

GENDERING MIGRATION FROM AFRICA TO SPAIN:  
LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF MASCULINITIES AND FEMININITIES

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A Dissertation Presented to  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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By  
CHAD MONTUORI  
Dr. Michael Ugarte, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the  
dissertation entitled

GENDERING MIGRATION FROM AFRICA TO SPAIN:  
LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF MASCULINITIES AND FEMINITIES

Presented by Chad Montuori

A candidate for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Michael Ugarte

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Professor Flore Zéphir

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Professor Tola Olu Pearce

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Professor Mamadou Badiane

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Professor Iván Reyna

## DEDICATION

Never has the importance of family been as apparent to me as during my pursuit of a PhD. I am convinced that I would have never managed to make this happen had it not been for their presence. I dedicate this dissertation to them. To my mother and father, I thank you for always making time in your schedule so I could escape to write for an hour or two or three or four. To my beautiful wife, Kira, who always found the right thing to say during all the tough times, this is for you. You never stopped believing that things would work out and eventually they did. To Paul and Hillary, who despite the distance that separated us, always made me feel like what I was doing mattered. And finally, I dedicate this work to my three remarkable children, Blaize, Milana, and Rocco. When I embarked on this journey six years ago, these three little people had yet to join us. They have hit the ground running and have wasted little time in making this world a better place. They'll never know how meaningful it was to come home to a hug and kiss after a frustrating day of writing. May they someday pick up this dissertation and realize that what daddy was doing all those weekend afternoons was worth it!

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. THE LITERARY WORK OF DONATO NDONGO	
PART ONE: “El sueño”.....	24
PART TWO: <i>El metro</i> .....	41
3. “Emigración”.....	74
4. <i>El último patriarca</i> .....	96
5. <i>Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits</i> .....	121
6. <i>Leaving Tangier</i> .....	148
CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	175
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	179
VITA.....	186

GENDERING MIGRATION FROM AFRICA TO SPAIN:  
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Chad Montuori

Dr. Michael Ugarte, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that recent literary representations of migration from Africa to Spain — composed by African authors — hold the potential to create alternative visions of gender, identity, and the nation. I analyze the work of a variety of African writers—Donato Ndongo’s short story “El sueño” (1973) and novel *El metro* (2007), Maximiliano Nkogo’s short story “Emigración” (2000), Najat El Hachmi’s novel *El último patriarca* (2008), Laila Lalami’s novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005), and Tahar Ben Jelloun’s novel *Leaving Tangier* (2008) — to demonstrate how gender and migration intersect to shatter any fixed notion of the African migrant experience. While these authors depict African migrant characters from Senegal, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Morocco, they all share the same place of destination: Spain. The migratory journey from Africa to Spain becomes a space where normative notions of gender and sexuality are contested. Informed by postcolonial and gender theory, my work seeks to shed light on a number of questions related to gender and migration: How are the traditional gender norms strengthened or interrogated in these literary narratives? How do these representations challenge masculine hegemony by presenting alternative images of masculinity and femininity? Finally, what larger implications do these visions of masculinity and femininity have on the nation? In order to answer these research questions, each chapter

focuses on the following themes: the role African gender relations play in the decision making process, the existence of gendered social networks; how the migratory journey reconfigures or reaffirms gender roles, and how the return of the migrant is a gendered performance of masculinity. My analysis reveals how each author creates subversive gendered identities, which emerge from the migratory experience, that contradict the normative discourse in Spain surrounding the phenomenon.



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Each of us, helplessly and forever  
contains the other — male in female,  
female in male, white in black and  
black in white. We are a part of each  
other.

---James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket*

The death of General Francisco Franco in 1975 accelerated Spain's entry into the modern consumer economy and forced previously marginalized groups into the workplace. Spain, at this time, was still largely a country of emigration, and not immigration. Suddenly, however, migrant workers played a large role in responding to the challenge that faced the country after forty years of oppression. Franco's dream of establishing a homogeneous nation-state crumbled vis á vis the monetarized cultural values of the society. With other countries in the region closing their borders to migrants, Spain quickly transformed itself into one of the primary receiving countries for migrants pursuing the European dream of wealth and prosperity. Acceptance into the European Community in 1986 hastened Spain's conversion from a country of closed borders and ostensible homogeneity, to one of economic potential. In recent years, the transition from sending to receiving country has been drastic. According to the National Institute of Statistics, from 1992-2009, the number of foreign residents has risen from 400,000 to 5.6 million, or 11 percent of the population. Because of the geographic proximity to Africa, there has been a surge in the number of immigrants from North and West Africa who

have settled in Spain. Recent data from the National Institute of the Statistics suggests that Africans comprise 20 percent of the foreign population in the country.

Due to the historical and cultural ties that bind Spain with Africa, this high percentage of migrants is not surprising. As Paul Gilroy aptly states in *Postcolonial Melancholia*, “The postcolonial migrant is rooted in the imperial past and is now here because Europe, was once out there. They carry all the ambivalence of empire with them” (89). Spain, “was once out there,” expanding into Equatorial Guinea and Morocco during a nineteenth century that saw a shift in their colonial project away from the Americas to Africa. The colonial doctrine of the Spanish, French, and other European nations sought to strip the colonized of their humanity by creating uniform categories of race, gender, and class. The Manichean discourse of colonialism created an ambivalent struggle within the colonized, a complex that Frantz Fanon analyzes in *Black Skin, White Masks* when he states in the introduction: “White civilization and European culture have forced an existential deviation on the Negro” (14). The vestiges of this colonial division and condition continue to haunt the former colonized as they struggle to break free of the fixed marks of gendered, racial, and class identities. The migration of millions of Africans to Spain has only increased the intensity of this internal struggle and created a dilemma for both the former colonized and colonizer.

In an effort to accommodate the surge in migration from Africa, Spain has undertaken an effort to establish labor plans like the one adopted in 2007 with the Senegalese government. The program seeks to bring hundreds of Senegalese workers to Spain on one year work visas, with the option of extending the stay. Senegal is not the only West African country with whom Spain is trying to establish a partnership.

Investments have been made with Gambia, Mali, and Mauritania to train future workers to find employment in Spain. Additionally, Spain is seeking to increase their presence in Africa through the Africa Plan introduced in 2006. In the plan, Spain will be opening new embassies in Cape Verde, Mali, Niger, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau. As Bernardino León Gross, secretary of state for foreign affairs, stated in a 2007 interview with the *New York Times*, “We want to completely change the parameters of Spain’s relationship with Africa.” While these words ostensibly express solidarity, popular opinion polls indicate that immigration is a polarizing issue facing Spanish society. According to a 2006 Gallup opinion poll for the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo*, 69 percent of those questioned felt there are too many immigrants, and 83 percent were in favor of a quota system, dependent on the needs of the market. It is logical to assume that these numbers were influenced by images that the media continues to disseminate of Sub-Saharan migrants arriving off the shores of the Canary Islands. The tendency of popular discourse in Spain is to view the migrant through a one size fits all lens. Media outlets use categories such as “illegal,” “sin papel,” and “indocumentado” to define migrants, thereby stripping them of their humanity and agency. This type of myopic narrative silences the migrant’s voice, and reduces them to objects. While popular media reports continue to perpetuate this myth of uniformity to identify the migrant, alternative visions of migration are beginning to come to the surface.

In recent years, cultural productions written by African authors, who at one time have been migrants themselves, present a different perspective — one that captures the many complexities of migratory movement from Africa to Spain. These literary works demonstrate how a number of different identities — including linguistic, ethnic, religious,

and gender — are affected by movement across time and space. In this project, I narrow the focus of identity research by examining how migration transforms masculine and feminine identities in the literary worlds of Donato Ndongo, Maximiliano Nkogo, Najat El Hachmi, Laila Lalami, and Tahar Ben Jelloun. I will concentrate on Ndongo's short story "El sueño" (1973) and novel *El metro* (2007), Nkogo's short story "Emigración" (2000), Hachmi's novel *El último patriarca* (2008), Lalami's novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005), and Ben Jelloun's novel *Leaving Tangier* (2008). It must not be forgotten that these literary portraits of migration are merely representations of what it means to be a migrant and should not be mistaken for other documents which attempt to describe the reality of immigration. However, as I discuss in more depth later in the chapter, a literary studies approach to migration does allow for a more subjective and humanistic understanding of the many dimensions of the experience. While these African born authors write in a variety of languages: Spanish, English, Catalan, and French and depict African migrants from Senegal, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Morocco, they all share the same place of destination: Spain. The migratory journey from Africa to Spain becomes a space where normative notions of gender and sexuality are contested. Although my project privileges the relationship between gender and migration, I do not ignore how other power variables such as race, ethnicity, language, and class intersect with constructions of masculinity and femininity to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of identity. By placing constructions of gender in contact with other forms of identity, these authors undermine the discourse that began during the colonial period and continues in contemporary Spain, which categorizes the African in homogeneous and static terms. Consequently, they bring alternative images of

masculinity and femininity to the foreground, and understand identity, gender, and the Spanish nation in ambivalent, unstable, subjective, and pluralistic terms.

Instead of essentializing identity — as the earlier African writers of the colonial period did<sup>1</sup>, these contemporary authors offer new and at times subversive visions of African masculine and feminine identities — derived from the convergence of gender relations and migration. All of these literary representations have not only the power to interrogate the image of the African migrant established by popular discourse, but also hold the potential to move beyond that vision and create a new one that emerges from the relationship between gender and migration. This project seeks to shed light on a number of questions related to the phenomenon: How are traditional gender norms strengthened or interrogated in these literary narratives? How do these representations challenge masculine hegemony by presenting alternative images of masculinity and femininity? Finally, what larger implications do these visions of masculinity and femininity have on the nation? In order to answer these research questions, each chapter focuses on the following themes: the role African gender relations play in the decision making process, the existence of gendered social networks; how the migratory journey reconfigures or reaffirms gender roles, and how the return of the migrant is a gendered performance of masculinity. I see my analysis of these emergent themes as making an important contribution to the field of migration studies by revealing how each author use the migratory journey to create subversive gendered identities that contradict the normative discourse surrounding African migration to Spain.

My theoretical point of departure uses a postcolonial studies framework by privileging the idea that changes in identity occur because of migration. These novelists

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<sup>1</sup> The negritude movement is an example of the type of essentialist identity that I reference.

align themselves with postcolonial authors who challenge the work of earlier African writers by refusing to accept a stable notion of identity. Stuart Hall (1996) is especially insightful when he argues the following:

Identity, far from the simple thing that we think it is (ourselves always in the same place) understood properly is always a structure that is split. It always has ambivalence within it. We now have to reconceptualize identity as a process of identification, it is something that happens over time, that is never stable, that is subject to the play of history and the play of difference. (222)

The ambivalence that Hall describes manifests itself in the life experiences of all of the migrants in the literary texts. The act of migration forces the protagonists to resolve the many internal battles over the past and present. Because of their movement, they develop a double consciousness towards the home and host communities that make them the embodiment of modernity, as described by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. As they try to reconcile the many choices that they must confront on a daily basis, their identities are inevitably altered. Accepting Hall's assertion that identities are unstable and always changing, postcolonial literature offers an effective means by which to contest the fixed notions of identity that colonial discourse established. Through literary narratives, the reader captures what it means to be a migrant by gaining access into the ambivalent world of migration. In his article "Geography, Literature, and Migration" that appears in *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration*, Paul White argues that literature effectively illustrates what it means to be a migrant:

The migration event may seem clear-cut in the cold tables of statistical information, yet the event itself lies at the centre of a long-drawn-out (indeed, perhaps never completed) web of personal reflections,

adjustments, reactions and repercussions that start in the individual's biography well before the move and which are played out for many years afterwards. The insights of literature provide a commentary on these processes. (12)

By emphasizing how individual samples represent the whole, literature challenges some of the methods used by social scientists. While I acknowledge this tension, it is imperative to construct an interdisciplinary approach to better understand migration. Noted scholars of migration studies Katherine Donato, Donna Gabaccia, Jennifer Holdaway, Martin Manalansan IV, and Patricia Pessar echo this opinion. In a recent article in the *International Migration Review* entitled "A Glass Half Full? Gender in Migration Studies," these social scientists note that other disciplines have much to offer the field and that "future breakthroughs from gender analysis will be the product of heightened collaboration across disciplines and innovative ways of combining quantitative and qualitative methods that understand gender to be relational and contextual, power laden and also dynamic" (13). Their review includes the potential of a number of disciplines including, anthropology, geography, history, law and society, political science, psychology, sociology, and sexuality studies, but omits literature.

My project justifies the inclusion of the humanities into conversations about migration studies by arguing that literature has the transformative power to explore contested issues related to the field. One such issue focuses on the relationship between gender and migration. Migration as a gendered phenomenon continues to generate debate that in the words of the aforementioned social scientists "requires more sophisticated theoretical and analytical tools" (4). Although theoretical work by social scientists has sharpened our understanding of the relationship between gender and migration, there are

limitations to their approaches. Migration scholars of anthropology, Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar, developed an influential conceptual model called “gendered geographies of power” to study gender across transnational space. In discussing one of the dimensions to the framework they state: “We argue that the social agency we are interested in must include the role of cognitive processes, such as the imagination” (7). Although they acknowledge the importance of the cognitive aspect, they later recognize “the difficulty in detecting and measuring such intangible actions” (7). Their comments suggest the difficulties of capturing the subtleties and nuances of the migratory experience through the use of aggregate data or questionnaire surveys. While I acknowledge the contributions made by social scientific research studies to our understanding of gender and migration, there is a void that the humanities can help fill. I contend that the humanities offers us a glimpse into the interior world of the migrant; an opportunity to get inside the head of the migrant and explore the cognitive processes that are so important in shaping the experience. By taking us into the minds of the protagonists, these literary representations of migration deepen our understanding of the immigrant experience. Through these literary works, we soon realize that gender plays a constitutive role in the process and must be considered a dimension of migration.

Instead of strictly associating gender with women, I draw from the work of migration scholar Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, and frame this project around an understanding of gender as a set of social practices that determine the power structure of all human relations. I will integrate the idea she articulated in *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*, that gender is more than a simple element of migration, but an element of power relations that shapes migration. Moreover, as the



gender theorist Michael Kimmel suggests: “Masculinity and femininity are relational constructs...One cannot understand the social construction of either masculinity or femininity without reference to the other” (12). My project recognizes how gender organizes many kinds of relationships between male and female, such as mother/son, brother/sister, and father/daughter. While gender is influential in shaping all human behavior, it must be understood in subjective and mutable terms. That is, as a process that is constantly being configured and reconfigured over time and space. For this reason, the work of Judith Butler and R.W. Connell serve as the theoretical foundation from which each text is analyzed. All six literary works are manifestations of Butler’s idea that gender is an act that is constantly occurring and never static. Butler rejects a binary and essentialized way of thinking about gender that creates the simple categories of male/female or masculine/feminine, because this logic assumes that gender is something that we “are” rather than “do.” Once gender is conceptualized as a verb rather than a noun, one begins to see how subjective a term it becomes. Butler maintains that “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (33). Because gender choices are constrained by this regulatory frame, it becomes difficult to break free of the power structures that have determined these ascribed roles.

I analyze how this regulatory frame shapes the gender identities of each of the protagonists and contributes to their decision to migrate. The protagonists feel trapped in a gendered matrix of power that prevents them from any sense of autonomy. Young males feel constrained by the traditional gender expectation that requires them to stay

home and work to provide for their families. Being caught in between childhood and adulthood creates confusion and tension within the family unit. Ultimately, they decide to break free from these limitations by leaving their homeland in search of adventure and opportunity. In many cases, these young migrant characters are influenced by the ostensible material wealth of their peers. Because they strive to meet the expectations of what men should do and should be, they fail to focus on what they are really capable of as young men. Their desire to live up to what R.W. Connell constitutes as a hegemonic masculinity influences the decision making process. He defines the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a culturally normative ideal of male behavior that oppresses other males and females. However, my analysis of each literary text shows how as they move across time and space, their ideas of what it means to be a man begins to change. Connell's research on masculinities is helpful in explaining the protagonist's sudden shift:

Masculinities are neither programmed in our genes, nor fixed by social structure, prior to social interaction. They come into existence as people act. They are actively produced, using the resources and strategies available in a given social setting. Masculinities are created in specific historical circumstances and, as those circumstances change, the gender practices can be contested and reconstructed. (12-13)

By creating characters who subvert many of the traditional roles assigned to being a male in African society, these novelists challenge the norms established by African society that their literary predecessors promulgated. The body of literature that came out of the colonial period, and years following independence, rejected the paternalism that the Colonial empire inculcated upon the African, and replaced it with the image of African paternal figure. However, the authors whose work I analyze in this project, reject the traditional ideals that the masculine elders embody, by rebelling against the normative

roles of the African male. Instead, they embrace alternative and at times rebellious forms of African masculinity, which emerge from the nexus between gender and migration.

The female protagonists perceive their migratory journey as an opportunity to escape a confined gender structure which places them in a subordinate position. No longer is the image created by authors such as Leopold Senghor in “Femme noire,” of the essentialized African woman, the only vision of what it means to be a female in today’s Africa. Instead of depicting women as passive victims silenced by their male counterparts, these contemporary writers offer radically different visions of African women by reconfiguring the traditional role of mother to include marks of sexuality and defiance. Migration becomes an opportunity to establish a different gendered identity because they come into contact with new social, political, and economic worlds. But as my analysis will prove, it does not necessarily mean new gender roles will be established. In some cases, migration complicates constructions of femininity and destroys their gendered identity. However, as Obiama Nnaemeka judiciously states in the introduction to the seminal study of African women, *The Politics of (M)othering: Womanhood, Identity and Resistance in African Literature*: “What is important is not whether these agents survive their insurrection or are crushed by it; what is crucial is the fact that they choose to act” (15). Nnaemeka’s work is an important model from which I analyze each literary piece that comprises this dissertation because it challenges our assumptions of victimhood and agency.

While I acknowledge that different levels of agency available to female migrants, I also think it is important to recognize that the line between victim and agent can be blurred. In other words, even female migrants who work in the sex industry under

miserable conditions can be said to be both victims and agents. While some popular media accounts choose to label female migrants as passive victims who need to be rescued from exploitative work as sex workers, it is important to recognize that by choosing to migrate they are exhibiting control over their destiny, and thus exercise a degree of autonomy that is often overlooked. Even if they enter into a restrictive environment such as prostitution, it can still be said that they have made a decision to alter the course of their lives in a radical way. Nnaemeka references *Ngambika*--a seminal work in African literary studies to demonstrate the complexity of the victim/agent dichotomy.

*Ngambika* delinks victimhood and powerlessness. This forceful articulation of agency in victimhood asks for assistance, not the removal of the load. *Ngambika* reveals not the absence but the limitation of agency; it says in effect that 'I can carry this load only if you can balance it for me.' On the one hand, *Ngambika* speaks against debilitating excess and unevenness and, on the other hand, *Ngambika* it argues for balance and fair share. (3)

My dissertation builds on the critical studies found in *Ngambika* by revising our understanding of female migrants as victims and recognizing a certain degree of agency they possess.

Chapter Two includes an analysis of Donato Ndongo's first work of fiction, the short story "El sueño," and his latest novel, *El metro*. In 1973, when "El sueño" was published, Ndongo was only twenty-three, and had only been in Spain for eight years. Despite his relative inexperience as a writer, one is impressed by the prescience of his understanding of an issue that currently remains complex and controversial for both Africa and Spain. The amount of migration that occurred during the time period in which

Ndongo published the story pales in comparison to the current numbers. Spain, in 1973, was still under the control of Francisco Franco, who prescribed to a monolithic idea of the nation. It was still largely a country of emigration, and not immigration. In the article “Social and Economic Change in a Climate of Political Immobilism,” Borja De Riquer I Permanyer estimates that 1,500,000 Spaniards between the years of 1955 and 1975, emigrated to other parts of the world in search of work. The majority of African migrants who immigrated to Spain fit the profile of Ndongo, who arrived in 1965, after receiving a scholarship to study in Valencia. There were, however, other migrants who sought illegal entry into the country via the Strait of Gibraltar. Many of them were forced to compete with millions of Spaniards who migrated to the urban centers during this time. Permanyer states that the number of cities with populations of over 100,000 rose from twenty in 1960 to forty in 1975. It was reading about one such group of African migrants in a Barcelona newspaper, that Ndongo felt compelled to explore the complexity of the migratory experience through a literary narrative like “El sueño.”

The story details the anonymous protagonist’s journey from his rural homeland in Senegal all the way to Spain. At a young age, he begins to feel the social pressure placed on young Africans to assume the role of the adult male by providing for his family. After spending only four years at school in Bignona, he begins working on a plantation in order to meet the established intergenerational expectations of a young African male. It is there that he meets Traoré, and decides to pursue a marriage with her. His plans are complicated by the high dowry of twelve cows, which forces him to consider migrating. He is influenced by his cousins’ stories about the many opportunities that lie beyond his local village. Their migratory experiences supersede the opinion of his grandfather

Diallo, who tries to convince his grandson that his presence is needed at home. It is this type of pressure to assume the gendered role of the young African male that causes him to migrate. I will explore the intergenerational relationship between the protagonist, his grandfather, and cousins in order to understand how these relations contribute to his decision to leave. Additionally, my analysis will focus on how his notion of masculinity intersects with the cultural tradition of the brideprice and causes him to migrate. I will then follow the protagonist as he moves along the migratory circuit and explore how his gendered role and identity undergo a transformation based on his temporal and spatial position. My reading of this story privileges the work of Frantz Fanon and Walter D. Mignolo, whose theoretical contributions help to understand the colonial condition and complex that the anonymous protagonist experiences. Additionally, I apply the empirical research of scholars of migration studies and African culture such as Dorte Thorsen, Karen Armstrong, Jack Goody and Obiama Nnaemeka to position my work in an interdisciplinary framework that is sorely needed in analyzing the relationship between gender and migration.

“El sueño” serves as a precursor to the latest novel published by Donato Ndongo, *El metro* (2007). The protagonist, Lambert Obama Ondo, feels the same social pressure as his counterpart in “El sueño” to maintain his masculine gendered identity by entering into marriage. Just like in “El sueño,” when Lambert pursues marriage, he encounters resistance because of a cultural tradition. Ndongo elucidates the difficulties of the adult male who tries to enter into manhood only to be held back by his own father. As this scenario unfolds, Lambert concludes that his only option is to emigrate. My analysis of his decision to migrate will focus on the gendered expectations of young African males to

marry and raise a family. I demonstrate how antiquated cultural traditions intersect with gender roles to influence Lambert's decision. The middle and final portions of the journey focus on his migratory experience in the urban areas of Cameroon, Senegal, and eventually Spain. Because he encounters so many female migrants along the way, I will draw attention to how the gender roles of male and female protagonists are maintained and reconfigured as they move from Africa to Europe. I will analyze how Lambert's interactions with these female migrant characters force him to reassess his masculine gender identity and his views of the female's role in society. Finally, I analyze Lambert's time in Spain by focusing on the social networks that facilitate his assimilation into his new community. I compare how these networks are structured along gender lines and can make a difference in the experience of the migrant. This chapter draws from the theoretical work of Paul Gilroy and Patricia Hill Collins, whose ideas on race, the African diaspora, and gender have been instrumental in understanding African identity. I also build on the empirical field work of a multitude of African scholars such as Victor Agadjanian, Betty Potash, Jessica Ogden, Akosua Ampofo, Christine Qunta, Tea Virtanen, and Michael Ba Banutu-Gomez. While situating my work within an interdisciplinary matrix enriches our understanding of African gender dynamics, it also enables us to see how these literary representations do not always conform to reality—thus, creating radically different ideas of identity, migration, and gender norms.

While Donato Ndongo's experience as a migrant residing outside of Equatorial Guinea has been permanent, Chapter Three's analysis focuses on the work of a temporary migrant, Maximiliano Nkogo. Nkogo, who after spending a brief period abroad in Madrid, returned to his native country and now resides in Malabo, where he works for the

government of Teodoro Obiang. Prior to holding his current position of minister of welfare, Nkogo gained the notoriety of more established writers, most notably his one-time mentor, Donato Ndongo. In fact, it is Ndongo who wrote the introduction to the collection of three short stories that brought Nkogo recognition: *Adjá-Adjá*. My analysis will be restricted to Nkogo's final story of the collection, "Emigración," which describes the horrendous conditions that exist in Equatorial Guinea during the current rule of Teodoro Obiang. In order to escape abject poverty, the young protagonist, Miko, decides to leave for Spain. Miko feels the same social pressure to provide for his family as his counterparts in "El sueño," and *El metro*. As the firstborn child whose father was killed, he drops out of school to assist his mother and younger siblings. Just like the other protagonists, Miko is forced to grow up in a single parent household and provide for his family. I will analyze how the loss of a parent is a contributing factor in a child's decision to migrate. Just as in Ndongo's work in which Lambert and the anonymous protagonist identify themselves as equals of their elders because of the journey, Miko envisions that he will achieve a higher status in the community by migrating. I will discuss Miko's journey towards Spain and narrow my scope to focus on another female character that makes the trip with him. Nkogo's description of this female passenger is one of defiance and determination; someone who possesses enough autonomy over her life and that of her unborn child to reject female genital mutilation. She is unwilling to continue to comply with the cultural traditions of her people that jeopardize her future and that of her child. She possesses the same desire to dream as her male counterparts and will not compromise those dreams just because she is a woman. Because a bulk of the story takes place in Equatorial Guinea, a former colony of Spain, I draw from the theoretical work of



Frantz Fanon, Walter Dignolo, and Mary Louise Pratt to anchor this chapter. My analysis is also informed by the research of Equatorial Guinean specialists such as Fernando Abaga. Finally, because the second half of this chapter examines how the issue of female genital mutilation intersects with migration, various scholars who have conducted research on the topic influence my work: Liselotta Dellenborg, Jennifer Allen, Obiama Nnameka, and Betina Shell-Duncan.

Chapter Four shifts from the West African nation of Equatorial Guinea to discuss literary representations of migration from a Moroccan perspective. While at first glance the transition may seem abrupt, in fact, the two regions are bound by the colonial legacy of the Spanish. Morocco is another African country whose history, economy, culture, and language are intertwined with Spain's. Expansion into North Africa became a priority for the Spanish after the independence movements swept through their American colonies in the early nineteenth century. Instead of rejecting and emasculating the Muslims like they had done during the Reconquest, the Spanish were now looking to build relationships with Moroccans in hopes of expanding their empire. Some Spaniards even justified the mission because they felt much more attuned to African culture than their French and English counterparts, and thus better suited to colonize. Intellectuals such as Joaquin Costa emphasized the similarities between Spain and Morocco to galvanize support for the expansion into Morocco. Instead of comparing Spaniards to dark skin Africans, Costa identified how the North African Berber tribes shared similar physical characteristics with their Spanish brothers. A majority of Costa's ideas about the subject are found in an article entitled "Los intereses de España en Marruecos:"

We will not find a single fiber in our bodies, nor a sentiment in our souls, not an idea in our minds, not a cell in our brains, nor a puff of air in our atmosphere, nor a furrow in our soil, which doesn't bear the mark of those Berber and Oriental races that made of the Peninsula a shining beacon in the middle of the Dark Ages, and whose immortal spirit still circulates like a subtle warmth, like an impalpable breath, through all of our nerves, and moves our arms and commands our will; and if it is true that Spain, because of its geology and its flora, is linked with Africa and not with Europe, the Spanish people, because of their psychology and culture, must seek out the birth of civilization and the elevation of their spirit on the other side of the Strait rather than on the other side of the Pyrenees. It could be said without exaggeration that just as for natural history Africa begins in the Pyrenees, in terms of human history, for all Spaniards, Africa begins in the soles of their feet and ends in the hairs of their head. (160)<sup>2</sup>

While in the nineteenth century Costa and his counterparts stressed consanguinity and brotherhood, contemporary cultural productions offer a startling contrast.

Chapter Four centers on the work of Najat El Hachmi, herself a Moroccan immigrant living in Spain since the age of eight. She migrated with her family from the Rifian region of Moroccan to Barcelona, where she learned Catalan. The arrival of many North African migrants like El Hachmi and her family to Catalonia, has rekindled the intense debate within the region of maintaining a Catalan national identity. The politics of language has become front and center in a region where a large number of African migrants is perceived as a threat to the local culture. In El Hachmi's case, Catalan becomes the dominant language, so much so that the novel, *L'últim patriarca* was originally published in Catalan, and then translated under the title *El último patriarca*. While she has adopted Catalan as her primary language, she has not abandoned the language and culture of her native Morocco. Because of her familiarity with the Amazigh (Berber) culture, it is no surprise she sets the novel in that region of Morocco. Her work

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<sup>2</sup> Translation found in Susan Martín Marquez's *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity*.

offers a lens through which to view the roles of men and women in Berber society. While in the urban centers of Casablanca and Marrakech many women enjoy a greater sense of freedom and autonomy, life in the remote regions of the Rif Mountains offers little hope for change. The traditional patriarchal structure which strictly enforces gender role ideologies by restricting women's movement in public spaces is still common in the isolated parts of the country. Consequently, women become domesticated and economically dependent on the male. The male dominated traditions described above represent the basis for El Hachmi's novel, *El último patriarca*. In this chapter, I analyze the nexus of these patriarchal systems and migration through the eyes of a strong female character. Along with a close analysis of how migration alters the gendered identity of this female character, I also examine how gender relations shape the decision making process of her father, Mimoun, to depart for Spain. His migratory experience in Spain is worthy of a close gendered examination in order to shed light on how migration can potentially reinforce patriarchal traditions, while also allowing us to understand the gendering of social networks. Furthermore, his return to Morocco after years in Spain enables the reader to understand how inherent gender codes are part of the performance of the migrant as he interacts with those who stay behind. In addition to consulting the postcolonial research of such scholars as Robert Young and Susan Martin-Marqu ez, this chapter also includes the work of noted Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi in order to gain better insight into the familial dynamics of rural Morocco.

While Chapter Four approaches the issue of rural Moroccan migration to Spain, Chapter Five examines how Laila Lalami's novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* approaches the issue from an urban perspective through the lens of four different

characters: Murad, Aziz, Halima, and Faten. Lalami, who was born and raised in the metropolitan center of Rabat, uses her knowledge of the urban areas of contemporary Morocco to shed some light on how gender shapes migration. It was after reading an article in the back pages of the French newspaper *Le Monde* about a group of migrants who lost their lives crossing the Strait of Gibraltar, that she began work on the novel. At the time, she was living in Los Angeles and decided to try her hand at writing in English. In a 2008 Authors@Google presentation she discussed the rationale for this decision by stating that it granted her some distance from which to write objectively without feeling a sense of nostalgia for her homeland. Morocco is now a country which sends close to one million migrants to Spain, with a significant percentage of these migrants originating from the urban centers of the country. In the article “Morocco’s migration experience: a transnational perspective,” geographer Hein de Haas provides some valuable insight on why international migration occurs from these areas:

People from areas located at the “margin of the margin” tend to migrate less and most migration from such areas tends to be internal. Similarly, in southern Morocco, sedentary peasant populations of relatively well-connected oases, endowed with better infrastructural links and socio-political relations to the outside world, participated earlier and more intensively in international migration than sedentary or nomadic (and semi-nomadic) people living in small oases or other isolated areas in the Atlas mountains, steppes, and deserts. Typically the poorest people within sending communities are not the ones most likely to migrate, because they lack the resources to do so. (53)

Lalami’s work fleshes out research by social scientists such as de Haas by illuminating some of the reasons this international migration occurs from urban areas.

Although each protagonist has a different reason for wanting to reach Spain, there is a gendered thread that binds all of their stories and propels them to board the small raft

one evening in Tangier. What follows that fateful trip across the Strait of Gibraltar is a journey back in time, in which Lalami reveals why each protagonist decides to migrate. Murad feels he must emigrate in order to regain his status as the first born child that he has lost to his more successful younger siblings. Aziz is tired of assuming a subordinate role to his wife and must convince her that his time away from home is only temporary. Halima decides that she must migrate with her children in order to escape an abusive husband who refuses to grant her a divorce. Finally, Faten migrates when after failing her college entrance exam, she realizes that because she is a female in a patriarchal society, she is left without any viable career options. While gender relations play a constitutive role in the decision making process, my analysis of each character proves that the journey is a gendered one, capable of favoring men over women, or vice versa. The ways in which their gendered identities are altered because of their movement across time and space is insightful, especially if juxtaposed with El Hachmi's work. Additionally, I examine how Lalami uses gender norms to impact the eventual return of each migrant. Along with Mernissi's seminal work *Beyond the Veil*, this chapter also incorporates the work done by other scholars in the field of migration studies such as David McMurray, Doris Gray, and Laura Agustín.

Chapter Six highlights how young migrant males use their bodies as sex workers in order to survive in their new surroundings. My earlier analysis draws attention to the number of female migrant characters who work in the sex industry after migration. Their migration and subsequent decision to become prostitutes represents a rebellion against normative traditions that codify their existence. By contrast, fewer studies have focused on the role males play in this industry, particularly as it relates to men as sex workers

themselves. This dearth of research contributes to the maintenance of traditional models of African male sexuality that refuse to acknowledge alternative visions of masculinity. The social and political discourse that constitutes the heteronormative in Moroccan society makes it difficult to construct a working dialogue on sexuality. If discussions about transgressive sexual identities remain restricted to the margin, Moroccans will continue to entertain myths and fallacies about sexuality. Instead of choosing to remain silent about the topic of sexuality, in *Leaving Tangier*, Tahar Ben Jelloun brings the issue to the foreground by intersecting it with migration.

The intersection between sexuality and migration has long been of interest to Ben Jelloun. In 1975, as a student in social psychiatry, he completed his doctoral thesis on the sexual isolation of North African migrants in Europe. Two years later, Le Seuil published *La Plus Haute des Solitudes*, a book that was based on his empirical research. In the book, Ben Jelloun seeks to understand the sexual problems of the North African immigrant by shedding light on the psycho-cultural world of the North African male. He explains that the male migrant is judged by the ability to sexually perform and that sexual impotence results in the loss of identity. Because the male migrant is a product of this system, it becomes difficult for him to modify how he defines authentic manhood upon his arrival in Europe. Ben Jelloun argues that the male immigrant finds relief in sexual encounters, because it serves to stabilize a masculinity that is in a constant state of flux. With the immigrant subjected to a series of social, cultural, and economical changes, he seeks to maintain any trace of the lifestyle left behind. With this in mind, a majority of workers interviewed in the study admitted that their sexual possibilities were reduced to homosexuality, masturbation, and prostitution. Ben Jelloun encourages them to not only

utilize these alternatives as viable outlets for their sexual desires, but also to talk about their emotions and anxieties. These types of discussions serve to break the silence on a subject that has long been taboo in North African society. Ben Jelloun's early interest in the psychological effects of migration on masculinities carries over to his contemporary fictional work. While my analysis will include several different migrant characters in his latest novel *Leaving Tangier*, my focus will be on one principle character who embodies this intersection. In order to strengthen my understanding of the relationship between sexuality and migration, I draw from the work of the following scholars: Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Daniela Flesler, and Gema Pérez Sánchez.

Within each of the literary works, there lies great potential to penetrate the rigid and uniform boundaries created by the colonial and postcolonial hegemonic discourse that pervades both African and Spanish society. Each author presents a startling contrast to the homogenous masculine and feminine identities that became the norm during the colonial and post independence years. These authors urge us to consider how the migratory space offers a unique site from which to contest normative notions of masculinity and femininity. Their literary representations of the migratory experience remind us of the power of art to influence social and political reality. It is their work that is helping to shape our understanding of African migration to Spain. For each of these authors, migration is not merely a literary theme, but a personal experience from which they draw to help shed light on the complexity of the phenomenon.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE LITERARY WORK OF DONATO NDONGO

### PART ONE: “El sueño”

Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with the kings.

-Chinua Achebe,  
*Things Fall Apart*

Although Donato Ndongo wrote the short story “El sueño” in 1974, long before his more critically acclaimed novels *Las tinieblas de tu memoria negra* (1987) and *Los poderes de la tempestad* (2000), the thread of migration connects the three works. In many ways, the characters that Ndongo creates resemble the author’s own lived experiences of occupying multiple points along a transnational continuum. When Ndongo left his village of Niefang at the age of fifteen to study in Spain, he was forced to negotiate between the past and the present in an effort to integrate into a Spanish society that had largely closed its borders to outsiders. Not unlike Ndongo himself, the educated protagonists of the two novels navigate between home and host societies in an effort to reconcile this double consciousness created by their movement. In “El sueño,” and *El metro*, even though Ndongo offers a slightly different version of the migrant protagonist as being uneducated, he is forced to deal with the same dilemma as his counterparts. While they desire to remain a part of their home community, they no longer feel a connection to the conventional traditions that surround them. They feel a constant push-pull to either conform to the traditions of their ancestors or reject them in favor of a more modern worldview. Donato Ndongo states in an interview with Dr. Michael Ugarte from



the University of Missouri-Columbia how he views the question:

Many of the purists who demand that we only use our traditions do not acknowledge certain realities. We Africans are also familiar with modernity, we too use the metro, we travel by plane, we wear suits, etc. I cannot educate my child as if I were still living in the age of my grandfather. Am I going to ask my son to wear a loin cloth? That's ingenuous, it's simply folkloric. We must go beyond that. (230)

It is important to understand Ndongo's subject position as someone wanting to transcend the absolute dichotomy of modern/tradition, so that it can be applied to his work. In the following pages, I will show how "El sueño" and *El metro* go beyond that, by challenging the traditional practices of African culture through the act of migration. The narratives question the traditional macroeconomic assumptions related to migration by offering important insight into the gendered dynamics of the phenomenon. This chapter's analysis begins with "El sueño," Ndongo's first published piece of fiction and ends with his latest literary work, *El metro*.

Embedded within "El sueño" is the anonymous protagonist's desire to reassert a lost masculinity after years of being subjugated by others. His experience is like that of many African males following years of colonization, and one that Frantz Fanon explores in his work. Central to Fanon's arguments in *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks* is the understanding that colonial experience and the years that followed, stripped the colonized from any sense of humanity. Fanon argues that, "He [the colonized] wanted quite simply to be a man, and nothing but a man." (92). Fanon directs many of his comments towards the colonized man to resist colonial domination and invert the master/slave dialectic. The colonial doctrine emasculated the male and reconfigured the traditional gender structures. Therefore, Fanon's works are a manifesto

for the colonized male to reassert his individuality and masculinity by rebelling against the system. Although Ndongo wrote “El sueño” in the post independence years, one gets the sense that the colonial structure is still in place. While the colonial viceroy no longer physically occupies the colonized country, there is still a power structure that relegates the young protagonist to an inferior position. I contend that the vestiges of colonialism deprive the young protagonist of his manhood and independence. After years of being oppressed by others, migration serves as an act of resistance against these repressive conditions.

Our introduction to the protagonist reveals that despite his youth, he was still exposed to this type of treatment. In fact, Ndongo opens “El sueño” with the protagonist revealing the following detail about his age: “I’m young”<sup>3</sup> (75). It is important to remember that many of the migrants who make the perilous journey from Africa to Spain are adolescents just like the protagonist. However, they do not fit nicely into the categories of “adolescence” or “youth” because they make decisions that fall outside the lines of a fixed notion of what it means to be a child or adolescent. It is useful to interrogate the ideas of “youth” or “adolescence” as social categories, and move beyond a universal understanding of these concepts in favor of more fluid definitions. As the protagonist begins to nostalgically think back to his earlier years, the reader learns that he dropped out of school in order to work on a plantation to support his family. Therefore, we can determine that at a young age he defied the degree of dependence that children are supposed to demonstrate: “When I got where I could put up with the mosquitoes and the hunger without complaining too much, when I was considered a good black man who

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<sup>3</sup> All quotes of “El sueño” are from “The Dream,” Michael’s Ugarte’s English translation of Ndongo’s short story. *Iowa Review* 36. 2 (Fall 2006): 75-79.

could work, they sent me to a plantation” (75). Even though he is only a young adolescent, there is the gendered expectation that he will work on the plantation to support his family. In rural households in West Africa, ethnographic research conducted by Anne Whitehead, Iman Hashim, and Vegard Iversen, explores this tacit agreement between the younger and older generations about labor and economical needs:

Children have to ensure, on the one hand, that they fulfill their obligations to parents and seniors, while, on the other hand, they wish to carve out the space to pursue their own personal endeavors, which is their material interest, and also an aspect of [constructing] their identity and others’ perceptions of them as “a good child.” For their part, seniors need children’s labor to secure subsistence, while at the same time ensuring they provide children with the time and means for pursuing their own endeavors. (6)

Dorte Thorsen’s study of adolescent children in Burkina Faso builds on this research related to the expectations placed on children:

By expecting older children to participate in farm work, they learn all the necessary skills by doing, but they are also important sources of labor for their parents both on the farm and in the house. Adolescent children and youth are also given time to engage in various social activities. But while girls are often under adult surveillance, boys and young men have considerable freedom to explore the social and economic fields (98).

Thorsen’s analysis uncovers how clearly defined the gender roles are in the West African society. I argue that migration is the natural progression for many young males to continue this path of self exploration and adventure. However, they must continue to negotiate the duty they owe to their elders. This agreement between young and old manifests itself in the relationship between the protagonist and his grandfather, Diallo.

Diallo occupies a social position in the society that his grandson aspires to reach.

He is someone whose voice holds both symbolic and real power after witnessing the arrival of the colonizer, and objecting to their methods. During the colonial period, a paternalistic system was in place that emasculated and infantilized the black man at the hands of the colonial master. Literary narratives written during the postcolonial period attempt to invert this hierarchy by allowing the elders to regain some of their power and status stripped of them by colonialism. In many ways, Diallo resembles another of Ndongso's characters, Tío Abeso, who vehemently rejects the colonial presence of the Spanish in *Las tinieblas de tu memoria negra*. Both characters have constructed a dominant masculinity that affords them the right to occupy the position of the "Big Man," in the community. They represent a static notion of masculinity that remains steadfastly committed to autochthonous traditions. While much of the theory in masculinist studies discusses the shifting nature of masculinity, Diallo and Tío Abeso are evidence that indigenous masculinities are still viable and powerful. R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity helps to understand the authority that these men hold in their villages:

The ability to impose a particular definition on other kinds of masculinity is in part of what we mean by "hegemony." Hegemonic masculinity is far more complex than the accounts of essences in the masculinity books would suggest...It is a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance. (112)

Diallo seeks to maintain control in the village by insisting the other forms of masculinities that the younger generation exhibits are inferior to his. His attempts to silence those masculinities are ignored by the protagonist's cousins: "Grandfather Diallo, who still remembered seeing the boat grounded on the sands of Joal Beach in the land of

the Mandiga, told them that none of our women would marry them for their scorn and for having an eye for white women” (75).

For his part, the protagonist finds himself torn by what his grandfather represents. He knows that by migrating he will likely increase his status in the village, and gain the respect of his peers. However, he is unable to forget the words of Diallo, who told him that he was “too young to know so much” (75). By refusing to acknowledge his grandson’s readiness and maturity, Diallo is failing to see that he is a capable decision maker. Even though the protagonist admits that Diallo “was always right” (75), he still decides to pursue interests that conflict with those of his grandfather. I argue this occurs because the young protagonist is attempting to break free of the gendered expectations that his elders place on him. Because as Butler states, gender is never static and constantly evolving, it allows for individuals to exercise agency. Prior to his decision to migrate he occupied a social position that afforded him little autonomy. He states: “I don’t know the reason exactly; I don’t even know what happened. All I know is that I was uprooted from my village to go to school in Bignona” (75). The young protagonist sees migration as an opportunity to demonstrate his maturity and renegotiate his social position within his community. He no longer feels like he belongs on the plantation and states: “And the years went on, I really wanted to get out of there; the misery, the poverty; it was too much” (75). He makes his decision to leave after determining that marriage will provide him the opportunity to escape the abject poverty.

“I was going to marry Black Traoré; she was prettier than the darkest night, but I didn’t have the twelve cows for the dowry: those twelve cows, the twelve cows of my downfall” (75). These words prove how the protagonist begins to feel the social pressure

to be able to provide for his future bride. In *Shifting Ground and Cultural Bodies: Postcolonial Gender Relations in Africa and India*, Karen Armstrong elaborates on this idea by commenting that “with the increasing cost of wedding celebrations and bridewealth throughout this century, establishing a ‘house’ has become difficult for young men” (25). It is the responsibility of the man to provide the material resources to be able to build a successful home. This exemplifies how gender intersects with other ideas about kinship structures, religious doctrines and cultural traditions. It does not exist within a vacuum and must be understood in relation to other concepts. Butler supports this idea by stating the following:

Gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities it becomes impossible to separate out “gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.  
(3)

In the story, the protagonist feels obligated to assert his masculine gender identity by providing for his future wife. “I had four cows. I wanted her to trust me, to see I was hard working, that I was capable of anything, anything for her” (75). Yet, when he realizes that “cows are hard to come by” (76), he begins to consider the possibility of migrating. Furthermore, when he realizes that “Black Traoré was getting impatient and threatening me with hooking up with a more clever man” (76), he feels like he has no other option than to migrate. By using the bridewealth as a method of controlling her future husband, Traoré proves how gender roles are subjective and always floating. Despite living in a patriarchal society, she is able to exercise her agency as a female. The traditional paradigm that places the male in a dominant position and subordinates the female does

not accurately portray the relationship between the protagonist and Traoré. By usurping the power traditionally afforded to the male, she exemplifies Butler's assertion that "gender is a free floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one" (6). Their relationship questions the double standard that traditionally has allowed men more sexual freedom, while subjecting the female to moral scrutiny. Her decision to leave the protagonist forces him to rethink his position in the community and consult his two cousins about their experience as migrants.

The relationship he has with his peers proves to be the deciding factor in his decision to leave his homeland:

My cousin Tello had gone to Gambia to make his fortune, and he came back with twenty cows and two oxen. My other cousin, Lamine, had gone to the land of the Mandiga, in the north, over the Senegal River; he said he came back with something called a bicycle. He said it was worth more than all the cows in the world, but I never wanted to believe him. What in the world could be worth more than a cow? My cousins left and they were the ones who lost faith in the people. The people no longer counted on them. (76)

This passage underscores how influential the peer group can be in determining whether people stay or go. The protagonist is intrigued by the material wealth that his cousins demonstrate as a result of their time spent in other parts of Africa. Tello and Lamine feel obligated to outwardly prove to their peers that the migratory experience resulted in the acquisition of wealth. In describing how young migrants in south-eastern Burkina Faso construct their identity after returning home, Dorte Thorsen asserts: "The child migrant's interests were relative to the social recognition they gained through the demonstration of success by giving gifts, investing in resources for the future, showing off fancy clothes or

items like bicycles and radios” (111). Thorsen’s point emphasizes how the young migrants feel the pressure to give the impression that their journey was a success. The return of the migrant is in effect a performance — an opportunity to act out for the audience, in this case those left behind, that the act of migration was a positive experience. While their journey is inevitably fraught with hardship, when the time comes to return home, the migrant must “save face” in front of those who desperately want news of the Promised Land. I contend keeping up the appearance that the journey was a success is especially important for young male migrants in their efforts to construct a dominant brand of masculinity. Although the protagonist is skeptical of his cousin’s assertion that the bicycle is worth more cows, he is still attracted by their claims and eventually departs for the land of the Mandiga.

When he returns to his hometown for the funeral of his mother, he feels differently about his status in the community. “And I saw a girl (Dikate) that I would have never looked at years ago” (76). He has now constructed a new gendered identity that reflects the different skills he acquired during his time abroad. He plans to use these assets to find another wife. Having already lost Traoré because of non-payment, he feels even more of an economic and social burden to meet the bride price of Dikate. Although he would prefer to stay at home and live like his father, he is compelled to explore what lies beyond his homeland. His words reveal a young man torn between two worlds. “I’d rather have married like my father did [but] how can a woman respect you if you haven’t got anything? So once again I was all tied up in the cow problem” (76). This statement suggests how the gendered expectations continue to plague the young protagonist. His sense of urgency and desperation is palpable when he describes what it would mean to



lose Dikate because of his failure to pay the bride price. “I didn’t want Dikate to leave me like Black (too black) Traoré had done. I had to get the twelve cows very soon. If I didn’t, everyone back home on the banks of the Casamance would think I wasn’t man enough to get married. Life isn’t worth living if a man can’t be a man” (76). Because he ascribes to meet the social customs and gendered roles of his village, he continues his journey north. The idea of masculinity that he constructs for himself is centered on the acquisition of a wife – anything else would be a failure. Uche Isiugo-Abanhe’s analysis of the institution of marriage in African society is informative when applied to the protagonist’s plight: “To be a woman without a husband is unfortunate and disgraceful. Such a one is ridiculed and associated with evil. A man without a wife is regarded as useless” (75). Because these social aspects are contributing to the migratory trend, they merit a closer analysis.

The situation described in “El sueño” falls under the category of bridewealth or bride price, defined as transfers from the family of the groom to the bride. In his book *Bridewealth and Dowry*, Jack Goody emphasizes the importance of cattle as part of the transfer by stating: “The effect is to reinforce the authority of the father and emphasize the tie with the sister. The authority of the older generation is linked to the extent to which the young are dependent on them for marriage cattle or the equivalent” (5). This information is significant because it reveals how a literary portrait such as “El sueño” doesn’t always conform to the anthropological or sociological analysis. The protagonist doesn’t have the financial backing of his father or the bridewealth of a sister to meet the demands of Traoré or Dikate. According to research such as the Bridewealth, Age at Marriage, and Fertility (BAF) project conducted by Uche C. Isiugo-Abanihe, the

protagonist represents a growing trend of wage-earning men in Africa who are now beginning to fund the bridewealth themselves. Of the close to 1,000 male respondents, 69 percent agreed that in their community the individual suitors must now finance the bridewealth without the assistance of their kin and only 20 percent reported relatives still help (81). The protagonist occupies this precarious position that so many young Africans face, and feels conflicted about his decision. He is haunted by the memory of home and begins to recall the words of his grandfather: “When I left for Dakar, it was like going to either heaven or hell, both cases very far and forever. Grandfather Diallo had told me that those kinds of places are like a combination of heaven and hell. He was so right” (76)! By occupying this space of ambivalence, the protagonist embodies the many complexities of migration. Ndongu effectively captures the confusion that plagues the protagonist by using interior monologues in which he vacillates over his decisions.

A combination of the high brideprice and Dikate, who “every day was putting more pressure on me” (77), prompts the protagonist to leave Africa for the Canary Islands, (part of Spain) in search of more opportunities. Again, Ndongu creates a female character who dictates the terms of the relationship. His depiction of African females evokes Obioma Nnaemeka’s assertion that the category of African woman should not be represented by paralysis, but rather by autonomy and agency. In the introduction to the important book *Sisterhood, Feminism & Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*, Nnaemeka states:

In this regard, it will be more accurate to argue not in terms of a monolith (African feminism) but rather in the context of pluralism (African feminisms) that captures the fluidity and dynamism of the different cultural imperatives, historical forces, and localized realities conditioning

women's activism/movements in Africa-from the indigenous variants to the state-sponsored configurations in the postcolonial era. (33)

Her words dovetail nicely with Butler's thoughts about feminism: "The insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of culture, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of "women" are constructed" (14). Dikate and Traoré exemplify the diversity of the category of "woman," which challenges an essentialist understanding of the female identity.

The protagonist tries to accommodate Dikate, but despite earning a higher salary, he is unable to save any significant amount of money because of his proclivity for engaging in sexual relations with white prostitutes, "And the second thing was that I couldn't resist the temptation of making it with the white whores of the port. The money just flew away from me, but I couldn't stop going. It was too much for me" (77). This statement emphasizes how his gendered identity evolves as his spatial location changes. He feels compelled to assert his masculinity by ascribing to the social codes of the port. The sexual freedom he possesses as a male reveals how sexuality and gender are interrelated parts that shape migration. Even though he tries to resist the temptation, the urge to prove his virility by engaging in sexual activity supersedes his fidelity to his future wife. His gendered identity has undergone a transformation as he has moved along the migratory circuit. While in Africa, he was more concerned with providing for his family and meeting the expectations of his bride; his focus has now shifted. His objectives are no longer collective, but instead, strictly personal. His encounters with a white prostitute exemplify the colonial psyche that Frantz Fanon discusses in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Fanon's writings had such a significant impact on the life of Ndongo, that in 1972 and 1973, he published a series of articles paying homage to the Martinique writer and psychiatrist. Of the six articles that appeared in the literary magazine, *Índice*, the fourth article titled "La sexualidad interracial," provides some invaluable insight into the protagonist's sexual relations with the white prostitutes. In the article, Ndongo emphasizes Fanon's assertion that the black man is purely a sexual object for the white woman who is intrigued by his sexual prowess. Ndongo goes on to state that "la muchacha, en efecto, quiere poseer al hombre, pero al hombre "negro." Lo negro queda por encima de la masculinidad" (42). Fanon argues that the white woman enables the black man to fulfill his desire to feel white:

By loving me, she proves to me that I am worthy of a white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man. Her love opens the illustrious path that leads to total fulfillment... I espouse white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. Between these white breasts that my wandering hands fondle, white civilization and worthiness become mine. (45)

The protagonist embodies this desire to be white that Fanon discusses. His focus shifts drastically and is more aligned with a modern European perspective:

I don't want to tell you more. I forgot about the cows, thinking about all the splendors of Paris. Our little town is nothing compared to the whole world! What's the worth of twelve cows if after all nothing is worth the trouble? What are you?-only my downfall. Will I ever see you again? (4)

Still, the protagonist realizes that the contact he has with the prostitute has not enabled him to feel white when he sees that she even dreams differently: "I woke up. She was sleeping next to me. She had a dreamy look on her face. Her dreams were not like mine. They were white woman's dreams" (79). These passages reveal how despite not taking

place in a colonial context, the colonial dilemma of having black skin and a white mask continues to haunt the young protagonist as he tries to reconcile the two sides. Thus, the only option available to him is to perform the role of the hypermasculine black male and conquer the white woman sexually. His mentality coincides with Fanon's findings on the matter:

In recent conversations with Antillean men we learned that their main preoccupation on setting foot in France was to sleep with a white woman. Barely off the ship in Le Havre, have they headed for the bordellos. Once they have achieved this ritual of initiation into "authentic" manhood, they take the train to Paris. (54)

The protagonist now conceptualizes what it means to be a man differently. Connell's research on masculinities is helpful in explaining the protagonist's sudden shift:

Masculinities are neither programmed in our genes, nor fixed by social structure, prior to social interaction. They come into existence as people act. They are actively produced, using the resources and strategies available in a given social setting. Masculinities are created in specific historical circumstances and, as those circumstances change, the gender practices can be contested and reconstructed. (12-13)

His gendered identity has been reconfigured based on the social codes that structure different spaces. Being a man in his rural village does not have the same meaning for the protagonist as it does in the port city of Las Palmas. His desire to reach authentic manhood compels him to comply with the different gendered expectations of each place. His gendered identity follows the same fragmented and interrupted path that the protagonist takes to reach Europe.

Despite engaging in these relationships with the white prostitutes, the protagonist still writes to Dikate and thinks about his family back in Africa. "Maybe if I found work I

could call you soon, your father and mother too, and our brothers and sisters...” (78). His statements emphasize how conflicted he has become because of his migration. He wants to feel liberated and discover independently, yet he also feels trapped as a migrant. He is trying to negotiate the ambivalence he feels as he moves along this continuum. The journey reconfigured his gendered identity and caused him to attach different meanings to being a male. Just as Stuart Hall states, the protagonist’s identity is constantly in motion: “Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation” (222). Prior to his departure, he exhibited a loyalty and reverence for his grandfather and his traditions. “What in this world could be worth more than a cow” (75). These words reveal how the protagonist complied with the unwritten gendered contract that exists between the younger and older generations by initially refusing to acknowledge that migration was the solution to his problems. A lot changed by the time he dreams he is about to die while crossing into France from Spain, when he states “I don’t believe in our spirits anymore” (79). He is no longer the same passive and loyal grandson, but instead is a young man who has acquired a sense of power and agency because of his experiences. I argue that the gendered relationship he shared with his grandfather was based on power. Prior to his departure he was in the weaker position because of his age and lack of world experience. His migration inverted this relationship and enabled him to possess a greater degree of control over his life. He now questions what he previously would have accepted, because his experiences have altered his worldview.

His relationships with Traoré and Dikate are also manifestations of how gender needs to be understood as a dimension of power. Both Traoré and Dikate maintain the upper hand in the relationship by demanding that the protagonist meet their brideprice. By doing this, they reverse the power structure that Connell describes. According to Connell, the main axis of the power structure of gender is the general connection of authority with masculinity. Both Traoré and Dikate undermine this authority and assume control of the male protagonist. Migration affords him the opportunity to regain his position as the authentic male. As he moves along the migratory path, he begins to show signs that he perceives Dikate as his subordinate. “When I wrote to Dikate, I told her we would live there in one of those flats like beehives, where men are insects, but where everything is more comfortable. But of course, Dikate still had a few things to learn. She didn’t even know how to ride a bicycle” (76). He now positions himself as a man who has passed through the migratory rite of passage and has come out on the other side with a different understanding of the world.

Despite giving the impression that his experiences have elevated his status, his time in Spain is not without hardship: “We spent six months in Barcelona. We slept threes in a stinky hammock that pinched into our bare backs. We didn’t go into the city, not even once. I didn’t get to make it with any of the whores in the port. We could barely do anything of our own free will” (78). Although he resides in the promised land of Europe, he continues to live in squalor. Because of these conditions, it is understandable that he takes the first opportunity to enter France, despite not knowing any specific information regarding the trip. The trip leader exposes the protagonist when he takes his money and passport and leaves him to drown in the water. Just as he is about to perish,

he suddenly wakes up and the reader comes to the realization that the morbid journey from Spain to France has been a dream. This detail proves to be unsettling since it reveals that the desire to migrate can become so pervasive as to enter one's dreams. As I discuss in the introduction, the inherent value of literary narratives is to allow access into the cognitive aspects of the migratory process. By framing parts of the story as a dream, Donato Ndongo allows us to understand how powerful the imaginary is in shaping the decision to migrate. I argue that we must not dismiss the imaginary as a purely fictive construction, but recognize that for the protagonist and many other migrants like him, the imaginary is what they know, not what they pretend to know.

With its portrayal of the gendered dimensions of migration, "El sueño" provides the reader with a more complete understanding of the phenomenon. The gendered expectations that the young protagonist feels he must meet to be considered an authentic male greatly influence his decision to leave. Additionally, migration is the means by which the protagonist subverts the dominance of his elders. Instead of following in the footsteps of his Grandfather Diallo, the young protagonist creates an alternative vision of masculinity born out of the migratory experience. Once he is in motion, his gendered identity is constantly in flux and never stable. The migratory space proves to be fraught with contradictions that complicate his understanding of what it means to be a man. For these reasons, the story cannot be dismissed as merely a fictional account of migration, but rather, needs to be read as a social document that demonstrates the intimate relationship between gender and migration. Ndongo follows his short story with a more comprehensive glimpse into the migratory experience with his novel, *El metro*.



## **PART TWO: *El metro***

The thirty-four years that transpired between the publications of “El sueño” and *El metro*, saw significant changes in the landscape of the Spanish nation. By 2007, Spain had transformed itself from a country of emigrants fleeing to other parts of Europe, to a country that migrants from all over the world sought to reach. With the end of the Franco dictatorship, the Spanish government recognized the importance of establishing a stronger relationship with other European markets. Spain’s inclusion into the European Union reinforced their identity with Europe and in the hearts and minds of many Spaniards, solidified their place as a Western capitalist enterprise. By the mid 1980’s, Spain’s economy was rapidly expanding, as the government invested in public works and infrastructural modernization. This direct investment in Spain triggered the arrival of migrants, many of whom found work as part of the boom. In their article “The Politics of 1992,” Helen Graham and Antonio Sánchez estimate that there was an increase in the number of foreign residents in Spain from 200,000 in 1981 to 400,000 in 1990, and in 2001, there were more than a million. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, that number has now increased to over five million. While the number of migrants has grown exponentially over the years, Spain is still one of the European countries with the lowest percentage of immigrants. Despite this fact, the increase in the number of North and West Africans who try to make the perilous journey across the Strait of Gibraltar continues to spark a national debate on immigration. Graham and Sanchez claim: “Migrant workers from North and West Africa have come to be the targets of racism in

Spain, even though they are a minority (only 25 percent of the migrant population, the rest being constituted by Latin Americans together with Europeans and North Americans)” (414). In fact, it was a subtle incident of xenophobia that Ndongo experienced as a black man in Spain, which planted the seed for the novel. In *Entre estética y comprometida La obra de Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo*, Joseph-Désiré Otabela and Sosthène Onomo Abena include the anecdote:

La idea de escribir esta nueva novela nace de un anodino viaje del autor en el Metro de Madrid; viajaba muy tarde en la noche cuando se encontró compartiendo un tren con una pareja, al parecer de españoles. Notó que sus compañeros de viaje se sentían algo incómodos, inquietos y hasta espantados de estar encerrados en este tren con un negro. No se sabrá nunca si habían llegado a su destino; lo que sí se sabe es que bajaron apresuradamente en la siguiente estación, como si estuvieran huyendo, como si tuvieran miedo de viajar con él a esta hora tan avanzada de la noche. (138)

Ndongo’s personal experience underscores the obstacles that African migrants face as they arrive on Spanish soil. Their attempts to integrate into a culture that embraces the title of “first world” Europe, are often times met with resistance. Instead of embracing the “other” into their heterogeneous culture, Spain continues to construct an immigration policy that in the words of Graham and Sanchez , “is geared to creating a security cordon, an internal control to ‘manage’ the supply of migrants from the ‘South’, which exists in this scenario as a provider of cheap labor for Europe” (415). Against this backdrop, Donato Ndongo creates the life of his protagonist, Lambert Obama Ondo, as he travels from Cameroon to Spain.

*El metro* underscores how a socially constructed of idea of gender, class, and tradition contribute to migration. This novel embodies Judith Butler’s assertion that “gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of

discursively constituted identities” (20). These identities shift as Lambert Obama Ondo migrates from his rural homeland to other parts of Africa, and eventually onto Spain. As Hall (1996) states: “Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (227). It is only through his travels where he gazes others and others gaze him, that Lambert is able to pull away the multiple layers of his identity. Once he does this, a new human identity forms which reflects the new gender codes of his two worlds. Before reaching that point, my analysis will focus on the origin of his decision to leave; I argue that the rigid gender norms of his community play a central role in his migration.

Just like his counterpart in “El sueño,” Lambert is the firstborn son to his parents and assumes many expectations and responsibilities because of this status. The relationship the firstborn son has with his parents is one that has been discussed by Michael Ba Banutu-Gomez:

The firstborn child is seen as a gift from God to their parents. It is a gift that increases the importance of the parents in the community because it gives them more responsibility and trains parents to care for the additional children who will be born. This newborn child is considered to be the person who will be in charge of the family when the parents are old. This firstborn child will serve as an example for all the other children to follow. (33)

What complicates Lambert’s ability to fulfill the requirement to provide for his family is the hostile relationship he shares with his father Guy Ondo Ebang. However, Tea Virtanen’s research reveals this strained relationship is not uncommon in African society:

Though the shame built into the relationship between the parents and the first-born is the same irrespective of the sex of the child, its concrete consequences for sons and daughters are different. The tension between

father and his sons is more, probably because the filial son reproduces the patrilineage by replacing the father. (52)

The root of their hostile relationship lies in Lambert's unwillingness to embrace a western ideology, like his father. Guy Ondo has embraced the type of masculinity that can be categorized as the docile native who mimics the colonial master. From his earliest days, Guy Ondo realizes that adapting to the French model is his best option for success. "Aunque en teoría se le presentaron al joven Ondo Ebang varias opciones para construir su vida, la realidad cotidiana le mostró, sin embargo, un sólo camino: el de una vida más cómoda, arropada por el beneplácito de los nuevos amos venidos del otro lado del mundo, portadores de la Única Verdad" (23). Once again, Guy Ondo resembles another masculine character from *Las tinieblas de tu memoria negra*: the young protagonist's father. Both men seek to benefit from what the colonizing country can offer them in material terms, but in the process, sacrifice their reputation amongst the native population. Lambert is adamant that his father is just a pawn to the French and seems to realize that as Homi Bhabha argues, the colonized is almost the same as the colonizer, but not quite. He is unable to sway his father's commitment to the French and defers to his mother, Dorotee to serve as an intermediary between the two. Her eventual death marks a turning point in Lambert's life and prompts him to make a promise to his deceased mother that as the first born child, he will keep the family together. Lambert decides that in order to accomplish this, he will "seguir el camino inverso al trazado de su papá que amparado por la magia de los fantasmas venidos de mundo lejanos, más allá del mar, para subvertir el orden constituido y predicar la Única Verdad" (100). The path he takes

leads him into a life of subsistence agriculture that mirrors the customs and habits of his ancestors.

While he remained content with his new life, there was still a void that troubled him. Just as the young protagonist in “El sueño” understood the importance of finding a wife, Lambert feels he must enter into a conjugal relationship:

En realidad, nadie entendía que un joven tan activo y sensato no tuviera todavía una esposa, porque ningún hombre llega a su plenitud si no tiene una mujer propia que le lleve la comida al abaa; Obama Ondo sabía que ningún fang puede considerarse digno, ni merecer el pleno respeto de los demás, mientras no asuma las responsabilidades del matrimonio y la paternidad. (110)

Lambert begins to feel that the town elders are putting pressure on him to find a wife. “Así se lo decían los ancianos del lugar, sobre todo el viejo Nso Endaman, de tal modo que Obama Ondo captó la sutil presión” (110). Because of the well defined gender codes that define African society, young men must follow the patriarchal traditions that precede them. This includes embracing polygamy, while also maintaining authority over the female. Lambert acknowledges that he needs a wife “para que le lavara la ropa, guisara sus comidas y mantuviera siempre caliente el rescoldo del hogar” (111). This proves his desire to sustain the traditional male dominated hierarchy in his household. Conversely, in traditional African society, the female is to remain passive and subordinate to the male. The image of the African woman as powerless is one that Christina Qunta articulates in *Women in Southern Africa*: “The African woman of the rural areas is portrayed as little more than a slave, who goes about her tasks with silent acceptance. She has no past and no future, given the inherent backwardness of her society...She never speaks for herself but is always spoken about” (11). Furthermore, the omniscient narrator comments about

the woman's role in a relationship: "Anne Mengue tampoco le había insinuado tal desenlace, pues no es normal la mujer solicite al hombre la relación, y menos el matrimonio, y sólo las más necias, o las más frívolas, o las perdidas osan tomar la iniciativa en tales asuntos" (111). At this point in the narrative, it appears Anne and Lambert fit into the discursive categories of the traditional male and female in African society. On one end of the spectrum lies the passive silent female victim, as Qunta describes. On the opposite end sits the traditional dominant male who subordinates women. However, I argue that it is important to interrogate these categories and uncover the complexities of what it means to be an African male and female. As the following analysis reveals, Anne and Lambert's relationship simultaneously conforms to these prescribed gender roles, but also challenges them, eventually leading to their migration.

The fluidity of their gendered experiences embodies Butler's theory of gender.

While she argues that over time gender becomes a free floating artifice, she also states:

That is not to say that any and all gendered possibilities are open, but that the boundaries of analysis suggest the limits of a discursively conditioned experience. These limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicted on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality. (9)

Both Lambert and Anne possess a certain degree of agency; however, they are also constrained by the dominant norms of their community. On the one hand, Lambert rejects the idea of controlling the female through physical abuse and rebels against a singular idea of African masculinity:

Lambert Obama Ondo era atento y servicial, generoso y trabajador, fuerte y abnegado, y su forma reposada de plantear los problemas aseguraba un carácter paciente y equilibrado. Cuestión muy importante, ya que si era

inevitable que el hombre pegara a sus mujeres y a sus hijos para asegurar la obediencia y el respeto. (119)

On the other hand, Lambert is also conflicted by his gender role; he feels the social pressure to maintain his masculine identity by adhering to the tradition of polygamy. Because he wants to emulate his ancestors, he feels obligated to engage in sexual relations with other women. He does not divulge any of this information to Anne because of how he perceives she will respond:

(Él) era sabedor de que todas las mujeres son celosas y convencido de que existen según qué cosas que no se pueden compartir con ellas. Un hombre debe saber reservarse sus propios secretos; a fin de cuentas, la mujer es una extraña que en cualquier momento puede volverse contra ti, y su carácter veleidoso puede perjudicarte si llega a conocer hasta tus más íntimos pensamientos. (112)

For her part, Anne acknowledges the pervasive nature of polygamy and knows that “todos los hombres son iguales y no pierden ocasión de tomar aquello que se les ofrece” (128). Conversely, she is also defiant in what she expects. “No compartiría nunca a un hombre” (126). Her words reflect a new femininity that questions accepted norms that structure African society. Being a woman to Anne means more than just serving as a subordinate to the male. Butler argues against a monolithic idea of womanhood: “If one “is” a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive...” (3).

What complicates her ability to maintain power in the relationship is her apparent infertility. She realizes that Lambert would most likely embrace polygamy if she proved to be infertile. Traditionally, many African societies scorn childless individuals and view those women who are infertile as the ultimate betrayal. In “Whose ‘Unmet Need’? Dis/Agreement about Childbearing among Ghanaian Couples,” Akosua Ampofo asserts

that “the importance of children makes childlessness an important reason for divorce, although husbands are more likely to seek an additional wife or have children outside the marriage than to choose this option” (122). Anne begins to question his commitment: “Accedería a casarse con ella cuando no había demostrado que podía darle hijos?” (125). She avoids this scorn by visiting her grandmother to receive a traditional home remedy for infertility. Only a short time after consulting her grandmother, she announces to Lambert that she is pregnant with their first child. This news empowers Lambert to realize that it is time to propose to Anne. After revealing his desire to marry her, she unexpectedly flees from his embrace. She knows that their marriage will never be permitted by the village elders because of her mother’s relationship with Lambert’s father. When the widowed Jeanne Bikie and Guy Ondo become sexually involved, a marriage between Lambert and Anne Mengue would then constitute an incestuous union, and violate the strict exogamy rules of the clan. Through Guy Ondo and Jeanne Bikie, Ndongu explores how the gendered aspects of widowhood affect the relationship between Lambert and Ann, contributing to their decision to migrate.

As a widow, Jeanne Bikie is relegated to an inferior position in the social hierarchy of the village. Jessica Ogden’s fieldwork with Ugandan single mothers sheds light on widowhood: In an interview with Ogden, one of the widows states:

Single mothers do not get much respect, especially when they are not employed. Your parents feel that you have not honored them. The community fears and despises you. You can only get support from another in your own situation. As a single mother you are not accorded full status as an adult woman, and men just approach you as if you are a prostitute. You also get chided by other women. (178)



It is important to emphasize the role other women play in establishing unequal power relations, and not solely blame patriarchal oppression for the problem. Butler's words are useful:

The notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination is shortsighted. The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural contexts in which it exists. (3)

An analysis of the intra-gender relationships reveals a hierarchy among women, which often times leads to abuse of widows by other women. Jeanne Bikie's plight as a widow is an alarming representation of this type of woman-on-woman mistreatment. Alone with her three children, she is desperate to find male companionship in order to gain acceptance into the community. She asks herself: "Qué podía hacer una mujer sola, una viuda desvalida cargada de hijos, cuando todos los familiares varones de su difunto esposo habían pisoteado la tradición y emigrado a las ciudades, y no se preocupaban ni por ella ni por sus sobrinos" (159). She knows she faces the scrutiny of the entire village, many of whom have labeled her "la puta oficial del pueblo" (158). Despite her young age, she is expected to live alone and suppress her sexual desires. In *Widows in African Societies: Choices and Constraints*, Betty Potash explains: "In Western societies widowhood is largely associated with aging, but this is not necessarily the case in Africa. Demographic patterns vary. The stage in the life cycle at which women become widows depends on the marriage system" (15). Her comments help explain how common Jeanne Bikie's dilemma is for many African widows. Jeanne's response is to make a decision about her own life and become an agent of change. She embraces the freedom that

widowhood has granted her by attempting to marry Lambert's father, Guy Ondo Ebang. In a testament of her defiance to the customs of her clan, "estaba decidida a arrancarle un compromiso de matrimonio para volver a sentirse digna, ser de nuevo una mujer respetada por la comunidad" (160). By taking the initiative to marry Guy Ondo, she is a testament to the evolving nature of what it means to be a widow in Africa. She is unwilling to comply with the rigidity of a system that relegates her to an inferior status. The hierarchal power structure that subordinates women must be replaced with a more egalitarian idea of widowhood. If Jeanne not felt such a visceral repulsion from the rest of the community for being a widow, perhaps she would have rethought her decision to become intimate with the father of her daughter's lover. Instead, "ese anhelo se había convertido en un empeño" (160). Her obsession to undermine the gender roles prescribed to a widow directly jeopardizes the marriage of her daughter to Lambert. Because this moment represents a pivotal point in Lambert's life, I will analyze how gender codes manifest themselves within the institution of marriage.

Lambert reveals the multiple layers of the Fang marriage custom in a particularly informative passage:

Obama Ondo recordó lo que sabía desde siempre: un matrimonio no es una unión caprichosa entre dos jóvenes inexpertos. La decisión primera había pasado a la exclusiva responsabilidad de los novios, principales protagonistas de sus propias nupciales. Pero de ahí a dejarlos solos, sin el consejo y la asistencia moral de sus mayores, de sus familiares, de los miembros de sus respectivas tribus, van a un abismo. El matrimonio es también una alianza entre dos tribus, la consagración de un vínculo pereene entre dos clanes, la fusión duradera de dos familias que, a partir de la ceremonia nupcial, tendrán una sola sangre. Por eso no caben bromas, ni ligerezas, ni descuidos, ni decisiones precipitadas. Un matrimonio que no reúna estas condiciones no puede ser válido, no puede prosperar, no puede cumplir su función, no puede durar. (143)

What becomes apparent from this excerpt is the importance that marriage has for the reputation of the entire clan. Any union between two individuals that would jeopardize the image of the collective group will be rejected. By controlling the marriages of younger generations, the elders create a system of dependence that is difficult for the youth to break. The decision the elders deliver to Lambert ruins his dream of marrying Anne and raising their unborn child together:

Y a través de un largo circunloquio, de parábolas sazonadas de máximas, proverbios y sentencias, al modo del habla antigua, fue haciéndole entender que los ancianos de la tribu no daban su consentimiento a su proyectado casamiento con Anne Mengue, a pesar de su estado prematernal, porque su propio padre andaba en amores con Jeanne Bikie, a la que se disponía a tomar como esposa, y no era bueno para la estabilidad del clan que se confundieran los papeles, que sus padres fueran sus suegros al mismo tiempo. Sabes que no puede ser: los padres son los padres y los suegros deben ser los suegros, pues cada uno tiene su función, y ha llegado el momento de desenredar tanto embrollo, porque a partir de este momento te prohibimos todo trato carnal con la hija de la viuda, puesto que ha pasado a ser tu hermana. (170)

This passage reinforces the power of the elders to determine the fate of the clan's youth, while also demonstrating how much the prestige of the entire clan supersedes the happiness of one couple. Their response is particularly crushing to Lambert because of his unending faith in the traditional customs of his ancestors. Having attempted to reject Western norms and thoughts, he immersed himself in the lifestyle of his ancestors. Cruelly, those same traditions were now what prevented him from being with the woman he loved. Lambert ponders: "De todas las traiciones posibles, la más dolorosa e imperdonable era la de su propio padre" (171). He realizes the time has come to forget about the past and focus on the present. He represents Hall's assertion that an ideal past is merely a chimera. "Our relationship to that past is quite a complex one, we can't pluck it

up out of where it was and simply restore it to ourselves.” (223). By deciding to migrate to Yaoundé as a young man, Lambert refuses to conform to the gender roles established by his father and elders. Migration becomes an act of defiance against the normative codes of his elders; an opportunity to carve out a new construction of masculinity that breaks from the past. His abrupt decision reveals a young man who is no longer concerned with the well being of his family and household. He now seizes control of his own destiny and becomes an agent of power and autonomy.

Lambert’s transition to his new life in the urban center of Yaoundé is eased after a chance encounter with his cousin Philibert Nkony. Since arriving from the same village as Lambert, Philibert has found a job and a girlfriend with whom he lives. Lambert disapproves of Philibert’s relationship with Nena Paula because he neglected to formalize their union by marrying her. “Lo cual disgustó a Obama Ondo: como decía el viejo Otuk Ekoró, ¿qué respeto puedes esperar de una mujer por la que no has dado nada” (192)? Lambert’s refusal to accept their relationship proves that he still feels conflicted about the traditional gender codes of his community. His cousin Philibert also strives to maintain the traditional gender relations between himself and Nena Paula. His move from the rural village to an urban area has not impacted how he perceives the role of the female. His perspective challenges the idea of scholars who affirm that migration offers females more mobility and access to egalitarian gender relations. Lambert describes his cousin’s routine: “Se limitaba a dejar en lugar visible el dinero necesario para que Nena Paula fuera al mercado y sufragara las necesidades de la familia, con la seguridad de que a su regreso encontraría la mesa dispuesta, la ropa limpia y planchada y la casa aseada y ordenada” (196). For her part, Nena Paula accepts the way Philibert treats her. Lambert

describes her as “simpática y alegre a pesar de su azarosa vida, hacendosa, servicial, callada, que lo aguantaba todo de su hombre” (192). Nena Paula’s condition supports the research of scholars who contend that other factors such as class, foreign status, and social networks, play a deciding role in a migrant’s well being (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). I will now examine how these issues overlap with gender to constrain Nena Paula’s independence.

Nena Paula’s journey from Malabo, Equatorial Guinea to Yaundé is indicative of the interrupted and fractured nature of migration. As Illain Chambers states in *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*: “...Migrancy, on the contrary involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. [...] Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming---completing the story, domesticating the detour — becomes an impossibility” (20). The oppressive treatment by the governmental regime hastens her decision to leave behind her studies and a daughter. Along the way, she must relegate herself to prostitution in order to finance the trip. This is a reoccurring theme in much of the scholarly literature that documents female migration. According to Hondagneu-Sotelo’s research, women are more likely to turn to prostitution if they make the journey alone. “Compounding the dangers faced by an ‘illegal’ presence in the country, a young, unmarried woman unaccompanied by family or kin is easy prey for those who might take advantage of her sexuality” (131). If they are without any type of social network, they are much more likely to choose this lifestyle. Nena Paula was able to escape prostitution when she met Philibert. However, she still endured other abuses because of her foreign status, class, and lack of social outlets.

Her place of origin, refined manners, and physical beauty create tension with the

other females. Once again, Ndongo explores how oppressive and patriarchal women can be towards each other. “Por ello, algunas envidiosas murmuraban con desprecio qué se ha creído esa putita equató, si es que hasta nos quiere dar lecciones sobre cómo cuidar a nuestras familias” (193). Nena’s situation reinforces how the lives of migrants are organized by class, ethnicity, and social networks. Her ostracization by other females underscores Butler’s assessment that universal patriarchy is not the sole culprit for gender oppression:

Feminist critique ought to explore the totalizing claims of a masculinist signifying economy, but also remain self-critical with respect to the totalizing gestures of feminism. The effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms. (13)

These intra-gender relationships between women is an area around which the social theorist Patricia Hill Collins has framed the theory of “matrix of domination.” Instead of thinking about power relations in strictly binary terms between males and females, Hill Collins argues that we must shift our attention to the systems of oppression where oppressor/oppressed positions are reconfigured. Because Nena is socially isolated, it is impossible for her to establish any meaningful relationships outside the home.

Conversely, Philibert’s contact with other males in his play of employment enables him to develop stronger relationships and eventually find Lambert a job. Again, Hondagneu-Sotelo is helpful in illuminating how polarized these social networks are for both males and females. “Immigrant social networks are highly contested social resources, and they are not always shared, even in the same family” (189). Therefore, Nena Paula must rely on Philibert’s family for any source of social interaction. However, instead of providing her with a social outlet, the household becomes a site that exacerbates the sexual division

of labor. The arrival of Lambert and subsequently his brother Laurent, places increased demands on Nena Paula to provide food and other accommodations for Philibert's relatives. Ironically, increased family involvement strengthens the traditional and oppressive family values, by preventing Nena Paula from establishing a more balanced division of labor within the household.

After finding a job and saving up enough money, Lambert feels the time has come to move out and find his own residence. His decision becomes easier after a confrontation with his cousin. In a jealous rage, Philibert accuses Lambert of having an illicit relationship with Nena Paula. Philibert's behavior underscores how the migratory experience appears to have strengthened his control of the female. Despite having moved from a rural and traditional setting to a more liberal urban center, Philibert refuses to modify his gender views. For him, the family hierarchy is a valuable asset that merits protection amidst all of the changes that come with migration. While her journey from Equatorial Guinea certainly demonstrates a certain level of autonomy, because of the structural conditions in place, Nena Paula remains dependent on Philibert. Her inability to establish a strong social support system, combined with limited employment opportunities weakens her position in the relationship with Philibert. Because of these structural conditions, Philibert is able to maintain control of Nena Paula and abuse his power. In his patriarchal dividend theory, Connell argues that because males provide the financial resources of the household, females become socially and economically dependent on them. While Nena endures this abuse, Lambert refuses to live under these oppressive conditions. He begins another stage of his journey, one that takes him into the arms of Madame Danielle Eboué. With their relationship, Ndongo confronts the issue of

sexuality and desire amongst different classes and ethnic groups.

Lambert describes her by stating “había visto mujeres, pero ninguna comparable a Danielle Eboué” (209). The wife of a successful businessman, Danielle frequently visited Lambert’s place of employment. Trapped in a marriage of convenience that is marred by infidelity, Danielle “deseaba experimentar lo que sienten los hombres al ser infieles a sus esposas, disfrutar de esa sensación de libertad interior, gozar también del fruto del árbol prohibido” (220). This quest takes her to develop an interest in Lambert who “iba perdiendo la rusticidad campesina y adquiriendo modales desinhibidos, más desenvueltos” (223). It is precisely his “otherness” that makes him attractive to the wealthy Danielle Eboué. She ponders, “Podía decirse que era guapo y encantadoramente tímido, un verdadero diamante en bruto. Impresiones que fueron confirmándose mes a mes, a medida que el cuerpo de Obama Ondo recuperaba brillo” (223). Lambert does not realize that he is the latest target of Danielle Eboué, a woman who uses her sexuality to subvert the traditional gender norms of African society. Because of Danielle’s social class, Lambert constructs a powerful image of her: “No se atrevió ni a mirarla cuando la diosa de aquel paraíso apareció por la puerta entornada, seguida de un gato ornado, de pelo muy largo y brillante, que se escondió bajo la mesa” (229). His acknowledgment of her power inverts the traditional sexual binary system that places men and women in restrictive categories. Suddenly he occupies a submissive position, and realizes he is not the first who has felt this sense of inferiority. “Se notaba que estaba acostumbrada a tratar con hombres y a dominar la situación, porque ahora no se mostraba ni tímida, ni distante, ni tensa” (230). Lambert soon becomes disillusioned with how their relationship is strictly sexual and void of any true meaning. “Obama Ondo empezó a sentirse como



humillado, un simple objeto, vio que estaba siendo utilizado por aquella mujer manipuladora e insaciable, y eso contribuía a agobiarle, porque no se consideraba capaz de controlar ni su propia vida” (237). Lambert yearns for a relationship in which the emotional connection supersedes the physical one. Their discrete encounters come to an abrupt halt when Lambert meets Sylvie Anguesomo, a young woman from his place of origin in Cameroon. His involvement with Sylvie forces him to again reassess his masculine identity, and his views of the female’s role in society.

Lambert’s relationship with Sylvie corresponds to a difficult economic time for Cameroon. The entire country experiences an inflation that limits the buying power of its residents. Consequently, employers reduce their inventory and slash jobs. Lambert falls victim to these unfortunate circumstances and loses his position at the store. Sylvie provides his only source of income when she, “pasó a dedicar los fines de semana a la venta al por menor: compró algunas mercancías e instaló una mesita en la puerta de la casa de Lambert, donde se sentaba a ver transcurrir el tiempo sin más beneficio que unas cuantas monedas al cabo del día” (256). Her resourcefulness prompts Lambert to evolve his perception of women. “A través de la experiencia de Sylvie, Obama Ondo supo que en realidad eran las mujeres las que sostenían ahora la economía y alimentaban a sus familias” (256). The market conditions force the reconfiguration of the normative gender roles and enable women to gain a sense of power and autonomy. The migratory experience alters the labor structure outlined by Connell, which traditionally restricts women to work as homemakers and categorizes men as breadwinners. Connell explains: “Equal attention should be paid to the economic consequences of gender divisions of labour, specifically the benefits accruing to men from unequal shares of the products of

social labour. This may be called the patriarchal dividend” (25). Sylvie inverts this patriarchal dividend through the collective system of tontine o djangué: “El sexo débil pasó ser el fuerte y ocupó el primer plano en la familia y en la sociedad” (257). As these women gain economic independence, the structure of power outlined by Connell is no longer in place. They were able to establish strong social networks that facilitated their ascent up the social scale. “Dejaron de exigir dinero a sus maridos para ir al mercado, y los niños ya no se dirigían al padre, sino a la madre, cuando necesitaban un cuaderno” (257). These circumstances reveal how intricate other factors are in reconfiguring gender roles. Until the economic downturn, women such as Nena Paula were unable to liberate themselves from the oppressive system. The labor market opportunities in the migratory space enable Sylvie and other women to seize power, and create a more egalitarian view of gender relations. The men become dependent on the females because of their ability to provide for their families. “A los hombres se les bajaron los humos y, arrinconados y acomplejados, ya ni osaban preguntar de dónde salía el dinero que les permitía comer, y se limitaban a sentarse a la mesa en un silencio reconciliado y espeso” (257). The transformation of their gendered identities includes recognition of the important role women play in society. Through this representation of gender relations, Ndongu rejects a singular notion of masculinity in African society. He demonstrates how migration plays a constitutive role in altering constructions of masculinity. Lambert accepts his subordinate role to Sylvie and is grateful for all that she has provided him. His feelings of appreciation evolve into feelings of love and admiration, which result in Sylvie’s eventual pregnancy.

Her announcement evokes feelings of uncertainty in Lambert, as he ponders how he will provide for Sylvie and their newborn child. He determines that he must make the ultimate sacrifice by leaving his family in Yaoundé, so he can migrate to the capital city of Douala, where there would be more employment opportunities. His decision is made in haste, and his departure is just as abrupt. Ndongó's representation of the decision making process contradicts some scholarly literature that stresses women's involvement in the negotiations. Lambert's impulsivity corresponds to Hondagneu-Sotelo's research that concludes men tend to migrate without much thought:

In those families where men migrated before their wives and children, women were not included as active participants in the decision to migrate. Rather, the husbands unilaterally decided to migrate north with little regard for their wives' concerns and opinions; migration was not the outcome of conjugal or household decision-making processes. (57)

His arrival in Douala is aided by the presence of his cousin Ntogo. Lambert continues to be the beneficiary of a strong social network that enables him to adapt quickly to his new surroundings. "El primo Ntogo llevaba much tiempo de estibador en el Puerto de Douala, y por su seriedad y carácter afable y generoso, gozaba de la confianza de sus jefes y del aprecio de sus compañeros. Gracias a lo cual, Lambert Obama Ondo también fue admitido en la misma cuadrilla" (272). Ndongó contrasts Lambert's successful inclusion into his new community with that of his onetime lover Anne Mengue. Ndongó's juxtaposition of the two characters' experiences in Douala embodies the gendered dimensions of the migratory social networks.

Anne's decision to migrate to Douala is motivated by her contempt with the rigid gender structure of her rural village. Her migration is an act of rebellion against a gendered system that subordinates females:

Estaba harta de tener que privarse de la carne y del pescado más suculento, porque eran comidas reservadas a los hombres; estaba harta de barrer, lavar, planchar, y coser para hemanitos, mientras ellos haraganeaban por el pueblo y sus alrededores; estaba harta de las palizas y de las humillaciones que soportaban las esposas de sus maridos; estaba harta del sometimiento de las mujeres a los caprichos de los varones. (268)

Because of the rigid gender codes that established a clear sexual division of labor, she was unable to find any type of profitable employment. She refuses to allow her daughter to be subjected to the same patriarchal order, and concludes that her first step is to migrate to an urban center in search of employment opportunities. She anticipates that her movement across time and space will shatter the labor structure that Connell references as being a significant restriction on women. Just as Lambert does, she relies on the knowledge and experience of a cousin:

Llegó a la ciudad sin un céntimo y con lo puesto, rastreando las huellas de su prima Chantal, la cual, según era notario por los signos externos, había encontrado un buen trabajo y gozaba de un envidiable nivel de vida, que le permitía enviar dinero a sus padres con regularidad y colmarles de dádivas. (269)

However, while Lambert's cousin, Ntogo, established himself working in the port, prostitution was the path taken by Anne's cousin, Chantal. Oblivious to her lifestyle, Anne falls victim to the same trap as her cousin.

Lo que nadie sospechaba, y Anne Mengue descubrió demasiado tarde, era que la prima Chantal se encontraba atrapada en la tupida red controlada por Marcel Nosecuántos, un sujeto siniestro, de la peor calaña que una pudiera toparse, de origen incierto como todo lo suyo, beninés o togolés, que vivía opíparamente a cosa de un puñado de muchachas, que le eran fieles en la cama y en el trabajo a base de sexo...(269)

After having arrived in Douala without any money, Anne is the beneficiary of Marcel's lavish lifestyle. However, when she rejects his sexual advances, this favorable treatment ends and Anne sees another side of Marcel that forever changes her life. "Así empezó a prostituirse para resarcirle la deuda que, según el pícaro proxeneta, le debía por las semanas de agasajos.[...] Luego la chantajeó con reveler a su familia a qué se dedicaba en la ciudad..." (270). This quote reveals how the act of migration has significantly reduced Anne's agency as a female by undermining her ability to control her own destiny. All of the autonomy and defiance that she exhibited to rebel against the normative gender codes of her community has been stripped by the insidious work of one man. Marcel skillfully uses fear and intimidation tactics to bait her into the sex industry. Once there, she finds it incredibly difficult to navigate a way out of the underworld. Her case underscores how migration exacerbates normative gender codes if the social networks are unreliable.

Ndongo's portrayal of Chantal and Anne as selling sex brings to the surface the important role that the sex industry plays in employing migrant women. Recent research by the scholar Laura Agustín challenges the notion that the way migrant women enter into the sex industry is any different than how other migrants arrive at their destination. This claim proves to be legitimate if applied to Lambert and Anne, both of whom migrated with little knowledge of what to expect. They are both susceptible to exploitation and must rely on the experiences of a family member. However, the tendency of popular media is to label the female migrant who immigrates and enters into the sex industry as a victim who has been trafficked. If used indiscriminately, these terms are problematic because the complexity of the experience becomes lost in the dizzying

media coverage that often surrounds these cases. Suddenly, there is a conflation of terms and all prostitutes are labeled as poor victims, unable to exercise any agency. Ndongo's representation of the phenomenon allows us to understand that not all females who land in the sex industry are trafficked against their will, but in fact, choose to migrate. While I do not argue the severity of Anne's condition, there are aspects of her life in the migratory space that are liberating: "La única ventaja que Anne Mengue le encontraba a su etapa actual es que no tenía que deslomarse de sol a sol en los bisques para arrebatarse a la tierra su sustento, se había librado de esos menesteres de esclava" (264). Through Anne Mengue's experience, Ndongo enables us to see how the men who run these operations are calculated criminals whose psychological tactics play a significant role in maintaining the captivity of the female migrants. "[Anne] le tuvo miedo, pues ¿ante quién podía denunciar a un truhán que tenía en el bolsillo a medio departamento de policía?...Luego la chantajeó con reveler a su familia a qué se dedicaba en la ciudad, y después prometió facilitarle el camino de Europa" (270). With this in mind, the image that the popular media disseminates of the migrant women held against her will as a slave is not entirely accurate. Anne Mengue could have physically escaped (which she eventually does), but chose not to, due in large part to the psychological tactics of Marcel. He is someone who uses his charm to seduce the women into thinking that he values their relationship: "Marcel la explotaba, sí, pero eso había dejado de tener importancia, pues casi llegaba a olvidarlo en sus ratos de intimidad, esos breves momentos que todavía le dedicaba de vez en cuando..." (270). After remaining in these conditions for an extended period of time, Anne exhibits agency and leaves him for Europe. Although we never learn of her eventual fate, Ndongo's depiction of Anne allows us to understand her

journey in the context of migration studies and not trafficking. The stigma attached to the term “trafficking” reduces these women to silent and passive victims and negates their participation as agents moving along the migratory circuit. Our understanding of the issue must rethink an either/or approach, but instead should simultaneously recognize how female migrants like Anne can be both victims and agents.

While Anne works on the streets of Douala, Lambert continues to live under austere conditions in order to send remittances to Sylvie and their child. He is fearful of what could happen if he were to stop providing her some financial support. He wants to ensure that his wife remains faithful to him despite the distance that separates them. Consequently, Lambert strives to serve as the breadwinner of the family by working numerous jobs in Dakar:

Aunque sabía que llegaba con retraso y no siempre, procuraba enviar algo de dinero con regularidad para que ella hiciera frente a sus necesidades acuciantes; asumía de buen grado sus responsabilidades para con la que ya consideraba su familia, cumplía con abnegación y fidelidad sus deberes de esposo y de padre, reafirmando así el compromiso, para que ella no se sintiese abandonada y buscase consuelo en otros brazos. Esas cosas ocurren, por desgracia. (306)

Despite the increased income, Lambert continues to be drawn to what Europe has to offer. His curiosity results in his decision to make the trip from Dakar to Casablanca, Morocco, and then on to the Canary Islands (Spain). During a break in the journey, Lambert notices a large gathering of young men surrounding three of the young female migrants. The young ladies finance their trip by engaging in sexual relations with the other migrants. While their decision to use their bodies as a means of migrating suggests the migratory experience is not always an empowering one for females, this scene also demonstrates how women use their bodies to gain access to the other side. By

capitalizing on their sexuality, these female migrant characters show that the boundaries that structure the migratory experience are unequal for men and women. For his part, Lambert succumbs to the pressure to conform to the gendered codes of his new setting by engaging in the sexual act:

A pocos metros, unas parejas yacían en el suelo, y les llegaban nítidos los gemidos. Obama Ondo miró a sus compañeros, incrédulo, y Ndiaye les informó del precio del servicio, saliendo del escondrijo y dirigiéndose hacia la fila. Ni lo pensó ni lo pudo evitar: le dominó el instinto, su cuerpo entero fue presa de una excitación incontenible, la naturaleza reclamaba satisfacción. ¿Cuándo fue la última vez? Se iba encabritando más a medida que se aproximaba. (332)

For these brief moments, his idea of manhood no longer includes providing for his family and community. He is exclusively concerned with fulfilling his own sexual desire even though he questions his decision for taking part in the act. “Más tarde se preguntaría qué le impulsó a caer en semejante estupidez, si no había atractivo ninguno en aquellos manejos” (332). This is one of the many times throughout the novel that Lambert asks himself rhetorical questions in an interior monologue that captures the indecisiveness of his decision making. Butler’s theoretical work offers an answer to the confusion that surrounds his sexuality. During a conference entitled “Undoing Gender” at The Ohio State University’s Mershon Center for International Security, Butler addressed the issue, by stating our way of thinking about sexuality as a personal attribute and as an expression of ourselves has led to this idea that we have sexuality. However, according to Butler, if there is any having to be done, it is our sexuality that has us. By destabilizing and deconstructing the terms by which the subject/object is constituted, she argues against an essentialist understanding of sexual and gendered identities. This theory helps to explain Lambert’s inability to refrain from the sexual encounters. By depicting Lambert as



struggling with what it means to be a man, Ndongo allows the reader to see the instability of gendered identities. Throughout the entire journey, Lambert battles with his masculinity and is only able to reconcile the question after finally reaching European soil.

After surviving the perilous experience of reaching Europe, Lambert immediately thinks about the badge of honor that he now wears. He constructs an image of his masculine self that is superior to what his ancestors achieved:

Lambert Obama Ondo percibió en ese instante que en su espíritu se producían alteraciones profundas y definitivas: puesto que en tan poco tiempo había acumulado una experiencia más vasta que cualquier anciano de su pueblo en toda su prolongada existencia, poseía ahora el don maravilloso de penetrar el arcano, de conocer los misterios de la madurez mucho antes de alcanzar la edad proveya. (349)

These thoughts underscore the significance that young males place on the migratory journey. They understand it as a rite of passage that enables them to challenge the dominant traditions and ideas of manhood established by their ancestors. For Lambert, he vows that “después de superar ese sufrimiento espantoso, le sería imposible vivir como antes, pues determinados acontecimientos marcan con tal intensidad que suponen el fin de la inocencia” (349). His entire life he longed to possess the “hegemonic masculinity” of his elders, but now reconstructs what it means to be a man. Lambert begins to reject this hegemonic masculinity and accept the man he has become. He recognizes that his construction of masculinity is unique and just as valid as his ancestors. His gendered identity undergoes even more changes once he comes in contact with others in Europe.

Lambert’s transition into European society is aided by the social support that he establishes with Abdoul, a Senegalese man, on the journey from Dakar. Abdoul’s brother,

Ibrahim, resides in Murcia, and invites both Abdoul and Lambert to join him once they arrive in Spain. Ibrahim provides them with a place to live, a job, and inclusion into his circle of friends. After initially working in the agricultural sector, Lambert is forced to accept a job working in the primarily female dominated industry of street vending. “No era el oficio que hubiese elegido, pero eso ya no importaba demasiado. Era más cómodo y limpio que sudar sobre la tierra inhalando el pútrido hedor de los abonos, y mejor que nada” (443). Lambert’s thoughts related to his new place of employment erase any notion of a gendered division of labor. By working alongside females, Lambert embraces a more egalitarian view of gender, in which men and women are capable wage earners. Victor Agadjanian studies the phenomenon of African male street vendors in the article “Men Doing ‘Women’s Work’: Masculinity and Gender Relations Among Street Vendors in Maputo, Mozambique”: “Although men’s entry into street trade does not eliminate gender inequality, the processes of de-gendering and re-gendering that it entails do seem, on the balance, to diminish it” (267). Lambert’s willingness to reconfigure traditional gender relations does not stop at the workplace, but rather continues to be carried out in the domestic sphere. When his friend Abdoul begins dating Pilar, Lambert feels obligated to complete the household chores: “La presencia de Pilar modificó sus vidas porque pusieron mucho más esmero en limpiar, ordenar y perfumar el pisito” (420). Ndongo uses Lambert as a representation of how migration disrupts the established gender hierarchies that exist within the household and employment sectors. However, Ndongo also shows the contradictory nature of these gains, when Lambert transgresses with local prostitutes.

On weekends, Lambert and his friends would explore the nightlife of the area by visiting local bars or clubs, but would inevitably end up soliciting prostitutes. Once again,

Lambert could not resist “caer en la tentación” (406), even though “no obtenía placer ninguno” (406). However, in an abrupt change of heart, he realizes that these sexual encounters are a waste of his time and money. His decision to stop visiting the prostitutes influences the other young migrants. “Por eso Obama Ondo terminaría aborreciendo el sexo mercenario, y su inhibición lograría que poco a poco se moderasen los ímpetus de sus amigos; llegó un tiempo en que ya pasaban delante del prostíbulo sin detenerse, para dirigirse al pueblo al encuentro de otros senegaleses” (407). Through Lambert, Ndongo constructs a new masculine identity that rejects prostitution and breaks from the codified norms attached to being an African male migrant.

Lambert turns his focus away from the ephemeral pleasure of engaging with prostitutes, to his family back in Africa. His correspondence with Sylvie provokes feelings of uncertainty and doubt about his role in the household:

Sylvie se había aclarado la piel y trenzado el pelo siguiendo modas extrañas, dejando de ser una joven sencilla de saludable aspecto ingenuo para parecerse a una buscablancos de ciudad. No aprobaba aquella elegancia arrabalera y chabacana. No le gustaban sus nuevos aires extravagantes. No le tranquilizaban transformaciones a su juicio ridículas y peligrosas. Pero ¿Qué podía hacer? Era imposible controlar su hogar a cinco mil kilómetros de distancia. (411)

Lambert’s decision to leave his family behind strips him of any control over his wife. Thus, the act of migration disrupts the traditional gender hierarchy. Sylvie possesses the autonomy to be able to make changes in her physical appearance without the permission of Lambert. Lambert’s reaction suggests that he is still aligned with the type of gender arrangement that places the female in a subordinate position. His frustration with Sylvie continues to manifest itself when he questions her ability to wisely save the money he

sends home:

Estaba convencido de que los demás familiares envidiaban la prosperidad aparente de Sylvie, la cual, con toda seguridad, se pavonearía sin recato ante sus ojos dilapidando en lujos innecesarios el dinero que ganaba su hombre con tanta fatiga y a base de privaciones, en lugar de conducirse con discreción y ahorrar para que pronto fuera realizable su proyecto de vida en común. (413)

Lambert's mistrust of Sylvie is not based on any substantiated facts, but is instead founded on the traditional stereotypes that claim females are incapable of handling the finances. It is contradictory for Lambert to place these restrictions on Sylvie after she demonstrates the resourcefulness and business savvy to provide for the family during the economic crisis. By failing to acknowledge these traits, Lambert is allowing the traditional gender restrictions to remain intact. These feelings suggest that Lambert is conflicted about the gendered relationship with Sylvie. He is forced to confront this uncertainty when her parents demand that she marry another man because of Lambert's lack of commitment. Faced with the possibility of losing her and his honor, he quickly responds by sending her family the requisite bridewealth. His father, Guy Ondo, in an effort to reconcile the strained relationship with his son, takes the bridewealth to Sylvie's family and formally asks for her to be a part of their family. This transcendent moment forces Lambert to reflect on the meaning of his journey and represents a turning point in how Lambert perceives himself in relation to others.

Lambert recognizes that he must move beyond differences that divide male/female, tradition/modernity, black/white, young/old, and agent/victim. By placing himself in the migratory space, he has developed a keen sense of what it means to be an African male. Instead of focusing on the restrictive nature of these boundaries, Ndongo

crosses them by insisting that his protagonist occupy the gray and ambiguous spaces that represent the ambivalence of the migratory experience. By questioning these simplistic binaries, Lambert develops a more humanistic way of looking at others that embraces difference and identifies a common ground amongst all human beings. “Poco a poco, aprendió a distinguir a las personas de la masa, a ver la individualidad velada por la multitud; ya no se conformaba con la epidermis, y procuraba profundizar para llegar al corazón de sus semejantes” (431). He no longer views his father as the enemy, but as a man with whom he can reconstruct a friendship. The ethnic differences that drove a wedge between Lambert and other Africans at the start of his journey no longer exist. His relationship with the Senegalese Abdoul and Ibrahim is described in the following terms: “Obama Ondo no era senegalés, pero tras su prolongada estancia en Dakar y su convivencia con Abdoul e Ibrahim, había asimilado su mentalidad y, en cierto modo, podía considerarse un senegalés adoptivo” (443). He refuses to judge Ibrahim’s relationship with Pilar, a white woman, because “pues ni podían ni debían seguir reproduciendo los mismos gestos que sus mayores” (433). His travels have also played a significant role in reshaping his understanding of constructions of masculinity and femininity. Most importantly, his journey enables him to reconstruct all aspects of his identity and develop a sense of solidarity with his homeland: “Pensó que una de las ventajas de viajar es conocer otros lugares, otras experiencias, otras formas de ver y de entender la realidad, sin conformarse con las cortas miras de lo inmediato. Obama Ondo estaba decidido a regresar para vivir mejor, pero no sólo él, sino todos los suyos y su nación entera, la tribu común” (447). While this quote reveals Lambert’s desire to return to Africa, the reader gets the sense this will never occur and that home for him is now a

part of his imaginary. Instead, as Paul Gilroy articulates in *The Black Atlantic*, he is part of the growing African diaspora whose identities are shaped by routes and not roots. His travels have enabled him to feel a part of something larger and more meaningful: an interdependence that connects all Africans and a sense of community that includes all ethnic, class, and gendered identities.

His newly developed sense of solidarity with the “others” leads him into a friendship with a white Spanish woman named Lucía. Rather than developing their relationship around carnal desire between the black man and the white woman, Lambert and Lucía appear content to spend time with each other on a strictly platonic level. Sadly, Lambert encounters a group of neo Nazis’ who cannot move beyond the perceived physical interaction between black and white. They use the white woman as the ground upon which they will assert their masculinity and power as white men over the black man. A simple kiss on Lucía’s cheek provokes the group to follow Lambert as he boards the subway. While Lambert is keenly aware of the dire circumstances in which he finds himself, the other passengers on board are oblivious to the danger. He finds himself all alone and unable to escape the inevitable. His situation is reminiscent of Gloria Anzaldua’s theory of the *la facultad*:

*La facultad* is the capacity to see in the surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant “sensing,” a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings, that is, behind which feelings reside/hide.

Those who are pushed out of the tribe for being different are likely to become more sensitized (when not brutalized into insensitivity). Those who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world are more apt to develop this sense. Those who are pounced on the most have it the strongest—the females, the homosexuals, of all races, the darkskinned, the outcast, the persecuted, the foreign. It’s a kind of survival tactic that

people, caught between the worlds, unknowingly cultivate. It is latent in all of us. (60-61)

His worst fears come true when he is violently attacked by the young men, who admonish him for touching the white woman. “Nunca más follarás con blancas, mono asqueroso, negro carbón” (456). They refuse to allow the black man to assert any sense of freedom or independence by courting a white woman, and savagely decide to cut his life short.

I read the savage murder of Lambert as evidence that the white man envisions the black man as a threat — especially in sexual terms. This scene conjures up Fanon’s theory about the negro and psychopathology, which he articulates in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon explains that there is a fear of the black man because of his tremendous sexual powers; that once the white woman and black man engage in sexual relations, she will refuse to be with white men. Fanon continues: “Still on the genital level, when a white man hates black men, is he not yielding to a feeling of impotence or of sexual inferiority? Since his ideal is an infinite virility, is there not a phenomenon of diminution in relation to the Negro, who is viewed as a penis symbol? Is the lynching of the Negro not sexual revenge?” (159) I contend that because of the sexual danger that Lambert represents to these white men, they determine that he must die. Furthermore, as Daniela Flesler argues for in her recent research, because of Spain’s historical ties to Africa, there are latent anxieties of africanization and emasculation by the immigrant other. Flesler claims that the immigrant is perceived as an invader who, because he threatens Spanish masculinity, must be repressed. Going back to medieval period, she argues that the other—the Muslim and Jew — were perceived in effeminate and homosexual terms in order to create the contrast with Spanish virile men. The contemporary example offered by

Ndongo demonstrates how the medieval model has been inverted: the African other is now perceived as the sexually dominant. Just as startling, however, is the reaction by the young neo-nazi's, which exposes a brand of Spanish masculinity built on violence that is carried out on the hyper-masculine black body. Their violent action proves that constructions of gender are always in contact with other power variables; in this case, race intersects with masculinity to form a deadly combination.

The ending to the novel is so abrupt that one must conclude Ndongo was trying to make a statement that events like the one he describes, occur just as suddenly, without any notice. In fact, a similar incident occurred on November 11, 2007, in which a neo-nazi group murdered a young man because of his alleged support of the immigrant community. This type of violence, while isolated, suggests that the Spanish people continue to resist the integration of migrants. Opinion polls from a variety of different sources indicate that immigration is a major issue facing Spanish society. According to opinion polls of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, in May 2006, 27.7 percent of people interviewed considered immigration to be the country's biggest problem; by September, that number had risen to 59.2 percent. In May 2006, a Gallup opinion poll for *El Mundo* reported that 69 percent felt there are too many immigrants, and 83 percent were in favor of a quota system, dependent on the needs of the market. Raquel Vega offers the following assessment of the phenomenon: "Términos como "ilegal," "detenciones," "celdas" e "internamientos" hacen que la sociedad española, la que supuestamente pertenece, obtenga una imagen negativa del inmigrante que llega a España sin sus documentos en regla, lo que lo convierte, en base al uso de estos términos por parte del gobierno, en una amenaza que se presenta como incontrolada por la legislación



española” (43). The inherent value that a literary representation of migration possesses is its ability to penetrate these boundaries that the media has constructed. *El metro* reconfigures the terms that circumscribe the issue of migration of Africans to Spain by personalizing the experience. The reader has an opportunity to follow the migrant from his homeland all the way to Europe and gain a better understanding of the entire process. Along the way, the image of the migrant as an invader begins to fade in favor of a more balanced perspective that recognizes the complexity of the issue. We soon realize that gender is concomitant with the decision to migrate, and that by depicting protagonists who challenge the validity of normative fixed notions of masculinity and femininity — unchanged through the years — Donato Ndongo demands a revision of how we think about gender and migration. We must continue to gender migration and realize that the migratory process frees up both males and females to create variant gendered identities in different spatial and temporal contexts.

### CHAPTER THREE: “Emigración”

My discussion of Donato Ndongo’s literary work in Chapter Two demonstrates that West Africans from a multitude of countries are now involved in the migratory journey to Spain. Ndongo’s decision to set “El sueño” and *El metro* in Senegal and Cameroon — two countries whose migrant population historically travelled to the former colonial power of France — suggests that Spain has evolved into a popular place of destination for many West African migrants. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE), since the mid 1990’s the number of documented Senegalese living in Spain more than tripled from 3,575 to 11,530. Other former French colonies such as Mali and Mauritania have joined Senegal as major senders of migrants to Spain. While the surge in immigrants from these countries is a relatively new phenomenon, another West African country has been inextricably linked to Spain for many years: Equatorial Guinea. Current statistics from the (INE) suggest that there are 2,527 Equatorial Guineans living in Spain. This relatively small number does not accurately portray the extent of the relationship between the two countries. Because this chapter focuses on Maximiliano Nkogo’s short story, “Emigración,” set in Equatorial Guinea under the current regime of Teodoro Obiang, a brief historical backdrop will follow. Only when the colonial past is brought to the foreground, does one begin to understand that migration from Africa to Spain is a deeply contested experience. Following this discussion, I examine two migrant characters from Nkogo’s story, one male and one female, with the intention of demonstrating how the past shapes present day gender relations that lead to migration.

The Spanish occupied what was then Spanish Guinea for over two hundred years before Equatorial Guinea achieved its independence in 1968. Prior to independence, Spain based their colonial mission on civilizing Africans through education. When analyzing how successful these schools were in establishing the goal of civilizing the natives, the numbers tell a different story. In *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in African and the Performance of Identity*, Susan Martín Marquéz explains that by 1963, there were only thirteen native Guineans with professional degrees: four doctors, four lawyers, and five agricultural specialists. The ninety-nine students sent to study in Spain during the several years of autonomy represented a scant .04 percent of the native population. These statistics reveal that many Guinean youth were not being molded into the type of Spaniards that the colonial doctrine outlined. While Spain ostensibly built the schools to offer children a path towards modernity, very few benefited from the opportunity. The primary school never materialized into the center for civilization and Western ideals that the Europeans promised. Instead, Equatorial Guinea became more dependent upon the colonizing power because the natives did not gain the necessary skills to create self-sustaining wealth. Donato Ndonga reveals how the interior of Rio Muni remained largely uneducated, due in large part because of the resistance of the natives:

Lo tardío del esfuerzo de modernización de la enseñanza en la colonia Española harán que en el momento de la independencia sólo una débil capa de la población esté verdaderamente formada y “asimilada,” factor que explica, casi por sí sólo, el triunfo de las fuerzas regresivas que capitalizaron la independencia de Guinea Ecuatorial e hicieron del antiespañolismo su bandera política, hasta desembocar en la realidad presente. (174)

The combination of an uneducated and untrained society proved to be too much for the

newly independent country to overcome. While the many economic advances in infrastructure during the colonial period contributed to relative growth, the ephemeral nature of this prosperity proved devastating for the nascent nation. Many of these improvements were never intended to let the country develop in their own way. Furthermore, because the Europeans occupied a majority of the positions in the export economy, it became increasingly difficult for the workers involved in subsistence farming to transition to a commerce economy. Fernando Abaga makes this point when discussing why the economy of Equatorial Guinea failed after independence in 1968. “[Se debe] al profundo estado de subdesarrollo en que se encontraba el país cuando obtuvo la independencia y a la desaparición por razones políticas del sector *moderno*, que no era más una extensión de la economía española” (195). The dependence complex that the Spanish embedded in the natives originated with legislation such as the 1904 Patronato de Indígenas. While the Spanish modified the Patronato a number of times throughout the years, its objectives were clear: categorize all natives who weren’t considered “emancipados,” or followers of the colonial administration, as minors and strip them of many of their individual rights. In the words of Fanon, laws such as the 1904 Patronato de Indígenas created: “A feeling of inferiority? No, a feeling of not existing” (118). As I later suggest in my analysis of “Emigración,” this complex continues to manifest itself in contemporary encounters between Africa and Spain. Migration becomes the means by which, in the words of Fanon they “become aware of their possibility of existence” (80), and recapture what it means to be a man. While the 1904 Patronato de Indígenas ended when Spain left in 1968, its logic prevailed during the oppressive regimes that followed independence.

With a majority of the population dependent on the Spaniards, it is no surprise that disaster struck in 1968, when Francisco Macías Nguema became Equatorial Guinea's first president. Because his roots were to the interior isolated region of Bata, Macías never completely embraced the Spanish worldview. While he did achieve emancipado status and gained the support of the Spanish administration to become mayor of his district, Macías always remained partial to the traditional lifestyle of his native Mongomo. Never fully accepted by the local intelligentsia because of his background, Macías developed a paranoia that prompted him to create an environment of terror and mistrust that permeated all sectors of the population. He rejected all things European in an effort to create a pre-colonial society based on traditional customs. Paul Gilroy challenges this strategy in *The Black Atlantic* when he states:

The term tradition is now being used neither to identify a lost past nor to name a culture of compensation that would restore access to it. It does not stand in opposition to modernity, nor should it conjure up wholesome images of Africa that can be contrasted with the corrosive, aphasic power of the post slave-history of the Americas and the extended Caribbean. (199)

What is noteworthy about this definition is that it rejects any simplistic relationship between tradition and modernity. Because of the contact between rural villages and urban centers, the relationship between tradition and modernity is no longer a simple binary. It is not that theorists such as Gilroy and Stuart Hall reject the past, it is just they recognize the importance of moving beyond it. Hall says it best in the following passage taken from his article "Ethnicity: Identity and Difference": "The relation that people have to their own past is, of course, part of the discovery of their own ethnicity. They need to honor

the hidden histories from which they come. It's important to understand the past. However, the recognition that our relationship to that past is quite a complex one, we can't pluck it up out of where it was and simply restore it to ourselves" (339). Macías' insistence on returning to the past proved to be detrimental, with many Guineans migrating from their homeland to Spain.

After eleven years in power, Macías' nephew Teodoro Obiang, led a resistance movement to overthrow his uncle in 1979. After the successful coup, Obiang assumed the presidency and has yet to relinquish power. Many hoped for changes during his leadership but after almost thirty years in power, not much has improved for the average Guinean. Just like his uncle, Obiang has remained loyal to his rural traditional roots. In fact, many of his top aides are from the same ethnic clan and district. While one of his first decisions in office was to open the country up to external investment and commerce, he has openly expressed a return to many African traditions. This contradiction of embracing European markets while simultaneously valuing the traditions has proven to severely handicap the country's development and left many of its residents in poverty. According to Fernando Abaga, Obiang's lack of direction for the country is a contributing factor to its current state. "El segundo factor, posiblemente el más importante, es la falta de visión que ha caracterizado a los dirigentes que han gobernado el país desde su independencia, y su incapacidad para movilizar a la población hacia la consecución de objetivos de desarrollo concretos, lo que hubiera facilitado la filtración del dinamismo del sector exportador al resto de la economía" (195). The authoritarian governments of Macías and Obiang only reinforced the widespread inequality and dependence that the colonial government developed. As I discussed in the introduction,

ironically, it is this very government that currently employs Nkogo, which his literary work aims to critique. Cultural representations like the one Nkogo creates in his collection of short stories entitled *Adja, Adja y Otros Relatos* reveal a dark and hopeless reality for many Equatorial Guineans under Obiang's rule. In the title story *Adja, Adja*, the characters spend their entire day searching for opportunities to bribe others so they can make enough money to support their families. It is no surprise after reading about these conditions that one would feel the need to migrate. In the final story of the collection, "Emigración," migration serves the same function for Nkogo's protagonists as it did in "El sueño" and *El metro*: an act of resistance against a restrictive antiquated world order that constrains the independence of young African males and females.

In Nkogo's story, it is the oppressive regime of Obiang that strips the society of its humanity and sense of agency. The omniscient narrator begins "Emigración" with the following statement about life under Obiang:

Cuando desde arriba se crean situaciones que vapulean injustamente a los humildes ciudadanos sin que éstos hagan nada, las sociedades no pueden experimentar los cambios necesarios, no pueden progresar; más bien son susceptibles de volverse hostiles, y más hostiles todavía para aquellos que, resignados y encerrados en la jaula de su destino, comen o buscan comer por sus propias manos, como Miko y su familia. (79)

The "desde arriba" that the narrator mentions, is inevitably tied to the colonial project and the tumultuous years that followed the country's independence. Miko, like so many other former colonized males, feels emasculated and is still fighting for the independence and sovereignty that the country gained in 1968. As Fanon argues in *The Wretched of the Earth*, after national liberation, the fight continues. Equatorial Guinea follows the script

Fanon outlines in his seminal study of the colonized condition: “The former dominated country become an economically dependent country. The ex-colonial power, which has kept intact and sometimes even reinforced its colonialist trade channels, agrees to provision the budget of the independent nation by small injections” (98). The past shapes the present day circumstances of Miko, who as a young male, feels powerless and constrained in his role as the breadwinner. Miko is part of the wretched of the earth, whom Walter Mignolo comments about in *The Idea of Latin America*: “are the subjects formed by the colonial wound, the dominant conception of life in which a growing sector of humanity becomes commodities, or expendable lives. The pain, humiliation, and anger of the continuous reproduction of the colonial wound generate radical political projects, new types of knowledge and social movements” (8). In Miko’s case, the radical project he considers is migration. Living under the hopeless Obiang regime has fostered sentiments of frustration and hostility within Miko. Just as Fanon predicted, the time has come for the native to fight back against the national government and its “sterile traditions” (95). In an effort to rehabilitate a humanity and masculinity that the government has denied him, Nkogo’s protagonist embraces the migratory experience. Because Miko fails in his attempt to reach Spain, it is unknown how the journey would have reconfigured his gendered identity. Therefore, my analysis will primarily focus on how the gender dynamics within the family and community play a constitutive role in the decision making process.

Just as Ndongo did in “El sueño” and *El metro*, Nkogo frames the narrative around a young male protagonist. Miko is the firstborn son to his parents and assumes many responsibilities because of this status. The death of his father further enhances



Miko's position as a paternal figure for his younger brothers and widowed mother. This loss leaves Miko alone with his mother and siblings, and forces him to become the sole provider for his family while working as a petty vendor. The first step away from living a normal childhood is Miko's decision to drop out of school. For many young Africans, education becomes an opportunity to assume a sense of agency and create a new idea of masculinity that breaks from the past. Education is a source of enlightenment that enables them to redefine a new masculine identity that focuses on knowledge and sophistication. Because of the dire conditions of his family, Miko surrenders this opportunity and inherits the traditional role of the breadwinner at the tender age of twenty. By assuming the role of provider for his family, Miko's sense of manhood is shaped by his ability to be the responsible wage earner. The circumstances in which the twenty-year-old Miko finds himself hastens his own understanding of his readiness to perform tasks reserved for adults. A chance encounter with Nacho, a young Spaniard working in Malabo, continues to foster this mindset. Their friendship embodies Fanon's theory in *Black Skin, White Masks*, which identifies the struggle within the black man to mimic the white man. For Miko, the colonial wound is still open and manifests itself in his relationship with Nacho.

The paternalistic manner in which the Spanish ruled their colony reappears in the dependency complex created between Miko and Nacho. Prior to his relationship with Nacho, Miko lives his daily life void of any diversion or excitement. His primary task is to sell random items at the market in order to provide for his family. He is fortunate to come across Nacho, who is interested in purchasing some of Miko's products. As Nacho approaches his booth, the narrator reveals what many of the local merchants think of the Europeans. "Lo que se comenta ahí en el mercado es que cuando compra un blanco,

compra mucho y no se queja del precio” (81). This statement reveals the high status with which the African vendors viewed any European. Because Nacho is Miko’s only contact with Europe, he constructs an image of all Europeans as being wealthy and superior. It is only after making the journey do African migrants rethink their ideas about Europe. The experiences of Lambert Obama Ondo in *El metro* exemplify this evolution: “Ya nunca más creería que los blancos son seres privilegiados: su sacrificio les costaba comer cada día, adquirir aquellos pisitos como colmenas, pagar los plazos del coche y de los muebles, vestir, educar a los hijos” (451). Because Miko has not reached that point, Nacho embodies all the qualities of a man that Miko strives to become. He possesses the hegemonic masculinity that R.W. Connell defines as the image of masculinity of those men who hold power. This brand of masculinity is the standard against which all other forms are measured. What follows is a friendship between not only the two protagonists, but also Nacho with Miko’s family. In fact, Nacho becomes a source of wealth for the entire family, consistently providing them with food and other resources:

La amistad entre Nacho y Miko es para la familia de este último como un regalo caído del cielo. Desde que se conocieron, la madre del africano ya no se preocupa por la comida diaria de sus hijos, los dos pequeños han mejorado su rendimiento en la escuela porque ya tienen cuadernos y bolígrafos, ya no andan descalzos y comen todos los días, y hasta desayunan y cenan de vez en cuando. (84)

Although Nkogo sets the story during the post Independence era of Equatorial Guinea, this passage reveals that Miko and his family remain dependent on the European for their livelihood. By installing a model that stripped the colonized of their language and identity, the European created a complex within the African. “Emigración” embodies this division between the colonized and the colonizer through Miko and Nacho. Because

Miko begins to define himself in relation to Nacho, he is not that much different than the black schoolboy as described by Fanon: “In the Antilles, the black schoolboy who is constantly asked to recite “our ancestors the Gauls” identifies himself with the explorer, the civilizing colonizer, the white man who brings truth to the savages, a lily-white truth. The identification process means that the black child subjectively adopts a white man’s attitude” (126). Therefore, Miko’s constructions of masculinity are shaped by his contact with Nacho.

Despite being portrayed as a benevolent figure who wants to bring a sense of humanity to the continent of Africa, there is a darker side to Nacho and his relationship with Miko:

Este blanco, Nacho, que así es cómo se llama, está interesado en conocer la cultura y la sociedad de los países africanos. Por eso, aparte de ser médico en una organización no gubernamental, en cada zona a dónde llega no sólo se dedica a suministrar medicaciones a los enfermos de paludismo, tifus, diarrea y otras enfermedades de miseria, sino que además curioseaba sobre la vida cotidiana de los habitantes, con el fin de conocer sus costumbres, ritos, gustos y disgustos, su forma de vivir y de pensar. Esta afición por conocer la idiosincrasia de los pueblos negros le viene de sus antepasados conquistadores y colonizadores. (82-83)

On the surface level, because his intentions are portrayed in an altruistic light, it is hard to find fault in Nacho’s mission. However, because of his European background, he possesses a scientific eye that studies and classifies the native in a way that resembles his 18<sup>th</sup> century predecessors. While Mary Louise Pratt’s book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* describes the travel accounts of explorers in Africa and Latin America during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, some parallels can be drawn in the way Nacho perceives the native. Pratt employs the term anti-conquest to refer to a European tactic of claiming

innocence while consolidating hegemonic control. “It amounts to a kind of false naiveté. The seeing-man is the protagonist of the anti-conquest; he is usually a European male subject whose imperial eyes “passively look out and possess” (7). If Pratt’s theory is applied to Nacho, one begins to see the destructive nature of the relationship. After Nacho reveals to Miko’s mother that he must depart the country to attend to another crisis, her reaction underscores the dependency complex that they developed on Nacho:

Quién nos volverá a procurar la comida diaria? ¿Quién me volverá a decir que estoy radiante en mi perpetuo traje de luto? ¿Quién nos volverá a dar huevos y embutidos gratis para desayunar y cenar? ¿Con quién mi hijo volverá a ir a pasear para volver con billetes y monedas y cuentos divertidos? ¿Y cómo vamos a poder sobrevivir sin Nacho? ¿Y por qué, Señor, tú que eres absolutamente generoso y misericordioso, nos quitas de esta manera lo que ya nos habías dado? (86)

While Nacho may be more concerned with learning about the native culture, he is unable to remove himself from the shadow of those colonizers who came before him; he is simply an extension of the past. Although maybe not by intention, he perpetuates the myth of the colonizer as being the superior and the colonized as the inferior. The omniscient narrator states the following about his intentions: “Y para informarse más y mayor su técnica consiste en trabar amistad con un lugareño, pero sin que esto implique una amistad interesada, ya que él también ofrece amistad y explica, por su parte, cómo se vive en su país, que es España” (83). Despite his objectives to merely educate Miko about life in Spain, his words directly influence how Miko imagines the experience. Miko constructs an image of Spain as the mythical salvation to his misery and decides to pursue this paradise when Nacho is forced to leave the country. He tells his family, “Pienso llegar a España, donde se encuentra Nacho. A lo mejor él me ayuda a conseguir

un trabajo y así os podré mandar mucho dinero” (89). This statement reveals how dependent Miko is on Nacho for success. Because he feels so disconnected at home, he is willing to risk everything by embarking on a journey to Europe. He tells his mother, “Ya he visto que aquí nadie puede hacer lo que quiere y yo no puedo seguir perdiendo el tiempo. Tenemos que hacer algo, mamá... (88). In many ways this quote answers the call to action that Frantz Fanon decries in *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism*. Miko feels as if he must act in order to regain the humanity that the processes of colonialism and despotism have deprived him.

In a similar vein to his counterparts in “El sueño” and *El metro*, Miko acts impetuously about the decision to migrate. He scorns his mother for instructing him to have patience about the situation: “Sí, claro; saber esperar, tener paciencia...!Siempre! El hombre no puede tener tanta paciencia como si fuera Dios” (88). His words echo Fanon’s assertion that “the colonized races, those slaves of modern times, are impatient” (74). Because he feels constrained in the oppressive regime of the government, his sense of masculinity and independence is damaged. He anticipates migration will afford him the ability to move independently and embrace what it means to be a male. Having to earn a living compels Miko to perceive himself as an agent of autonomy and self-determination. His individual perception does not necessarily correspond with the interpretation his mother has of him. Consequently, when the moment arrives to express his desire to migrate, she refuses to consent: “Es verdad que algunos de los que van mejoraran su vida y la de sus familias, pero la mayoría no vuelve, se queda ahí para siempre, y este es el gran problema. Por eso no quiero que te vayas, hijo; no quiero perderte. En la vida hay que tener paciencia” (88). Her approach is similar to the one taken by the protagonist’s

grandfather Diallo in “El sueño.” Just as Diallo did, she fails to realize that Miko’s migration is the natural progression from the paternal role he inherited as an adolescent. As primary provider, he desires to take action: “Tenemos que hacer algo, mamá...fijate que hasta el comer al día es un gran problema para nosotros, y no hablemos de lo desnudos que andan los niños, ni de que hay que cambiar esta casucha, ni de que no tenemos ni un sólo duro ahorrado por si nos pasa algo...” (88). At this stage in the decision making process, his idea of masculinity is framed around his ability to serve as the dominant breadwinner. Because of the limited opportunities in Equatorial Guinea to provide for his family, he considers leaving his homeland. Migration offers him an opportunity to assert his masculinity and fulfill his financial obligation to his family. While en route to Spain he thinks about what his experience will enable him to offer his family:

Ahorraré mucho dinero y les estaré enviando algo cada dos semanas o cada mes. A mis hermanitos les compraré zapatillas, incluso zapatos, y ropa y material escolar; y a mi madre le enviaré un buen traje para que se rejuvenezca un poco, que aún no es tan vieja como parece. Como ya sé que no le gustan los tacones, pues le mandaré zapatos sin tacones...o le enviaré dinero para que ella misma compre lo que le dé la gana; no vaya a ser que le mando algo y me digan que se ha perdido o que le ha resultado ancho o estrecho. (92-93)

Just as it did for his counterparts in *El sueño* and *El metro*, the circuit of other migrants plays a significant role in shaping Miko’s understanding of the process.

He is influenced by others who have gone before him and justifies his decision by their apparent wealth. “El hijo de Obá se ha ido hace poco y dicen que se ha comprado un coche; y también se fue Ndolong, que además es menor que yo y manda regularmente dinero a su familia” (87). Again, the ostensible success of others proves to be a

determining factor in the migrant's decision making process. The relationship between ideas of masculinity and the return of the emigrant is apparent when his peers feel the need to justify their decision to migrate by displaying items of material value. The return of the migrant is an opportunity to recapture their humanity and reassert themselves as the dominant males. The fact that Miko is influenced by his peers supports Roger Rouse's research that the migratory circuit plays a significant role in the phenomenon. Rouse claims that a transnational migrational circuit develops across time and space through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods, and information. However, in many cases the validity of the information is questionable. Often times, lies, misinformation, and hearsay characterize what is being transmitted across this circuit. The entire picture of the migratory experience is concealed to those who are about to make the journey. Once this information is circulated, it is subjected to many revisions and falsifications. In *El metro*, it was Anne Mengue, who discovered this hard fact, and it appears that Miko is just as vulnerable. He embodies the naïveté of the migrant when he tells his family "dicen que ahí no es como aquí. Ahí hay mucho trabajo y mucho dinero" (89). He relies on unsubstantiated information that has been transmitted along the circuit and refuses to question any part of the process. Instead, he focuses on how the experience will reconfigure his gendered identity. Because he simultaneously occupies the role of adult and youth, Miko embodies how ideals of masculinity are constantly being realigned and shifted as African males struggle with what it means to be a "man."

Just as the protagonists in Ndongo's work, Miko envisions that his migratory experience will transform his masculine identity. All three protagonists construct an idea of masculinity that must include migration and the difficulties that will come with it.

Because they want to inherit the role of the strong adult male, they are willing to confront the experience. They look beyond the hardships of what the journey will entail by focusing on what awaits them on the other side. They envision that the act of migration will provide them increased mobility and power upon returning home. Miko anticipates the trip will only enhance his social standing with the females in his home community:

Y cuando yo mismo vuelva!, je, je!, ni me reconocerán. Habré engordado mucho por la buena vida, sí señor. Después me casaré, sí, me casaré. Sé que las chicas estarán detrás de mí porque verán que vengo de Europa y tengo mucho dinero, y estoy seguro de que algunos padres me darán a sus hijas en matrimonio aun sin habérselo pedido. (93)

His words are strikingly similar to what the protagonist of “El sueño” experienced after returning from his initial journey. They are part of the younger generation of African males who feel pressure to carve out a new idea of masculinity. All three protagonists do not have the financial backing of their lineage and must identify new ways to be the dominant male. They become consumed with how the material wealth will facilitate their ascension up the social hierarchy. Miko envisions that the experience will provide him with the necessary financial capital to find a wife. His emphasis on the acquisition of money suggests a shifting landscape between males and females that has come to include the interconnectedness of love and money. Andrea Cornwall’s research of Nigerian men helps to inform our understanding of this phenomenon: “The ability to spend money on a woman, to sustain her and the family, has featured more and more prominently in men’s accounts of what women want” (240). Miko is fully aware that by just being a male, he is no longer afforded the same status. He must actively perform the gendered male role by possessing financial wealth. Miko’s words reveal that his ideas of being a male shift from



providing for his family to impressing women. Because Miko possesses conflicting masculinities, he embodies the dilemma of being and becoming an African man. While he still prescribes to an idea of masculinity that focuses on posturing for the opposite sex, he also defines what it means to be a man by fulfilling financial obligations for his family. Since his journey ends abruptly, he does not undergo the transformation that Lambert experiences in *El metro*. As Lambert moves across time and space, his perception of what is considered true “maleness” drastically changes. He decides being a “man” does not have to include his sexual prowess. Instead, he opens himself up to an entirely different side of manhood by seeking out meaningful relationships with females. His relationship with Lucía is evidence that he is moving along the continuum of being a male. Sadly, Miko never reaches a point in which he reconciles the competing masculinities, when the boat carrying him and two other passengers, capsizes en route to Spain.

Prior to that tragic moment, Miko has an opportunity to learn about what motivated the others passengers on board to migrate. The omniscient narrator discusses the case of one of the passengers by explaining that “ella también ha venido huyendo como estos jóvenes, pero por una razón diferente y curiosa: a su edad la tradición de su país pretende practicarle la ablación, a pesar de que, además, está encinta” (92). Nkogo explores the issue of ablation even further when the female passenger explains to Miko the exact circumstances behind her departure:

Y en cuánto a la mujer de la túnica negra y el velo negro, ella también tiene sus decisiones y anhelos: ‘A mí nadie me va a cortar nada; Alá me ha dado mi cuerpo entero y tengo que mantenerlo entero, y nada de mutilaciones... Cuando llegue a Europa, trabajaré, y cuando nazca mi hijo o mi hija-sólo Alá sabe si será masculino o femenino-, primero le meteré

en la guardería y luego en un colegio y después, si Alá ayuda, irá a la Universidad y estudiará una buena carrera, y mientras tanto yo me dedicaré a trabajar, a buscarme la vida. Creo que esto es mejor que rendirse a los preceptos de una tradición machista que no evoluciona...(94)

Just as Lambert did in *El metro*, the female character uses her migration as an act of rebellion against the traditions of her clan. While Lambert migrates because of what he perceives to be an absurd custom, the young female passenger of Nkogo's story outwardly defies a traditional practice that she feels is brutal and outdated. By placing her alongside other migrants, Nkogo demonstrates that female migrants are no different than their male counterparts: they possess the same dreams and desires as any other migrant. They are capable of asserting themselves as agents of change and using migration as a vehicle for achieving it. The female passenger's comments about ablation represent a growing trend in parts of Africa to eradicate the practice. Because her thoughts underscore how traditional gender practices contribute to her decision to leave, it is important to explore the implications of ablation or female genital mutilation, in order to understand how it intersects with migration.

While Nkogo's female passenger claims that the practice is maintained by men, research that has been conducted in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa suggests otherwise. Liselott Dellenborg's article "A Reflection on the Cultural Meanings of Female Circumcision" discusses how women are instrumental in allowing the tradition to continue:

Women not only defend the practice, but, more importantly, they have played an active role in the process...and female circumcision is now an important aspect of women's initiation rituals and their secret society. Jola women, of course, form a heterogeneous category, but regardless of the differences within this category, excision is crucial to

Muslim Jola women's religious identity, initiation, and a female collective identity. (80)

This passage certainly contradicts the assumption that the procedure is male dominated in order to control women's sexuality. Again, Judith Butler's insight proves to be useful in understanding gender practices: "The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural contexts in which it exists"(3). As the particular case of female genital mutilation exhibits, while a hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination may be in place, other women play a significant role in its vitality. Dellenborg asserts that it is in fact women who have fought to maintain the tradition:

In the last ten years, many men have joined the Senegalese government's action against excision on the grounds that female circumcision is neither a Muslim nor a Jola custom and that it ruins women's health, sexuality, and fecundity. Women, on the other hand, especially married ones, fight against their fathers, brothers, and husbands for what they perceive as their right to be excised and initiated. (81)

Dellenborg's point that married women maintain the tradition uncovers a power base of older women who exert their influence on the younger females of the region and in fact, become malegendered. These intra-gender relationships and unequal power relations, suggest paradigms that place men over women are not always accurate. Instead of the male/female power structure, a model that Patricia Hill Collins calls the "matrix of domination" is more useful. This model puts its focus on the interlocking system of oppression where oppressor/oppressed positions shift and women-on-woman violence can occur:

Embracing a both/and conceptual stance moves us from additive, separate systems approaches to oppression and toward what I now see as the more fundamental issue of social relations and domination. Race, class, and gender constitute axes of oppression that characterize Black women's experiences within a more generalized matrix of domination. (226)

This type of system of oppression was apparent in *El metro*, in which women were the perpetrators of the abuse directed towards Jeanne Bikie because of her status as a widow. Women were also responsible for verbally abusing Nena Paula because of her perceived upper class status. One can assume that it was also women who were going to perform the procedure on the young female passenger in "Emigración." Migration becomes her way of escaping the abuse. While the female passenger vehemently expresses her outrage at the practice, Dellenborg's research found many young women and teenage girls were afraid to speak out against the practice: "A few whom I know well told me that they were considering not excising any daughters that they might give birth to in the future. But they would not tell their mothers and grandmothers about their thoughts. Respect for elders is an important element in the education of young people" (86). These young girls construct a deferential image of the town elders and refuse to challenge the norms of the village.

Nkogo's short story contradicts the passivity that these young girls displayed. Instead, the story shows that young females are resistant to the idea that the procedure is a rite of passage into womanhood. Because the act represents a transformation from girl to woman, there is an improved social status related to the practice. However, the young female passenger subverts the traditional notion of being a woman by rejecting the ablation and the enhanced social image that comes with it. She demonstrates that

inclusion into womanhood is not limited to or defined by taking part in the procedure. Butler's (1990) insight into what it means to be a woman is especially pertinent: "The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms. There is a great deal of material that not only questions the viability of "the subject" as the ultimate candidate for representation or, indeed, liberation, but there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women" (12). The female passenger's idea of what it means to be a woman varies from her elders. She rebels against the boundaries of traditional femininity and refuses to perform the normative role. Butler theorizes that masculinity and femininity are performances of gender that "always operate within established political contexts as normative injunctions, determining what qualifies as intelligible sex, invoking and consolidating the reproductive constraints on sexuality, setting the prescriptive requirements whereby sexed or gendered bodies come into cultural intelligibility"(148). Because she refuses to participate in the ritual, she takes control over her own body and rebels against a tradition that strips her of her sexuality. By contesting traditional norms related to womanhood, the young female passenger creates a new image of what it means to be a woman. Just as Miko embodies the many faces of the African male, she represents the complexities and ambiguities of being and becoming an African woman and mother. While Miko is both a paternal figure and young man eager to find a wife, the female passenger is both a mother and a woman. By fleeing from the tradition of ablation, she is not abandoning her role as a mother. She does, however, make us rethink the facile binary that associates the institution of motherhood with victimhood. Jennifer Allen's essay "Motherhood: The Annihilation of Women," foregrounds the constraining nature of motherhood:

“Motherhood is dangerous to women because it continues the structure within which females must be women and mother and conversely, because it denies the creation of a subjectivity and world that is open and free” (315). The female passenger’s experience contradicts the restrictive nature of the institution. Instead, entering motherhood represents an opportunity to rebel against the antiquated tradition of circumcision. She does not want to subject her child to such a practice and feels empowered by what it will mean for his future.

In order to realize this new identity, migration becomes her only viable option. Sadly, her quest to escape the gender persecution is never fulfilled when she perishes at sea. The courageous position she takes against the gender codes of her clan is nullified because of the treacherous nature of the journey. However, despite perishing on her journey to Africa, the female passenger’s story is one that must not be ignored. As Obiama Nnaemeka states in the introduction to the seminal study of African women: “What is important is not whether these agents survive their insurrection or are crushed by it; what is crucial is the fact that they choose to act” (5). The female passenger embodies this willingness to challenge the oppressive situation in which she finds herself. Through this character, Nkogo demonstrates the importance of establishing an intergenerational dialogue between women that addresses the disconnect that exists between different groups. Nkogo suggests that to continue performing these procedures will only alienate young females from their communities and force them to actively seek to improve their own situation by trying to migrate.

Maximiliano Nkogo’s short story “Emigración” offers the reader a glimpse into the changing nature of African masculinities and femininities. Being a male and female in

contemporary Africa is not a static identity; rather, it is one that is dynamic and subject to many changes. Butler states that gender is not “a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (140). As each character constructs a different idea of masculinities and femininities, the reader sees how these social constructions shape migration. Both Miko and the female passenger actively create their gendered identities, rather than merely accepting the normative roles they inherit. Despite not ever making it to Spain, we must not ignore how the power of the imaginary placed them in a position to migrate. They envision that migration is the panacea to the oppressive social conditions of their homelands and will enable them to transform how they perceive their gendered roles.

## CHAPTER FOUR: *El último patriarca*

While Chapters Two and Three examine how migration from West Africa is altering the landscape of Spanish society, the remaining chapters will foreground how gender dynamics contribute to the arrival of the most populous group of migrants in Spain: Moroccans. According to data available through Spain's National Statistics Institute, there are approximately 710,000 Moroccans residing in Spain, a number that far exceeds any other sending country from Africa. Due to the historical and cultural ties that bind Spain with its North African neighbor, the high number of Moroccan migrants is not surprising. As Daniela Flesler argues in *The Return of the Moor: Spanish Responses to Contemporary Moroccan Migration*, Spain finds itself in a dilemma about how to treat their former occupier:

If Spaniards have difficulty in welcoming Moroccan immigrants, it is because they perceive them not only as guests but also as hosts who have come to reclaim what was theirs. Perceived as "Moors," Moroccan immigrants embody the non-European, African, and oriental aspects of Spanish national identity. Moroccans turn into a "problem" then, not because of their cultural differences, as many argue, but because they are not different enough. (9)

As I discussed in the introduction, this question of maintaining a national identity in the face of African immigration is particularly acute when placed in a Catalan context – the



setting for Nachat El Hachmi's literary work. Her autobiographical novel *El último patriarca* provides the reader some insight into this problem, as she follows one man and his family from Morocco to Spain. Like Ndongu and Nkogo before her, El Hachmi's work highlights how gender is an important factor in understanding the migratory process. However, unlike her African counterparts, El Hachmi is a female author, whose feminine voice offers the reader a unique perspective of how migration affects Moroccan patriarchal ideologies.

*El último patriarca* offers a lens through which to view the roles of men and women in Berber society. While in the urban centers of Casablanca and Marrakech, many women enjoy a greater sense of freedom and autonomy, life in the remote regions of the Rif Mountains offers little hope for change. In *Francophone Voices of the 'New Morocco' in Film and Print: (Re)presenting a Society in Transition*, Valerie Orlando documents a conversation with the Moroccan novelist and film producer Nousfissa Sbaï, about the dichotomy between life in urban and rural Morocco: "Morocco has two speeds: the urban and the rural and it is this gap, that has penalized women who must live in remote areas of the country" (73). The traditional patriarchal structure, which strictly enforces gender role ideologies by restricting women's movement in public spaces, is still common in the isolated parts of Morocco. Fatima Mernissi explains in *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*, the ramifications if women enter into these spaces: "A woman has no right to use male spaces. If she enters them, she is upsetting the male's order and his peace of mind. She is actually committing an act of aggression against him merely by being present where she should not be" (144). Consequently, women become domesticated and economically dependent on the male.

The patriarchal traditions described above represent the basis for El Hachmi's novel. *El último patriarca* builds on Sbaï's claim that "the Moroccan man doesn't want to change, and so it is up to women to bear the brunt of transforming their society." (74). The following pages analyze the nexus of these patriarchal systems and migration through the eyes of a strong female character. Placed alongside her patriarchal father and subordinate mother, she dislodges any static notion of Moroccan femininity by creating a variant version of what it means to be a female.

Just as Ndongu and Nkogo construct their narratives around first-born sons, El Hachmi frames her novel around the eldest son of the Driouch's, Mimoun. In fact, it is his voice who narrates the majority of the novel, a strategy that at times causes the reader to detect a simultaneous attraction and repulsion on the part of El Hachmi to what he represents. For the sole reason of being a male, Mimoun is entitled to a higher status in the family. "Mimoun habría sido un hombre normal si no fuera porque su infancia se vio salpicada por tantos incidentes poco usuales, el primero de los cuales fue el orden mismo de su nacimiento. Si tan sólo hubiera nacido antes que la hermana o después de su hermano, todo habría sido muy diferente" (19). Because he is the firstborn son, Mimoun's mother and sisters constantly dote on him. They forfeit their happiness so Mimoun can have anything he desires:

Sus tres hermanas eran mujeres de las de antes, de las que se encargan de la casa, de la familia, y sentían una devoción innata por el pequeño, aunque ellas no eran mucho mayores. Lo arropaban, lo acariciaban, ordeñaban la vaca cada mañana para que el niño tuviera leche fresca, lo acostumbraron desde que nació a los masajes con aceite de almendra. Estaban por él, eran sus niñeras y él era su juguete (19).

His sisters, along with Mimoun's mother are complicit in his maturation into an oppressive patriarchal figure. In fact, El Hachmi is so determined to demonstrate to the reader that she feels females are part and parcel of the patriarchal system, that the narrative voice at times is collective in its scope. However, despite their efforts to insulate him from the outside world, they are unable to protect Mimoun from the violent rage of his father. From a very early age, there is tension between father and son because Mimoun proves to be an inconsolable infant. His father is unable to tolerate his son's behavior and reacts by physically abusing him. These frequent confrontations between father and son at an early age indicate that their relationship will be forever strained. Just as the young protagonists in Ndongo's and Nkogo's texts are diametrically opposed to their elders, the line is clearly drawn between Mimoun and his father. Their relationship is further damaged by the arrival of Mimoun's younger brother, whose demeanor does not irritate his father. Still, he has aspirations for Mimoun as the firstborn son: "El abuelo todavía anhelaba que su primogénito se dedicara al oficio de la medicina y que al menos uno de sus hijos pudiera dejar la vida en el campo y viviese de un trabajo tan respetable como el de médico" (29). Instead of pursuing these options, Mimoun chooses to quit school, thus, taking the same path carved out by all three of the young protagonists discussed in the previous chapters. By electing to bypass a chance at receiving an education, all four young men accelerate the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Enrolling in school would have helped them remain committed to improving their lives in their country of origin. They are now forced into making decisions that complicate their roles as adolescents and that lead to their eventual migration.

After dropping out of school, Mimoun dedicates his entire existence to impressing the opposite sex in hopes of finding an eventual wife. Without an education and lacking any tangible skills, Mimoun realizes that he must utilize physical attributes to his advantage. It is after coming to this realization, that he begins his transformation to conquer all females. “Pero Mimoun triunfó, y mucho. Tenía un encanto especial con las chicas, dicen que por culpa de la perfecta latitud de su peca sobre el labio, pero también hay quien dice que era su modo de hablar, cómo las hacía cómplices y las engatusaba para que se dejasen hacer todo lo que a él le apetecía” (52). In addition to his charm and good looks, Mimoun possesses a certain brashness and irreverence for any girl he encounters:

No se sabe si era por la edad o por el trato preferente de que siempre había disfrutado, pero Mimoun era de los pocos chicos que podía estar tanto en la zona reservada para los hombres como en la zona de las mujeres. Entraba tranquilamente a hablar con las conocía y ninguna de las otras se tapaba púdicamente la cara con el borde del vestido ni gritaba, ¡un hombre, un hombre! Mimoun se había ido acostumbrando a que, para él, las normas se exceptuaban siempre. (53)

He does not abide by the norms established in a Muslim society that clearly delineate between spaces reserved for males and females. Additionally, he will not accept just any female; according to him, she must be: “La mujer a la que podría domesticar, con la que crearía unos vínculos tan intensos que no podrían deshacerse nunca, nunca” (55).

Mimoun strives to find a girl who is pure, like his sisters:

Para Mimoun, las mujeres que no se sabían hacer respetar, que no preservaban su honor, eran eso, cavidades donde deshacerse de la propia tensión. Y aun así las mujeres lo adoraban, y más todavía con ese aspecto moderno y forastero que le daba la nivia sobre las mejillas enrojecidas por el alcohol y aquella vestimenta que ellas sólo habían visto en las carátulas de las cintas de Rachid Nadori con su guitarra. (53)

Mimoun's radical outlook on how he perceives the role of women can be attributed to an illicit relationship he carries out with his cousin Fatma. While Mimoun is under the impression that he is the only one engaging in sexual acts with her, he quickly recognizes that he is one of many. The realization that she is being unfaithful provokes feelings of rage and jealousy and causes him to seek a wife that will be his subordinate.

His quest to locate just such a wife ends when he makes eye contact with a young girl while at a wedding:

Ella levantó la cabeza y lo vio, sonriéndole, y no pudo apartar la mirada de él. Qué vergüenza, debía de pensar, mirar a un hombre directamente a los ojos de esta manera, pensará que le gustas, qué vergüenza. Volvió a mirarse los zapatos, completamente ruborizada bajo la piel morena, y Mimoun lo supo. Por el modo en que había bajado la mirada, supo que ésa era la mujer a la que podría domesticar. (54)

At the tender age of sixteen, Mimoun is so convinced that he has found his eventual wife in Mila, that he approaches her parents about asking for her hand in marriage. He envisions how entering into a conjugal relationship will enable him to have many children and will enhance his status as a dominant male. When his future father-in-law reluctantly agrees to the union, Mimoun realizes that he must find a way to support Mila. He feels his role as the primary breadwinner for the family will be compromised if he does not migrate. While he postures as a patriarchal figure, his inability to provide for his future wife proves that he is not prepared to assume the position. He recognizes that the migratory experience will empower him to be inducted into the role. Just as the elders in "El sueño," *El metro*, and "Emigración" are unsupportive of the young protagonists' decision to migrate, Mimoun's parents cannot understand his rationale. Because he is

fearful of what his father will say, Mimoun initially broaches the topic with his mother. Her response is similar to the advice given by Miko's mother in "Emigración": "¿Dónde quieres ir, hijo? ¿No ves que atravesar el mar es peligroso, que puedes morir en el intento y que no serías el primero?" (76) Mimoun's father, the symbol of patriarchal power, also disagrees with the decision his son makes, but acknowledges that he is no longer an adolescent: "Ya es un hombre, le dijo, que tome sus propias decisiones. Pero movía la cabeza de un lado a otro pensando qué maldita idea se le habría metido ahora entre ceja y ceja" (76). Mimoun is representative of many young male migrants whose primary motivations of money for their family cloak their own hidden desires for independence from that same family unit. The reader learns about Mimoun's true rationalization for migration after he boards the ship: "Así pues, es muy probable que el verdadero motor del viaje de Mimoun fuese el convencimiento de que cualquier alternativa sería mejor que lo que ya tenía, que de hecho él debía de considerar no era nada" (79). As a young male, he strives to escape the monotony of working on the highways with his father, and instead embraces the adventure and freedom that migration affords him. In this respect, his migration is an attempt to construct a counter version of masculinity that breaks from the past.

Fortunately for Mimoun, he has a strong social network to guide him through the process. Just as in *El metro*, when Lambert relies on the guidance of friends and family to acclimate to life in the different cities of his journey, Mimoun's uncle serves as his point of reference. At a severe disadvantage because of his youth and inability to understand the language, Mimoun concentrates on what his uncle told him: "Antes de embarcar le habían dado las instrucciones precisas desde el otro lado del hijo telefónico: Barcelona,

Mimoun, tienes que encontrar el autobús que lleva a Barcelona. Ya lo verás, paran todos en el Puerto y van por toda España, pero a Barcelona sólo hay uno. No te equivoques” (80). This passage indicates the importance social network systems carry in maintaining the flow of migrants. Mimoun’s dependence on his uncle does not stop there, but only continues to grow during his time in Spain. En route to the apartment, one of the first topics discussed between Mimoun and his uncle is the place of his eventual employment. He informs Mimoun of the following: “Mañana mismo te llevaré a conocer a mi jefe, ya lo verás, trata muy bien a sus trabajadores y podrás aprender mucho” (84). His words demonstrate how migration is a gendered phenomenon that caters to males and females differently. Because Mimoun is a young male, he is an ideal candidate to follow in the footsteps of his uncle and earn enough money to send back home.

Mimoun also has the advantage of being able to live with his uncle without paying rent. He tells Mimoun the following about the living conditions at the house: “Ya lo ves, éste es nuestro reino, sin mujeres, y sin nadie que nos haga las tareas de la casa” (85). When Mimoun enters the house, the reader gets a sense of the filth that permeates the space that is dominated by males:

Mimoun vio el rincón de comedor destinado a hacer de cocina, con una pila de platos amontonados y unas moscas sobrevolando en círculos; se dio cuenta de que la pintura del comedor se agrietaba por doquier y que en algunos puntos llegaba a desprenderse de la pared, que la tenue luz entraba por las dos ventanas de la sala, porque en aquella ciudad la luz no tenía demasiada fuerza, pero también porque los cristales estaban empañados de polvo y salpicados de grasa aquí y allá. (85)

Clearly Mimoun’s uncle has refused to violate the gendered domains established in Morocco, in which the male’s space is outside of the domestic sphere. His unwillingness to transcend the gendered boundaries of domestic responsibilities suggests that migration

does not always reconfigure those roles. Migrants such as Mimoun's uncle feel that by taking part in tasks reserved for females, their status as the patriarch will be jeopardized. For his part, Mimoun emulates the approach of his uncle: "Hacía ya tiempo que Mimoun no probaba un buen guisado, prácticamente desde que se había ido de casa de su madre. A él nadie le había enseñado a cocinar o a limpiar, y mucho días la única comida decente que ingería era la de la señora Ramona. Había desistido de intentar hacerse la comida él mismo" (90). Instead of embracing how the migratory journey could have reconfigured his gendered identity by empowering him to cook and clean, Mimoun vows to maintain the rigid logic. Another way Mimoun and his uncle seek to reinforce their masculinity and assume the role as the patriarch is through contact with other women.

The public and private spaces that Mimoun and his uncle occupy allow little to no opportunity to engage with women. Not only do they reside in an apartment reserved for males, but their jobs as bricklayers largely exclude females. Because they have little access to women's bodies at home and work, they seek out other venues to fulfill their needs. Bars become a site where they can embrace topics related to their masculinity:

Las putas de aquí son como las de cualquier otro sitio, le decía su tío, sólo que te hacen pagar más y no te dejan hacer según qué. Te hacen lavarte antes de hacer nada contigo, como cuando te lavas para rezar, y algunas incluso te ponen una especie de plástico para que no las contamines, las muy cabronas. Hay muy pocas que te dejan hacérselo por detrás, dicen que les duele. (90)

These words underscore how migration enables Mimoun to capitalize on the freedom by meeting other women. Engaging in sexual relations with prostitutes empowers Mimoun to recapture the claim that he is the dominant male, an assertion jeopardized by his inability to provide a steady income while living in Morocco. However, because of his



relative sexual inexperience and Moroccan background, he is perceived as a low-status client and emasculated by the Spanish prostitutes. “Las chicas solían repasar que la pintura de las unas no se les hubiera saltado mientras el acababa.” (90). This proves how constructions of masculinity are relational and dependent on time and space. Migration genders him inferior when placed alongside the Spanish prostitutes, a position foreign to him in Morocco because of the high status granted by his mother and sisters. Feeling emasculated by the Spanish prostitutes, Mimoun is forced to seek out other women to recuperate his brand of hegemonic masculinity.

Despite being unable to speak Spanish and earn a high salary, because Mimoun exploits his otherness, he is able to seduce the local women:

Todavía era exótico ver a un moro en medio de una ciudad tan de interior y bastante a menudo había quien se volvía y se lo quedaba mirando con la mano tapándose la boca para no mostrar más de la cuenta la sorpresa. Sobre todo las señoras, que recordaban historias de magrebíes asesinos durante la guerra que habían cortado cabezas a todo aquel que se les ponía por delante y que las colgaban después por el pelo en medio de la plaza. O al menos eso era lo que se había oído decir. (88)

He realizes that women like his boss’s wife are intrigued by his otherness, and curious to have a sexual experience with a Moor: “A ella le debía de seducir el exotismo del mozo, que se movía de otra forma, su piel tan morena le recordaba a la del gitano aquel que había trabajado para ellos en otra ocasión. Pero no era lo mismo, Mimoun tenía algo que lo hacía brillar penumbra, la luz rebotaba sobre su piel” (94). This passage supports the theory articulated by Robert Young in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* whereby the colonizer possesses a simultaneous attraction and repulsion to conquer and subsequently be conquered by the hyper masculine and sexually charged racial other. Mimoun considers the sexual experience he has with the married woman as an indictment

on the manliness of his boss: “Malparido, debía de pensar, ¿es que no ves que me estoy tirando a tu mujer? Y tú, que te haces llamar hombre” (94). Because of his physical attributes, he considers himself superior to his Spanish boss. This mentality supports the claim made by Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarm in *Dislocating Masculinities*. “Rarely, if ever, will there be only one hegemonic masculinity operating in any cultural setting. Rather, in different contexts, different hegemonic masculinities are imposed by emphasizing certain attributes, such as physical prowess or emotionality, over others” (20). Despite not being of the same social class as his boss, Mimoun renders him less of a man because of his inability to sexually perform. By questioning the masculinity of the Spaniard, and accentuating his own virility as a Moroccan, Mimoun inverts the paradigm that Spanish intellectuals of the past sought to establish. Flesler states: “In sharp contrast to the gender dynamics articulated in medieval Reconquest texts, in which Muslims and Jews are represented as effeminate or homosexual in order to set up a contrast with virile Christian men, in these [contemporary] texts, Spain is identified with femininity and the Moor/Moroccan immigrant, with masculinity” (11). Still, as Susan Martin Márquez explains in her book *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity*, it is a masculinity that is perverse:

While the traditional stereotype of North African men as indomitable warriors was called into question...other centuries-old clichés were reaffirmed, solidifying the linkage to late nineteenth-century conceptualizations of degeneration. The association between Muslims and sexual ‘perversions’ was certainly not uncommon during the medieval period, but it gained particular currency during the sixteenth century, as the Moriscos were converted into a racialized minority. (181)

Through Mimoun, El Hachmi reinforces this stereotype that defines Moors as being sexually excessive. “Va, mujer, diría, si es una costumbre musulmana, piensa que todas

las generaciones de mi familia que lo han hecho y es lo primero que aprenden del sexo las mujeres. Lo dice nuestra religión, que lo tenemos que hacer, es tan sagrado como el Corán o como rezar cinco veces al día” (94). By justifying the act because of his Muslim roots, Mimoun contributes to the clichés that began during the medieval period and continue to this day. It is Mimoun’s desire to anally penetrate his boss’s wife that eventually terminates their illicit relationship and ends in dismissal from the job. He considers her rejection of him and his firing an assault on his masculinity and retaliates the only way he knows how: violence. His attempt to burn their house down results in his arrest and deportation to Morocco.

Despite having resided in an environment in which the gender roles were more liberal, Mimoun never alters his gender ideology and adheres to the same rigid orthodoxy upon his return from Spain. During his stay in Europe, he never understood why women were able to have the same freedom as their husbands: “Si yo tuviera una mujer así, pensó Mimoun, no la dejaría salir de casa, la follaría cada noche tantas veces que ya no querría estar con ningún otro hombre” (93). This quote perpetuates the myth of the incompatibility of the Moroccan immigrant with the European. In Flesler’s book, she studies this very phenomenon:

In every one of these narratives, a modern, secular, and sexually liberated Spanish woman becomes romantically involved with a conservative, traditional, religious, “Islamic” immigrant, a contemporary “Moor” oppressive to women who becomes the opposing image of what Spain strives to convince itself it has become: a modern, “first-world” European nation. (14)

So, while narratives such as *El último patriarca* foreground these different gender ideologies, they also reveal how other power variables such as race and class inform the

discourse. Étienne Balibar defines this type of racism in the French context as: “A racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but only the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions” (132). Therefore, the Muslim immigrant is perceived as being unable to completely integrate into Spanish society because of the supposed cultural differences between Africa and Spain. The irony being, that this perceived homogeneous Spanish nation, has been and continues to be, defined by its heterogeneous parts.

After realizing that he will be deported to Morocco, Mimoun knows that his family and especially his soon to be father-in-law, will consider his return an indictment on his role as the dominant male and label him a failure. “Si volvía a casa sin dinero después de perder parte de la dote de su madre en un viaje en vano y eso llegaba a oídos del abuelo Segundo, a buen seguro le negaría a su hija, a pesar del compromiso y de la boda inminente” (101). Once again, this quote reveals the intertwining nature of the return of the migrant and questions of masculinity. Fortunately for Mimoun, he avoids this emasculation after a chance encounter with his brother-in-law leads him to his sister. Once again, we see how others are instrumental in perpetuating the myth of patriarchal control. She insists that he stay with them until he can save enough money to offer as the bride price. This time gives Mimoun an opportunity to reestablish himself as a patriarchal presence. He continues his obsession with his bride’s chastity by interrogating friends and family about her faithfulness. “Le preguntó a Fatma si ella había oído algún rumor, si su futura esposa había asistido a bodas, contrariando la voluntad que él le había

expresado antes de marcharse, si había ido alguna vez a la ciudad o había enseñado sus encantos junto al pozo” (107). This paranoid behavior towards his wife only continues once they are officially married. When Mimoun discovers she defied his wishes that she stay in the house, he responds with physical abuse and threatens to kill her. Although he constrains Mila’s mobility, Mimoun continues to arrange sexual meetings with Fatma. Not even the announcement that his wife is pregnant prevents Mimoun from sexual contact with other women. It is during the pregnancy of their second child that Mimoun informs her that he must migrate to Spain: “Que yo no me puedo quedar más aquí, ¿es que no ves que estoy rodeado de envidias que me obligan a hacer los disparates que hago? Todas me desean y me hacen daño sólo con mirarme, ¿ves cómo me hacen daño? Tengo que irme” (125). Mimoun’s rationale for leaving illuminates how migration is not always a collective decision made in the best interest of the family. Hondagneu-Sotelo comments on this phenomenon:

Husbands either announced their imminent departure, or sought their wives’ tacit approval by justifying their actions on the basis of family economic need. This pattern reflected both the legitimacy of husbands’ and fathers’ authority to act autonomously, and the context of the immediate opportunities in which they acted. (57)

By departing to Spain, his wife will be forced to care for their two small children without the assistance of her husband. Furthermore, Mimoun forces her to promise him that she will never leave the house during his time in Spain. Meanwhile, Mimoun clearly frames his migration as an opportunity to recapture his lost sense of masculinity. En route to Spain, he reflects on how the trip will be better than the first because of his enhanced understanding of women: “Cuanto más mayor se hacía, más aumentaba su destreza con las mujeres, quizá porque las iba conociendo mejor o quizá porque sabía elegir a las que

seguro que eran presas fáciles” (127). This passage contradicts the idea that individuals only migrate in search of better economic opportunities. Through Mimoun, El Hachmi forces the reader to acknowledge how the gendered expectations of being a true “man” can factor into the decision to migrate. Mimoun’s definition of manhood rejects fidelity to his wife and instead is framed around conquering other women in order to prove his masculinity.

Upon arriving in Spain for the second time, Mimoun’s desire to defend his honor as a patriarchal “male” provokes him to attack his uncle, after he interprets some comments about Mila as damaging to his reputation. Consequently, Mimoun finds himself alone and without a place to stay after being thrown out of the house.

Fortunately, he meets Jaume, a fellow Moroccan from the Rifian region, who allows Mimoun to live with him until he can afford his own apartment. During his stay with Jaume, Mimoun witnesses how migration contributes to the crossing of the proverbial line between men’s and women’s work. El Hachmi’s portrayal of Jaume represents how new gendered identities can form because of migration. By occupying the homosocial world of male migrants, Jaume recognizes that his hold on true masculinity will be challenged. Unlike Mimoun, he embraces the challenge and becomes adept at traditional tasks reserved for females. This transformation shocks Mimoun:

Por eso Mimoun no entendía a un individuo tan excepcional como Jaume, al que consideraba casi como un ser híbrido por la destreza que demostraba con los estofados de pollo con patatas o con aquella especie de crepes llenas de burbujas. No, era un hombre, estaba seguro de ello, pero no sufría la disminución natural de su género a la hora de hacer las labores del hogar. Mimoun pasaba su tiempo libre contemplándolo desde el sofá con una lata de cerveza y un cigarrillo mientras el otro pasaba la fregona por todos los rincones. Oye sahbi, intenta no levantarte hasta que se haya secado, ¿vale? Y él contestaba aquello de sí, señora. (135)

Jaume's decision to carry out what were once considered feminine tasks is strikingly similar to what transpires in *El metro* when Lambert takes on jobs reserved for females. In stark contrast to these two masculine migrant characters, Mimoun refuses to take part in these tasks because of how they will alter his image as the ideal patriarch. He ponders how because of his upbringing he is incapable of domestic tasks: "Y no era que le gustase vivir así, con el suelo pringoso pegándose a los zapatos y aquel ruidillo de chuf, chuf; no, sólo era que no sabía encargarse de la casa" (134). By suggesting that he is unable to reconfigure his gendered identity because of his upbringing, Mimoun rejects the idea that gender is subjective and always changing. Instead, he clings to the notion that being a male is static when he refrains from completing any domestic chores. His desire to maintain this image demonstrates the resiliency of gender roles under attack from migration. Because he does not surrender his role as the dominant male, Mimoun seeks a female to restore the gendered boundaries of household responsibilities. His quest to find someone to fit this role ends when he meets Isabel.

Just as it did with his former employer's wife, Mimoun's strategy includes capitalizing on his Moroccan roots: "Una mujer mayor que él siempre se sentiría halagada por el hecho de que un joven corpulento como él le lanzase el anzuelo. Y tan moreno, decían. Algunas seguían relacionando su procedencia con todas las leyendas que habían oído contar a sus abuelos sobre moros, y eso era un punto que jugaba a favor de Mimoun" (147). While initially Mimoun's relationship with Isabel is limited to discrete sexual meetings, it evolves into one of significance. Since Mimoun desires to restore his patriarchal title, he decides to move into Isabel's house: "Sólo un cierto tiempo, hasta que

Mimoun decidió que necesitaba una mujer, que su compañero de piso estaba muy bien, pero que no le podía ofrecer aquello de las caricias cuando estaba medio dormido” (155). This passage underscores the importance contact with women serve in enabling the male migrant to regain his sense of proper masculinity. For Mimoun’s entire life, women made sure that he was the center of attention by catering to his every need. Without the presence of a female in the household, Mimoun feels lost and insecure. Therefore, his decision to relocate to Isabel’s house gives the reader a sense of how some male migrants desire to replicate the family structure they left behind. However, Mimoun’s decision to recreate the patriarchal system with Isabel coincides with his desire to meet other women: “Lo que no podía ofrecerle ella era la emoción de la caza, aquel cosquilleo en el estómago y la certeza-incerteza de saber si la presa sería tuya o no. Eso sólo podía pasar una vez con cada mujer, de modo que Mimoun tuvo que volver a salir por su cuenta a ejercitarse de nuevo para no perder la costumbre” (160). El Hachmi uses Mimoun to capture the inherent tension that lies within the male migrant. On the one hand, Mimoun wants to establish a home in which he is the head of the household, and the female occupies the private domestic sphere. This type of traditional household structure enables him to feel he has reestablished his privilege as the patriarch. On the other hand, by continuing to pursue other women, he lays claim to another side of masculinity that satisfies his yearning to conquer any and all females. His efforts to reconcile the two only become more complicated after he learns that Mila gave birth to a baby girl. This event shifts his focus back to life in Morocco, where he eventually returns. Just as it does for the other male migrant characters, his return is an opportunity to perform the role of the dominant male migrant who must use lavish gifts to evince his success abroad.



During Mimoun's extended absence from Morocco, his wife does everything in her power to maintain the well being of the family:

Madre trabajaba y eso la mantenía alejada de los males que te hacen enfermar. Trabajaba con nosotros, nos levantaba por la mañana y nos lavaba, bien limpios, y pobres de vosotros que manchéis la ropa. Trabajaba barriendo, fregando, lavando la lana de las alfombras hechas con piel de cordero, encalando las paredes cuando tocaba o limpiando el juego de té que parecía de plata y no lo era con aquel líquido especial tan blanquecino. Trabajaba tanto que tenía que dormir siesta después de comer, el momento del día que yo más odiaba, todo tan silencioso. (165)

Fortunately Mila is able to rely on Mimoun's mother and father for some assistance.

However, because of their age, her in-laws can only do a little, and a majority of tasks are completed by Mila. Contrary to some of the literature that claims migration can have an empowering effect on the female, Mimoun's wife remains constrained in the relationship.

Despite her independence and assertiveness, Mila still occupies a subordinate role to Mimoun because she is unable to leave the domestic domain. Connell's theory of the "patriarchal dividend" helps explain her inferior status. Connell argues that there is a "patriarchal dividend" for men collectively arising from higher incomes, higher labor force participation, unequal property ownership and greater access to institutional power. The influence of migration on the gendered identity of his wife is nonexistent because she does not have access to this dividend. The entire family suffers because of this gender order, and it is not until Mimoun's daughter, the anonymous narrator, insults his manhood, that their destiny changes: "Yo no lo recuerdo demasiado bien, pero se ve que Dios me iluminó y usé mi vocecita de niña para arreglar los problemas de toda la familia. Por qué no dejas de una vez a esa putita cristiana y haces el favor de encargarse de nosotros? ¿No crees que ya es hora de que pienses en tu familia?" (169). Because she

challenges his role as the head of the household, Mimoun feels obligated to take action by insisting that they accompany him in Spain. This transformative scene represents a shift in power from the patriarchal Mimoun to his daughter as the narrative voice transitions from father to daughter. El Hachmi depicts the narrator as inherently resistant to his patriarchal ideology and fully capable of asserting herself as an agent of change. The move from Morocco to Spain allows her to continue to rebel against the traditional gender norms of her family.

While Mimoun's daughter enjoys the more liberal European environment, her mother finds it difficult to break free of the patriarchal gender relations that structure the relationship with her husband. Upon arriving at Mimoun's apartment, Mila immediately assumes the domestic role that she occupied in Morocco:

Pero madre sí que sabía qué hacer con el desorden y la suciedad que lucía por todas partes. Su capacidad transformadora de la realidad ha sido siempre una de sus virtudes, quizá de las más destacables. Si habíamos pasado tantas horas de viaje y ella no había dormido por miedo a que raptasen a sus hijos, ¿no estaba cansada? Sacó el polvo, barrió y recogió con las manos lo que había reunido por toda la casa, haciendo de pala con las dos palmas extendidas, como había hecho siempre. Y como siempre, fregó el suelo con un trapo viejo, doblándose de esa forma que yo nunca he sabido imitar, con las piernas abiertas y estiradas y el vestido colgando en medio. (174)

This scene exemplifies how the household division of labor proves to be resilient to change. Mila is unable to gain access to the outer world where employment opportunities and resources lie, and consequently remains confined to the private sphere. Additionally, because of the foreign surroundings, she enters into a stage of deep depression: "Mila no tenía ni siquiera la ánima para apoyarla, Mila no tenía a nadie por primera vez en su vida en un lugar tan alejado de todo" (181).

The experiences Mila encountered in Spain are similar to Hondagneu Sotelo's research

on wives of men who migrated:

Loneliness was compounded if they worked at home caring for the children of other immigrant women, a common first job for newly arrived undocumented immigrant women in this study. Yet this isolation, and the fear of moving beyond the domestic sphere, were tempered by the pockets of women's networks. The companionship of even one or two other women—often neighbors, kin, or housemates—lessened the feelings of loneliness, and women became more secure as they learned what activities were safe to pursue in their new surroundings. (116)

Even when Mimoun tells her to explore the city and seek outside relationships, she remains at home: “¿Dónde quieres que vaya? Al parque, con nosotros, por ejemplo, al mercado el martes o al mercado el sábado o a caminar o...Pero ella no, limpiaba, lavaba la ropa y dormía la siesta, que era lo que la alejaba de todo” (192). These feelings of isolation and monotony continue until Mila meets Soumisha, a female neighbor from the same region of Morocco.

Mila's friendship with Soumisha enables her to see how the patriarchal family structure can erode because of migration. “Soumisah era diferente porque iba a comprar al Mercado, visitaba a otras mujeres que habían venido de la provincia de donde nosotros procedíamos, buscaba telas para hacerse caftanes para el día en que se marchase para allá abajo y viajaba cada año” (218). She encourages Mila to reject the passivity with which she lives her life and empowers her to become an agent of change. The initial step she must take is to become more financially independent. Soumisha leads by example, when she informs Mila that she works on the side to supplement the family's income. She then instructs Mila to demand that Mimoun stop seeing his new Spanish girlfriend, Rosa. Mila takes her advice and begins to secretly take money from Mimoun. When he eventually

learns of her scheme, he demands that she give him the money. However, in an act of resistance, she rejects his requests:

Dame el dinero te digo. No, no y no. No había visto nunca aquella forma de mirar de madre y padre estaba como si no le correspondiera estar allí. Dijo: o la dejas, o te dejas... Dile que venga aquí. ¿Te has vuelto loca?, no sabe que él ha nacido y cree que tú y yo no dormimos nunca juntos. Hazla venir, te digo, y yo no había visto nunca a madre desplegar los brazos de aquel modo ni a padre con una especie de miedo que se le escurría por algún sitio. (226)

Migration affords her the opportunity to observe the egalitarianism that defined the relationship between Soumisha and her husband. Mila realizes that she possesses the ability to resist being a victim by allowing her voice to be heard. Due to migration, the image of Mila as the docile motherly figure is no longer entirely accurate.

Although Mila subverts Mimoun's authority by questioning his fidelity, in terms of spatial mobility, she still occupies a subordinate position to her husband. While Mimoun leaves at will, she remains confined in the house, afraid of what will happen should she leave that space. Even when Mimoun returns to Morocco for a funeral and leaves her alone, she is reluctant to go to the market:

Yo le decía a madre, va, venga, vamos al mercado, que él no está, o vamos a aquella tienda de las telas y las escoges tú misma para hacerte vestidos, vamos a dar un paseo o a ver a alguna amiga tuya. Ella que no, que no, que él no está pero lo sabe casi todo. Entonces comencé a entender hasta qué punto estaba domesticada y que quizás ese vínculo ya era para toda la vida. (241)

This forces her daughter to sacrifice her normal routine in order to accommodate her.

Despite being subjected to Mimoun's oppressive ideology for so many years, Mila insists that her daughter remain at home by her side. "Madre quería enseñarme a funcionar como

le habían enseñado a ella” (202). Even Mila’s neighbor, Soumisha, encourages her to assume the role of the traditional female: “Hija, decía, ya es hora de que te espabiles un poco, no te queda más remedio. Ya sé que a ti te interesa más leer ese libro tan gordo que tienes, pero ahí no aprenderás nada de la vida” (225). The young female narrator responds to these orders by vehemently rejecting that lifestyle: “Yo deseaba ser lo bastante mayorcita para otras cosas, no quería pasarme los días limpiando para que los demás ensuciasen, aunque puede que no lo pensara de esa forma porque solamente tenía diez u once años” (225). By articulating these thoughts at such a young age, she demonstrates an uncanny ability to challenge the societal norms that Mila has known for her entire life.

Ironically, Mimoun advocates for his daughter to have increased mobility. This occurs primarily because he relishes the status that comes with being seen in public alongside his daughter. From the time that he discovered Mila gave birth to a girl, he spoke of its impact on his masculinity: “Las niñas son más leales a los padres, te hacen más caso y te quieren de todo corazón, y no por la obligación de ser tus hijos. Y te lo demuestran, las niñas te demuestran que te quieren hagas lo que hagas y su amor siempre es incondicional.”(151). When the family arrives in Spain, Mimoun insists on allowing his daughter to accompany him while he visits public spaces. This creates some tension between Mila and Mimoun, as they begin to wrestle over whether their daughter’s role should be more public or private. Mimoun’s Spanish girlfriend, Rosa, compounds the problem by offering her opinion on the matter: “Rosa decía entonces es que esta niña hace demasiadas cosas para lo pequeña que es, esta niña no tendría que trabajar tanto en casa” (202). For her part, the narrator admits that other Spanish girls her age are not

forced to complete domestic chores: “Madre siempre decía que debería estar haciendo esto o debería estar haciendo lo otro y yo ya había visto que las niñas de mi edad no sabían ni coger bien una escoba y que no tenían ningún interés por aprender a hacerlo” (243). Because she resides in this more liberal environment, she begins to embrace an alternate way of life that diminishes the gender inequalities that she has known her entire life. She begins to develop strong social ties at school, a place that she embraces as a sanctuary away from her chaotic private life. The relationships she builds at school instill in her a quiet confidence that infuriates Mimoun, thus creating a chasm between father and daughter. When she reaches an age that she becomes interested in dating, their relationship only worsens. Mimoun cannot tolerate that his daughter desires to gain independence by spending time with her peers. She continues to challenge his authority by actively seeking to establish strong social networks:

Las conocí a las dos y no se sabe por qué nos hicimos amigas. Una porque se sentaba a mi lado, pues su apellido iba detrás del mío. La otra ya no me acuerdo, era amiga de otra amiga. Había muchas cosas que nos unían, aunque al principio dicen que les di como repelús, que sabían tanto de las moras, mejor dicho, de los moros, que les dio mal rollo tenerme tan cerca. Pero nos convertimos en imprescindibles las unas para las otras, el triángulo perfecto. (277)

Friends become a key source of support and guidance for the narrator to overcome her father’s abusive behavior. Taken by itself, migration from Morocco to Spain was not enough to reconfigure the gender imbalances between Mimoun and his wife and daughter. Because Mila is unable to secure a strong social support system, she remains confined to the status quo. However, her daughter’s ability to establish social outlets provides the means by which she will challenge the traditional gender order that her father seeks to maintain. Her outlook enables her to not only create lasting friendships,

but also to enter into a serious relationship with a young Moroccan male. When her boyfriend insists that they get married, she seizes control of the relationship by demonstrating her independence and power as a female: “Yo es que no seré una esposa de las que se quedan en casa a limpiar y a cocinar, quiero salir, las labores de la casa han de ser compartidas” (299). While he initially agrees to these conditions, once the marriage is official, he begins reverting to traditional gender attitudes. Instead of passively allowing his behavior to continue, she assertively challenges him:

Más tarde cogió la costumbre de salir sin decir adónde iba y comenzaron las discusiones por ese tema. Hace como padre, pensaba yo, y él debía de entender que quería atarlo, que ya se sabe que las mujeres de aquí hacen lo que quieren con los hombres y tú eres más de aquí que de allá. ¿Dónde vas? No lo sé, salgo y basta. Hasta que dije de acuerdo, vale, yo haré lo mismo. Y agarraba la puerta a las once de la noche y él decía ¿adónde vas a estas horas? ¿Quién te ha dicho que me voy a quedar en la calle? Ya veremos, puede que me vaya a tomar algo o que vaya al cine o que me vaya de marcha. ¿No eres tú el que no quiereir a ningún lado conmigo? (328)

After having too many of these confrontations, she decides to leave her husband and seek a divorce. “Y yo que a partir de entonces me sentaría como quisiera, comería como quisiera, cocinaría sólo si me apetecía, limpiaría sólo si me daba la gana, trabajaría en lo que quisiera y estudiaría lo que quisiera. Sólo eso. Aquel día no hice nada más, pero eso era la libertad. Decidir, decidir, y decidir” (330). She is no longer concerned with the ramifications of her decision, but more focused on taking control of her life and becoming an agent of change.

In its portrayal of the migratory experience from Morocco to Spain, *El último patriarca* foregrounds how gender norms are both maintained and reconfigured as the

migrants move across time and space. While the narrator challenges the patriarchal structure by embracing the more liberal values of Europe, her father and mother remain entrenched in their ideas of what it means to be a Moroccan male and female. Although the act of migration subjects Mimoun to subordinate forms of masculinity in the workplace, he compensates by using his sexual virility as a “Moor” to regain his sense of manhood. This proves how notions of gender and power are socially constructed and historically positioned. Once his family arrives, we see how migration only exacerbates the gendered attitudes of Mimoun towards Mila, thus proving that a change of residence does not guarantee true mobility or equality. Conversely, their daughter is able to challenge the ideology when she establishes a strong social support system. She embodies a radical variant of femininity that rebels against any essentialist notion of what it means to be a woman. Because it provides a glimpse into these divergent gender ideologies, *El último patriarca* demands that the reader take a critical approach to understanding the complex and varied relationship between gender and migration.



## CHAPTER FIVE: *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*

As the number of Moroccans arriving in Spain increases, the profile of these migrants continues to evolve. Najat El Hachmi's novel *El último patriarca* offers the reader a glimpse into the experience from the perspective of rural Morocco. She describes how the monotonous lifestyle of the Rifian region of Morocco contributes to the decision that young Mimoun makes to migrate to Spain. Her work builds on qualitative research carried out in the Nador province of the Rif Mountains by anthropologists such as David McMurray. His study, *In and Out of Morocco: Smuggling and Migration in a Frontier Boomtown*, describes how rural Moroccans envision migration as an escape from the hopeless lifestyle of the area. However, literary representations such as El Hachmi's novel and fieldwork completed by McMurray, do not tell the entire story of Moroccan migration to Spain. In order to fully understand how pervasive the phenomenon has become, the focus must shift to the urban areas. In the densely populated cities of Casablanca and Tangier, there is an entire sector of Moroccans waiting to make the journey north. In the article "Morocco's migration experience: a transnational perspective," Hein de Haas provides some valuable insight on why international migration occurs from these areas:

People from areas located at the "margin of the margin" tend to migrate less and most migration from such areas tends to be internal. Similarly, in southern Morocco, sedentary peasant populations of relatively well-connected oases, endowed with better infrastructural links and socio-political relations to the outside world, participated earlier and more intensively in international migration than sedentary or nomadic (and semi-nomadic) people living in small oases or other isolated areas in the Atlas mountains, steppes, and deserts. Typically the poorest people within

sending communities are not the ones most likely to migrate, because they lack the resources to do so. (53)

It can no longer be assumed that the typical migrants from these urban areas are young, poor, uneducated, single, and male. Instead, demographic factors such as age, sex, class, level of education, and marital status are varied. Migrants young and old, male and female, single and married, of all socioeconomic classes and education levels, are now making the decision to migrate.

Laila Lalami's collection of short stories *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* captures how multifaceted the migratory experience is by following four protagonists — two male: Murad and Aziz, and two female: Halima and Faten — as they move from Casablanca and Tangier to Spain. While originally published in English, and translated into Spanish, Lalami's collection of stories are a relevant example of how the diasporic space between Africa and Spain proves to be a fertile site to investigate issues of gender normativity, postcoloniality, and the nation. Her work provides the reader with examples of how gender roles have typically been viewed and elaborates on the complexities of being a man and woman in present day Morocco. We see how each protagonist tries to reconcile modern views with the traditional gendered expectations of those around them. As they try to negotiate this dilemma, we begin to understand how heavily gender roles burden them. The social pressure is so great that the decision all four protagonists make to cross the Strait of Gibraltar is influenced by these gendered expectations of what defines authentic Moroccan masculinity and femininity. Once they make the journey, not only will their gendered identities never be the same, but their ideas of Spain will also be forever changed.

Lalami chooses to begin her narrative in media res, a strategy that causes the reader to question the motives of each passenger. By blurring past and present, Lalami inverts the traditional linear narrative that explains cause and effect in a simplistic manner. In Lalami's work, there is nothing straightforward about the migratory experience, but is instead described as a fragmented and fissured journey undertaken by active participants who come together to form a new transnational community. Their stories are woven together to form a tapestry that reflects the complexity of being a migrant. In the first section entitled "The Trip," we learn Aziz, Faten, Halima, and Murad are the names of just some of the passengers aboard the raft, but do not know many more details about their personal stories. As they get closer to Spanish soil, Murad ponders the irony of their journey:

Murad can make out the town where they're headed. Tarifa. The mainland point of the Moorish invasion in 711. Murad used to regale tourists with anecdotes about how Tariq Ibn Ziyad had led a powerful Moor army across the Straits and, upon landing in Gibraltar, ordered all the boats burned. He'd told his soldiers that they could march forth and defeat the enemy or turn back and die a coward's death. The men had followed their general, toppled the Visigoths, and established an empire that ruled over Spain for more than seven hundred years. Little did they know that we'd be back, Murad thinks. Only instead of a fleet, here we are in an inflatable board-not just Moors, but a motley mix of people from the ex-colonies, without guns or armor, without a charismatic leader. (3)

Once again, the reader is reminded of how important the historical past is in contributing to migration. Lalami broadens her scope to include a heterogeneous group of Africans who embody the colonial wound. Many of these passengers meet the same fate as described in the previous chapters, when the captain of the raft informs them that they must swim the rest of the way to shore. Although the reader is unsure about the

whereabouts of Aziz or Halima and her children, the dream of making it into Spain comes to abrupt halt for Faten and Murad after Spanish authorities detain them. It is only after we learn their fate, does Lalami move onto the second section of the narrative entitled “Before,” in which she explores the social pressure and gendered dynamics surrounding each character’s decision to migrate. Before I analyze how each protagonist conforms or rejects these constructions of male-ness and female-ness, it is important to outline the contemporary social context in which they operate. A logical point of departure to discuss the social dynamics between males and females in Morocco is the 2003 announcement by King Mohammad IV to reform the country’s *moudawana* or personal status code, designed to improve women’s rights.

The reform — unanimously approved by parliament in January 2004 — sought to redefine the relationship between men and women by allowing shared control over the family unit. Essentially, the law now views men and women on an egalitarian level. This is a radical break from the earlier *moudawana* that required women to get permission from their *wali* (guardian) to get married, allowed men to marry multiple wives and issue unilateral divorces in accordance with the Islamic tradition of repudiation, and prevented women from requesting a divorce. Along with these reforms, the changing nature of the current socioeconomic reality has greatly reduced the differences between males and females in contemporary Morocco. Fatima Mernissi’s study *Beyond the Veil* speaks to this point:

A respectable man is not simply someone who acquires some degree of economic power, but also who controls the sexual behavior of his wife, daughters and sisters. But this is possible only if he is able to control their movements, to limit their mobility and thereby to reduce their interaction with the strange men with whom they threaten to ‘sully the family’s

honor'. Once again, money and sex are intimately linked in the definition of identity, both for women and men. (149)

Because of these changes, men are no longer in a privileged position to dominate a family and restrict the mobility of the female. Lalami's work accurately captures this new gendered space by creating characters who represent the changing nature of what it means to be a male and female in contemporary Morocco. As each character wrestles with their gendered identity, migration becomes a viable option in their quest to construct alternative ideas of masculinity and femininity.

While we follow four characters on their journey, it is Murad whom Lalami chooses to introduce first to the reader. Unlike the other young male protagonists that I analyzed in the first three chapters, Murad has a strong educational background and other tangible skills that make his decision to leave easier. "He isn't like the others — he has a plan. He doesn't want to break his back for the *spagnol*, and spend the rest of his life picking their oranges and tomatoes. He'll find a real job, where he can use his training. He has a degree in English and, in addition, he speaks Spanish fluently, unlike some of the harraga" (3). Because of Morocco's high unemployment rate, Murad is unable to utilize his degree to find any meaningful work. While the total unemployment rate is estimated to be ten percent, that number is double in urban areas. The forecast is even bleaker for young Moroccans, with the unemployment rate at thirty percent for university graduates. Murad expresses anger at the bleak economic outlook and begins to regret his decision to enter the university:

Maybe he shouldn't have bothered going to college to study English, spending his time learning a language and its literature. No one cared about these things. In the beginning, when he had just graduated, he'd

combed the papers for ads and written long, assured application letters; but as the months and then the years crawled by, he took anything he could find, temporary or seasonal work. Looking back now, he wondered if he should have worked with smugglers, bringing in tax-free goods from Ceuta, instead of wasting his time at the university. (102-03)

His comments imply that education is not always an antidote to the high number of young Moroccans willing to migrate. Recent research indicates that a majority of Moroccan migrants are university educated. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad discusses in *Muslims in the West: from Sojourners to Citizen* how these new migrants are mainly young, urban, and forty percent of them either have a baccalaureate or a university degree. Despite his credentials, Murad is never able to find any stable employment, and is forced to enter into the competitive and thankless position of working as a tour guide in Tangier. After a day in which numerous tourists reject his requests, Murad returns to the apartment he shares with his mother and siblings. With his father deceased, Murad assumes the patriarchal role in the family, but is unable to meet the demands that accompany this title. Meanwhile, his younger brothers, the twins Abd-el-Samad and Abd-el-Sattar, study medicine in Rabat, and his sister Lamya, is a receptionist for an import-export firm in downtown Tangier. The frustration and shame that Murad feels because of his diminished position in the family multiplies after hearing the news of his younger sister's engagement:

-Someone asked for your sister's hand today.

-Who?

-A colleague of hers from work. He came to talk to your uncle and me.

-My uncle? Murad felt his face flush with anger at the sight.

-Well, yes, his mother said.

-Why didn't you tell me?

-I'm telling you now.

He slammed his hand on the table and got up.

-I'm the man in this family now, he said. His father had passed away three years ago, in a hit-and-run accident.

-There will be a proper engagement ceremony and you'll be there. May we celebrate when it's your turn. Murad wondered how his mother could say this so nonchalantly when she knew that without a job his turn wasn't going to be anytime soon.

-I should have been in the know, he yelled.

-Don't raise your voice at me. Are you paying for the wedding?

-Just because I don't have a job you think I'm invisible? I'm her older brother. You should have come to me (101-02).

Murad's reaction suggests how influential gender relations between siblings can be in shaping attitudes and beliefs. Because Murad is economically dependent on his mother, his younger siblings refuse to grant him the proper respect afforded to him as the eldest son. This demotion in familial status precipitates his desire to arrange for his migration to Spain: "He knew, in his heart, that if only he could get a job, he would make it, he would be successful, like his sister was today, like his younger brothers would be someday. His mother wouldn't dream of discounting his opinion the way she did" (108). In Murad's mind, migration becomes the vehicle by which he will regain his status and household authority within the family.

Although Murad remains hesitant about making the trip, he, like the protagonists described in Ndong'o's and Nkogo's works, relies on the apparent success others have had to influence him. This reoccurring trope proves how trends in migration, which have shifted towards a more transnational movement between sending and receiving countries, contribute to the decision-making process. Because of the increased contact and networking across time and space, it becomes easier for those who remain behind to receive news of those abroad. In the case of Murad, it is after hearing about Rashid, the baker's brother, that he makes up his mind:

Murad never tired hearing stories like that. He'd heard the horror stories, too — about the drowning, the arrests, the deportations-but the only ones were told over and over in the neighborhood were the good stories, about the people who'd made it. Last year Rashid's brother had been just another unemployed youth, a kid, who liked to smoke hashish and build weird-looking sculptures with discarded matchboxes, which he then tried to sell off as art. Look at him now. (107)

The possibility of acquiring the type of financial freedom enjoyed by Rashid's brother forces Murad to accept the price of 12,000 dirhaim. After agreeing to the price, he must now identify how he will finance the trip. Once again, social constructions of masculinity play a pivotal role in the process as he ponders asking his sister and uncle for the money: "For one thing, she now had a wedding coming up; for another, he couldn't imagine asking his little sister for help. But it would be different with his uncle. He would talk to him, man to man, and ask for a loan" (107). While asking his sister would jeopardize his status as the dominant male, he believes that by simply focusing on the question of honor with his uncle, he will acquiesce. In fact, in many cases, because these older males were once migrants themselves, the strategy used by young migrants like Murad is a clever one: since his uncle is supposed to understand the norms of true manhood, he will be sympathetic to Murad's position. This logic is subtended by a static notion of masculinity, which until it is redefined, will continue to influence the decision making process to migrate. Because Murad strives to meet the expectations of what men should do and should be, he fails to focus on what he is really capable of as a young male. His desire to live up to what R.W. Connell constitutes as a hegemonic masculinity — the most honored and desired in a particular context — prohibits Murad from realizing this concept is unattainable. As Carrigan, Connell, and Lee state:



The ability to impose a particular definition on other kinds of masculinity is part of what we mean by ‘hegemony...’ It is, rather, a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance. An immediate consequence of this is that the culturally exalted form of masculinity, the hegemonic model so to speak, may only correspond to the actual characters of a small number of men. (112)

Blinded by aspirations of how migration will instill in him this hegemonic masculinity, Murad myopically makes the journey.

After Murad fails to make it to Europe, Lalami returns to his plight in the third section of the text entitled “After.” It is at this point in the narrative that Murad is able to rethink his understanding of masculinity. Upon his return to Tangier, he feels such a strong sense of dishonor:

He avoided family gatherings, refused to run errands, turned down offers to play soccer with the neighbors. Everyone knew he’d tried to go to Spain, and now they all knew he’d been caught and deported, so he took to staying home with his mother, forsaking even a glass of tea at the Café La Liberté with other unemployed young men from the neighborhood. (176)

Although a year has passed, Murad is still imprisoned in the migratory circuit of lies and gossip. Despite the failed attempt, his desire to recoup his honor and humility drive him to ask his mother to fund another trip. When she rejects his pleas, Murad is forced to take a position as a store clerk operated by a friend of the family. Faced with copious amounts of down time, Murad begins to question his own identity and ponder his role in society. He determines that “he’d been so consumed with his imagined future that he hadn’t noticed how it had started to overtake something inside him, bit by bit” (177). The pressure he felt to meet the gendered expectations of the authentic male played a significant role in his obsession with Spain. His definition of manhood was restricted to

possessing economic power. Spain represented the possibility of achieving a higher economic status, which would allow him to become the archetypal male provider. However, after failing in his attempt, he realizes that he can create an alternative image of masculinity that is not solely defined by potential wealth, but can be grounded in reality. He embraces the man he is in the present moment and moves forward with his plan to be a writer. Through Murad, Lalami demonstrates that the migratory journey — as brief as it was—has the potential to create different visions of masculinity that are not solely defined by hegemonic discourse, but instead focus on realistic ideals of manhood in contemporary Morocco.

Along with Murad, the other male passenger that we follow on the journey to Spain is Aziz. Unlike Murad, who is captured and returned to Morocco, Aziz eludes the Spanish authorities and successfully crosses into Spain. Despite this fact, Aziz's rationale for migrating is also anchored in the gendered expectations to fulfill his role as the man of the family. While Murad is single, Aziz has to consider the ramifications his decision will have on his marriage with Zohra. Although he is content in the relationship, he begins to feel inadequate because of his inability to find steady employment. Despite earning a certificate from trade school, the only source of income available to him comes from random side jobs around the city. His sense of inferiority is exacerbated when he learns Zohra finds a job at a soda factory. The news of her employment coupled with his own idleness, forces him to feel pressure from others: "They [his in-laws] had been nagging Zohra about his joblessness, and their comments had grown more persistent after she'd managed to find a job at a soda factory" (76). This commentary underscores how young men are expected to fulfill their traditional roles as breadwinners and heads of the

household. However, because of the high economic unemployment rate, it has become increasingly difficult for young men like Aziz to do so, and their patriarchal authority has been destabilized and challenged by women. In this context, Aziz perceives that the rewards of migration outweigh the risks: “But he had weighed their [his parents] warnings against the prospect of years of idleness, years of asking them for money to ride the bus, years of looking down at his shoes or changing the subject whenever someone asked what he did for a living, and the wager, seemed, in the end, worthwhile” (79). With his self-esteem and identity tarnished, Aziz decides that he can no longer occupy a subordinate position to Zohra. Therefore, his decision to migrate is an act to recapture his position as the male breadwinner and prove his manhood. It is not considered a communal decision made in the best interest of the household. This example has implications for proponents of the household theory of migration, which stresses the role of a unified family in migration decisions. The household undivided by gender hierarchies of power is challenged by Aziz’s relationship with Zohra. Despite having lost his status as the primary breadwinner in the family, he still exerts his authority over Zohra and rejects her requests that he stay behind.

Although he promised to return in a couple of years, five years pass before Aziz steps foot on Moroccan soil. When he finally arrives at the apartment, the reunion with Zohra is anticlimactic and awkward. The tension is eased after Aziz presents Zohra and his mother with gifts from Spain: “He took out the fabric he brought his mother, the dresses for Zohra, the creams, the perfumes. The two women oohed and aahed over everything” (154). The strategy to shower relatives with gifts is one that Aziz uses to

distract from the hardship of the trip. It would be damaging to his manhood should he give the impression that his experience in Spain was difficult or perhaps a failure:

But he didn't talk about the time when he was in El Corte Ingles shopping for a jacket and the guard followed him around as if he were a criminal. He didn't describe how, at the grocery store, cashiers greeted customers with hellos and thank yous, but their eyes always gazed past him as though he were invisible, nor did he mention the constant identity checks that the police had performed these last two years. (155)

Thus, despite being profiled because of his Moroccan background, he gives the impression that his decision to migrate was the correct one. Even though his time in Spain was fraught with bouts of racism, because it provides him with financial means to purchase elaborate gifts, he perceives his migration as a success. Back on his native soil, Aziz settles into the role of the alpha male, whose journey to Europe has granted him a special privilege amongst his people:

Within in an hour of his arrival, a stream of visitors poured in to see Aziz. The tiny apartment was filled with people, and Zohra kept shuttling between the kitchen and the living room to refill the teapot and the plate of halwa.  
-Tell us, someone said, 'What's Spain like?'  
-Who cooks for you? asked another.  
-Do you have a car? asked a third. (154)

The others gravitate towards Aziz because he passed through the rite of passage of migration and lived to tell about it. The interaction between Aziz and his neighbors is similar to the scene in *El último patriarca*, in which Mimoun converses with friends about the grandeur of his life in Spain. The return home is an opportunity for the migrant to not only be a man again, but become a mythical figure to other aspiring migrants.

With his status as an adult male greatly enhanced, Aziz tries to use this power to convince Zohra that she should come with him to Spain. The five years in Spain have made it difficult for him to adapt to the more conservative lifestyle of home. His normal routine of flirting with young women at night clubs gives way to spending time with women in hijabs at family gatherings. He yearns for something more than what Zohra and Morocco can offer him. The intimate contact he shares with his wife on the second night of his return brings to mind the other women he slept with while in Spain: "He was ashamed to have cheated, but, he reasoned, he had been lonely and he was only human. He told himself that he had never intended to cheat on her, that the women he had slept with had meant nothing to him, just as, he was sure, he'd meant nothing to them" (163). Somewhere along the migratory circuit Aziz's priorities shift and the desire for sexual pleasure and independence becomes his focus. The uninhibited sexual experience he shares with these women leaves him craving for the same type of passion with Zohra:

Now he wondered what his wife would look like in a sexy bustier, straddling him, her arms up in the air, moaning her pleasure out loud. He couldn't imagine Zohra doing it. But maybe she would, if he asked her. He came out of her and put his arm under her so he could scoop her up and put her on top of him, but she raised her head and gripped his arms in panic. Her eyes questioned him. (163)

Aziz realizes that he cannot change the person Zohra is and the man he has become. Migration has altered Aziz's construction of manhood. Being a man to him no longer means having a wife, raising a family, and being together. This traditional model of Moroccan masculinity shatters after his migratory journey. The thought of raising children with Zohra causes him to rethink having any sexual contact with her during his

stay: “When it was over and he lay in the dark, he wondered what had been on her mind. He feared that it was only one thing. He had seen how she had looked at the neighbor’s child and he wondered if he should have stayed away from her tonight. He told himself that he’d have to use a condom next time” (163). While in *El último patriarca*, condoms are a threat to Mimoun’s masculinity, in this context, they enable Aziz to pursue a reconfigured masculine identity that does not include a wife or children. His desire for sexual freedom coincides with his pursuit for professional success. He rejects the traditional model of the Moroccan male who resides in the homosocial world of cafés: “He chose a seat outside, in the sun, and ordered an espresso. He looked around. Something struck him as odd, but he couldn’t quite put a finger on it. It wasn’t until the waiter came back with his coffee that he realized there were no women at all” (165). It is at this moment that Aziz determines that he has become a new man, and belongs outside of Morocco.

While Aziz is convinced that his future is in Spain, Zohra does not share the same certainty. Aziz is sure that he will be able to use his authority to change her mind, but greatly underestimates Zohra’s autonomy. He forgets that she has lived independent of him for five years, and established her own life with friends and family as her main priorities. Instead of serving as a simple pawn to Aziz, she raises important questions about who will take care of his mother should she migrate, or how she will learn the language. She even demands to know why Aziz can’t just stay in Morocco. Her resistance represents a break from the subservient and docile model of the Moroccan female that Mila embodies in *El último patriarca*. Forced by her parents into marriage with Aziz, Zohra is determined not to capitulate in the same passive way. By allowing

her voice to be heard, Aziz takes notice and realizes that they have become two separate people:

He couldn't imagine her with him in Madrid. She was used to the neighbor's kid pushing the door open and coming in. She was used to the outdoor market where she could haggle over everything. She was used to having her relatives drop in without notice. He couldn't think of her alone in an apartment, with no one to talk to, while he was at work. And he, too had his own habits now. He closed his suitcase and lifted it off the bed. It felt lighter than when he arrived. (167)

Thus, the chasm that migration has created between Aziz and Zohra is too much to overcome. Aziz's notion of masculinity no longer coincides with the lifestyle that Zohra desires to maintain. This representation of the Moroccan male allows the reader to see how masculinity is a mutable idea that is constantly being reconfigured over time and space. Through Aziz, Lalami produces a new form of the masculine male: unconcerned with his role as husband and potential father but consumed by the pursuit of individual happiness through independent sexual relations with women. Migration does not always reinforce a man's commitment to their family, but instead can directly challenge how they perceive their gendered role in society. Any construction of masculinity in Morocco should include this alternative vision offered by Lalami.

Not only does Lalami's work contest the traditional notion of masculinity, but the female characters — Halima and Faten — also shed light on how migration intersects with the changing nature of being a woman in contemporary Morocco. When we first meet Halima, she is recovering from yet another beating by her alcoholic husband Maati. Lalami's characters find themselves in an abusive relationship that mirrors the one between Mimoun and Mila, as depicted by El Hachmi in *El último patriarca*. Feeling

abandoned and alone, Halima turns to her mother, Fatiha, for support. With her father deceased, and her two brothers having emigrated to France, Fatiha is her only source of comfort. Fatiha's insists that Halima be patient and that "a woman must know how to handle her husband" (53). When Halima rejects her advice, and insists that she wants divorce, "Fatija slapped her hand on her thigh, spilling tea on the table. 'Curse Satan,' she said. How are you going to feed the children?" (54) The generational gap between mother and daughter is all too apparent in how they approach such a serious matter as spousal abuse. Instead of supporting her daughter's right to an independent and autonomous life, Fatija recommends a traditional approach of visiting a sorceress to cure the problem. She informs her daughter: "Look, I'm going to get you a little something from a new sorceress I went to the other day. Make sure you put it in Matti's food this time. He'll become like a ring on your finger. You can turn it any way you want" (54). Instead of paying a magician fifteen hundred dirham, Halima prefers to use the courts to rectify the matter. To her mother, the thought of going to court will only complicate matters. "Look what happened to Hadda. Hadda was Halima's neighbor in the Zenata shanty. Her husband had taken up with another woman but refused to divorce her. She'd gone to court, but he hadn't shown up at any of the hearings. Now she lives alone. She's neither married, really, nor free to remarry." (54) Halima is unaffected by the in-between state that Hadda occupies and replies: "Better than living with the son of a whore" (54). She no longer respects nor admires what her husband represents and is unafraid to express the irreverence she feels towards him. She embodies a new generation of Moroccan women who have had to reinvent themselves to compensate for the male's erratic and self-destructive behavior. As we learn later, Maati is not the breadwinner in



the family: “Matti made a living driving a cab for a businessman uptown, but there was a little of it left by the time his bar tab was paid. Halima had taken janitorial jobs two days a week and made extra money by selling embroidery to neighbors and friends” (54).

Maati’s inability to provide for his family forces Halima to reconfigure traditional notions of gender, thus, clearly blurring a male and female’s role in modern Morocco. Never was Halima’s sense of autonomy more on display, than when she decides that the time has come for her to pursue a divorce — a decision that eventually leads to her migration.

Halima makes her decision after absorbing another physical attack at the hands of her husband. His violent outburst stems from yet another job loss. Just like Murad and Aziz, Maati is unable to maintain steady employment and feels emasculated by his unemployment. Maati turns to alcohol to masquerade a deep sense of inferiority that he feels. The idea that a man isn’t a man without a job continues to bear fruit and eventually leads to serious conflict between Maati and Halima. Halima no longer pities him, but is instead disgusted by his inability to put the family first. When she asks him what they are going to do without his job, the shame of his face is palpable: “I’ll find something else, he said. His tone was confident, but he turned his face away from her” (62). Instead of supporting Maati during this difficult time, Halima outwardly criticizes him: “Halima glared at her husband. Mimicking his voice, she groaned, I’ll save, money, I’ll buy my own cab, I’ll get us out of Zenata one day, you’ll see” (62). Maati reacts the only way he knows how: through the use of physical violence. His response adds to the research that reveals how economic marginalization leads to increased aggressive behavior and abuse. Maati’s control over the household has all but eroded, causing his wife to lose respect for what he is supposed to represent. While Maati’s economic situation enables Halima to

undermine the traditional patriarchal authority in the relationship, it also foregrounds the potential negative implications for women. Despite feeling disempowered because of his inability to meet the expectations of the breadwinner, Maati still strives to maintain power in the relationship through the use of physical violence. After enduring another attack, Halima knows that the only way to escape his wrath will be through a divorce and then migration.

Halima's decision to unilaterally seek a divorce is a clear example of what the 2004 Personal Status Code reforms sought to establish. In her book *Muslim Women on the Move*, Doris Gray states: "The wife can ask for a divorce. Previously, a judge would not accept a request for divorce by a woman unless she could present a case of 'suffering prejudice' and witnesses. A woman's request for divorce will now be considered on its own merit without requiring witnesses" (82). In addition, in cases of divorce, guardianship of children goes first to the mother, then to the father. While many acknowledge these reforms are a step in the right direction, others have raised important issues of implementation in the face of corruption and a rigid patriarchal system. In Gray's conversation with women about the reforms, they raised these very concerns:

If the mentality of the judge does not change, the new law is meaningless, said Mina, an aspiring manager in an international firm in Casablanca. Anyone can buy a verdict here and, consequently, well-connected, wealthy men can obtain a ruling no matter what the new law says. Less fortunate men and women are at the mercy of old-fashioned judges, whose decisions they would not know how to appeal. (93)

In this context, it is understandable why Halima goes to great lengths to ensure that her divorce is granted. She decides to visit the judge's house and offer him a monetary bribe so that he rules in her favor. Because Halima is unable to trust the fairness of the justice

system, she feels compelled to influence the decision of the judge. Still, even with the bribe, she feels unsure of the outcome. For his part, the judge embodies the corrupt and atavistic system that the 2004 reforms were intended to attack:

The judge readjusted his jellaba and told her not to worry. 'Be on time at the hearing. You'll get your divorce this week.' He tapped her back and she realized it was over and he was pushing her toward the door. Suddenly she wished the exchange of money had taken a little longer. What if he didn't give her custody? She wondered. Why did she give him the money all at once? She could have given him half and promised him the rest after he'd granted her the divorce and custody. Why didn't she think of that earlier? 'Wait,' she said. ....Why wouldn't he give her the children? This judge had been taking bribes for years; there was no reason to think he wouldn't come through this time. (67-68)

While a majority of Moroccans accept that the Personal Status Code improves a woman's position alongside men, it must also be acknowledged that the law is only as good as though who enforce it. Until there are better trained and more ethically responsible judges, it will be difficult for women to be considered equal partners in a marriage, as the law intends.

In the end, Halima decides that she has a better chance of successfully migrating to Spain than she does of divorcing Maati. Despite her meager income and three children, she is hopeful that the journey will enable her to provide her family with a better, more stable future. She draws strength from her two brothers, both of whom successfully migrated to France when she was young. However, they traveled as single young men, while she contemplates making the trip with three small children. She looks beyond the difficulty of the crossing, and instead focuses on starting a new life in Spain without her abusive husband. Because of the patriarchal system entrenched in Morocco, migration becomes her only possible option. Her story allows the reader to see the *moudawana*

portrayed in a different light. As long as women are more willing to board a raft than to appear before a judge to seek a divorce, the viability of the reform will be in jeopardy. Until there is a profound change in the mentality of the Moroccan woman, she will continue to feel constrained in a world that ostensibly allows her voice to be heard.

Although her attempt at migration fails, the mere act of trying instills in her a newly discovered confidence and sense of self-worth. Unlike Murad, who after his failed attempt, isolates himself because of what others may think, Halima builds off the courageous and defiant act of migration. “After Halima returned to Casablanca, she didn’t move back in with her mother, who had never agreed with her decision to leave, and who, Halima feared, would try to convince her to get back together with Maati. Instead she borrowed money again, this time from one of her cousins, and took a room with her three children in Sidi-Moumen, a slum outside the city” (114). She no longer has to play the role of the victim, but instead, is capable of taking control of her destiny and of creating a new life for her children. After Maati complies by granting her a divorce, she begins her life as a single woman in Morocco. Unlike her mother, Halima is unbothered by any stigma attached to being a divorcée. She refuses to remain silent while her husband engages in destructive behavior that jeopardizes the marriage. She prefers to take her chances alone, rather than continue down the same path that she knows will lead to disaster. Therefore, Halima becomes a representation of the changing face of womanhood in contemporary Morocco: she is unafraid to challenge a patriarchal system that strips her of any authority and sense of independence. In this light, the act of migration empowered her to seek more egalitarian gender roles in which both males and females possess authority.

Along with Halima, the other female character to make the journey is Faten. While Halima migrates with her three children in hopes of connecting with her two brothers, Faten is all alone in her attempt to cross into Spain. Underestimating the support of a strong social network, she strives to start her life over. However, as we learn more about her background, Faten's decision to migrate on her own is consistent with her character. Prior to her departure, Faten was an outspoken and radical student who rebelled against the societal norms that circumscribed her independence as a nineteen-year-old female. She expressed her displeasure by dressing conservatively and by neglecting her physical appearance. Her ideology influenced her classmate Noura, whose father Larbi, held a powerful position as the Minister of Education. Larbi is convinced that Faten is a bad influence on his daughter and could jeopardize her admission into a foreign university. As Noura spends more time with Faten, Larbi becomes increasingly frustrated with his daughter's erratic behavior. He is unable to penetrate the wall constructed by the two girls and realizes that his daughter is adopting the rigid philosophy of Faten. His suspicions are confirmed when he overhears Faten tell Noura:

The injustice that we see everyday, she said, 'is proof enough of the corruption of King Hassan, the government, and the political parties. But if we had been better Muslims, perhaps these problems wouldn't have been visited on our nation and on our brethren elsewhere.' 'What do you mean?' Noura asked. 'Only by purifying our thoughts and our actions...'  
(26)

These thoughts clearly demonstrate Faten's courage to speak her mind and challenge the status quo. As a young female, she is unwilling to passively accept a subordinate role within the patriarchal society by remaining silent. Because Larbi is part of the hierarchy that Faten detests, he is determined to keep his daughter away from her. Larbi senses he

is losing his daughter to a rigid form of Islamic thought, and that his intervention will be her only hope for salvation. He begins to probe into Faten's past and uncovers some important details that ultimately seal her fate. After realizing she failed her final exams the previous year, he conspires to make sure she will fail again, thus preventing her from receiving her diploma. The result of his deceitful actions cause Noura to ask: "What's going to become of her? There are so many unemployed college graduates, but without a diploma, her chances of ever finding a job...It's so unfair" (49). Her sense of anger and urgency is palpable because she knows that there are no options for Faten. She is now a part of an entire sector of the population who must compete for jobs without the necessary credentials. Within this context, it becomes easier to understand why she decides to board the raft and cross into Spain.

Along with Murad and Halima, Faten is rescued by Spanish authorities and later detained in a Spanish jail pending her return to Morocco. Unlike her counterparts, Faten is able to capitalize on her sexuality to avoid deportation. While she awaits extradition, she notices a subtle signal from one of the Spanish guards: "She didn't need to speak Spanish to understand that he'd wanted to make her a deal. She remembered what her imam had said back at the underground mosque in Rabat — that extreme times sometimes demanded extreme measures" (141). Faten understands that without any social support in a foreign country, she must utilize any asset at her disposal, including her body. Her decision to sexually engage with the Spanish guard demonstrates how migration forces constructions of gender roles to be reconfigured. In Morocco, Faten was overtly critical of a gender system that exploited women and perceived them as objects, but her migration has now forced her to become the type of woman that she so

vehemently rejected. While the act compromises her integrity, it does ensure that she will make it into Spain, something that Murad is denied. Once again, the boundaries that structure the migratory experience prove to be unequal for men and women when Faten gains entrance into Spain by exploiting her sexuality. Faten's entrance into Spain suggests that the Spanish are complicit in the migratory process in ways that go beyond the purely economical. The tremendous demand on the part of Western nations for the sexual services of migrant women needs to be placed in its proper context. Lalami's portrayal of Faten's as a migrant sex worker is an important point of departure in helping to raise Spanish consciousness about the issue.

Three years after the fateful night with the Spanish guard, Faten finds herself in Madrid, waiting on Calle Lucia for the next client to solicit. She has chosen this promiscuous lifestyle mainly because of the isolation and solitude that she feels. Her imam is no longer by her side to look out for her best interests: "So when her imam suggested she leave the country, she had not argued with him. She had done as she was told. Except her imam wasn't there when the Spanish coast guard caught her and the other illegal immigrants, nor was he around when she had to fend for herself in Spain" (130). While her imam would disagree with how she earns her livelihood, the act of migration has forced Faten to make her own life decisions and become an independent actor. Although she is no longer constrained by the patriarchal authority that permeates Moroccan society, she has entered into another oppressive sphere of gender relations by becoming a prostitute. Her only reprieve from the monotony of the job is a young Spaniard named Martín, whom she thinks is different than the other men who request her company: "He always got out of the car, too, which is more than you could say for the

others, the men who talked to her while they bent over their steering wheels, as if spending more than a minute deciding who they were going to fuck was too much of an imposition on their time. He was different” (127). Beneath Martín’s chivalrous veneer, lie the vestiges of a colonial desire that consumed Europeans before him.

While in *El último patriarca*, it was Mimoun who capitalized on his otherness to sexually conquer the Spanish women, Faten is now perceived by Martín as sexually stimulating precisely because of her exoticism: “I like the smell of your skin-salty like black olives.” He coiled a strand of her hair around his finger, let it spring out, ran his fingers along her cheekbones, cupped her right breast. ‘And your breasts-ripe like mangoes’” (131). He is clearly aroused by the physical attributes that distinguish Faten from her Spanish counterparts. Martín’s obsession with Faten’s body, ties into Butler’s concept of performativity, as articulated in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*: “With a focus on the body, performativity can be understood not as conscious acts of self-representations but, rather, as acts that are constituted/forced through the power of the dominant discourse. It is not only the social agenda but also the biological body that is bound by constructions of heteronormativity, sex, and gender” (94). Therefore, in Martín’s eyes, Faten must perform the role of the sensual and subservient Moroccan woman that has been constructed by public discourse. Moreover, he is attracted to the idea that as an Arab she will treat him differently than other Spanish women. His response to Faten’s question about why he always chooses her demonstrates this point: “Women in this country, he said, shaking his head. ‘They don’t know how to treat a man. Not the way you Arab girls do.’ Faten felt anger well up in her. She wanted to slap him. ‘I’ve been reading up,’ he said. ‘About the duties of the woman to the man



and all that. It's a fascinating subject" (142). His comments provide insight into Robert Young's work on colonialism and the vestigial nature of a colonial desire for "other" women of African descent by European men. Young explains in *Colonial Desire: hybridity in theory, culture, and race*, how this obsession is so strong that it causes the white man to refuse to marry white women. Martín is clearly consumed by Faten's otherness and appears disillusioned and uninterested in pursuing Spanish women. He insists on orientalizing Faten by studying her like Edward Said explains his European predecessors did during their nineteenth century travels:

Why the Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative province of my analysis here, alas, despite its frequently noted appearance. Nevertheless one must acknowledge its importance as something eliciting complex responses, sometimes even a frightening self-discovery, in the Orientalists... (188)

However, he fails to understand that his infatuation is based entirely on an immutable image of the Arab woman: one who stands by while things happen to her. On the contrary, Faten is the antithesis to the stereotypical subservient female; her migration proves that she is capable of challenging a traditional system of power and control. She uses the same type of courage to reject Martín and his antiquated fantasies about Arab women when she tells him: "I think you should find yourself someone else next time, she said. She opened the car door and got out" (143). By refusing Martín's company, Faten inverts the traditional power relationship between prostitute and client. Although she occupies a position of little power, she demonstrates the ability to seize control of her own destiny and challenge the normative gender role assigned to prostitutes. We must resist labeling her as a victim and recognize the agency she demonstrates as a sex worker.

After refusing to see Martín again, Faten returns to the apartment she shares with her Moroccan roommate, Betoul. While Faten chooses prostitution to earn a living, Betoul works as a nanny for a Spanish couple to support her younger siblings back in Marrakesh. Although they are from the same country, there is little that they share in common: “In Morocco Betoul would have never lived with Faten, but here things were different. Here Betoul could not put on any airs, the way she would have at home. She had moved in with Faten because the rent was cheaper than anything else she could find, allowing her to save even more money to send home” (136). Once again, we see how migration creates a new space in which people of different backgrounds are forced to occupy. While in *El metro*, Lambert overlooks place of origin and forms a strong bond with the Senegalese migrants, Faten and Betoul are unable to move beyond the arbitrary differences that separate them. Had they looked past these discrepancies in age and class, they would have identified a major similarity: they both possess a fearlessness and courage to reject patriarchal authority: “She had been wary of having Betoul as a roommate. She’d heard a rumor that back home, when Betoul had found out that her husband, a truck driver, had been cheating on her with a seamstress from Meknes, she’d put a sleeping pill in his soup and then drawn X’s on his cheeks with henna while he slept, leaving him marked for days” (138). Just as Faten refuses to passively sit back and allow Martín to mistreat her, Betoul becomes the aggressor by placing her husband in a submissive position. Faten recognizes that Betoul would make a better friend than foe and decides to earn her trust by making a traditional Moroccan dish of lamb and vegetables. This apparent simple task becomes quite difficult for Faten:

At home with her mother, meals had been simple-fava beans and olive oil, rghaif and tea, bread and olives, couscous on Fridays, whatever her mother

could afford to buy. Now that Faten could buy anything she wanted, she didn't know how to make the dishes she'd craved as a teenager. The lamb came out too salty and the vegetables a little burned, but she hoped that Betoul wouldn't mind. (144)

Regardless of meal's outcome, this scene reveals that Faten has become a new woman. Migration has forced her to assume a different identity and take on different challenges. She is no longer the same young girl who left Morocco three years earlier amidst scandal. Rather, she is a woman in control of her own destiny who must choose which path to take. Whether she continues to lead a life of prostitution or decides to start anew is irrelevant. What matters most is that she has taken a stand against the patriarchal corruption and abuse carried out by Maati and Martín.

All four protagonists represent how traditional notions of femininity and masculinity are contested by the migratory experience. Studying the journeys of Murad, Aziz, Halima, and Faten enable the reader to see how difficult it is to reconcile society's gendered expectations with their own personal desires. After having made the journey, all four characters realize that they must accept who they are in the present moment and reassess their understanding of Spain as the promised land. In the end, being a male and female no longer means the same thing it did prior to their migration. We must use each character's multiple gendered identities as proof that the interplay between gender and migration is ongoing and the journey is one that destabilizes any static and homogeneous notion of gender, identity, and the nation.

## CHAPTER SIX: *Leaving Tangier*

Throughout this study, I have focused on a number of female migrant characters who work in the sex industry after their migration. Both *El metro* and *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* highlight how women use their bodies as sex workers in order to survive in their new surroundings. In *El metro*, it was Anne Mengue who turned to prostitution after migrating to Dakar, while in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, Faten chose a life on the streets of Madrid after arriving from Morocco. By drawing attention to female characters on the move, these works force the reader to consider constructing alternative models of African female sexuality. In the case of Anne Mengue and Faten, their migration and subsequent decision to become prostitutes represents a rebellion against normative traditions that codify their existence as passive bystanders unable to control their own agency. By contrast, fewer studies have focused on the role males play in this industry, particularly as it relates to men as sex workers themselves. The migration theorist Laura Agustín follows up on this point in her provocative article “The Disappearing of a Migration Category: Migrants Who Sell Sex” by stating:

The ‘disappearing’ from migration studies in order to reappear in criminology or feminist studies happens only with women. Male, transsexual and transgender migrants who sell sex are even more neglected in migration studies, with the difference that they do not reappear anywhere else. Even those who count migrant sex workers usually include only women, and then it is not clear whether they are including transsexuals who look like women or not—this when in some places it is estimated that as many as a third of foreigners selling sex are trans. (1)

By portraying migrant men as heterosexual, hypermasculine beings, the myth of normative masculinity continues to exist. Instead of perpetuating this construction of masculinity as being heterosexual, in his latest novel, *Leaving Tangier*, Tahar Ben Jelloun brings alternative and transgressive masculine identities to the surface and directly challenges the social and political discourse that regulates what it means to be an African male migrant in contemporary Spain. While originally written in French under the title of *Partir*, and translated into Spanish and English, *Leaving Tangier* articulates the struggle of the postcolonial migrant to create a gendered identity free from the hegemonic and homogenizing discourse fueled by colonial rhetoric. In Ben Jelloun's Morocco, variant sexualities come to the surface, shedding light on a topic that has been oppressed in Moroccan and Spanish society for too long.

While popular Spanish discourse depersonalizes the migratory experience by creating uniform categories of "Moro" "indocumentado, and" "illegal," I argue that we must realize migrants are gendered beings, who are looking to express their masculinity and femininity as they move across time and space. Because Ben Jelloun creates migrant characters who actively seek to challenge the medieval notion of the North African as sexually weak and effeminate, there is a subversive strand to the novel that must be brought to the surface if a new paradigm of migration is to be created. Ben Jelloun's novel works towards this new epistemology by intersecting Spain's anxieties over the historical past with contemporary issues of migrancy and sexuality. As I have argued in my analysis of other cultural representations of migration, the latent fear that Spaniards have shown towards the arrival of the African immigrant overlaps with issues of emasculation to produce horrific results. The xenophobia described in the closing scene

of *El metro* exhibits how the skinhead characters perceive Lambert as a threat to their masculinity by dating Lucía. In a similar vein to this treatment of Sub-Saharan immigrants, in *The Return of Moor: Spanish Responses to Contemporary Moroccan Immigration*, Daniela Flesler seeks to understand why in many contemporary novels and films, Moroccan migrants also encounter sexual and racial oppression. A scene from the novel *La aventura de Saïd* by Josep Lorman demonstrates the point when two skinheads discuss how they perceive the Moor as a sexual threat:

- Y qué hacen dos moros de mierda a estas horas de la noche en la calle con una rubia?
- A lo mejor han ligado.
- Imposible. Los moros son todos maricones...
- ¿Y si han raptado a la chica y se la llevan para violarla?
- ¡No jodas!
- Los moros son capaces de eso y de mucho más.
- Pues si es eso, no podemos permitirlo. No os parece?
- Ya habían encontrado la excusa para atacarlos. (77)

Flesler concludes that the medieval period was instrumental in shaping current perceptions about the “Moor” because it created an image of him as a sexual threat to a noble Spanish masculinity. Consequently, she explains that writers during this period constructed an image of the Moor as sexually passive or homosexual, while depicting the Spaniards as virile Christian men:

The play *Las famosas asturianas* by Lope de Vega, beautifully articulates what is at stake in these attributions of masculinity. In it, the chastity of Alfonso II de Asturias is identified with impotency and military weakness, and the Moors’ sexual potency with fierceness in battle. This Moorish aggressive masculinity accounts for their conquest of Spain. By the end of the play, however, the Christians show their true virility by defeating the Moors. With the advance of the Reconquest, thus, the gender dynamics are reversed, positing the defeated Muslims as weak and feminine. (201)

Instead of maintaining this binary relationship, Ben Jelloun's work inverts it, thus offering the reader a glimpse in the changing nature of gender dynamics between Africans and Spaniards.

By bringing queer and gender theory into dialogue with migration studies, this chapter argues for a shifting definition of sexuality that is reconstituted over time and space. Because a person's sexuality intersects with social, cultural, and historical dimensions, it is constantly being transformed. The construction of one's sexuality occurs across a variety of different contexts and venues. Just as Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo argues that gender needs to be considered a dimension of migration, sexuality also shapes the decision making process of who stays behind and who goes. Because for many male migrants the desire to achieve economic success is so great, along the way, they sacrifice their sexual identity and turn to prostitution as a survival strategy. In *Leaving Tangier*, it is the young migrant male character Azel who follows this script. Through Azel, Ben Jelloun seeks to integrate marginal sexualities into traditional formations of the African male migrant. In Ben Jelloun's portrayal of Azel, there lies great potential to reconsider normative notions of masculinity by bringing alternative models of sexuality to the foreground. The gender theorist Kaja Silverman elaborates on this potential when she argues: "Perverse masculinities represent a tacit challenge not only to conventional male subjectivity, but to the whole of our world- [...] they call sexual difference into question, and beyond that, reality itself" (1). In the following pages, I analyze how Azel attempts to negotiate the new gender and sexual identities that are constructed because of his migration.

Prior to his departure, he is not unlike the other male migrant characters as discussed in the previous chapters: educated, unemployed, without a father, and supported by a female family member. His mother, Lalla Zohra, “pretended to be worried about her daughter, who had not found herself a husband, but she was obsessively concerned about the future of her son, whom she spoiled shamelessly. Azel was feeling more and more stifled by her possessive love” (58). Because of the constraints imposed on him by his mother, Azel spends most of his days and nights navigating the social landscape of Tangier. Despite not having a consistent source of income, Azel is a major player in the social scene because of his physical attributes. His good looks enable him to establish meaningful relationships with some of Tangier’s most wealthy residents, including El Haj. As the omniscient narrative voice reveals:

El Haj and Azel made a strange pair. They weren’t the same age, didn’t share the same interests. Fascinated by this young man’s story, El Haj wanted to help him. El Haj was as physically repulsive as Azel was attractive. Azel’s relationships with girls were episodic but straightforward: sex was the object, nothing else. To him, falling in love was a luxury, especially since there was nowhere to take a girl in Tangier, even just for a drink. You needed a car, money, a job. Everything that foreigners had and he did not, in this city that enticed and infuriated him. El Haj welcomed Azel warmly at his beautiful house on the Mountain. (26)

It becomes Azel’s job to invite attractive females to attend the many parties held by El Haj. Even though many of these girls are enamored with Azel, he initially rejects all of them because of his desire to leave. It was only after a long conversation with Siham, does he succumb to the sexual temptation and make love to her. Their attraction appears to transcend the corporeal when she reveals to him her desire to migrate:



-Will you take me with you if you manage to leave the country? she asked him afterward, and then admitted that she was hoping to marry a Frenchman or a Spaniard.  
-Me too, replied Azel.  
Giggling, she corrected him: a Frenchwoman or a Spanish lady! Azel thought for a moment.  
-What does it matter, he said solemnly, as long as I fulfill my dream...(30)

His comments are the first indication that he is willing to assume a transgressive and non normative sexual identity to achieve his desire of migration. A chance encounter with a wealthy Spaniard named Miguel enables Azel to simultaneously realize his dream of migration, while also challenging his sexualized and gendered self.

When Miguel saves Azel from a beating at the hands of two attackers, his intentions appear to be magnanimous. It is only after we learn more about him, are the underlying motives for his action revealed:

Why, then, did Miguel want to tear Azel from his own world to take him home to Spain? At first, he wanted to help Azel. Only after seeing him a few times did he realize that a fling or even a serious affair was possible. Whenever Miguel forced a man to become involved with him, he regretted it, but he found a kind of perverse pleasure in feeling lonely and sorry for himself. He loved the “awkwardness” of Moroccan men, by which he meant their sexual ambiguity. He loved the olive sheen of their skin. And he loved their availability, which marked the inequality in which the relationship was formed, for the lover by night was thus the servant by day, casually dressed to do the daily shopping, wearing fine clothing in the evening to stimulate sexual desire. (41)

He has constructed a stereotypical image of the Moroccan male that is built upon their exotic otherness. This representation is reminiscent of Edward Said’s observations of the sexual attraction that Westerners held for the Orient:

We may as well recognize that for nineteenth-century Europe, with its increasing embourgeoisement, sex had been institutionalized to a very considerable degree. On the one hand, there was no such thing as “free”

sex, and on the other, sex in society entailed a web of legal, moral, even political and economic obligations of a detailed and certainly encumbering sort. Just as the various colonial possessions – quite apart from their economic benefit to metropolitan Europe – were useful as places to send wayward sons, superfluous populations of delinquents, poor people, and other undesirables, so the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe. (190)

Just as his colonial predecessors, Miguel is unable to find what he is looking for at home, and must come to the exotic “Orient” to satisfy his desire. I contend that his decision to pursue homosexual contact in Morocco illustrates the continual stigma attached to homosexual relations in Spain. This provocation is made knowing that in recent years, Spain has passed a number of progressive laws intended to provide equal rights to groups traditionally marginalized by the government. In 2005, Spanish parliament legalized same sex marriage, while in 2007, Spanish lawmakers approved a bill that allowed for an individual to change their gender on legal documents without having undergone a sex change operation.

While this legislation certainly alters the vision of the homogenous nation that Franco sought to establish, I argue, cultural representations of the migration experience such as *Leaving Tangier*, illustrate that homophobia is still part and parcel of Spanish society. Miguel’s unwillingness to outwardly express his sexuality while in Spain, indicates vestiges of a homophobia that pervaded the country during the Franco years continues to exist in contemporary Spain. As he stumbles upon Azel, Miguel has flashbacks to his earlier years—a time in which being homosexual in Spain was taboo:

The situation brought back memories he had long struggled to repress, of the time when he used to flee his parents’ house to haunt the bars of Barcelona, longing for a love affair that would relieve his melancholy and loneliness. His parents— a Catholic mother and a Communist father—could

not imagine why their son was slumming around with depraved men. They made life hard for him, barely even spoke to him. (43)

In her book *Queer Transitions in Contemporary Spanish Culture: From Franco to La Movida*, Gema Pérez-Sánchez takes up the issue of homosexuality under the Franco period by positing that the government was “segregated to a passive role, which meant that the nation was being placed in the same position as women” (13). Consequently, she suggests that Franco sought to establish a new version of the ideal Spaniard. Anybody outside this heteronormative delineation was considered dangerous and subject to imprisonment. Under these conditions, it is logical as to why Miguel desired to leave Spain: “Spain was unlivable. Franco just wouldn’t die, and his religious and military regime infested everything...I’d been stifling in that cramped, hypocritical existence, where everything smelled stale, as if dust were clinging invisibly to objects, clothes, hair, and especially the soul” (45). Although Miguel’s circumstances are different than Azel’s, their struggles to be included in the national vision of Spain are strikingly similar. Just as homosexuals were not considered “true” Spaniards during the Franco regime, in contemporary Spain, it is the immigrants who struggle for a sense of national belonging.

As Butler argues in *Bodies that Matter*:

It seems crucial to resist the model of power that would set up racism and homophobia and misogyny as parallel or analogical relations. The assertion of their abstract or structural equivalence not only misses the specific histories of their construction and elaboration, but also delays the important work of thinking through the ways in which these vectors of power require and deploy each other for the purpose of their own articulation. (18)

Ben Jelloun’s fictional representation of contemporary Spanish society proves that the

emotion once stirred up by homosexuality can always be redirected towards another group, as Azel soon discovers.

After spending the night at Miguel's home recuperating from the attack, Azel realizes this relationship might be his ticket to the other side. Consequently, the former colonized inverts the paradigm of oppressor/oppressed by exploiting the former colonizer. He begins to befriend Miguel and spend more time at his Tangier mansion, in hopes that his time and energy will lead to a visa. He even performs the role of the docile servant at one of his extravagant parties: "Wearing one of Miguel's fine white gandouras, Azel was welcoming guests and showing them around, and he looked like an Oriental prince or a character in the black – and – white films of the fifties (62). His obsession with obtaining the visa has shattered any sense of autonomy and individuality. Instead, by wearing the attire of the stereotypical exotic other, he perpetuates the myth established during the medieval and colonial periods. However, his strategy does not go unnoticed by his friends, who question his motives one evening at the Café Haba:

-Someone saw you at the Spaniard's house. Watch out – he adores Moroccan boys, said Saïd.

-It's incredible, everyone knows everything in this city! I feel like emigrating just because of that.

-You think you'll have a nice quiet life over there? asked Ahmed.

-At least I won't have to see your lazy faces anymore!

-If you manage to bamboozle the Spaniard, asked Abdelmalek, you'll help us?

-I have no intention of bamboozling anyone.

-Come on, you sleep with him – and you're all set!

-I can't stand being touched by a man.

-You'll see when you get to it, you'll be thinking only of your visa.

-So you could go to bed with a man, caress him, kiss him as if he were a woman, get hard and come and everything?

-Men, they're not my thing, but when you got to, you got to: close your eyes and think of your girlfriend, it's a question of imagination, and then remember what it's going to get for you, it's just being practical.

-But that's prostitution!

-Call it whatever you want, I know a lot of guys who do that in the summer, even some who end up leaving in the zamel's baggage. Once abroad, they run off with a woman, get married, and become citizens, you know, that pretty burgundy passport. (46-47)

For his part, Azel is reluctant to enter into any type of relationship that resides outside of the heteronormative boundaries of Moroccan society and fears the act itself. In his mind, being touched by a man would challenge any notion of the true masculinity that he strives to perform. By contrast, Saïd maintains that the two sides are not mutually exclusive and that one can still engage in homosexual acts without jeopardizing their heteronormative masculinity. His words corroborate the findings of Ben-Jelloun's 1977 study in which various North African immigrants discussed their experiences in Europe. Despite the forbidden nature of homosexuality in the North African context, there appeared to be a greater acceptance of the act in Europe. Many of the subjects considered it acceptable provided the circumstances faced by the immigrants that limited their contact to the opposite sex. They concluded that as long as the male still desired women, then having sexual relations with men was not as shameful as in North African society. Azel rejects this vision, and finds it easier to repress and deny any thoughts that he will become sexually involved with Miguel. Instead, he chooses to focus on what is in it for him — a strategy that works when Miguel informs him that he will arrange for his visa. Although he will finally fulfill his lifelong dream of migrating, the journey will have devastating effects on his manhood.

Azel's arrival into Spain is a stark contrast to the perilous journey undertaken by the other protagonists analyzed in this study. Instead of boarding a precarious patera and crossing the Strait of Gibraltar, Azel simply boards a plane and arrives on Spanish soil.

After arriving in Spain, Miguel arranges for Azel to be picked up and brought to his luxurious home where he will spend the night. It is only after making the journey that Azel inquires about the specifics of his work with Miguel. “Azel hesitated a moment before asking him exactly what his job would be. ‘Oh come on, don’t play the idiot, you’ve understood perfectly well...’ ‘No, Monsieur Miguel, I assure...’ ‘Enough of this pretense! Let’s deal with these documents now; we’ll see about the rest later’” (70). This interchange is particularly revelatory if applied to current debates on migrants entering the sex industry as trafficked victims who were coerced or deceived into the decision. It is difficult to argue that Azel did not know that some aspect of his job would be sexual. In fact, right before he asks Miguel what his job will be, he thinks to himself about “...the difficult moments that would inevitably arrive, sooner or later...Miguel was not doing all this through pure altruism. And yet he was a sensitive, intelligent man: surely he must have divined how much Azel loved women...” (70). Regardless of whether or not he knew, we must realize that not all migrants who use their body to survive are “poor victims,” and not all “traffickers” are monsters: “They had settled into a comfortable routine...He wore nice clothes, some of which belonged to Miguel, and that’s how Azel discovered the luxury of cashmere jackets and sweaters, tailored shirts, and English shoes. He lived among Miguel’s things as if he were inside another skin. For the first time in his life, he felt good, and made an effort to take care of himself” (79). There is, however, a darker side to his employment, one that we learn more about once he contacts his former girlfriend, Siham.

After spending three months in Spain working for Miguel, Azel manages to get a day off to travel and see Siham, who had settled in Marbella working as a live-in nanny.

Their reunion is filled with passionate lovemaking, followed by a conversation in which Miguel divulges the truth about his employment with Miguel:

-I've become Miguel's lover.

After a long silence, Siham, who felt like crying, asked him if it gave him pleasure.

-I don't know. When I make love to him, I think really hard about a woman-you, for example. There: now you know everything. I'm naked in your eyes. And if one day I get married, it will be to you, because we understand each other, we talk to each other, and then, I've always felt comfortable with you.

-You know, to tell you the truth, I kind of suspected. Don't tell me anymore about it. The important thing is that we should both be able to see each other, to breathe, regain some strength, and do our work well.

-You're so wonderful! I'd really like to see things as clearly as you do.

But I've never fallen in love in my life: it's an infirmity, something I was taught-that love was something for women. Men, well, they're supposed to be strong, unshakeable, you know, all those clichés. I'm so afraid of doubting my own sexuality. (80-81)

Instead of allowing Azel to discuss his emotions, Sihab chooses to suppress what she's heard because of the transgressive nature of the act. Instead of addressing the issues surrounding Azel's sexual identity, she prefers to think about the problem in economical terms. In her mind, one must never lose sight of the reason they decided to migrate: economic opportunities. Her unwillingness to rethink the relationship between heterosexuality as a normal act and homosexuality as an abnormal one, forces Azel to negotiate this identity dilemma on his own. In order to reconcile his thoughts, he turns to a journal:

I'm ashamed. I don't feel proud of myself. O dear country, if you could see what I've become! I keep trying to find excuses, ways to justify myself. When Miguel touches me I close my eyes, I leave, abandoning my body to him: I go for a stroll, I pretend, I fake it, and then I awaken, get up, and can't face myself in the mirror. I'm so humiliated.

Oh, if my mother were to see me....I can hardly bear thinking about it. How can I tell her that her son is just an attaye, a faggot, a man who

crawls on his belly, a cheap whore, a traitor to his identity, to his sex? In any case, she's no fool, and has surely understood everything on her own. Her son is virile, all right – he makes love to a woman, to a man... One can't talk about such things. (83-84)

These words reveal the social and familial pressure that Azel feels to uphold normative notions of Moroccan masculine sexuality. The honor of his mother will be tarnished should word get out that he is violating the sexual norms that constitute what is acceptable and what is deviant. His understanding of being a man in Moroccan society is simplistic and static; one that is based solely on his virility. Should he violate this gender code by engaging in a homosexual act, his status as an authoritative male will be weakened. This coincides with R.W. Connell's theory about the essence of manhood: first, being a man is natural, healthy, and innate; second, a man must stay masculine; he should never let his masculinity falter. Connell, et al. state:

What emerges from this line of argument is the very important concept of hegemonic masculinity, not as 'the male role,' but as a particular variety of masculinity to which others – among them young and effeminate as well as homosexual men — are subordinated. It is particular groups of men, not men in general, who are oppressed within patriarchal sexual relations, and whose situations are related in different ways to the overall logic of the subordination of women to men. (110)

To combat this dilemma Azel actively seeks opportunities to reinforce his masculine authority. Sexual performance becomes an indicator of true manhood and the possibility of failure shatters any possibility of being a true man. Because he is unable to see Siham on a regular basis, female prostitutes are the solution: "Azel resolved to go to the brothel at least once a week. This was an important decision for him. He slept with Miguel, but found his own pleasure with women. Given that Siham was hardly free, Azel felt he absolutely had to keep up with his virility with the North African girls he met at the Café



Casbah, a bistro that smelled of cigarettes and cheap wine” (98). These frequent visits to meet his mistress Soumaya provides him an opportunity to regain a masculinity that is being threatened by the relationship with Miguel.

Soumaya confides in Azel about a past filled with heartbreak and disillusion. When her husband left her after arriving in Spain, she is forced to start anew by taking a job as a cook. Her independent lifestyle allows her to embrace her sexuality and fulfill Azel’s every desire. Through Soumaya, Ben Jelloun carves out an alternative model of Moroccan femininity that challenges the notion that the African female is sexually marginalized. Instead, Soumaya actively seeks sexual pleasure and is unafraid to express her affinity for what would be considered traditionally sexually transgressive behavior: “And I’m good in bed, too! You know, it’s so rare to be able to speak free with a Moroccan. With you, though, I feel at ease. Tell me, why is it so frowned on to love men? People often reproach me for showing that I love them. But I’m someone who can’t hide her feelings-when I see a man I like, I let him know it. What’s wrong with that?” (101) By assuming the role as an active participant, she subverts the idea that the female passively accepts the male:

Soumaya was shameless, observed no taboos, and gave herself without hiding any of her passion for what she called ‘vice.’ She had a special way of languorously drawing her tongue all along Azel’s body, always lingering on his buttocks and between his legs. Whenever he asked her where she’d learned all these things that brought him so much pleasure, she’d told him it was intuition: freedom guided by desire! (105)

Migration affords her the opportunity to explore her sexuality and transgress the normative boundaries that constrain a female’s sexual pleasure. For his part, Azel is

rendered captive to her every move, so much so that his relationship with Miguel begins to suffer.

When Miguel learns of Azel's infidelity, he contrives to humiliate him at a party with the theme of "The Orient: Think Pink!" With Miguel dressed as a vizier of the *Arabian Night*, he forces Azel to wear women's clothes and notifies the audience of his prize:

My friends, I'm delighted to present my latest conquest to you: the body of an athlete sculpted in bronze, with a piquant supçon of femininity. Quite a stud! Educated, but familiar as well with the underworld of Tangier, that city of bandits and traitors. Neither bandit nor traitor, of course, Azel is simply a most beautiful object, an object to tempt every eye. Just look at his magnificent skin! You may touch it. Get in line, but don't push, he's right here, he's not going anywhere. Run your hand along his hip, for example, and do restrain your impulses. He belongs to me, and I won't have any fighting over him! (107)

Instead of rejecting the role as the female, Azel decides to embrace the part:

Rising to the challenge, Azel decided not only to play his employer's game but to astonish him as well. He made himself up like a bride, took care to dress properly in the women's clothing adjusted his wig, and sat down again to wait. The little bell finally rang around midnight. Azel left the room and went slowly down the four flights of stairs. When he pushed open the door to the living room, everyone fell silent, gazing at him in admiration. Then the men began to compliment him. (106)

Azel's willingness to accept the role of the female signifies the destruction of his hypermasculine sexual identity that defined his existence in Morocco. As Butler states in *Gender Trouble*: "Drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity" (174). Azel's decision to dress as a female dancer, lends credence to the

performative nature of gender. He has traversed the entire continuum, moving from domination to submissiveness when he is forced to dance for Miguel and his guests:

He began to dance to some Egyptian music, moving his buttocks and thinking about his sister, so talented at Oriental dancing, but her image gradually became confused with Soumaya's. Despite the tension in the air, Azel tried hard to concentrate, telling himself over and over that he was an employee, working for a lunatic boss. Cursing life and fate, he was flooded with shame but determined not to give in to regret and despair. (107)

Applying the scholarship of Connell, Azel now possesses a nonhegemonic masculinity, which is subordinated by the ruling or hegemonic masculinity of the Western world. According to work by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Michael Messner: "By examining nonhegemonic masculinities, we are better able to understand not only gendered relations between men and women but also the multiple and intersecting axes among men themselves, such as the axes of race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality" (216). When this theoretical framework is applied to Azel and Miguel, one realizes how class differences can play a significant role in determining the power relations between men. Even though Miguel — as a homosexual male — occupies a non-hegemonic masculinity, because of his wealth, he is able to maintain the upper hand over Azel. In *Dislocating Masculinity* Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne elaborate on this point: "Rarely, if ever, will there be only one hegemonic masculinity operating in any cultural setting. Rather, in different contexts, different hegemonic masculinities are imposed by emphasizing certain attributes, such as physical prowess or emotionality, over others." (20). As Azel feels control over normative masculinity slipping away, he embarks on a return trip to Tangier to regain a sense of his sexual identity.

Returning to Tangier provides him the opportunity to occupy a power position because of his experiences abroad. Just as the other male protagonists do in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, he arrives with an abundance of gifts that enable him to be greeted as a hero by friends and family:

Azel went off to see his mother, who greeted him as if he'd just returned from Mecca. As soon as she laid eyes of him she burst into undulations, while Kenza tried frantically to calm her down. It was the return of the prodigal son. The neighbors were out on their balconies or terraces, watching as Azel arrived with two suitcases crammed with presents, and the only disappointment was that he'd driven up in a taxi instead of a big luxury car.

-He came by plane, shouted Lalla Zohra, by plane, and he left the car home in Spain...He returned to see his mother just before she goes away on a pilgrimage! The first evening was a celebration. Azel talked and talked about himself, saying whatever popped into his head, exaggerating, lying, even though he wasn't fooling anyone (111-12).

Although the transnational elements of migration allow friends and family to detect the hardships of his time in Europe, they faithfully play the part required of the naive audience in this performance. Their reaction proves how the community is complicit in the return: they have an expectation of the migrant that must be met. Included in this idea is that the migrant must evince ostentatious prosperity, such as a return in a luxury car and not a pedestrian taxi. Despite having occupied a marginal sexuality identity while in Spain, Azel embodies the role of the successful migrant by projecting an image of material wealth. He plays the part required of the return emigrant by occupying homosocial environments in hopes of impressing his peers with the financial gains of Europe.

On once such occasion, he joins his friend Abdeslam at a local café and offers to buy a round of drinks. However, as he soon discovers, “the men in the café saw Azel as

someone who had succeeded, but at a shameful cost” (129). In this respect, even though sex work is a strategy for survival in Europe, it occupies an inferior position in the eyes of his peers. The luster of his time in Europe appears to have faded when his friend Abdeslam questions him about his occupation:

-So what I'd like to know is, how does that work with your Spanish guy?  
Who's on top?

-I'm not a *zamel*, I'm a man!

-I knew it! [...] In our country, the *zamel* is the other guy, the European tourist, never the Moroccan, and no one ever talks about it but it's not true, we're like all the other countries, except we keep quiet about those things. We're not the kind to go on TV to admit we like men! (131)

It is clear that Azel defines his sexual identity on the basis of the active or passive role. Because he occupies the active role, in his mind, Azel remains the dominant male and his masculinity should not be questioned. He associates the passive as feminine, and considers it an inferior position. The problem with his logic of active/passive is that it assumes a static understanding of gender roles by attaching a stigma to the passive role. By constructing a “dominant/submissive” dichotomy to define the homosexual experience, the versatility of sexual identity is foreclosed. For his part, Abdeslam insists that it is time to recognize the changing nature of Moroccan masculinities and embrace the different meanings of homosexuality. He even admits to Azel that he is a bisexual — but insists, “whatever you do don't tell anyone” (131). It is clear that any deviation from the heteronormative sexual identity invokes fear and shame within each character. While they both acknowledge having sexual relations with men, they refuse to recognize how those experiences alter their sexual identities. Despite Abdeslam's admission, Azel remains resistant to this idea of recognizing his transgressive behavior and continues to

struggle with his sexual identity. In a moment of utter helplessness he admits to Abdeslam: “I don’t even know anymore just what I am in all this business. A falso, a fake, through and through, always pretending, running away” (130). Through Azel, Ben Jelloun demonstrates how difficult it becomes for the migrant male to construct a stable identity. Migration has caused a fissure in how he looks at himself and how others perceive him as a man. Trying to reconcile these contested identities proves to be too much for Azel to handle by himself. He is too ashamed to confide in his mother, and his sister, Kenza, refuses to discuss any other matter unrelated to her plan to marry Miguel and join her brother in Spain. In order for her to realize the dream, she needs Azel to broach the subject with Miguel.

The conversation between Miguel and Azel brings to the surface the intersection between racist stereotypes and sexual tourism:

Miguel was neither surprised nor offended. He was quite familiar with that kind of subterfuge and preferred to follow the lead of his feelings, wherever they took him. He loved Azel and thus could refuse him nothing. He could talk endlessly about the methods and ravages of treachery. Miguel had read the works of Jean Genet and wondered why he loved to say that Tangier was the city of perfidy. Miguel knew there was something in Azel’s eyes that was difficult to put into words, a kind of pseudo-smile, an implicit way of revealing an inadmissible form of deception. By accepting this marriage with Kenza, he hoped to create a stability at home that would make Azel more manageable, more trustworthy. (113)

Ben Jelloun’s reference to Jean Genet, himself a sexual tourist, reinforces the stereotype that labels Moroccans as deviants. In his book *Queer Nations: Marginal Sexualities in the Maghreb*, Jarrod Hayes references an interview that Genet conducted in which he discusses his sexual relationship with a young Moroccan:

- I was in Morocco. I met a young 24 or 25 year old Moroccan man, very poor. He came up to my room every day. He stayed in my room. He left my money all alone. He didn't touch anything. Do I admire him for that? No. I think it was a ploy. In short, I admire him for having tricked me to such a degree.

- Later, you brought him to France?

-Of course, and he was very clever, I don't regret having brought him to France. In Arab countries, in Third-World countries, a young boy, as soon as he meets a white guy who pays him a little attention, can only see in him a potential victim, a man to rob, and that's normal. (42)

Because of the negative stereotype attached to being a Moroccan migrant, it becomes problematic for Azel to break free of the label. While Miguel refuses to completely convict Azel of being a parasite, his friends have given up all hope: "After the son and the daughter, you'll get the mother and the grandmother, if there is one. As soon as those people find a sucker, they make themselves right at home" (138). Miguel not only takes offense to these comments, labeling them as racist, but he also offers up his own analysis that proves he is complicit in the relationship: "Azel isn't like that. He's completely bewildered, ashamed of living off me, especially since his sister is here and she's working" (137). Instead of acknowledging that the primary motives of Azel are selfish, Miguel decides to play the fool. Their relationship is evidence that the master/slave dialectic is one of mutability. The slave, (Azel) inverts the paradigm by placing the master, (Miguel) on the defensive. Through their relationship, Ben Jelloun subverts the idea that the immigrant must always perform the role of the subjugated other. In fact, Azel projects onto Miguel by assuming a power position during sexual intercourse. He writes in his journal: "I'd hit him in the back, he liked that, so I'd take advantage, wanting money, which he'd give me." (241) This image of the Muslim portrayed as the sexual aggressor directly challenges the image of effeminate Moor that medieval

literature sought to establish. Gradually, Azel is able to use his sexualized body as leverage to reposition his status in the relationship. He begins to assert a certain level of influence over his Spanish partner, which translates in Miguel's decision to acquiesce and take Kenza as his wife. For her part, Kenza is able to excel abroad:

Kenza adjusted fairly quickly. She spoke Spanish, which helped her look for work. She wanted a job in the social services, interfacing between immigrants and the government, for example. She had decided to make her own way, determined not to be a burden for Miguel, who had given her a few letters of recommendation and made some phone calls. By the end of the month she had been hired by the Red Cross. (137)

In a similar vein to what the female narrator experiences in *El último patriarca*, migration proves to be a liberating experience for Kenza. Her success further compounds Azel's identity crisis because of the social pressure attached to being the first-born son.

Once again, Azel confides in Siham to make sense of the issues that continue to haunt him. He reiterates that he feels like he is losing control of his masculinity because of his frequent encounters with Miguel. "I can't get it up anymore, so the other day he had me swallow a little blue pill, some Viagra, do you believe that? At my age? I'm a whore, that's what I am, or at least that's how I feel" (135). Siham refuses to acknowledge the seriousness of his situation, and instead tries to engage in sexual foreplay, only to discover he is unable to get aroused. She then replies: "It's just temporary, it's from stress, and don't worry about me, I know you're a man and I adore it when you make love to me" (135). Her comments reinforce the notion that masculinity is strictly defined by the virility of a man. Azel is unable to transcend this static definition of manhood and continues to struggle with the man he has become. His physical and mental states are so fragile that Kenza decides to intervene even though: "it embarrassed



her to speak to her brother about sex, Moroccan families simply didn't talk about such things. She knew what was going on, but how could she put into words? Before she'd even broached the subject, Azel flew into a screaming rage one day and denied everything" (146). Because both Azel and Kenza strive to enact the normative roles of the traditional Moroccan family, it becomes difficult to address the root problem plaguing Azel. Kenza performs the role of the passive female by not challenging Azel to divulge all the facts, while Azel assumes the role of the dominant male sibling who is unwilling to confide in his younger sister. This type of rigidity perpetuates Azel's identity crisis, and eventually leads to his expulsion from Miguel's house. Ironically, not being able to return to Miguel evokes feelings of liberation and relief: "I'm free, I'm finally free! I don't have to fuck some guy to make a decent living!"(175) He is able to finally see the situation with some clarity and able to construct an identity removed from sex work. He feels a newfound bond with humanity and decides that the time has come to divulge his past to Kenza.

Upon entering her apartment, much to his dislike, Aziz stumbles upon Nazim — Kenza's Turkish boyfriend. Not only is he irate that she is dating a Turkish man, but he is also furious that she neglected to inform him of their relationship. As her brother, he feels entitled to protect Kenza from any man he perceives as a threat. Just as Mimoun consistently uses violence to prove his hypermasculinity in *El último patriarca*, Azel comes within a fraction of assaulting Nazim. However, Kenza refuses to capitulate and actively resists his threats:

-Don't use language like that with me. I forbid you! You're such a disappointment, Azel, nothing works for you, you ruin everything.  
-Fine, but I won't put up with him touching you.

-Who do you think you are, to put up or not with anything? I don't care what you think! Just look at yourself! You're a complete mess. (174)

The traditional power structure between siblings has eroded because of the existing circumstances in Spain. Because of the transgressive behavior that defines Azel's existence abroad, Kenza is able to subvert the traditional authority granted to the first-born son. While Azel has self-destructed, Kenza has been able to flourish during her short stay. With a steady source of income, she is able to live without the support of Miguel, and her relationship with Nazim provides her with an important social outlet. All of these factors conjoin to transform the relationship between brother and sister, further complicating Azel's questions of his masculine identity, eventually leading to a breakdown.

Azel's decision to rely on alcohol and drugs to escape the harsh truth of his reality lands him in jail. When Kenza picks him up from the police station, Azel realizes that he has hit rock bottom and must divulge what has been haunting him since moving to Spain:

My sister, big sister, my friend, you must listen to me, I need you, this can't go on, I'm sinking into a hell like nothing you could ever imagine. [...] Forgive me, sister, I must speak to you about things that brothers and sisters don't talk about. The relationship between Siham and me – it was about sex more than anything else, and I needed that so as not to lose my virility, and she was getting what she wanted as well, we were partners, helping each other, and it gave us pleasure. Well, last week, *walou*. Rock bottom. I was unable to be a man, forgive me, but I have to say this, it has to come out, the shame, the incredible shame. [...] I'm done for, I can't be a man anymore, I don't know what to do; yesterday I went to see the Moroccan girl who's been whoring since her Kuwaiti 'husband' ditched her, I can't remember her name anymore, I just remember that she used to explode with me, screaming when she came, so, well, I saw her last night, I'd had a bit to drink to give me some confidence, I was afraid of washing out again, and when I undressed, she burst out laughing! (188)

Since Azel has always been able to rely on his sexual prowess to recapture his masculine self, this failure to sexually perform represents a turning point in how he perceives his gendered identity. He feels emasculated by his impotence and questions whether he can regain the dominant masculinity of his past. When Kenza suggests that he return home, Azel becomes hysterical at the thought of showing his face in Tangier. As we later learn: “There was only one thing he didn’t want: to be sent back to Morocco. The shame, the hchouma, and the hegra, the humiliation – no, never, anything but that. He had left. Left to return only like a prince” (231). Once again, this passage reinforces how constructions of masculinity intersect with the return trip of the migrant. Because he strives to project an image of the dominant masculine male, he perceives returning to Tangier as a threat to his manhood. Azel concludes that the only viable option available to him in order to recapture his pride is to engage in sexual activity with Soumaya: “If there’s anyone on earth who can still save me, he thought, it has to be her. She’s the only one who can revive my soul, and help me recover my manhood. I just have to see her!” (204). At this point in the journey, Azel’s entire existence is defined by his ability to sexually perform and is dependent on a female. When he learns that Soumaya is gravely ill with a sexually transmitted disease, his journey takes a unique turn — one that leads him into the company of Flaubert, an African migrant from Cameroon.

Their ephemeral relationship offers a glimmer of hope for a solidarity that moves beyond the arbitrary boundaries of gender, race, and language. Ben-Jelloun is not alone in his exploration of the migratory space as a site for change. Both Ndongu and Lalami also show how migrants of different backgrounds come together and forge meaningful relationships. The two migrant characters initial exchange suggests division, primarily

because of the stereotypes that Azel possesses for black Africans. Flaubert looks beyond Azel's derogatory comments in hopes of illuminating him about the motives of Sub-Saharan migrants. His words also demonstrate an inherent trust and brotherhood between the two men that erodes boundaries:

-You know, said Flaubert, strangers and foreigners are welcome among us. If you feel like it, you could sell rugs up north in my country, in Maroua, or Garoua; the Aladji would buy them from you. They love Moroccan carpets, especially prayer rugs. So think about it, if you feel like forgetting your troubles: leave Europe without going back to Morocco—Cameroon will welcome you! These aren't idle words, don't forget: we are the land of the promises given but above all, kept. Here, let me give you my family's phone number in the Nde. You can call whenever you like. (216)

Azel is startled by Flaubert's offer and responds: "You certainly do trust me! Knowing nothing about me, you're already inviting me to visit!" (216). Flaubert insists "It's better to start from the premise that a man is good, you know; if he turns out to be bad, he's the one he hurts. A question of wisdom" (216). Sadly, Azel's identity is shattered beyond repair and he is unable to build off this association with Flaubert. Instead, he chooses to wander aimlessly through the streets of Spain — a decision that leads to his demise.

At this point in his journey, the permit granted him to reside in the country expired —thereby forcing him to work illegally. Consequently, he enters into a life of crime by selling fake watches. When he is arrested for these acts, in order to avoid deportation, Azel accepts a position as a police informant for the antiterrorist police. He finally feels a part of something larger that transcends his own personal struggles. It is precisely because he experiences these emotions of despair, that he is able to discover

aspects of his identity that move beyond the sexual and focus on creating a sense of solidarity with humanity:

Azel's dearest wish was to wipe away all memory of his departure from Morocco, and return home like a hero. Was he not personally helping to combat the terrorism that was threatening Europe? All this had pushed Azel's sexual problems to the sidelines; he no longer fretted over his penis, looked at women, or had erotic dreams. He had become another man: courageous, subtle, and strong. He moved with clear agility and ease between the radical Islamic movements dedicated to sending the West up in flames...When several days passed without any sign of life from Azel, his police contact became annoyed and decided to visit him. The concierge claimed to have seen Azel the previous day with two men, "Moros," she added. (244)

Despite Azel's efforts to be a part of the movement to eradicate terrorism, he is never able to escape the label of the "Moor." Flesler argues in her book *The Return of the Moor* that the identity of the contemporary Moroccan migrant is enmeshed with the historical past, and in turn, he is perceived as an invasive threat to the Spanish national imaginary. Sadly, despite his yearning for solidarity with his Spanish brethren, Azel never moves beyond the category of the "Moor." When he is savagely murdered by the criminals he is paid to follow, any hope for conviviality is shattered.

Azel's brutal death forecloses a period of torment in which his normative sexual identity is gradually destroyed. He no longer possesses the same confidence as a heterosexual male that defined his existence in Morocco, but instead is subjected to cruel forces of transgressive sexual behavior that alters his own self-perception. His transformation illustrates how aspects of gender and sexuality are constantly evolving and not static. While the traditional view is that one is dependent on the other and linked, as Butler states in *Gender Trouble*, to be a certain gender does not mean to have a certain

sexuality. Ben Jelloun argues that non normative aspects of sexuality must continue to be represented in contemporary culture to disrupt the rigidity with which Moroccans perceive the issue. By choosing to privilege the intersection between sexuality and migration, Ben Jelloun emphasizes how popular Spanish discourse must alter the construction of the immigrant as an effeminate other, and acknowledge that migrants are sexual beings looking to express their masculinity and femininity. For these reasons, Tahar Ben Jelloun's literary work is an important cultural artifact that sheds light on how the migratory experience is one that includes multiple dimensions — gender, sexuality, class, and race — which all intersect to create a multifaceted phenomenon that must be understood in relational terms if a new understanding of the issue is to surface.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In his groundbreaking book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson considers how theorists of nationalism have often debated “the formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept — in the modern world everyone can, should, and will ‘have’ a nationality, as he or she ‘has’ gender...” (5). Anderson later argues that the construction of the ‘nation’ is a fictive concept that its members imagine to exist. The act of migration proves to be especially problematic for this homogenous understanding of the nation, as the ‘other’ continues to arrive and change the landscape of national identities. This dissertation argues that just as there can be no monolithic understanding of the Spanish nation, we must perceive gender in non-essential terms. While other theorists have already articulated this idea, my dissertation approaches the issue from a different perspective by using migration as the catalyst for this claim.

Each literary piece analyzed in this study exemplifies how gender roles are destabilized through migratory movement. The authors challenge the normative tropes that are commonly associated with Africa women and men by creating migrant characters who subvert static models of gender. By presenting these alternative visions of gender, the literary texts studied in this project demand a revision of simplistic dichotomies such as male/female, agent/victim, and modernity/tradition that too often restrict variant models of female and male identities. Since these authors provide a panoramic view of the migratory experience by allowing the reader access into the life of each protagonist leading up to the decision to migrate, we are able to understand how restrictive these

categories are for young African males and females. They feel trapped in an African society that forecloses the range of masculinities and feminities available to them. The young male migrant protagonists from all of the works studied in this dissertation feel the pressure to conform to the role of the dominant male breadwinner placed upon them by their communities. Many of these texts depict male protagonists who feel a deep sense of frustration and emasculation because of their inability to abide by the normative model of masculinity. Not only are African males subjected to these feelings of hopelessness, but all of the texts also present female migrant characters who are struggling to come to terms with the gender norms that structure their role in society. The authors present women who are no longer willing to abide by the cultural norms which relegate them to a second class status. Thus, we see how migration not only becomes a viable option for both male and female migrant characters to rebel against these antiquated gender models, but also holds the potential for each character to recreate their masculine and feminine identities.

A cursory glance at each of the texts reveals that more often than not, the dream of finding success in Europe becomes a nightmare for the migrants. In Donato's Ndongo's novel *El metro*, Lambert's journey comes to tragic end when he is savagely murdered by a group of neo-Nazi's for no other reason than being seen alongside a white woman. We read a hauntingly similar outcome for the migrant characters from Ndongo's short story "El sueño" and Maximiliano Nkogo's story "Emigración." When the plan to land the rafts transporting them to Spain goes awry, both protagonists are left to die in the sea, miles from the coast. Finally, in Tahar Ben Jelloun's work, Azel is able to reach the Promised Land of Europe and find work as Manual's assistant. His success is brief, and



eventually leads him down a path of self destruction which culminates with his eventual murder. While the migrant characters from Najat El Hachimi's and Laila Lalami's narratives survive the migratory experience, it is not without having to endure tremendous hardship. In *El último patriarca*, Mila finds it difficult to break free of her husband, Mimoun's domineering behavior. Even Mimoun's time in Spain is not without problems; he encounters discrimination because of his Moroccan background. Some of Laila Lalami's characters in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* have a similar experience. Aziz is unable to complete as simple a task as going to the supermarket without feeling scrutinized. The other migrant who makes it to Spain, Faten, is only able to enter the country because she offers up her body to an immigration agent. She continues to use her body to earn a living on the streets of Madrid and must endure the abuse of clients who see her as nothing more than an object.

While it is not my intention to ignore these images of hardship and desperation that each author creates, I would like to propose an alternative reading of each literary narrative that problematizes our understanding of migration as either a success or a failure. Instead of approaching migration in these simplistic either/or terms, I contend that we must begin to recognize how migrants simultaneously occupy both sides of the binary. The literary works that I study in this dissertation provide a solid point of departure for this method of analysis. They all transcend the artificial boundaries that popular media accounts construct around the issue and instead define migration in ambiguous terms. It is precisely because of these gray spaces, that we are able to recognize such subtle and nuanced aspects of the experience as gender dynamics. All of these texts demonstrate how migration facilitates the reconfiguration of static

constructions of gender. In their place, these authors ask us to consider unorthodox and at times subversive ideas of masculinity and femininity. As we follow each migrant character from Africa to Spain, we realize that the journey— like gender, identity, and the nation— is marred by contradictions, fragmentation, and ambivalence. We see how each migrant protagonist tries to navigate in a diasporic space that contains many obstacles and alternative routes. “Gendering Migration from Africa to Spain: Literary Representations of Masculinities and Femininities” sheds light on these detours of what it means to be an African male and female migrant in Spain. From these diverse sites, lies the potential to recreate rigid and monolithic notions of how we define masculine and feminine identities.

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## VITA

Chad Montuori was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico where he attended The University of New Mexico and received his BA in Spanish and History in 2001. After graduating, he enrolled in a MA program in Foreign Language Teaching at the University of Missouri-Columbia and received his degree in the spring of 2003. That fall he began teaching as full-time faculty member at Maple Woods Community College in Kansas City, MO. In 2005, he returned to the University of Missouri-Columbia to begin his doctoral studies in Afro-Hispanic Literature. He has since published articles and reviews in several journals: *Black Women*, *Gender and Families*, *Mester*, and *Utah Foreign Language Review*, and was awarded a fellowship in European Studies to participate in the 2010 Trans Atlantic Summer Institute at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus. He has also presented papers at a number of conferences including The American Comparative Literature Conference and Purdue University's 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on African American Culture and Philosophy: "New Direction in Feminism and Womanism in Africa and the African Diaspora."