-3) proposes that narrative houses the potential to disrupt hegemonic discourses, particularly nationalist ideologies. The Spanish state takes pride in its present position as a land of opportunity after many years of economic emigration. Nevertheless, Ortiz’s tale about African and Caribbean immigrants questions the nation’s offer of prosperity to all, instead indicating that for many this representation does not match the reality of economic exploitation. In an interview with Ortiz, the author remarked to me that “una parte de la riqueza [en España] se hace a base de sueldos de miseria.” She further proposed: “si se dejan fluir las nacionalidades, se lograría la convivencia” (Personal interview). In a country in which expressions such as trabajar como un moro, un negro, or un chino are part of the vernacular and where prejudices against the gypsies continue although they have lived in Spain for almost four-hundred years, acceptance of ethnic Others will not be a smooth or easy process. Nonetheless, with strategies and stories that suggest the power of perception and the influence of ethnicity on perceptions of others, Ortiz provokes her readers to reflect upon their own gazes, personal experiences with newcomers to Spain, and interpretations of correlated reports in the daily media. She has stated that literature can accomplish both everything and nothing (“¿Qué puede la literatura?” 17). In a time in which the constant transmission of mass-mediated images of war and destitution lessens their impact on the viewer, literature can lead to greater reflection...
on these realities and a questioning of hegemonic discourses (McGovern 52-54). Ending the story “La piel de Marcelinda” with such a pathetic image of the young girl and the narrator’s sense of horror, and juxtaposed with the pimp’s and narrator’s neoliberal rhetoric throughout the story, the narrative suggests the potential to change entrenched attitudes and behaviour. Whether or not Ortiz’s stories disrupt racial prejudices, convince readers of the exploitive side of globalization, and lead to a mutually designed ethnic integration in Spain depends greatly on the perceptions and motivations of the reader, as these short narratives imply.

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NOTES

1 To avoid confusion, I have used the term employed by the Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, “residentes extranjeros” or “foreign residents.” The most recent figures compiled by this government agency calculate that 633,726 people have emigrated from Africa, Latin America, and Asia from 1975 through 2001. These numbers, indeed large, do not account for undocumented immigrants and, therefore, underestimate the number of immigrants living in Spain. During the 2000 regularization amnesty, instead of an estimated 65,000 applications, almost 250,000 people applied for a visa (Anuario de Migraciones 2002; “Cifras de población”; Díez Nicolás and Ramírez Lafita 22, 65-66).

2 While “Fátima de los naufragios” and “La piel de Marcelinda” alone focus on immigration to Spain, similar issues connect these stories to the remaining four in the collection, including isolation, the pressure to conform to social norms, political hypocrisy, social responsibility, the use of art to beautify a troubling reality, fear of engagement in relations with others for their complexity, and the interconnectedness of people and their actions locally and globally.

3 A precursor to these narratives, Ortiz’s La fuente de la vida (1995) focuses on global migrations, specifically addressing the selling in Spain of babies from orphanages in Romania. Indicative of monumental social change taking place in Spain, numerous writers and artists are engaging in a cultural dialogue about immigrants’ experiences and interethnic relations. Since I have chosen to study two such short stories in depth, rather than provide a panoramic review, the interested reader may consult Andrés-Suárez, Kunz, and D’Ors’s study of narratives and drama and Soler-Espiubá’s collection of essays on literature and songs about migration, primarily but not limited to travel across the Strait of Gibraltar.

4 Ortiz has challenged the often cited assertion that “no hay racismo en España,” commenting that until recently there were few minorities in Spain and, therefore, little motivation. Historic racism – the expulsion of the Jews and the Moors – and
discrimination against Spain's most visible minority group, gypsies, suggest that as more and more immigrants come to Spain, the country's racist tendency will become more evident (McGovern 56). Ortiz was active in the Izquierda Unida, a political party that joined with several non-profit organizations during reforms to Spain's immigration laws in 1999 and 2000 to oppose the more restrictive policies of the Partido Popular ("Movilización de ONG; "El PSOE pedirá"). The author has noted, however, that lately writing provides a more satisfying means to express her views than political activism (Personal interview). Nonetheless, she still voices her opposition to the Partido Popular and its former leader José María Aznar, stating that, in response to the terrorist attack on the Atocha train station on 11 March 2004, "nosotros hemos votado (por Rodríguez Zapatero) para 'purificarnos' cambiando de gobierno" (Lavin Mujica).

5 The narrator disagrees with the locals only once, and on a minor point. Whereas some townspeople characterize Fátima as young and others as old, the narrator says that one cannot ascertain her age.

6 The US State Department's 2004 report on "Trafficking in Persons" estimates that 600,000 - 800,000 individuals, mostly women and children, are trafficked across international borders annually. The report states that, in Spain, victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation come primarily from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Nigeria, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia, and Romania. Moreover, networks use Spain as a transit country for victims destined for Portugal and Italy.

7 Although I will strive to be specific and avoid homogenizing categories, because of ambiguities in these fictional works, I inevitably must use terms such as Spanish, Almerian, African, and Caribbean that obscure the subtleties of difference that interest me.

8 Current scholarship refers to race when describing visible distinctions (particularly skin colour), while the term ethnicity encompasses race, language, culture, nationality, religion, and, sometimes, geographical location (Nagel 6).

9 Ortiz herself has commented on the paradoxical power of language to document and manipulate reality. Similar to the narrative strategy in these tales, in previous works she has positioned characters whose opinions and attitudes she wishes to examine as the narrators and focalizers. This technique also helps to create distance from characters with whom she sympathizes (McGovern 50, 51).

10 As Joane Nagel (39) points out, the ethnicity of the viewer influences the ethnic and racial categories that that person assigns to others. A Nigerian in Nigeria will not take note of the skin color of a fellow Nigerian, but instead will focus on religion, language, and community affiliation.

11 For Cornejo-Parriego (523-25), the transformation of Fátima into a mythic and iconic figure supports a positive view of a global Spain and serves as evidence of the characters' sense of a new collective identity. In contrast, I view these agglomerations as one-sided cultural impositions, by the Spanish characters on the immigrants.
Moreover, out of respect for Fátima’s religious customs, one of the townspeople asks his wife to exclude pork from the food that she makes for her (9).

Art greatly influences Ortiz and often figures in her writing. In addition to evoking specific works, scenes often have a painting- or statue-like quality. The portrayal of Fátima recalls representations of the gypsy figure in Andalusian and Spanish painting of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From a symbol of danger and anti-conventionalism, and often prostitution, the gypsy became the model for portraits of bourgeois and noble women in Andalusia and then Spain, as intellectuals searched for the nation’s soul in Andalusian iconography. These paintings often emphasized motherhood, submission, and religious devotion (Sauret Guerrero).

I am indebted to an anonymous reader for linking the policemen’s guilt to border control activity and suggesting that the authorial voice may be critiquing the more restrictive immigration policies of the Partido Popular.

I am grateful to the reader who pointed out the use of art to escape from reality. I would add that the narrator’s artistic choice alludes to the autochthonous population’s greater social power relative to that of the immigrants.

My use of the term “translation” recognizes the change in meaning and subjective interpretation involved in this linguistic act.

In their study, Siriporn Skrobanek, Nataya Boonpakdee, and Chutima Jantateero (103) assert that international sex trafficking showcases the undemocratic nature of an unregulated global market economy. There is much debate over whether, in prostituting oneself, a person exercises his or her free will. A 1995 revision to the Spanish penal code allows a person to sell his or her body without punishment so long as the decision is made freely, without the intervention of a third party (Barahona Gomáriz 30-31). Many argue, however, that prostitution is never an act of freedom. Tamzal Wassyla, for example, states: “el hombre moderno tiene que saber también que la libertad debe pararse en el momento en que la dignidad humana está en peligro. No es para nada ser reaccionario, ni moralista, ni conservador, el manifestar que hay momentos en que hay que saber poner freno a la libertad humana” (31). Backgrounds of sexual abuse, lack of adequate job training, early pregnancy, alcohol and drug addictions, unstable families, and psychological separation from one’s body in prostitution, place the free will argument in doubt (Barahona Gomáriz 100; Pisano 299; Wassyla 35). Almost all of the women interviewed in Barahona Gomáriz’s (143-47) study did not seek sex work on their own; rather, someone introduced them to the trade.

Ortiz added that the Spanish complain that the Moroccans are dirty people at the same time that they fail to provide decent living conditions and adequate pay to Moroccans working in the invernaderos.

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