

THE IMMIGRANT AS/IN CRISIS: THE CITATION AND APPROPRIATION OF LAVAPIÉS IN
NARRATIVES OF PROGRESS IN CONTEMPORARY MADRID

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On July 11, 2008, Esperanza Aguirre, the President of the Community of Madrid, visited Lavapiés, a central neighborhood of the capital city that, until the expulsion of 1492, had been the Jewish quarter, and after the fascist bombings of the Spanish Civil War, was left partially in ruins; now, it has become known as a *barrio* of immigrants. During her visit, Aguirre was photographed viewing the renovations to many of the historical buildings in the neighborhood, whose restoration the government subsidized, although residents still paid forty percent of the costs—as Aguirre herself noted, “no hay nada gratis total” (*Aguirre*).

The promotional video created by Aguirre’s office gives a glossy, warm, and redemptive account, featuring slow pans of Aguirre and company listening attentively to residents and workers alike, surveying the renovations of historical buildings, residences, and community spaces. In the video, Aguirre reads a statement that describes how Lavapiés “fue declarado Área de Rehabilitación Integral (ARI), con el objetivo de recuperar las características arquitectónicas, históricas, culturales y sociales que distinguen a este barrio madrileño,” commends the residents for their “esfuerzo económico” and for “aguantar las molestias” and affirms the project’s goal of “hacer de este rincón tan madrileño como es Lavapiés un lugar que tenga también condiciones de mejor calidad de vida.” Noting how the neighborhood has “tanta personalidad” Aguirre refers, somewhat euphemistically, to the diversity of residents, the majority senior citizens, immigrants, or artists—that is, those considered to be “different” or marginal in mainstream Spanish society.

With approval, Aguirre notes, “los vecinos no se resignaron al deterioro que amenazaba al barrio.” The deterioration here is not merely architectural: concern for the crumbling buildings has become a screen for deeper anxieties about the occupation, not only of abandoned buildings by activists and squatters, but also of the occupation of an increasingly gentrifying artist’s community by those immigrants who can afford the rent. This is the threat that faces this “rincón tan madrileño,” as Aguirre described it. The subsidy and its declared success, the promotional video suggests, have metamorphosed Lavapiés into what it was meant to be, a site of diversity and dynamism compatible with the loving preservation of, and acceptable assimilation into, Spanish tradition.

The newspaper *El mundo*, published an article of the “photo opportunity;” however, the report features a photograph taken of the space between Aguirre and an elderly resident and reveals two homeless people, one sleeping on a bench, the other surrounded by bags. The caption reads, “MENDIGOS: En su visita de ayer a Lavapiés, la presidenta de la Comunidad, Esperanza Aguirre, pasó ante un grupo de indigentes que suelen situarse frente a las antiguas Escuelas Pías de San Fernando. La mendicidad es uno de los problemas del céntrico barrio madrileño” (Medrano). The image on the right shows the back of a police officer leading a man away in handcuffs. Underneath, the caption is, “INMIGRANTES: Poco antes de la llegada de Esperanza Aguirre al barrio, la Policía detuvo a un inmigrante chino, al parecer por hacer en un taller copias piratas para el ‘top manta’. Lavapiés tiene una alta concentración de inmigrantes, que suelen vivir hacinados en pisos...” This very overcrowding is the principle means by which many of the immigrants who give Lavapiés its identity are able to afford to live there; many others are forced to move due to the increasing rents that follow public and privately managed renovation projects like the ARI initiative.

The headline of the article is “La doble cara de Lavapiés.” These “twin faces” reveal the duplicity of politics in contemporary Spain: citation of Lavapiés becomes a strategic means of substantiating a vision of Spain as thoroughly modern, European, and democratic. Still, the demands of neoliberal urban governance require that any politically radical or resistant culture be anaesthetized, any labor exploited, any identity commodified—in Lavapiés, ghettoization, surveillance, and management of immigrant and otherwise marginalized bodies occur

alongside a profusion of celebratory narratives of the neighborhood's vibrant cultural *mestizaje*—the appropriation of those same bodies as emblems of Spanish modernity and progress.

By featuring these two images above the photo Aguirre's office distributed, the article rewrites the narrative of the conservative government's investment in the quality of life for the immigrants and artists, and the preservation of Spanish heritage that includes valorizing the culture and "personality" that the residents of Lavapiés bring to that tradition. Instead, the story told in *El mundo* is one of hypocrisy and contradiction. The headline makes the argument explicitly clear: "La doble cara de Lavapiés: Barrio histórico. La presidenta de la Comunidad, Esperanza Aguirre, hizo ayer balance del plan para rehabilitar los edificios de este céntrico barrio madrileño, que continúa sufriendo sus viejos problemas pese al lavado de cara."

Noting that garbage trucks removed the waste that residents say habitually fills the streets, journalist Carlos Medrano also reports that the police removed only some of the other elements that Aguirre and company would consider in need of cleansing: among these, the immigrant accused of pirating movies to sell on the street, in police custody at the time of Aguirre's speech. Medrano and his local sources emphasize the criminal activity, calling it "un territorio preferente para mendigos, borrachos y para trapicheos de droga" adding, "De este hecho pudo ser testigo ayer por la mañana la presidenta ... Aguirre, o casi."

Here, another image of Lavapiés as urban space intrudes, "casi," upon the attempted appropriation by Aguirre: the material conditions of the neighborhood, as well as the real struggles inhabitants regularly face (homelessness, poverty, addiction, police scrutiny, etc.) must be removed—cleaned up—before a photograph can be taken that will acceptably fit this site of difference into a story of anaesthetized diversity: cultural cohesion around the tenets of neoliberalism—individual action, free choice, production of culture—without opposing the accumulation practices that maximize profits, including the gentrification of buildings that will no longer be affordable to the immigrants who lend Lavapiés its "personalidad."¹

These "twin faces" of Lavapiés reveal the duplicity of politics in contemporary Spain: on the surface, difference, progress, and liberal ideas like tolerance define the political landscape; underneath, projects like neo-colonial expansion, investment, and exploitation provide the impetus for such images like that of Aguirre affirming that Lavapiés is "tan madrileño", despite its status as one of the most visible sites of difference in Spain today. While *El mundo* seems to contest the surface image of the Lavapiés appropriated by Aguirre, its revised portrait instead make clear the neoliberal assessment of beggars and criminals as having failed to survive in an individualistic society—as the "problems" from which Lavapiés suffers—rather than symptoms of an institutional failure to address inequalities and injustices for a large number of the neighborhood's residents.

The social, political, and economic struggles of immigrants in Spain are often hidden from view in glossy photographs or promotional videos, and the political narratives constructed by Aguirre's party, the Partido Popular (PP), as well as by more moderate and even left-leaning parties like the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), appropriate these struggles in a move that at once distances the democratic government from its precursor, Francisco Franco's fascist dictatorial regime, while emphasizing modernization in order to posit Spain as legitimately and essentially European. The arrival to late capitalism legitimates Spain's status as a European nation, which it privileges, even in amendments to the *Ley de extranjería*, as the motivation for ethical treatment of immigrants, rather than any moral imperative (*Ley Orgánica*). Likewise, when politicians like Aguirre pose with immigrants, it is often part of a project designed to depoliticize, disempower, or diminish the visibility and access of those populations.

Literature, with its capacity to undermine and destabilize this project, initially appears to do so in Lucía Etxebarria's 2007 novel *Cosmofobia*, in which the narrative of the "occupation" of Lavapiés by undesirable "Others" seems to have found its challenge. However, the text ultimately reproduces, rather than contests, the neo-racism found in tolerance discourse's empty emphasis on multiculturalism. "Otherness" only receives a partial critique, and Lavapiés is again characterized as a space suffering from the addictions, behavioral disorders, and moral deficiencies of its largely immigrant population. Etxebarria crafts a character in the text to represent herself: a Spanish writer who resides in Lavapiés and pines for interculturality and mutual respect, while describing her

neighbors with thinly veiled aversion and xenophobia. Etxebarria's novel understands "immigrants" as a singular identity, sharply delineating the "us" as the unmarked, white artists like herself, and "them" as everyone else.²

Etxebarria's residence in and identification with Lavapiés only partially mask the contempt, antipathy, and distrust she feels toward the very residents, the "Others," who constitute the subject matter of *Cosmofobia*. Her choice of subject matter reveals the fashionability of Lavapiés and immigrants in Spain. Gentrification, another fairy tale of the metropolis, originates, as Martin F. Manalansan describes, from conditions existing within the built environment, rather than external to it (154). The production of "authenticity" by immigrant and queer populations leads to their eventual displacement from the spaces they made desirable, in a process that reveals the way visibility, commodification, and exploitation like Etxebarria's participate in the neoliberal state's project of accepting only the formation of social solidarity movements that do not oppose accumulation practices.

Cosmofobia molds fictional interviews between the author and an assortment of characters, all residents of Lavapiés, into a montage of narratives of life in the central neighborhood of Madrid. While Lavapiés is now celebrated as the site of a diverse community of immigrants and artists, the novel offers a different view: Etxebarria's Lavapiés is, as described by one character, "multicultural, no intercultural [...] las comunidades se toleran, pero no se mezclan, los límites se respetan" (27). The "limits" of conviviality, acceptance, and respect are presented as unease, distrust—the "fobia" of the book's title—an arrangement that, within the confines of Lavapiés, produces very separate realities. The novel's Lavapiés codifies this arrangement spatially. Mapping out the "dos mundos" that exist within the neighborhood, Etxebarria narrates:

Es curioso que a dos mundos tan diferentes los separe sólo una calle ancha. A un lado, el Barrio de las Letras, los lofts de diseño, los bares para turistas, los teatros, los hoteles y las cafeterías; al otro, los inmigrantes, los niños derivados de los Servicios Sociales, los borrachos con sus litronas, los *latin kings*, las maras, las navajas, los traficantes de hachís. Por el mismo café que cuesta un euro en una zona te cobran tres en la otra. (79-80)

Descriptions like these give the reader an orientation within the space while providing a geography of privilege and power. The "curious" segregation not only falls along the lines of racial, cultural, and class difference—but, for Etxebarria, it is these very differences that *produce* the spatial divides and the resultant tension, fear, and division she observes.

Armed with a unique and powerful opportunity to represent a space so charged with meaning both for its inhabitants, as well as in contemporary Spanish political discourse, *Cosmofobia* attempts to critique celebratory narratives of a depoliticized multiculturalism; yet, it ultimately internalizes and reproduces them, "celebrating" instead the aversion and conflict produced, as it were, by immigrants in a thoroughly modern Madrid. Lavapiés, like the rest of the country, is home now to a significant immigrant population. The neighborhood is frequently imagined as a location where immigrants "need" to live, perhaps due to lower rents, work opportunities, or even family connections; but it is also considered a desirable location for white Spaniards, including artists and students—they are drawn, for a variety of reasons, to the "immigrant neighborhood," while fearful of the very immigrants who live there.

Foucault describes the shift from "crisis heterotopias," or sites reserved for or dedicated to people in a state of crisis, to "heterotopias of deviation," that is, "those [sites] in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (25). Despite the reality that powerful, devastating crises and displacements of various forms (political, economic, and environmental), as well as the very structure of globalization, produce the circumstances that bring about the presence of immigrants in Lavapiés, political and cultural narratives have emerged that celebrate Spain's tolerance of its burgeoning multiculturalism and characterize the neighborhood as a heterotopia of deviation, arguing that the significant presence of immigrants is the main factor that produces the crisis—a crisis that must be "addressed."

In *Cosmofobia*, Lavapiés plays an interesting role: it serves as spatial evidence of a Spain so modern, so liberatory, that it can support the enormous burden of these "Others" and the deviation they represent,

substantiating the claim that it is immigration that produces crisis, and not the reverse. Reflecting the shift Foucault notes, Etxebarria's characterization of Lavapiés details the *effects* of an immigrant-occupied urban space, rather than examining the histories of colonization, exploitation of migrant labor, and legal rights for refugees—among other conditions—that have led to the *production* of Lavapiés as a particular set of relations spatially codified, as they are, in the novel.

In the chapter titled “La negra,” Etxebarria speaks through the character of Susana, a black woman who divides her time between a studio apartment and the retail store where she works. When tensions rise between Susana and her live-in boyfriend Silvio, she gains weight from the chocolate she eats to soothe herself and is fired from her job at the trendy store Mango. Next, she applies to work at Superwoman, a plus-size store and is told, “Mira, es que tú eres demasiado oscura y las clientas se me van a asustar” (57). Here, capital structures racism in a more traditional sense: the shop owner defends her racism given her need to, above all else, sell clothing to others who she assumes to be racist as well (83). Susana, via Etxebarria, explains that she accepts the mistreatment despite the offense it gives her because she needs work; as she muses, “el orgullo no da de comer,” responding to the market value assigned to her dignity (62).

Dora, the store owner, then asks Susana where she is from, to which she responds, “Alcalá de Henares,” a town outside Madrid (61). Unsatisfied, the woman repeats the question several times with emphasis, until Susana offers that her father is Guinean, which seems to calm the store owner. Now that she can identify Susana not only as black, but also as “immigrant,” she is more comfortable. While Susana describes Dora as “una racista de cuidado,” what emerges here represents a change from the racism described above (61). Instead, it illustrates the phenomenon Etienne Balibar terms “neo-racism,” “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 of peoples in relation to others but ‘only’ the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions” (84). The first clue, Balibar warns, is “The functioning of the category of *immigration* as a substitute for the notion of race...” (84). Despite being a native speaker of Spanish and born in Spain, Susana is considered by white Spaniards to be part of that category of “immigrants,” one of the “dos mundos” defined by *Cosmofobia*.

As Balibar explains, neo-racism is the result of “the reversal of population movements between the old colonies and the old metropolises, and the division of humanity within a single political space” (84). The division of the political space of Lavapiés into two worlds not only permits the differentiation of reasons for living in the neighborhood, but also the differentiation of two different levels of culture, “one assumed to be universalistic and progressive, the other supposed irremediably particularistic and primitive” (Balibar 86). Susana realizes that many of the shoppers at the store have never met a black woman before her, and view her through the lens of documentaries they have seen about tribal African women, “jumping with their breasts out asking for rain, and of course, they see me as somewhat *masai*” (Etxebarria 61). Etxebarria writes a Susana who laughs at this misguided cultural expectation, but does not question the hierarchy it implies. Instead, she proudly reports that her clientele soon become convinced of her fine manners and speech in stories such as this:

Había una señora que estaba así como mirando prendas y yo me acerco toda amable y toda fina y le pregunto: “Perdone, ¿puedo ayudarla en algo?”, y la mujer se gira y me ve y pega un grito como si se le hubiese aparecido el mismo diablo: “¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaay!” y luego, cuando se da cuenta de la metedura en pata, para intentar arreglarla, va y me suelta: “Perdona, es que me has asustado; como hablas tan bien.... (Etxebarria 61)

The shopper knows she should not have screamed in fear at the sight of a black woman—due to multiculturalist discourses of tolerance and political correctness, she knows she should tolerate the sight of dark skin, despite its being, for her, the source of aversion—so she offers the explanation that Susana's apparent assimilation surprised her, revealing how neo-racism functions to keep the two worlds apart: regardless of her having been born in Spain and speaking well, no amount of assimilation will ever be viewed as sufficient.

Susana's very voice is co-opted, depoliticized, and made to declare tolerance the best she might expect. Much like neo-racist discourse, the use of what Wendy Brown terms "tolerance discourse," like that used by Etxebarria-as-Susana, works with multiculturalism to reframe postcolonial immigration as a depoliticized encounter; as she explains, "the call for tolerance, the invocation of tolerance, and the attempt to instantiate tolerance are all signs of identity production and identity management in the context of orders of stratification or marginalization in which the production, the management, and the context themselves are disavowed. In short, they are signs of a buried order of politics" (*Regulating Aversion* 14). Buried in Susana's narrative lie the racial and gender inequalities of Spanish society and the powers that create and sustain them, Spain's history of colonization and empire, the hierarchy of power implied in the "self"/"other" dyad, and the production and management of the "immigrant" identity.

As Brown indicates, depoliticization removes history and power from the understanding of the tolerated subject and a context-absent analysis occurs—presenting difference as a source of conflict that is not only apolitical, but also natural, personal, and frequently emotional. The failure of the immigrant to assimilate completely is also viewed as an individual failure to "get along." Susana laments, "A mí me encantaba jugar a ser la única que había escapado de la maldición y por eso me jode tanto [...] porque yo quiero ser distinta" (Etxebarria 77). By eliding history and power, Etxebarria gives voice to a Guinean-Spanish woman whose failed assimilation is presented using "emotional and personal vocabularies" instead of "political ones" (Brown *Regulating Aversion* 16). Susana's subject-position is defined by domestic squabbles, feelings of shame, and culturally programmed behaviors that produce conflict, instead of the material inequalities, histories, and power structures that actually produce and construct what Etxebarria presents as "natural" dynamics.

Rather than challenging the politics and distribution of power that make integration a fairytale, an impossible ideal, tolerant subjects like Etxebarria, both as character and author, celebrate their own progressiveness, open-mindedness, and modernity as demonstrated by their ability to support the burden of these "others", and to survive the nightmare produced by a largely immigrant-populated urban space. Much like *costumbrismo*, the 19th Century Spanish movement most identified with journalists Ramón Mesonero Romanos and Mariano José de Larra, whose sketches or *cuadros* claimed to objectively depict urban life, Etxebarria's text purports to present Lavapiés from a perspective that transcends the segregation of the "dos mundos" and the power structure they entail. Yet, like the *costumbristas*, her novel not only fails to transcend the notion of insuperable cultural difference, but ends in affirming its epistemological legitimacy, shifting from a notion of "cosmophobia" as a crisis for immigrants to a crisis caused by immigration, wrought upon the white, European Spaniards.

While the *costumbristas* sought to transcend, yet ended in defining class types, John D. Blanco, describes how, in the colonial context, a *costumbrismo* emerged in which "racial division between Spanish colonialists and travelers, on the one hand, and native subjects, on the other [...] consistently displaces the polarization between 'enlightened' and 'unenlightened' sectors of the public" (163). I argue that, in post-1992 Spain, the category of immigration comes to function as an identity category in representations that depict cultural differences—texts that end in legitimizing cultural types, much like previous forms of *costumbrismo* did to racial or class types.

Similarly, Etxebarria and others whose privilege and power depend upon the disarming of certain segments of the population employ and affirm the "self"/"other" dichotomy in their representations of Lavapiés. The *costumbristas* crafted "sketches" of the lower classes that inevitably shifted the focus back onto the character of the *costumbristas* themselves, men of letters, the emerging middle class. Similarly, Etxebarria sustains her study of the immigrants and otherwise marginalized peoples of Lavapiés for several chapters, then reverts back to the subject of herself and her community of artists, models, and actors. *Cosmofobia* portrays a neighborhood that tolerates racial, ethnic, and sexual identities so long as they do not challenge a celebration of the "dos mundos," particularly the world of an unmarked "self" that can survive the influx of these "others." This tolerance of "others" and celebration of "self" serves to construct a narrative that maintains the white artists as the true protagonists of the narrative.

While Etxebarria lives in Lavapiés, she does not identify with the immigrants, exiles, and refugees who, for her, apart the vibrant cultural diversity that defines the neighborhood. Instead, she identifies only other white, Europeans living in—and tolerating—a site of vibrant cultural diversity. In earlier *costumbrismos*, too, Susan Kirkpatrick locates moments in texts when “the observer’s neutrality evaporates. [...] a bitter, subjective note imposes itself on the description, and the narrator’s hostility to the figure he is representing is undisguised [...] Through this hostility a deep antipathy toward the lower classes, whom the author initially treated sympathetically, asserts itself” (41). Behind this antipathy, she notes a political distrust, just as I find in Etxebarria’s *Cosmofobia*. Even seemingly banal descriptions of the fashions worn by women in the neighborhood reveal the appropriation and rejection she practices when identifying with Lavapiés: musing about the women who pick up their children at the state-run daycare: “Los demás casi siempre son morenos. Los hay chinos, pakistaníes, marroquíes, de Bangla Desh (*sic*), ecuatorianos, colombianos, senegaleses, nigerianos [...] Hay madres marroquíes y egipcias con velo y *yilaba*, ecuatorianas con vaqueros ceñidísimos, senegalesas con túnicas estampadas, y alguna española—las menos—vestida con vaqueros de su talla” (Etxebarria 12). She continues, “Eso de llevar pantalones dos tallas por debajo de la propia sólo se estila entre las sudamericanas, porque las españolas jamás lucirían con orgullo unos michelines y unas caderas amplias que para unas son sexys y, para otras, motivo de vergüenza” (12).

This description corresponds with Balibar’s assertion that neo-racism “reintroduces the old distinction between ‘closed’ and ‘open,’ ‘static’ and ‘enterprising,’ [...] ‘gregarious’ and ‘individualistic’ societies,” despite the ways in which it aims to “[protect] European culture and the European way of life from ‘Third Worldization’” (86). While even members of the Partido Popular, including Esperanza Aguirre, can be heard touting the importance of diversity, the differentialist function of Etxebarria’s representation is part of a larger, concurrent move, one that shows the investment of Spanish politics in a definition of a particular national culture that requires protection from impurities and closure rather than open acceptance, despite the rhetoric of progress and pluralism. *Cosmofobia* becomes Etxebarria’s way of claiming the identity of cosmopolitan for herself and others like her, effectively marking her subjectivity, her culture and identity as the truly “Spanish,” the universal framework within which all others will be understood.

Part of what enables problematic notions of cosmopolitanism and immigration as “crisis” is the narrative of freedom and openness arriving with the advent of democracy and globalization. In Justin Crumbaugh’s *Destination Dictatorship*, he reframes the popular notion of neoliberalism and late capitalism as unique to the post-transition era. As Crumbaugh explains, what is commonly understood as the *dictablanda*, the weakening or softening of the dictatorship’s power in the later years of Franco’s rule, is merely a repackaging of that power, above all through tourism, which Crumbaugh understands as a *dispositif* in the Foucauldian sense, functioning as part of a larger process of governmentalization, or the emergence of an assemblage of devices and rationales by which “the figure of the sovereign ruler (such as a dictator) is no longer at the center of power relations, and overt disciplinary measures are downplayed, dispersed, and reformulated,” and while sovereign power and violent repression by no means disappear, they are now “rationalized as a means to an altruistic and pragmatic end (i.e., the optimal management of the wealth, well-being, and security of the people)” (18).

Rather than arguing that the political bolstering and development of tourism brought a freedom the regime had not meant to give the Spanish people, Crumbaugh posits this freedom as “both a product and mode of governance, a way to intervene on the population through positive measures” (37). In 1962, in fact, Franco boasted about the freedom every Spaniard had to think and act as he or she pleased (Preston qtd. in Crumbaugh). I embrace Crumbaugh’s call to recognize “in the spectacle of Spain’s tourist boom a distinctly modern mechanism of power, the efficacy of which is derived paradoxically from the impression of liberation” (20). He elaborates the shift from spiritual justifications of Franco’s “mission” to the technocratic claims of rational, objective, and efficient leadership, which took place largely through the exportation of unemployment by way of emigration to Eastern Europe in the 1950s and the importation of investment and consumption, particularly through tourism, capital from the United States, and economic liberalization (29).

Extending Crumbaugh's framework to the cultural production of the 2000s, not only is it important to cease to identify "freedom," "modernity," and capitalism as markers of democracy and distance from the Francoist era, but we can also appreciate Crumbaugh's project of examining the "play of perception and appearances—that is, the aesthetic dimensions of governing, its 'art,' [...] connecting governmentality with the concerns of cultural studies scholarship by extending the objects and practices examined to question of representation" (18). For this reason, a press conference about renovation in Lavapiés can become a highly significant stage for the discussion of a Spain that only in 1992 began to receive more migrants than it emitted, yet imagines itself as worlds away from the Spain of the 1950s and 60s.

In the Spanish mainstream, "otherness," a category constructed in multiple, yet typically compatible ways, was typically represented as opportunity, although popular discourse has shifted to posit the very presence of so many "others"—that is, immigrants, or children of immigrants, from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe—as a veritable crisis, an enormous burden that Spain can only manage because it is just so modern, European, and Western. The "crisis," then, of the "others," becomes evidence of Spain's efficient and progressive democratic leadership in a global market. Whereas Crumbaugh notes that Spanish officials implied that "Spain was now [after economic liberalization took place] the nation chosen not only by God but also by millions of foreign consumers," (19) I highlight the implication that Spain is now, in the present day, not only chosen by millions of foreign consumers, but also millions of migrants from the so-called "Third World."

In widely popular films like 1999's *Flores de otro mundo*, 2005's *Princesas*, and 2010's *Biutiful*, immigrants are represented as sex workers, cheap labor, and otherwise exploitable or consumable by Spanish neoliberal society. It seems that "opportunity" still abounds in Spain's aesthetic and political treatment of immigrants, as in *Flores de otro mundo*, female migrants arrive by bus to a small rural town, where women are scarce, and immigrant women are now considered marginally acceptable, should they help repopulate and boost the withering economy of the town, either through traditional labor like working on farms, or through the labor of reproduction, or the affective labor of providing "companionship" for lonely men. In *Flores de otro mundo*, some types of "others" are able to assimilate, albeit incompletely. In *Princesas*, this assimilation is impossible for an immigrant sex worker, who eventually must return home, now carrying HIV. We continue to see these women as vulnerable, frequently victimized, and always exploited, except by one or two benevolent Spaniards, who befriend and defend the immigrants.

Many of these texts, like *Cosmofobia*, present intercultural romance in particular as the central immigration or assimilation narrative—this is, however, an assimilation that can never happen. Desire here, and sexuality in general, are not merely allegorical frames, but also material practices by which culture is depicted as an insuperable boundary to interculturality or even peaceful coexistence. Interracial relationships are violent and ultimately fail; others are unfaithful, secretly homosexual, and cannot be trusted; and the desire of the Spanish artist touring the immigrant landscape of Lavapiés is not for the other, but for the pleasure and perpetuation of itself. Rather than a queer desire, in the sense that it challenges or destabilizes norms, this is a normative desire whose function is, above all else, to uphold and solidify the self as the norm.

When the agenda of representing the "Other" wanes in value and interest for Etxebarria, she shifts the narration shifts back to the "self."³ In the opening chapters of *Cosmofobia*, she describes the site purportedly at the foreground of her narrative: the daycare center, "un caserón que en su día fue un colegio. Los que eran los parques donde los alumnos pasaban los recreos han quedado para uso público." (Etxebarria 12). Connected as it is to a temporality of what was once privatized made public and now decaying, the center echoes the larger narrative found in Spanish news media about the decay and neglect of "social services" facilities in Lavapiés and other areas that serve immigrants and the poor due to underfunding and disinterest as politicians focus on more neoliberal platforms, like the prosperity of the middle class. Situated at the margins of society, it seems central to *Cosmofobia*, having facilitated intercultural contact, the cornerstone of Etxebarria's Lavapiés. Still, the novel's white characters follow the political trend, performing an interest in the neighborhood's residents for their own gain, and then losing interest when the expected benefits do not appear.

Extebarria describes the children served by the daycare center, but through a character who belongs to her “world,” in which Lavapiés and the people in it can be appropriated, and when they cease to serve one’s agenda, discarded.⁴ Antón, a young white man who volunteers at the center, works with the children for two months, all the while approaching the kids with distrust and mild disapproval. Finally, Antón discovers that Claudia, the director of the daycare, is pregnant. It was to achieve proximity to Claudia that Anton began to volunteer, and upon this discovery, he thinks, “Pero, ¿cómo ha podido hacer el tonto de semejante manera? Dos meses viniendo a verla todos los días, sesenta días aguantando los gritos y las peleas de los críos y todo para nada.” (Extebarria 42). The entire chapter that introduces the center and the children it serves has a greater focus on the internal narrative of the white Spanish artist than the children. His view of the “Others” is not only differentialist, he also views them as material he can put to use to further his own goals. He describes them from a distance, without empathy, yet with significant entitlement: when Antón’s time spent with the schoolchildren ultimately fails to help him woo Claudia, he is irritated by the children. Antón, like other white Spanish artists in the novel, including the author, “consumes” what Lavapiés has to offer, and when the poor or the marginal can no longer provide this value, Antón follows the trajectory of the political mainstream, and shifts his attention to spaces and subjects that have greater appeal.

Extebarria introduces Yamal Benani through another “romance” storyline that echoes of *costumbrismo* in that his contact with Miriam, a white woman, establishes him as thoroughly “other,” whereas Miriam, described as a friend of the author’s, is offered as the character with whom the reader can identify and empathize. Miriam, on a graduation trip to Paris, meets Yamal, who then follows her back to Spain, and, due to a mobility he attributes to an inheritance, decides on a whim to move to Madrid. He rents a studio in Lavapiés, and, Extebarria narrates, “la hija de buena familia acabó viviendo en un barrio de inmigrantes al que su madre se negaba a ir a visitarla” (86). At times, Yamal’s relationship with Miriam facilitates critiques of the discrimination of *los moros* in Spain: in response to Miriam’s mother’s comment—“Un moro ... qué vergüenza, tú estás loca. Si esa gente pega a sus mujeres y las hace ir con velo”—Miriam says, “Su país es Francia, mamá, no seas loca...” (87). While the scene is conveyed with criticism of its implicit racism—her mother is described as “embebida en su patriotismo de estrechas miras”—Miriam defends Yamal by insisting upon his “Europeanness,” rather than challenging the stereotypes her mother employs (87). Yamal’s seduction of Miriam, then, depends upon his ability to embody a white, European subjectivity, and suppress the beliefs he can be assumed to hold due to his Moroccan and Lebanese background.

When the “romance” storyline of seduction by Yamal has run its course, Extebarria swiftly reveals that he is the head of a neighborhood-wide network of drug dealers, that his art was plagiarized, and that he might have murdered the American curator who failed to further his career. What connects Extebarria’s and Esperanza Aguirre’s representations of Lavapiés is the suggestion that immigrant bodies and immigrant-occupied spaces do not signal the injustice of larger crises that displace them—instead, these bodies and spaces subject the unmarked “self,” the Spanish essence, to emotional turmoil, poverty and crime. Celebratory narratives of Spain as progressive and modern emphasize the large numbers of tourists who choose to visit Spain. However, displacement acts not only upon the freely-moving tourist-agent, the seeming icon of modernity, but also those Homi Bhabha et al. term “Cosmopolitans today”: “the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism’s upward mobility, and bereft of those comforts and customs of national belonging. Refugees, people of the diaspora, and migrants and exiles” (6). Rather than acknowledge the cogent critique of modernity these figures represent, statist mnemonics in Spain focus instead on narratives like Aguirre’s and Extebarria’s about the bravery and dedication of the Spanish people throughout the immigration “crisis.”

Martin F. Manalansan’s distinction between “neoliberal urban governance” and “gentrification” highlights a desire “to move away from the popular notion of the latter as an organic, natural supplanting of

on-site inhabitants by outside forces and agents” (154). His discussion of New York City’s neoliberal policies resonates in many ways with Madrid’s in that, unlike those of many cities, “particularly those of the third world, that are mediated by institutions like the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund [...], the very forces at work are situated within the city itself as a global financial center” (Manalansan 154). In the case of Lavapiés, these forces include initiatives like Aguirre’s, as well as the presence of and representations by white, European, middle class artists like Etxebarria and her friends. While “gentrification” was neither “organic” nor “natural” in Madrid, it does exemplify the ways that Wendy Brown describes “a neoliberal political rationality” can emerge “as governmentality—a mode of governance encompassing but not limited to the state, and one that produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behavior, and a new organization of the social” (*Edgework* 37). This organization tends toward division, decentralization, and displacement.

Madrid’s government has organized its “others” into distinct spaces, each produced to extract the most value, the cheapest labor, and the highest profit margin. Lavapiés has experienced what its residents, in the documentary project *Mundo Lavapiés*, have termed “La ‘balcanización’ de Lavapiés” in which:

Las constructoras reinaron sobre el espacio público. La rehabilitación trajo calles impracticables, andamios, contenedores, aceras y calzadas abiertas y cerradas una y otra vez. La circulación peatonal se hizo yinkana. Ningún vecino vio nunca un plan de obras: el caos se aceptó con fatalismo [...] La plaza de Lavapiés se abrió tres veces [...] Algun@s se han ido del barrio en este tiempo [...] Otr@s quedamos [...] [p]ero tenemos la impresión de que Lavapiés se está rehabilitando para otr@s, los vecin@s que vendrán, l@s que hayan superado la selectividad económica [...]. (13)

Again, diminishing access to these spaces—spaces beloved by many *because* they promised to be meaningful sites of diversity—leads to the displacement of the very populations whose identities have become coded into references to each urban space. Those who remain capable of using the space have to pay more, to share an apartment with still more people, or to submit to even more police regulation. The balkanization of Lavapiés is symbolic of the *modus operandi* of neoliberalism: divide and conquer. The division of space resonates with the division of people, of communities, of families into polarized identity categories—the division of coalitional resistance movements into single-issue identity politics. This decentralization becomes a key strategy in limiting access of marginalized peoples to these sites, of exploiting them while they inhabit those spaces, and of enacting an insidious regulation of public spaces by normatively constructing scripted, manageable forms of “private life.”

When Aguirre, Etxebarria, and other Spanish politicians and writers cite Lavapiés—or any other “identity” neighborhood, for that matter—these references are not only neo-racist and neo-costumbrista in content; the form they take is also problematic. Another emblematic site of progress, the Chueca neighborhood of Madrid, is the space most frequently cited as representative of homosexuality in Spain. This “identity neighborhood” is distinct from Lavapiés, the “barrio inmigrante” in the Spanish imaginary, as though immigrants and queers were distinct populations. After the Partido Popular, the conservative party to which Aguirre belongs, announced it would attempt to overturn same-sex marriage legislation, there were photographs and reports of the publicized visit to the Regional Service office, during which the Madrid president assured the audience that she opposed “‘desde el principio’ a que su partido presentara el recurso ‘no porque pensara que jurídicamente no podía haber razón, sino porque entendía que eso se iba a interpretar como un ataque a los gays’” (Minutodigital.com).

This message functions as what Lisa Duggan describes as “a double-voiced address to an imagined gay public, on the one hand, and to the national mainstream constructed by neoliberalism on the other” (50). This address becomes a means of constructing ideal citizen-subjects—in this case, the ideal gay citizen—embedded in the mainstream through, as Duggan writes, “a rhetorical remapping of public/private boundaries designed to shrink gay public spheres, and redefine gay equality...as access to the institutions of domestic privacy, the ‘free’ market, and patriotism” (50-51).

Aguirre's address to the gay community exemplifies this "double-voicing": in that she was said to have repeated what newspaper *El país* terms a "chorus" of "Queremos una Comunidad abierta a todo y a todos, cualquiera que sea la condición sexual, la raza, lo que sea..." and then accused President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero "'meterles el dedo en el ojo a los católicos' ya que 'se podrían haber regulado las uniones entre las personas del mismo sexo sin necesidad de haberlas llamado matrimonio'" (Minutodigital.com). This speech act is never meant to convey that Aguirre is a proponent of material equality, respect, and political cogency for same-sex couples; instead, it co-opts homosexuality, employing the legalization of marriage, which she reveals here functions, above all, as further regulation of gay subjects, in order to, as Martin Manalansan writes, "anesthetize queer communities into passively accepting alternative forms of inequality in return for domestic privacy and the freedom to consume" (142).

Duggan explains how hormonormative doublespeak depoliticizes, and in Madrid, this depoliticization means that the conservative party can tout its support of marriage, receive ever-increasing support from gay voters, and never be taken to task for rampant homophobia, shrinking social services for AIDS/HIV care and prevention, ties to a historically homophobic Catholic church, criminalization of sex work, and countless other policies that generally go, if not unnoticed, uncontested. In this way, the passing of gay marriage, now firmly co-opted by Aguirre and much of the PP, as well as the PSOE, elides the real political struggles of queers in Spain.

By emphasizing tourism, consumption, and domesticity, the Spanish state has constructed a gay consumer who complacently occupies the private sphere, and is a seemingly distinct entity from neoliberalism's interpellation of the immigrant, whom the state has figured as an exploitable, cheap laborer, and a necessary token in the construction of an image of Spain as a convivial, multicultural society. Having established this divide, the Spanish government, particularly that of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, effects what Martin F. Manalansan terms "the violent remapping of lives, bodies, and desires...caused by neoliberal practices" (141). Within Lavapiés, the division of residents into "dos mundos," or two worlds, reveals how even the "immigrant neighborhood" requires further balkanization and segregation to properly utilize and disarm the inhabitants of the space, and any resistant culture they might produce.

Lavapiés has witnessed the process by which, Brown continues, "neo-liberalism normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life," prioritizing one's "capacity for 'self-care,'" producing individuals who bear "full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action no matter how severe the constraints on this action, e.g., lack of skills, education, and childcare in a period of high unemployment and limited welfare benefits" (*Edgework* 42). The notion of "mismanagement" of these actions, and the constraints upon them, "becomes a new mode of depoliticizing social and economic powers and at the same time reduces political citizenship to an unprecedented degree of passivity and political complacency" (*Edgework* 42).

In depoliticizing queer and immigrant populations, the state manipulates the sites where these forms of difference were most visible, and redraws "boundaries, neighborhoods, and lives...[giving] rise to insidious forms of surveillance of and violence in communities of color" (Manalansan 141). The "Democratic values" that represented the Spanish statist mnemonic of consolidating the present as a "post-Franco" moment no longer need be cloaked in notions of "freedom" and "equality"—instead, they need merely emphasize the value and cost-effectiveness of such a shift, thereby meeting more efficiently the "needs of capital." Through insidious governmentalization and homonormative addresses, capital and cultural production collude to normatively construct Spanish "selves" and immigrant "others"; however, if the endurance of 15-M and *los indignados* have taught us anything, it is that even the most "buried" and naturalized politics can be brought to light.

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Notes

¹ See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.

² On the cover of the paperback release, faces of a variety of people are imposed over drawings; around any racially marked face phrases like "sin papeles" (undocumented) and "estado alterado" (altered state) appear, as well as drawings of tears issuing from the faces of children. Around the face of a blond, white woman, there is a drawing of a cell phone, foreshadowing the neo-racism of the novel.

³ Another way the *costumbrismo* fails to fulfill its goal of objectively representing the lower classes, as Kirkpatrick explains, is through "[a] curious reversal," in which, for example, Larra's description of a ragwoman turns, instead, to "a subjective expression of an upper class lover's disappointment" (40). She continues: "The text seems to obey some law of its own which pulls it away from the announced focus on one class, its object, to the language and point of view of another class, its readers" (40).

⁴ In order to sustain his readers' interest, the *costumbrista* would, Kirkpatrick explains, "[appeal] to the values of his readers to justify dwelling on," for example, "the ragwoman—she is important because she is connected with high society and the world of letters" (40).