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Documenting the (Un)Documented: Diasporic Ecuadorian Narratives in Southern/Mediterranean Europe

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**DOCUMENTING THE (UN)DOCUMENTED: DIASPORIC ECUADORIAN NARRATIVES IN
SOUTHERN/MEDITERRANEAN EUROPE**

A Dissertation Presented

by

ESTHER ADELINA CUESTA SANTANA

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

February 2015

Program in Comparative Literature

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ESTHER ADELINA CUESTA SANTANA

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DEDICATION

to María Esther Santana Páliz (Ventanas 1940 - Guayaquil 1990)

and to Lucy Santana Páliz (Ventanas 1925-)

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This dissertation is the happy end of painful and sleepless nights. It is the complex assemblage of reflections, analysis, readings, discussions, writing, and the squeezing of time to be alone. But it is also the product of human contact and shared experiences with colleagues, friends, mentors, professors, taxi drivers, train riders, lawyers, activists, and migrants, and the generosity and solidarity they demonstrated toward me.

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ABSTRACT

DOCUMENTING THE (UN)DOCUMENTED: DIASPORIC ECUADORIAN NARRATIVES IN SOUTHERN/MEDITERRANEAN EUROPE

FEBRUARY 2015

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For several decades, Ecuadorian, U.S. American, and European social scientists have studied Ecuadorian migration to the European Union. Yet little academic research has been devoted to the comparative study of literary and filmic representations of diasporic Ecuadorians. This disparity between social science and literary studies research is especially evident in scholarship published in English, a gap this dissertation proposes to fill.

I investigate the discourses, cultural production, representations, and self-representations of diasporic Ecuadorians in Southern/Mediterranean Europe, specifically in Spain and Italy, where the largest diasporic communities of Ecuadorians in the European Union reside. I focus on a selection of works of fiction, poetry, and films, with particular attention given to texts by diasporic Ecuadorians. I argue that some of these recent texts point to a shift in epistemological standpoints, self-representational strategies, and political

coalitional projects that differ from previous understandings and representations of the Ecuadorian migrant. I suggest that they gesture toward the narrative of a subject who not only exposes her subjectivities and experiences, but also connects these within larger translocal histories, revealing the global subalternization of migrants and critiquing dominant systems of power.

Since the mid-1990s, approximately 1.5 million Ecuadorian women and men from diverse geographical, social, and ethnoracial backgrounds (roughly 10 percent of the total population) have migrated to the European Union, particularly to Southern/Mediterranean Europe. Ecuadorian women often work as caretakers of the elderly, disabled, or the ill, while men work in construction and other manual labor. Unlike previous Ecuadorian migrations to the U.S., this migration was predominantly female and with a higher formal education than that of the average Ecuadorian population.

As subalternized, ethnicized, and racialized migrants, Ecuadorians are seldom viewed by mainstream European societies as narrators and inscribers of their own experiences and subjectivities, or as agents of knowledge production and self-representation. I suggest that intercultural projects such as poetry contests, developed by diasporic Ecuadorians in Genoa, have countered certain discursive formations regarding Ecuadorian youth in Italy by fostering their self-presentation as creators and producers of knowledge and culture. The texts analyzed advance the documentation of translocal Ecuadorian narratives in Southern/Mediterranean Europe.

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INTRODUCTION

In July 2005, I travelled transnationally for the first time in eleven years. I had recently received my “greencard” in the mail: a white Alien identification card that materially and symbolically represented my regular migratory status in the United States. This piece of plastic allowed me to leave the country and, most importantly, to return.

I went to San Miguel de Allende, perhaps the most “gringo” town in central Mexico, oversaturated with U.S. influences and tourism, to volunteer and participate in the “Women and Globalization Conference,” organized by the Center for Global Justice. This meeting was an opportunity for me to return to my own migratory history within an activist/political/intellectual project that could help me cope with my problematic transgression—crossing the U.S. border without authorization—and deterritorialization. I remember there were two lines at the immigration control in Mexico City’s airport: one for those who arrived from European, U.S., and Oceanian points of departure and another for those who came from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia.

My previous transnational journeys had been first to Mexico and then to the U.S. Unlike my former unchecked border crossing in Laredo at the age of 19, this time I stood on the first line, perplexed but comfortable, on the privileged side. I proudly showed my “greencard” and passed through immigration control smoothly. No visa was required to enter Mexico as a tourist for Ecuadorian citizens who were U.S. permanent residents. A few months later, my application for a Schengen tourist visa was approved at the Spanish Consulate in Boston. Presenting a “greencard,” being enrolled in a Ph.D. program in a U.S. university, and having a graduate assistantship demonstrated that I was travelling as a “real tourist.” I flew to Barcelona with two goals: to visit a cousin with whom I had grown up in

Guayaquil and, on a grander scale, to better understand Ecuadorian female migration to Spain. After obtaining her degree as a dentist and being unable to find a stable job, my cousin migrated to Madrid, and later to Barcelona, following her mother's migration footsteps during Ecuador's major socioeconomic and political crisis at the turn of the century. The notorious escalation of migration of Ecuadorian women to the European Union, particularly to Spain, had become a critical academic interest of mine during my graduate-student years and I wanted to explore how I could intervene in this field from my location in the U.S. and in the humanities.

In December 2005, I spent the first Christmas with my family in more than a decade. It was a trip full of mixed emotions that I could only anticipate to a certain degree. I felt displaced. Eleven years before, I had experienced a different sense of traslocation the February morning a Greyhound bus took me to New York's Port Authority Bus Terminal. I had seen countless pictures and movies about New York City so that, seen from the bus window, the skyscrapers and wide avenues felt more like a recollection of images and sensations than a new lived experience. I was thrilled to begin a new venture, without truly pondering the legal, material, spatial, emotional, and psychological consequences of my several border crossings. In Guayaquil, instead, I was unable to recognize many streets and landscapes, even those in the neighborhood where I grew up. I (re-)entered my childhood home. I felt that the family who lived there did not really belong to that space. But neither did I. The country had changed. My family had changed. I had changed, too.

These frenzied trips satisfied an urge I had accumulated over the years as an undocumented immigrant. My "documentation" and later spatial and liberatory journeys allowed me to come to terms with my diasporic experience in the U.S. and marked the end of my migratory "non-status," my anxieties about an eventual deportation, and a sense of

invisibility, as well as the juridico-legal limitations I had persistently encountered as an irregular migrant. This dissertation emerges from my own inquiry into the often contradictory positions in which I was located as a diasporic Latin American mestiza woman in the United States and my desire to intellectually and politically intervene in the (re)presentation of diasporic Ecuadorian subjectivities, experiences, and narratives.

In this dissertation, "*Documenting the (Un)Documented: Diasporic Ecuadorian Narratives in Southern/Mediterranean Europe*," I investigate the discourses, cultural production, representations, and self-representations of diasporic Ecuadorians in Southern/Mediterranean Europe, more specifically in Spain and Italy, the two countries where the largest diasporic Ecuadorian communities in the European Union reside. I focus on a selection of works of fiction, poetry, and films—arguing that some of these recent texts point to a shift in epistemological standpoints, self-representational strategies, and political coalitional projects that differ from previous understandings and representations of the Ecuadorian migrant. They gesture toward the narrative of a subject who not only exposes her subjectivities and experiences, but also connects these within larger translocal histories, revealing the global subalternization of the ethnicized and racialized migrant and critiquing hegemonic systems of social control and transnational migration.

My dissertation maps oral, media, literary, and cinematographic representations and self-representations of diasporic Ecuadorians in Italy and Spain, which have received little attention in academic discourses in the United States. I examine the translocal knowledges and experiences Ecuadorians acquire during transnational migration, as well as their representational strategies and inscription of their homeland in the diasporic imaginary, while creating art in nation-states that often consider them *only* as workers fit for domestic or manual labor and racialize them differently from the way their existence

and power relations have been configured in their country of origin—where the Eurocentric paradigm and coloniality have persisted.

The U.S. has historically been the main migratory destination of Ecuadorians, particularly since the 1960s. Within the hemisphere, Canada and Venezuela also received significant migrant populations from Ecuador. This migration flux was mostly male and from two specific Andean zones: the Southern provinces of Cañar and Azuay, with a high percentage of rural and indigenous populations with low levels of formal education. Otavaleños, from the Northern Andes, also migrated to the U.S. and Europe, commercializing their crafts and traditional music, but also selling their workforce. After September 11, 2001, Ecuadorian emigration to the U.S. declined, mainly due to post 9/11 immigration policies and intensified surveillance, while unchecked border crossings became ever more dangerous; potential migrants, particularly women and children, were subject to increased violence, abuses, and homicides in their multiple border crossings spanning several countries in Central and North America.

Since the 1980s, and particularly in the 1990s, Italy and Spain—formerly countries of emigration, now of both emigration and immigration—have witnessed dramatic changes in demographic patterns that are linked to immigration fluxes, mainly from neighboring countries in Africa and Eastern and Central Europe. Despite increasingly restrictive immigration policies and rhetorics of exclusion in the European Union, since the mid-1990s, approximately 1.5 million Ecuadorian women and men from diverse geographical, social, and ethnoracial backgrounds (roughly 10 percent of the total population) have migrated to the European Union, particularly to Southern/Mediterranean Europe. Ecuadorian women often work as caretakers of the elderly, disabled, or the ill, while men work in construction and other manual labor. Unlike previous Ecuadorian migrations to the U.S., this migration

was predominantly female and with a higher formal education than that of the average Ecuadorian population.

In the period of 1998-2003 Spain became the second leading country of destination for Ecuadorian migrants, preceded by the U.S. and followed by Italy. While in 2003 Spain, Italy, and other member countries of the European Union required the Schengen visa for Ecuadorian citizens to enter the “Schengen space,” Ecuadorian migration to Spain and Italy gradually declined yet remained positive as migration primarily took place through family reunification. It was not until 2011, with the evident financial capitalist crisis in Europe, that Ecuadorian migration in Spain and Italy significantly slowed down and increasing numbers of Ecuadorians began returning to the homeland, along with their families.

As subalternized, ethnicized, and racialized migrants, Ecuadorians are seldom viewed by mainstream Southern/Mediterranean European societies as narrators and inscribers of their own experiences and subjectivities, or as agents of their own knowledge production and self-representation. Since the turn of the century, when Ecuadorian transnational migration notoriously increased, Ecuadorian migrants in Spain and Italy have appeared in European mainstream media, usually in reports of murder, rape, and violent attacks related to racist or xenophobic situations, or crimes of passion.

In one instance, the Spanish and Ecuadorian media followed the case of 21-year-old Sergi Xavier Martín, who attacked a 15-year-old Ecuadorian female on Barcelona’s metropolitan train the night of October 7, 2007 with racist and xenophobic slurs and physical violence. Soon after, video recordings from the Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya’s (FGC) security cameras travelled the world through cyberscapes, via YouTube, electronic mail, and Facebook. While Spanish authorities continuously labeled Martín’s

behavior as racist and viewed it as an isolated case, the Ecuadorian government, led by President Rafael Correa Delgado, supported the minor and her mother with legal, diplomatic, economic, and psychological assistance. In March 2009, Sergi Xavier Martín was condemned to eight months in prison, with a € 360 fine, in addition to the € 6,000 indemnification paid to the young Ecuadorian woman and a three-year prohibition against being less than 1,000 meters away from her.

On December 14, 2008, outside of the popular club *Estrella* in Genoa, often frequented by Latin American youth, a 17-year-old Ecuadorian male stabbed and killed Marcos Javier Camarena Jiménez, a 22-year-old Dominican. In a twenty-first century “real life” version of *West Side Story*, a narrative of presumed jealousy over Maria—a 15-year-old Ecuadorian female, who received multiple text messages from Camarena Jiménez—attempted to explain the murder. The Italian local and national media covered the news as merely another violent act committed by migrant youth with some affiliation to transnational Latino gangs, also known as “*bande*,” while emphasizing the passionate aspect of the violence and suggesting a sort of inability of Latin American males—and in a larger context, of those considered non-European—to control their emotions.

Although Spanish and Italian citizens commit the majority of crimes in Spain and Italy, respectively, authorities and news coverage about crimes committed by so-called first, second, or third generation non-European migrants (including Romanians, Albanians, Afro-Europeans, and Roma people who continue to be viewed as “other”) make explicit references to ethnoracial, nationality, gender, and residence status issues, manifesting their position outside the community of European citizens and European consciousness. These “informal” practices that render migrant populations “visible minorities” often translate into racial and religious profiling (El-Tayeb, “The Birth of a European Public” 651). In Italy,

this news acquires a paternalistic tone that suggests the purported incivility, infantilism, and uncontrolled passion of Latin Americans, which in turn echoes the colonial and racialized discourses associated with the Italian Southern Question that Jane Schneider discusses in *Italy's "Southern Question": Orientalism in One Country* (1998), and officially referenced as the socioeconomic divide between the country's North and South.

Within the European unification discourses of the racialized, cultural, and religious "other," the Ecuadorian diaspora in Spain and Italy has remained in the fictive shadows of discourses of the *unwanted* in the European Union. Ecuadorian women in Spain and Italy, often perceived as "good humble/noble migrants" and as domestic and more *domesticatable* workers, have been almost invisible in mainstream media (anti-immigrant) discourses, whereas the targets have frequently been Ecuadorian males and youth. On the other hand, in their attempt to disseminate Ecuadorian culture among the greater populations in Spanish and Italian cities, including Madrid, Barcelona, Milan, and Genoa, several Ecuadorian associations based in these cities have often reproduced a folklorization and essentialization of Ecuador's heterogeneous cultures and subjectivities, understanding Ecuadorian culture as a static element that can and must be passed on to younger diasporic generations in the ways it has been passed down through the generations in Ecuador.

At the same time, emergent literary and filmic narratives produced by diasporic Ecuadorians have exposed the historic and current translocal and transnational experiences of Ecuadorians and Europeans, as well as innovative self-representations that simultaneously break with and maintain literary and cinematographic conventions and techniques. These visual and written texts inscribe the experiences of globalized capitalist dynamics lived by migrants, their localized struggles, multiple geographies, and affiliations, and those of their texts.

Although diasporic Andeans in general and diasporic Ecuadorians in particular living in the European Union have been studied by social scientists in Europe, the U.S., and Latin America, such analysis is rare within literary and cultural studies. This dissertation attempts to fill that research gap. Contemporary diasporic Ecuadorian narratives in Southern/Mediterranean Europe must, I believe, be studied comparatively in order to identify the epistemological translocations from which literary and filmic texts emerge, to examine the ways in which these texts may illuminate our present understanding of colonial histories and epistemologies within global capitalist flows and structures, and to envision social transformation in our own communities.

I use the term diaspora and diasporic to refer to Ecuadorians living in Italy and Spain. Building on the work of Tiffany Patterson and Robin Kelly, I understand the Ecuadorian diaspora, first, as a process constantly remade through movement, migration, and travel, and imagined through thought, cultural production, and political struggle; and, second, as a condition that is situated within global race and gender hierarchies (11, 20). In addition, as Agustín Laó-Montes points out in his discussion of the African diaspora, the Ecuadorian diaspora can be apprehended as a “project of affinity and liberation searching to build translocal community and a global politics of decolonization” (“Afro-Latinidades” 118). It can also be understood as a project of friction along with multiple and contradictory discourses, narratives, social practices, and relationships that emerge from diverse translocal subject positions (gender, sexual, ethnoracial, class) linked to multiple interlocking networks and geographies (inter-household, local, regional, national, global) and modes of domination (capitalism, heteropatriarchy, racism, imperialism) (Laó-Montes, “Afro-Latinidades” 122). Thus, in this dissertation, I read the narratives of diasporic Ecuadorians as a corpus that is far from coherent or homogeneous.

As mobile people living across nation-states and engaging in their own translational processes and negotiations, I consider Ecuadorians living in Spain and Italy as cosmopolitans. As such, they enter already ethnoracial and gender stratified labor niches, located in subalternized positions, within global relations of capital and translocated in metropolitan Southern/Mediterranean European cities such as Barcelona, Madrid, Rome, or Milan, as well as in more provincial and smaller cities such as Genoa, Valencia, or Lorca. As Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge, and Chakrabarty have stated, “Cosmopolitans today are often the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism’s upward mobility, and bereft of those comforts and customs of national belonging” (6). They add, “Refugees, peoples of the diaspora, and migrants and exiles represent the spirit of the cosmopolitical community” (6). I understand diasporic Ecuadorians to be subalternized cosmopolitans and members of diverse cosmopolitical communities whether or not these are visible from within dominant structures.

In this sense, diasporic Ecuadorians are agents who are able to move and live within and across nation-states, cultures, languages, and transnational social fields, and reconfigure strategies and devices of communication and representation, while having been placed in subalternized positions within dominant structures of power. Levitt and Glick Schiller refer to “social field” “as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” (1007). I find their notion of “social field” particularly useful in understanding the complexity of the everyday experiences and cultural production of diasporic populations whose social lives are not confined to nation-state boundaries.

I locate this dissertation in the interstices of the humanities and the social sciences, which includes Comparative Literature, Cultural Anthropology, European, Latin American,

Feminist, and Diaspora Studies. Diverse theoretical frameworks and critical traditions have informed the writing of this dissertation, including world-historical analysis, subaltern and postcolonial studies, as well as decolonial and feminist theories. The subalternization and racialization that diasporic Ecuadorians face today in the European Union and in much of the Northern hemisphere are linked to the heteropatriarchal modern capitalist world-system that has been imposed since the European “discovery,” conquest, and colonization of the Americas, and its peripheral incorporation to European history and consciousness. Largely financed by the Genovese, these imperial projects were consolidated during the sixteenth century, over the course of what Enrique Dussel has considered the (first) “Hispanic, humanist, Renaissance modernity,” from a Eurocentric paradigm (13). Since then, and during the “Anglo-Germanic” (second) modernity and the British and Anglo-American hegemonies, Andean and Afro-diasporic epistemologies, technologies, and subjectivities have been confined to the world peripheries of knowledge production and experience (13). In the same vein, today’s marginalization, classification, and distribution of (diasporic) Ecuadorian literary and filmic narratives are contingent upon the global inequalities—among other factors—that have emerged from dominant Western thinking, which has considered most of non-Western knowledges and experiences to be non-existent (Santos, “Beyond Abyssal” 1-2), as well as the invention of Latin America as a geopolitical region, the Eurocentric formations of Latin American nation-states in the nineteenth century, and the contemporary capitalist need for cheap migrant labor in Europe.

This dissertation stems from my reflections as an Ecuadorian migrant woman living and writing in the northeast of the United States and is informed by the ethnographic and archival research I conducted in Italy from February to July 2007, as part of my participation in the European Field Studies Program at the Department of Anthropology,

University of Massachusetts Amherst, followed by several trips to Italy since then. In November 2009 I was appointed Consul of Ecuador in Genoa and two years later, Consul General. Since then, I have had the rare opportunity to acquire first-hand knowledge from a variety of sources and at different locations. In addition, this diplomatic post has allowed me to better understand the social realities of Ecuadorian migrants in Italy, their relational communities, and their collective action in groups, political parties, transnational networks, and activism, particularly in Genoa. I have viewed Ecuadorians from a privileged position of power, but also with the multidimensional political responsibility of assisting them in improving their quality of life, especially in situations of extreme vulnerability. This governmental position has also enabled me to intervene in and mediate the Ecuadorian migrant representation in Northern Italy and facilitate the creation of cultural, filmic, and literary projects that acknowledged diasporic Ecuadorian experiences.

Since 1990, as Graziella Parati has stated, “speaking from a marginal location, migrants’ writing narrates the role of the migrant as agent of change in the new culture he/she inhabits and the strategies of exclusion employed by the dominant culture” (*Migration Italy* 57). It is worth noting that it is only in the last ten years or so that diasporic Ecuadorians in Italy have sparingly appeared as authors of testimonials, poems, short stories, experimental narratives, and novels, using Italian as a second or third language to represent themselves. In such works I find that the power dynamics in literary production, distribution, and reception become strikingly evident. On the Iberian Peninsula, Spanish-speaking Latin American writers may have potential advantages in terms of language, culture, geopolitics, socioeconomics, and, particularly, book publication and circulation. Nonetheless, as diasporic writers from a small country such as Ecuador, and in the 1970s and early 1990s barely known by most Spaniards, Ecuadorians have encountered a highly

competitive market for book publishing and readership. In Spain, however, some of them have been able to promote their work transnationally, becoming well-known writers in Ecuador. It is interesting to note that the Ecuadorian writers in Spain who have obtained the most recognition are located in Barcelona and its surroundings. Capital of the culturally, linguistically, and economically distinctive Region of Catalonia, Barcelona has provided more artistic and literary opportunities for Ecuadorian writers to develop their careers than the more centralized and historic capital of the Spanish empire, Madrid.

In Chapter One, “Nation and Migration: Ecuadorian Diaspora in Italy,” I discuss some of the main political, legal, social, and economic contexts that diasporic Ecuadorians encounter when they arrive in Northern Italy, where nearly 70 percent of the Ecuadorian population in that country lives. I present an overview of Italian legislation on immigration and the welfare system, as well as recent Italian and Ecuadorian government modes of managing transnational migration, which inform the subjectivities, agency, and narratives of diasporic individuals and communities, as well as those of the native populations.

In Chapter Two, “Subalternized Cosmopolitans in Italy: Oral Narratives of Ecuadorians,” I draw my arguments from the epistemological standpoints and situated knowledges of the Ecuadorians interviewed during the ethnographic research I conducted in Italy from February to July 2007, and follow-up visits in January and March 2008. I expose some of the particularities of the multiple subjectivities and experiences of Ecuadorian migrants that contribute to the emerging Ecuadorian diasporas’ collective knowledges and incipient diasporic decolonial moves. Most of the interviewees had migrated to Italy at the end of the 1990s, during Ecuador’s most dramatic socioeconomic and political crises.

The literary texts produced by three contemporary Ecuadorian male writers living in Spain constitute the subject of Chapter Three, "Journey, Exile, and Border-Crossing in Mario Campaña's *Aires de Ellicott City*, Leonardo Valencia's *Kazbek*, and Iván Carrasco's 'El Ecuatañol.'" Iván Carrasco has lived in Catalonia since the 1970s, whereas Mario Campaña and Leonardo Valencia have lived in Barcelona and its surroundings since the 1990s. These three authors migrated with the unequivocal purpose of becoming accomplished artists and writers. As mobile subjects, their literary work has also travelled. However, little academic criticism has been published about their work, and it is almost non-existent in the English language. In the long poem *Aires de Ellicott City*, the novel *Kazbek*, and the short story "El Ecuatañol," the possibilities of travelling, moving, crossing borders, migrating spatially, spiritually or intellectually, pinpoint the human desire for a sense of freedom, which could translate into literary creativity, consciousness, or essentially a dignified human existence. For Valencia, the limitations on travelling in either intellectual or spatial dimensions may cripple creative and artistic creation. In Campaña, the pilgrim's journey, not its final destination, occupies the heart of the narrative poem. The pilgrim's cyclical path allows him to observe, learn, and choose what he needs from his cultural and geographical background, and to return. In contrast, Carrasco's incisive critique of hegemonic global systems of social control and transnational migration reminds the reader how domination violently attempts to crush subjectivity.

In Chapter Four, "Dominant Representations: Ecuadorian Migrant Youth and The Burden of *Bande*," I examine the social spheres in which the cultural production of adult and adolescent diasporic Ecuadorians takes place. This analysis contextualizes the literary and cinematographic representations and self-representations of diasporic Ecuadorians in Southern/Mediterranean Europe considered in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. I present an

overview of transnational families led by Ecuadorian women in Italy, the structural situations experienced by Ecuadorian youth and their parents once reunified in Genoa, and how an eventual territorial family reunification may reproduce the subalternized social integration of Ecuadorian migrant workers. I then discuss the stigmatized and racialized representations of migrants—principally Ecuadorian male youth as “*banda*,” or gang members and violent street actors—by the Italian, and particularly the Genovese, mainstream printed media. My aim here is to discuss the context in which diasporic women and youth express their subjectivities and narratives, and inscribe them in the public sphere.

In Chapter Five, “Poetry By Ecuadorians? One Way of Destabilizing The Image of *Bande* and Promoting Creativity,” I study the mediated self-representation of diasporic Ecuadorians in Genoa. I examine the development of a poetry contest developed in 2010 and 2011 that promoted citizen participation—as well as the collaboration of Ecuadorian and Genovese public and private institutions—and was aimed at the creation of poetry written by Ecuadorian youth. Finally, I analyze some of the poems entered into this contest—primarily those written by Ecuadorian youth who for the first time exposed their literary narratives to the public eye. I argue that this cultural project served as one way to question the definition of literature in general, to counter and destabilize boundaries and politics of exclusion of Ecuadorian youth in Genoa, and to deconstruct discourses of the “other” in which Ecuadorian male youth are primarily understood as members of gangs, while women are essentially viewed as domestic workers.

I focus on diasporic Ecuadorian women’s short stories, their description of household spaces, homeland, and the idea of a return to it in Chapter Six, “The Quasi-Invisible Inscraper: Diasporic Ecuadorian Women, The Homeland, and Household Spaces.” I

examine Lucinda Jiménez Armijos' "Clotilde" (2009), Kathiusca Toala Olivares' "Vigilia di Natale" ("Christmas Vigil") (2009), and "La scelta di Lucynda" ("Lucynda's Choice") (2010). I have also considered the life short story "Due mamme e un Papà," attributed to the pseudonymous Inés Gualacoto, as recounted to Giuseppe Pedercini, an Italian freelance writer. These texts suggest that migration is a necessary journey to improve one's quality of life. It is a decision that must be taken mainly for socioeconomic reasons.

Nostalgia for the homeland runs through these short stories, while the female protagonists recall their pasts in Ecuador, returning to their origins through memory. The hope of a return to the homeland is a constant theme in the texts examined in this chapter. Both in "Due Mamme e un Papà" and "Clotilde," the return to Ecuador is implicit in the sense that it is desired and expected. For the protagonists, the journey (and residence) in Italy is a temporary state that can only conclude with the return to the homeland, but only after having improved the migrant women's socioeconomic situation, as well as that of their children. In "La scelta di Lucynda," the return to Ecuador is an inherent element in the decision to migrate to Italy. The difference consists in what influences the protagonist Lucynda to anticipate her return to the homeland, even if her much expected financial goals have not been achieved. Only in "Vigilia di Natale" is the return to the homeland neither explicit nor implicit. The narrative voice leaves open the possibility that her translocation to Italy may be definitive. While the narrator-protagonist, Kathiusca, feels nostalgia and anguish, and even regret, at having abandoned her family and homeland, she does not pose the question of whether or not to return. Kathiusca lives the nostalgia for the homeland as a sort of exile insofar as she does not envision the possibility for return.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, "The Ecuadorian Migrant on Film: Spanish, Italian, and Ecuadorian Perspectives," I assess the different narrative strategies, styles, and thematic

concerns of Spanish, Italian, and Ecuadorian filmmakers, as well as other Latin American filmmakers translocated in Europe, in light of their representations of Ecuadorian migrants and diasporic communities in Spain and Italy. Through feature-length fictional films and documentaries, men and women directors have engaged in the (re)articulation of homeland, identity, ethnicity, otherness, and journey. They have also interpreted Ecuadorian diasporic transnational subjectivities, their accommodation, adaptation, differential or segmented integration into the host country, and counter-narratives of dominant immigration discourses both in Spain and Italy. Like most world cinemas today, the video and filmic representations of Ecuadorian diasporas in Spain and Italy discussed here are often the result of transnational collaborations that involve the films' production, locations, casting, distribution, and diasporan directors.

I provide a brief overview of Spanish and Italian representations of immigrants/citizens of nation-states considered outside or not belonging to the European Union, followed by an examination of several videos and films that directly or indirectly feature Ecuadorian migration and diasporic communities in Spain and Italy.

My (non-exhaustive) charting of filmic representations of diasporic Ecuadorians in Spain and Italy also serves to provide a critical framework to contextualize my analysis of Fernando Miele's first feature-length film, *Prometeo Deportado* (2009). This fiction movie illustrates how, at the turn of the century, transnational migration, particularly to the European Union, became a national narrative in Ecuador, involving all social classes, ethnoracial groups, and geographical regions. Through satire, the film presents a critique of global contemporary systems of migration control and dehumanization of peoples from the global South, similar to, but also different from, the critique Iván Carrasco delivers in the short story "El Ecuatañol."

As a woman born and raised in Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city, who has lived in the United States since the age of 19, I have had access to numerous oral migrant narratives and I have written and published my own. In Genoa, I have been able to expand my understanding of migration from a government position. Consequently, my approach to theory, praxis, and my own research have shifted. I must note that it has been from within the U.S. academy that I have been able to obtain the analytical tools and material resources to research and study diasporic Ecuadorian narratives and to intervene in the documentation of their cultural production, subjectivities, and experiences, even when those who spoke or wrote were not documented by the nation-states in which they lived. It is my hope that this investigation can advance the comparative study of diasporic Ecuadorian literary and filmic narratives within Diaspora, Decolonial, Feminist, European, and Latin American Studies

CHAPTER I

NATION AND MIGRATION: ECUADORIAN DIASPORA IN ITALY

Là dove ci sono degli essere umani, ci sono e ci saranno delle manifestazioni di razzismo. Come il riso è una specificità dell'uomo, visto che gli animali non hanno questa facoltà, anche il razzismo lo è. Solo l'uomo è capace di umiliare, di disprezzare, di escludere e di rendere schiavi altri uomini.

—Tahar Ben Jelloun

Introduction

As a comparatist working in the humanities, it is clear to me that the study of cultures and literatures cannot be deprived of an analysis of the interrelations of political and socioeconomic conditions of a cultural product and their impact on the diasporic subjectivities that create those products.

This chapter and the following one stem from my reflections as an Ecuadorian migrant woman living and writing in the northeast of the United States and from ethnographic and archival research in Italy conducted over five consecutive months from February to July 2007, and follow-up visits in January and March 2008.¹ In November 2009

¹ My research in Italy from February to July 2007 formed part of my participation in the European Field Studies Program at the Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts Amherst. I am grateful to the Comparative Literature Program, Modern European Studies, and the Department of Anthropology for the material support that allowed me to do this research. I thank Francesca Lagomarsino, Andrea T. Torre, Luca Queirolo Palmas, and the members of the research team working on migration issues of the Department of *Scienze della Formazione* of the Università degli Studi di Genova, which allowed me to have an office space, affordable meals at university luncheonettes,

I was appointed Consul of Ecuador in Genoa and two years later, Consul General. Since then, I have had the rare opportunity to acquire first-hand knowledge from a variety of sources and to understand the social realities of Ecuadorian migrants in Italy, particularly in Genoa, from a privileged position of power, but also with the multidimensional political responsibility to assist them in improving their quality of life, especially in situations of extreme vulnerability. This governmental position has also enabled me to intervene in and mediate the Ecuadorian migrant imagination and representation, as well as to interact directly with thousands of Ecuadorian migrants. While I inscribe here my reflections developed from 2007-2008, when I originally wrote this chapter, I also incorporate my views elaborated subsequent to my diplomatic appointment, along with observations regarding socioeconomic and political changes in the global order and those that have occurred internally in Italy and Ecuador, and which have affected Ecuadorian migration patterns and agency.

According to the United Nations, global migrations continue to increase. In 2013, 232 million people, or 3.2 percent of the world's population, were international migrants, compared with 175 million in 2000 and 154 million in 1990; women account for almost half (48 percent) of all international migrants ("Press Release"). Although today South-South migrations are as common as South-North migrations, Europe remains the most prevalent

access to initial contacts, an academic community in migration studies, and the opportunity to share my work with their inquisitive students. I also thank Narcisa Soria Valencia, Consul General of Ecuador in Milan, for her kindness and commitment to Ecuadorian diasporas, and Krista Harper, Jackie Urla, Luca Lo Basso, Agustín Laó-Montes, Sofia Kalo, Christopher Sweetapple, Angelina Zontine, and Lee Ellen Reed, for their helpful comments and suggestions.

destination region, with 72 million international migrants in 2013, having experienced the fastest growth in migrant stock by an average of 2.8 percent per year (UN).²

Alongside this uneasy global flux of human migration, there is a relatively easy circulation of capital, information, goods, and services, as well as structural and systemic colonial and neocolonial nexus in the political economies of countries of the North and South. All countries have become, simultaneously, points of origin, transit, and destination, as in the cases of both Italy and Ecuador. Since the 1980s, Italy, historically a country of emigration, now also of substantial immigration, has witnessed dramatic changes in demographic patterns. While in 2012 there were 4,387,721 foreign residents in Italy, constituting 7.4 percent of the country's total population (59,394,207 people), there were 4,341,156 Italians (7.3 percent) registered at the *Anagrafe italiani residenti all'estero* (A.I.R.E.) and in 2009 nearly 39,000 (0.07 percent) Italians migrated from Italy to a foreign country, mostly in the European Union.³

² Europe experiences this fast growth of migrants in part because of the citizenship laws (*jus sanguinis*) that are in effect in most European countries. Thus, children born in Europe to migrant parents continue to have foreign citizenship in their country of birth and residence, with some preferential fast tracks in the cases of Spain, France, and Germany. Thus, these foreign children born in Europe count as migrants in official statistics.

³ Unless otherwise stated, all demographic data in Italy is taken from the Italian *Istituto Nazionale di Statistica*-ISTAT. Created through law No. 470 of October 27, 1988, A.I.R.E. maintains a registry of Italian citizens who reside abroad for more than 12 consecutive months, those born abroad, and those who have acquired Italian citizenship according to current laws. Not all Italians who move abroad register at A.I.R.E. and Italian citizens who have never lived in Italy may register at A.I.R.E. Considering the millions of Italians who have emigrated over the last centuries, this data is only referential. However, it suggests that even when having Italian citizenship, people prefer to live outside of Italy. Many Ecuadorians who had double citizenship (Spanish and Ecuadorian)—acquired via *jus sanguinis*, usually through their grandparents—migrated to Spain (and then, sometimes, to other EU countries) because their Spanish passports facilitated their entry into the European Union.

On the other hand, since the mid-1990s Ecuadorian emigration has become one of the most notorious demographic processes in Ecuador. In the last 15 years, more than 1.5 million Ecuadorians emigrated, passing through regular migration checkpoints. This estimate does not include the thousands of Ecuadorians, including minors and pregnant women, who have crossed unchecked Central American and Mexican-U.S. border controls.⁴ Spain and Italy have become the main European migratory destinations.⁵ Simultaneously, Ecuador has received significant populations from Peru, Cuba, Colombia, Spain, and China, to name only the largest foreign communities. In fact, Ecuador has become the Latin American country that has recognized the largest number of refugees. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Ecuador, as of September 2013, 54,865 refugees were living in Ecuador, 98 percent of them having escaped from armed conflict in Colombia, compared to 390 refugees in 2000.

Saskia Sassen reminds us that migrations are not simply an indiscriminate flow from poverty, as “only a very tiny fraction of poor people emigrate, and they do so from very specific areas and toward equally specific destinations” (*Guests and Aliens* xiv). It is no surprise that both Italy and Ecuador have experienced global and local structural socioeconomic situations that yielded migratory flows of Ecuadorians to Italy, who migrated in small numbers in the 1980s and reached their highest levels at the turn of the

⁴ According to Ecuador’s Viceministerio de Movilidad Humana, part of the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana, an average of 100 undocumented Ecuadorians are expelled from the United States every week, on planes chartered by the U.S. government. (Personal conversation with a high-level official of the Viceministerio de Movilidad Humana. Quito, June 23, 2014).

⁵ Historically, the U.S. has been the main migratory destination of Ecuadorians. In the period 1998-2003 Spain became the second leading country of Ecuadorian migrant destination and Italy became the third.

century. As in previous world migrations (Italians included), millions of Ecuadorians made the decision to leave their homeland, their families, and their cultural context, in search of better living conditions for themselves and their families. According to the Italian *Istituto Nazionale di Statistica-Istat*, by January 1, 2012, Italy had become the migratory destination of more than 3.5 million people from non-EU member states. Although Romania became a EU-member state in 2007, Romanian migration continues to be itemized in most Italian demographic statistics, with almost a million citizens residing in Italy (942,726). While official Italian statistics indicate that in 2012 there were 78,200 Ecuadorians residing in Italy, the Ecuadorian Embassy and Consulates in Italy estimate that at that time, approximately 110,000 Ecuadorians were living in that country.⁶

Subsequently, migration, as a field of study, has gained the interest of Ecuadorian, European, and U.S. social scientists. Ecuadorian migrants have frequently been the object of sociological and anthropological studies, but hardly ever the subject-researchers doing these studies. In recent years, however, this geopolitics of knowledge production has begun to shift. Pierre Bourdieu refers to “political fields” as the sites of competition between agents involved in different kinds of power, which mobilize people to feel entitled to and actually speak and act in the name of others (*Language and Symbolic Power* 172). As more diasporic Ecuadorians enter a multiplicity of what Bourdieu has called “political fields,” including social movements, the academies (obtaining Ph.D. degrees) either in their country of origin or settlement, and as they produce science and valued knowledge, space has begun to open up for a shift in epistemological standpoints, self-representational strategies, and political coalitional projects.

⁶ By Italian official statistics, I refer to those taken from the Italian *Ministero dell’Interno, Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali*, and Istat.

How are diasporic Ecuadorians responding to this historical lacuna between representation and self-representation? How can inter- and transdisciplinary research not only break with academic and methodological boundaries, but also with epistemic perspectives and Occidental categories of analysis (such as the nation-state and geopolitical world regions), while shedding light on particularly understudied positionalities and social realities? Where and how do Ecuadorians in Italy and their narratives contribute to a decolonization of Occidental logics and epistemologies and the creation of what Boaventura de Sousa Santos defines as an “ecology of knowledges,” which can recognize and comprise a plurality of epistemologies of the South and the North, beyond scientific knowledges? (“Beyond Abyssal” 28). These are some of the questions that inspire the writing of this chapter in an attempt to document the subjectivities, experiences, and oral narratives of diasporic Ecuadorians in Italy. In what follows I outline how the Italian state and Italian society have managed immigration processes in the last 15 years, during which time thousands of Ecuadorians have been incorporated. I will also discuss how the Ecuadorian state has responded—both in discursive and political spheres—regarding the recent and significant numbers of nationals who have emigrated, particularly to Southern/Mediterranean Europe.

Whose Rights Are to Be Respected? Outlining Italian Immigration Laws and Backlash

Despite growing coalitions of anti-systemic/anti-capitalist, feminist, labor, ecological, indigenous and Afro-descendant movements, and civic participation in different locations across the planet, the U.S. and the European Union—under the banner of public (homeland) security—continue to criminalize migrants and to sanction and implement a politics of systematic (sub)human exclusion and violence. The targets of these discourses,

practices, and policies are often the world's most impoverished who dare to (or attempt to) settle in countries where they do not hold citizenship: transnational migrants and unrecognized refugees. Even when holding citizenship, as in the case of minority ethnic groups, violence is perpetrated. For instance, Roma people and settlements have a long history of being subjected to exclusion, violence, and non-existence in Europe.

The division of populations into citizens with rights to be recognized and guaranteed and immigrants whose rights are denied by the state and supranational entities could be exemplified by the series of state policies and practices in Italy following a tragic event that took place on October 30, 2007 in Rome. Giovanna Reggiani, a 47-year-old woman—wife of Italian naval officer Giovanni Gumiero—was mugged, sexually assaulted, and killed near a train station of Tor di Quinto, a northern peripheral neighborhood of Rome. Allegedly committed by 24-year-old Nicolae Romulus Mailat, a Romanian citizen of Roma ethnicity, the crime prompted an intensification of ethnocentric violence against Romanian and Roma people in Italy, particularly in Rome.⁷ Police subsequently raided Roma camps and Roma people were subjected to augmented physical, legal, and discursive violence.

⁷ It is difficult to specify the number of Roma people living in Italy, in part because of their unorthodox nomadic way of life and the fact that the Italian government categorizes migrants by citizenship, not by ethnicity. On January 1, 2007, there were 342,200 Romanian citizens regularly residing in Italy (Istat). According to Caritas/Migrantes, on November 30, 2007, 569,767 Romanians had worked at least one day (cited in Perrotta, 68). Migrants, including Romanians until 2007, have had to wait for the passing of laws for the regularization of immigrants, '*sanatoria*,' or '*decreti flussi*.' Meanwhile, irregular migration has been the most feasible route for living and working in Italy. Other relevant data concerning Romanians in Italy refer to their identification as irregular immigrants and expulsion from Italian territory. In the period between 1999 and 2002, 48,965 Romanians without residence permits were identified by Italian police; of these, 18,084 were expelled. Between 2003 and 2006 these numbers dramatically increased. 99,687 Romanians were identified without residence permits; of these, 42,193 were expelled from Italy and repatriated (*Ministero dell'Interno*, cited in Perrotta, 68).

Italian news media reported this crime intensely, creating alarmism and manipulating the fear of crime. The way the media managed this case is not accidental. At the time, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, one of the richest, if not the richest, man in Italy, controlled directly or indirectly approximately 90 percent of Italian national television, two national newspapers, some of the larger-circulation national magazines, the copyrights on a quarter of all books published in Italy, the main distribution networks for most of Italy's magazines and movies, and around 60 percent of all television advertising sales (Ragnedda and Muschert 1, 46). But as Fabio Quassoli states, the immigration-security nexus in political debate, media discourse, and legal texts, which evokes dangers and threats of immigration to the security of Italian citizens, are not exclusive to the current century, but have been present for at least two decades (204). The criminalization of migrants, the reiterative use of the term "*clandestino*" to link immigration and criminality in public discourse, and the way the Italian government has managed immigration policy-making, have facilitated the establishment of distinctions between foreigners/Italians, immigrants/real citizens, them/us, etc. (204-8).

On November 2, 2007, three days after Reggiani was violently assaulted, Silvio Berlusconi's government issued a decree empowering city officials—without judicial intervention—to expel individuals, including citizens of EU member states, who were considered "dangerous to public security."⁸ Ultimately, the Italian Parliament did not approve the decree, but only two days after the decree was issued, Italy had already

⁸ I argue that this event assumed such proportions and received much media and immediate government attention largely because it took place in Rome and the person attacked and assaulted was an upper-class woman, wife of Italian naval officer Giovanni Gumiero.

expelled at least 39 people, including 17 from Genoa (*Il Secolo XIX*). According to Amnesty International, in the two weeks following the decree, 177 people had been expelled from Italy. Most of the immigrants expelled from Italy were Roma people (mostly from Romania and Bulgaria) and Romanians who had been, in fact, citizens of the European Union since January 1, 2007—when Romania joined the European Union.⁹ As of January 1, 2007, 3,432,651 migrants had permits of stay in Italy, of which 2.6 million were from non-EU member states (Istat). The joining of Romania with the EU increased the fear of a Romanian “invasion” among the general public. According to Istat, between the period of January 1, 2007 and January 1, 2008, regular Romanian migration to Italy appeared to double, from 342,200 to 625,278. By examining the estimates of Caritas Italiana, which compiles demographic data from different sources, nonetheless, the growth reflects other figures.¹⁰ As of December 31, 2006, there were 556,000 regular Romanian migrants, compared to 1,016,000 in December 31, 2007 (*Caritas/Migrantes Romania*, 88-90). Most likely, the Romanians who were regularized in 2007 had already lived in Italy since before 2007 and many of them probably did not establish residence in Italy even though they had lived for more or less than a year in Italy. It is interesting to note, however, the decrease of Romanian migration after Romania’s entry into the EU. The apparent economic growth experienced by Romania before the evident financial capitalist crisis in Europe (roughly before 2009) by

⁹ Bulgaria also joined the EU in January 1, 2007.

¹⁰ Constituted in 1971 by the Italian Episcopal Conference, Caritas Italiana is a Catholic organization that promotes charity, human development, peace, and social justice, particularly to those considered most needy in Italy and abroad. It works in collaboration with other civic and transnational religious organizations. It is based in Rome and has delegations throughout the Italian territory.

receiving loans and financing from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, together with the decreasing labor opportunities for migrants in construction (for males) and domestic (for females) sectors in Italy, might have also deterred further Romanian migration to that country. For instance, in 2007, 261,273 Romanians migrated to Italy; in 2008 there were 162,277; in 2009, 100,680. In 2012 this figure gradually decreased to 81,666.

The manipulation of information and the suspension of law and therefore, rights, highlight how the creation of a media campaign of fear, with the approval and support of the government, enables a nation-state to construct an emergency situation and obtain a majority of citizen consent, just as the U.S. used this mechanism for the enactment of the Patriot Act in 2001.¹¹ In the name of public security and citizen protection, it becomes necessary for the nation-state to deny fundamental rights to specific ethnic or national groups. During the state of exception—“a point of imbalance between public law and political fact” (Saint-Bonnet 28, cited in Agamben 1)—the nation-state determines an irreparable violation of rights of particular groups of people who are regarded as being responsible for citizen fears, insecurity, and danger. These exceptional measures are the result of periods of political crisis and, as such, must be understood on political and not legal-constitutional grounds (Agamben 1). Having the two essential criteria of absolute necessity and temporariness, the state of exception, at the intersection of the legal and the political, appears as the legal form of what cannot have legal form (1, 9). In Italy, the largely factitious conditions previously cited have been used to derogate current laws and norms

¹¹ While keeping in mind the differences in the historical context and global impact, the approval of the USA Patriot Act by the U.S. Congress and its subsequent signing into law on October 26, 2001 by George W. Bush, after 9/11 and the 2001 anthrax attacks epitomizes the detrimental effects of a “national emergency” that becomes a state of exception.

and to influence public opinion to perceive these measures as urgent and necessary procedures that inevitably limited and suspended migrant rights.

On July 9, 2009, the Italian *Corte Suprema di Cassazione*, the 'Supreme Court,' condemned Mailat to life imprisonment. Soon thereafter, his lawyer Piero Piccinini appealed the verdict before the European Court of Human Rights based in Strasbourg, on the grounds that his rights to defense had been violated through irregularities and inconsistencies in the judicial process. Piccinini emphasized that soon after Mailat was taken to prison from the Roma camp, its residents had 48 hours to abandon it. In 48 hours the camp was completely destroyed by local authorities, leaving insufficient evidence or eyewitness testimonies, except the super-eyewitness Roma woman who claimed to have seen Mailat carrying Reggiani's dead body, while the woman's son, who was also required to testify in court, committed suicide five days before he had to testify (*La Repubblica, Il Messaggero*).

Mailat's case, not the trial itself (as I am not an attorney or specialist in criminal law and have not had access to the entire dossier), but the ways in which both the Italian government and police managed it and the Italian mass media covered the news, underscored a heightened neo-fascist turn in Italian politics. Immigration in Italy has been mostly associated with crime and illegality, whereas many migrants are also victims of crime.¹² In 2007, one out of every six victims of crimes against the person was an

¹² According to Istat, by December 31, 2006, immigrants constituted 5.8 percent of the total Italian population, whereas 32 percent (442) of the country's total homicides was reported to have been allegedly committed by foreigners, and 31 percent of the total attempted homicides (1,530). While I have not had access to the number of cases in which the indicted migrants have been declared guilty in the three levels of Italian courts (*Giudizio di primo grado, Corte d'Appello, and Corte di Cassazione*), and considering Art. 3 of the Italian Constitution, which states that "Tutti i cittadini hanno pari dignità sociale e sono eguali davanti alla legge, senza distinzione di sesso, di razza, di lingua, di

immigrant; most of them were women (*Ministero dell'Interno*, cited in Erminio 115). During the same period, six out of every hundred persons residing in Italy was a migrant. The incidence of migrant victims of crimes against the person is underestimated, especially because many migrant women do not report the crimes of which they are victims and survivors. For the most part, Italian public and private mass media have functioned as reiterators of the message that justifies states of exception, and consequently, a suspension of law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, EU directives and regulations, and the Italian Constitution. Immigrants from the global South and all those considered non-Europeans have been accused of not being willing to integrate into Italian society. The implicit subordination of substantial populations that are considered to have come from and, therefore, to belong to “the other side of the line” of Occidentalist epistemology, morality, and social reality, becomes evident in the perverse fashion immigration has been manipulated in Italian politics and mass media discourse.

As part of the escalation of immigration control, on May 23, 2008, Berlusconi’s government approved decree-law No.92, known as the “security package,” *‘pacchetto sicurezza,’* which Parliament ratified and converted into law No. 125 on July 24, 2008. As Art. 1 warns early on, the law is created regarding “*misure urgenti in materia di pubblica sicurezza.*”¹³ In 19 articles, this law established a series of measures to criminalize and

religione, di opinioni politiche, di condizioni personali e sociali,” every Italian courtroom shows the sign: “*la legge è uguale per tutti,*” and the prolonged duration of judicial processes in Italy to the point that some crimes may go in *prescrizione* (going beyond the statute of limitations), in practice, it is evident that the socioeconomic conditions of an individual involved in trials inevitably determine the application of the principle that “the law is equal to all.”

¹³ ‘bringing urgent measures regarding public security.’ All English translations are mine, except when noted otherwise.

accelerate the expulsion of undocumented migrants, to restrict family unification laws for regular migrants, and to convert the renting of residences to irregular migrants into a felony, including the confiscation of property.¹⁴ Unlike the 2007 decree-law mentioned above, which did not require the judicial branch to issue an expulsion order and to expel citizens of EU member states and of third countries from Italian territory, the new law modified the Italian penal code by empowering Italian judges to expel migrants in cases provided for by the law, and to sentence foreigners to prison for more than two years. Discursively, the name change of public institutions that hold undocumented migrants in custody also reflected Berlusconi's government's overly exclusionary ideological and structural stance. Art. 8 incorporates the term "*Centro di identificazione ed espulsione*," 'Identification and Expulsion Center' to substitute for the previously (and euphemistically) called "*Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*," "CPT," or "*Centro di Permanenza Temporanea ed Assistenza*," 'Center for Temporary Stay and Assistance.' Upon the issuance of this law, leftist, human rights, and other solidarity immigrant groups and movements marched in different Italian cities to protest the violation of fundamental rights of migrants and the legalization of discriminatory practices. However, these movements have not gained massive citizenship support, in part due to the lack of attention received, not surprisingly, by Italian private and public mass media.

In some ways, the *pacchetto sicurezza* expanded on Italian law No. 189 of July 30, 2002, known as Bossi-Fini law, which took effect on September 9, 2002. Named after the Italian politicians who sponsored it, Gianfranco Fini and Umberto Bossi, Vice President of

¹⁴ It should be noted that despite marches and demonstrations in Rome, Naples, Genoa, and other Italian cities, immigrant movements in Italy have not developed into massive social movements. Not surprisingly, Italian media attention to such protests has been scarce, if not invisible.

the *Consiglio dei Ministri* and Minister of the *Riforme Istituzionali e Devoluzioni*, 'Institutional Reforms and Transfer,' respectively, the Bossi-Fini law conceived the process of immigration in Italy as a question of public security, as a problem to be solved in the face of danger to state security. It sought to legalize irregular Italian immigration to mainly supply specific Italian labor markets, causing more precarious working conditions for migrants, and creating a constant immigrant dependency on employers who could sponsor their legal residence in Italy through a "*contratto di soggiorno*," or residence contract, so that to reside in the country, one would need to sign a labor contract. The law also reduced the time, from one year (as in law No. 40 of March 6, 1998, known as the Turco-Napolitano law) to six months, for an unemployed migrant who has renewed her residence permit to get another job. Otherwise, the migrant could lose her residence permit. The anxiety and pressure for a migrant to obtain employment under any circumstances became higher, reinforcing structural conditions for labor abuses that migrant workers would never report.

In baffling style, not uncommon in Italian immigration politics, the same day the Bossi-Fini law became effective, a *Circolare Esplicativa*, 'Explicative Circular' of the Bossi-Fini law, the decree-law No. 195, and an Explicative Circular about the decree-law No. 195 were issued, in order to systematize the legalization of irregular labor of "extra-communitarian" migrants and standardize the rights of asylum seekers in Italy.¹⁵ The Bossi-Fini law had already modified the *Decreto Legislativo*, 'Legislative Decree,' No. 286 of July 25, 1998, known as "*Testo Unico delle disposizioni circa la disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero*" or simply "*Testo Unico*." While the Bossi-Fini law temporarily regularized thousands of migrants, it deteriorated their lives and placed them

¹⁵ The decree-law No. 195 was later converted into law No. 222 on October 9, 2002 and published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* No. 240 of October 12, 2002.

in even more vulnerable positions; it made immigration to Italy more precarious and subject to more abuses by authorities and to further exploitation by human traffickers.

Legislative Decree No. 286 could be considered the first comprehensive Italian law concerning asylum seekers and migrants from non-EU member states. Before that, Italy had applied the Turco-Napolitano law, approved by the Italian Parliament in mid-summer 1998, in a social context that was rife with indifference. On the other hand, sensationalist crime news highlighted migrants mostly as criminals, which facilitated the justification of the issuance of emergency provisions in the name of public security. Italian sociologist Alessandro Dal Lago describes this period as follows:

Dall'inizio degli anni novanta, i migranti sono divenuti per l'opinione pubblica italiana le cause della crisi sociale e delle paure collettive che hanno segnato la fine della cosiddetta Prima repubblica. Se a metà degli anni ottanta i sondaggi segnalavano una generale indifferenza (o ignoranza) nei confronti dei fenomeni migratori, dall'inizio degli anni novanta indicano atteggiamenti diffusi di repulsione, se non di vera e propria xenophobia. (25)

It seems that Italy's response to relatively new immigration (evidenced since the 1980s), particularly from Africa and Eastern Europe, was activated through the lens of political speculation, blaming migrants by associating them with criminality. Focusing attention on specific aspects of immigration, Italian official and media discourses have strategically distracted public attention from situations and behaviors that have influenced social and political crises, not necessarily attributable to migrants. It is useful to remember that the migrant population in Italy has been and continues to be a lower percentage of the country's total population, relative to other EU member states with longer immigration and colonial histories.

As in most countries of migratory destination, even when migrants in Italy are criminalized in public discourse, they have often been portrayed as (cheap) workers who would lower salaries and take jobs away from the native population. Conveniently, what is not publicly communicated is Italy's need for low-income labor for the expanding service sector and high-income lifestyles, as well as economic contributions by workers to Italy's social security system or *Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale-INPS*. As Italian demographers Francesco Billari and Gianpiero Dalla Zuanna state, in the next few years, Italy, particularly the center-north, will not be able to independently sustain the dramatic decrease of the Italian working-age population as a result of the low birth rate over the last decades of the past century (36).

In order to exemplify this demographic gap, it is helpful to review some statistics and predictions. Between 1950 and 1970, Italian women gave birth to an average of 2.50 and 2.43 children, respectively, who would reach retirement age between 2010 and 2030. While between 1980 and 2000, the birthrate was 1.64 and 1.19, respectively. In fact, during the 1990s, with an average birthrate between 1.1 and 1.2, the Italian birthrate was considered "the lowest birthrate of any country in the world" (Krause 1) and "likely the lowest ever documented in the history of humanity for a large-scale population" (Golini et al. 1). The people born between 1980 and 2000 are the ones who have entered or will enter the Italian labor force between 2010 and 2030 (Consiglio d'Europa, Eurostat, cited in Billari and Dalla Zuanna 80). Thus, with current Italian legislation regarding retirement, even with recently enacted laws that have raised the age for mandatory retirement, the welfare system will not be able sustain itself, if it depends exclusively on Italian-born worker contributions. Foreign workers will have to replace Italian retirees. Otherwise, there will be no workforce from which to recruit and the welfare system will collapse (Billari and Dalla

Zuanna 36). In order to maintain today's numbers of people between the ages of 20 and 59 in Italy, it will be necessary for 280,000 migrants to enter Italy in the next few years, which is precisely what has happened over recent decades (36).

For instance, between 2007 and 2008, Italy experienced an increase of 493,729 migrants, including working-age people, minors, and a smaller portion of elderly. In seven years, between 2004 and 2011, there was a growth of 2,580,158 migrants, which means that there was an annual increase of 368,594 migrants, most of them entering the economically active Italian population. This trend has continued in subsequent years, with an increase of 335,000 foreigners in Italy between January 1, 2012 and January 1, 2013, and approximately 534,000 between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2013.

The increase of Italy's migrant population is bound to continue for at least another decade even with the eventual enactment of new laws that may further restrict immigration from non-EU member states and social security reforms that have changed demographic projections. Ultimately, Italy may be one of the territorially accessible EU countries for subjects to envision the improvement of their living conditions and those of their families. Migrant labor is certainly a necessity for Italy, without which it could not maintain the current standards in its social and economic system. As Jacqueline Bhabha has stated, the exclusion and denial of a political voice of third country nationals in the European Union is integral to its socioeconomic structure, as they cannot fully access state benefits, public services, and employment in a so-called democratic society: without voting rights and political representation in municipal and European Parliament elections, and lacking free movement and residence rights (605).

The so-called crisis of the Italian welfare system—particularly in the face of the ever-increasing retirements of an aging population—has been understood as the epiphenomena of the restrictions in government-funded child-care and elderly-care programs. As many scholars, including Hondagneu-Sotelo, Orloff, and Salazar Parreñas have pointed out, the feminization of migrant labor has gradually made up for the expanding neoliberalization of social services in the northern hemisphere. More specifically, Ecuadorian migrants enter an Italian welfare state that considers women and men as different kinds of persons for specific kinds of jobs, and has different expectations of how they are to live their lives, as reflected in its provision of gendered incentives and services: interventions that are inextricably tied to capitalism (Kingfisher 9). According to Gary Teeple, the welfare state is part of:

a capitalist *society* in which the state has intervened in the form of social policies, programs, standards, and regulations in order to mitigate class conflict *and* to provide for, answer, or accommodate certain social needs for which the capitalist mode of production in itself has no solution or makes no provision. (emphasis in original) (15)

The current Italian welfare system was created, structured and largely developed during the fascist period (1922-1943) and has since gone through several reforms. It has also contributed to keeping socioeconomic inequalities and class differences less perceptible to most Italians. With the current global capitalist systems of power, this welfare system can no longer maintain the same structures and objectives that were introduced almost 100 years ago.

The aging of the Italian population, alarmist discourses on the decline in Italy's fertility rate, and Italian women's increasing access to higher education and wage labor outside the household have increased the need for cheap (migrant) female labor to do jobs traditionally performed by Italian women (Bettio et al.; Krause).¹⁶ The break-up of the so-called traditional family and the restructuring of families have also been a factor in the demand for domestic and elderly care labor. In addition, because the average age of the migrant population is younger than the average age of the native Italian population, and the migrant fertility rate is higher than the Italian rate (2.4 children to 1.25), alarmist demographic discourses and policies to financially encourage Italian women to bear children were deployed and implemented (Krause).¹⁷

It is also worth noting that by the end of 2002, there were 20,000 pre-retired individuals in Italy (age 57, with 35 years of social security contributions), with a monthly retirement pension of around 1,500 euros. Thus, more people have been receiving social services as retired or disabled, while a decreasing number of workers have been paying social security contributions to the *Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale*-INPS.

¹⁶ It is worth noting that the birth rates of several Western European nation-states have sharply decreased in the last 20 years or so, particularly in Spain and Italy. It is mainly in Italy, however, that alarmist rhetoric has been used in the deployment of the decreased Italian birth rate in media, political, and scholarly discourses.

¹⁷ For instance, in 2006 an Italian woman received 2,000 euros from the Italian government soon after the birth of every child as a way of promoting childbirth. By "mistake" on the part of government employees, many migrant women received a notification to collect this money soon after the birth of their child and they collected the 2,000 euros. Then, the government pressed lawsuits against the women who collected this money. This policy was later eliminated.

Genoa: Columbus' Birth City and a World City

In this conjuncture, Italy was perceived as a viable migratory destination: there were jobs available for women migrants. More specifically, Genoa presented the appropriate labor demand for Ecuadorians. Before their arrival, Ecuadorians knew that they would perform domestic and care work. While (un)documented immigrants have limited access to certain social services, employment, and citizenship rights, Genoa, as a world city—considered the birthplace of Christopher Columbus and called the capitalist city *par excellence* by Fernand Braudel (157)—becomes a pivotal site to re-examine the subjectivities and agency of Ecuadorian migrants moving through the transnational caretaker economy in Southern/Mediterranean Europe in the *longue durée* of capitalism.¹⁸

Contemporary Latin American migrations to Genoa must be contextualized within larger historical frameworks and world-systems analysis. As one of the main ports during the rise of Europe as a hegemonic geopolitical entity—what later became known as modernity—Genoa was a key geopolitical space in the constitution of the Indias Orientales, the Indias, America, the Americas, and Latin America as world regions. Genoa became one of

¹⁸ For Braudel, Genoa's leading role in the European world-economy—what has been called the 'age of the Genoese' or 'i secoli dei genovesi' (from the mid-1500s to the mid-1600s)—during which Genovese merchant-bankers, through their handling of capital and credit, call the tune of European payments and transactions, "was firstly because her chief customer was the king of Spain, controller of the flow of bullion." (34, 157) Braudel understands the long-term (*la longue durée*) of capitalism as a long-lived structure, that is "a succession of repeated movements, with variations and revivals, periods of decline, adaptation or stagnation – what sociologists would describe as *structuration*, *destructuration* and *restructuration*" over the centuries. (621) According to Braudel, historical capitalism's essential features are "its unlimited flexibility, its capacity for change and adaptation" from thirteenth-century Italy to the present-day West. (433). Building on Braudel, Giovanni Arrighi has identified the Genovese finance capitalism developed in the latter half of the fourteenth century as the first of the four systemic cycles of accumulation (following the Dutch, British, and U.S. cycles) (6, 111). He adds that "Genoese capitalism in the fifteenth century was developing a path that diverged radically from that of all the other big Italian city-states," moving in the direction of "increasingly 'flexible' strategies and structures of accumulation." (112)

the main receivers of the capital accumulation resulting from the slave trade from Africa to the Americas, labor exploitation and colonization of the Americas. Genovese capitalists were the main financiers and key political allies of the Spanish empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here I build on Fernando Coronil's reconceptualization of empires, and how Southern Europe, as the birthplace of the modern European empires of Spain and Portugal, created model empires and the conditions for the emergence of later empires. However, Spain and Portugal became marginal to Europe subsequent to the 1800s and have been neglected in the field of colonial studies in the twentieth century onwards (244).

Genoa's historic center is considered Europe's largest historic center. Since the 1980s the historic center has gone through intense urban transformation and requalification as a result of the urban politics planned and executed on the occasion of the *Esposizione Internazionale "Cristoforo Colombo: la nave e il mare,"* 'International Exhibition Genoa '92 "Christopher Columbus: the Ship and the Sea," known as Expo Colombiana 1992, in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' voyage to the Americas. Huge investments of economic and social capital were allocated during the city's preparations for this event, as well as for successive events since the turn of the century, such as the G8 meeting in July 2001 and Genoa's 2004 designation as European Capital of Culture. Nonetheless, the historic center has maintained certain "pockets" that include residents with diverse incomes, ethnicities, nationalities, and commercial activities that do not endorse bourgeois lifestyles. Interestingly, the city's appropriation of the old port refashioned by prominent Genovese architect Renzo Piano underscored the city's emigration culture and history. The creation of the Galata Museo del Mare-MuMA, by the old pier reminds visitors and residents of the port from where many Italians migrated to North

and South America.¹⁹ Despite gentrification and real estate speculation, Genoa's historic center continues to be a space of mixed-income residents and ethno-cultural and socio-economic diversity.

In Genoa, Ecuadorians represent the largest national immigrant group (around 20,000) in a city of less than 600,000 residents—followed by Albanians, Moroccans, Peruvians, and Romanians. Ecuadorians constitute approximately four percent of the city's total population. Although 44.5 percent of all Ecuadorians in Italy live in the Lombardy region, Genoa is the Italian city where the largest Ecuadorian community lives.

Salvatore Vento has pointed out that the last 15 years of increased flows of Latin American migrations coincided with a shift in the productive, occupational, and social structure of Genoa in the 1980s and 1990s (13). Vento adds that the strong presence of the shipbuilding, steel, plant design and installation, and electronics industries placed Genoa alongside Milan and Turin in what became known as “the industrial triangle” and a vital center for workers' movements, unions, and leftist parties. Between the 1980s and 1990s, many industries closed and no new industries were created (13).

At the turn of the century, Genoa experienced an accelerated aging of the population. According to Istat, in 2002 people 65 years and older represented one quarter (25.7 percent) of the city's total population of 610,307. This figure increased by 2013, constituting 27.5 percent. There was also an increase in the number of elderly living by

¹⁹ In recent years, the Museum has included a permanent exhibit about immigration to Genoa from people belonging to non-EU member states, focused on the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea by Africans, and including smaller sections of Latin American and Asian communities.

themselves. Genoa's population in particular, and Italy's population in general, continue to age and decrease even with the arrival of immigrants that ameliorate Italian birth rates.

The Ecuadorian Diaspora in Italy

In the context of Ecuador's major socioeconomic and political crisis (1995-2000), approximately one third of Ecuador's active labor population emigrated. Current scholarship stresses several macro socioeconomic and political factors, and to a lesser extent, the natural disasters, that prompted Ecuadorians to emigrate. These would include the intensification of Ecuador's neoliberal policies beginning in the 1980s, the formal dollarization in 2000, political instability, the militarization of Southern Ecuador and the military border conflict with Peru, and the floods caused by the oceanic-atmospheric phenomena known as El Niño and La Niña.²⁰ Moreover, the decrease of oil prices at a time when Ecuador had signed unfavorable contracts with transnational oil companies that extracted crude oil from the Amazon, added to the international and national debt that Ecuador was forced to pay. To provide an idea of people's discontent and scarce services provided, in 2002 almost three quarters (74 percent) of Ecuador's Gross National Product was allocated for payment of the country's foreign debt. The tightening of U.S. borders and immigration policies and backlash also made Ecuadorians consider other migratory destinations.

Similarly to other women from the global South and post-socialist countries, Ecuadorian women have been pioneers in their migration to Spain and Italy. The literature also emphasizes Ecuadorian migration within the shift in the international distribution of

²⁰ Between 1994-2005, Ecuador had eight presidents. This meant that none of them was able (rather, allowed) to finish his democratic mandate.

labor that relocated women's services and affection from impoverished countries to wealthier countries in the northern hemisphere to care for the elderly, the ill, and disabled.

Italy has the third largest Ecuadorian diaspora, after the United States and Spain, respectively.²¹ By January 1, 2013, there were 90,300 Ecuadorians with resident permits in Italy: of these 58.8 percent (53,138) were women, and 41.2 percent (37,162) were men.²² Partly because the Ecuadorian population does not represent a significant percentage of the total migrant population, Ecuadorian migrants in Italy have remained in the fictive shadows of exclusionary public discourses of the *unwanted* in the European Union, in general, and in Italy, in particular.²³ By January 1, 2013 there were 4,387,721 foreign residents in Italy, constituting 7.4 percent of the country's total population. Of these, 3,764,236 were citizens of non-EU member states. It is not accidental that Africans are the continental group that has the largest and longest immigration history in Italy (22 percent). Geographical proximity and the composition of the global colonial and neo-colonial economy have facilitated this process. Africans are followed by Asians (19.4 percent), migrants from the

²¹ Since September 11, 2001, Ecuadorian emigration to the U.S. and the EU has declined mainly due to post 9/11 immigration policies and the implementation of the Schengen agreement in 2003. All figures referring to Ecuadorian migration are estimates based on the data made available by the Ecuadorian government, Istat, and Caritas. Precise data are difficult to obtain, as it is only in the last 15 years that the Ecuadorian government has kept systematic emigration records.

²² Istat.

²³ On January 1, 2012, there were 49,957,682 residents in the European Union born outside of their country of residence; of these, 34,360,456 had a citizenship other than the country of residence, constituting 6.8 percent of the total EU population; of these, 20,699,798 had citizenship of non-EU member states (*Immigrazione Dossier Statistico* 2013, 16).

Americas (8 percent), and from Oceania (0.1 percent) (*Immigrazione Dossier Statistico 2013*).

At the end of the 1990s, Ecuadorians perceived Italy as a country that offered many possibilities in terms of employment, higher salaries, and lower inflation, compared to those in the homeland. Employment was particularly accessible to women, considering Italian demographics and the necessity to bridge a gap that was expanding in domestic services and elderly care. In the specific case of Liguria, the historic links and previous migratory trends between the region and the Guayas Province, particularly Guayaquil prompted the rapid formation of migratory chains. Despite the notable distance (approximately 6,282 miles) between Italy and Ecuador, travel costs, and risks, as well as linguistic differences, Italy promptly became the third country of migratory destination.

Although Ecuadorians are an ethn racially and culturally heterogeneous group, they are understood as presenting a less evident phenotypical, cultural, and religious alterity “under Western eyes,” to borrow Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s phrase. Considering a distant geography that assumes less immediate danger (think of how Mexicans are demonized by U.S. border patrols and mainstream media), and a “positive” exoticization that invokes legendary figures as varied as Che Guevara, Pancho Villa, and even Shakira, Ecuadorians have not represented a great social or economic threat in cities where their numbers are low compared to other national migrant groups. For instance, in Italy it is estimated there are currently 1,032,000 Romanians, 513,374 Moroccans, 497,761 Albanians, 304,768 Chinese, and 224,588 Ukrainians (*Immigrazione Dossier Statistico 2013*, 457). Ecuadorians represent the 16th largest non-EU national migrant group in Italy (constituting 2.4 percent of all non-EU residents in Italy). Nonetheless, Ecuadorians are the second most numerous

Latin American national group in Italy, after Peruvians (109,374 people), who have a longer migration history in Italy (Istat and *Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali*).

It is worth mentioning that 81 percent of the Ecuadorian population in Italy lives in the northern part of the country, where employment in service and industry was available until recently. In Lombardy, probably the most industrial region of Italy, 40,184 Ecuadorians live (or 44.5 percent of all Ecuadorians in Italy), while 22,124 Ecuadorians (24.5 percent) live in the region of Liguria, and 9,662 (10.7 percent) live in the Lazio region (*Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali*, 19). Concentrated in Milan, Genoa, and Rome, Ecuadorians enter already ethnic-racial, gender-stratified migrant labor markets upon arrival. Women often work as maids, “*collaboratrici famigliari*” or “*colf*,” or as caretakers of the elderly, “*badanti*” and children, “*baby-sitter*,” while men mostly work in construction, “*muratore*” and increasingly as caregivers of the elderly, particularly the disabled and non-self-sufficient, as the care services may include extra physical strength and not necessarily the appropriate equipment to lift and move the cared-for person.²⁴ According to the Annual Report of the Ecuadorian Community in Italy, prepared by the Italian *Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali*, ‘Ministry of Labor and Social Politics,’ in 2013, 89.8 percent of Ecuadorian migrants (mostly women) were employed in domestic and social services, while 9.1 percent worked in the industrial sector (generally men), mainly in construction (5.5 percent), and 1.1 percent worked in agriculture (*Ministero del Lavoro* 1, 38).

²⁴ The Italian *collaboratrice familiare* literally means family collaborator/worker, or housekeeper. *Badante* means carer or caretaker. In Italy *badante* refers to either a live-in-home-care assistant to the elderly and disabled or the live-out assistant charging per hour. As Asher D. Colombo has stated, even though Italians use the English term ‘baby-sitter,’ the English ‘nanny’ perhaps best describes the role that women workers have in Italian homes.

Although Ecuadorians constitute the 16th largest non-EU national migrant group in Italy—as mentioned above—they occupy the 7th position among non-EU immigrant groups for students in the Italian education system, which underlines the low median age of the Ecuadorian population in Italy. In the 2011-2012 academic year, there were 19,473 Ecuadorian students registered at all levels of the Italian school system.

Perceived as the good humble/noble migrants, Ecuadorian women in Italy, as domestic and more *domesticatable* workers, have been almost invisible in media (anti-immigrant) discourses, considering that more than half of the four largest national immigrant groups in Italy (Romanian, Albanian, Moroccan, and Chinese) are composed of men. Dominant media discourses have often represented Ecuadorian adult males as petty criminals, gang members, loud drinkers, and disruptors of order, albeit less dangerous than Romanian, Albanian, and Romani men. Particularly in the cities of Milan and Genoa, Ecuadorian youth have developed alternative national and transoceanic social networks with other Latino/American youth organizations in Madrid, Barcelona, New York, and Guayaquil.²⁵

Although the first migratory processes of Ecuadorians to Italy took place in the 1970s, it is since the end of the 1990s that Ecuadorians have migrated in significant numbers. As migration to the U.S. became ever more difficult and dangerous during the

²⁵ For instance, the Latin Kings, a transcontinental youth group, composed of working-class urban Latina/o and Italian youth, have established networks with other youth groups in Guayaquil, New York, Barcelona, and Madrid, with whom they share similar interests and develop a sense of family and belonging. This and other youth groups have frequently been deployed by the local media as *bande di latinos*, 'Latino gangs,' and criminals. It is not uncommon that disputes and conflicts for territory and honor also emerge among these youth groups.

Clinton administration and as these policies became further legitimized for homeland security purposes after September 11, 2001, Ecuadorians searched for new points of European destinations where a tourist (Schengen) visa was not yet required for travel. Once both Ecuadorians and Spaniards viewed Spain as 'Ecuadorian-saturated,' Italy became a more feasible option.

In the twenty years from 1992 to 2012 the Ecuadorian community in Italy increased ten-fold every 10 years: from 1,037 regular residents in 1992 to 11,170 in 2002, to 89,626 in 2012. It is clear that Ecuadorian migration continued to increase even after August 3, 2003 when Italy required the Schengen visa for Ecuadorian citizens entering the country, as most migration took place through the application of family reunification laws.²⁶ It was not until 2011, with the evident Italian financial capitalist crisis, that the increase of Ecuadorian migration in Italy has slowed down. From 2008 to 2013 the Ecuadorian diaspora in Italy has shown an increase of 37 percent, compared to that of 43.6 percent of the total non-EU migrant population (Cesarini). As Barry Hindness points out, while citizenship controls the relations between individuals and the state to which they belong, "it is also one of the markers used by states in their attempts to regulate the movement of people across

²⁶ On October 26, 1997 Italy joined the Schengen system that allows "free movement of persons" of signatory nation-states, as part of a gradual process of adjusting to the European Union visa regime since the 1980s. The name Schengen was taken from a town of that name in Luxembourg where the first agreements were signed. The Schengen system includes most EU member states. Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein are part of the system as non-EU member states. Ireland and the United Kingdom, although EU members, are not part of the Schengen area. As of July 1, 2013, the Schengen area comprised the national territories of 26 countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. It took several years to finalize all requirements and implement the infrastructure and common data collection for Schengen visas in all Italian consulates of all non-Schengen area countries. For this reason, it was not until 2003 that it became operationalized in the Consular section of the Italian Embassy in Ecuador.

borders” (243). Simultaneously, people adjust their own mechanisms for coaptation of their migratory purposes. Thus, the multiple mechanisms used by the European Union—as a supranational regime within the international system of states—in filtering who is allowed to enter and who is not, have influenced the way potential migrants adapt their choices and strategies to cross national borders and to stay within the European Union territorial boundaries.

It is important to note the education attainment of the Ecuadorian diaspora in Italy. Half of the population has earned a high school diploma, 30 percent has obtained an elementary school education, and 11 percent has a college degree. These figures constitute a higher percentage compared to migrant communities from other Latin American countries and non-EU member states. The continuation of formal education in Italy has represented a struggle for most irregular migrants. According to Art. 1 of law No. 296 of December 27, 2006, in Italy,

L'istruzione impartita per almeno dieci anni è obbligatoria ed è finalizzata a consentire il conseguimento di un titolo di studio di scuola secondaria superiore o di una qualifica professionale di durata almeno triennale entro il diciottesimo anno d'età.

Thus, the Italian state is obliged to guarantee at least ten years of free public education. The Circular issued by the Italian Ministry of Education, *Circolare Ministeriale* No. 101 of December 30, 2010, specifies that

l'obbligo di istruzione riguarda la fascia di età compresa tra i 6 e i 16 anni....
I dieci anni dell'obbligo sono parte della formazione aperta a tutti e si collocano nell'ambito del diritto-dovere all'istruzione e alla formazione,

che, come è noto, si estende, ai sensi del decreto legislativo n. 76/2005, fino al 18° anno di età o almeno sino al conseguimento di un titolo di istruzione secondaria di secondo grado o di una qualifica professionale di durata almeno triennale entro il diciottesimo anno di età.

According to current Italian education laws, it is not compulsory to study beyond the completion of three years of (technical) high school education, or *istruzione secondaria superiore*, at around the age of 17-18. Migrant youth, who could not quite be considered one and a half, or 1.5 generation in Italy—following the taxonomy that Rubén G. Rumbaut uses to describe the different stages of migration—are channeled into three-year technical high schools.²⁷ These youth are dissuaded from entering the *licei*, five-year high schools of liberal arts, languages, or scientific education, that academically prepare them to enter and make it in the Italian and European University system.

Contextualizing The Ecuadorian Diaspora

I use the term diaspora—despite its multiple and contested significations—to account for the entangled transnational subject and collective formations of Ecuadorians outside the Ecuadorian nation-state, articulated at specific geopolitical historical junctures. As James Clifford points out, “the term *diaspora* is a signifier, not simply of transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacements” (308). The displacements and struggles of

²⁷ Rumbaut coins the “1.5 generation” in his studies of Cuban and then Southeast Asian youth, that includes children between the ages of 6 and 12 who have been born abroad, but brought to the host society at an early age, making them culturally and sociologically closer to the second generation (“Ages, Life Stages” 1166).

Ecuadorians, and most importantly, the alternative spaces they create in their new homes away from home within—and at the limen of—systems of domination are not necessarily in line with the subaltern cosmopolitanism that Santos (2007) invites us to consider. By subaltern cosmopolitanism, Santos refers to “the vast set of networks, initiatives, movements and organizations that fight against the economic, social, political, and cultural exclusion generated by the most recent incarnation of global capitalism, known as neoliberal globalization” (“Beyond Abyssal” 24). Nonetheless, this conception can help us envision the further emancipation of Ecuadorian migrants in an Occidentalist Europe.

For Santos, subaltern oppositional cosmopolitanism is “the cultural and political form of counter-hegemonic globalization. It is the name of the emancipatory projects whose claims and criteria of social inclusion reach beyond the horizons of global capitalism” (23). This action entails “the identification of groups whose aspirations are denied or made invisible by the hegemonic use of the concept, but may be served by an alternative use of it” (23). Santos’ re-interpretation of cosmopolitanism diverges from, and is oppositional to Kant’s understanding of the cosmopolitan citizen, *kosmou politês* (world citizen). Kant’s “Toward Perpetual Peace” (1795) was envisioned as an achievable goal by the (European modern) world citizen within the state and among states through cosmopolitan order. According to Santos, Kant conceives himself, his rationality, and moral universalism within the “abyssal thinking” that has characterized modern Western thinking. Within this logic, abyssal Occidentalist modern thinking has divided and excluded the knowledges, lives, and worlds of people across the planet, who have been understood to be on the other side of the line and therefore made invisible by history and lacking agency. Santos remarks:

Modern Western thinking is an abyssal thinking. It consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation

of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of 'this side of the line' and the realm of 'the other side of the line.' (1)

Thus, the grounds from which Santos bases his theoretical concept—post-abysal thinking, premised upon the awareness of the world's epistemological diversity—differ from Kant's. Unlike Kant, for Santos, subaltern cosmopolitanism is oppositional to Occidentalist notions such as rationality, progress, universal knowledge, freedom, citizenship, and the supra-national and nation-state systems, as these have been constitutive of the non-existence attributed to the realms of "the other side of the line" (1). I argue that Ecuadorians in Italy may be understood as diasporic subalternized cosmopolitans who have been "placed" in subaltern positions within both global and local dominant structures; therefore, their diasporic subjectivities and experiences combine cosmopolitanism and subalternization.

While diasporic Ecuadorians may feel a sense of belonging to their specific local cultures, ethnicity, birth towns, geographical regions, and the Ecuadorian nation-state, and try to retain some of their "*traditional and given identities*" as diasporic subalternized cosmopolitan subjects, they have also become empowered in ways they may not have anticipated before their translocation; they have learned to "*talk back to the state*" (Benhabib 67). In fact, they have learned to talk back to more than one state, as they have the privilege/opportunity of interacting with at least two states (and one supra-national entity, the European Union, as may be the case for Ecuadorians who have experienced situations that fulfill the requirements for application to the European Court of Human Rights) from whom they can claim rights and expect action on behalf of their well-being and for the protection of their rights.

Incorporating Migrants into The Ecuadorian State

Since the noteworthy emigrations at the turn of the century, the Ecuadorian state has gradually attracted the attention of Ecuadorian migrants in current national events and has promoted their participation in democratic processes. Official political discourse rendered visible the situation of Ecuadorians living abroad, highlighting their importance to the nation beyond their contribution to the country's economy in terms of remittances received. This new diasporic citizen participation also encouraged Ecuadorian migrants to make claims to the state that "forced them to migrate;" thus, they learned to exercise "the rights to have rights," to borrow Arendt's renowned phrase.

Ecuador's Constitution of 1998 allowed, for the first time, Ecuadorians living abroad to vote for President and Vice President. Unlike registered voters in Ecuador who are required by the Constitution to vote, voting for Ecuadorians living abroad was facultative. The 2006 Presidential elections significantly mobilized migrants to vote for their heads of state, particularly in Spain and Italy. Compared to those settled in the U.S, these migrations were recent. This political participation established stronger links to the country and their families left behind in Ecuador. In 2007 diasporic Ecuadorians also participated in the election of members of the *Asamblea Constituyente*, 'Constituent Assembly,' in charge of writing the new Constitution. With Ecuador's new Constitution of 2008, the facultative right to vote of Ecuadorian migrants was ratified, added to the right to vote of foreign citizens residing in Ecuador for more than five years, youth 16 and older, members of the police and military force, incarcerated people waiting to be sentenced, and greater access to suffrage for people with special needs. In short, sectors of the population that had been historically marginalized from formal participation in the country's political processes were now included.

The 2008 Constitution—probably one of the longest in the history of any country, with 444 articles—includes at least 13 articles that explicitly recognize the civil, political, and socioeconomic rights of *ecuatorianos en movilidad*, ‘Ecuadorians in mobility.’ This is the vocabulary the government of Rafael Correa Delgado, elected in 2006, used in its political discourse to refer to Ecuadorians living abroad. The lexical variation in political language intended to, eventually, also change the derogatory and pejorative social connotations generally associated with migrants, either in the countries of origin or destination. Unlike most Constitutions in the world, Art. 40 recognizes people’s right to migrate and no person will be identified or considered as *illegal* based on her/his migratory condition (my emphasis). It states: “Se reconoce a las personas el derecho a migrar. No se identificará ni se considerará a ningún ser humano como ilegal por su condición migratoria.”²⁸ The politicized migratory discourse and the unprecedented economic impact of migrant remittances (constituting the second most important source of national income, only after oil exports) at the turn of the century, and the national project of promoting migrants’ participation in the country’s political life, prompted the state to include in the Constituent Assembly six members, *Asambleístas Constituyentes*, as representatives of three geopolitical regions where Ecuadorians had significantly migrated: two from North America, two from Latin America and the Caribbean, and two from Europe.²⁹

²⁸ “The right of people to migrate is recognized. No human being will be identified or considered illegal based on her/his migratory condition.” I should note here that the Ecuadorian Constitution does not prohibit Ecuadorian citizens from having other nationalities and acquiring other nationalities will not annul the Ecuadorian one.

²⁹ As a way of including all world geopolitical regions, the two members of the Constituent Assembly representing Europe also represent Asia and Oceania, while the other two representing Latin

Since 2007, and based on the 2008 Constitution, the government has incorporated a series of programs intended to directly benefit Ecuadorians in mobility. These programs have advanced the development and practices of political transnationalism by Ecuadorians living abroad, and the return of migrants to the homeland. In fact, President Correa's political discourse often used the metaphor of the "*Quinta Región*" to refer to the delocalized country's space, where a significant percentage of Ecuadorians (approximately 12 percent of the total population) were living, which symbolically added to the other four geographically defined regions: the Coast (*Costa* or *Litoral*), the Andean (*Andina* or *Sierra*), the Amazon (*Amazonía* or *Oriente*), and the Insular (*Galápagos*) regions.

The increased government attention to migrants became more evident with the creation in 2007 of the *Secretaría Nacional del Migrante-SENAMI*.³⁰ With the rank of a Ministry, this public entity had the task of creating, implementing, and executing government policies regarding human mobility. In 2013, however, SENAMI was merged into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility.³¹ Thus, Embassies and Consulates became fully responsible for human mobility issues and programs for assistance to migrants and those who wish to return to the country. Ecuador's political move of deliberately creating a Ministry to coordinate affairs specifically related to human mobility

America also represent Africa. So far, these members have resided in the main migratory destinations: North America, Europe, and Latin America.

³⁰ The SENAMI was created through Executive decree No. 150, published in the Official Registry No. 39 of March 12, 2007.

³¹ This institutional merging went into effect through Executive decree No. 20 of June 10, 2013; SENAMI became the Viceministerio de Movilidad Humana, within the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana.

and to operate within and beyond national borders was nonetheless an exemplary model for other countries in the region and those with large emigrant populations. SENAMI had faced many difficulties in operating abroad, especially in protecting migrants' rights and assisting them in vulnerable situations. Its function became sort of "parallel" to Consulates, with limitations imposed by international law, particularly the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963, which states that only Consulates are allowed to exercise consular functions.

On the other hand, SENAMI's coordination of cultural events and dissemination of state programs for housing, employment, education, and loans in Ecuador could be achieved. SENAMI's activities promoted national identity and revived Ecuadorian interest in what was going on in the homeland. SENAMI also facilitated channels for making demands to the Ecuadorian state, from which migrants might have felt disassociated for several years, even before their translocation. The collective projects created by migrant associations, cultural and political groups also cleared the way for Ecuadorians to exercise their influence and political power transnationally. Diasporic Ecuadorians also developed a sense of Latin American/Latino identity as they encountered other diasporic Latin Americans.³²

As a strategic way to find better working conditions, to fit in, and to try to integrate themselves into dominant structures, Ecuadorians may disidentify, perhaps *temporarily*, from Ecuadorian dominant cultures, while encountering and resisting dominant ideologies, habits, and structures, and creating alternative modes of re-creating their translocal

³² This Latin American/Latino identity formation could be compared to those constructed in the United States, with clear differences of historical context and implications due to the cultural, political, and economic situations of their home countries and those of the United States and EU member states.

subjectivity. This diasporic consciousness may give rise to a sense of “feeling global” and to the experience of disidentifications (Clifford 312). Ecuadorian migrants may disidentify themselves from Italian dominant cultures that view them as oppressed, inferior, or different, based on their habits and understanding of the world. As José Esteban Muñoz remarks:

The fiction of identity is one that is accessed with relative ease by most majoritarian subjects. Minoritarian subjects need to interface with different subcultural fields to activate their own senses of self. This is not to say that majoritarian subjects have no recourse to disidentification or that their own formation as subjects is not structured through multiple and sometimes conflicting sites of identification. (5)

In some ways, similar to U.S. queer-of-color performers, who recycle or re-form signifiers and strategies, incorporating and transfiguring them while creating their own strategies and tactics in powerful ways (Muñoz 39), my research shows how Ecuadorian migrants in Italy cannibalize various knowledges and strategies and adapt them to their own needs and systems—sometimes re-elaborating or accessing them in strategic ways that place them in advantageous, albeit subalternized, positions within Italian society. As cosmopolitans and global citizens—with a wide range of knowledge from several European, U.S. American, and South American cultures, while remaining cognizant of subalternized social positions as low income migrant workers (domestic/caretakers or construction workers)—Ecuadorian migrants see themselves as enjoying situations they lacked in Ecuador, not only in material symbolic terms, but also in emotional and cultural ones.

It is interesting to note that in 2008, when members of the Ecuadorian Constituent Assembly, participating in various commissions, were debating the text of the Constitution throughout the country and with a vast array of sectors of the population, in Italy there was a public debate focused on the above-mentioned decree laws regarding immigration, which “exonerated” domestic migrant workers (read: caretakers) from the tightening of migratory policies. The debate was about benefiting only a specific type of migrant labor—while no relevant discussion involved the beneficiaries of that cheap migrant labor either before or after the decree laws took effect. Similar to the previous *sanatorie*—a type of migrant amnesty also known as migrant regularization processes—some of the major beneficiaries, in fact, were Italian employers of domestic workers. If employers hired irregular migrants, after the decree, they could pay the fine (not an excessive amount and sometimes subtracted illegally from the workers’ payroll) and continue employing them. Migrant caretakers continued to be able to obtain residence permits through jobs offered by Italian citizens in Italian households—preventing a crisis at the center of Italian society: the family. While Ecuadorian women in Italy were compiling the requirements to apply for a residence permit to work legally, and therefore, to exist, to be registered on Italian official records, to be able to receive social services such as a family doctor, subsidies for low-income families if they had children, to open a bank account, to sign a home rental contract, and to visit their families in the homecountry, in Ecuador a debate about their rights as migrants was taking place. Their political representation in the Constituent Assembly was the responsibility of two members from Europe, one of which was from Genoa, Guayaquil born Asambleísta Mercedes del Rocío Panta Figueroa. The work performed by thousands (probably more than a million) of migrant women became essential in Italian households, while it continued to be undervalued socioeconomically and symbolically. At the same time—within the same Occidental capitalist logic, Ecuadorian migrant women are placed and/or place

themselves in peculiarly advantageous positions within the larger immigrant population in Italy.

Although Ecuadorian women often endure abusive situations in their workplace (i.e., Italian households), they consider it a necessary and temporary period they need to undergo in order to obtain residence permits through job contracts as caretakers. The migrant caretaker not only attends to the basic needs of the elderly or disabled in terms of food, body cleaning, medicine taking, housekeeping, but also, and perhaps most importantly, in companionship, emotional care, love, and dialogue. The power dynamics between employer and employee, as well as the moments of intimacy and affect, are mediated by Occidentalist colonial logics and unequal distributions of knowledge, capital and natural resources, regulated by EU migration policies (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 67). Ecuadorian migrant women in Italy have had to adapt, more than to assimilate, to these logics in order to obtain the most favorable situations in the labor market and family life.

As I briefly mentioned earlier, until June 1, 2003, Ecuadorians were able to travel to most European countries and stay up to 90 days without a visa. Presenting the “image of a tourist” was one of the mechanisms used by Ecuadorians to enter the European Union, particularly Spain and, thereafter, Italy. By this I mean traveling with clothes and accessories that were, or appeared to be, imported from the U.S. If, after presenting the passport, European immigration officers did not judge the travelers to be tourists based on their appearance and attitude, they would be required to show the *borsa di viaggio*, ‘travel funds,’ that is to say, sufficient funds to cover expenses for the period indicated on the round-trip plane ticket. At the turn of the century, this amount was about U.S.\$ 2,000. It was also necessary to show proof of a place to stay or hotel reservations for the exact days of the stay. Otherwise, as several interviewees emphasized, the person could be detained for

hours or days, intimidated, strip-searched, interrogated, denied entry to the country and, consequently, sent back on the next available flight to Ecuador. Agreements with European airline companies allowed EU member states to return non-desirable citizens of non-EU member states.

Once in Italy, in 2007-2008 Ecuadorian women were paid between 600 and 1,000 euros a month for live-out or live-in caregiving, depending on seniority, live-in/live-out arrangements, and personal relations between employer and employee. For house cleaning, the hourly pay was between seven and ten euros. In 2014, in fact, following the financial capitalist crisis experienced in Southern/Mediterranean Europe, particularly in Italy, these wages have increased little, if at all. Sometimes the employer and employee agree, upon the employer's proposal, to under-report the number of working hours to the INPS. These agreements "benefit" both employer and worker. The employer pays less in social security contributions to the INPS. The net payroll is higher. Many Ecuadorian migrant workers do not envision benefits from their social security contributions after retirement. Until now, the Italian government has not been available for negotiations with Ecuador for the signing of a bilateral agreement that could enable Ecuadorian workers to recover their social security contributions paid in Italy if they return to Ecuador before reaching retirement age. Such an agreement has already been signed between Italy and Peru. And migrant workers continue to be discouraged from making contributions to the Italian welfare system, preferring a higher salary but off the books. As of now, they cannot be reimbursed for their contributions in the form of pension benefits. This situation is also an advantage for employers who save money through lower labor costs. Consequently, the INPS receives a lower amount than it really should from migrant worker contributions—funds that the Italian social security system desperately needs to sustain itself.

In the spirit of practicing cultural studies, grounded in interdisciplinary analyses and transnational methodologies, in this chapter I have discussed some of the main political, legal, social, and economic contexts that diasporic Ecuadorian subjects encounter when they arrive in northern Italy, where nearly 70 percent of the Ecuadorian population in that country lives. I have presented an overview of Italian legislation on the immigration and welfare systems, as well as recent Italian and Ecuadorian government modes of managing transnational migration, which inform the subjectivities, agency, and narratives of diasporic individuals and communities, as well as those of the native populations.

Undoubtedly, the experiences of Ecuadorian migrants differ in many aspects from those of other national migrant groups, and sex, gender, race, and class intersect in the ongoing regimes of domination. For example, Muslim and African migrants experience different racializations and subalternizations linked to colonial ethnoracial and global financial histories and contemporary practices. Even within Latin American national groups, there are clear distinctions for instance between a Peruvian and an Argentinean living in the European Union, embedded in Occidentalist ethnoracial capitalist conceptualizations and foreignness and citizenship articulations. I have examined the relations of power in the migrations and social interrelations of Ecuadorians in Italy, as well as the potential labor opportunities in order to better understand the cultural products that are informed by these interactions and the social context in which these cultural products emerge.

CHAPTER II

SUBALTERNIZED COSMOPOLITANS IN ITALY: ORAL NARRATIVES OF DIASPORIC ECUADORIANS

Egidio era la seconda persona anziana a cui badavo e, stando nella sua enorme e ricca casa sul mare, ho capito che più che lucidare e smerigliare, le immense stanze andavano riempite di calore umano. Egidio parlava poco, molto poco; a volte mi rivolgeva sguardi carichi di così tanta tristezza che mi veniva voglia di dirgli: 'Guardi che sono io quella clandestina che è dovuta uscire dal suo paese, lasciando la famiglia e tutto quello che aveva di più importante al mondo, quindi su con la vita che tutto si può risolvere!'

—Maria Morla Crespín

Introduction

The epigraph of this chapter is taken from the semi-autobiographical short story “Per non saper cucinare,” written by an Ecuadorian woman who migrated to Genoa nearly 15 years ago. In the narrative, Morla Crespín depicts how as a domestic worker, her lack of cooking abilities—basically because she cooked so badly—facilitated her a pathway of jobs outside of domestic realm. After her employer hired a cook, she had the afternoons free for studying a new profession. Without inscribing a conventional version of the migrant success story, Morla Crespín’s text won the first prize of the 2013 Premio Letterario Città di Cantù “Suor Rita Borghi,” ‘City of Cantù Literary Award,’ from a small town located in the Lombardy Region and addressed to African, Asian, and Latin American writers living in Italy. For this award, she received a public appreciation from a Latin American women’s

association in Genoa on International Women’s Day.¹ The author reveals only one of the divergent experiences that deterritorialized Ecuadorians engage in Italy and only few make it to a literary text.

I locate this chapter in the interstices of the humanities and the social sciences: a transdisciplinary intervention informed by Comparative Literary Studies, Cultural Anthropology, European, Latin American, Feminist, and Diaspora Studies. This text—which is more collective than I could ever demonstrate in academic writing—has afforded me the privilege of translocating desires and expectations, while building friendships, affiliations, and coalitional projects with other migrants.

Ethnographic methods are extremely useful in my understanding of the subjectivities, experiences, and narratives of Ecuadorians living in Italy. As I have discussed elsewhere (Cuesta, “A modo de testimoniar,” “Guayaquileña (In)Documentada,” and “We’re Better off Outside Our Country”), my multiple and shifting positionalities critically inform my research on and with diasporic Ecuadorians.² My epistemological standpoint as a diasporic mestiza woman, born and raised in Guayaquil, Ecuador’s largest city and where most of my research participants lived prior to their migration to Genoa, places me in a complex insider/outsider position—neither an ‘indigenous ethnographer’ nor a totally outsider ethnographer. My political angle of vision and the asymmetrical power relations

¹ The event was organized by the non-profit association Coordinamento Ligure Donne Latinoamericane, in collaboration with the General Consulate of Ecuador in Genoa; and it took place on March 6, 2014 in Genoa’s City Hall, Tursi Palace.

² I should also note that my work is informed by feminist theories and methodologies (Alcoff, Harding, Hesse-Biber, Haraway, Behar, and Gordon), particularly those developed by U.S. women of color (Sandoval, Anzaldúa, Lugones, and Hill-Collins).

between Ecuadorian migrants in Italy and myself have been further complicated by the constantly (re)negotiated multiple subjectivities and locations while I have served as Consul General of Ecuador in Genoa.

In my analysis of Ecuadorian migrants in Italy, I draw my arguments from the epistemological standpoints and ‘situated knowledges’ of the Ecuadorians interviewed during the ethnographic research I conducted in Italy in five consecutive months from February to July 2007, and follow-up visits in January and March 2008. At the same time, I remain cognizant of the power differentials in the relationship between the interviewees and myself.³ While I concur with Sandra Harding that feminist knowledge involves “starting thought from the lives of marginalized groups” and “from multiple lives that are in many ways in conflict with each other, each of which has multiple and contradictory commitments” (56, 66), my interactions with Ecuadorian women migrants have made me view them more reflexively and critically. Ecuadorian women migrants may be perceived as marginal groups of study from North American, European, and even Ecuadorian academic perspectives. However, these women do not perceive themselves as marginal in many ways, but rather as active transformative agents of their own realities and with opportunities that members of their families who remained at home have not had. In a sense, my role as researcher also involves joining their voices together to form *our* voices—always partial, situated, subjective, power-imbued, and relational, as knowledge itself is constructed—more internationally and transversally audible, and certainly, more academically readable.

³ Here I am in dialogue with Donna Haraway, who calls for an “objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing” (585).

In this chapter, I aim to expose some of the particularities of the multiple subjectivities and experiences of Ecuadorian migrants, which, I hope, will contribute to the emerging Ecuadorian diasporas' collective knowledges and decolonial moves.⁴

In addition, I build on Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of dominant Western feminist discourses and Patricia Hill Collins' analysis of African-Americans as objects of knowledge prior to the 1970s, with respect to the absence of Black people in the U.S. academy, especially in positions of authority (47).⁵ In the same vein, a large majority of Ecuadorian migrants has not yet attained higher education in the countries in which they reside, nor are they in positions of authority.⁶ While I was conducting this research and

⁴ As Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, Patricia Leavy, and Michelle L. Yaisser have noted, feminist standpoint begins with research questions rooted in women's everyday existence, which reflect the multiplicity, multidimensionality, and fluidity of women's subjectivities and structural differences within a society (15). Following Dorothy E. Smith, in this chapter I attempt not to "rewrite the other's world or impose upon it a conceptual framework which extracts from it what it fits with ours" [i.e. mine] (35). I have tried to explicate and analyze their experienced world rather than administer it and frame it within current theories that may 'fit' their experienced world.

⁵ Here I refer particularly to Mohanty's insightful essay, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in which she addresses much of Western feminisms' rendering of the "Third World woman" as a singular, monolithic subject and producing an image of an "average Third World woman," who lives an essentially truncated existence based on her feminine gender (sexually constrained) and her being "Third World," which situates her as ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc. (17-22). While I contend that the term "Third World" is an imposed and inadequate category to refer to women living in or originally from nation-states located mostly in the Southern hemisphere and formerly colonized by European empires since 1492, I believe Mohanty offers a valuable critique for understanding women in subalternized positionalities from non-Occidentalist perspectives.

⁶ Undoubtedly, there are clear distinctions between the historic and current situations of Ecuadorian migrants in Italy and other countries in the Northern hemisphere, and African Americans in the U.S. Addressing the specificities of these differences is beyond the scope of this chapter. While there is a growing number of Ecuadorian migrants and first generation U.S. children born to Ecuadorian migrants who graduate from U.S. colleges and universities, most do not seem to stay in the academy

writing on it, as an Ecuadorian migrant/researcher affiliated with a U.S. university and studying Ecuadorian migrants in Italy, I often felt both as an insider and an outsider. Whereas these positionalities are ever fluid and shifting (Naples 49), I perceived myself as an insider because of my Ecuadorian citizenship, my experiences as a migrant in the global North, my sex, my gender, and my “professional-working” class.⁷ I also felt as an outsider in terms of my specific experiences in the U.S. and in Ecuador. Many of the migrants with whom I spoke may have regarded me as an *other* based on my phenotype, my appearance, my habits, and my formal education, among other categories that *othered* me from them. Despite this *othering*, I sought to build knowledge *with* them and to bring their subjectivities and realities to other worlds, beyond their intimate circles.⁸

and work from there—for financial reasons, personal and professional choices. Historically, and particularly since the 1970s, Ecuadorians from upper classes have enrolled in U.S. and European universities as international students or have simply travelled to the North to gain access to cultures considered “more advanced,” within Occidental hegemonic epistemologies. The relatively low cost of public higher education (compared to the U.S.), as well as prior socialization and class, limited access to scholarships and tax exemptions, have allowed Ecuadorians to increasingly enroll in Italian universities, albeit in discrete numbers. The European, and particularly the Italian university system, known for its not always meritocratic selection and elitist way of functioning, still restrains access of lower-middle class Italians and foreigners to university positions as researchers, lecturers, and faculty. By situating my knowledge and research, in no way do I imply that I am putting the burden of analyzing and writing about Ecuadorian diasporas only on diasporic Ecuadorians; nor that they (we) are the only ones capable of researching this field of inquiry, and only this field. It is, however, a perspective that has too often remained within intimate circles and has not been sufficiently exposed in U.S. academic research spheres of knowledge.

⁷ Because traditional Marxist definitions of social class do not necessarily apply to waged workers in the early twenty-first century, I understand members of the “professional-working” class to be wage earners who may have a university degree or some higher education. Their salaries, access to capital, alienation, and exploitation, however, may not be very different from the so-called working class (the proletariat), lacking a professional or university degree.

⁸ As this ethnographic research was conducted prior to my government position in Genoa, I have not included that positionality in this section.

Ruth Behar remarks that it is clear that any ethnographic representation “inevitably reflects a self-representation and a certain economy of representation,” while the author is confronted by a kind of paradox:

On the one hand, there is the desire and temptation to leave the account wholly in the native voice, in imitation of the literary autobiography that it is not; on the other hand, there is the anthropological imperative to place the account in a theoretical/cultural context, to provide some sort of background, analysis, commentary, or interpretation, so as to mediate between the reality of a life lived and inscribed elsewhere but wedged between book covers and read here. (“Rage and Redemption” 231)

However, I do not view my research participants as “native” subjects, not only from an ethico-political perspective, but, first and foremost, because they are not native of the place where I encountered them (Italy) and second, because their translocal and shifting identities are evident in their critical understandings of self and others, which break with constricted notions of nation, nationhood, identity, and group identification.

Behar’s reflections on anthropological writing and representation, nonetheless, reveal perhaps the most challenging part of my research on diasporic Ecuadorians. As an Ecuadorian migrant myself, albeit in a privileged positionality and different geopolitical translocation from that of my research participants, I often perceived the inscription of Ecuadorian migrants’ subjectivities and experiences in Italy as a way of partially inscribing some of my own diasporic subjectivity and experiences. Certainly, the research I conducted forced me to confront my own migratory experience and to identify myself with many of the situations narrated by the interviewees, including the sense of mourning of the loved ones

left behind in the homeland, the multiple obstacles that undocumented migrants have to overcome, and the specific risks that women are exposed to in a foreign country.

My ethnographic research in Genoa in 2007 and 2008 included participant observation and twenty-eight 90-minute to 180-minute in-depth and open-ended interviews.⁹ Most of the interviewees had migrated to Italy at the end of the 1990s and had Italian residence permits or once had them at some time in the past.

The research participants were chosen from a sample of snowball referrals that stemmed from the contacts I made in my first visit to Genoa in November 2006: individuals I met on the streets, in churches, and the organizations and institutions where I volunteered and worked. The interviews with Ecuadorian women and the Latin American cultural mediator were conducted in a variety of spaces, situations, and subject positions: cafés and restaurants as customers, or those owned by the interviewees, in my quiet room in an apartment in the center of Genoa, in the interviewees' residences with music, food, and wine, in buses, parks, and malls. Interviews with Ecuadorian men were often held in public squares, cafés, their houses, or their workplaces. I conducted these interviews in Spanish. Most Ecuadorian interviewees responded in Spanish. Many, however, spoke in a combination of Spanish and Italian, commonly known as *Itañol*, depending on the particular

⁹ I interviewed sixteen Ecuadorian migrant women (ages 23-46), six Ecuadorian migrant men, including two activists (ages 30-55), working in a non-profit association that provides services for migrants, three Ecuadorian writers (two women living in Vicenza and Trieste, respectively; one activist-writer male residing in Milan), four Italian women (activist-immigration lawyer Alessandra Ballerini, program manager at Genoa's *Centro Risorse Alunni Stranieri*, part of the Italian Ministry of Public Education, Claudia Nosenghi, and two experienced workers in different non-profit associations that provide services for migrants, which also included my supervisor at the non-profit organization), and one Latin American cultural mediator who works in Genovese public schools. To protect the identities of the interviewees, I use pseudonyms to refer to them. The published writers gave me permission to use their real names.

topic of the conversation, how often they use either language, the length of their stay in Italy, their command of Italian, and their conscious decision to keep the two languages separate. Later in the chapter I discuss *Itañol* as an alternative way of intercultural communication. Interviews with Italians were held in their offices, in Italian.

Half of the Ecuadorians interviewed had attended college or had a college degree from an Ecuadorian institution of higher education. Two women had college degrees from the University of Genoa. The participants' level of formal education varied, depending largely on their age at the time of migration. For instance, if Ecuadorians entered Italy between the ages of 16 and 18 as "tourists" and overstayed, without having attained a high school diploma in Ecuador, and once in Italy their parents were unable to fulfill the requirements to apply for a residence permit, or *permesso di soggiorno*, they would not have been allowed to finish a high school education, or *liceo*.

Building upon my ethnographic research and traversing a wide array of literature on modern/global capitalism, feminist and decolonial critiques, in this chapter I discuss some of the experiences and oral narratives of Ecuadorians in Genoa and Milan. Concomitantly, I envision possibilities for alternative (non-dominant) modes of thinking about South American diasporas in Southern/Mediterranean Europe in general, and Ecuadorians in Italy in particular. My two aims here are interrelated: 1) to examine some of the subjectivities and experiences of Ecuadorians within spaces that provide three different types of services for migrants: legal consulting (supplied by an Italian non-profit organization to its members, being part of what is commonly known in Italy as the third sector, or *terzo settore*), medical (a free clinic run by voluntary Italian medical doctors), and higher education (a private Catholic Ecuadorian university located in Italy); and 2) to identify oral narratives that evoke alternative spaces that diasporic Ecuadorians create

when they have limited access to certain social services, employment, cultural, and material capital, as well as civil and human rights.

Services for Migrants and Clientelism

During my fieldwork, I volunteered at the reception desk for migrants (*sportello migranti*) in the Genoa office of the non-profit national association ARCI, established in 1956 as *Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana*, Italian Recreational Cultural Association. According to its website, ARCI is the largest Italian association dedicated to social promotion regarding culture, continuing education, peace, rights, welfare, democratic legality, and leisure (ARCI). Nationwide, in 2012 ARCI had 1,115,000 members, distributed in 17 regional and 116 provincial committees, as well as 4,867 *circoli*, or clubs. ARCI is closely connected with the Italian center-left coalition, particularly with the *Partido Democratico* (PD), Democratic Party.¹⁰ The largest regional committee, composed of 272,036 in 2012, is located in Emilia Romagna, historically known as a red (leftist) region. Liguria is the sixth largest regional committee, with 60,857 members.

Although the association had several offices in different neighborhoods of Genoa, this one was located in the historic center. The *sportello* was open five days a week, Monday through Friday, with different hours each day. For instance, there were days that it was only open in the afternoon, others, only in the morning, others, without lunch break. Volunteer and payrolled staff assisted migrants in filling out immigration and tax forms, consulted on labor and housing disputes, job searches, Italian citizenship applications, and deportation

¹⁰ The center-left *Partito Democratico* is perhaps the largest political party in Italy, with the largest number of members in the current parliament. In a way, the *Partito Democratico* represents a part of former political parties, including the Communist party, and groups with leftist tendencies within the Christian Democracy Party, *Democrazia Cristiana*.

issues. Notices of “voluntary” departure from Italy, “*foglio di via*,” literally meaning, “piece of sheet to go away” (for lacking a permit to stay in Italian territory) were also brought to the association. Sometimes another volunteer would accompany me. I sat next to a staff member while he or she met with the migrant and I would assist during the meeting, either clarifying concepts and procedures, translating for the migrants or distributing forms, making photocopies, or consulting information with other members of the staff. Most times I sat at the reception.

As a receptionist (*in accoglienza*), sitting at a desk near the entrance door, I was the first person migrants saw and to whom they spoke in the office. The appointment book was always on the reception desk. The appointments were made every fifteen minutes. I would check the members’ names on the list as they came in. Migrants often made appointments in advance of being seen. At the end of a visit, they usually made their next appointment. Others would stop by the office to make an appointment for sometime in the upcoming weeks. Before their meeting with the staff, migrants were asked to show their membership card, *tessera*, and to fill out a form requesting personal information and the reason for their appointment. Migrants had to become members of the association before being allowed to benefit from the association’s services. The membership has to be renewed on an annual basis in order to continue obtaining the services. Migrants sat, or stood if there were no seats available, in the waiting room for an average of 10-45 minutes before being assisted. Although most staff members were conversant in all issues, the staff was divided into specific areas of expertise. Depending on the nature of the case presented on the form and the information collected by the receptionist (me), migrants were assigned to the different members of the staff, including immigration and labor lawyers.

I was the only Latin American in the office, either as a volunteer or waged staff member. With the exception of a male Moroccan veteran who dealt with labor issues once a week and a male Basque volunteer, the staff was composed of Italian citizens. Two male Argentines and several Spanish women had previously volunteered at the *sportello*, I was told. When I greeted and responded in Spanish to questions posed by Latin American migrants, they seemed pleased and often perceived me as an Argentinean or Spaniard. To my surprise, most migrants, especially Ecuadorians, did not identify me immediately as Ecuadorian. I contend that many Ecuadorians in Genoa have created a kind of fixed idea, an internal stereotype—in part disseminated by dominant Italian discourses—of what an Ecuadorian migrant is, based on the job she/he performs in Genoa (female, *badante*; male, manual worker). Guayaquileñas and Costeñas sometimes “quizzed” me to verify that I was indeed from Guayaquil.¹¹ In the waiting room, I was perceived as a non-Ecuadorian. As a light-skinned mestiza with short dark straight hair, and relatively thin, I did not match the ‘idea’ of an Ecuadorian woman in Genoa. I argue, however, that this perception mainly stemmed from the position I occupied in the *sportello migranti*, apparently speaking, comfortably, standard Italian with Italian colleagues. I was the one providing services to migrants, not receiving them. These situations sent mixed messages to most Ecuadorians who came to the *sportello*.

¹¹ By Costeña, I refer to women natives of any of the five Ecuadorian coastal regions (Esmeraldas, Manabí, Guayas, Los Ríos, and El Oro) who may or may not have lived in their native towns at the time of their transnational migration. Guayaquil is the capital of the province of Guayas. The city has been considered the country’s economic capital, due in part to the city’s influence on the development of the national banking system and as a result of its concentration of agro-export industries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, products that were exported from Guayaquil’s port.

The office where I volunteered was part of the so-called *terzo settore*, or third sector. This complex of non-profit, non-entrepreneur, non-governmental private organizations includes private associations, trade unions, cooperatives, voluntary and private organizations and foundations. Having diverse juridical nature, structures, and economic-financial situations, these private institutions operate in numerous sectors with part of their functions being performed by volunteers. The third sector enters the Italian socioeconomic system located between the State and the market. It produces assets and/or provides services related to social assistance, health, culture, sports, international cooperation, education, research, environmental issues, socioeconomic advancement, religious promotion and training, and other services of social utility.

The Genoa office where I volunteered provided services for migrants. Ecuadorians were usually on the “other side” of the desk, not on “this side.” Italians assist migrants in their understanding of, adjusting to, and functioning in Italian society. The third sector, in alliance with the center-left Democratic Party has built a sort of clientelistic complex of migrant service providers that assist migrants, while conveniently keeping them in marginal positions and without making radical anti-capitalist transformations in Italian immigration, education, social, and labor politics. Although national, regional, and local associations, as part of the Italian third sector, help migrants in immediate everyday situations, bureaucratic processes, and with a series of programs, including classes of Italian as a second language, at the same time the public funds funneled to ‘assist’ migrants are used to create jobs for Italians, and mainly members of the Democratic Party. These associations—mainly funded by the European Commission, the Italian state, and local governments—need migrants to sustain and justify their own existence and guarantee the allocation of public funds to their social projects. Their goals seem not to be geared toward a

transformation of capitalist structures of domination in order to assist migrants to get out of marginalized socioeconomic positions and to promote active citizen participation, but toward reforms that maintain a situation in which migrants remain in subalternized positions and in need of constant assistance, without which these associations would risk their own existence.

Coloniality as One Way to Understand The Ecuadorian Diaspora in Italy

Originally coined by Peruvian intellectual Aníbal Quijano and further developed by other prominent Latin American intellectuals working in Latin America and the U.S., coloniality of power—at the constitutive crux of the colonial/modern capitalist system of power—is the axis that articulates its own social classifications, dominant cultural logics, forms of knowledge, and modes of (inter)subjectivity and identification. Quijano argues that:

One of the fundamental axes of this model of power is the social classification of the world's population around the idea of race, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism. The racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established. Therefore, the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality. ("Coloniality of Power" 533)

This matrix of power "of global vocation" (533) is constitutive of world historical inequalities that date back to the rise of Europe as a hegemonic geopolitical region, at the

expense of slavery, genocide, labor and natural resource exploitation and land expropriation of non-European peoples, the conquest of the Americas, and the development of capitalism in the modern/colonial world. Building on Quijano, Agustín Laó-Montes points out that

This matrix of power is structured around two main axes: one of exploitation which refers to the simultaneous subjugation to capital of multiple forms of labor (wage, servitude, petty commodity, slavery, reciprocity), and another one of domination (gender/sexual, racial/cultural) which is also where he [Quijano] locates coloniality, as a specific attribute of modern regimes of power....In short, Quijano's concept of coloniality theorizes the eurocentric racial discourse that emerged along with the capitalist world-economy and the rise of western hegemony, as a central organizing feature of modern constellations of power. Hence coloniality in the sense of a divide between Europe and its Others (or "the West and the Rest") is a material/discursive substratum that lies behind the main modes of domination, regimes of labor exploitation, strategies of rule, civilizational claims, and logics/categories of knowledge of capitalist modernity. ("For an Analytics" 1-2)

We can see that the concept of coloniality of power, as Laó-Montes indicates, "is a key critical theoretical tool to analyze (and hopefully supersede) the world-historical patterning of power in the *longue durée* of historical capitalism" ("For an Analytics" 1). I engage with the concept of coloniality of power in the context of Ecuadorian diasporas because I believe it is a useful analytical tool for understanding how Ecuadorians, particularly women, have been classified and categorized as *badante*, poor, humble, noble, and hard-working in dominant Italian society. For Italians, Ecuadorian women know their place in an

Occidental social hierarchization of modern capitalism. Taking Quijano's understanding of "race" as a social construction that was constitutive of the organization of labor, first in the Americas, and then in other territories colonized by European empires, we can see the logics behind the associations made in contemporary Italian domestic labor markets. Arguably, in Italy there are more Italians than non-Italians who perform domestic work for Italian families (Colombo 2009). However, the fact that the percentage of domestic workers among the non-Italian population is much greater than it is among the Italian population (2009) is only part of the tendency to associate women from the global South and several post-socialist countries with *badantismo*, which I discuss later in the chapter. Northern Italians, now understood as 'White' Europeans, often associate darker-skinned Latin American women (whether or not the latter have a University degree from their countries of origin) as "fit" for taking care of Italian elderly and house cleaning. "*Sono bravissime,*" I have heard so many times from Italian middle and upper-middle class women. While they said this, they genuinely thought they were giving me a compliment and being kind. Race, more than color (pigmentocracy), is a key concept through which Ecuadorians are racialized and ethnicized in the European Union in general, and Italy in particular. Coloniality of power also helps us identify certain patterns in the way Italians and Ecuadorians interact, and the way Ecuadorians interact with other Ecuadorians and other migrants, as well as certain expectations that different groups have about other groups they do not see themselves as belonging to. Here, Rogers Brubaker's remarks may be useful to recall. He points out that:

Ethnicity, race, and nation should be conceptualized not as substances or things or entities or organisms or collective individuals—as the imagery of discrete, concrete, tangible, bounded, and enduring 'groups' encourages

us to do so—but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregated terms....in terms of practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events. (11)

Thus, the group “Ecuadorians” is a very shifting, unstable category to analyze certain patterns, practices, and ideas. The coloniality developed in what we call today Latin America is itself embedded in the term Ecuadorian. So, the category “Latin American” is even more unstable and shifting compared to the nation-state classification. Cognizant of the conflictive aspects of the terminology utilized, “Ecuadorians,” as a national group form part of the nation-state world-system, and Latin American as an Occidentalist geopolitical world region, these terms remain useful for describing and analyzing patterns, practices, and ideas in order to be understood by the common reader and academics.

Badantismo and Migrant Domesticability

I argue that a kind of *Badantismo* has developed in recent years in Northern Italy. I refer to *badantismo* as a new kind of social relationship among Ecuadorian women and Italian families, and it has become an identification marker for particular ethnic or national groups who are live-in or live-out care takers of Italian elderly, ill or disabled.¹² Similarly to

¹² I tend to associate *badantismo* with *madamismo* or *madamoto* for their gendered colonial relations and phonetics. The terms *madamismo* or *madamoto* were used to refer to the relationships Italian men and Eritrean women had particularly between 1890-1941, when Italy formally occupied and colonized today’s Eritrea. Although these relationships varied, the language and praxis of *madamismo* or *madamoto* were embedded with sexual ideologies that showed the inequality of gender/sexual relations and European supremacy in Italian colonies in East Africa. These terms emerged to distinguish sexual and emotional relationships among Italian men and Italian women and those among Italian men and East African women.

what has occurred in other Southern/Mediterranean European countries such as Spain, Portugal, and Greece, in the last 20 years, Italy has experienced a deterioration of public social services. The Italian central state and local governments have assigned to the complex of organizations belonging to the third sector the responsibility of providing social services such as healthcare, childcare, elderly care, education, intercultural mediation in schools, health centers, and prisons, as well as socioeconomic advancement of marginal sectors of the population. As part of the neoliberalization process that Italy pursued during the three Berlusconi governments, the state has maintained that it does not have the financial resources, structure, logistics, or professional staff to provide those kinds of services to the most vulnerable sectors of the population (children, prisoners, drug addicts, ill, elderly, and disabled people). Families must assume most of the responsibility for such care. And if not the family, then it is the third sector that is left in charge, financed by public and private funds. Increasingly, most families are purchasing care services from the private sector and third (or non-profit) sector (Ranci 25-30). In this conjuncture, the new term, *badante*, has emerged in colloquial use over the last 15 years or more. In fact, the word *badante* is a neologism that was not generally used by Italians before the 1990s, and was only inserted in Italian dictionaries after the year 2000. According to the *Devoto Oli Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana 2011*, a major dictionary of the Italian language, *badante* refers to “a person suited for the assistance of elderly, ill or disabled: queued up in Police Headquarters for the regularization of the badante.”¹³ The Italian verb *badare*, in turn,

¹³ “Persona addetta all’assistenza di anziani, ammalati o disabili: code in Questura per la regolarizzazione delle badanti. Partecipio presente di badare.”

means “to take care, to keep an eye on, to watch.”¹⁴ *Badante* is the present participle of *badare*. The incorporation of this term into colloquial Italian and then into a dictionary has occurred within a particular historical period, including the arrival of significant numbers of female migrant workers in the 1980s, particularly from the Philippines, Cape Verde, Somalia, and Eritrea. Not only does the Italian dictionary refer to the type of work *badanti* do, but also their perceived public image in large numbers waiting in line for a residence permit outside of Police headquarters, as migrants often did in the 1980s and 1990s, before the Police implemented an appointment system for fingerprinting and issuance of residence permits.

The popularity of the term *badante* also reflects what Bettio, Simonazzi, and Villa call the transition from ‘family’ to a ‘migrant in the family’ model of care, particularly in Southern European countries (272). In the last 20 years, migrant women have been filling up domestic and caregiving labor ‘spaces’ that Italians see as appropriate for them. Italian employers and Italians working in employment agencies (either non-religious private ones or Catholic Church affiliated agencies, which may be informal but nonetheless considered trustworthy by the upper and middle classes) consider migrant women as ‘fit’ to do domestic and homecare jobs. I have noticed that even though Ecuadorian women in Italy have achieved an important level of autonomy and financial independence, they still believe domestic and homecare work is the only kind of job available to them. In some of the interviews and conversations I have had with Ecuadorian women in Genoa, they indicated that they eventually want to return to Ecuador, either after a few years or when they retire from the Italian labor system. They wish to do this because they feel that their jobs in Italy

¹⁴ “avere cura, sorvegliare, custodire.”

do not correspond to their professional training and employment experience in Ecuador. Even after many years of residing in Genoa, they have not been able to shift from cleaning and homecare employment to other types of service oriented jobs, similarly to the ones they once held in Ecuador.

For instance, before migration, many Ecuadorian women worked in the service sector, such as in banking, retail, sales, administrative staff in manufacturing companies, private schools and university teaching, accounting, etc. Although some interviewees reported that they were treated like family members and not as domestic workers, most feel inferiorized by experiencing for the first time a lowering of social class and discriminatory treatment from many Italian employers and Italian employees in public offices, retail stores, public transportation, etc.

A case in point is Claudia, 34, a dark-skinned Guayaquileñean accountant, whose mother had migrated by herself to Guayaquil from a rural town near the port city of Machala. She narrated the following experience while working as a live-in (*fissa*) caretaker for a 92-year-old Italian woman:

For her, I was the servant, yes, her own servant, but in the real sense of the word in the 1900s. So, I felt like a prisoner in that house. The day I asked for a raise, she fired me. She kicked me out!...it hurt me a lot the way she fired me, like a dog!...and she was well off...besides that, she didn't give me food because she said that fasting was good for the purification of the body. I ate what she ate. You should understand that a 92-year-old woman barely eats. Thus, she would make a chicken broth with a chicken wing for the two of us. I was dying of hunger! Dying of hunger! I lost weight, like 8 kilos...but I didn't live this situation traumatically because I came with the idea that I

would work as a servant, that they treat servants like that!...For instance, she would send food to the dog, and I would eat its food. It wasn't her dog. It belonged to one of her children. So, she would send to the dog an old piece of bread, a mildewed focaccia, to the dog. I swear, I would go and shake the bag to the dog, and say, hey, they sent you this, but I had already eaten what was inside because I was dying of hunger. It was really something! I learned to eat everything at that time!¹⁵

This is just one of the many humiliating situations and hardships Claudia narrated to me. She emphasized that she thought she had no rights to demand better treatment from her employers. Claudia's experiences exemplify the reconfigurations of domestic/intimate spaces, new servitudes, and new slaveries across the planet. Claudia adds, "this is how she [the elderly] thought servants should be treated, regardless of their nationality. The thing is that an Italian woman would have quit the same day, but I stayed eight months because I needed the money." This situation also highlights how the *badanti* represent a form of family assistance perceived as different from the home assistance provided by Italian or

¹⁵ "Para ella yo era la sierva, sí, *proprio* la *serva* però en el exacto sentido de la palabra de los años de 1900. Entonces me sentía muy prisionera de esa casa. El día que le pedí que me subiera el sueldo, ese día me botó. Me botó.... me dolió muchísimo como me botó, porque me botó *proprio* como se bota al perro...solamente porque yo le había pedido que aumentara el sueldo, era una señora que estaba muy bien...no me daba de comer, porque decía que en el *digiuno* está la purificación del cuerpo. Comía lo que ella comía, pero comprenderás que una señora de 92 años no come casi. Por lo tanto, ella con una ala de pollo hacía un *brodino* para las dos. Yo me moría de hambre. Me moría de hambre. Bajé de peso, bajé como 8 kilos.... Pero no vivía esa situación traumáticamente porque yo cuando recién vine yo vine con la idea que uno iba a venir a hacer la sirvienta. Así tratan a las sirvientas.... Por decirte, ella le mandaba la comida al perro. Y yo la comida del perro me la comía. Ella no tenía perro. Era un perro que tenía uno de sus hijos, entonces ella me mandaba, qué se yo, el pan viejo, una *focaccia* verde, a darle al perro. Te lo juro, llegaba, y le hacía así la funda, esto te mandaron, pero yo ya me lo había comido porque yo me moría de hambre, me moría de hambre. Verdaderamente, era una cosa! Yo, En esa época me acuerdo que yo aprendí a comer de todo!"

other Western European workers. Thus, certain modes of exclusion and subalternity are inconceivable for Italian workers. The term *badante*, then, describes a form of home assistance that cannot be applied to all workers, but only to particular groups of people (migrants) and involves evident discrimination.

Claudia migrated to Genoa at the beginning of the century to help pay for the medical treatment that her older sister was receiving after she was diagnosed with a chronic disease in Guayaquil. Her sister's illness and expensive medical treatment prompted her desire to leave: it was the right reason to leave the family, the home, and the boyfriend she did not yet want to marry. Had her sister not been ill and in need of continuous medical treatment, it would have been more difficult for Claudia's mother to accept her daughter's transnational migration—something that Claudia had already contemplated, but could not yet realize. Given that it was her decision to go to Italy as a kind of “uninvited guest,” as Claudia told me, she believed that she had to accept and tolerate the treatment that domestic workers received. It was in Italy that, for the first time, Claudia experienced domestic relations between employers and workers. Back in Ecuador, her Afro-descendant mother washed clothes by hand and ironed for other families to support and educate her five children; she performed all paid work at home while keeping an eye on her own children, under the immediate care of the older ones. Claudia was among the younger children. Claudia was the first in her family to obtain a university degree; her office job in Guayaquil allowed her to contribute the most to the household expenses. In a way, Claudia had prepared herself for her migration, having already experienced exclusion and marginalization based on her social class, race, sex, and gender, when she was a child and adult. On the other hand, light-skinned mestiza women, wives of professional men and, often times, women with their own professions, migrate to Italy and feel for the first time a

kind of exclusion they did not experience in Ecuador, based on their race and social class, although they may have already felt discriminated against for their sex and gender. In Italy, they may also work as *badanti*. The scarce possibilities in the host country to obtain employment other than that of a *badante* facilitate a new form of marginalization experienced by Ecuadorian women. These women were not prepared to confront this kind of discrimination based not only on their sex, gender, class, race, ethnicity, but also on their migratory status and national origin.

It is also noteworthy that Northern Italians see Ecuadorian women as more '*domesticatable*' migrants, compared to other migrant women in the city of Genoa, such as Moroccans, Senegalese, Tunisians or Nigerians. With the exception of Nigerian women, most African and Asian women migrate to Italy following their husbands and other family (male) members. The Genovese often perceive Latin Americans as people who speak a comprehensible language, similar to their own language, unlike Arabic, Wolof, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Mandarin, and other languages spoken in Africa and Asia. It is also a matter of phenotype. For Italians, Latin Americans may be 'brown' people, but not 'too much,' as Afro-descendants in Latin America are barely imagined by many Italian employers, and if they are Afro-descendants, they are Latin Americans; therefore, they speak Spanish or Portuguese, most are Christian and have been socialized into Occidental cultures, which have penetrated deeply into the Americas.

It is interesting to remember that when Italian peasants and workers—mostly from the South—migrated to the United States during the second half of the 1800s and first half of the 1900s, they were often racially categorized as 'White' even though they remained poor and working class longer than other European migrants, and lived in neighborhoods amid U.S. people of color (Guglielmo 4). Italians became the largest national group to

migrate to the U.S. from 1880 to 1920 (20) and came to feel and identify themselves as Italians abroad, more so than they ever did at home in Italy. As Italian immigrants were categorized as 'White,' they also developed an awareness of the racial divisions in U.S. society: where collaboration, intimacy, hostility, and distancing among U.S. people of color and Italians and Italian Americans have long existed (4). Similar to what many Ecuadorians experience today in Italy, Southern Italians were subjected to a kind of racism, a privileged racism. Although Ecuadorians are placed in marginal positions in Italian dominant culture, they are considered closer to 'White Italians' than other migrant groups, as they have assimilated into and learned many elements of Italian culture, while living and/or working in Italian households. In addition, the smooth functioning of the Italian upper and middle-class family largely depends on these workers. The forms of exclusion and marginalization that Italian migrants experienced in the last centuries in the U.S. and today's experiences of Ecuadorian migrants in Italy seem to have a common denominator: representing an alterity, yes, but not so distant from the dominant autoctonous communities and social groups.

Interestingly, many of the elderly who are taken care of by Ecuadorian women are Southerners who migrated to Northern Italy in the first half of the twentieth century and whose relatives migrated throughout the Americas and Europe. The historic divide between north and south in Italy, which has even been described as "Orientalism inside Europe" (Schneider 1998), has influenced constructions of race, ethnicity, and nation, and therefore relations between nationals and immigrants in Italy. As Barbara, an Italian working in an association providing services for migrants, said: "I have had Italian employers calling the office, telling me that they do not want a Black person, you know, especially old ladies, who are not used to interacting with Black people. They are scared. It's understandable. So, they prefer South Americans or Eastern Europeans." These statements reflect a kind of

coloniality disguised beneath fear. As Africans and African diasporas have been historically conceived and represented under Occidental/ imperial logics, they have been systematically excluded from European metropolises and those formed in the colonies. The exacerbated racism is utilized to dissociate the geographical proximity and colonial history that links Africa and Europe. Thus, the colonial comments of the Italian elderly are justified by the employment agency worker under the same colonial logics and epistemologies.

Considering that the Catholic Church, along with all its non-profit, non-governmental institutions with tax exemptions (associations, foundations, convents, nurseries, schools, hospitals, etc.) and now registered as part of the *terzo settore*, has been historically in charge of providing social services in Italy to those in most need, the Italian Catholic Church has played a key role in providing homecare to the ill, the disabled, and the elderly, as well as serving as mediator between those who request the services (Italian families) and those who provide them (migrant workers). In the 1970s and 1980s, the Catholic Church was the only recruitment channel and matching agency between Italian families and women from Cape Verde, the Philippines, and former Italian colonies in Africa. During my fieldwork, there were two main Genovese Catholic churches in the center of the city that spiritually, culturally, and socially assisted Latin American migrants: Santa Caterina Church, run by Capuchin Friars, and the diocesan Santa Zita Church. In Sampierdarena, in 2005 the Giovanni Bosco Church, directed by Salesians of Don Bosco, founded the group “Latinos en Don Bosco,” which became an important center for socializing, integration, sports, recreation, and spirituality of Latin American migrants, particularly young people, a characteristic of Salesian Society.

Beginning in 1989, from the San Siro Church, located in Genoa’s historic center, an Italian nun known as Sor Clara began to pay closer attention to Latin American migrants

and to assist them in the various difficulties they encountered upon their arrival in Genoa, particularly when Ecuadorian female migrants began to arrive in larger numbers. Then Sor Clara was transferred to the Santa Caterina Church, and from there, the Cura Pastoral Latinoamericana was created around 2003 with the collaboration of the Capucchin friars of Genoa and Peru.

In 2007, once or twice a week, Santa Caterina Church offered basic Italian language classes and workshops in Spanish where nurses and more experienced care takers would lecture on elderly and disabled care. Afterwards, a monk or a nun proceeded with a Bible reading and prayer. At Santa Zita Church, there were similar meetings; later on, food and clothing were distributed for free, acquired with donations from private companies and Caritas Migrantes, an institution of the Catholic Church. Learning how to accept hardship while living in a foreign country, how to be submissive and patient with Italian employers, and to practice acts of kindness and charity toward those in greater need and poverty, constituted a fundamental part of the workshops. At the end, especially in the winter, bread, a hot beverage, and packaged food were distributed at a table by Sor Clara with the assistance of close members of the Church. Most Ecuadorians in Genoa claim to be Catholic and believe they share cultural backgrounds with Italians. But even those who self-identify as Protestant in the interviews have participated in these workshops and attended Sunday mass, declaring that “they were praying to the same God” and they could more rapidly find a homecare or house cleaning job through the Catholic Church. It is evident that the Catholic Church, as a global and powerful network, helps in the organizing of contemporary global migrations and accomodation of capitalist needs.

In Italy, Ecuadorian migrants are often perceived as less ‘other,’ compared to Muslims from Asia and Africa, or to Albanians and Roma—while there is increasing

competition among Eastern European and Latin American women to obtain domestic and elderly care jobs. In Italy and other Southern European/Mediterranean countries, the Catholic Church has developed programs and offices to assist migrants in legal, migration, health and family issues, such as Caritas Migrantes in major Italian cities. Latin American migrant women and, to a lesser extent, men, have been assisted in adjusting to local labor cultures as domestic workers. While the Italian Catholic Church has assisted Ecuadorians—many of them with university education and degrees—in emotionally, psychologically, and technically preparing them to do the jobs they are expected to do as migrants, it is clear that the Church has proselytized and promoted Catholicism among the migrant population, maintaining and developing religious activities that Italians are less interested in pursuing, and perpetuating the status quo of Eurocentered modern/colonial gender, ethnoracial, and class hierarchies with respect to who does what in Italian society.

When women migrants first arrive, they often work as live-in caretakers as a way of securing room and board. As they learn local labor systems, join more social networks and save money, many opt to work at an hourly rate. They either care for the elderly, ill, or disabled and/or clean houses, 6-18 hours a week, two to three days a week. Italian families that did not previously use the services of domestic workers either because they were too expensive or they preferred not to have a ‘stranger’ in the house, are increasingly hiring domestic workers as they have become more affordable and imply a higher status in social circles.

Ecuadorian women in Italy are often seen as *badanti*, or potential *badanti*, as if that were the only waged work they could do. For instance, at the *sportello migranti*, staff and volunteers would funnel Ecuadorian and other Latin American women into *badante* work, even if these migrants were teachers and professionals in their home country. In their

Occidental attempt to help migrants, I observed that Italians in these associations would encourage women migrants to perform domestic work as a first step in the Italian labor market (*per cominciare*), and most would end up in these jobs for decades. However, Claudia represents a break from this pattern. In Genoa, she worked for nine years as a domestic worker, and now works as an accountant in a supermarket, which is the profession she studied for and practiced in Ecuador. She recounts:

We, migrants in general, and Ecuadorians in particular, came—at least when I came—to work in anything and make money and then leave, and that’s it! For example, I haven’t had money because the last thing I’ve done to be able to study, is having the luxury of not working Monday through Friday for six months, and just working Saturdays and Sundays. I haven’t made money in six months. I have made enough to get by and stuff, but I haven’t earned enough to save. But now I have a career.¹⁶

Claudia was able to see herself outside of the dominant ideologies regarding what a migrant in general, and an Ecuadorian woman in particular, was expected to do. As a single woman without children, she was also able to re-structure her life when she no longer had to pay for her sister’s ongoing medical treatment. After her sister died, Claudia’s earnings were mainly used to support herself and to help her two orphaned nieces in Ecuador. Claudia, fluent in Italian, also took several accounting courses that helped her understand the

¹⁶ “Porque nosotros, la gran mayoría de extranjeros, extranjeros en general o ecuatorianos en particular vinimos, al menos en las épocas en que yo estuve, a trabajar como sea y hacer plata para después irnos y basta. Por ejemplo, yo no he tenido dinero porque la última cosa que he hecho es seis meses darme el lujo de no trabajar de lunes a viernes para ir a estudiar, y trabajar sólo sábados y domingos. Sí, no he ganado dinero en seis meses, he ganado lo suficiente para subsistir y todo lo demás, pero no he ganado como para ahorrar. Pero tengo una carrera.”

accounting system in Italy, as well as national fiscal legislation. She realized that her university degree from Ecuador was not enough to obtain an accounting job in Italy. In 2007, she married her long-time Ecuadorian boyfriend and brought him to Genoa, under Italian family reunification laws.

Healthcare Services and Migrant Circuits

I also volunteered at a free clinic (*ambulatorio*), called *Ambulatorio Internazionale "Città Aperta."* [International Clinic "Open City"], run by the association of the same name, composed of volunteer physicians, nurses and administrative staff (medical anthropologists, university students, retirees), who are also members of the *Comitato Cittadino della Solidarietà e della Cooperazione Internazionale* [Citizens Committee of Solidarity and International Cooperation]. The clinic was founded in 1994. For two years, it operated in San Donato Church, located in the historic center; in 1996 it moved to its current location, also in the historic center. Interestingly, the clinic, which provides free medical services to undocumented migrants who cannot otherwise access it in the city, is in an alleyway, *vico del Duca*, in front of the City Hall (Tursi Palace), intersecting the most historically aristocratic, and probably, the most beautiful street of Genoa: via Garibaldi, also known as Strada Nuova.

The clinic opened for the purpose of providing medical care as a fundamental human right, regardless of national origin, migratory or socio-economic status, as established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 25, paragraph 1: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." In particular, the clinic

offered medical assistance and care to ‘irregular,’ undocumented migrants, since current Italian law does not guarantee medical care to undocumented migrants, except in emergency cases and when people go to the hospital emergency room. According to Art. 32, paragraph 1, of the Italian Constitution, “La Repubblica tutela la salute come fondamentale diritto dell’individuo e interesse della collettività, e garantisce cure gratuite agli indigenti.”¹⁷ Thus, according to the Italian Constitution, emergency healthcare cannot be denied to any person, in the interest of the collectivity, and the State guarantees free healthcare to indigent people. Precisely from this principle, the opening of the clinic intended to draw special attention to the serious discrepancies in the Italian healthcare system, which should cover healthcare services for all people present in Italian territory, including undocumented migrants beyond those of emergency cases, and to avoid emergency health-care situations for people residing in Italy. Paradoxically, while making up for a grave social concern, the political goal of the association that runs the clinic is to close its office the moment the national healthcare system abides by the Italian Constitution and provides healthcare to everyone residing in Italy, regardless of their migratory status.

Thus, the clinic served as a first point of contact and reference for healthcare and preventive medical services through which undocumented migrants could obtain prescriptions for medicine, referrals to specialists and approval for medical examinations, which they could only obtain from public hospitals for free if they could prove their indigence. Otherwise, undocumented migrants could only access healthcare in emergency

¹⁷ “The Republic safeguards health as a fundamental right of the individual and as a collective interest, and guarantees free medical care to the indigent.”

cases. From outside of the public healthcare system, the clinic played the role of primary care physician, enabling undocumented migrants to enter the public healthcare system.

Just as I had volunteered my services to ARCI, I also provided my services in reception at the *Ambulatorio Internazionale "Città Aperta."* Upon arrival, I would ask patients if this was their first visit. If so, patients would fill out a one-page form regarding their personal and contact information, age, national origin, sex, and relevant medical history, and in case of emergency, another contact person. Once they returned the filled-out form, I would give them a piece of paper with their patient number, which was the number used to archive the medical files of patients in the waiting room. In order to protect patient privacy in the office records, the clinic used numbers in the files. If patients indicated that they had been there before, I would simply ask them for their number and orally verify their name with them. No appointments were made. No identification cards were requested. The clinic observed a first come, first served policy. The clinic was open for five days a week, Monday through Friday, from 5pm to 7pm. Usually there were two staff members, all volunteers: the doctor and the receptionist.

Most patients stated on the form that they were undocumented. Some indicated they were unemployed. Others declared they were street vendors, construction or domestic workers. The exception to this trend was the visit by three Albanian male students from the University of Genova who needed a medical certificate to present to the University. From the onset, the doctor emphasized that they should be seen by a primary care physician registered within the public healthcare system. But the students declared that they had recently arrived and urgently needed the certificate for some university activity. The doctor agreed to see them as an exception. Although university students must register every year in the public healthcare system at a reasonable price, the students were nonetheless examined by the doctor and given the requested certificates.

This uncommon situation helped me to understand that even when regular foreign people came to the clinic, the doctor's guiding principle was always the patient's right to healthcare, regardless of migratory status, even when the patient could legally and readily access the Italian healthcare system.

In conversations with the volunteer medical doctors, they confirmed that it was not unusual for foreign people, and in sporadic cases, also Italian citizens, to request services from the clinic even when they could access the national healthcare system. In most cases, the doctors added, insured people would come to the clinic because they had previously been patients of the clinic (for instance, while being undocumented) and they had felt comfortable with the service or they had heard that the clinic would not deny medical care to any person requesting it, regardless of whether or not they were registered in the public healthcare system.

Similarly to my experience volunteering for ARCI, I was the only non-Italian volunteer at the clinic. The migrant population that arrived at the clinic was heterogeneous. But some distinguishing characteristics could be mentioned. Patients were mostly from Africa and South Asia and more than half were men between the ages of 20 and 50. A smaller number of patients were Roma and Latin American women and men; they usually came with minors. Some were newly arrived. Others indicated that they had been in Italy for 10 years. Few were illiterate while others stated they had a college degree. The level of Italian language proficiency also varied. Some stated they lacked an established residence (they were homeless) and slept and showered in several shelters throughout the city. Occasionally well-dressed Italian men in their 30s or early 40s would arrive at the clinic with young Eastern European or South American pregnant women.

My fluency in Spanish and Italian was welcomed by both the Italian doctors and the patients. Most 'associates/customers' in the *sportello migranti* of ARCI were South

American. In contrast, at the clinic most patients were males from the Maghreb, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. Few were from Latin America. The fact that Latin Americans compose the majority of migrants who access the services provided in Genoa by associations like ARCI, while most patients at the clinic are Africans and Asians, points to some differences in migrant networks and experiences, as well as the available means to obtain residence permits. It seems that because Italian families prefer to hire Latin American women as domestic and homecare workers, and Latin American migrant women have built a labor chain in Genoa, assisted and sponsored by the Catholic Church, they seem to obtain more labor contracts, thus, enabling them to obtain and renew their residence permits in Italy. This is an advantageous situation that African and Asian men in Genoa do not have. Furthermore, as Latin American women often work with Italian families and take care of the elderly, ill, and disabled, they are more familiar with the Italian healthcare system than, for instance, a construction worker. Latin American migrant women are in closer contact with the elite, upper and upper-middle classes who can direct them to and facilitate medical care when needed. In some cases, migrant careworkers are seen by the family doctors of their employers, or their own employers are medical doctors.

In some significant ways, the clinic works outside many dominant structures. The clinic and the *sportello migranti* work in two different but inter-related circuits among migrants. Information about their services travels differently as well. The free services provided by the clinic primarily travel by "*passa parola*," 'word to mouth,' among undocumented and documented migrants who have visited the clinic themselves at one time or know someone who has. In Italy, it is not uncommon for a migrant to have a permit of stay and then be unable to renew it. Subsequently, she may stay undocumented for a period of time, which could become several years, and then, once again, to be able to renew

it. A migrant may have been served at the clinic while being undocumented and then, once having the permit of stay, re-access the public healthcare system.

Unlike ARCI's *sportello migranti*, there are no multilingual color fliers and pamphlets publicizing the clinic and there is no large political party that lobbies for the clinic to obtain public funding for healthcare promotion and prevention. The power relations and legality within the associations and with other entities also differ. A lot of what the *sportello migranti* does is to facilitate the entrance and placement of migrants within the Italian labor system, legalizing their existence (by applying for a residence permit), protecting their rights as workers, tenants, parents, policyholders, victims of accidents, etc. In other words, a migrant goes to ARCI to enter and continue functioning within the Italian 'legal' system.

In contrast, migrants who access the clinic are outside the Italian 'legal' or formal system. As outsiders, they cannot access public healthcare unless they go to the emergency room—where, depending on the case, a patient could be examined either immediately or after several hours. According to Angelo Marconi, a former volunteer at the clinic, two of the founding doctors of the clinic association did a case study that demonstrated a pattern of diseases that related either directly or indirectly to the conditions of being migrant (particularly undocumented); both doctors argued that the migrant is subject to physical and mental pathologies linked to nostalgia, a sense of alienation and isolation (Message to author). While the *sportello migranti's* major decision-making takes place among Italians at the level of labor unions, political parties, public officials of the Province and the City of Genoa and the Region of Liguria, the clinic association is largely composed of medical doctors who have their own private practices, work in hospitals, or are retired, as well as college students and medical anthropologists.

Liminal Spaces: The Ecuadorian University in Genoa and Milan

In addition to my two volunteer positions during the week, I traveled to Milan every Sunday. From April to June 2007, I worked for the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL) extension in Milan (88 miles northeast of Genoa). When required, I also worked on Saturdays at the University extension in Genoa, with which I became very familiar. On Sundays, I taught English as a third language at the elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels. In the classroom, I used a student-centered teaching approach. At the intermediate and advance levels, I often generated student participation, particularly on current Ecuadorian and Italian issues and on their migratory experiences in order to use the target language, English, as a medium of expression.

This rewarding experience in Milan allowed me to interact with young Ecuadorian migrants in different spaces and positionalities, and to understand Ecuadorian diasporas in a larger metropolitan city. It also helped me to comprehend how an Ecuadorian institution staffed by Ecuadorians and providing services for Ecuadorians functioned in Italy. The train rides from Genoa to Milan and back were also important sites of observation and participation.

The University of Loja-Milan is one of UTPL's six international centers located in Madrid, Barcelona, New York, Rome, and Genoa, in addition to the 110 university centers in Ecuador. The Milan extension operates in the facilities of the Jesuit Institute Leone XIII, a comprehensive school, run by the Compagnia di Gesù [Company of Jesus], a Christian Third Order Franciscan and Benedictine community. The Jesuit Institute charges the UTPL only the necessary amount to cover the costs of cleaning the facilities and utilities during the weekends that the UTPL holds classes. The school provides elementary (*primaria*), middle

(*scuola secondaria di primo grado*), and high school (*liceo classico e scientifico*) education. Located in a central urban zone, the school is accessible by most forms of public transportation: tram, bus, and subway.

Founded in 1971, and using distance-learning methodologies since 1976, the UTPL has been administered by Identés missionaries. The main campus of the University of Loja is in the City of Loja (capital of the Loja Province, in Southern Andean Ecuador). UTPL-Milan is registered with the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and managed by Fondazione Identé di Studio e Ricerca [Identé Foundation of Learning and Research], based in Rome. The University works in collaboration with the adult-elementary and high school, Unidad Educativa José María Velaz S.J, part of the Instituto Radiofónico Fe y Alegría (IRFEYAL); and they share the same space in Milan at the Instituto Leone XIII, and in Genoa, at the Salesian Institute Don Bosco, in Sampierdarena. In Italy, both UTPL and IRFEYAL started in Rome in December 2000, and later extended their educational services to Milan and Genoa, operated by Identés missionaries. IRFEYAL is also part of the *Compañía de Jesús* [Company of Jesus], which was founded in Venezuela in the 1950s and later extended to the rest of Latin America. In Ecuador, it has provided education to children and adults since 1964. Similarly to the Identé missionaries, the Company of Jesus is a congregation of clergy, religious and lay missionaries.

Operating with a distance-learning methodology, the University of Loja in Milan offered 18 undergraduate career paths. Some of the most popular careers were computer science, business administration, psychology, economics, communications, and law. Although the local Genovese newspaper *Il Secolo XIX* referred to the University of Loja as the “University of the ‘*Badanti*,’” this is in fact a private Catholic university open to everyone fluent in Spanish, with a high school diploma and able to pay tuition and the cost of books.

To be accepted to the University, students do not need to have a residence permit. Approximately one quarter of the student body is undocumented. Some migrants with residence permits decide to study there because it is one of the few universities in Italy that allows students to have full-time jobs while pursuing a professional degree. As the Italian university system requires students to have part-time jobs because most classes are held between 9am and 5pm, students perceive the University of Loja as the only accessible space to obtain a university degree. During informal conversations with my students, they indicated that they chose to study at the University of Loja because the education was in Spanish and they felt more comfortable studying in that language. Others indicated that they were pursuing higher education at an Ecuadorian institution because their intention was to return to Ecuador and they wanted to make sure that their degree would be immediately recognized there. I argue that in order to successfully fulfill Italian university requirements, foreign students, in this case, Latin American ones, require not only fluency in Italian, but skills that allow them to understand and reproduce concepts and specific knowledge of which they were not familiar during their previous education in Latin America. As in most higher education institutions around the world, university students need to command not only oral communication competencies, but also academic Italian written skills by the time they have to write a thesis, as a requirement for graduation.

Most of my students were Ecuadorians between the ages of 20 and 50. They came from different geographical regions as well as cultural and socio-economic situations. Female and male students were equally represented. I also had Salvadorian, Peruvian, and Colombian students. During the break, some students organized themselves to sell Ecuadorian food to their colleagues. In Milan, my students worked in a wide range of sectors: food manufacturing, import-export offices, domestic work, catering, courier, retail,

and construction. By obtaining elementary or secondary school education at IRFEYAL or pursuing a university degree at UTPL, Ecuadorian migrants engaged in intellectual practices that are denied to them by the Italian public educational system.

In a sense, my students were in a liminal position in that even though they lived as migrants in Italy and had jobs that offered them little upward social mobility, their vision for change toward a better social situation is geared toward a space and time that is not related to Italy, but to Ecuador. This social transformation is not envisioned as a possibility in Italy. For this reason, their decision to study at the Ecuadorian University of Loja is not only a convenient and practical choice, but also an assessment that denotes how their position in Italy is suspended while waiting (and working toward) a better moment yet to come, also through their studies. Their decision to pursue a college degree also suggests their sense of awareness and agency: they have chosen to move away from how the dominant society understands them, creating for themselves opportunities and alternatives removed or at least more distant from dominant cultural logics.

Taking the concept of liminality, Maria Lugones proposes a way to re-think ourselves and others, as a way of coalescing and creating alternatives to existing dominant structures. She examines liminality as a space in which dominant groups are largely ignorant, and where transgression of the reigning order is possible (75). Liminality, for Lugones, necessitates some level of awareness of domination and of resistance to domination—at least a praxical and not necessarily articulate level, that is, one that informs action (78). The borderdweller, in an Anzaldúan genealogy, is thus in need of interactive sense outside the narrow and oppressive confines of

dominant logics and sense (98). Ecuadorian student/migrants in Italy envision themselves outside or at least less removed from dominant logics and sense.

For Lugones, the liminal, the borderdweller, knows that she has ways of living in disruption of domination.¹⁸ By recognizing that we occupy a liminal site in a particular situation, we are able to read each other away from structural, dominant meaning, and recognize and decipher resistant codes (“On Complex Communication” 79). Thus, the first step for Lugones is to recognize liminality, and from there to recognize and decipher resistant codes (79). I argue that even though mestizo, black, and indigenous Ecuadorians are in particularly oppressive situations in particular spaces as documented or undocumented migrants in Italy, under white supremacist/capitalist logics that guide Italian dominant ideologies and praxis, Ecuadorians are creating and accessing alternative spaces and ways of communication where they are not what they are within dominant Italian structures. For Ecuadorian migrants embarking on intellectual projects denied by

¹⁸ Here it is worth remembering Victor Turner’s Occidentalist notion of “liminality.” In his study of ritual systems of the Ndembu people of northwestern Zambia (formerly northern Rhodesia) in south-central Africa, and building on Arnold van Gennep’s “rites de passage,” Victor Turner considers the period of margin, or “liminality,” as an interstructural situation, and views this state as “a relatively fixed or stable condition” (91). The transitional-being or “liminal persona” is defined by a name and by a set of symbols (95). He adds that the “structurally negative characteristic of transitional beings is that they *have* nothing. They have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows. Their condition is indeed the very prototype of sacred property” (98-99). Other symbolic themes related to this state are “structural invisibility,” ambiguity and neutrality, and that the opposite processes of notions and representations form a peculiar unity of the liminal: “that which is neither this nor that, and yet both” (99). He then adds that “liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection” to think about their societies, cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them (105). While Turner’s work may have been influential in Anthropology, I do not find his thesis to be of theoretical or political use in my dialogue with Lugones. Lugones’ concept of liminality is not a passage toward a new position, within the structures of society. It is a moment of in-depth analysis of the structures of society. It is a situation within dominant structures, in which one could be immersed as a migrant, and one may experience exclusion and marginalization and develop practices of resistance and awareness.

the Italian dominant systems of labor and education, I consider the University of Loja in Italy as a space of liminality and resistance-building, although working within Western modern/colonial systems (with the collaboration of the transnational Catholic Church).

Another limen can be traced in the intercultural polyglossia Ecuadorians use with other intercultural polyglots, as they move away from the dominant monologic discourse—which is also resisted by the plurality of languages spoken by native Italians. Most Ecuadorians use Spanish when speaking to native Spanish speakers. Many, however, speak *Itañol*: a combination of Spanish and Italian, depending on the particular topic of conversation, the length of their stay in Italy, and their fluency in Italian.

Rosa, a 43-year-old woman at the time of her interview, was originally from a rural coastal town. Rosa had lived in a Guayaquileñean favela before her migration to Italy, and has lived in Genoa since the mid-1980s. In fact, she considers herself one of the first Ecuadorian migrant women to have moved to Genoa. In the 1980s, “when I found an Ecuadorian-looking woman on the street, I would suddenly talk to her and we would become friends,” she told me. Rosa narrated to me a telephone conversation she had with her future Italian boss.

“La señora parla poco español.

“The [Italian] lady speaks little Spanish.

Y me dijo: ¿te quieres venir en Italia? And she told me: do you want to come to

Italy?

Yo sin pensar dije sí,
pensando que era Yaguachi que
me iba!...Non sapevo ni
che cosa era Italia, Europa, che
cosa era l’America!”

Without thinking, I said yes,
thinking that it was Yaguachi where
I was going!...I didn’t even know
what Italy was, Europe was,
what America was!”

We can see the syntactic calque, that is to say, the borrowing of syntactic structures from one language to another. Rosa felt that she had learned a lot in Italy: about food, culture, geography, how to set up a table, how to dress, and how to read. She never took a single Italian language class. She became literate when the Italian children she took care of were learning how to read. In this quote, we can see that in Guayaquil Rosa was not aware of the geopolitical distribution of the planet and Western cartography. After so many years living in Italy, Rosa refers to the United States of America, as 'America,' the way it is often referred to by Europeans, but not Ecuadorians. , although a subalternized speech, works as a liminal language that Ecuadorians incorporate into their oral and written communication (sms, twitter, whatsapp, facebook, skype, email, and other social networks) as they interact with other Latin American migrants, and even with their relatives in Ecuador. Spanish-Italian interference and intercultural communication are also present in public written texts, as exemplified in the broadly distributed *Expreso Latino* newspaper, published in Rome, which belongs to the publishing group *Stranieri in Italia*, the most important publishing house in Italy oriented toward migrants (Gómez Sánchez 35-6) .¹⁹

In contrast, Patricia, 26, was pursuing a Master's degree in International Relations at the University of Genoa at the time of the interview. She refused to speak *Itañol*. She told me:

[Italians] think that the people who come here are ignorant, that you're inferior, not in an ethnoracial sense. You're inferior in knowledge...

Something I have noted in Ecuadorian migrants is that there is an implicit

¹⁹ This is similar to *Spanglish*, often spoken by Latina/o communities in the United States.

sense of inferiority; it's as if the change affects them a lot. They incorporate within themselves what society in general thinks of them.²⁰

Patricia is from the agricultural coastal town of Balzar, in the Province of Guayas, whose capital is the city of Guayaquil. She told me that the main reason her father originally migrated in 2001 was to ensure that his children had a college education. In Balzar (approximately 80 miles from Guayaquil), Guayaquil was the nearest city to access a university. But her family worried that eventually she would move to Guayaquil by herself since her closest family lived in Balzar. Soon after her father migrated to Genoa, Patricia joined him, followed by her younger sister. Although Patricia appreciates the higher education to which she has had access as a documented migrant in Italy and speaker of standard Italian, she is critical of the Eurocentered hierarchization of knowledge and geopolitics. She does not consider herself as living in two worlds or understanding two different conditions of life (those of Ecuadorians and those of Italians). According to her, Ecuadorians have developed a sense of inferiority in Genoa, compared to Italians, which impedes them from succeeding at school, business, and social life. A sense of inferiority, Patricia, remarked, that has been taught in Ecuador, at home, school, and in general social life.

Let me now turn to Xavier, an Ecuadorian activist and former president of an anti-capitalist association that advocates for human rights, including those of migrants. At the

²⁰ “[Los italianos] creen que las personas que vienen acá, son ignorantes, que tú eres inferior, no en el sentido étnico-racial. Eres inferior en cuanto a conocimiento...Algo que he notado, en la migración ecuatoriana es un implícito sentimiento de inferioridad; es como si les afecta mucho el cambio. Ellos incorporan dentro de sí lo que la sociedad en general piensa de ellos.”

time of the interview, Xavier was 34. During the day and on weekends, Xavier worked as a construction worker and waiter, respectively. When he did not work, he participated in the meetings of his association or with the radical leftist political party to which he felt affiliation. In these meetings and demonstrations, to which I was invited to participate, they discussed political texts, strategies, organization of sit-ins, rallies, and demonstrations. Other times, Xavier would sell the association's newspaper in the historic center, while speaking to migrants about his political organization. Xavier stated:

Cheap labor, that's it! For the government, immigrants are here only as workers. You can get it [a residence permit] with a student visa, etc., but you have to come from your country with it, you have to have a scholarship, win in a selection process, you know, you cannot be a young person who finishes high school in your country and want to study in Italy because you can fill out the application, but at the end they don't accept you. Those are extremely rare and few cases, and people who are usually recommended. I'm not the only one without documents, I think there are two or three million in Italy.²¹

Although Xavier had precarious jobs and at the time was undocumented, he has been able to see himself outside structures of domination, which keep the migrant using Italian-run 'window services' and maintain them in subaltern epistemological

²¹ "*Braccia da lavoro, basta!* Los inmigrantes aquí son sólo trabajadores para el gobierno. Tú lo puedes obtener [permiso de residencia] por estudio, etc., pero tienes ya que venir de tu país, tienes que ser becado, tienes que haber ganado algún concurso, sabes, no puedes ser un joven que termina la secundaria en tu país y dices yo quiero venir a estudiar en Italia, porque tú puedes hacer la solicitud, pero puntualmente te la niegan, son poquísimos, son rarísimos, y son gente recomendada normalmente. Yo no soy el único sin documentos, pienso que hayan dos, tres millones en Italia."

and social positionalities. I view Xavier not only as a person occupying a liminal space, from which he has been able to create alternative ways to domination, but most importantly, as a subalternized cosmopolitan who is committed to counter-hegemonic anti-global apartheid.²² His vast knowledge of Ecuadorian and Italian ideologies and structures, his critical understanding and sophisticated analyses of Ecuadorian and Latin American development, poverty, and leftist political thinking, as well as of Italian elites and politics and EU policies, allow him to make decolonial moves. Located as a subaltern within specific domains of cosmopolitanism, Xavier's vernacular cosmopolitanism reflects the disentanglements of the particular oppressions he lives individually and collectively as an undocumented migrant in Italy, and yet he continues his activism in his organization.

Conclusions: Re-Thinking Ecuadorian Diasporas

As a Southern/Mediterranean European country and a subordinate colonial empire since the nineteenth century, Italy has been constructed in Ecuador as a nation composed of people who are 'warmer' than Northern Europeans and less racist, compared to Spain. Insofar as Italians and Latin Americans are mostly Catholics or, if not, they are predominantly Christians, they have developed powerful alliances that have opened particular spaces to Latin American migrants, such as the collaboration of the Salesians in Genoa, the Company of Jesus in Milan, the Capuchins in Santa Caterina Church, just to name

²² In *We, the people of Europe?* Balibar refers to how these global apartheid are put into place after the disappearance of old colonial and postcolonial apartheid (113).

a few. Italians are also conceived by Ecuadorians as speakers of an intelligible language and viceversa.²³

Most importantly, many Ecuadorians in Ecuador view Italy as being at the center of Europe, a potential market for migrant care-takers and a country with a stronger industrialized economy. After Spain, it is mainly through France and Italy that most Ecuadorians have garnered knowledge about Europe.²⁴ While Ecuadorians have formed communities in France, the domestic labor offered in Italy, the migratory chains that have developed since the 1980s, and the idea that French is a more difficult language to learn, encouraged the idea that Italy could be a possible final migratory destination.

Migrants from non-EU member countries are both included and excluded from the hierarchical structures of EU-member countries. Where civil and political rights are ever more restricted in the name of protecting citizen rights, by studying law, economics, computer science, psychology, and English at the University of Loja, Ecuadorians use and apply alternatives to Italian oppressive systems, within Western logics and epistemologies. Why are Ecuadorians not studying careers in history, philosophy, and literature at the University of Loja? These careers are not even offered, as the University seeks to respond to the needs of migrants. In the global capitalist system that Ecuadorians inhabit, whether it is in Ecuador, Italy or Singapore, Ecuadorians know that they need to have particular

²³ Most Ecuadorians I interviewed thought that when they first arrived in Italy they could understand more Italian than they actually could.

²⁴ During the wave of Latin American wars of independence from Spain in the first half of the nineteenth century, France and French education, law, and culture became models for the nascent Latin American nation-states, in opposition to Spain and as a consequence of the imperial rivalry between Spain and France in the Caribbean and North Africa.

knowledge and skills that are validated, practical, and useful within the current systems of domination. Why are Andean cosmology and philosophies, and non-Occidental histories, not yet taught at the University of Loja in Milan, or why is there not yet an indigenous University in Europe? While there are Latin American universities that incorporate indigenous knowledges, as well as Indigenous universities, research and cultural centers, these knowledges still have yet to make their way to European universities in more systematic approaches, that is, not via Occidental anthropologists but through the very producers of these forms of knowledges.

As Bonnie Honig argues, it is unclear whether the state does *not* consent to the presence on its territory of large numbers of undocumented migrants, as the state not only combats illegal immigration but also simultaneously enables, covertly courts, often manages, and tolerates it (97). Ecuadorian diasporic subjects subvert the Italian oppressive system (of education for example) which dictates that they must occupy and remain in certain subalternized labor positions, as electricians, carpenters, welders, machinists, and maids. By pursuing a college degree in law, economics, computer science, psychology or education at the University of Loja, they incorporate another type of life that is different from their daily life and jobs; whether or not they will ever return to Ecuador.

In a coloniality under capitalist modern/colonial structures, a liminality that transcends particularly oppressive situations is one step ahead, generating alternatives and personal and collective transformation. Of course, ethnography involves some sort of representation. Nonetheless, my being an insider/outsider in the self-reflexive ethnography I have conducted in Italy can hopefully trigger new inquiries and help me identify possible relationships and alternatives to domination and oppression from within and from without dominant systems.

Today's projects of the Ecuadorian diaspora are some of the responses from "the other side of the line" to "this side of the line"—to borrow Boaventura de Sousa Santos' phrase, cited earlier in this chapter, to refer to how radical epistemological and legal distinctions have been created to divide social reality into two realms (1-2). According to Santos, modern Western thinking has been an abyssal thinking at least since the thirteenth century, in the sense that as a socio-economic and political hegemonic paradigm, it has manifested the denial and impossibility of co-presence of the two sides of the line. Thus, beyond "this line" there is only nonexistence, invisibility, absence, and sub-humans that are not conceivably candidates for social inclusion (1-10). It is on this "other side" that Ecuadorians have been placed under several historical inter-related systems of domination grounded in modern/colonial capitalist logics. From and through these logics, Ecuadorians are searching for a redistribution of material and social resources. Ecuadorians have left their known and familiar spaces, and in their attempts have risked their own lives and dignity and have been willing to be inferiorized as migrants, under Occidentalist abyssal logics. While real-world distinctions and practices are more blurred than what dominant systems and theorizations can profess, what is most important to note is that Ecuadorians in Italy, as subaltern cosmopolitans from the global South moving to the North, are simultaneously reproducing and disrupting colonial epistemologies and practices, as well as creating alternatives to hegemonic Occidentalist systems of domination. They know very well that they need allies in powerful positions, such as the Catholic Church, in order to open alternative spaces that would otherwise be closed to them. Ecuadorians in Italy are creating counter-hegemonic emancipatory projects that I view as an invitation to reconceptualize the notion of trans-migrants. This re-thinking of human beings, moving transnationally in cosmopolitan ways, in and through global capitalism, can be another step toward counter-hegemonic logics of exclusion.

CHAPTER III

JOURNEY, EXILE, AND BORDER-CROSSING IN MARIO CAMPAÑA'S *AIRES DE ELLICOTT CITY*, LEONARDO VALENCIA'S *KAZBEK*, AND IVÁN CARRASCO'S "EL ECUATAÑOL"

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we look back, we must also do so in the knowledge—which gives rise to profound uncertainties—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.

—Salman Rushdie

Introduction

The literary texts I examine in this chapter were written by three contemporary Ecuadorian male writers who have lived in Spain, specifically in Barcelona and its surroundings, since the 1970s: Mario Campaña Avilés (Guayaquil 1959-), Leonardo Valencia Assogna (Guayaquil 1969-), and Iván Carrasco Montesinos (Cuenca 1951-). As mobile subjects and writers, their literary work has also travelled. These authors have published both in Spain and Latin America. Mario Campaña's work has also been translated and published in France and Italy. Likewise, their readership and the consumption and circulation of their works are located on both sides of the Atlantic. However, little academic criticism has been published about their work, and it is almost inexistent in English language.

Campaña, Valencia, and Carrasco are well known in Ecuadorian literary circles. The three writers come from Ecuadorian middle (Campaña and Carrasco) and upper-middle-class families (Valencia). They are university educated, although Carrasco did not complete degrees in the several fields he studied. Both Campaña and Carrasco identify themselves with leftist political struggles that are often manifested in their non-fiction, and less evidently evoked in their poetry and fiction, respectively.¹ On the other hand, Valencia has been a notorious right-wing intellectual. He has openly criticized the left-wing politics of the Ecuadorian government of President Rafael Correa Delgado.² These three authors migrated to Southern/Mediterranean Europe with the unequivocal purpose of becoming accomplished artists and writers: a goal they considered a near impossibility in the Ecuador of the 1970s in the case of Carrasco, and the 1990s in the cases of Campaña and Valencia.

¹ I should note that within his leftist political stance, on July 18, 2009, Campaña started a public debate on Ecuadorian cultural politics, with the first open letter sent to Ecuador's President Rafael Correa Delgado, signed by Campaña, along with other 11 Ecuadorian artists and intellectuals, which circulated in blogs and electronic mails. Campaña sent this letter during his trip to Ecuador, on the occasion of Guayaquil's IV Feria Internacional del Libro (IV International Book Fair), that took place in July 2009 in the Palacio de Cristal, in which he participated. In that letter and consecutive communications and essays, Campaña makes an incisive critique on the model of cultural politics carried out by Ecuador's Ministry of Culture, which considered "convencional y limitada, y, además, centralista" and would not lead to a real change in Ecuadorian society or a radical and profound cultural transformation ("Nuevas Cartas"). The initial letter received a reply from then Minister of Culture Ramiro Noriega Fernández. A series of comments and responses to Campaña created a sort of open and non-institutional dialogue about Ecuadorian cultural politics (although it only lasted a few months), and emails and other messages were uploaded to Campaña's blog "Cartas Nuevas." As a non-conformist diasporic intellectual, Campaña has maintained a critical stance toward Ecuador's governmental politics, critiques that arise from his profound desire for social justice and freedom of thought.

² In personal conversations, interviews, and newspaper editorials in Spain (*El País*) and Ecuador (*El Universo*), Valencia has manifested his opposition to Ecuador's current government.

They viewed Europe, not surprisingly at the time, as a privileged and vital space for developing their creativity and presenting their literary and artistic works.

Having chosen Spain as the location from which to inscribe their work, Campaña, Valencia, and Carrasco were very aware of the Iberian nation's potential advantages in terms of language, culture, geopolitics, socioeconomics, and particularly, book publication and circulation. Nonetheless, the difficulties an uncelebrated Latin American writer (even worse, from a small country such as Ecuador, and in the 1970s and early 1990s barely known by most Spaniards) might encounter in Europe were not insignificant. But Barcelona, capital of the culturally, linguistically, and economically distinctive Region of Catalonia, might have provided unique opportunities that a more centralized Madrid could not. Here it is pertinent to consider the migratory context in which these Ecuadorian writers settled in Spain.

Since the mid-1990s, Ecuadorians have migrated in significant numbers to Spain and the decision to migrate has shifted from an individual choice to a family survival strategy. In fact, by 2009 Ecuadorians constituted the largest Latin American national immigrant group in Spain, with nearly 500,000 people: of these more than half were women. As Emilio José Ciriano Gómez has stated, during the 1960s, 1970s and mid-1980s, Ecuadorian emigration to Spain was linked to academic, entrepreneurial, and diplomatic spheres (25). Starting in the mid-1990s, the 'new' Ecuadorian migration became an economic migration mainly from the lower-middle classes of all geographical regions of the country and largely composed of women. No diasporic Ecuadorian women writers in Spain,

however, have achieved the recognition that Campaña, Valencia, and Carrasco have enjoyed both in Ecuador and Spain.³

It was in the context of the early 1970s that Carrasco migrated to Spain. He soon joined radical and alternative artistic spheres in Spain, particularly in Catalonia, not only linked to literature, but also to different forms of artistic expression, such as painting, sculpture, and street and urban art.

In contrast, when Campaña migrated to Barcelona in 1992, he found a country undergoing the end of what Ciriano Gómez calls the “*etapa preliminar*” (preliminary phase) of the Ecuadorian migration to Spain, which he identifies as taking place from the 1970s to 1994 (19). Later, in 1998, Valencia moved to Barcelona when he entered a doctoral program at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona and decided to dedicate himself primarily to literature. Although Valencia migrated during the period of the massive Ecuadorian migration to Spain (1998-2001), his upper-middle class background and the

³ Bernardita Maldonado (Loja 1969-), a former resident of Benidorm, Alicante Province, has published several poems in Spain and Ecuador. Her work is included in the anthology *Abriendo puertas...por amor al arte* (2006), published by the Liceo Poético de Benidorm. She has recently moved back to Ecuador, where she continues her work on literature and journalism. Young short story writer Daniela Gaviria, born in Jipijapa, Manabí Province, lives between Barcelona, Guayaquil, and Quito, and together with Ilán Greenfield and Yanna Hadatty, has published *Antología. cuentos de migrantes* (2009). Perhaps the most noted diasporic Ecuadorian woman writer in Spain is María Fernanda Ampuero (Guayaquil 1976-), who lives in Madrid since 2005. A journalist, chronicler, and short story writer, she has published two books of chronicles and articles previously published in women’s Colombian magazine *Fucsia* and several newspapers, entitled *Lo que aprendí en la peluquería* (2011) and *Permiso de residencia. Crónicas de la migración ecuatoriana en España* (2013). Her short stories have been included in three anthologies: *Todos los juguetes. Nuevo cuento ecuatoriano* (2011), *Historias de hospital* (2011), and *Dios mío* (2011). While the literary work of these women writers present a different gender perspective (not necessarily feminist) about diasporic Ecuadorian writing in Spain, their work is limited in terms of style, themes, and number of publications compared to the vast literary production of Valencia, Campaña, and Carrasco, and their work have received little attention of both Ecuadorian and Spanish literary critics, in relation to that received by the male writers analyzed in this chapter.

university and literary context to which he entered in Barcelona might have allowed him to experience a different migratory process from that of most Ecuadorians who migrated mainly for economic reasons.

Mario Gustavo Campaña Avilés—a poet, translator, Baudelaire specialist, and editor of *Guaragua*, a Barcelona-based journal on Latin American literature and culture—has published extensively both in Spain and Ecuador and has been the editor of numerous poetry anthologies of Latin American countries. *Cuadernos de Godric (Godric's Notebooks)* (1988), his first book of poetry, received Ecuador's National Young Poetry Award for writers 30 years of age and younger. *Días largos (Long Days)* (1996) presents poems written between 1992 and 1994. Published in Barcelona, *Días largos y otros poemas (Long Days and Other Poems)* (2002) compiles a selection of Campaña's poems included in *Cuadernos de Godric* and *Días Largos*. Also in the same year, a pocket edition of this book was published in Barcelona. Simultaneously in Ecuador, Campaña published *El olvido de la poesía se paga (The poetry into Oblivion Must Be Paid)* (2002), which collects poems from *Cuadernos de Godric* and *Días Largos* and includes the poem "Últimas alabanzas," composed of seven sections. Campaña's fifth and sixth books of poetry: *Aires de Ellicott City (Impressions of Ellicott City)*—first printed in 2005 as a not-for-sale book by the Montevidean printing house Letraeñe, followed by the Candaya publication in 2006—and *En el próximo mundo (In the Next World)* (2010) emphasize a recurrent theme in Campaña's poetry: the subjectivity of a man in a constant journey.⁴

⁴ The publishing house Candaya is located in Canet de Mar, a small town situated 43 km north of Barcelona.

Born in Guayaquil while his parents were living in the rural town of Coronel Marcelino Maridueña, Campaña and his family moved to Guayaquil soon after his birth.⁵ In 1985 Campaña earned a law degree from the Universidad Católica de Guayaquil, and in 1991 a bachelor's degree in Hispanic literature from the Universidad Estatal de Guayaquil. In 1995, he completed a master's degree in Contemporary Philosophy from the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. For several years, Campaña worked as a lawyer in Guayaquil's banking sector. Unlike most migrants who leave their country in order to find better job opportunities, Campaña used to work and save money in Guayaquil to later support his short and medium-term writing sojourns in Barcelona. His financial situation in Guayaquil allowed him to manage this mobile existence for several years. In 1992, he decided to give up his stable job in Ecuador to devote himself to literature in Barcelona.⁶ Since then, Campaña has often travelled to Ecuador and the United States, and has also lived in Glasgow and Mexico City.

A year after its publication for sale, *Aires de Ellicott City* was translated into French by Michel Alvès, entitled *Demeure Lointaine* (2007). It was published by then recently-founded, l'Oreille du loup (2007), owned by Colombian poet Myriam Montoya and French writer and translator Stéphane Chaumet. In December 2010, Trento-based Edizioni Forme

⁵ Although Campaña was born in Guayaquil's Maternidad Enrique Sotomayor Hospital, where a relative worked as a nurse and his mother could access proper medical care, Coronel Marcelino Maridueña is actually registered as Campaña's official birthplace, a town located to the east of Guayas Province, approximately 65 km from Guayaquil. Campaña's father, Armando Campaña, registered his son's birth in Coronel Marcelino Maridueña, part of the jurisdiction where Ingenio San Carlos, one of the largest sugar cane companies in Ecuador, is located and where Campaña's father had obtained a temporary job at the time and Campaña's maternal family male members worked for years (Campaña, Message to the author).

⁶ Personal conversation. Genoa, February 23, 2011.

Libere published *Nel prossimo mondo / En el próximo mundo*, translated to the Italian by Luca Baù and under the direction of Angela Bonanno, a Sicilian poet and director of the publisher's series "Il gheriglio."⁷ Interestingly, and due to bureaucratic publishing procedures, the publication of the bilingual (Italian-Spanish) edition of *En el próximo mundo* preceded by one month the publication of the 'original' Spanish version, which was published in January 2011 by Candaya. In 2012, Saint-Nazaire's Maison des Écrivains Étrangers et des Traducteurs-MEET published a bilingual (French-Spanish) collection of Campaña's short stories *Avant ils arrivaient en train / Antes bajaban en tren*, translated by Françoise Garnier—a project that was conceived while Campaña was writer-in-residence at the MEET. In September 2014 an Italian translation of *Antes bajaban en tren / Prima scendevano in treno*, by Elena Liverani and her students at the University of Trento Clara Rigano and Sofia Salvini, will be published, also by Edizioni Forme Libere.⁸

Compared to Valencia and Campaña, Carrasco, who since the late 1970s has lived in Terrassa, a town located nearly 17 miles from Barcelona, seems to be less interested in promoting his work internationally or building a network of public relations that will facilitate his visibility as a writer. Since the 1980s, he has also been a Spanish citizen.⁹ In

⁷ Angela Bonanno heard Campaña's poetry for the first time during the International Genoa Poetry Festival in the Palazzo Ducale in June 2010. After his reading at the Festival, she proposed that they collaborate on an Italian translation of his poems.

⁸ Elena Liverani is Isabel Allende's main Italian translator.

⁹ Valencia and Campaña also became Spanish citizens a few years after their migration to Spain, as this country has a 'privileged track' for Latin American residents in Spain to become Spanish citizens. Mainly, the requirement of years of residence prior to the application for requesting Spanish citizenship is lowered from the standard ten years to two years for citizens of Latin American

fact, Carrasco has been considered a 'Terrassense' writer by being included in the anthologies *Mostra de poetes terrassencs* (1987) and *Mostra de narradors terrassencs* (1992). But Ecuador and his birth city, Cuenca, also claim him as an essential writer. Carrasco's work has been included in several anthologies published in Ecuador. For instance, his short stories were included in *Moderato Contabile. Muestra del Relato Cuencano del Siglo XXI* (2013), published by the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana 'Benjamín Carrión'-Núcleo del Azuay, located in Cuenca. Carrasco is also a painter. In fact, he was a painter before identifying himself as a writer. He has shown his visual work in several individual and collective exhibits in Spain and Ecuador.

Today, Carrasco is mainly considered a short story writer. He has published six collections of short stories: *13 relatos y medio (13 Short Stories and a Half)* (1988), *Relatos de atrás (Tales from Behind)* (1992), *Las muertes inevitables (Inevitable Deaths)* (1996), *Un canto en los dientes (A Pebble in the Teeth)* (2001), *Nudos de letras (Knots of Letters)* (2004), and *Cuentos Clandestinos (Clandestine Tales)* (2008), and the electronic books *Cuentos grandes y pequeños (Large and Short Stories)* (2012) and *Relatos (1991-2013) (Short Stories)* (2013). For the first time in 2013, as an electronic book, a French translation of a selection of his short stories appeared in *Nouvelles Clandestines (anthologie de textes écrits entre 1988 et 2006)*. Carrasco is also a regular collaborator of the magazines *El viejo topo* and *Cáñamo*, and has published essays in the journals *The Ecologist para España y Latinoamérica* and *Kaos en la red*.¹⁰ In 2004 his short stories "Los suyos" ("Those that Belong to Him") and "La

countries, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea, Andorra, and Portugal. Valencia also married a Spanish citizen.

¹⁰ *Cáñamo* is a printed and online magazine that focuses on the culture of cannabis. It was founded in Barcelona in 1997 with the purpose of contesting the prohibition of cannabis around the world, particularly in the European Union (*Cáñamo*). *El viejo topo* is a well-known Spanish magazine that

estatua" ("The Statue") were finalists of the Charles Bukowsky Prize, promoted by the Spanish publishing house Anagrama and the magazines *Generación*, based in Mexico City, and *Cáñamo*, based in Barcelona.

Iván Carrasco's novel *Un canto en los dientes* and the short story collections *Las muertes inevitables* and *Cuentos Clandestinos* relate the mythical and fantastic experiences of indigenous people, mestizos, and Europeans in Ecuador, in Europe, and in unnamed geographical locations. Carrasco underlines the subordinated knowledges of indigenous people within the structures of an Occidentalist state, the experiences of mestizos who opt for living, whenever possible, outside state regulations, and the criminalization of drug users. Through human migration within the nation-state world capitalist system and Occidentalist epistemologies, Carrasco shrewdly highlights the exclusion and marginalization of people and states.

In contrast, Leonardo Pedro Valencia Assogna holds a doctorate in literary theory from the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona and a master's degree in Publishing from Oxford Brookes University. He worked in the publishing industry as a copywriter in Guayaquil and Lima before devoting himself entirely to literature. Valencia was editor of *Lateral* and *La Comunidad Inconfesable*, Spanish printed and online magazines, respectively.

presents a critical perspective of social, economic and cultural aspects of society, as well as science and power relations linked to socialist values. It also publishes a book series <<http://www.elviejotopo.com/web/index.php>>. *The Ecologist para España y Latinoamérica* is a printed journal based in Barcelona that focuses on environmental and sustainability issues (*Ecologist*). *Kaos en la red* is an online counter-information or alternative information collective founded by the cultural association Kollektiu Caos en la Red, ideologically committed to the anticapitalist pluralist left (*Kaos*).

He is currently a professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, where he founded and directed the Creative Writing Program between 2005 and 2009. During the last few years, he has directed the project “Laboratorio de Escritura,” ‘Writing Workshop,’ which is coordinated by his wife, María Nella Escala Benites and other writers and artists. This sort of creative writing and arts institute, based in Gràcia, one of Barcelona’s traditional neighborhoods, offers face-to-face and online fiction, poetry, and children’s literature workshops in Spanish, Catalan, and English, with prices ranging from € 175 to 1,200.

Valencia has maintained his teaching career in Barcelona as a means of support for himself and his family, while writing and publishing. Published in Peru (1995), Ecuador (1998, 2004, 2011), and Spain (2004), *La luna nómada (The Nomadic Moon)* is a progressive book of short stories that incorporates new stories and/or modifies them every time a new edition is published. In a way, it is a book that breaks with conventional editorial frontiers precisely because it lacks an ending, a literary confine. *El síndrome de Falcón (Falcón’s Syndrome)* (2008) is a collection of essays containing Valencia’s analyses of more than a dozen world prominent writers, Ecuadorian literature, and the process of writing in general, and his own writing, in particular. With Ecuadorian literary critic Wilfrido H. Corral, Valencia edited *Cuentistas hispanoamericanos de entresiglo*, an anthology of short story writers from the Hispanic world. Additionally, in 1999, as part of its classical book series, the Spanish journal *El Mundo* published Valencia’s Spanish translation of Luigi Pirandello’s play *Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore / Seis personajes en busca de un autor*, and in 2006 his Spanish translation of Catalan scientist and professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, Oscar Vilarroya Oliver’s *Paraula de robot / Palabra de Robot, inteligencia artificial y comunicación* was published.

Valencia has written three novels, all published in Spain: *El desterrado (The Exile)*

(2000), *El libro flotante de Caytran Dölphin* (*The Floating Book of Caytran Dölphin*) (2006)—published almost simultaneously in Quito by Paradiso Editores—and *Kazbek* (2008), which in 2009 was also published in Buenos Aires by Eterna Cadencia.

Italy becomes a recurring theme in Leonardo Valencia's first two novels *El desterrado* and *El libro flotante de Caytran Dölphin*. In *Kazbek*, Valencia intensifies his preoccupations on nomadism, journey, and exile.

In *El libro flotante de Caytran Dölphin*, narrated in the first person, Iván Romano, a descendant of a Jewish Roman woman forced to flee Mussolini's Italy, comments on the fragments of the apocryphal book entitled "Estuario" ("Estuary"), convinced that he possesses the only copy, supposedly written by the missing Caytran Dölphin.¹¹ Romano interprets the fragments because he believes he knows the stories told in the book. However, he fears that other readers will find another copy and draw different interpretations. As a witness of what Dölphin narrates in fragments, Romano can only provide a partial interpretation and leaves open space for other possible interpretations, outside the text. Romano describes a destroyed Guayaquil, a city interconnected by a network of estuaries, which has been submerged by water. After so much destruction, he attempts to destroy the book "Estuario" by throwing it into the Albano Lake, located in the Province of Rome, which becomes the beginning of the novel.

¹¹ One might argue that this biographical aspect of the character Iván Romano, like many of the passages narrated in his literary works, may have been inspired by Valencia's autobiography and family background. As Valencia states in his essays "¿Cuánta patria necesita un novelista?" and "Elogio y paradoja de la frontera," his mother, Luciana Assogna, was born in Rome and learned Spanish when she moved to Ecuador at the age of 30 and his use of Spanish is influenced by the way his mother spoke it during his childhood in Guayaquil (*Síndrome* 193, 214), which is similar to Iván Romano's childhood.

Narrated in the third person and following a logical chronology, *El desterrado* takes place in fascist Rome and revolves around Nebbiolo Bentornato, an orphaned Italian man sent to live and work in Ethiopia as part of the Italian colonial projects in the Horn of Africa, intertwined with the life and family of his best friend Domiziano. In contrast, *Kazbek* is written almost exclusively in indirect discourse. In his attempt to write his masterpiece, the protagonist Kazbek moves between Guayaquil and Barcelona, past and present, and key meetings with his friend Mr. Peer, who serves as the model for free and creative artistic expression.

An interesting cyber-inursion by Valencia is the interactive project, “El libro flotante de Caytran Dölpfin,” developed in collaboration with Mexican digital artist Eugenio Tisselli, who has lived in Barcelona for many years (“El libro flotante”). This cyber-project is linked to the novel by the same name. It is born out of the concept of ‘chronotext,’ which refers to the “growing collection of software experiments exploring the relation between text, space and time;” it is a programmatic experimentation that emerged “after a long and random exploration on the theme of interactivity in digital space closed by a series of epistemological experiences” (“Chronotext”). Adapting it to the central theme of Valencia’s novel, *El libro flotante de Caytran Dölpfin*, which narrates the interpretations of undecipherable and ambiguous aphorisms and fragments included in the apocryphal book, “Estuario,” the site seeks to promote the collective creation of texts by active participant-readers. In his essay “La escritura flotante,” which focuses precisely on this novel and its subsequent cyber-project, Valencia refers to the cyber-project in these terms:

Esto no sólo es una experiencia de participación sino una experiencia estética, porque el lector podrá compartir también la dinámica interna del libro y la estrategia que se plantea dentro de la novela, que la palabra es

una exiliada permanente que se reescribe siempre: una escritura flotante.

(*Síndrome 277*)

In this way, cyber-readers (*lectonautas*), can re-inscribe fragments of “*Estuario*,” the lost book supposedly written by Dölphin. Valencia has stated that this project “propone la alternativa de vincular los soportes físicos y virtuales, dejando abierta una progresión de escritura a través de *fisuras*” (*Síndrome 271*). In a sort of parallel cybertext that is constantly commented upon or distorted by other readers/writers around the world, registered cyber-reader-writers can distort fragments by ‘substitution,’ ‘addition,’ or by a ‘complete distortion,’ upon the approval of a webmaster, omniscient reader/inscriber/censor, i.e. an unidentified editor that could be a participant or a group of participants of a project within the “Laboratorio de Escritura,” directed by Valencia, where Tiselli has been an invited speaker. Valencia adds that “No se trata, por lo tanto, del caso de la ‘muerte del autor’, que planteaba Barthes en su artículo homónimo, sino de la ‘multiplicación del autor’ a través de un proceso de des-subjetivación de la versión del narrador de la novela” (*Síndrome 271*). Valencia’s idea is to compose a collective text where readers can also become writers, multiplying the subjectivity of the narrator of the text, who, in the printed novel, is only Iván Romano. According to the webpage, “El libro flotante de Caytran Dölphin,” its creators expect to publish all the “distortions” proposed by the cyber-world. By August 31, 2013, there were 1845 registered fragments. In a way, the cyber-project, “El libro flotante de Caytran Dölphin,” is the virtual, and therefore, more complex and diversified, version of the progressive printed collection of short stories, *La luna nómada*.

These three writers have published a significant number of books that have received significant attention from critics and readers. Their work has been included in several

anthologies and they have made incursions into various genres, such as novels, short stories, poetry, and essays. Because of their academic and international personal networks, Campaña and Valencia have been more ‘successful’ in promoting their work among U.S., Spanish, and Ecuadorian readerships. Both have translated literary works into Spanish and have edited several anthologies and literary journals. The work of these three writers, however, has barely received attention of academic literary critics, is little known to non-specialists, and has been sporadically translated into English.¹²

Unlike the case of Italy, in Spain the literature written by Campaña, Valencia, Carrasco, or any other Latin American writer resident in Spain may not necessarily be perceived as migrant or diasporic literature. Instead, it is classified according to its geopolitical origin—as Latin American literature—or more specifically, for its linguistic feature: as Latin American literature written in Spanish. This literature is then subdivided in Spanish bookstores by genres: poetry, prose, theater, etc. The power that Spain exercises in the production, circulation, and symbolic value of publications, not only literary, of books published in Spanish language is inevitably linked to the historical colonial power relations between Spain and Latin America, as well as Spain’s desire and economic interest to maintain neocolonial cultural, political, and commercial linkages with its former colonies.

¹² The Still Life Gallery, based in Ellicott City promoted a bilingual (Spanish-English) edition of a selection of Mario Campaña’s poems, especially printed for Campaña’s poetry reading in the gallery on May 14, 2011. In an interview, Valencia stated that “El medio cultural en mi país, Ecuador, es precario y limitado por motivos económicos, inestabilidad política e institucional, falta de rigor intelectual, y por carencias del medio educativo y editorial. Hay una gran dificultad para proyectar internacionalmente el trabajo artístico. Mis libros han sido bien leídos, pero dentro de un ámbito muy reducido y sin ninguna repercusión comercial significativa” (232). I agree with Valencia’s statement regarding the limitations of Ecuador’s academic rigor and publishing industry, although in recent years the public educational system, including higher education, has conspicuously improved. However, one should remember that Valencia has mostly published his work in Peru and Spain.

For example, if a book is published in Spain, it can smoothly migrate and circulate in most Latin American countries. However, if a publisher based in a Latin American country publishes a book, it is distributed only within that country—not even among neighboring Latin American countries. Despite Europe’s current financial crisis, particularly in Spain, the power relations in book publication and circulation between Spain and Latin American appear to remain unchanged. These limitations of book circulation and distribution within Latin America have prompted intellectual and commercial barriers in the region, which could be overcome through bilateral and multilateral agreements.¹³ Publishing houses such as Alfaguara (with publishers in 19 countries, including Argentina, the U.S., Ecuador, Spain, and El Salvador), Tusquets (present in Spain, Argentina, Mexico, and the U.S.), Seix Barral, part of the transnational publishing company, Grupo Planeta, which owns more than 50 publishing houses in Spain, Portugal, and Latin America, are the main controllers of Spanish language book production and circulation, maintaining a strong cultural and economic monopoly hard to dismantle.

According to Campaña, “The French are the ones who take risks” in publishing new or less known writers.¹⁴ Argentinean and Mexican publishers, the largest and most

¹³ This sort of internal isolation within Latin American countries as a geopolitical region has been gradually surpassed since 1998, when Hugo Chávez Frías was elected Venezuela’s President. Later, in 2005 Evo Morales Ayma was elected Bolivia’s President, and in 2007 Rafael Correa Delgado became Ecuador’s President, while Daniel Ortega regained Nicaragua’s Presidency in January 2007. A multipolar model of political, cultural, and economic integration processes and democratic participation has been promoted and enacted, particularly through la Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR), Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA), la Cumbre de la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC) and, to a lesser extent, la Comunidad Andina de Naciones (CAN).

¹⁴ Telephone conversation. July 20, 2012.

prestigious in Latin America, are less willing to take risks with less known writers, especially if they are not their fellow citizens. The Argentineans and the Mexicans generally follow how a particular writer develops her literary career before publishing her work. Historically, having “el beso de París” [Paris’ kiss] has been crucial for Latin American writers and artists in launching their names in world literature. Here, one could think of Julio Cortázar, César Vallejo, Carlos Fuentes, and even Gabriel García Márquez, who worked and lived in Paris, and how their time there was key in their transnational promotion as writers and translations of their work. In fact, three of the most renowned Ecuadorian writers of the nineteenth (Juan Montalvo) and twentieth centuries (Jorge Carrera Andrade, Jorge Enrique Adoum, and Alfredo Gangotena) lived in Paris as diplomats, which allowed them to enter European literary and artistic circles, and to contact translators and European publishing houses.

This “kiss,” adds Mario Campaña, implied that once the writer or artist had the approval of Paris critics and artists, the doors of opportunities and recognition would open. Within the Occidental book market logic, the value of a literary product and the popularity of a writer are closely related to by whom and where the publication takes place and in what language. It is clear that, for instance, a book of poems in a bilingual edition (Shuar and Spanish) published by the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana-Núcleo de Loja (the Southernmost Andean province of Ecuador) would not have the same readership and commercial impact of another book of poems in bilingual edition (Spanish and English) by Random House in New York.¹⁵ This (neo)colonial printing and circulation of books, as

¹⁵ Shuar-Achuar Chicham is a native language spoken by several communities living in Ecuador’s southern Amazonian territories (included those who have chosen to live isolated from the Ecuadorian state and mestizo society) and also in northern Peru. After Kichwa, is the most widely

well as the value and potential circulation of a text published in English have placed many limitations on Ecuadorian writers in general, and those examined in this chapter in particular. None of the writers analyzed has been published by large and/or transnational publishing houses, but rather by small publishers in Spain or medium-size publishers in Ecuador.

Leonardo Valencia, Iván Carrasco, and Mario Campaña provide different ways of understanding interlocking connections among nation-states and local communities in Latin America and Southern Mediterranean Europe, as well as situated experiences that have been rendered invisible by dominant discourses and structures. The poems, novels, and short stories written by Campaña, Valencia, and Carrasco represent a microcosm of the themes explored in contemporary Latin American writing, such as exile, wandering existence, immigrant's solitude, socially marginal characters, the city as a dumping site, social isolation as a protective mechanism, social discrimination, love and lack of love, and information technologies.

Both Carrasco and Valencia are mostly fiction writers. Besides Carrasco's anthology, *Cuentos Clandestinos* (2008), whose prologue is written by Valencia, and their participation in the "Primer Encuentro de Cultura Ecuatoriana de Ultramar" (Barcelona, October 30-31, 2007), organized by Ramiro Caiza, an Ecuadorian writer residing in Barcelona, Campaña, Valencia, and Carrasco have not collaborated extensively, although they are acquainted and follow each other's literary careers.

spoken native language in the country. Approximately 80,000 people speak it (Mejeant 7). According to the Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008, as an intercultural, plurinational, and secular state (Art.1), Spanish, Shuar, and Kichwa are recognized as official languages of intercultural relation (Art. 2).

While the authors present some similarities in themes that involve human mobility and all three underscore the importance of a writer's pluralistic literary tradition, there are also clear differences in the ways they interpret and represent human experience and in the political, ethical, and ideological dimensions that run through their work. In the poetry, novel and short story chosen, I examine how the themes of journey, exile, and border crossing are braided through each of the texts of Campaña, Valencia, and Carrasco, respectively.

Journey in Mario Campaña's *Aires de Ellicott City*

Campaña's leitmotif in *Aires de Ellicott City*, his fifth book of poetry, could be defined as two-fold: the journey and the symbolic consciousness that takes place in the journey. It is a long poem in free verse, divided into three sections. The first section contains two segments while the second, only one. The third section, composed of seven segments, occupies most of the book. Campaña's poetry is introduced, and to a certain point explained, by Peruvian poet Carlos Germán Belli in his prologue "Tejas abajo, tejas arriba" ("Tiles Down, Tiles Up"). Belli expounds that in *Aires de Ellicott City* "El viaje es su idea central" and the reader finds "un hablante que aparece como un forastero, un emigrante, un peregrino cabal" (5). The epilogue is composed of eight black and white pictures of "Assemblages / Ensamblajes," assemblies created by French artist Martine Saurel (Villemomble 1961-), named for instance, "Le voyageur," "L'embarcation," and "La migration des pierres," in dialogue with Campaña's poetry. An audio compact disk in which Campaña reads some verses of the poem also accompanies the book. His voice is stout and vigorous, but the melody and rhythm of the poetry, without a musical background, it may be argued, hamper the poetry's musicality.

Taken from the poem “Ya hablaremos de nuestra juventud,” the verse “Días que vinieron del mar y regresaron” by Chilean poet Pedro Lastra (Quillota 1932-) opens *Aires de Ellicott City* (cited in Campaña, 15). The sea—its violence and capacity to return—constitutes a privileged element in the poetic subject’s journey. The book’s second section is preceded by the Spanish translation of a citation taken from one of the Marquis de Sade’s letters written to his wife at the beginning of his solitary and silent confinement at the Château de Vincennes in 1777. It reads “Estoy cautivo detrás de diecinueve puertas de hierro” (cited in Campaña, 25). This phrase suggests the captivity, and therefore, solitude, of the poetic subject in this journey. He is far away from others and has no direct communication with the people he encounters in his journey. He has no choice but to take this journey and observe what he encounters. In this journey without exit, there are no religious implications. It is a secular journey.

In *Aires de Ellicott City*, Campaña narrates the experience of a contemporary man who is never at home. He is always on a non-temporal journey, passing through worlds. It is a multilayered journey, from which return is possible. The poetic subject defines himself as an eternal emigrant, always on the move and carrying with him his few possessions. Campaña writes: “Un emigrante eterno, aquí voy con mis bultos / Faltas y culpas no dichas; con viada. / Pez raspabalsa que avanza río abajo / Abrazado de un tronco de palmera” (51). The image of this fish characteristic of the Guayas River, hugging a palm trunk, suggests the idea of a frightened fish going down the river, unable to swim by itself. Therefore, it needs an element from the earth to survive in what is supposed to be its habitat. Campaña evokes a change in the order of things in the world and/or the complementarity of the world, as in Andean cosmology.

With a tendency toward epic tonalities, but without being a hero or appending a victory beside his name, this anonymous pilgrim embarks on his existential and psychic journey without the expectation of rewards. There are no specific goals to achieve. However, similar to Homer's Ulysses, a series of realizations and learning processes take place on this journey before returning home. As Belli states in the prologue, this journey is "un viaje de ida y vuelta. Pero es el más inusitado de los periplos, sin duda alguna. Porque se trata de un desplazamiento desde acá hasta el mismísimo más allá, y acto seguido el retorno del viajero—o el hablante, mejor dicho, porque nos relatará lo que ha vivido" (6). Unlike Ulysses, the poetic subject has no physical home to which to return. He returns to an existential home. He returns to a home he does not recognize: "¿He llegado? ¿Adónde? / ¿Qué lugar es éste / Donde los cuerpos cuelgan del asta de los augurios / Y hay hombres con soles en la cabeza" (44). He speaks from a sense of estrangement. He knows he has arrived at his destination, but he is astonished at what he finds: bodies that hang from the flagpoles of auguries and men with suns in their heads. It is a world that he does not identify, but where he is compelled to be.

Campana could have been inspired to write *Aires de Ellicott City* during a trip to the actual Ellicott City, Maryland. At one moment, he stopped to watch a television program in which former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, serving from 2001 to 2005 under the Presidency of George W. Bush, attempted to persuade U.S. citizens of the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.¹⁶ At that moment, the poet experienced the sensation of belonging to a civilization that has reached its own epilogue, a decadence, with no other choice than to confront a turning point, a crossroads: either to disappear or to backtrack its

¹⁶ Personal conversation. Genoa, February 23, 2011.

own steps. For Campaña, poetry is a form of resistance, or at least of being alert. Much of *Aires de Ellicott City*, in fact, was written during the poet's stay in Ellicott City, in the early years of the current century. While he was writing, he heard in the background U.S. television news reports of the period. Although there were numerous television networks, for Campaña these were all very similar, with a unified discourse that seemed to hide reality. Campaña writes:

Luego enmudezco. Mutismo del andar.
Aléjame de la verdad patria de la mentira.
Si digo la mentira ésta emprende
El camino de la verdad o la profecía.

Si digo la verdad ya se transforma
en una maldición. Una mentira. (43)

The poetic voice perceives the subtle line between the truth and the lie, how—through the word (language)—one can easily turn into the other. One cannot exist without the other: highlighting the fragility and vulnerability of both lying and truth-telling.

As is perceptible in his poetry, Mario Campaña has confirmed in interviews and personal conversations the profound impact that Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and symbolist poetry has had on his own poetic writing. Spanish writer Manuel Vilas has written that “No es casual que Campaña sea traductor de Mallarmé ni que sea el autor de una excelente biografía de Baudelaire (2006), no es casual porque se nota en *Aires de Ellicott City* una dicción lírica que busca en el lenguaje y en la metáfora el sentido de la realidad” (456). In the poet's own words, reading the Spanish translation of Baudelaire's *Les*

fleurs du mal (1857) at the age of 15 in Guayaquil was “una revelación y un terremoto,” ‘a revelation and an earthquake’ that impressed him for life: Campaña later rediscovers him, as an adult, by reading Baudelaire and French symbolist poetry in the original French (Radio Francia Internacional). Whereas French symbolist poetry is often associated with negating, distancing, alienating gesture, fright, and temporal transcendence, as well as the constitutive vulnerability to life and nature (Earle 1016), in *Aires de Ellicott City* the series of intense images of a non-temporal journey taken by the poetic subject is an intellectual and sentimental experience of today’s time, without once referencing the actual Ellicott City, nor for that matter any other geographical location. Instead, Campaña makes allusions to key elements of his birth city, Guayaquil, and his native Ecuador.¹⁷

Guayaquil is implied when Campaña writes: “Huelo lagos: aquí había lagos. ¿Quién recuerda que aquí había seis esteros?” (68). Then, he adds: “En esta orilla había un barco, un muelle para partir. / Seis esteros de mar y un río” (100). Guayaquil’s history and development are closely linked to the Guayas River, located to the east of the city. In the past, six large estuaries surrounded Guayaquil, which influenced the city’s inhabitants’ daily lifestyles and commerce. During the city’s unplanned urbanization process and expansion, particularly since the 1960s, many of the estuaries were progressively filled in to be turned into fields for constructing residences and streets.¹⁸ Thus, the poetic voice reminisces about

¹⁷ In *Aires de Ellicott City*, Campaña seems to follow what Cecil Maurice Bowra refers to as the aims of the symbolist poet: to disrupt not only the established usages of words, but also the established empirical order of the world to which those usages refer—the symbolist uses the word “not for its common purpose but for the association which it evokes of a reality beyond the senses” (5).

¹⁸ The lack of Guayaquil’s urban planning has created disastrous situations in the city, as the water is impeded from fluidly flowing to the Guayas River, and eventually to the Pacific Ocean, producing severe floods in numerous parts of the city during the rainy season. My own childhood house in

these characteristic estuaries that once brought life into the city. By only smelling what remains of the estuaries, the poetic voice alludes to the historic memory of the inhabitants of Guayaquil. The estuaries are present in the memories of the city-dwellers: the strong odor of the semi-stagnant salty water, its strength and dark color, the mud, the swamps, the pebbles that many children would throw to the water as a game, the reed docks and houses built by and over the mangroves. The poet writes: “Yo viví en una ciudad construida con guijarros / Caña gadúa y barro, ciénaga y manglar / Añoraba el mar y su fuelle, su fuego oscurocido” (79). As Cristóbal Zapata has stated, “En este poema, la ciudad natal y la patria son nombradas metonímicamente, a partir de su flora, su fauna, sus fiestas, su cocina, la diversidad de sus usos culturales, pero también recuperada alegóricamente a través de su particular memoria de la infancia y primera juventud” (“Review: Mario Campaña” 166). Campaña chooses cultural and natural elements of his native city and country to provide situated signals and indications to lead the reader along the narrative flow.

Campaña alludes to Ecuador when the poetic voice suggests the Shuar nationality and the elaboration and significance of the *tzantzas*, an ancient tradition maintained by some Shuar communities to paralyze the spirit of a dead enemy or to keep the essence and wisdom of a master, “que reducen cabezas y atan bocas” (94).¹⁹ The lyric voice calls this population “cazadores de cabezas,” known in Ecuador, since colonial times, as the most

Guayaquil faced a tributary of one of the estuaries, and in the 1970s was also filled in, turning into ‘Calle Primera B’ (First B Street). Valencia develops this urban overflowing of water in his novel *El libro flotante de Caytran Dôlphin*, with a histrionic flood that takes place in Guayaquil.

¹⁹ Since colonial times, the communities belonging to the Shuar nationality have been pejoratively called ‘jíbaros’ or ‘jívaros;’ and in today’s Ecuadorian mestizo society, it is a way to refer, also pejoratively, to someone as savage, uneducated, or undisciplined.

skillful warriors and reluctant to be dominated, “*incolonizables*,” ‘uncolonizable’ (94). When referring to Ecuador, Campaña remembers the Amazonian ethnic communities that have defended the most their ancestral territories and their cultural identity, responding fiercely to the attacks and invasion of Europeans, mestizos, transnational oil corporations, and even other Shuar communities, while keeping a strategic distance from Western lifestyles. The poet then writes: “Cultivado y violento / Conservándolos en sitios visibles / Como monstruosos trofeos: arte antiguo” (94). The poetic voice observes the Shuar ceremony and understands the *tzantzas* as symbolic reminders of a chief’s triumph, in which the victorious warrior reduces the heads of the chiefs of dominated communities and makes them visible to emphasize his authority.

Most interestingly, Campaña describes in detail the “Baño de Dulce,” associating it with non-Western ancestral knowledge and spirituality from people in harmony with nature; “*monte de baño*,” he also calls it (85). This ‘*limpia*,’ as it is commonly known in Ecuador, is filled with local flowers, fruits, and herbs, but also animals and random objects, that purify the body and the soul of the traveller to protect him and give him strength to be able to confront the long journey and return. As in a recipe, the poet writes: “Mastrante y yerbaluisa. Ruda / De gallinazo y arancel, campana / Y paico. Jazmín de Arabia, eucalipto / Abejón / Rosa de muerto florecida / Con tabacos y limones; / Jabón prieto” (85). But this “Baño de Dulce” also opens the spiritual path for the poetic subject’s journey: “Baño de Perfume: abrecamino de cera y suerte rápida” (85). This “Baño de Dulce” invokes good luck for the pilgrim-narrator as recipient of an ancient spiritual benediction. Campaña emphasizes ancestral knowledge by turning to a grandmother. He writes: “Y yerbabuena y manzanilla. Yerbaluisa otra vez / La de la abuela. Romero y paico, para que te miren bien” (85). While being aware of the existence of evil people everywhere, “la gente es mala de

arriba abajo,” in these perfumed and colorful “Baños de limpieza” of “rosas de todos los colores,” the pilgrim entrusts himself to positive energy and pushes himself to be courageous and not to despair, “cuchillo no te dobles” (85-6).

Additionally, Campaña turns to Ecuador by using a series of *ecuatorianismos*, Ecuadorian colloquial language sometimes derivative of Kichwa words or Renaissance Peninsular Spanish, intermixed with elegant and elevated language. For instance, the poet writes: “cochambroso” (7), “quedito,” “curcuncho” (54) “caramanchelero” (78), “chaquiñames” (79), “canguil” (80), “mosquiñaña,” “aguachirle” (81), and “cachinería” (90). He also describes the ‘*años viejos*’ or ‘monigotes,’ nearly human-sized rag dolls that are traditionally burnt at midnight on December 31st in some Latin American countries, including Ecuador, as a way of reducing to ashes the negative experiences lived during the year about to end and leaving the wretched past behind.

With the exception of a few verses that allude to Guayaquil and Ecuador, mentioned above, the pilgrim goes from one place to another, in a so-called world emptied of life. The poetic voice realizes he is passing through a world where the most basic elements of life are nonexistent. There is no air, wind, water, or soil. The poet writes: “Corre el gamo en un campo que no hay, y el ave / Vuela en un aire que no hay. Y tiembla el pez / En aguas que no hay. No hay. / Vive el hombre una vida que no hay” (45). The verses suggest that those who live in this world may think they are among the living when, in fact, they are among the dead and death. If there are no animals, no soil, air, or water; then there is no life.

But this journey is not a real journey in the sense that it does not pass through physical and geographical places. It is a learning process. The lyric subject has to learn from nature, where life and wisdom are situated. The poet writes: “Hay que aprender del mar y

su caballería. / Sus veloces hordas violentas, sus / Blancos batallones vuelven siempre” (59). The sea is associated with an army composed of waves. These bodies mounted on horses are the high white waves that penetrate the sea. The sea is understood as a violent element. It is as aggressive as groups of people who appear to be out of control and undisciplined. Yet like an army, there is a rhythm that brings order to their movements; and like the rest of nature, the sea also has its cycles that must be learned by humans.

Comparing *Aires de Ellicott City* to his previous poetry collections, even to the subsequent *En el próximo mundo*, the reader may note Campaña’s development of the idea of journey, memory, spiritual elevation, and introspection. Whereas in his previous books the poetic voice also takes metaphysical journeys, it is in *Aires de Ellicott City* that the poetic voice returns. In his poetic and spiritual journey, the pilgrim is not necessarily distanced from the native land or the homeland, nor lives in exile. There is no sense of psychological or cultural uprooting in his poetics. Campaña’s interior dialogue takes place during his wandering and nomadism. Unlike Valencia, Campaña has no specific roots to vindicate. Instead, Campaña searches for soil where he could take root, make plants grow, and restart anew. In an interview in Guayaquil, Campaña commented that:

se estableció en Barcelona porque necesitaba ordenar sus pensamientos y convertirse en el escritor que deseaba ser. Ese aprendizaje, creo yo, se fue enriqueciendo por su manía ambulatoria—como Campaña la denomina— porque en estos años ha habitado 35 domicilios en 7 países: ‘No sé qué busco... amores, a veces... pero después de unos meses, fondeado en un

sitio, sé que ha llegado la hora de volver nuevamente a ponerme en marcha.’

(Martillo Monserrate)

Campaña himself lives a sort of nomadic life. He has lived at 35 different home addresses in seven countries. For many years he lived in Barcelona, but tired of city life and noise, a few years ago he moved to Les Cases d'Alcanar, a small fishermen's town in the Tarragona Province, in Southern Catalonia. *Aires de Ellicott City* poetically reflects his lack of attachment to a particular geographical place. It is a journey of return to a consciousness of past, present, and future: selectively choosing elements of his origins, to build a present that would eventually lead to a future of no concern to the pilgrim. It is the realization of world's evil, but also of purification of the soul and the body, and the return to his ancestral knowledge, to prepare himself for the next journey.

Exile and Relation to The Native Land in Leonardo Valencia's *Kazbek*

¿Por qué se teme tanto al movimiento? ¿Miedo acaso de que al alejarte dejes de ser la carnada doméstica que permite a otros la supervivencia? ¿O será que el temor al movimiento es más bien el momento terrible en el que se descubre la postración en el tópico? Mientras más lejos estés de tu origen, más larga será la cuerda y más fuerte el ejercicio de tensarla. Tu cuerpo encaja en el cuadrilátero de tinta dibujado para tu imagen. Tu cabeza no: tus antenas tiran de ti para sacarte de lo inmóvil y las punzantes extremidades que han brotado cortan una zona imaginaria que tampoco a ti te pertenece. Sé leve, continúa la marcha. Lejos, vivirás. (Valencia, *Kazbek* 77)

The protagonist Kazbek, the young writer in Valencia's homonymous novel, writes the above passage inspired by the sixth of the sixteen drawings of insects that his German

friend Mr. Peer has given him in Guayaquil. Exile, in Valencia's fiction, whether literary or territorial, is the connecting thread through which characters make sense of their world and move within it. The self-imposed and desired uprooting, as well as the relation between movement and writing are the linking knots in Valencia's *Kazbek*, a novel constructed on various interwoven narrative levels. These linking knots reflect the author's need to liberate himself from cultural and literary conditionings in order to search for artistic creativity and innovation and to move away from the idea of a Latin American identity and literary tendencies that have limited Latin American writers in terms of themes, styles, and exploration (*Síndrome* 171).

Valencia is not interested in forced geographical exile, but rather in the sort of self-exile and estrangement an artist may experience with or without physical movement. In the above citation, part of Kazbek's "Libro de Pequeño Formato," 'Book of Small Format,' the protagonist-writer seems to address the insect drawn and given to him by Mr. Peer, a Berliner who migrated to Guayaquil in 1962. Mr. Peer is inspired to draw these "bichos" (insects in colloquial Latin American Spanish) or "escarabajos" by the fear Quito inhabitants feel with respect to the eruptions of the nearby Pichincha Volcano (14). It is interesting to note that the word "insect" comes from the fifteenth century Latin *insectum*, meaning "divided" (in segments), derivative of the word *sectus*, past participle of the verb *secare*, which means "to cut," with the prefix *in*, as in *insectum (Devoto Oli)*. Thus, the cutting through of different parts of insect's body may allude to the internal divisions of Kazbek's life: his different desires, which cannot always coincide with the time and space expected, such as writing his literary masterpiece or having significant encounters with his ex-colleague Dacal and his friend Isa, as well as the spatial divisions he has between and within Barcelona and Guayaquil.

Figure 1: 6th Escarabajo (*Kazbek* 76)



As one can see in the above image, while the insect's body may fit the box designed for it, its head remains outside. This image suggests that even if one's movement may not be physical, the mind (through the antennae, i.e., the elements through which one is able to perceive the world) allows cultural exiles to translocate the self and maintain the cord between the native land and the self always taut, always tense. As one can see in the drawing, the lower extremities border (and cut through) the box that attempts to keep the insect (the writer) inside. For Valencia, even if the native land (and everything and everyone that encompasses

it) may want to constrain or limit him, there are always ways to get out, as symbolically represented in the drawn insect.

I do not use the term homeland in this section, as homeland may not necessarily be the place where one was born, the past one imagines or remembers, or to paraphrase Salman Rushdie, the past that is the country “from which we have all emigrated” (“Imaginary Homelands” 12). I argue that for the protagonist, Ecuador is Kazbek’s native land, not his homeland—“el país atravesado de volcanes,” the country cut through volcanoes, as Mr. Peer defined it to his German friends, paraphrasing Alexander von Humboldt (16-17), who in 1802 carried out an expedition in Ecuador. It is the geographical place in which Kazbek did not ask to be born. Not even his name is related to Ecuador. In Greek mythology, Zeus chained Prometheus to a rock in the summit of Kazbek, a Caucasic mountain. If Prometheus broke the chains, then it is possible for Kazbek to bring out the ghostly writer that he carries within him and liberate himself from tradition.

Kazbek does not feel rooted to a native land, nor does he identify with a physical home. He has constructed his own homeland in the books he has written. Valencia states: “Él [Kazbek] preferiría no ser un desarraigado y tener una casa propia. Los libros que ha escrito los ha edificado como si fueran casas donde refugiarse de lo que arrasa consigo el movimiento del mundo” (26). But this home built on books is temporary. Kazbek “convive muchos años con sus manuscritos y los publica cuando intuye que también su residencia en ellos es provisional” (26). Thus, the written word, not the published books, is what Kazbek desires to become his real home, even though he questions the existence of a home based on his written texts. Once in Lisbon, Kazbek ponders: “¿Se convierte realmente en una casa lo que escribe? ¿Escribe gracias al impulso adquirido o es un canto de sirena que lo lleva a una

casa falsa? Sin hogar, sin Gran Novela” (27). Kazbek seems to equate home, ‘hogar,’ and its lack thereof, with the literary masterpiece he is never able to write.

In his attempt to write his masterpiece, his “*Gran Novela*,” Kazbek travels from Guayaquil to Barcelona, Lisbon, Tunis, Sidi Bou Said, and back to Guayaquil and Barcelona, to end up in Geneva during the wintertime. But Kazbek cannot to write his “*Gran Novela*.” Instead, he ends up writing a “*Libro de Pequeño Formato*,” which accompanies sixteen drawings of insects, as suggested by Mr. Peer, an older man who represents a sort of father/teacher figure to Kazbek. This “*Libro de Pequeño Formato*” is inserted into the novel as a metatext, creating a different narrative level. Mr. Peer describes nine characteristics of this type of book, with the last one stating that it “es un libro que crea silencio para escuchar cómo fluye la fuente” (20). Mr. Peer, a mature visual artist, creates for Kazbek a sort of new classification in the taxonomy of book writing. Mr. Peer defines for Kazbek what Kazbek’s book should be, which is an amalgamation of Mr. Peer’s visual art (his drawings of insects) and Kazbek’s interpretation of it.

The desired protagonist of Kazbek’s “*Gran Novela*” is Dacal, his enigmatic ex-colleague during the time he worked in the publishing industry in Lima. But his protagonist escapes from inscription and therefore, from representation and signification. It is a failed project. Unlike Luigi Pirandello’s play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), Dacal escapes from the author: Kazbek. Dacal is slippery and evasive. He is not interested in demanding that an author perform or narrate his own story on the page. Valencia writes:

Dacal es inasible para Kazbek. ¿Por qué se le escapa? Kazbek piensa que la imagen que lo inspira—la de un hombre perdido en un desierto—no permite que ninguna narración lo atrape.... Como si se resistiera a las redes causales de la novela, el personaje ha elegido un lugar esqui-

vo para que lo dejen en paz. En el desierto no puede ser narrado, piensa Kazbek. Y algo más interesante todavía: no quiere ser narrado. Sólo quiere decir sus propias palabras. Él, Dacal, es el narrador, el que construye su propia secuencia de palabras. (21)

Dacal represents the counter-position of the characters of Pirandello's play because he does not want to be narrated within Kazbek's text, under Kazbek's direction. As translator of Pirandello's play, Valencia enters into dialogue with the Italian Nobel laureate of 1934. Dacal wants to use his own words, his own voice, outside the text, outside literature. He neither needs nor wants an author although he never explicitly expresses this.

Instead, the sixteen drawings of insects given to Kazbek by Mr. Peer are in search of a text: to be given language, a name, to be baptized. According to Mr. Peer, the drawings need words. Valencia writes:

El artista que trabaja con imágenes y colores—es decir, con ausencia de palabras y de sonidos—, necesita precisamente de palabras. La entrega de los dibujos al escritor, piensa el señor Peer, es una petición de bautizo. También es un bautizo para el escritor: el objeto da imagen a la palabra todavía desconocida. Hay que soltar entonces la palabra que da un soplo de vida a los bichos que buscan su camino. (29)

For Mr. Peer, as later for Kazbek, the word implies movement. The word has the transformative power to give life to image. As Mr. Peer says, it is also a baptism for the writer. As a sort of creative purification or consecration, through this ritual, the baptized

writer is illuminated for creating words. In a way, the baptism also works as an initiation into writing life, as Kazbek's starting point for invention and creative writing.

Mr. Peer's migration to Ecuador and Kazbek's nomadic life between Ecuador, Europe, and North Africa echo the movement and liberation Valencia suggests in his essays. In Ecuador, Mr. Peer is freer precisely because he can create art in a country in which he was not born. Mr. Peer has fewer ties or chains that would compel him to remain loyal to national and nationalist traditions. He is free not to follow what he has learned in his country from childhood to adulthood, or to respect artistic formats, tendencies, styles, as well as aesthetics that are accepted and acceptable for fellow citizen artists. Valencia writes: "En este país [Ecuador, Mr. Peer] estudió su luz, su flora y su fauna. Se apropió de los elementos de la cultura local. Lo hizo de manera muy libre, precisamente porque no era su tierra de nacimiento y él no era un artista local" (16-17). By migrating, Mr. Peer has arrived at the point at which Kazbek desires to arrive: feeling free to create art. Indirectly, Valencia also alludes to previous transnational migrations that link Europe and Ecuador, which today are almost invisible in both European and Ecuadorian migration discourses.²⁰

²⁰ Within an Occidental and colonial logic, the symbolic and cultural value given in Ecuador (and in most Latin American countries) to the knowledge and skills of European immigrants or exiles—such as in industry, agriculture, medicine, craftsmanship, and the arts—have been socially considered to be at a higher level than ancestral and indigenous knowledges. In many cases, and in obviously different socio-economic conditions, European immigrants and exiles, particularly Spaniards, Germans, Swiss, and Italians, did not take too long to identify an investment area and/or open their own businesses in Ecuador, inserting themselves at some of the highest social strata. This Western European immigration to Ecuador was especially evident between the second half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth one, except during the period between the intervention of the U.S. in WWII and the end of the war, when in Ecuador German and Italian immigrants and their families (some of them, Ecuadorian citizens) suffered discrimination against and violation of human rights, and their assets were expropriated by the Ecuadorian government.

As Italian-Ecuadorian Francesco Masala writes in his unpublished undergraduate thesis, “Kazbek. Traducción, análisis y comentario,” Valencia is inspired to write this novel from Peter Mussfeldt’s sixteen drawings of insects, which are, in fact, included in Valencia’s novel (170). The novel braids together (auto)biographical aspects both of Peter Mussfeldt and Valencia’s lives. Like Mr. Peer, Mussfeldt was born in Berlin, experienced a wartime childhood, spent his adolescence in East Germany, and in 1969 migrated to Ecuador. Like Valencia, Kazbek is a writer born in Ecuador who moved to Lima in 1993 and worked in publishing.

As I have suggested, Valencia follows a kind of intellectual exile that Edward W. Said describes in his essay, “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals.” In this essay, Said persuasively discusses how exile is an *actual condition*, but also a *metaphorical condition* that derives from—but is not limited to—the social and political history of dislocation and migration (52). The actual condition of exile is understood here as a forced or self-imposed moving away from one’s homeland. The sense of being out of place, of staying always alert and uneasy as a foreigner, is not only a situation one encounters in actual/physical exiles, but also in intellectual and spiritual ones. The intellectual, as outsider, and unfit for domestication, Said continues, “is best exemplified by the condition of exile, the state of never being fully adjusted, avoiding accommodation in a familiar world” (53). Said adds that

Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others.... So while it is true to say that exile is the condition that characterizes the intellectual as someone who stands as a marginal figure outside the comforts of privilege, power, being -at-homeness (so to speak), it is also very important to stress that that condition carries with it certain rewards and, yes, even privileges. So while you are

neither winning prizes nor being welcomed into all those self-congratulating honor societies that routinely exclude embarrassing troublemakers who do not toe the party line, you *are* at the same time deriving some positive things from exile and marginality. (53, 59)

This privileged, translocated in-betweenness configures a privileged marginality that could be understood as an intellectual exile. Whether or not one lives in and writes from the geographical home, one could be banished intellectually, politically, and spiritually from circuits of power and domination, and from the familiarity of home-ness. And this is precisely what Valencia suggests both in his fiction and non-fiction.

In his essay “Nunca me fui con tu nombre por la tierra,” transposing the title of a poem written by renowned Ecuadorian intellectual, Jorge Enrique Adoum, “Yo me fui con tu nombre por la tierra” (“I Left for the World with Your Name”), Valencia examines the “*extrañamiento*,” the estrangement/distance, that he has felt regarding Ecuadorian literature and culture.²¹ He states that

²¹ This essay is included in his collection of essays *El síndrome de Falcón*. In the poem “Yo me fui con tu nombre por la tierra” (1964), Jorge Enrique Adoum presents the anguish and despair the lyric subject feels by belonging to a country that no one knows about or where it is, that could be interpreted as Adoum’s country of birth: Ecuador. It is also a critique of state government and politics and people’s sense of disempowerment. It begins “Nadie sabe en dónde queda mi país, lo buscan / entristeciéndose de miopía: no puede ser, / tan pequeño ¿y es tanta su desgarradura, / tanto su terremoto, tanta su tortura / militar, más trópico que el trópico?” And it ends with a return to national myths, a theme he later develops in his long essay *Ecuador: señas particulares* (1997), in which he discusses how, in search of heroes and a victorious past, Ecuadorians cannot even claim a glorious empire before European colonization and, therefore, lack a myth and a history that can serve as the construction of a national identity. Adoum ends the poem: “Quisiera entonces que no encuentren / la lupa, que no miren de cerca lo difícil, eso / no nuestro, tan desprecio, tan asco. Pero insisten / y, como soy patriota, digo: ‘Sucede que los Incas’. / En dónde queda, di, di qué le hicieron” (218, 220).

Lo cierto es que siempre he escrito teniendo en mente que nunca me fui con el nombre del país [Ecuador] por la tierra. Me fui con algo distinto.... Me fui más bien con una mirada y una búsqueda, una exploración, con mis palabras que vienen de allí y que en sus contornos difíciles de clasificar trata de entender lo que es la escritura y el mundo en que vivimos. (*Síndrome* 222, 230-1)

Valencia's three novels, particularly *Kazbek*, evoke the author's ideas regarding the 'weight' that most Ecuadorian writers bear in attempting to follow a so-called national tradition that has associated Ecuadorian literature to social realism, an art movement that marked Ecuadorian literary production from the 1930s to the end of the 1960s. According to Valencia, a literature that depicts a representation of Ecuador on a postcard has limited the literary creation of Ecuadorian writers (170). Literature would have to be political and serious. Anything perceived as different by the leading Ecuadorian Communist intellectuals and writers during the first decades of the twentieth century (for instance, members of the Grupo Guayaquil, among them Joaquín Gallegos Lara) was considered a transgression, a bourgeois deviance, or a cosmopolitan pretension (170). This type of literature, Valencia adds, which has been dominated by leftist and Communist ideologies, offers a potential resource for sociological readings, defense for the rights of indigenous communities, magic realism, or the process of urbanization in Latin America. At the same time, it has isolated Ecuadorian literature and hindered a dialogue with world literature (178).

Building on Jorge Luis Borges' irreverence for what a writer should consider his literary tradition, against nationalist conceptions of literature that limit artistic creativity and innovation, Valencia also considers that the writer's resources for literary creation are the universe (Borges 137). Like Borges, Valencia believes that "no debemos temer y que debemos pensar que nuestro patrimonio es el universo; ensayar todos los temas, y no podemos concretarnos a lo argentino [or Ecuadorian] para ser argentinos [to be Ecuadorians]" (137). In *Kazbek*, as in his previous novels, Valencia inscribes on the page his desire to move away from what he calls 'Falcón's syndrome:' the desire and responsibility to carry the weight of tradition (comparing it to the image of Aeneas carrying his father, Anchises, in his arms, while escaping from a burning Troy), like Juan Falcón Sandoval, the man who, for lack of a wheelchair, carried renowned Ecuadorian writer, Joaquín Gallegos Lara in his arms for twelve years. Falcón becomes the metaphor for referring to the weight Ecuadorian writers have felt compelled to carry for several generations, by writing about their reality, their city, their localisms, using colloquial language, and representing a 'social realism' of their country.

Practicing what he preaches, in *Kazbek*, Valencia attempts to enter into dialogue with world literature by using a standard Spanish, avoiding localisms, directly or indirectly referring to Pirandello, Gaudì, Baudelaire, Mirò, and Picasso, and mentioning a series of novels and "Libros de Pequeño Formato" that rest on Kazbek's shelves, from *El Quijote*, *Pedro Páramo*, *Metamorphosis*, to *Moby Dick* (35, 60). While the reader may sometimes perceive Valencia's zealous desire to move away from traditional Ecuadorian literary production, in *Kazbek* he keenly problematizes the discourse of exile and engages in the complex relation between the protagonist and his native land of Ecuador by evoking a sense of intellectual exile that leads him, in fact, to inventive imagination and literary liberation.

Border Crossing in Iván Carrasco's "El Ecuatañol"

"El Ecuatañol" was first published in Iván Carrasco's fifth collection of short stories, *Nudos de Letras* (2005). It then appeared in *Cuentos Clandestinos* (2008), which compiled his short stories written between 1988 and 2006 and whose introduction was written by Leonardo Valencia, as stated earlier. Recently, "El Ecuatañol" appeared in the electronic book, *Relatos (1991-2013)*, which includes 48 short stories. With the exception of 11 published elsewhere and a few previously unpublished short stories, most were already included in *Cuentos Clandestinos*. In this chapter, I cite the slightly revised version of "El Ecuatañol," contained in *Cuentos Clandestinos* and *Relatos*.²²

Some of the key characteristics of Carrasco's short stories are his satire and a Borgesian economy of words and use of the fantastic, as well as themes related to the limitations of human understanding and the cruel revelation of either nature or humanity made manifest to the protagonist, and simultaneously to the reader.

In a Kafkaesque style, "El ecuatañol" satirically narrates the migratory story of Ecuatañol, a man from a country that no longer exists. Because he has no document to prove who he is, such as a passport or an identity card, and his biographical information does not appear in any official digital databases, his existence is denied. As a result, his freedom of transnational movement is taken away, and, eventually, his right to a dignified life. As a way of disposing with him, he is sent to Barcelona's Ramblas to showcase what should not exist: an undocumented migrant.

²² The differences between both versions are minimal, especially related to change of adverbs, connecting words, and punctuation. I use the last version of "El Ecuatañol" as it is the one that the writer has revised for his more recent printed and electronic publications. Thus, I take it as his final version so far. The page numbers refer to the published text in *Cuentos Clandestinos*.

Carrasco's neologism "Ecuatañol" addresses the multiple Ecuadorian subjectivities and experiences in Spain, which have often been invisibilized and sometimes relegated to sub-human existence. As a migrant national community from a former colony in South America, Ecuadorians have often been stereotyped and discriminated against. By joining morphemes that refer to both countries and national identities: 'ecua' from the demonymic adjective 'ecuatoriano' and 'añol,' taking the last morpheme of that from Spain 'español,' Carrasco gives name to a contemporary fact. He points to the presence of a sort of fusion of both national identities that are not culturally and socially recognized by dominant society, regardless of the documentation that a person may possess. As Caroline Labaut has stated:

Il en fait certes un motif littéraire empreint de réalisme social et de

questionnements identitaires en donnant un visage à cette immigration équatorienne, mais surtout, il nomme et donc fait exister une facette de l'équatorianité d'aujourd'hui qui est pour lui «l'ecuatañolité». Il invente

el ecuatañol et en fait une évidence. ("El Ecuatañol' de Iván Carrasco," 3)

Carrasco makes an incisive critique of European Union directives and domestic migration policies, as well as the controlling systems developed to regulate the migration of people from non-EU member states. The writer gives name to an experience that has profoundly marked both Spain and Ecuador, in socio-economic, cultural, and political terms, and has not always ended in the 'successful migrant story' that generally any migrant would like to achieve, and every country, either of origin or destination, would prefer to publicize.

The short story begins with the African proverb: "El sol pasa las fronteras / sin que nadie le detenga," which captures the irony of the protagonist-narrator's experience of being stopped at a border checkpoint and unable to pass national borders as a human being. (203) Ecuatañol starts his narration optimistically: "En un principio me sentí absolutamente

libre: había nacido en un país que hoy, por fin, ya no existía, secuelas de la caída del muro de Berlín. A partir de ahora podía considerar, ¡con derecho!, todas las fronteras como meros artificios, cosas de quita y pon, imposturas” (203). Carrasco sarcastically refers to the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, as the metonymy for freedom, the right to have rights, and the hope for the end of political barriers and borders between states and people. He alludes to European history to suggest that borders are understood as artificial human inventions that can be easily imposed and removed. As a symbol of the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall prompted the vanishing of a number of states and the creation of others. At first, the protagonist-narrator alludes to being a citizen of one of those states. Carrasco writes:

-¿De dónde vienes? ¿Adónde vas? ¿De qué país dices ser? –Y claro, el país ya no estaba en el mapa, y menos en el ultramoderno ordenador. Era cuando se cabreaban, teclaban unas cuantas letras y luego se arrepentían, y se tiraban de los pelos clavándome sus ojos asesinos e implacables.

Y no había explicación que valiera, que aquello había ocurrido hacía algunos años y pocos se acordaban. Por supuesto, ningún policía. (129)

As in Kafka's *The Trial*, the immigration officials are confused. They do not know how to handle this rare situation. The new configuration of European nation-states is suggested. And Carrasco humorously implies the ignorance of public officials, especially of the police.

His country of citizenship no longer exists on the world map. He lacks a piece of paper, a document that can prove who he is and his citizenship. Carrasco sarcastically depicts the hegemonic power of the nation-state system as an oppressive condition that shatters people's subjectivity, agency, and multiplicity of sense of belonging, and ultimately, people's right to exist. The protagonist-narrator is an undocumented immigrant, without

citizenship, without a nation-state, without a valid document, therefore, without rights. The reader cannot avoid recalling *The Trial* when Carrasco mocks the public institutions and bureaucracy that nation-states develop in order to control the existence and subjectivity of their citizens. He writes:

Pero a poco vinieron los problemas, los papeleos, las burrocracias tan extendidas por el planeta y que, poco a poco, nos someten a la estupidez. Y así, tras atravesar múltiples fronteras en busca de ese mundo libre que me habían prometido, me fui convirtiendo en el propietario de un documento obsoleto y un número caduco, y eso es inadmissible en una sociedad en la que uno es lo que dice el papel oficial actualizado y confirma un ágil y ultramoderno ordenador. Si no sales ahí... –Tú no eres nadie –me dijeron mirándome a los ojos y deseando hacerme desaparecer. Fulminarme, sí, ¡fulminarme! (203-04)

Carrasco plays with the term 'burocracias,' turning it to "*burrocracias*," alluding to '*burros*,' asses, to emphasize the ignorance and stupidity of public officials of all states, "por el planeta" that systematically implement apparatuses to regulate and surveille human existence and circulation across national borders. What Ecuatañol verbally declares has no relevance: what matters is what the document certifies. Otherwise, immigration officials want nothing more than to make him vanish that instant.

Carrasco suggests the crossing of at least two border checkpoints: the one that allows Ecuatañol to pass through, although reluctantly, and the other that questions his existence, his presence and, therefore, stops him. Because he represents an unknown, unregistered presence, he disrupts the authorities' methodical immigration checks. He must

be kept under control: “Los guardias del otro lado de la frontera me habían dejado pasar observándome de arriba abajo, y estos igual, solo que aquí no me dejaban circular” (204). He is a border-crosser; as such he is aware that he is always viewed with suspicion.

Continuing with the burlesque, Ecuatañol claims to be from the “Tahuantinsuyo” or Tawantinsuyo, a spatially and temporally distant place.²³ His origins are located in the ancient pre-Hispanic empire that colonized most of the communities inhabiting Andean territories, including today’s Peru, large parts of Ecuador, southern Colombia, parts of Bolivia and northern Argentina and Chile, which was in turn later colonized by the Spaniards following Columbus’ voyage to the Americas in 1492—known to Westerners as the Inca empire. When asked about his origins, Ecuatañol narrates:

¿El Tahuantinsuyo... Tahuantinsuyo? –decían consultándose con el gesto.

Un montón de papeles de otras burrocracias, de otros países no justi-

²³ Carrasco uses the term “Tahuantinsuyo,” which has been the customary way of writing Kichwa or ‘runa shimi’ (people’s language) in Ecuador, following Hispanic orthography (from the evangelization of indigenous Andean and Amazonian communities by European missionaries). Many people in Ecuador continue to use the Hispanic orthography of Kichwa even after the change of graphemes from a Hispanic orthography to graphemes more similar to the International Phonetic Alphabet that is symbolized by the use of the term ‘Kichwa’ instead of ‘Quichua,’ proposed by indigenous intellectuals and linguists. This symbolic collective oppositional resistance and reappropriation of a cultural identity are part of the political consciousness that emerged following the formation of the Consejo de Coordinación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador in 1980 that gave rise to the creation of the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE) in 1986. In the 1990s the indigenous movement became the most significant social movement in Ecuador, gaining national political visibility with the “levantamiento indígena,” the indigenous uprising that took place on June 4, 1990, on the sacred (according to Andean cosmology) Inti Raymi of 1990, during the Presidency of Rodrigo Borja Cevallos, and was part of the most important continental social movement in the Americas. The CONAIE and indigenous movement’s leaderships also entered formal politics by forming the political party Pachakutik, in alliance with other progressive social movements, composed of mestizos, Afrodescendants, and peasants that participated for the first time in the 1996 Ecuadorian elections. In this dissertation, I prefer to use the term ‘Tawantinsuyo,’ following Ecuadorian decolonial thinking.

ficaban semejante nombre. Todo lo que yo llevaba como identificación era transitorio, provisional, efímero, y en esta frontera querían algo más concreto, algo que siquiera saliese en la pantalla. Si no, ¿cómo podían creerme, cómo?

Era un problema atípico: una existencia que no podía existir, pero que estaba ahí, enfrente suyo... Su ordenador lo decía con rotundidad y claridad yo no existo, ni puedo ni debo existir. (204)

Ecuatañol claims the “Tahuantinsuyo” as his country of citizenship, in what could be a checkpoint in a Spanish airport probably at the end of the 1990s and before August 3, 2004 when the Schengen visa became a requirement for Ecuadorians to enter Spain as a tourist for any stay shorter than 90 days, and when Ecuadorian transnational migration was at its highest point. As Caroline Labatut writes when referring to the complexity of today’s Spanish and Ecuadorian coexistence in Spanish territory, Carrasco evokes “un tiempo cíclico que se reitera más de quinientos años después, a la manera de un círculo dantesco...una maledicción dentro de la cohabitación entre españoles y ecuatorianos, pues ‘ecuatañola,’” (187-8). But it is also a sort of denied/negated sort of symbolic ‘Pachakutik,’ in Andean cosmology, a transformation and rebirth. Carrasco might allude to the profound alteration and rebirth that a human being may experience at different levels during migration: psychological, spiritual, ethical, social, economic, political, or sexual. As an undocumented migrant claiming a subalternized Andean geopolitical affiliation, Ecuatañol is the oxymoron that must be suppressed; he must not exist. Nonetheless, he exists, even when Spaniards may deny his presence. Most importantly, Carrasco suggests the historic amnesia that the Occidental global capitalist discourse deploys, by erasing the collective history of invasion and colonization of the Americas by Spaniards (and other Europeans) since 1492,

as well as the accumulation of capital in Europe, and the exploitation of human labor and natural resources of the Americas. Ecuatañol claims that his history has been invisibilized by Occidental knowledge and systems of domination.

But border checkpoints are places of human circulation and temporary detention. And from every checkpoint station undocumented migrants must be transported somewhere else for a more lasting confinement. Thus, Ecuatañol is transferred to Barcelona's Ramblas (*Les Rambles*)—an emblematic tourist walk of the city and an area of large concentrations of people—to become another statue and a tourist attraction, receiving a few coins of appreciation. Through a telephone conversation with a colleague, the border officer arrives at the best solution for Ecuatañol's case. The colleague suggests that in this situation the best option is for the non-person to become a statue similar to those already in the Ramblas. Within the context of his official non-existence (both on paper and computers), the digital databases absurdly indicate that Ecuatañol has been in Barcelona a few months prior. Because of his non-person status, Ecuatañol can move neither forward nor backwards. He is doomed to have a non-temporal survival. Carrasco writes:

–Mira chico –me dijeron-, tú no eres nadie, te lo volvemos a repetir, y por lo tanto no puedes ni avanzar ni retroceder, así que para ahorrarte situaciones aun más molestas, un colega de Barcelona, aquí consta que hace meses estuviste por ahí, nos ha sugerido que lo mejor es que te conviertas en una estatua semejante a la de las Ramblas, las has visto, ¿cierto? Esos pobrecillos que se están horas y horas inmóviles por las cuatro perras que les echan. (205)

His role as a non-person, “tú no eres nadie” pinpoints that within a nation-state world system, the lack of recognition of citizenship and national belonging also erases a person’s subjectivity, concrete social relations, friendships, affection, and waged labor; and Carrasco exemplifies this violent negation-erasure by not even mentioning Ecuatañol’s social relations, hopes, and desires within the narrative. It is Ecuatañol’s lack of citizenship that turns him into a non-person.

Like Ecuatañol, these *non-persone* conduct a life whose choices do not depend on them, as Alessandro Dal Lago states,

Sono vivi, conducono un’esistenza più o meno analoga a quella dei nazionali (...) ma sono passibili di uscire, contro la loro volontà, dalla condizione di persone. Continueranno a vivere anche dopo, ma non esisteranno più, non solo per la società in cui vivevano come ‘irregolari’ o ‘clandestini’, ma anche per loro stessi, poiché la loro esistenza di fatto finirà e ne inizierà un’altra che comunque non dipenderà dalla loro scelta. (207)

Ecuatañol has no option but to follow the public officer’s plan for him in the Ramblas.

His role as a statue becomes, in a way, his new status in a society that would see him everyday in the Ramblas, but at the same time not see him: he would be invisible, anonymous. Similar to the poignant social invisibility of African Americans within U.S. race relations as described in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, when the Spanish passersby and tourists of Barcelona’s Ramblas may see Ecuatañol, they would not really perceive him. “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me,” Ellison writes. (1) In the Ramblas, Ecuatañol’s inexistence achieves its ultimate goal: invisibility. Ellison adds:

Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me. (1)

Immersed in a forced invisibility among the other statues, Ecuatañol becomes part of a free-entry street circus that distorts reality while entertaining people: where human beings become objects of bewilderment and amusement. “Yo también fui hace un par de años. Recuerdo que cuando se movió la estatua mi mujer se llevó un buen susto—rió con la rememoranza,” recalls the immigration officer in a moment of human slippage (205). The immigration officer and his wife have also been in the Ramblas to see the (sub)human spectacle, but even when his wife frightened at a movement of a (sub)human statue, she was unable to see beyond her own self and her imagination.

Following the joke and laughter about the Ramblas’ (sub)human statues, the migration official says: “Bien, tú serás la estatua del indocumentado. Te estarás aquí, entre frontera y frontera como ejemplo de lo que no debe ser” (205). The negation of Ecuatañol’s existence is camouflaged by authorities, as a microcosm of dominant society, by masquerading Ecuatañol in his own mask. “La verdad que, con el tiempo, llegué a hacerlo bien, no tenía ni que disfrazarme” (206). Ecuatañol learns how to play his own role in the Ramblas, as the statue of an undocumented immigrant. He learns to play the role that state authorities (and on a larger scale, dominant society) have forced him to follow. He obtains the necessary device for both his home and showcase. A cardboard box becomes Ecuatañol’s home at night and a pedestal during the day. His daily activities are regulated by other people’s time, such as showcasing, sleeping, and washing himself. Avoiding a tone of

lamentation, Ecuatañol narrates that he could always find other people's leftovers; "la comida... pues las sobras me llegaban todas," Ecuatañol says. (206)

At the Ramblas, Ecuatañol continues to remain under surveillance. In fact, Spanish authorities that patrol the area expect Ecuatañol to die at any moment as another unidentified being. "Por las mañanas el poli de turno abría la escotilla, que yo había apañado en el cajón, me arrojaba de cualquier manera los mendrugos y me decía: -Tu desayuno, estatua -y yo sabía que quería decir: ¿todavía no te has muerto, chico?" (206). It is interesting to note that the Ramblas lead to Barcelona's Old Port, where the imposing statue of Christopher Columbus points to the Mediterranean Sea with his right forefinger, erected to memorialize Columbus' report of his first voyage to the Americas (the Indies for Columbus) to the Spanish crown in that city. Columbus' statue is visible from everywhere in the Ramblas, where the human-size statue of Ecuatañol, who claims that his origins are in the Tawantinsuyo, will not miss Columbus' statue every day.²⁴

Ultimately, Ecuatañol's existence becomes a total negation: an undocumented migrant who becomes a (sub)human street spectacle. Systematically and socially excluded, he lives the non-existent condition of an undocumented migrant, among the marginal masquerades of the Ramblas.

Conclusions

In the poetry and fiction examined here, one can see that Campaña, Valencia, and Carrasco share the concept of universal mobility, either of ideas (as through literature) or

²⁴ Inaugurated during the 1988 Universal Exposition of Barcelona, the statue of Columbus has been object of agitated controversy as to what Columbus' forefinger may symbolically point at, whether it is the Mediterranean Sea, the Americas, or his birth city Genoa.

human beings, as well as the right of people to move from one place to another, regardless of their place of origin.

At the end of his journey, Campaña's unnamed pilgrim returns, but not to the same place from which he departed, or rather, his perspective and the path that leads to his return have changed. What is important in *Aires de Ellicott City* is the journey itself as a learning process of personal growth and consciousness, not the final destination. On the other hand, Kazbek's inability to return to his "punto de origen," is his destiny (115). Mr. Peer would tell Kazbek, the artist must sit down "a crear su obra en el destierro (...) Y la obra, aunque nunca lo hubiera sospechado el artista, le responde" (115). What remains is movement, as the word itself "es movimiento: palabra en metamorphosis: cosa viva" (29): movement without guarantees that leads to uprooting and exile, to a new land, either real or imaginary. The movement is the consciousness that the writer has neither homeland nor a home. Language and Kazbek's own life reflect this movement.

After attempting in vain to write his masterpiece, Kazbek moves from one city to another, alone, until he writes a "Libro de Pequeño Formato," whose text accompanies the sixteen drawings of insects that incarnate the fear of people because of the eruptions of the Pichincha Volcano. Symbolically, the novel ends when Kazbek finds comfort and warmth in Isa's apartment in a winterly Geneva, with whom he had sporadic and ineffective communication during his creative travail. In contrast, Ecuatañol, a person without documented citizenship and nationality is denied movement, transnational migration, and, ultimately, human existence. In different circumstances, outside his nation, Ecuatañol might have been freer from the constraints that Kazbek and his German friend, Mr. Peer, might have endured in their native lands. The negation-erasure imposed on Ecuatañol underlines the violent limits of people to cross national borders and to experience an ideal of freedom.

Both Campaña and Valencia return to their birth city, Guayaquil, as a source of poetic and narrative inspiration, taking perhaps the city's most striking characteristic, its estuaries, as these may be remembered from their own childhood and adolescence, while Carrasco, through irony and paradox, makes a far-reaching social critique of the Ecuadorian migration to Spain.

In *Kazbek*, the reader finds a novel that addresses the writing process of its author and presents the birth of the actual book, as if it were the book's autobiography (La Rocca 3). All of *Kazbek's* characters are mobile people, as if in self-exile. Kazbek constantly translocates himself for work or in search of inspiration or characters, such as Dacal. While Dacal persistently eludes Kazbek, Isa unexpectedly appears in Guayaquil or Geneva and does not call when Kazbek most expects her. Kazbek's teacher, Mr. Peer, abandoned his native Berlin for the artistic freedom that Kazbek seeks. Although the association of Isa with Dante's Beatrice and Mr. Peer with Virgilio becomes a little hackneyed in *Kazbek*, it may work in the novel to accentuate Kazbek's mundane/higher inspirations and sensations and a master from whom to learn about art and creativity.

Whereas for Valencia citizenship is a limitation, and for Campaña it has no relevance, for Carrasco it can represent the negation of people's existence when they lack it. As a person from a non-recognized nation-state and citizenship, Ecuatañol is denied all rights. There is a crescendo in the denial of his rights: from movement, to transnational migration, a home, food, and sleep. As one of the limitations imposed by the nation-state/United Nations system, Carrasco highlights that if one does not have some form of recognized citizenship, one is denied status as a person. Ecuatañol becomes an inanimate object, '*una cosa*,' a statue; therefore, he is immobilized. He is dispossessed of his humanity.

In these literary works, the possibilities of travelling, moving, crossing borders, migrating spatially, spiritually or intellectually, pinpoint the human desire for a personal sense of freedom, which could translate into literary creativity, consciousness, or simply human existence. For Valencia, the limitations on travelling in either intellectual or spatial dimensions cripple creative and artistic creation. For Campaña, it is not important where the journey takes the pilgrim: what matters is what happens in the process. The pilgrim's cyclical path allows him to observe, learn, and pick what he needs from his cultural and geographical background, and to return. Through the experience of an undocumented migrant, Carrasco reminds the reader of the hegemonic global systems that violently attempt to crush subjectivity.

CHAPTER IV

DOMINANT REPRESENTATIONS: ECUADORIAN MIGRANT YOUTH AND THE BURDEN OF BANDE

The unified moralism attached to subaltern subjects now also clings to diasporan ones, who are invariably assumed to be members of oppressed classes and therefore constitutionally opposed to capitalism and state power. Furthermore, because of the exclusive focus on texts, narratives, and subjectivities, we are often left wondering what are the particular local-global structural articulations that materially and symbolically shape these dynamics of victimhood and ferment.

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Introduction

Over the last 20 years, Italy, historically a country of emigration, has become a site of immigration for people from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. Nonetheless, the complex and bureaucratic Italian legal, judicial, and institutional public system and the monopolized mass media communication disseminated by public and private networks have been reluctant to acknowledge, protect, or denounce the violation of rights of diasporic populations who do not belong to the European Union. As part of the project of fortress Europe, Italy has gradually adjusted its legislation according to EU directives. However, Italy—like all countries of the EU—has implemented its own juridico-legal mechanisms, administrative procedures and social structures to address the inclusion or exclusion of subjects, immigrants and citizens.

¹ *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality.*

Undoubtedly, Italy presents similarities to other Western European nation-states (i.e. the United Kingdom, (West) Germany, France and Belgium) that have received significant immigration from non-European (former colonial) populations during the twentieth century. As Stephen Castles argued in 1984 regarding migrant workers in then West Germany, Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe, “As the migratory process matures, and labour migration develops into settlement, there is a corresponding shift in the way society perceives the minorities” (159). This has also been the case as Ecuadorian migration has settled in Southern/Mediterranean Europe. For Ecuadorian migrants, settlement has meant that women migrants have reunited with their children in the country of migratory destination. Castles adds that

Black and foreign working-class youth are particularly hard-hit by the crisis, both economically—unemployment, housing problems, and so on—and ideologically—for example, racism and campaigns for deportation. At the same time, the institutions of socialization are far less effective in their case.

The family is disrupted by migration and by insecure legal and socio-economic circumstances; the education system discriminates against minority children, giving them neither useful knowledge nor the certificates needed for access to the occupational system, decent work opportunities are closed. So the potential for rebellion among minority youth is even greater than among other groups. (160)

As has usually been the case in today’s European Union, Switzerland, the United States and elsewhere in the global North, migrant workers, migrant youth, and children of migrants born in the country of settlement enter already racialized and ethnicized working classes and acquire an ‘ethnic minority status.’ The public discourse of the state, supra-national entities such as the EU, and mainstream media regarding a given ethnic minority often

ignores world economic hegemonies and inequalities linked to colonial histories and the socioeconomic and cultural difficulties that migrant populations confront on a daily basis in the countries of settlement. While the EU finances a number of projects and programs for the integration of immigrants, migrant youth, and children of immigrants and the promotion of interculturality in the European Union, these have mostly been devised, developed, executed, and supervised by local, national, and European bureaucracies. If immigrants, aware of their own necessities, have intervened in the development of a project, they have had little or no power to decide where, how, and for whom public funds are invested.

In Italian cities where significant foreign populations reside, a kind of “boutique multi-culturalism” has become part of daily life: Italians have become used to seeing ‘ethnic’ businesses where migrants simply buy their food (for them, it is not ethnic food), items for traditional celebrations (baptisms, *quinceañeras*), specific clothes (girdles, brassieres, jeans), and make long-distance phone calls to their families or send remittances.² However, this landscape of interculturality and pluri-nationality within the Italian state does not necessarily mean an “acceptance of the ‘others’ and their difference” (Parati 118). In this conjuncture, I believe that a discussion of the social spheres and structural realities in which the cultural production of adult and adolescent diasporic Ecuadorians take place, particularly those analyzed in Chapter Five (the poems submitted to two poetry contests)

² I borrow the term “boutique multi-culturalism,” cited by Graziella Parati, who, in turn, refers to Stanley Fish’s lecture at Dartmouth College on July 23, 1993 entitled “Boutique Multi-Culturalism” (118-39). I understand “boutique multi-culturalism as the symbolic value and consumption of goods and services from countries of the global South in Europe and North America, that are stripped of their significance and power relations with the immigrant and refugee populations who have settled in those countries where those goods and services are consumed and given social value by upper and middle classes.

and in Chapter Seven (the filmic representations in which migrant youth are either active agents as script writers or represented subjects through Italian, Spanish, or other Latin American gazes) can provide a way to contextualize the literary and cinematographic representations and self-representations of diasporic Ecuadorians in Southern/Mediterranean Europe. Most importantly, the examination of diasporic Ecuadorian social realities allows the reader to better understand the subjectivity formation of Ecuadorian migrants, particularly women and youth, and the context in which they express their subjectivity and narratives.

This chapter presents an overview of transnational families led by Ecuadorian women, the structural situations experienced by Ecuadorian youth and their parents once reunified in Genoa, and suggests ways in which an eventual territorial family reunification may reproduce the subalternized social integration of Ecuadorian migrant workers. I then discuss the stigmatized and racialized representation of migrants—principally Ecuadorian male youth as gang [*banda*] members and violent street actors—by the Italian, and particularly the Genovese, mainstream printed media.

The Reworking of Ecuadorian Families

As stated in the introduction, the Ecuadorian population residing in Genoa is mainly composed of women (62 percent of the total Ecuadorian population with regular migratory status in the city). In the last ten years, the Ecuadorian male population has increased, in part, as a result of the acceptance of Ecuadorian women's applications for family reunification or "*ricongiungimento familiare*" that have allowed migrant children and husbands to join their mothers and wives, respectively, in Italy.

Particularly since the mid-1990s, many Ecuadorian women have migrated to Italy,

leaving their children at home in the care of grandmothers, aunts, nieces, close female friends, husbands or former partners. As part of the organizational arrangements of motherhood, accommodating spatial and temporal separations, transnational motherhood has become a strategy of Ecuadorian women in which networks of affection, caring, and financial support transcend national borders (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 548). In fact, this is not a new praxis for poor, indigenous, Afro-descendent, *montubia*, rural, peasant and single mothers who have historically moved out of their hometowns in search of work in large and distant urban spaces, oftentimes as servants and domestic workers, in *maquilas*, or in rural areas as field workers.³ The most significant differences to have taken place in Ecuadorian society evidenced at the turn of the century have to do with a wider spectrum of social class, race, and ethnicity within which female migrant workers identify themselves, a longer period of the mother's absence, greater distance separating mother and children, and the transnationality involved.

Mara Tognetti Bordogna refers to this transnational reworking of family relationships as a “patchwork family,” insofar as during the migration process members must restructure the family by mending, recomposing, or patching, which often assumes original and creative forms (“L’incremento” 23). Gender ideologies, practices and relationships, as well as the sexual international division of labor, especially around

³ *Montubio*, as a political identity, refers to Ecuadorian peasants from the Coastal Region, with specific ancestral cultural traditions, collective knowledge and lands, social organization, and sense of belonging, who—within an Occidentalist and Eurocentric epistemology—have been historically placed at some of Ecuador's lowest ethno-social strata. In the last few years, the term ‘*montubio*’ has acquired a positive connotation and a sense of pride for many Coastal peasants, and has become part of the national political language, following the relentless struggles of social movements and negotiations with the state. Ecuador's current Constitution, approved in 2008, recognizes *montubio* cultural, land and collective rights, social, administrative, and territorial organization, as well as traditions and cultural expressions, particularly in Articles 56, 57, 59, 60, and 257.

household work and subsistence, have undoubtedly been challenged by the increasing feminization of transnational migration, particularly from the global South, including that of Ecuadorian women. Once women migrants achieve the legal and economic conditions required by the Italian state, transnational motherhood is reworked, again. Many children and youth arrive in Genoa after a long period of separation from their biological mothers. The children are often brought to Genoa in intervals of a couple of years between one child and another—dramatically altering their intimate, social, and linguistic contexts. These newly arrived children often find a ‘new’ home and a ‘new mom’ in Genoa; and the head-of-household or authority figure becomes this ‘new’ mother.

Most scholars have focused Ecuadorian migration research on its impact on the family and the role of the family in the subjectivity of the heterosexual woman. For instance, Lagomarsino insists:

Appare chiaro dunque che esiste un rapporto interattivo tra famiglia e migrazione, in cui ciascuno dei due soggetti esercita la sua influenza sull’altro. Da un lato la struttura e il funzionamento dei nuclei familiari influenzano la possibilità di emigrare, ma dall’altro la migrazione trasforma e influenza la famiglia sia nel paese di origine che nel paese di arrivo. (“Familia e migrazione” 219)⁴

As evidenced in the literature on Ecuadorian migration in the European Union, particularly in Italy and Spain (Pedone, Lagomarsino, Pagnotta, Queirolo Palmas, Torre, Herrera, Acosta,

⁴ “Thus, it seems clear that there exists an interactive relationship between family and migration, in which each subject exercises its influence over the other. On one hand, the structure and functioning of nuclear families influence the possibility of emigration, but on the other hand, migration transforms and influences the family both in the country of origin and the country of destination.” Unless otherwise stated, all English translations are mine.

Ramírez, Camacho, Cuesta), the migration of Ecuadorian heterosexual women who had a male partner in Ecuador often emerges from a family context already weak and characterized by fragile and problematic relationships in which the departure is experienced as an occasion to escape distressful and painful situations. In this sense, transnational migration is not the rupture of a heterosexual relationship but rather a “facilitating factor” for the realization of a separation that is already desired but not always feasible in the Ecuadorian cultural and socio-economic context (Lagomarsino 222).

In a study of transnational migration in Central America, Katharine Andrade-Eekoff and Claudia Marina Silva-Avalos discuss the more complex processes and multiple levels of heterogeneity of youth experiences in transnational families, which appear to be similar in many aspects to the experiences of Ecuadorian transnational families. They state that:

Clearly the migratory process involves difficult adaptations for young people in transnational spaces, for example in the case of a teenager asking for permission to go to a party or buy a dress from a father or mother that lives more than 4,000 kilometers away. At the same time, families are finding and creating new processes of adaptation in these situations; these processes often cause friction among family members. This suggests a change in family arrangements, in which young people assume greater responsibilities at an earlier age; characterizing this simply as disintegration with negative impacts on youth limits the possibilities for understanding a far more dynamic and heterogeneous situation. (31)

During the period of transnational motherhood, the mother becomes a distant authority figure who makes decisions about the minor's life in the country of origin, sends money and presents, while the grandmother (often called '*mami*') or an aunt represents the referent in terms of affection and daily care. The family context in Ecuador may involve an authority figure represented by a woman, a man, both, or two women, but usually within a larger social network of extended family and close friends who play distinctive roles as adult figures and contribute to and stimulate the child's subjectivity, development and care. For the most part, the capitalist Eurocentric idea of "nuclear family" does not necessarily fit the social context in which many Ecuadorian children develop in Ecuador (or in Italy). In this sense, I would agree with Maria José Magliano and Eduardo E. Domenech, who find fault with understanding the family in general, and the migrant family in particular, vis-à-vis the nuclear family model which "rules out other family models of family existing in today's society" and reinforces the Eurocentric concept of nuclear family (parents and children) in a sort of isolated cell (64). One should note here that transnational motherhood tends to be a temporary situation, at least for most Ecuadorian women in Italy: as soon as the mother can fulfill the requirements to apply for family reunification, she will do so.

After a few years of working in Genoa, the material requirements may be fulfilled. However, mother and children may not necessarily re-elaborate the period of separation and may not have the tools necessary for rebuilding the relationship and confronting the changes and challenges that involve family reunification in a different social context. In these circumstances, the mother often receives her loved but unfamiliar children. Similarly to the recent experience of Ecuadorian female migrations to the United States and Spain, after an exhausting and distressing period of 'reunification' in Genoa and the precarious structural conditions under which mothers try to manage the situation, Ecuadorian women

may consider transnational motherhood—a strategy not readily accepted by the community of migrants and the family in the homeland—a viable and new option, again (Herrera 83).

The fear of ‘losing’ her child and not being able to exert control over the minor’s life choices compels the Ecuadorian woman to re-work her family once again—i.e., by sending her child back to Ecuador—generally engendering a double sense of disorientation and displacement for the adolescent. By ‘losing’ a child, I refer to the phrase ‘*perder a mi hijo*,’ often expressed by Ecuadorian mothers during informal conversations in Genoa, as a way of describing the anguish and sorrow they feel when faced with the inability to prevent their children (usually boys, but also girls) from getting involved with drugs and alcohol abuse, unprotected sex, dropping out of school, and criminal or gang activities.

Ecuadorian Youth and The Local School System

Ecuadorian youth usually arrive in Italy as permitted by application of Art. 29 of the Italian law that regulates immigration of citizens of non-EU member states, *Testo Unico per l’Immigrazione, Decreto Legislativo No.286*, of July 25, 1998, published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* (Official Registry) on August 18, 1998, as a result of family reunification requested by migrant parents. Nonetheless, alternative arrangements are also available to parents. For instance, some have opted to have their children travel to Spain, either on a non-immigrant visa or through family reunification laws—if, for example one parent or guardian was ever a resident there—and then have them travel to Italy. Others use a series of optional strategies, including relinquishing parental custody, handing over custody to a relative who holds a permit of stay in Italy, adoption of a friend’s child, and (il)licit alteration of a child’s birth certificate and/or his Ecuadorian identification card, or “*cédula de ciudadanía*,” whose

data is then transferred to the passport.

In Genoa, Ecuadorian migrant women are often viewed and tolerated as domestic and more *domesticatable* workers, primarily in the private sphere of Italian households; most of these employment positions are limited to subordinate conditions with multiple intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality. In addition, the offspring of these workers enter a social milieu of new family arrangements, smaller apartments, limited material resources, marginalization, stigmatization, and social rejection. Both experience dislocations or “narratives of displacements,” to borrow Stuart Hall’s words, including partial citizenship, as they navigate social processes of migration which stem specifically from their structural location as racialized women and men, low-wage workers, poorly educated citizens of countries considered ‘Third world’ in mainstream Italian (and Eurocentric) regimes of knowledge (Salazar Parreñas 12-31). Thus their subjectivities are entangled within nation-state structures, government policies, labor market conditions, and the constitution of an ethnic community within global or transnational Ecuadorian communities, or the idea of an Ecuadorian community in Genoa. In this sense, not surprisingly, migrant youth tend to separate themselves from their parents’ subjectivities and identities.

Similarly to the experiences of youth of color or those of immigrant background, particularly of North African descent in France, and Turkish or Afro-German descent in Germany, Ecuadorian youth in Italy, viewed as migrants (e.g. having neither ‘Italian’ blood nor Italian citizenship, and with different lived experiences both in Ecuador and Italy), tend to be on the defensive, on guard. The linking of ‘blood,’ i.e., ethnicity and race, with ‘Italianness’ (Frenchness or Germanness), is a scenario in which minority youth are often portrayed as gendered images of ethnic others moving between a multicultural utopia and a

'clash of civilizations' (El-Tayeb, "If you can't pronounce" 466). Thus, Ecuadorian youth enter the Genovese social context as an 'ethnic other.' Although, clearly, Eurocentric ethno-racial discourse does not place Ecuadorians at the same level of 'otherness' as Muslim and Arab youth, nor is their orientalist exclusionary and invisibilizing representation comparable: Ecuadorian youth experience a sense of erasure and denial of their existence.

Consequently, Ecuadorian youth often feel uprooted and without firmly established national identities. Regardless of whether they have permits of stay, they are positioned in a sort of liminal space insofar as they already feel alienated or different from the dominant idea of the Ecuadorian nation as a cultural unit of belonging and, in Benedict Anderson's words, "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). These youth do not feel themselves a part of the Italian dominant culture and they become aware of their parents' subalternized inclusion in the Italian labor market and social structure. Having spent their childhood, or a part of it, in Ecuador, these youth arrive in Genoa, learn Italian, enter into contact with local cultures, and establish social networks at school and in the neighborhood. In this sense, the imaginary of Ecuadorian youth as subjects with full rights and agency is fractured by the symbolic and illusory idea of citizenship, as well as the limited possibilities available to them in order to break with their parents' plight of socio-economic subalternization and dislocation, which soon becomes their own.

Not surprisingly, Ecuadorian youth attending school search for groups of belonging and identity construction, removed from the dominant middle-class conception of 'Italianness.' This social construction is facilitated by the large numbers of Ecuadorian students in the Region of Liguria, particularly in Genoa. During the 2012-2013 academic year, of all foreign students registered in public and private elementary, middle and high

schools in Liguria (18,265), 23.63 percent were of Ecuadorian nationality (4,317). In the Province of Genoa, the percentage of Ecuadorian students increases to 37,02 percent, with 3,807 Ecuadorians, out of a total of 10,282 foreign students.⁵ Ecuadorian students constitute the largest national group of foreign students in Liguria and in Genoa, accounting for almost one quarter of all foreign students in Liguria, and 37.02 percent in the Province of Genoa, followed by Albanians: 3,778 in Liguria and 1,545 in Genoa, and Moroccans, 1,809 in the region and 788 in the province. While school may be a viable route to mainstream social integration, it is also a space where racial/ethnic and socio-economic hierarchies are articulated.

Schools have played a key role in accentuating differences between Italian and foreign students. About a decade ago, most migrant youth were tracked into professional and technical schools; this tendency has changed only slightly in recent years. In the 2002-2003 academic year, out of a total of 1,158 non-Italian students registered in high schools in the Province of Genoa, 607 (52.4 percent) were in professional schools, and 400 (34.5 percent) in technical schools, while 128 (11.1 percent) were in classical/scientific/linguistic schools, and 23 (2 percent) in art schools.⁶ According to the Resource Center for Foreign Students of the Region of Liguria [*Centro Risorse Alunni Stranieri-CRAS of Genoa-Ufficio Scolastico Regionale Liguria*], as a result of the recent restructuring of Italian public schools, the CRAS no longer maintains updated statistics on the nationality of students in different

⁵ Data provided by CRAS (*Centro Risorse Alunni Stranieri*) of Genoa-*Ufficio Scolastico Regionale Liguria*. In these statistics, the registration of Italian-Ecuadorian students (whose exact number is uncertain) is not included, as schools and the *Ufficio Scolastico Regionale Liguria*-Ministry of Education, University and Research identify those children as Italian citizens only. Foreign students constitute all non-Italian students, including citizens of the EU member states.

⁶ Data provided by Italy's Ministry of Education, University, and Research 2002-2003.

school tracks (personal email 8/21/2013). Traditionally, classical [*liceo classico*], scientific [*liceo scientifico*], linguistic [*liceo linguistico*], and artistic [*liceo artistico*] tracks of high schools have been the ones that prepared students to further their education at the University level. According to current Italian education laws, all second cycle schools [*licei, scuole tecniche, scuole professionali*] should prepare students for admission to the Italian (and eventually European) university system. It has been observed, however, that students who graduate from professional and technical schools have fewer tools for successfully obtaining a university degree in natural and social sciences, humanities, and the arts, as these schools focus knowledge on a practical/job-oriented level, for instance accounting, tourism, restaurant and hospitality, or auto and vessel mechanics. During the 2003-2004 academic year, almost 60 percent of all Latin American youth—which constituted 67.9 percent of

all foreign students—were schooled in the Institute Vittorio Emanuele II-Ruffini, Institute Odero, Institute Firpo/Buonarroti, Institute Nino Bergese, Institute Marco Polo, and Institute Gastaldi/Giorgi, all either technical, professional, or commercial schools located in the center and in the peripheries of Genoa (Ravecca 75). Although the statistics on where and what foreigners study in Genovese schools have been recently unavailable from Italian public institutions, the case of the Institute Vittorio Emanuele II-Ruffini may provide a sense of the actual distribution of nationalities in the Genovese school system. Located in the historic center of Genoa and easily accessible by public transportation from all parts of the city, in the 2013-2014 school year, in the evening courses at the Institute Vittorio Emanuele, which include at least four technical and professional tracks (Accounting, Computer Administration, Business Administration Operator, and Technician) of 3 to 5 years for

completion, almost 50 percent of the student population is non-Italian; of this population, about 40 percent is of Ecuadorian nationality.⁷

Partly because of the limited economic means of migrant families, lack of access to information and social networks regarding career and job opportunities, immigrant youth are eager to finish either middle [*scuola secondaria di primo grado*] or high school [*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*] in order to obtain low-paying jobs that can cover their personal expenses and sometimes contribute to the family expenses. Employment opportunities in general are scant in Genoa, and much more limited for a young person with a middle or high school diploma. In the first quarter of the year 2012, Italy's unemployment rate of people aged 24 and under was 35.9 percent and the country's overall unemployment rate was 10.9 percent (Istat). It should be added that these figures only include Italian citizens and regular residents who search for jobs, usually registered in *Centro per l'Impiego*, 'Provincial Employment Centers,' not those who have chosen not to be wage-earning workers, such as upper and upper-middle class housewives and undocumented migrants.

In this context, job prospects for ethnic minority youth are less positive. The jobs usually available for minority youth with a middle or high school diploma, if female, are in babysitting or house and office cleaning; if male, in the construction sector. Unlike their migrant parents, these youth are less willing to accept these kinds of jobs for the low salaries offered, long working hours, precarious working conditions, and socially devalued positions they represent. Often, migrant youth view themselves as socially entitled to obtain

⁷ Data provided by Prof. Agostino Calvi, responsible for evening courses at the Institute Vittorio Emanuele II-Ruffini. Personal conversation. December 16, 2013.

better jobs than their parents and exercise full citizenship rights, having been partially raised and educated in Italy, and possessing significantly better—although in many cases, not impeccable—Italian language skills than their migrant parents.

Aspects related to permits of stay are extremely important for the families of migrant youth. If by the age of 18 a person who has grown up in Italy has no regular permit of stay and fails to regularize her stay in Italy, she will be considered a ‘criminal’ according to Italian decree, *Decreto legge* No. 92, which became law No.125 on July 24, 2008, known as the ‘*pacchetto sicurezza*,’ or ‘security package.’ In other words, while she was a minor and did not have a regular permit of stay, she had certain rights, such as access to public education, health and social services, following international human rights treaties such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and European Union directives, which recognize the rights and freedoms of children without distinction of any kind, including national or social origin, birth or other status.⁸ Under Italian law, a minor living in the country with irregular status (i.e. without a permit of stay) is not considered a criminal and cannot be expelled from Italian territory. Rather, the minor must be protected by the state. At age 18, however, a person could become an irregular migrant in Italy if she does not renew her permit of stay. The most common category of renewal is for *motivi familiari*, ‘family reasons,’ and that permit of stay would be linked to that of the parent who financially supports the 18-year-old child and it expires on the same date the parent’s permit of stay expires. Another common category is for *motivi di studio*, ‘study reasons,’ being also economically dependent on the migrant parent who has a permit of stay. A less

⁸ Adopted by the United Nations Assembly Resolution 44/25 of November 20, 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child came into force on September 2, 1990. It was ratified by Italy on May 27, 1991 with Law No.176.

requested category is for *accesso al lavoro*, 'employment,' either as a dependent waged worker (*lavoro subordinato*) or an autonomous worker (*lavoro autonomo*), or for healthcare or medical necessities. Many migrant parents expect their children to get jobs as soon as possible so that they can contribute to the household bills, cover their own personal expenses (mainly clothing, cellular phones, cell phone recharge, outings, etc.) and eventually regularize their own migratory status. However, this is not the case in most migrant family scenarios. The lack of part-time jobs for youth, high school and university students, information and support about university admission requirements, tax deductions, scholarships and loans for tuition payments based on income, starting from the first university academic year, generate a situation in which Ecuadorian migrant youth do not envision socio-economic prospects in Italy.

In low-income families and in a larger social context with limited public social services for minors in which the head of household—usually the woman—spends long hours at work during the day (in some cases, with overnight work shifts from 7pm to 7am, or with live-in working conditions from 8am Monday to 1pm Saturday), often in the absence of a father figure or a social network of family, close friends, and neighbors who can complement the care of children during the mother's absence, migrant children encounter complex situations that deter them from succeeding in school. The parents' difficulty in helping the child with homework, as well as educational methods and methodology that do not always succeed in integrating foreign students into the school system and in stimulating command over the Italian language, have been identified by Ecuadorian parents as situations that prevent migrant children from succeeding at school, usually located in urban peripheries, such as the neighborhoods of Sampierdarena, Cornigliano, Campasso,

Staglieno, or Molassana. In this context, the organization of groups based on ethnicity is not uncommon. I note that many of these children have studied in Ecuadorian public and private schools with deficient academic levels. Thus, many of these children have not been provided with solid academic bases for successful school performance, whether in Ecuador or abroad.

Contemporaneously, the subalternization of Latin American cultures and the educational system has come to light in Italian schools through the lack of correspondence between school years completed in Ecuador and their counterparts in Italy. The first few years of schooling in Ecuador may have exposed students to different educational methods and methodologies and to the reproduction of different cultural capital (particularly in social sciences, history, and literature). In the new school and social system, the migrant students' knowledge acquired in Ecuadorian schools places them in a lower class, compared to their peers of the same age and school years. In the same vein, it has been noted that because of their lack of Italian language skills, Ecuadorian migrant students are placed in inferior classes that do not correspond to their school grade based on their years of schooling and age. Many migrant parents object to this school praxis. Some parents, however, favor their children's being placed one grade lower as a way for them to learn Italian and to adjust to the new social environment, without having the pressure of acquiring 'new' knowledge, but rather 'reviewing' what they learned, for instance, in Mathematics and other sciences. Yet, without the appropriate support either at school or at home, students who do not command skills to effectively function within the new school system tend to feel embarrassed, awkward, and intellectually and culturally inferior; therefore, they look for social spaces to feel comfortable, unjudged, and at ease with their peers.

In order to ameliorate the dramatic and confusing situation experienced in Genovese public schools with the arrival of a significant number of non-EU citizen children, the CRAS-*Centro Risorse Alunni Stranieri* (Resource Center for Foreign Students) was created in Genoa in 2000. Through an agreement between the School Department for the Region of Liguria [*Ufficio Scolastico per la Liguria*] of the Ministry of Education, the Municipality of Genoa, the Province of Genoa, and the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Genoa, the CRAS was created in order to develop a coordinated network of services and projects for intercultural education, as well as the reception and integration of foreign students. The need for this kind of initiative became evident at the end of the 1990s when Genovese schools received an unprecedented number of foreign students, particularly from Ecuador and other Latin American countries. The Center has been an important resource for principals, teachers, parents, students, and researchers for a more coordinated integration of recently arrived foreign students into schools.

However, cultural mediation services for foreign students in public schools are extremely limited and are not provided by trained public employees, but rather by associates and employees of private cooperatives or associations (known as third sector in Italy) and publicly funded. In Genoa, these are subsidized services provided by the cooperative S.A.B.A., whose associates and employees work as cultural and linguistic mediators and devote an average of 10 to 20 hours of 'intercultural mediation' to each student during the school year. Thus, intercultural knowledge is not necessarily an integral/systematic school component for all students and teachers, but rather a ministerial directive that is more freely applied by individual teachers. Well established within a center-left political coalition today headed by the Democratic Party that has governed the

City of Genoa since the mid-1970s, this politicized cooperative has had an agreement with the City of Genoa since 2000 to provide for social and intercultural services to migrant children and, if necessary, their families. One could also argue that the financial resources allocated and managed for intercultural education and social integration of diverse school populations do not correspond to the real needs of the City.⁹

Social Marginalization and The Mediated Idea of *Bande*

The precarious and fragile structural, material, and psychological preparation young people receive for family reunification may prompt migrant youth to develop certain strategies to define and protect themselves (Lagomarsino 89). Lagomarsino observes that this preparation requires a huge capacity of management and organizational resources—and not only material but particularly emotional resources—all linked to the capacity to imagine the needs and difficulties that adolescents experience upon arrival (89). In this context, self-segregation and self-exclusion—understood as ethnic and linguistic socialization, in which Latin American youth tend to form groups almost exclusively among themselves, expressing well-defined and distinctive characteristics that separate them from

⁹ During Genoa's de-industrialization process and its concomitant increase of cooperatives, the Genoa-based social cooperative S.A.B.A. (the acronym for *Servizi di Assistenza per Bambini e Anziani*) was created in 1979 by a group of Italian women. S.A.B.A.'s initial aim was to create new types of professional jobs by providing carework services to children and the elderly. Over the years and with Regional, Provincial and Municipal subsidies, the cooperative has expanded its services to reach disabled children and adults. Since 2000, its services have included those targeted to migrants, such as cultural mediation, particularly in school and social service systems, providing linguistic and cultural mediation. The cooperative has a staff of 216 people, of which 107 are member workers and 109 employees; of these, 63 are men and 16 are cultural mediators. Unsurprisingly, women mostly provide these services. Based on multiple conversations with cultural mediators in Genoa—most of them immigrant women with university degrees from their countries of origin—16 cultural mediators cannot adequately meet the needs of large numbers of migrant children and youth, as well as their families, whether at school or in colloquia in social service centers. I should note, however, that a job as cultural mediator is understood by many as the highest-level employment a migrant can obtain in Genoa.

Italians—become strategies of defense, protection, recreation, and identity construction that Ecuadorian youth often utilize within their own social milieux (Lagomarsino 92). It is important to note, however, that groups of Latin American youth who join together to skate near the central train station, dance hip-hop, rap or raggaeton in an isolated area or a park, or use alcohol and drugs in a public space are usually portrayed as gangs or ‘baby’ gangs by the mainstream media, while thousands of ‘Italian’ youth using alcohol and drugs and making noise outside of bars, during what is known as *‘la movida’* in Genoa’s historic center over the weekend, are generally perceived and accepted as young people having fun (Queirolo Palmas, *Il fantasma* 282). Undoubtedly, this is a matter of class and the socioeconomics of youth engaged in social behavior: it is about who can afford to dress up and meet at a bar for drinks and snacks, who can chip in to buy cheap bottles of vodka, rum or tequila at the liquor store.

The school occupies a unique position in the formation of youth groups as it becomes a space where gangs recruit, organize, and interact (Coughlin and Venkatesh 56). Working in Chicago with African-American and Latino gangs, Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh (2000) (Venkatesh and Levitt 2000) and Padilla (1992), respectively, analyze members’ subjectivity and understandings of gang activity, as well as how their motivations to participate are formed out of political views that stem from the understanding that their ethnic groups suffer discrimination in schools, labor markets, and financial institutions. In this sense, the gang can be understood as a social organization or as a strategy for individual youth to negotiate collective experiences that intersect race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and class. For socially disadvantaged youth, living on the peripheries of the city with their migrant parents who have limited access to social services, dropping out of school becomes

a socially accepted option that has been reinforced and even encouraged within migrant communities, neighborhoods, and schools.

For the purposes of this dissertation, a gang, “a street gang (or troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose identity includes involvement in illegal activity” (Weerman et al. 20). It is evident—and confirmed by Genoa’s Police Headquarters—that the involvement of Ecuadorian youth in gangs represents an extremely low percentage.¹⁰ However, the mainstream media attention that Latino gangs have acquired in Genoa is a mediated narrative that has an impact on the way Ecuadorian youth are perceived on a daily basis and, most importantly, how they perceive themselves.

Local and national authorities have often approached the formation of street gangs as a matter of security and criminal activity, not as a social situation that needs particular attention in the contexts of family structures, schools, youth recreation, creativity in public spaces, and lack of opportunities for youth. The situation of gangs in Genoa is, to a certain degree, comparable to the situation in New York City. Indeed, it is from the U.S. that the globalized image/performance of gangs reaches Ecuadorians in Genoa, Milan, Barcelona, and Madrid: and, similarly, the formation of these gangs “reflect the contradictory, misunderstood, and often ignored outcomes of socio-historical agency.” The gang, or rather, the street organization, simultaneously, manifests examples of urban social and cultural resistance to control and domination (Brotherton and Barrios xv-xvi). In this sense, the formation of ethnic and/or migrant youth groups that sometimes may develop into gangs,

¹⁰ Information obtained in an informal conversation with the Immigration Director of Genoa’s Police Headquarters in 2011.

could be understood as one way in which Ecuadorian youth, as a subalternized, racialized, and dis/translocated population, resist different regimes of control and domination at the macro and micro-structural levels (global, state, local, family). At the same time, the dynamics and articulation of these groups can also be understood as these youths' demand for recognition and difference as genuinely cosmopolitan citizens, and in opposition to Eurocentric bourgeois conceptions, models, and desires.

As Ecuadorian youth joined their mothers in Genoa in significant numbers at the turn of the current century, the dominant image of Latin American immigrants, or '*sudamericani*' as they are often called in Italy, particularly from Ecuador, shifted from that of the invisibilized, hard-working and honest, woman, dedicated to her domestic job, mostly in the carework sector, to the stigmatized representation of the drunk, loud and *machista* male who invades public spaces (which Italians use "correctly"), disturbs peaceful neighborhoods and breaks accepted codes of civil conduct. I borrow Albert Memmi's "mark of the plural," a term that refers to a colonialist strategy of depersonalization, strips individuality from colonized people, and projects their image over an anonymous collectivity, as "They are all the same" (85). In the case of mass media representations of young Ecuadorians in Genoa, they have not been allowed to claim individuality; their acts, particularly if outside of the law, have been seen as allegorical, as "all the same." As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have written regarding the burden of representation, "each negative image of an underrepresented group becomes, within the hermeneutics of domination, sorely overcharged with allegorical meaning as part of what Michael Rogin calls the 'surplus symbolic value' of oppressed people," the power that makes them stand

for something besides themselves (183).¹¹ Stigmatized and racialized representations of Ecuadorians have been disseminated by the printed media and in their online versions, such as the Genovese newspaper *Il Secolo XIX*, and to a lesser extent, the section dedicated to immigrants in Italy, “Metropoli,” included in the Roma-based national newspaper *La Repubblica*, as well as the less circulated Genovese journal *Corriere Mercantile*. In particular, articles published in the last decade by *Il Secolo XIX* have represented Latin American women, especially Ecuadorian, as almost exclusively within their economic role of ‘*badanti*,’ (from the Italian term, *badare*, meaning to care for), listing their salaries, their rates of employment in contrast to Italian domestic workers, and how much money they send to their families in their countries of origin, etc. In the case of men, articles have focused on criminal acts and youth groups, predominantly associated with gangs or the appropriation of public spaces, especially Piazza della Commenda, located in the city’s historic center, in a neighborhood that has historically been populated by various migrant groups, including Sicilians, Calabrians, Senegalese, Nigerians, and Moroccans. In fact, Piazza della Commenda has been informally named the “*plaza de los Ecuatorianos*” due to the daily gathering of Ecuadorian women and men there in order to socialize, as well as the zone’s increasing number of businesses catering to Ecuadorian customers, including telecommunication and money-wire centers, luncheonettes, and grocery stores. The appropriation of public space has taken on symbolic signification for Ecuadorians to the point that at midnight on New Year’s Eve, Ecuadorians now customarily gather at Piazza della Commenda to burn “*Años Viejos*,” ‘Old Years.’ Following Ecuadorian tradition, “*Años Viejos*” or “*monigotes*” are nearly human-sized rag dolls that represent the negative experiences lived during the year about

¹¹ In *Ronald Reagan, the Movie* and “Blackface, White Noise, The Jewish Jazz Singer Finds His Voice,” Michael Rogin describes African Americans in U.S. films.

to end and, as a way of leaving the wretched past behind, the *monigotes* are burnt to ashes, accompanied by firecrackers and small fireworks.

In this Piazza, it is also common to see groups of Ecuadorian men drinking alcohol far into the early morning hours. The next day, garbage, empty liquor bottles, urine, and vomit may be found in the plaza, but one also finds this phenomenon all over the historic center where *'la movida'* of nightlife in and around bars takes place every weekend. I should note that there is a general lack of public restrooms in the city, and there are no public restrooms near piazza della Commenda. At an earlier time, public restrooms were available in this plaza and were managed by a neighborhood committee. The lack of consensus or compromise among Italian business owners and the "new" migrant residents and business owners of the neighborhood surrounding the plaza impedes a more agreeable cohabitation for all.

The mediated images of Ecuadorian male youth as outsiders and criminals have prompted these youth to embody these same dominant narratives disseminated in the mainstream printed media, at the same time as they reinvent and claim an ethnic difference. Similarly to the case of Germany until 2000, when *jus soli* was recognized for acquiring German citizenship, in Italy, 'foreignness' seems a hereditary trait rather than a temporary state, creating naturalized, gendered, and racialized definitions of Italianness: and until proven otherwise, migrants are 'outsiders' who are expected to be very literally on their (natural) way out of a nation to which they cannot belong (El-Tayeb, "If You Can't Pronounce" 463). Within this cultural logic, social marginalization and subalternized identities provide the perfect scenario for the creation of belonging or identity groups, gangs, and other street groups known as "*bande di latinos*" or simply '*bandas*,' a neologism (a sort of *Spanishized* word) from the Italian term "*banda*." Etymologically, "*banda*" refers to

the Provençal '*banda*' and the French '*bande*,' drawn from the Gothic 'bandwo' or 'bandwa', meaning "sign" or "insignia"; and among its current meanings in Italian, '*banda*' refers to "1. reparto di volontari organizzato per la guerriglia; 2. Raggruppamento di fuori legge che di solito obbedisce a un capo e si attribuisce una certa autonomia nei confronti della malavita de una città o di un paese," and by extension "gruppo di individui poco raccomandabili" (*Devoto-Oli*).¹²

It is interesting to note that even the editors of a collection of academic research articles conducted in Genoa and published in 2005, analyzing the precarious and subalternized position of Latin American youth, chose to entitle the volume, *Il fantasma delle bande: Genova e i latinos (The Specter of the Gangs: Genoa and Latinos)*. The title suggests that the racialized and gendered construction of Latino gangs in Genoa is a ghost that is almost impossible to handle, manage or control, a nonexistent being, or a mainstream media creation. Surprisingly, the editors, Luca Queirolo Palmas and Andrea T. Torre, professors at the University of Genoa, neither provide a definition for what they refer to as '*banda*,' nor establish whether or not there are Latin American gangs in Genoa. Instead, they assume that the reader knows what they mean by "*bande*," "ghosts" and "*latinos*."

The Genovese mainstream media representation of Latin American migrants is not so different from the media representation of immigrants in Italy as a whole; it has barely changed in the last decade. Conducted in 2002 and part of a European Equal Project, the Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali (CENSIS), a socio-economic research institute based in Rome and founded in 1964, analyzed television representations of migrants in a six-week

¹² ["1. a unit of volunteers organized for guerrilla activities; 2. A group of outlaws who usually obey a boss and attributes to itself a certain autonomy from the underworld of a city or a country"..."a disreputable group of individuals."]

study of the media image of immigrants and ethnic minorities. The study, sponsored by the EU, concluded that migrants were not treated in a racist manner, but in a negligent way and almost exclusively portrayed in criminal news reports, impeding a process of integration and mutual knowledge (European Migration Network 38). In addition, the European Network Against Racism Shadow Report 2002 Italy, funded by the European Commission, found that

The Italian mass media have played a major role in dramatising the migration phenomenon, but they have also been encouraged by racist speeches and the attitudes of certain Italian politicians. Recent studies on the portrayal of immigrants in the mass media (in particular television and the press) show that since the 1990s the main national press has, consciously or not, come to connect immigration with danger and crime....The portrayal of migrants in the mass media is more distorted and unfair than before and reporting about the situation of minorities seems to be limited to news about crimes. When speaking about non-EU citizens, TV programmes tend to reduce their identity by just quoting their country of origin and their residence status in Italy. This portrayal of minorities is a social representation built progressively by media discourse and closely linked to the political and social opinion on immigration. (21)

The Genovese media, particularly online and in printed local journals and local television news, have created an atmosphere of fear—in line with the Berlusconi government and EU anti-immigrant backlash—targeting elderly people (a high percentage of the Genovese population), with the intention of instilling apprehension and anxiety in a fragile population that feels the threat of immigrants at a moment of critical political and economic tension. It

must be mentioned here that most crimes in Italy go unreported and are seldom labeled as racist crimes by law enforcement authorities and the media (European Network Against Racism 23). According to Everyone, a group for international cooperation on human rights culture, “if in 2008, 25 percent of the victims of violence in Italy were foreigners, in 2009 the percentage was even higher (also considering that the media often do not even mention the presumed nationality of the murder victims)” (23). What is less clearly articulated in mainstream printed media is the fact that these Latin American youth are mostly disempowered and marginalized minorities, limited to the prospects of reproducing a subalternized integration, already experienced by their parents, primarily their mothers. I would argue that social unrest similar to that which emerged in the winter of 2005 by youth of color in the *banlieues* on the outskirts of Paris seems far from the political consciousness and organization manifested in Italy. This situation, however, may change in a few years, as younger generations of Ecuadorians who are born, raised, and educated in Italy, achieve a self-awareness that accords symbolic value to their knowledge and creativity, while continuing to experience obstacles in achieving socio-economic mobility. Alternative ways of social organization with their fellow citizens (of a plurality of ethnicities) will evidently be key in their epistemological and social emancipation, as well as in their representation and self-representation.

Conclusions

This chapter has intended to provide the cultural and social context in which Ecuadorian transnational families and youth find themselves in Genoa and the difficulties, discrimination, and subalternization they confront as migrants entering working classes and ethno-racial minorities that are not considered as belonging to the European Union. It is no surprise that the family and school situations that migrant youth often experience after

family reunification in Genoa (and I would argue in many cases in the European Union), and the lack of a sense of belonging to a specific community, have prompted youth to respond, defend themselves and develop their own local and transnational strategies that break with national borders and are linked to youth activities regardless of class, race, ethnicity, sex, gender, national origin, or religion: seeking fun and feeling part of a group. Information technologies, social networks, music, and clothing fashions are some of the tools migrant youth utilize to connect globally with other migrant youth groups, exchanging and interweaving their subjectivities between Madrid, Barcelona, Milan, Genoa, and New York.

The complex professional network of services provided by the school and social services system in Genoa (as in the entire Italian state) that involves both private and public institutions, does not seem to have effectively accommodated its role and approach to the culturally diverse low-income diasporic populations that have settled in the city over the last 20 years. Not coincidentally, the system (complicit with the transnational Catholic Church) has accentuated and perpetuated power structures in society and has kept most ethno-racialized migrants at some of the lowest social strata. I argue that Occidental and colonial logics are still very much present in the way many public and private Genovese professionals interact with migrants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These professionals (social workers, medical doctors, teachers, educators, psychologists, social operators, family mediators, intercultural mediators, etc.), well intentioned as they might be, are not prepared to facilitate a transformation of social dynamics between native and migrant populations that can allow diasporic populations to envision, at least, a decolonial existence in Genoa. Furthermore, these professionals are often the ones who make critical decisions concerning the lives of migrant families and migrant children and youth.

While studying in Italian schools and speaking Italian, migrant youth are clearly marked as foreigners, *stranieri*, and in the case of Ecuadorians, specifically as ‘*sudamericani*.’ Paradoxically, on some occasions, family reunification in Genoa, as in other Southern/Mediterranean cities, does not achieve the expected desires of migrant mothers, which are geared toward the improvement of the quality of life of all members of the family (and not necessarily only the nuclear family), while being together in the same geographical location. While a migrant mother is in Genoa, regularly sending remittances home, her children and youth in the home country are generally taken care of by family members in a context in which socioeconomically, they are better off than their peers, albeit with the marker of growing up without a mother. Thus, to a certain degree, within this logic, transnational motherhood has worked out. Geographical distance has allowed conflicts within the family to become more manageable. Once reunified in Italy, adult migrants who had a migration plan and children and youth who were driven to migration by their parents’ decisions attempt to re-elaborate the absence of a mother figure that is socially (and transnationally) judged in a different socio-economic, cultural and legal system, and without larger family and close social networks. As Rebecca Walkowitz has noted, the “ways of thinking about the varieties and complexities of literary participation correspond to new ways of thinking about whose lives and which objects are transformed by migration” (533). Understanding the cultural and social context of Ecuadorian migrant youth allows the reader to comprehend the subjectivities of the poetry authors discussed in the next chapter, their own specific realities, the locations in which they express and articulate their creative work and the social processes that interrelate for the selection, arrangement, framing and publication of their poetry.

CHAPTER V

POETRY BY ECUADORIANS? ONE WAY OF DESTABILIZING THE IMAGE OF BANDE AND PROMOTING CREATIVITY

*Da sempre come seconda generazione
mi trovo in sospenso tra due mondi;
Sogno ad occhi aperti immaginando
ciò che mi manca, quando mi trovo nell'altro mondo*

—Zoila Bajaan¹³

Introduction

In this chapter I focus on the mediated self-representation of diasporic Ecuadorians in Genoa as producers of culture. I examine the development of a poetry contest developed in 2010 and 2011 that promoted citizen participation, as well as the collaboration of Ecuadorian and Genovese public and private institutions—and aimed at the creation of poetry written by Ecuadorian youth. Finally, I analyze some of the poems entered into this contest—mostly written by Ecuadorian youth who for the first time exposed their literary narratives to the public eye. I argue that this cultural project may be one way to counter and destabilize boundaries and politics of exclusion of Ecuadorian youth in Genoa, to deconstruct discourses of the *other*, in which Ecuadorian male youth are primarily

¹³ ["Always as second generation / I find myself suspended between two worlds: / I dream with open eyes imagining / what I lack, when I am in the other world"] (Bajaan 111). The poem "Immune dalla nostalgia" ("Immune to nostalgia") was awarded the third prize in the Poetry Section of the Second Edition of the Contest "Jorgenrique Adoum."

understood as members of gangs, while women are essentially accepted as domestic workers, and to question the definition of literature in general.

I am personally and institutionally involved in the creation of this intercultural space in the form of poetry contests as an attempt to destabilize existing practices of knowledge and cultural production about and by Ecuadorians and to disrupt the stigmatized images of Ecuadorian youth, from a decolonizing epistemological standpoint. As an official supporter of the creation, development, and promotion of diasporic Ecuadorian narratives in Genoa, through the creation of two poetry contests, I have also been a participant and witness to the writing processes of many young '*Genovesi*' of Ecuadorian citizenship. I have been involved in the organization of poetry workshops and meetings with Ecuadorian students in several technical and professional schools in Genoa, with the collaboration of receptive school principals and teachers, as well as Ecuadorian citizens who have volunteered their abilities and time while demonstrating constant enthusiasm for this project.

Destabilizing Exclusion and Marginalization of Ecuadorian Youth and Promoting Creativity

This process of creating a diasporic public sphere—in the form of two poetry contests—was aimed at encouraging and promoting artistic and poetic creation in young people, and at interrogating dominant ideologies, stereotypes, and representations of Ecuadorians. The texts that emerged from these poetry contests have furthered the documentation of Ecuadorian narratives of translocation, particularly those written by youth. The act of writing has stimulated the participants' imagination as a political act, wherein they envision a reality different from the present, while being empowered by their

right to dream. Because Ecuadorians constitute approximately five percent of the total Genovese population and are positioned at some of the lowest social strata, the creation of a cultural project that involved Ecuadorian writing represented a challenge that required continuous negotiation and reworking of strategies.

In November 2009 I became Consul of Ecuador in Genoa. From an explicit position of power and impact both in the Ecuadorian community in Genoa and in the city as a whole, I had the opportunity to intervene 'from above' in the cultural production of diasporic Ecuadorians in Genoa. Simultaneously, I have positioned myself in a liminal/outsider position as a migrant who left Ecuador at the age of 19 and had not developed networks within the Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commerce, and Integration or in any political party. Having been trained in literary and cultural studies in U.S. universities (therefore, without professional networks in Ecuador, but with the privileged 'status' of having a U.S. university education), I wanted to understand Ecuadorian subjectivities also through their written literary narratives.¹⁴

In January 2010 Priscila Cujilán Tello asked me to collaborate with her on the organization of an Ecuadorian poetry contest as part of the 16th International Genoa Poetry Festival that takes place every year in the city. Cujilán Tello, a Guayaquileñean woman who has resided in Genoa since November 1999, was a research participant in the ethnographic investigation I conducted in 2007 in Genoa, during my participation in the European Field

¹⁴ The research I had conducted in Genoa for several years while a student in the Ph.D. Program in Comparative Literature helped me to identify the difficult and dramatic situations of diasporic Ecuadorians in Genoa. I had not envisioned, however, that I would have the opportunity to intervene directly in the transformation of the social reality I investigated.

Studies at the Anthropology Department of the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Since then, we have remained in contact and established a collaborative relationship. The poetry contest was one way to channel diasporic Ecuadorian youth creativity and energy toward socially recognized projects that could promote symbolic social value in the local society at large and within their own communities. Thus, the creation of the First Poetry Contest of the Ecuadorian Diaspora 'Jorgenrique Adoum' (*'Primer Concurso de Poesía de la Diáspora Ecuatoriana 'Jorgenrique Adoum'*) was conceived as a pilot project to evaluate the interest of Ecuadorian youth in Genoa in the production of literary texts. In the first year, poetry was the medium chosen through which youth could self-represent to an audience beyond their own intimate circles.

Both Priscila Cujilán Tello and I envisioned the active participation of diasporic Ecuadorian youth in Genoa in this project as a way to, first, gain access to their thoughts, experiences, and reflections, and later evaluate their proposals in order to create, support, and/or sponsor initiatives capable of promoting a more empowered Ecuadorian youth in Genoa. In addition, we aimed at stimulating Ecuadorian self-esteem and self-representation, while countering representations of Ecuadorians in public discourse that included racist stereotypes of Latin American young males almost exclusively as gang members. Simultaneously, I considered it important to share and disseminate diasporic Ecuadorian cultural promotion and production with a larger audience that would comprise Italians, Ecuadorians, and all Genoa's residents, regardless of nationality, and as a way of contributing to a broader understanding of Ecuador's history, geography, politics, and ecosystem diversity.

Cujilán Tello had been an active cultural promoter in Genoa for several years and was known in several Italian and migrant social circuits. Following the initiative of the

Italian Reading Group of the Berio Library, in 2006 Cujilán Tello co-founded, along with Peruvian migrant Ernesto Torres, the *Grupo de Lectura en Español de la Biblioteca Berio*, 'The Spanish Reading Group of the Berio Library.' The Berio is the city's largest and most central Municipal library. This group of about 20 to 30 people meets every two weeks, led by Priscila Cujilán and her Italian partner, schoolteacher Roberto Marras. The group's membership is free. Most people participate intermittently in the meetings. It is mainly composed of middle-aged Italians who are passionate about improving their Spanish speaking and reading skills, by reading and discussing literature originally published in Spanish, mostly written by Latin Americans. Sometimes Spanish and Latin American artists and writers who visit Genoa are invited to participate in the meetings.

In 2008 and 2009, as part of the section '*Notte della Poesia*,' 'Poetry Night,' within the International Genoa Poetry Festival's program, the *Grupo de lectura en Español de la Biblioteca Berio*, led by Cujilán, organized Latin American poetry readings in the Spanish and Italian languages. A poetry contest, however, would require far more institutional support and a budget. This would be the first time that diasporic Ecuadorian literary discourses would circulate in spheres beyond intimate circles.

Every year since 1995, Genovese poet Claudio Pozzani (1961-) has organized the International Genoa Poetry Festival—one of the most important public cultural events held in the city—in collaboration with local government bodies, and sponsored by the European Union and Unesco. Its international importance is also due to cooperation with over thirty European cultural associations. I should note that the visibility of the Festival and its ability to attract a large audience stem from the sponsorship of key entities, such as the Region of Liguria, the City of Genoa (Comune), Genoa's Chamber of Commerce, and the Hotels Association. The venue of the Festival is one of the most beautiful historical buildings in

Italy: the Palazzo Ducale, located in the historic city center. During the past editions, over 850 authors have presented their work at the Festival: from Nobel Prize winners Czeslaw Milosz, Derek Walcott, John Coetzee, and Wole Soyinka, to other poets and artists such as Lou Reed, John Giorno, Dacia Maraini, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Yusuf Komunyakaa, Pete Hamill, Jack Hirschmann, Evgenij Evtushenko, Henri Lopes, Lydia Lunch, Ed Sanders, Charles Simic, Diane Di Prima, Roger Mc Gough, Simon Armitage, Joy Harjo, Ray Manzarek of The Doors, Joanne Kyger, Pedro Pietri, Charles Tomlinson, Tony Harrison, Brian Patten, Lidye Salvayre, Adonis, Fernando Arrabal, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Mario Luzi, Piero Bigongiari, Edoardo Sanguineti, Alvaro Mutis, Michel Houellebecq, Tahar Ben Jelloun, and many others.

At the time, I knew neither Claudio Pozzani nor his poetic work. However, in January 2010, as Consul of Ecuador in Genoa, I met with him to propose the Ecuadorian poetry contest project within the context of the Festival he organized, to which he immediately agreed. He then asked me for several names of Ecuadorian poets to invite to the forthcoming Festival that was to take place in June 10-20, 2010. I proposed well-known Ecuadorian poet Mario Campaña (Guayaquil 1959-), resident in Spain since 1992, and whose poetic work is analyzed in Chapter Three. In 2010, it was the first time an Ecuadorian poet had participated in the International Genoa Poetry Festival, fifteen years after the inaugural event. This intervention, I believe, had a profound impact on the way Ecuadorian culture is represented in Genoa and the perception Ecuadorians have of their own culture.

The Contest itself motivated competitiveness among youth, which may not always receive approval from adults. In a way, this Contest was a more nation-specific version of a successful intercultural project in Genoa called 'Caffè Shakerato' ('Coffee Shake'), that

included the writing of literary texts in Italian and in students' first languages (for instance, Arabic, Spanish, English), as well as the writing and performance of music and theater. 'Caffè Shakerato' was conceived and developed by Daniela Malini and Patrizia Falco, public school teachers of the Professional Technical Institute Nino Bergese of Genoa, and it has set an example for other intercultural projects in Genoa.

After much negotiation, Cujilán Tello and I agreed that she would organize the First Poetry Contest of the Ecuadorian Diaspora 'Jorgenrique Adoum' with the collaboration and sponsorship of the Consulate General of Ecuador in Genoa and my own personal support. In addition, we invited several Ecuadorian associations and educational centers in Genoa to participate in the co-organization of the Contest. Among these was the Genovese branch of the Instituto Radiofónico Fe y Alegría 'IRFEYAL' José María Vélaz S.J., which is part of an Ecuadorian semipublic experimental educational institution with 97 branches in Ecuador, which promotes popular alternative education, utilizing a series of pedagogical methods, including distance-learning, radio and classroom learning. This Ecuadorian school is also present in other Italian cities, such as Rome and Milan, enabling Latin American Spanish-speaking migrants—mostly Ecuadorians—to obtain their elementary and high school diplomas while being full-time worker/parent migrants.

Another collaborator was the USEI-Unione degli Ecuadoriani in Italia. Based in the city of Vado Ligure (located in the province of Savona, part of the Region of Liguria, about 30 miles west of Genoa), this association of mostly Ecuadorians also has members who reside in Genoa and were enthusiastic about participating. The Latin American handcrafts store, *Pachamama*, located near piazza della Commenda, owned by Patricia Betancourt, an Ecuadorian woman with more than 10 years of teaching experience in public schools in Ecuador, also collaborated with the organization of the Contest, as well as the non-profit

Associazione di Volontariato per la Fundación de Ayuda Social Madonna della Guardia, based in Genoa, of which Cujilán Tello was a member.

The naming of the Contest was another way of promoting Ecuadorian poetry, largely unknown in Genoa. To name it after Jorge Enrique Adoum (Ambato 1926 – Quito 2009), one of the most prominent Ecuadorian writers known outside national borders, seemed an appropriate choice as a name and tribute for the contest. Some of his work had been read by the *Grupo de Lectura en Español*. Adoum's poetry has been published in Italy by Casa della Poesia/Multimedia Edizioni, a publisher/cultural organization created in 1996 in Naples, where he had been a guest (accompanied by his second wife, Nicole Adoum) in several events organized by his publisher. As Consul, I contacted the Cultural Promotion Director of Ecuador's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to request permission to name the Contest 'Jorge Enrique Adoum.' His widow, Nicole Adoum, responded to the Ministry that she was flattered at the possibility of naming the Contest after the poet. In addition, she suggested naming it 'Jorgenrique Adoum' since the poet had envisioned changing his name—from Jorge Enrique to Jorgenrique—not long before his death.

The jurisdiction of the Consulate General of Ecuador in Genoa includes the northern regions of Liguria and Emilia Romagna. However, the Contest's participation was limited to Ecuadorians residing in the region of Liguria. This decision was made due to the different migration contexts, immigrant reception, and disproportionate numbers of Ecuadorians in these regions. In addition, the geographical division between these two regions formed by the Apennine Mountains and the scant rail transportation among the regions' larger cities (e.g. between Genoa and Bologna), and at the time, the scarce relations and networks between the Consulate and the Ecuadorian community in Emilia Romagna led us to

conclude that it was not yet time to extend the project into Emilia Romagna.¹⁵ Both Cujilán Tello and I were concerned about developing a major project that might prove difficult to handle, with limited experience, time and resources. A blog was created, in which the main activities, workshops and pictures regarding the Contest were regularly posted (Concorso di Poesia). At the conclusion of the Contest, the awarded texts were also posted. A mailing list grew as we continued to organize meetings with students of professional and technical schools. Ecuadorians in Pisa and in several Ecuadorian cities learned about the Contest and requested permission to participate. Regretfully, Cujilán informed them that for that year, only Ecuadorian citizens residing in Liguria could participate. This decision was also taken on the conviction that residents in Liguria were more likely to participate at the Awards Ceremony as that space was conceived as a central one in the creation of diasporic Ecuadorian culture and its diffusion within the Festival. The Contest was divided into three sections. In the first, participants presented their poetry written in Spanish. In the second, participants could use Italian. In both sections, Ecuadorians aged twenty-five and over were eligible to participate. The third section was devoted to younger Ecuadorians between the ages of twelve and twenty-four. They could write their texts either in Italian or Spanish. In fact, combining the two languages, or *Itañol*, was encouraged. For minors, a parent's written authorization to participate in the Contest was required. During the process of migration and translocation, many Ecuadorian adults and minors have 'lost' their Spanish language oral and written skills. It was expected that the longer participants had lived in Genoa,

¹⁵ By January 1, 2010, there were 4,033 Ecuadorians with permits of stay in Emilia Romagna while there were 15,657 in Liguria. Data provided by the Region of Emilia Romagna-Office of European Political Services and International Relations and Police Headquarters of the Provinces of Genoa, La Spezia, and Imperia, submitted to the Consulate General of Ecuador in Genoa.

having arrived at very young ages, the more probable it would be that they would write in Italian.

The organization of the Contest, mainly carried out by Priscila Cujilán Tello, involved dealing with sponsors, participants, often their parents as well, the Consulate, the leaders and members of the associations that had agreed to collaborate, and the Genovese public institutions with which several poetry workshops were planned. Italian-Argentinean writer Clementina Sandra Ammendola, at the time a resident of Turin, was an important workshop facilitator. She generously agreed to travel to Genoa for a symbolic stipend. Soon after the online and printed publication of the Contest's call for poems, the organizers were worried about the fact that only a few poems had been received, relative to the large Ecuadorian population residing in Genoa. The poetry workshops and meetings in different schools and after-school programs stimulated the participation of young people, but limited it to Ecuadorian citizens, which created a certain division between Ecuadorians and non-Ecuadorians during school time and extracurricular programs. Nonetheless, Ecuadorian students seemed for the most part proud and enthusiastic to meet a Consular representative of their country for the first time, one who had been introduced to them by the school principal, and, perhaps more importantly, to miss a class. It was also interesting to note how, during these meetings, schoolteachers observed their Ecuadorian students feeling more at ease and self-confident, while expressing their ideas and opinions—within the school context. During these meetings, the language of communication was Spanish, which acquired a socially valued medium of communication in a public setting. Many students were active participants, writing and reading their poems out loud during the poetry workshops. I believe this setting provided schoolteachers a more profound and revealing way of knowing and understanding their students.

In the 2010 Contest, 87 poems were submitted, written by 66 people. A participant could send a maximum of three poems of their own authorship. Depending on how one analyzes the results, 87 poems could be understood as a small or large number. Although the number of poems could be considered low, both Cujilán and I believed that since it was the first time that a group of Ecuadorians in Genoa had organized a cultural project that was not a beauty contest with silent young women in bikinis, or a dance party in a club, 87 poems was not a bad beginning. We were also aware that most of these youth had studied or were studying in professional and technical schools. Therefore, they had little access to world literature and the process of writing. Italian language and literature classes that included reading and writing were not major components of their school curriculum. Many of them, in Ecuador, had received a poor elementary and secondary education in public or private schools, in urban peripheries or rural areas. I remember one meeting with more than fifty Ecuadorian high school students, in which none had ever heard of Pablo Neruda, much less of Jorge Enrique Adoum. 87 poems could also be considered a low number in the sense that it reflects the inadequate and/or limited time, circuits and economic resources used to publicize the Contest, as well as a more general lack of interest in poetry on the part of Ecuadorian migrants.

The jury was composed of a group of writers and artists who had supported the project from the onset. It was intended to be mostly Ecuadorian—so that Ecuadorians would primarily be evaluated by diasporic Ecuadorians—but also to include other Latin Americans and Italians who were knowledgeable about literature in general and migrant

literature in Italy, in particular.¹⁶ The selection of the jury was also a way to recognize and highlight the work of Ecuadorian writers and artists living in Europe.

The prizes ranged from 150 to 500 euros in cash, as well as gift certificates. These were funded by sponsors of Genovese research and private institutions, such as Banco di Chiavari e della Riviera Ligure; the bookstore Books in the Casba; the glossy monthly magazine “Mi País” that caters to Latin American migrant workers; Centro Studi Medì, a research center that focuses on Mediterranean issues; Tonino Archetti, a non-profit organization that promotes youth advancement; and the Association Contatto Latino, which organizes dance parties with Latin American music and dance lessons. A prize to the youngest participant, 13-year old Katherine Moreira, was also created ad-hoc in the form of a gift certificate from the sponsoring bookstore. Her poem is analyzed later in this chapter.

By the end of the 2010 Contest, Cujilán Tello informed me that for family reasons she would be unable to organize the 2011 Contest. Consequently, I contacted the University of Genoa, with which I had already initiated a collaborative relationship through the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor. Thanks to the collaboration of Francesco De Nicola, Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and President of the Dante Alighieri Association in Genoa, a group of Ecuadorian students from that Department became part of the organizing committee while earning three university credits. Thus, the

¹⁶ The jury was composed of Mario Campaña, renowned Ecuadorian poet invited to the 2010 Festival; Clementina Sandra Ammendola, Italian-Argentinean writer (at the time a resident of Turin); Marisol Patiño Sánchez, a PhD candidate of Culture and Society Studies at the University of Costa Rica (UCR) and Instructor of the Department of Social Work in the Occidente Campus of UCR and an Ecuadorian citizen. Byron Salas, recognized Ecuadorian painter (at the time a resident in Rossiglione, located 26 miles west of the city of Genoa). Francisco Surdich, Professor and Chair of the Department of Humanities and Philosophy [Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia] at the University of Genoa; Raffaele Taddeo, editor of the online migrant literature journal, *El-Ghibli*, and co-founder and President of the Milan based Centro Culturale Multietnico La Tenda; and Marcelo Vega, Ecuadorian writer and activist, a resident of Milan and also a member of La Tenda.

Contest's organizing team was composed of Viviana Barres, Kelly Tandazo Betancourt, and Maria Fernanda Briones, supervised and guided by Priscila Cujilán Tello and myself. Soon, the leader became Viviana Barres, as she demonstrated distinctive initiative and keenness, as well as the capacity to work alone, as a team, and in contact with sponsors and participants.

In 2011, the Contest was designed to expand the type of texts received. Several teachers and collaborators had suggested that poetry as a literary genre might be considered too intimidating and/or perceived as too difficult to write for most youth. They added that the testimonial form might facilitate the writing process of self-representation as understood by John Beverley:

Testimonio may include, but is not subsumed under, any of the following textual categories, some of which are conventionally considered literature, others not: autobiography, autobiographical, novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, *novela-testimonio*, nonfiction novel, or "factographic literature. (13)

After this consideration, the organizers also included the short story genre so as not to limit the writing process to 'real' facts and issues of truth in the stories told. Thus, the Second Edition consisted of a Contest of Poetry, Short Stories, and Testimonials; however, by far, most of the texts received were poems. Similarly to the previous year, publicity of the Contest was mainly through Genovese middle and high schools with significant Ecuadorian student populations. In 2011, the Contest received 94 texts written by 63 authors, an increase of almost 10 percent from the texts received in the previous year. Continuing the 2010 methodology regarding jury selection, most were Latin Americans, mainly Ecuadorian

writers.¹⁷

The organization of these Contests, as a way of putting into practice theoretical reflections that involved the disruption of hegemonic discourses about the other, particularly the Ecuadorian migrant, as well as the facilitation of the production of literary texts written by Ecuadorians that inscribed new meanings and representations of the self and collective identity proved, in fact, quite difficult. For instance, it was complicated to secure financial support, physical spaces, sponsorship, participation by individuals who would not expect monetary compensation, as well as publicity of the Contest in the Ecuadorian community that for the most part prioritizes concrete concerns linked to labor, migration status, and economic issues, all of which raised serious concerns about the real importance of a poetry contest in Genoa. Nonetheless, a relatively small percentage of young Ecuadorians became interested in poetry and writing. Others had been writing for years, keeping their texts hidden among old school books and notebooks. The Contests were an opportunity to have their work recognized by their families and their communities. In the months following the Awards Ceremony, these youth participated in other public

¹⁷ In 2011, the jury was composed of Sonia Manzano Vela, prestigious Ecuadorian writer invited to the 2011 Festival and resident of Guayaquil; Leonor Delgado Franzot, diasporic Ecuadorian writer living between Guntersblum (Germany) and Trieste, whose work is analyzed in Chapter Seven; Edwin Madrid, well-known Ecuadorian writer, resident of Quito and instructor of literature courses and creative writing workshops at the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO)-Ecuador. He had also recently been Writer-in-Residence at La Maison des Écrivains Étrangers et des Traducteurs (Meet) in Saint-Nazaire, France. In 2004 he received the Casa de América de Poesía Americana Award in Spain and his work has been translated into English, Arabic, German, and Portuguese. Francesco De Nicola, Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and President of Genoa's Dante Alighieri Association; Luis Dapelo, born in Peru, Instructor of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Genoa; Antonello Cassan, Director of Liberodiscrivere, a publishing house based in Genoa; Raffaella Grassi, Genovese journalist, a regular contributor of the cultural section of the newspaper *Il Secolo XIX*.

cultural events, sponsored by the Consulate, in which they were encouraged to read their poetry in Italian or Spanish, among their friends. These collateral events promoted a sort of pride in the re-definition of an Ecuadorian identity in Genoa.

The poems submitted to the two Contests that took place in 2010 and 2011 focused on a wide range of subjects, from general themes, such as life, death, friendship, love, sadness, solitude, abandonment of a loved one, to more specific ones, such as Ecuadorian mountains and cities, the similarities between the Pacific Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, coffee, Genoa, migration, and mother-son relationships. Most poems were written in free verse.

In the second year, 2011, one section was opened for non-Ecuadorians; however, my analysis focuses exclusively on poems written by Ecuadorians. Of poems presented at the Contests, my selection is based on a consideration of the themes evoked in the texts. Thus, I have chosen to discuss the poems whose major themes refer to 1) migration, as a general topic, including migration as a human process and the personal narrative of migration; 2) women migrants as subjects with agency and as activators of transformation; and 3) poetry as a personal process that has the potential to become a socially emancipatory message. As I will show in my analyses, some poems may contain elements from several categories. Thus, the borders among my thematic categories are as porous as those among the nations migrants cross everyday—despite the efforts and capital investment of the states to control and restrict human mobility.

Textual Analysis of a Selection of Poems Submitted to The Contests

In “EXTRaños DESCONOCIDOS” [“Unknown strangers”], Víctor Hugo Zambrano Escobar—awarded second prize in the 2010 Contest-Poetry section—playfully emphasizes

both graphically and semantically the subject of his poem: the human being who has historically moved from one place to another, becoming an *unknown* person, a *stranger*, a foreigner, an outsider, no matter where he translocates himself. Zambrano Escobar is clearly an educated person who has transformed his life after migration. He was born in Guayaquil in 1965, graduated in medicine at the public University of Guayaquil, and later pursued his specialization as an anesthesiologist. He migrated to Italy in 1998, at the peak of the Ecuadorian economic and political crises. He currently lives in Genoa with his family.

In the adjective “EXTRañOS,” meaning ‘strange’ or ‘odd’ in Spanish, both the word “extra”, as in ‘outside of’ and “años” [years] are joined together, playfully intercalating small and capital letters. In ten quatrains of free verse, Zambrano Escobar analyzes migration as part of universal human history, which involves the classification, categorization, marginalization, and separation of people. He writes: “La casta ha expedido el decreto: / ordena crear el ‘gueto’ / diferencia el color de la tes / e investiga de qué padres es.”¹⁸ There is clearly a hierarchy in the articulation of difference. He also refers to the multidimensionality of modes of domination and oppression, including state power, the use of the law, isolating mechanisms, the differentiating of people based on pigmentocracy and the notion of race, and the search for origins of a people. Geopolitically located in Italy, the poetic voice recalls the “ghetto” that constituted the first institutionalization of the European confinement of Europeans within Europe during the Renaissance. With the decree issued on March 29, 1516, the Republic of Venice ordered the confinement of Jewish people in a zone of the City of Venice where old foundries had functioned. In these confines,

¹⁸ [“The caste has issued the decree: / it orders creation of the ‘ghetto’ / it makes skin color different / and investigates to which parents one belongs.”] All poems discussed in this chapter, written in Spanish or Italian, along with the English translation, are included in the Appendix.

Jews were locked in at night and guarded by Christian gatekeepers. The “ghetto” also suggests the confinement of Italian Jews immediately after the issuance of the 1938 Racial Laws during Benito Mussolini’s regime. The verse “investiga de qué padres es” seems to denote, also, the so-called *limpieza de sangre* [cleaning of blood] that was instituted in Spain during the fifteenth century, after the *Reconquista*, which aimed at “cleaning” the Iberian Peninsula of Muslim and Jewish ancestry. Within the violent and anti-semitic logic of “purity of blood,” the Spanish state discriminated against descendants of Muslims and Jews, even if converted to Christianity, by excluding them from holding public offices, traveling to what was known as the Indies and other political positions, on the grounds of having a Muslim or Jewish ancestor. Subsequently, Muslims, Jews, and their descendants were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. In this sense, the poetic voice recalls the historic mechanisms of institutional discrimination, oppression, and exclusion based on ethnic, racial, religious, territorial and economic differences, as well as the denial of individual and collective identities and rights.

The poetic voice presents itself as a sort of omniscient third person, which describes the different phases of the exertion and execution of power and control. At the same time, it inscribes a desire for equality and a new scale of values that goes beyond pigmentocracy, phenotype, and colors: “Siempre el rechazo a lo distinto / o por blanco o por tinto, / Es que los ojos poseen colores / pero carecen de valores.”¹⁹ Taking the color of human eyes as a metonymy for difference, the poetic voice denounces how human history has been a succession of social constructions of difference and taxonomy in terms of race and ethnicity, as well as the implementation of mechanisms to institute difference and power.

¹⁹ [“Always the rejection of what is different / either as White or Dark, / what happens is that eyes have colors / but lack values.”].

However, within all this history and strategic use of difference as a mechanism for separation and segregation among humanity, the only human being who deserves the poetic voice's admiration is the one who, in the face of the unknown, is aware of his ignorance and is able to build bridges of brotherhood. The poem ends with these lines:

Allí en lo que desconozco
para ser ingenuamente tosco.

Requiero de una frase
que el mundo abrace!...
espero que el ser humano
un día reconozca su hermano.²⁰

Positioning itself as an outside observer of humanity, the poetic voice hopes humanity itself finds a way to adjust its course without necessarily intervening in the desired outcome of equality and understanding between people. In an extended context, this could be understood as an allegory in which the poetic voice projects the difficulty of being accepted by the dominant society, i.e. Italian dominant society, as a citizen with full rights and capacities and as a recognized participant of social transformation. The poetic voice displays humility about his accumulated knowledge—fully aware of the limited knowledge and experience one may have. Throughout the poem, as stated above, the writer assumes the omnipresent third person, as an observer of human history, from a distance. However, toward the end of the poem, the poetic voice inscribes the first-person “I” with the

²⁰ [“Over there, of what I am ignorant / being naively coarse. / I require that the world / embrace a phrase!... / I hope one day the human being / will recognize his brother.”]

conjugation of the verb *desconocer* [to be ignorant of]. In the final stanza, in which the “I” is reinforced [“*requiero*” / “*espero*”], the poetic voice envisions a different human history of solidarity and brotherhood, one in which the foreigner or the stranger [“*extraño*”]—without the superstructures of power and domination—can be a source of admiration and knowledge production: after a coming to consciousness. The poet envisions a world in which humans can recognize each other as equals, as brothers. The lyric voice does not make specific connections with contemporary Ecuadorian migration nor to Italy. Instead, his narrative presents the commonalities of human beings, the similar banishments that different populations have endured throughout history by initiating contact with other groups, within a hierarchizing of cultural, military, religious, economic and political structures. He illuminates how a specific experience of marginalization can also be, in fact, a collective memory and a part of universal history.

In “*Mares diferentes*” (“*Different Seas*”), Christopher Emmanuel Peña Cujilán, who participated in the 2011 Contest when he was about to turn 18, wrote a semi-autobiographical poem that narrates the migration of a child, following in the path of his mother after a few years apart. Peña Cujilán, Priscila Cujilán Tello’s eldest son, remained in his native Guayaquil under the care of his grandmother and extended family after his mother migrated to Genoa. He joined her in Genoa after several years, once his mother had obtained all the legal and economic requirements to apply for the *ricongiungimento familiare* mentioned in the section above. In the poem, composed of four quatrains in a sort of traditional rhyme scheme, (abba, cddc, ceec, fggf), the poetic voice remembers childhood, possibly in the city of Guayaquil, as well as cherished trips to the nearby beaches. He then moves in time and space to a present where, despite the sea’s visibility and proximity, like the landscape of the city of Genoa, there are hardly any beaches. The poet writes:

Miro el mar y recuerdo mi infancia
recuerdo nuestros viajes hacia la playa
entonces busco alrededor y no se halla
¡qué ganas de regresar con ansia!²¹

The poem evokes a conversation with a family member or a close friend. The closeness to the sea recalls childhood vacations and incites a desire to return to those life episodes surrounded by sandy beaches. Most of the Ecuadorians living in Genoa arrive from the Coastal Region (65 percent), particularly from the Provinces of Guayas, Manabí, and Los Ríos, distantly followed by the Andean Region (34 percent), and only one percent from the Amazon Region (INEC-ENEMDU, 2007, cited in Camacho 22).²² The poetic voice suggests the differences many Ecuadorians encounter when they first observe the Ligurian coastline—characterized by rugged rocky cliffs crowned by maritime pine trees, a variety of vegetation, and picturesque villages—which contrasts significantly to what a trip to the beach [*la playa*] may mean in Ecuador. Ecuador’s geography facing the Pacific Ocean—with the exception of the Galapagos Islands, which are volcanic islands—is mainly composed of extensive sandy beaches, palm trees, and other tropical vegetation.

The poetic voice then underlines how the term *“playa”* is used to refer to going to the Pacific Ocean, which in Ecuador implicitly means going to the beach. Instead, Ligurians go to the sea, *“il mare,”* when referring to going to the Mediterranean Sea—as the trip may

²¹ [“I look at the sea and remember my childhood / I remember our trips to the beach / then I search around and do not find it / what a longing to return!”].

²² According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, by 2001, 11,433 Ecuadorians migrated from Guayaquil to Italy, constituting 15 percent of the total Ecuadorian emigration that year.

not necessarily imply going to a beach, but often reaching the sea by rocks and rocky hills. Thus, the more familiar the environment is to the narrating voice, the more he feels at home. At the same time, precisely because the water itself surrounding Genoa is so similar to that near Guayaquil, he feels nostalgia for that distant home. The paradox seems to be that the more similar the geographic environment—in this case, the imposing presence of a huge body of water—the more he becomes nostalgic for home and the more he perceives it to be different and further from home.

In the second stanza, the poetic voice recalls the moment his mother departed from the homeland. This passage refers to how, during migration, both the Ecuadorian mother and the child left behind suffer the pain of family separation. He writes: “Recuerdo cuando mi madre decidió partir / en el aeropuerto le pedí si en la maleta me llevaría / mientras se alejaba un mar de lágrimas escondía / y sola en una ciudad frente al mar se fue a vivir.”²³ The place of farewell is the airport, a ‘non-place,’ to refer to Marc Augé’s term describing spaces within the logic of late-capitalist societies where individuals and communities are in transit: between immense parentheses, feeling unconnected with others and without the possibility for creative social life. In this ‘non-place,’ surrounded probably by several family members, the young poetic voice wishes to leave with his mother. In Ecuador, it is customary to say goodbye at the airport to a close relative or friend who departs from the country, particularly when the traveler and her family know that it is a one-way trip. Nonetheless, due to entrance requirements to most countries, the potential Ecuadorian migrant must purchase a round-trip ticket and often purchases her flight ticket through a

²³ [“I remember when my mother decided to leave / at the airport I asked her if she would take me in her suitcase / while moving away, she hid a sea of tears / and she moved by herself to a city facing the sea.”].

travel agency, as part of a tour, making hotel reservations and pretending to travel as a tourist.²⁴ In the poem, his mother is a subject who makes decisions: “mi madre decidió partir,” a woman who is in control of her life, her present and future. The hyperbole “sea of tears” stresses the pain and suffering his mother wants to keep for herself as a way to protect her child from further hardship and grief, while recalling the large bodies of water that are recurring images of his own past and present.

The speaker then shifts to his own migration process. He recognizes the courage one needs in order to leave a familiar context for an unknown place. Peña Cujilán writes: “Recuerdo cuando también yo tuve que partir / descubrí cuánto es triste dejar tu casa y tus raíces / y cómo ésto se transforma en una de tus cicatrices / y cuánta voluntad se necesita para poder partir.”²⁵ For the writer, both roots and scars are elements that have marked his subjectivity and personal identity, and have played a central role in the way his experiential learning has taken place. However, he distinguishes how roots are aspects of one’s life that are not necessarily chosen but nonetheless cherished. While scars exist as a result of direct or indirect experience, his reflection on roots and scars are born out of the action of departing. After experiencing the pain of his mother’s departure, he experiences his own process of separation from his roots and emotional bonds, describing a sense of loss that symbolizes a scar in his subject formation. The act and process of migration represents a

²⁴ Only 28 nation-states do not require Ecuadorian citizens to obtain a visa to enter as tourists for stays shorter than 15 days, as in the case of Bangladesh, and up to 90 days, in the case of Colombia and Liechtenstein.

²⁵ [“I remember when I also had to depart / I discovered how sad it is to leave your house and your roots / and how this is transformed into one of your scars / and how much willingness is needed to be able to leave.”].

learning process, a sort of consciousness achieved through hardship and geographical distance from what is known and loved. In hindsight, the lyric voice alludes to an admiration for his mother, after he himself experiences emigration and realizes the human capacity to endure change.

Peña Cujilán ends the poem by momentarily shifting the direction of his gaze: from the sea to the sky. The time of day also advances. He writes: “Mientras llega la noche veo el firmamento / pienso que el cielo sea igual en todo el universo / pero por algún ignoto motivo desde mi País se ve diverso / y cuando veo el mar, pienso en Él cada momento.”²⁶ He shifts his gaze for an instant, but it always returns to the Mediterranean Sea, which triggers memories of Ecuador. As one observes, “País” [Homeland, Country] and “Él” [personal pronoun, third person masculine singular] are both in initial upper-case letters, which suggests that “Él” refers to his Homeland/Country. “Él,” however, may also refer to a masculine figure left in Ecuador, a father or a grandfather, who may have been part of that distant childhood: recalled while reminiscing about emotional and geographical landscapes back in Ecuador. One could also argue that “Él,” may refer to God, as an omnipresent being in his life, particularly when surrounded by imposing nature.

In contrast, Diana Elizalde’s untitled poem is written in free verse in Italian although her dedication is in Spanish. She dedicates her poem of seven stanzas to Mercedes and to all Ecuadorian women who, by migrating, have set an invaluable example of dignity and courage to their families and, therefore, to the entire world. She writes: “A Mercedes, y a todas las mujeres ecuatorianas que emigrando dieron a sus familias y por ende al mundo

²⁶ [“While night comes, I gaze at the firmament / I think that the sky is the same in the entire universe / but for an unknown reason, it looks different from my Country / and when I look at the sea, I always think of It.”].

entero un ejemplo inestimable de dignidad y valentía” to make sure the women to whom she dedicates her poem understand her message. The author, who participated in 2010, underlines a Eurocentric epistemic standpoint. Geopolitically positioned in Italy, she mainly addresses a Genovese audience. Right from the outset, the poetic voice views herself as a descendant of Christopher Columbus: “Si desta la progenie di / Colombo, / la necessità spinge / le radici fuori dalla terra.”²⁷ As Columbus’ progeny, part of the soil of the American continent, the visual image proposed by the poet suggests the shocking experience of a migrant being torn from her socio-economic and cultural context, uprooted from her land, her country. Elizalde’s image of uprooting a plant denotes the drastic and dramatic process of migration, inscribing it as an unnatural and traumatic experience in people’s lives. The Eurocentric epistemology revealed in this poem resides in the starting ontologic and epistemic point of the poetic voice: Columbus, as a metonym for Europe. This ontologic point of departure positions the roots, the origin of the Latin American woman migrant in the masculine image of Europe. This Eurocentric and patriarchal discourse follows José Vasconcelos’ idealization of a Europeanized and aristocratic Latin American *mestizaje*, referring to a hierarchy in which the European heritage is clearly on a higher stratum than the indigenous and African cultures. In addition, the reference to Columbus alludes to the imposing monument of Columbus outside of Genoa’s main train station, *Stazione Principe*, as a welcome greeting and reminder to visitors and newcomers of Columbus’ importance in the Ligurian capital, considered his birth city. In fact, most Ecuadorian migrants arriving in Genoa since the mid-1990s arrive in Milan, usually at the Malpensa Airport. From there, one generally takes a bus to Milan central train station, and then a train to *Stazione Principe*. Thus, after a long transatlantic flight, an anxious wait in line

²⁷ [“The progeny of Columbus / wakes up / necessity pushes / the roots to get out of the earth”].

before an immigration official checks and stamps one's passport (if one is lucky enough not to be detained to have one's body and suitcases searched), a brisk walk through airport passageways, tunnels and stairs, and a succession of rides on buses and trains, it would not be surprising if the first monument that an Ecuadorian migrant might see in Genoa—if she happens to raise her eyes or if someone points it out—would be the one erected in honor of Columbus.

The author then writes: “e sono donne, amici miei, / le guerriere: / dolci amazzoni, / che cavalcano il mare.”²⁸ The poem's protagonists are women as a group: more specifically, horsewomen and warriors, who take the reins of their lives and challenge the sea and the unknown. Unlike the traditional Western image of the male warrior, but nonetheless within the logic of the Western hero, in this poem women are the fighters in charge of their own destiny. The author addresses an audience, referring to it as “amici” (“friends” in masculine plural). The audience could be understood as a general one composed of both males and females, using a pluralizing male noun to refer to both women and men, as it has been traditionally used in Spanish. On the other hand, “friends” could also be interpreted as a male audience. It should be noted that in recent years in Ecuador, the distinctive use of feminine and masculine nouns has increasingly become common in most public discourses, as a way of recognizing some sexual equality, at least in public discourse.²⁹ However, this has not become widespread usage in Italian oral and written public discourses. In this poem, the sea also plays a central role. Emulating Columbus's trip across the Atlantic Ocean,

²⁸ [“And women are, my friends / the warriors: / sweet Amazons, that ride over the sea”].

²⁹ The specification of female and male nouns to refer to Ecuadorian women and men, public officials and citizens, is also present in the Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008.

the first step towards seeking new landscapes, not only physical-geographical but also existential, is through the sea. In this sense, the sea is the bridge that connects the known and the unknown, the past and the present, one's roots and new experiences, as in "Mares diferentes."

Elizalde's poem highlights the feminization of Ecuadorian migration in the past two decades, particularly, the specificity of female migration in Genoa. She writes:

E' femmina l'avventura,
è femmina la speranza,
è femmina, fratelli miei,
la nostalgia.

Una volta fu l'uomo:
impavido e audace;
una volta fu l'uomo a
navigare l'ignoto.³⁰

Simultaneously, Elizalde emphasizes the loneliness and nostalgia that migrant women often experience when they translocate themselves, but also the hope they have by setting out on this journey. The poem also highlights the fact that out of 214 million international migrants worldwide, approximately 105 million are women, constituting 49 percent of all international migrants (United Nations Department of Economic). Here, one should note

³⁰ ["Female is the adventure / female is the hope / female is, my brothers, / the nostalgia. / One time it was the man: / fearless and bold; / one time it was the man / who navigated the unknown."].

that grammatically, adventure, hope, and nostalgia are also feminine nouns both in Italian and Spanish, which underlines the femininity of these experiences and feelings. The author then describes the corporality of this woman warrior: “Ed ecco che oggi / fiera madre altera, / cammina il sentiero, il domani, / la Donna: / fianco, seno, / sorriso.”³¹ She presents this new woman, first focusing on her physicality and accentuating the biological differences between women and men: “fianco” [hips], “seno” [breasts], and “sorriso” [smile]. Then Elizalde connects the future and hope with the motherhood experienced by this heroic woman. This daring woman is also a “fiera madre altera” [a proud, dignified mother] who struggles and looks forward in order to provide for her children. As a mother, she nurtures and builds the future.

Elizalde then attempts to define Ecuadorian identity, moving beyond physical traits.

She writes:

è molto più di quello:
la volontà dell'indio,
la fierezza spagnola:
secolare connubio
ecuadoriano.³²

Geo-politically positioned in Genoa, known as Christopher Columbus's birthplace, Elizalde understands the history of the Ecuadorian nation-state in a traditional and conservative

³¹ [And here we have today / a proud, dignified mother, / who walks the road, the future, / the Woman: / she is hips, / breasts, / smile,].

³² [“It's much more than that: / the Indian's will, the Spanish fierceness: / Ecuadorian / millenarian alliance.”].

way, as imposed by the dominant classes, mainly European descendants born in Latin America, not only in Ecuador. Elizalde returns to Vasconcelos' messianic "raza cósmica" or "quinta raza" [cosmic race or fifth race]: a composite of White, Red, Black and Yellow races (in that order) present in the Americas, of which the fifth one has grasped the best of each (40). According to Vasconcelos, the American (read Latin American) *mestizaje* will be the protagonist of world history. The predominance that Elizalde attributes to the "fierezza spagnola" [Spanish fierceness] brings to mind Vasconcelos' words: "Quizás entre todos los caracteres de la quinta raza predominen los caracteres del blanco, pero tal supremacía debe ser fruto de elección libre del gusto y no resultado de la violencia o de la presión económica" (26). In this sense, Elizalde reproduces a Eurocentric logic that became intrinsic to the Latin American nation-state formation discourse in which the imagined and symbolic Ecuadorian (or Peruvian, Mexican, etc.) identity was the result of a *mestizaje* that included only European and indigenous peoples, excluding Afro-descendants and Asian peoples and other populations that have been considered non-existent. She seems to assume that the encounters between populations and empires are devoid of power, war, violence, exploitation, and death.

The poem's last stanza refocuses attention on the audience and the sea's omnipresence: "Brindate amici miei, / e senza paura / salutate le nuove / caravelle."³³ Countering the fear and distrust Europeans may experience in the face of the increasing presence of Ecuadorian migrants, mainly women, Elizalde invites her audience to welcome these new migrants, who—like Columbus—have crossed the Atlantic, but in reverse. As if attending a cocktail party full of guests, Elizalde encourages Europeans to greet and learn

³³ ["Cheers, my friends / and without fear / greet the new / caravels."].

more about these women warriors. The author invites her audience to accept and recognize the value of these Latin American female newcomers in Europe. Unlike Columbus's caravels, this new crew is composed of women. Representing the new caravels in allusion to Columbus' enterprise to the Americas, the trip envisioned by Elizalde is a re-making of Columbus' voyage across the Atlantic with different protagonists, but following the same Western colonial epistemology imposed during the European colonization of the Americas.

Related to this poem, concerned with the image and impact of Ecuadorian women as transcontinental migrants and workers, Jazmín Dora Rodríguez Soledispa's poem "Mujer del Alma Blanca" ["Woman of the White Soul"], emphasizes the role and characteristics of these migrants as domestic female workers. Rodríguez Soledispa, born in 1976 in the rural district of El Anegado, in the town of Jipijapa, located in the South of the Province of Manabí, participated in the 2010 Contest while completing her B.A. (*laurea triennale*) thesis on Genoa's Ecuadorian female migration at the University of Genoa. Although the author does not specify the nationality of her protagonist, the allusions to Ecuadorian women workers in the care-giving sector are present. She writes:

De Dónde ha llegado Dulce estrella,
Voluntad y paciencia son tus características.
Mujer del alma blanca eres indispensable y especial
Tú que puedes realizar tantas cosas con increíble naturaleza.
Tú que cumples tu deber con grande dignidad
Sin esperar nada a cambio,
Es cierto que existe un papel

Pero..! es cierto que lo que das es mucho más de lo que recibes.³⁴

The poetic voice underlines the essential role played by Ecuadorian domestic workers in Italian households by providing elder care, childcare and/or housekeeping services, and oftentimes, affection, love, and companionship. Most Ecuadorian women have somewhat accommodated themselves to the global low-wage service work and the physical, intellectual, and emotional demands of their domestic jobs. For the most part, they previously performed different kinds of jobs in their country of origin, working as cashiers, schoolteachers, in offices and retail stores. The poetic voice perceives the domestic work performed by Ecuadorian women migrants as naturally extraordinary. In a sense, the poetic voice naturalizes the kind of job migrant women from non-EU member states perform in Italy. Simultaneously, Rodríguez Soledispa gives dignity to her subject: a domestic low-waged worker. In a spiritual value system, this ‘natural’ worker is elevated to a high level of goodness and kindness—modeling her actions on the Virgin Mary: always willing to sacrifice for others. Hence, the wage earner’s primary objective is to do her work well in a professional sense without expectations regarding economic compensation. Also stressed is the fact that no matter how much money the domestic migrant woman gets paid to take care of other people’s children, elderly, ill and disabled, usually of Italian citizenship, it will never be enough to repay her for the responsibility she assumes by taking care of their loved ones.

³⁴ [“From where has this Sweet star arrived, / Will and patience are your qualities. / Woman of white soul, you are essential and special / you who can do incredibly, naturally, so many things. / You who do your duty with enormous dignity / Expecting nothing in return, / It’s true that there exists a piece of paper / But..! it’s true that you give much more than you receive.”].

In the first line of the second stanza, it is interesting to note the use of an Italian word in the poem written in Spanish. Rodríguez writes:

Tú que nonostante por todo lo que eres y haces,
Eres una figura invisible.
En mi pensamiento infinito quiero dedicar a ti mis reflexiones
Diciendo que eres un sujeto trascendente gracias a todo lo que haces
Mujer del alma blanca.
Que has traído estabilidad, recuerdos, alegría.³⁵

The Italian term “*nonostante*,” which could be the Spanish equivalent of “*a pesar de que*,” “*pese a que*,” or “*no obstante*,” is inserted in the poem. Unlike the last word of the poem, where the term “*Badante*” is used as a way of highlighting a specific kind of job and its social connotations, in the case of “*nonostante*” the reader can assume it is more likely an overlooked borrowing from the Italian. In this stanza, the poetic voice emphasizes two particular aspects of this woman: her invisibility as a domestic worker and her abilities in what she does and what she is. More importantly, the narrator foregrounds aspects of this woman that are within and beyond the walls of Italian households. The kind of stability that this woman has offered to Italian households is linked to the ways in which a migrant woman’s low-waged labor in global capitalism has allowed Italian families to maintain a sort of ‘functioning’ family life and comfortable standards of living, in which, for instance, a daughter in her sixties can pay a migrant woman to live in with her 93-year-old mother and care for her. This live-in employment situation, one that not infrequently involves tax and

³⁵ [“Despite all that you are and do, / You are an invisible figure. / In my infinite thoughts I want to dedicate my reflections to you / Saying that you are a transcendental subject thanks to everything that you do / Woman of white soul. / You have brought stability, memories, joy.]

labor rights evasion, would otherwise be less affordable for many middle-class Italian families. At a time of economic crisis in Italy, and even prior to the broadcasted knowledge of Italian's staggering public debt, the Italian state would not be capable of transforming home elderly care into an accessible and affordable public service to citizens and residents registered in the public health system without these migrant workers. By bringing stability, memories, and joy to upper and middle-class Italian households, these workers have brought to Italy the histories of their homelands, their cultures, including their languages. They have also transmitted happiness to those around them—often elderly, disabled and ill people who often live by themselves. This sharing of experiences and feelings has taken place in the intimate space of other people's homes, where borders that mark what is a job-related task and a courtesy or a favor are blurred, and the relationship between an employer and employee is less clear and explicit. In addition, these workers have brought financial stability to their own homes and families whether they are in Ecuador, in Italy, or in another country—and, therefore, a sense of happiness and security to their own loved ones.

In the final stanza, as suggested above, the poetic voice refers to "*Mujer Badante*," this "woman of white soul," as a way of recuperating the dignity of her subject and equating her with purity, righteousness, and virtue. The poem ends in this way:

Mujer del alma blanca.

De espíritu bondadoso, deseo bien para ti.

Desde mi mundo espero poder comprenderte.

Hoy rodeado de lindas plantas que viven la alegría de la primavera.

Tantas voces felices y otras menos que dicen el contexto

Los sueños y las energías no se acaban, viven y se regeneran en todas las estaciones.

Mujer del alma blanca. “Mujer Badante.”³⁶

The poetic voice contemplates herself outside of the world of the “Mujer Badante.” From that epistemic positionality, she wishes this worker the best and hopes to be able to understand her. There is happiness but there are also difficult situations. It is also a moment of transition: from winter to summer. Highlighting the rebirth, renewal, and hope associated with springtime, the speaker suggests that the “Mujer Badante” may be a bridge between worlds, a passageway, a new configuration of identity. In Gloria Anzaldúa’s terms, this “Mujer Badante” is a sort of *transfronteriza*, a *nepantlera*, a subject in transition, a connector of people and worlds. Experiencing complex intersecting social relations both in Italy and in her home country, this woman produces transformations at the local and global level. Through transnational migration, she has transformed her life, developing her own notions of liberation, economic autonomy, self-confidence, and social justice. Her not always joyful life is a transitory situation. Happier and better times will eventually return and these will generate new life.

From a different position of situated knowledge, Dina Keyla Tamayo Saltos, born in Guayaquil in 1996, participated in 2010 with the poem entitled “Io ho un sogno.” This poem —written in rhyme that follows the pattern: aa, bb, cc, dd, ee, ff, gg, hh, ii, jj, kk, a, l, mm — can be read as a hip-hop song. Its title and content make explicit references to the public speech delivered by Martin Luther King, Jr. in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963. Like King during his leadership in the U.S. Civil Rights movement and his legendary speech,

³⁶ [“Woman of white soul. / Of generous spirit, I wish you well. / From my world I hope to be able to understand you. / Today surrounded by beautiful plants that live spring’s joy. / So many happy voices and others less happy that reveal the context / Dreams and energy never end, they live and regenerate in all seasons. / Woman of white soul. “Mujer Badante.”].

Tamayo Saltos calls for social justice, racial equality and an end to discrimination and exclusion. Taking her experiential knowledge as a standpoint epistemology, the young poet inscribes her positionality as an adolescent who migrated to Genoa when she was three years old—following her single mother’s migration a year earlier—with the capacity to dream and envision a different world from what she has previously experienced. She writes:

Io ho un sogno:
aiutare chi ne ha bisogno,
vivere come voglio,
vedere l’onda che s’infrange sullo scoglio.
Vivere senza razzismo,
senza più bullismo;
una vita senza guerra
migliorerebbe molto la Terra!³⁷

The poetic voice’s dream does not only involve a world without racism, bullying, and war, but also a world in which one is free to enjoy a moment of beauty and self-reflection, such as the contemplation of the ocean waters’ strength, striking the rocks. She views poetry as a process of liberation, a safety valve for desires and frustrations. Her vision of transformation includes solidarity and fraternity among all, assisting people who need help. Through the narration of her dream, the poetic voice demands equality and justice, while

³⁷ [“I have a dream: / to help those in need, / to live the way I want, / to see the wave that breaks the rocks. / To live without racism, / without any more bullying; / a life without war / the Earth would be so much better!”].

embodying a goal of emancipation that unifies people. She hopes for a world in which people come together to eradicate social inequality, hunger, and ignorance.

The poetic voice is also aware that not all people will be interested in joining a movement for collective social transformation, political emancipation, and happiness.

Tamayo Saltos writes:

Ma la gente se ne frega

e nell'ignoranza annega.

Ma ad alcuni questo interessa:

...

a quei ragazzi che si vogliono applicare

e il Mondo provano a cambiare;

a quelle persone che insieme

lottano per la medesima ragione,

che sperano in un miglior futuro

molto più allegro e sicuro.³⁸

While the poetic voice is aware that all people will never wish for social transformation, she attempts to attract the attention of those who have the will and vision to work toward a better world. The intertextuality with Martin Luther King, Jr. is evident, as she calls upon those interested in the construction of a just society to join a project for change. Also, like

³⁸ ["But people don't care / and are drowned by ignorance / But some are interested in this / ... / those guys who want to get engaged / and try to change the World / those people who together / fight for the same reason, / and hope for a better future / much happier and safer."].

King, the poetic voice alludes to a religious faith—considering that Tamayo Saltos was raised in a very religious family. She writes: “Per tutta la gente che ancora ci crede: / niente è impossibile, basta aver fede.”³⁹ This faith, however, can also be understood as a humanist and secular faith, emphasizing the power people possess to change situations and their possibilities for social transformation. This participatory change can become a reality, when a mutual intelligibility of social actors is reached. In this context, faith would not necessarily be linked to a God, but to the human capacity to transform the world and to erase politics of exclusion based on traditional categories such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and nationality. Tamayo Saltos imagines a world without oppressive power relations, a new geography of peace and social justice.

The poem ends with the hope that change will come sooner or later. She writes: “Io ho un sogno / che prima o poi si avvererà... / E Voi, se ci credete, / non temete e agite!”⁴⁰ For the poetic voice, change is inevitable. The anaphora “Io ho un sogno” [“I have a dream”], both at the beginning and toward the end of the poem, emphasizes the literary cannibalism employed by the young writer as a way of paying tribute to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement leader. Like King, the poetic voice invites her readers (her audience) to join her fearlessly in this transformative process of justice.

Like Tamayo Saltos, Katherine Lissbeth Moreira Rodríguez, also born in Guayaquil in 1996 and participating in 2010, wishes for a different world from the one she has experienced in Genoa, as revealed in her poem “Io voglio.” In her 13-line poem, written in

³⁹ [“For all the people who still believe: / nothing is impossible, one just needs faith.”].

⁴⁰ [“I have a dream / that will happen sooner or later... / and you guys, if you believe in it, / don’t fear and act!”].

free verse, Moreira starts with a critique of the discursive formations regarding foreigners in general. She then moves to a very personal and domestic desire—not uncommon for a girl of her age: to have a puppy. She writes:

Io voglio
una città in cui nessuno parli male degli stranieri
che non ci trattino male!
O, quanto mi piacerebbe una cosa così!
Ma purtroppo non posso cambiare le cose.
Però io vorrei anche un cagnolino che mi piace
Ma neanche quello non posso averlo.⁴¹

As the reader observes, the author uses very simple language to express her not so easily attained desires, associated with the complex intersecting social relations that circumscribe her life in Genoa, but she also expresses her personal unfulfilled desires in the intimate space of home, such as having a pet. The poetic voice includes herself in the “we” [*ci*], when writing about foreigners [*stranieri*], the term commonly used in Italian public discourse to refer to impoverished immigrants, primarily non-U.S. citizens and those of non-EU member states.⁴² In fact, her desire for a more just society in which all people would be

⁴¹ [“I want / a city in which no one talks bad about foreigners / don’t treat us badly! / Oh, how much I’d like something like that! / But unfortunately I can’t change things. / However, I’d also wish for a puppy that I like / but I can’t have that either!”].

⁴² Romanians, although citizens of a EU member state since 2007, are still considered ‘stranieri’ not only in Italy, but in almost all EU member states, especially Roma and impoverished immigrants. A problematization of the understanding of immigrants in Europe who are considered non-European is included in the first chapter of this dissertation.

treated equally, and her understanding of individual limitations are exemplified—and understood by her—through the injustices perceived in her daily life by the unfulfilled desire to have a pet, her own experience living in a small apartment in which a dog would inevitably imply extra expenses, time, and cleaning, whose building administration might prohibit domestic animals on the premises, or the fact that the puppy would become another element in the household for her mother to worry about. In the poem, the mother or authority figure has responded negatively to her desire.

The poem ends by emphasizing the liberating power of poetry: “Scrivere delle storie è molto bello / perché puoi scrivere le cose che tu pensi, / mi decido e prendo un foglio e una penna / e descrivo quello che ho in mente, / Una storiella. / E tolgo così tutto dal mio cuore.”⁴³ While cognizant of her limitations in the real world—outside poetry—as a subalternized subject in a particular historical moment, the poetic voice understands the act and process of writing as an experience of personal liberation. Within this safe space she creates for herself, she can imagine and narrate utopias, vent frustrations of her young age, and invent her own worlds. She recognizes that through poetry she cannot change the world. Precisely for this reason she constructs another world that, perhaps, can help change the world she does not like.

⁴³ [“it’s very nice to write stories / because you can write things you think about, / I make the decision and take a sheet of paper and a pen / and describe what’s on my mind, / a little story. / And that way I take everything out from my heart.”].

Minor But Symbolic Changes in The Representation of The Ecuadorian Diaspora in Genoa

While the two consecutive Poetry Contests of the Ecuadorian Diaspora “Jorgenrique Adoum” may not have transformed the way Ecuadorian youth are perceived and understood in Genoa, I believe these intercultural projects have countered and destabilized some of the discursive formations regarding Ecuadorian youth in Genoa, a fact of major political relevance, in view of the very young Ecuadorian population in the city (approximately 4,000 Ecuadorians study in the Genovese public schools). In a sense, both Contests opened certain cultural spaces within the city in which Ecuadorians, particularly youth, were viewed as creators and producers of knowledge and culture. In the last two years, local Genovese institutions, as well as established Italian cultural producers, began paying attention to the potential and organizational capacity of diasporic Ecuadorians in Genoa. Moreover, dialogue, respect, and collaborations among public Genovese institutions, Ecuadorian migrant associations, and the Consulate of Ecuador in Genoa became more solid and continuous. At the same time, both the Ecuadorian Consulate and the civil society intervened more proactively in the Genovese cultural scene, for instance in film festivals, musical and theatrical presentations, poetry readings outside the context of the Genoa International Poetry Festival, both small and massive cultural street events sponsored by the Municipality, and the participation of diasporic Ecuadorians in the development of museum exhibits devoted to migration.

I believe this synergy also emerged, in theoretical terms, as an externalization of an Occidentalist desire to understand ‘alterity’ and ‘difference’ and, in pragmatic and economic terms, as a sort of praxis of ‘interculturality’ through the proposing and carrying out of cultural projects that relate to human rights, the elimination of discrimination, and the

socio-economic integration of migrants from non-EU member states. These projects are mainly funded by the European Commission and a small portion is funded by national, regional, and local institutions.

As Shohat and Stam note, contemporary media shape identity and can exist close to the very core of identity production in a transnational world typified by the global circulation of images and sounds, goods and peoples, impacting complexly on national identity and communal belonging (7). Ecuadorian youth subjectivity and experience have been fashioned by media representations and stigmatizations perceived by these young people and their migrant parents.

Interestingly, on May 10, 2012, the same conservative Genovese newspaper, *Il Secolo XIX*, that in previous years had accentuated and reproduced a sense of fear, conflict, and tension among native and migrant populations, inaugurated a weekly bilingual section, in Spanish and Italian, dedicated to news of particular interest to Latin American migrants. Since then, every Thursday, this one-page section called '*Génova Semanal*' [Weekly Genoa], features success stories about Latin American migrants who somehow 'have made it' in Italy or have stood out in artistic, cultural, academic or entrepreneurial contexts. In contrast to the widespread stereotyped images of migrants reproduced in crime reports, '*Génova Semanal*' attempts to highlight different aspects and experiences of Latin Americans, including the university student, the entrepreneur, the white-collar worker, the artist, the activist, and the cultural promoter. These articles also highlight the services and problems encountered by migrants, such as immigration laws and procedures, healthcare, other public services and cultural events. Considering the large Ecuadorian population in Genoa, there is an evident emphasis on Ecuadorian news, perspectives and reader's letters. In fact, the Peruvian journalist in charge of '*Génova Semanal*,' Domenica Canchano, asked me to

write the first letter published on the page in Spanish and Italian. Around the same time, *Il Secolo XIX* also created the Radio 19 Latino, “*La radio para los latinoamericanos que viven en Génova*”—the Latino version of the well-established Italian-only Radio 19, managed by *Il Secolo XIX* (Radio 19 Latino). On the radio station, popular Latin American and global Latino music is played and news related to Latin America and Latin American cultural events in Genoa are broadcast; the revenue from advertising spots catering to Latin American migrant markets has proved fruitful. Lately, the radio station created the program, “*Corazón Latino: El Especial de las Mañanas*,” conducted by Ecuadorian migrant, Edgar Gómez, who worked in radio stations in Ecuador and has served as master of ceremonies in religious and cultural events in Genoa. From 8 am to 9 am, Monday through Friday, Gómez plays popular Latino and Latin American music, interviews local cultural producers and invites listeners to feel part of an established community.

Undoubtedly, *Il Secolo XIX* managers have identified the market potential of Latin Americans and the need to reinvent a media product in order to increase sales and advertising that can attract a wider spectrum of readers and consumers. After several meetings and conversations between the newspaper director and myself, as Consul of Ecuador, regarding the stereotyped and racialized representations of Ecuadorian migrants, as well as protest calls and letters sent by numerous Ecuadorians to the newspaper, and the role of media and public actors in creating a more cohesive intercultural society, the news published currently in this journal about Ecuadorians involves not only crime and violence, but also cultural events, and useful information for migrants. For instance, benefits and requirements for applying for services, and bureaucratic and fiscal procedures have been included not only in ‘*Génova Semanal*,’ but also in other sections of the newspaper. Some of

these services are the result of bilateral agreements between Italy and Latin American countries.

While it is clear that two poetry contests have not and will not resolve the dramatic socio-economic difficulties of Ecuadorian families and youth and cultural subalternization is still experienced in the everyday lives of Ecuadorian migrants, the minuscule creative spaces developed in the Genovese cultural epicenter, such as Palazzo Ducale, where both award ceremonies took place as part of a renowned literary festival and Ecuadorian migrant youth read their creative work in front of a curious audience of more than 200 people, these contests have nonetheless sown the seeds for further cultural projects to be developed by adults and young people. For instance, every other Saturday, the non-profit project 'Lengua Madre Amiga' gathers in a public library in Cornigliano, a peripheral neighborhood with a high percentage of Ecuadorian residents (2,238 people). For most of the morning, Latin American children meet to sign, play, and dance Latin American songs and games, and to enjoy recreational activities in Spanish so that children utilize the mother tongue as active speakers and communicators. The project is intended to promote Spanish as a mother tongue or as a heritage language. This initiative was developed by a group of Ecuadorians led by Priscila Cujilán Tello, the originator of the Poetry Contest 'Jorgenrique Adoum.'

Conclusions

As I have discussed in this chapter, migrant youth have experienced a series of difficulties in adapting to new social, cultural, spatial, and economic environments, without adequate family and social support. As Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila emphasize, performing domestic work for pay, especially in a live-in job, is often incompatible with providing

primary care for one's family and home (552). In this sense, Ecuadorian citizens have created spaces to give support to their families. Ecuadorian migrant mothers have had to rework their own motherhood and adapt to new capitalist contexts, labor regimes, and subalternization. In this sense, the diversity of Ecuadorian cultures has become invisibilized and non-existent.

The texts analyzed in this chapter highlight a problematic evidenced by Armando Gnisci, in the sense that "Definire il fenomeno letterario degli scrittori migranti (scrittori immigrati, scrittori stranieri che scrivono in italiano, scrittori nascenti, scrittori col doppio sguardo, ecc.) significa porsi nella *verità* (o nel *disagio*) della definizione" (*Creolizzare L'Europa*, 178-79).⁴⁴ Without entering into a theological debate, the core of Gnisci's preoccupation is the fact that these translocated people who decide to write and to expose their narratives interrogate the traditional parameters used to evaluate the quality of literature, its categorization, and its value for publication and marketing, while often being excluded from literary studies in Italy.

The location and translocation of the writer and the text pose further questions regarding the plurality and transnationality of languages and perspectives within a "national literature," the relationality in defining modernity and redefining its time and space, the awareness of avoiding comparative imperialism in one's research, as well as the undomesticity of a text. By undomesticity, I refer to the way a text is not accommodated to fit in a particular temporal and spatial context, and for specific editorial and market purposes that may differ from those of the writer. Diasporic cultural production such as

⁴⁴ ["to define the literary phenomenon of migrant writers (immigrant writers, foreign writers who write in Italian, emergent writers, writers with a double perspective, etc.) means to place oneself on the truth (or the uneasiness) of the concept of definition."].

emerged in these poetry contests, I believe, is at the interstices of experiential knowledge, genres, literatures, representation, circulation, and distribution, particularly when one considers the geopolitics of knowledge and capital in which the writing takes place and its eventual publication, production, and distribution.

In fact, in December 2013, the texts that received awards in both Contests were published by the Consulate of Ecuador in Genoa in the bilingual anthology *Dove le parole sono sogni. Un viaggio poetico fra Ecuador e Genova* (2013), as a non-profit publication. The book was divided into three sections: 1) the texts awarded in the 2011 and 2012 Contests “Jorgenrique Adoum” and the subsequent 2013 Contest, created to attract youth of all nationalities who wanted to explore music, dance and literature “A VOCE ALTA: Concorso di poesia, musica e danza;” 2) the poems and short stories read by Ecuadorian writers and artists invited to the International Poetry Festival of Genoa from 2010 to 2013, which included Mario Campaña, Sonia Manzano, Ramiro Oviedo, Mariela Condo, Aminta Buenaño and Marcelo Báez;⁴⁵ and 3) a selection of narratives written by Ecuadorians incarcerated in the Genovese Prisons of Marassi (for males) and Pontedecimo (for women), during the creative writing workshops organized by the Consulate and voluntarily offered by poets Ramiro Oviedo, Sonia Manzano, Marcelo Báez, and Margara Russotto, in collaboration with the Festival and the Provveditorato Regionale dell’Amministrazione Penitenziaria della Liguria (Regional Agency of the Ligurian Penitentiary Administration) and the Prison’s directors and educators. Before this publication, the texts had only been accessible online through the Contest’s blog (Concorso di Poesia).

⁴⁵ Sonia Manzano and Mariela Condo and her group came to Genoa thanks to the sponsorship of Ecuador’s Ministry of Culture.

On December 13, 2013, the anthology was presented in Genoa, in the Museoteatro della Commenda di Prè by the Consulate and the International Festival of Poetry of Genoa, along with the editors, Italian-Ecuadorian Viviana Barres and Sicilian Gabriele Monte, both students of the University of Genoa. As previously stated, Barres was one of the main organizers of the second edition (2010) of the Contest and Gabriele Monte participated in and won the third-place award in the Poetry section of the 2010 Contest, and along with María Eugenia Esparragoza, had collaborated in the Italian translation of Ramiro Oviedo's poems for the International Poetry Festival and various poems published in the anthology. I would support Rebecca Walkowitz's contention that the location of the text depends "not only on the places where books are written but also on the places where they are classified and given social purpose" (527). The publication and public presentation of this book meant that youth were able to perform again to a large audience. They read their work in a space that recognized them socially and culturally.

The authors in both Contests used a second or third language (Italian), or a native one (Spanish), which is no longer spoken in mainstream social and public situations and rarely written in formal correspondence. Younger participants who have been schooled in Italy from an early age, such as Tamayo Saltos and Moreira preferred to use Italian to write their poems, as that is the language they command and feel comfortable using in public spaces. The texts analyzed in this chapter evidence that migration as a process is a fundamental part of the poetics of these young authors. Diasporic subjectivity can be understood as an epistemological standpoint that permeates the texts, as part of the reflective and self-reflexive process of writing.

CHAPTER VI

THE QUASI-INVISIBLE INSCRIBER: DIASPORIC ECUADORIAN WOMEN, THE HOMELAND, AND HOUSEHOLD SPACES

Noi vogliamo un'Italia che non diventi un paese plurietnico, pluriculturale, siamo fieri della nostra cultura e delle nostre tradizioni (...) Vogliamo aprire [le frontiere] agli stranieri che fuggono da paesi dove sono sottoposti a pericoli per la loro vita o per la loro libertà, questo è un nostro obbligo e quelli li accogliamo, così come accogliamo quegli stranieri che vengono qui per lavorare, ma non vogliamo tutti quelli che vengono qui per portare danno e pericolo ai cittadini italiani. (...) Vogliamo che questi stranieri che qui rimangono si adeguino alle nostre leggi, al nostro modo di vivere.

—Silvio Berlusconi (2006)¹

Introduction

The above epigraph is former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's response on March 28, 2006 to a listener regarding immigration issues in Italy during the RadioUno program, *Anch'io*, a state-run radio station belonging to the RAI media conglomerate (*Corriere della Sera*). Berlusconi's assertion was made during the decisive final days of the electoral campaign for national elections on April 9 and 10, 2006, in which the center-left coalition supporting Romano Prodi defeated Berlusconi's party

¹ We don't want Italy to become a multiethnic, multicultural country. We are proud of our culture and traditions (...) We want to open (our borders) to foreigners who flee countries where their lives or liberties are at risk, that is our obligation and we receive them, the way we receive foreigners who come to work, but we don't want to welcome all those who come here to bring about damage and danger to Italian citizens. We want the foreigners who stay here to adapt to our laws and to our way of life.

and gave Prodi his second mandate as President of the Italian *Consiglio dei Ministri*.² Berlusconi's statements caused a media uproar and political parties and movements from the so-called left, right, and a wide array of coalitions and parties located in-between took the opportunity to disseminate their views against or in favor of them. Berlusconi's declarations gestured toward Italy's vexed and complex internal struggle following unification in 1861, while at the same time referencing the Italian government's inclination toward a Eurocentric monocultural logic and a narrow nationalism imbued with official public discourse. This discourse obscures, first, the internal and historic cultural exchanges of the many populations (and empires) that have inhabited and occupied the Italian peninsula and its surrounding islands and, second, the intercultural processes that have been activated by relations between heterogeneous migrant and native populations in Italy, as well as by children born in Italy to migrant parents (known as second generations) and migrant children raised in Italy.

Within the context of a state monocultural logic, the contested terrain of multiculturalism and the understanding of failed implementation of policies regarding social integration of ethnic minorities in the European Union, the European literary scene has been "witnessing a proliferation of narratives which address issues of migration, diversity, conviviality (in the original meaning of *convivere*, 'living together'), citizenship, and cultural conflict" (Brancato, "Afro-European Literature" 3).³ These texts,

² Similar to his first mandate (1996-98), Prodi's second mandate (2006-2008) ended hastily with the Italian Parliament's vote of no confidence, '*sfiducia*.'

³ In her article "Telling Uneasiness: Second Generation Migrant Writers in Italy and the Failures of Multiculturalism," Marie Orton discusses how texts by Igiaba Scego and Randa Ghazy expose the social and political condition of second generation migrants (G2) and the vexed and, according to some, failed Italian multicultural project.

adds Sabrina Brancato, “which usually take the form of testimonials or autobiographies authored by a Western ghost writer, feed a Western white readership eager for third-world victim stories” (3).⁴ Not surprisingly and linked to geographical proximity, former colonial and neo-colonial relations and global socioeconomic inequalities, Afro-diasporic narratives, written in collaboration with Western allies, were the first to appear in Italy.

In the early 1990s the first manifestations appeared of what critics have termed, variously, “migrant or migration literature,” “*letteratura italiana della migrazione*,” “Italophone literature” or “minor literature in Italian.” Written by diasporic Africans, these texts were usually produced in collaboration with Italian writers and journalists who could correct the language used by migrants, structure the narratives, inspire political and literary interest, and facilitate the publication and circulation of the texts in Italy. Narratives written by diasporic authors in Italy have been considered by Italian literary critics as belonging to a corpus frequently known as migrant literature or *letteratura della migrazione* (Gnisci). In contrast, with Francophone studies in mind, other critics have understood these new narratives as a minor literature within Italophone studies (Parati). Within postcolonial discourse, the field of Afro-European literary studies as a whole has been questioned from a European comparative perspective, revealing relevant intersections with Diaspora Studies and Postcolonial Studies and, with a few exceptions, texts have dealt mostly with Britain and France (Brancato).

Senegal-born Pap Kouma and Oreste Pivetta’s *Io, venditore di elefanti* (*I, the Elephant Seller*) (1990), Tunisian Salah Methnani and Mario Fortunato’s *Immigrato*

⁴ Brancato mentions, as a widely known example, former top model Waris Dirie’s series of bestsellers (*Desert Flower*, *Desert Dawn*, *Desert Children*), which generated worldwide public debate around female genital mutilation (3).

(*Immigrant*) (1990), Moroccan Mohamed Bouchane with Carla De Girolamo and Daniele Miccione's *Chiamatemi Ali (Call me Ali)* (1991) and Senegalese Saidou Moussa Ba and Alessandro Micheletti's *La promessa di Hamadi (Hamadi's promise)* (1991), are among the first autobiographical, testimonial migrant narratives and extensive reportages that inscribe—from the migrants' marginal perspectives—the multiple translocated histories of recent migrations to Italy and the cultural processes that migrants have experienced in an already multicultural Italy, despite Berlusconi's statements. All of these narratives are mediated by an Italian ally/collaborator, often male, and in some cases, two Italian editors, who (re)present the narrative for an Italian readership.

These male writers were later joined by women writers who exposed the complexities of gender, ethnicity, race, and class locations and differences between and within nation-states that intersect and are intertwined with their personal and family histories and migrations. While asserting their multiple allegiances and positions, as well as their spatial displacements, they also broke with literary boundaries in the form of fictionalized autobiographies. These diasporic women writers brought to literature written in Italian, and to public discourse, narratives that, up to that point, had been limited to private spheres. These texts allowed for a more complex understanding of gendered, ethnoracial, and class identities, including Maria Viarengo's autobiographical text, *Shirshier N'demma (Shall we go for a Stroll?)* (1990), in which she narrates her experiences in Ethiopia and in Italy as a woman born in Ethiopia to a Piedmontese father and an Oromo mother (from Southern Ethiopia). Marsiglia-born, of Algerian origin, Nasser Chora's autobiography, *Volevo diventare Bianca (I Wanted to Become White)* (1993), which could be considered a second generation Afro-diasporic narrative, exposes her Occidentalist and colonial understanding of self, centered on the color of her body, whereas diasporic Palestinian Salwa Salem's memoir, *Con il vento nei capelli (The Wind in My Hair)* (1993), edited by Laura Mauritano, describes her personal experience

in Palestine during the 'nakba' (disaster, catastrophe) of 1948 and her various translocations in Damascus, Kuwait, and Vienna, to finally settle in Italy.

Since the 1990s, a number of writers with origins in Africa (Kossi Komla-Ebri, Amara Lakhous, Ingy Mubiayi, and Yousef Wakkas), Asia (Younis Tawfik and Laila Wadia), Central and Eastern Europe (Jarmila Očkayová, Ornela Vorpsi, Vesna Stanić, and Božidar Stanišić) and Latin America (Christiana De Caldas Brito, Julio Monteiro Martins, Sandra Clementina Ammendola, and Gladys Basagoitia Dazza), to name only a few, started narrating and publishing their diasporic perspectives in Italy, using Italian as a second or third language and addressing an Italian readership. Similarly, other transmigrant and second-generation writers, including Italians of Somali origin such as Igiaba Scego and Cristina Uba Ali Farah and “hyphenated” Italian-Indian Gabriella Kuruvilla, have inscribed their diasporic narratives in Italy and in Italian.⁵ Some of these writers have had their work translated into other European languages and have obtained praise and recognition for their literary work. In fact, in 1997, diasporic Albanian writer Gëzim Hajdari, who has lived in Italy since 1992, won the most prestigious poetry award in Italy, the Montale Prize.

Since 1990, as Graziella Parati has stated, “speaking from a marginal location, migrants’ writing narrates the role of the migrant as agent of change in the new culture he/she inhabits and the strategies of exclusion employed by the dominant culture” (*Migration Italy* 57). It is worth noting that it is only in the last ten years, more or less, that diasporic Ecuadorians in Italy have occasionally appeared as authors of testimonials, poems, short stories, experimental narratives, and novels, using Italian as a

⁵ By transmigrant, I understand “Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span” geographical and national borders; thus, “Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nation-states” (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 7).

second or third language to represent themselves. In these cases the power dynamics in literary production, distribution and reception are clearly evident, as I will show throughout this chapter.

Diasporic Ecuadorian Women Narrating Their Subjectivities and Experiences

Diasporic Ecuadorian women writers in Southern/Mediterranean Europe have not gained the same visibility and recognition in the publication and circulation of their literary work as their male counterparts. Unlike recognized Ecuadorian male writers in Southern/Mediterranean Europe, particularly those located in Spain, such as Mario Campaña, Leonardo Valencia, and Iván Carrasco, who migrated with the purpose of developing their intellectual and literary interests in European societies, most Ecuadorian women who today write and publish in Spain and Italy emigrated for socioeconomic reasons. Their translocations are linked to their family circumstances and their own desire to venture into new spaces, to develop financial autonomy, and to support their families. Most diasporic Ecuadorian women writing in Italy today identify themselves as part of the middle class. Sometimes, they have a university degree from an Ecuadorian University or have obtained some formal education abroad. Unlike their male counterparts in Spain, diasporic Ecuadorian women writers first had to learn to command the Italian language and find dependable Italian allies who could correct their Italian syntax (without necessarily appearing as editors of their texts), before having their work published in Italy.

In this chapter, I examine “Clotilde” (2009), by Lucinda Jiménez Armijos, and “Vigilia di Natale” (“Christmas Vigil”) (2009) and “La scelta di Lucynda” (Lucynda’s Choice”) (2010), both by Kathiusca Toala Olivares. I have also considered the life-short story, “Due mamme e un Papà” (1994), attributed to the pseudonymous Inés Gualacoto, as recounted to Giuseppe Pedercini, an Italian freelance writer. Published in Pedercini’s anthology, *‘Caciupa e Zeichini’ Le donne del terzo mondo raccontano la loro vita in Italia*,

Gualacoto is the only Ecuadorian included in the collection, which mostly presents African and South Asian women narratives from a clearly Occidentalist colonial perspective that views these heterogeneous groups of women in a monolithic way and lumps them together simply as “women from the Third World.” According to Pedercini, editor and transcriber of all the narratives, the women included in the compilation, including Gualacoto, have not written the texts, but narrated their stories to him from July 1993 to May 1994 (7). While aware that Gualacoto’s mediated text is the product of complex and hybrid authorial strategies that have involved acts of translation and appropriation of discourse, the narrative suggests Western interests in subaltern/marginal subjectivities that reproduce colonial epistemologies and practices.

Kathiusca Toala Olivares and Lucinda Jiménez Armijos have mostly worked as caretakers and domestic workers. Additionally, Toala Olivares has published several short stories. In 2007 her play, *Finestre romane*, ‘Roman windows,’ was performed as part of the cultural event, *Autori per Roma*, ‘Authors for Rome,’ organized by the cultural association, *Racconti Teatrali*, ‘Theatrical Narratives,’ in collaboration with the Municipality of Rome. For this initiative, foreign writers, either born in Italy (second generation) or abroad (first generation) are commissioned to write literary texts in Italian and related to themes and aspects of the Italian capital (*Racconti Teatrali*).

While research on diasporic Ecuadorian women’s narratives written in Italian has been a challenging task and a professional reader may consider them of little literary value, these texts in fact provide revealing written representations of diasporic Ecuadorian women’s subjectivities, inscribing their multiple locations and social identities and emphasizing both the specificity of the speaking subject and the politics of difference and translocations, much theorized in Feminist Studies. These texts highlight the sense of mourning, rootedness and uprootedness that migration involves, as well as the desire and agency of migrant women to intervene in the public sphere. Italian-

Argentinean writer Sandra Clementina Ammendola eloquently conveys what diasporic women writers, including Ecuadorian ones, may attempt in the writing of their narratives. She states:

Il mio percorso nella scrittura é fondamentale per riconoscere la mia moltitudine di appartenenze. Per esprimere, attraverso la scrittura, una condizione e avere la possibilità di renderla pubblica. Questo per me è stato, ed è, un percorso di cittadinanza e nello stesso tempo di costruzione d'identità... La scrittura e, soprattutto, il fatto che qualcuno mi legge mi ha dato questo spazio di partecipazione alla vita pubblica. (2)

Ammendola addresses the multiplicity of positions and allegiances of diasporic women, as well as the act of writing, i.e., through language, as the place to name locations, and to “speak about difference” (hooks 151). Writing is understood as the space to describe a process of moving “beyond boundaries,” embracing multiple voices and locations, and presenting that self to the public sphere (Kaplan 141). It is through these published texts that for the first time diasporic Ecuadorian women expose to the public sphere and through written language their household experiences outside their own households, their experiences as immigrants in Italy, whether documented or undocumented, i.e., as regular or irregular immigrants, or in the liminal space of being “*in attesa del permesso di soggiorno*,” waiting for the approval of their application for a permit of stay.

While the feminization of migration continues to receive attention and is increasingly visible both in everyday life and academic publications and conferences, little has been published in the academy about narratives written by diasporic Ecuadorian women in Italy, whether as poetry, fiction, or non-fiction. Thus, the analysis of literary texts written by diasporic Ecuadorian women, or recounted by them, in this chapter is a political act to ameliorate this gap and to articulate possibilities for further study of diasporic Ecuadorian women’s narratives.

I start my analysis with the life short story, “Due Mamme e un Papà” (“Two Moms and One Dad”) (1994). Published under the pseudonym of Inés Gualacoto, the text narrates the experiences of Inés, a mestiza woman and daughter of an Andean indigenous woman. As a domestic worker in Florence, Inés is raped by her Italian boss. She does not perceive this rape as a tragic event. Rather, it is an episode that she somewhat expected of her boss, as her mother lived the same experience in Ecuador in a similar subalternized ethnoracial and class condition. While the debates about truthfulness, authorship, authenticity, and collective shared experience of the testimonial narrative are beyond the scope of this chapter, my interest in this text centers on the fact that it advances our understanding of written narratives about diasporic Ecuadorians in Italy. Indeed, during my research, it is the only text I have found in Italian that exposes the ethnoracial diversity and discrimination experienced by indigenous Ecuadorian women and the colonial Occidentalist interactions between different ethnoracial groups in Ecuador from a diasporic indigenous Ecuadorian perspective. For the purposes of my analysis, I consider this text a fictionalized life story in the form of a short story that brings intercultural difference and coloniality to the discussion of diasporic female subjectivity and feminist Ecuadorian studies.

I then examine Lucinda Jiménez Armijos’ “Clotilde” (2009) and Kathiusca Toala Olivares’ “Vigilia di Natale” (“Christmas Vigil”) (2009) and “La scelta di Lucynda” (“Lucynda’s Choice”) (2010). While there are other diasporic Ecuadorian women writers in Italy, such as Silvia Campaña, Leonor Delgado Franzot, and Olivia Casares, I have chosen these texts because they share certain elements in common: the idea of journey, the process of migration, the quest for origins, and an affinity with the homeland, similar themes examined in the works written by Campaña, Valencia, and Carrasco, discussed in Chapter Three. In addition, the texts written by these women, and in the case of Gualacoto, orally narrated by a diasporic Ecuadorian woman, even if mediated by the editor, expose different forms of exclusion and discrimination based on gender,

ethnicity, class, and juridical status, either as regular or irregular migrants, as well as their desires and the diverse strategies employed to escape from oppressive situations. These texts also highlight specific cultural aspects of Ecuadorian-ness and diasporic Ecuadorian female subjectivities that are only beginning to appear in literature written in the Italian language.

A note about the context in which Jiménez Armijos and Toala Olivares' texts were published is in order. Jiménez Armijos' "Clotilde" and Kathiusca Toala Olivares' "Vigilia di Natale" were included in the anthology *Lingua Madre Duemilanove. Racconti di donne straniere in Italia* (2009), edited by Italian journalist Daniela Finocchi. Toala Olivares' "La scelta di Lucynda" was published in the book's 2010 edition. The anthologies collect a selection of the participating texts in the national literary contest, *Lingua Madre*. Since 2005, this national literary contest—conceived by Daniela Finocchi and proposed by Turin's Centro Studi e Documentazione del Pensiero Femminile—has become one of Italy's most noteworthy and inclusive projects, promoting and disseminating narratives written in Italian by migrant and Italian women who are willing to engage in intercultural experiences and exchanges. Regarding the purpose of the contest, in 2007 Daniela Finocchi stated that the project was born to "Creare un'opportunità per dare voce alle donne straniere. È questa l'idea da cui è nato il Concorso letterario nazionale 'Lingua Madre'" (*Lingua Madre Duemilanove* 10). Based in Turin and coordinated in collaboration with the Region of Piedmont and the non-profit *Fondazione per il Libro, la Musica e la Cultura*, which organizes the *Salone Internazionale del Libro di Torino*, the contest's awards ceremony takes place every year within the program of Italy's major international book fair.

In 2012 Finocchi declared in an interview that "il premio nasce per creare relazione, scambio e confronto: anche da qui la scelta della lingua italiana, per dare la possibilità a donne italiane e straniere di lavorare insieme e creare sinergie in una

collaborazione caldamente incoraggiata dagli organizzatori” (*A voi comunicare*). In a sense, the creation of the contest, despite its best intentions, originated from a White feminist/colonial standpoint epistemology which considered non-Italian, ‘non-White,’ immigrant women to be in need of an agent (the perceptive and sympathetic Italian feminist journalist and non-profit center) that could make their voices heard, imagining immigrant women as lacking voices before the creation of the contest. The project was conceived to give— “*dare*”—immigrant and Italian women the opportunity to work collaboratively and in synergy. The contest seems to have evolved from a space to give voice to immigrant women, to one that facilitates the creation of women’s synergy, bringing it into the public sphere.

Undoubtedly, the project attempts to foster dialogue and solidarity among women regardless of their nationality and first language. It stimulates co-authorship as a way of breaking with the individual, single and unequivocal speaking voice much encouraged in patriarchal capitalist regimes of knowledge production. The fact that the contest emerges from a vital Italian feminist center that has inserted the project within the *Salone del Libro*, in an industrial city such as Turin—which has been one of the main destinations of domestic migration, particularly from Southern Italy in the 1950s and 1960s, and developed by an Italian journalist has allowed the project to grow and obtain national visibility, as well as an array of institutional Italian partners and sponsors over the years. At the same time, and within the context of Occidentalist colonial gendered politics of ethnic and cultural difference, the contest has been primarily developed by Italian citizens and non-profit organizations. Italian public institutions including the Municipality of Rome and the Ministry of Grace and Justice have sponsored it. I argue that although the contest has been an important space for the inscription of migrant women’s narratives, it has not critically and decolonially interrogated the pervasive Occidentalist construction of Black/women of color/immigrant/poor/indigenous

existence as invisible, hypervisible (for instance, their sexuality), unvoiced, unaesthetic or simply disposable.

In an intercultural and pluriethnic Italy, the task for Finocchi and other well-intentioned Italian feminists, in the spirit of Gloria Anzaldúa, is to end with demarcations such as “ours” and “theirs,” to honor people’s otherness in ways that allow us *to be changed* by embracing that otherness, to get out of the safe space of home (that is also language though language could be considered already a patriarchal system), to bridge and expand the dialogue toward a transformational consciousness and social reality (“(Un)natural bridges” 3-4). To this end, the reader can distinguish how the contest has evolved over the years, as well as its organizers. In the 2010 edition of the anthology, Finocchi states:

Se i recenti flussi migratori stanno mutando il volto delle nostre comunità e suscitano nuove insicurezze, una soluzione può venire dalla scrittura in grado di renderci più comprensibile la realtà – come è stato scritto – in grado di cambiare il corso di molte vite. (11)

After a decade of facilitating women’s knowledge production, Finocchi envisions literature as a vehicle for transforming the lives of both writers and readers, and for both Italian and migrant women writing in Italian.

“Due Mamme e un Papà:” Gender, Class, Ethnicity, and Sexual Violence

Written in first person and under the pseudonym of Inés Gualacoto, the testimonial short story, “Due Mamme e un Papà,” narrates the experiences of Inés, a diasporic Ecuadorian mestiza woman who lives in Florence, through the mediation of Italian free-lance male writer, Giuseppe Pedercini. From the onset, the woman tells the interviewer: “Mi raccomando però: non scriva il mio nome vero né quello di mio figlio. Non voglio che qui a Firenze mi riconoscano e che conoscano la mia storia” (139).

Pedercini, as mediator/inscriber of this text, cannot be considered a reliable narrator. In the anthology's introduction, he clearly exemplifies essentialist Occidentalistic ideologies that have been reproduced in much of the world, holding up Europe (and hegemonic capitalist world regions that have been understood as the 'West') as the model of moral and cultural values and economic development while excluding knowledges, cosmologies, subjectivities, and experiences from populations imagined as belonging to the "Third World." Pedercini states:

Mi è capitato qualche volta di andare al di là delle classifiche e delle statistiche del terzo mondo, toccando casi di donne che al terzo mondo vero e proprio non appartengono ma che mi sono sembrati interessanti per vicende personali che, queste sì, appartengono al terzo mondo (è il caso delle polacche e delle cinesi). (7)

Within European rhetorics of exclusion, Pedercini understands the existence of the women he inscribes as subalternized and oppressed, naturalizing them as underprivileged and socioeconomically inferior. For Pedercini, the "Third World" seems to be a sort of "interesting" human experience, not necessarily a geographical region, in contrast to the cases of the Polish and Chinese women he mentions.

Moreover, it seems that for Pedercini, the integration of immigrants signifies the loss of cultural aspects of their countries of origin. For instance, he writes that

Già adesso si notano i segni, e non solo per eritrei e capoverdiani, di questa incipiente integrazione che se da una parte fa perdere le radici dall'altra segna la nascita di nuovi cittadini e di nuove cittadinanze. Il lettore vedrà anche il caso della bimba nata da genitori filippini che si sente interamente italiana per cultura e per modo di vivere. (10)

While Pedercini seems to celebrate the emergence of new citizens and citizenships as a result of new waves of immigration and birth of children to immigrant parents, he does not address the juridico-legal denial of Italian citizenship that a child born to immigrant parents in Italy must confront, as long as Italy continues to endorse a "*jus sanguinis*" citizenship legislation, and the discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion migrant youth may confront in the European Union.

Furthermore, Pedercini manifests a latent paternalistic attitude in his depiction of the women he represents, portraying them as unfortunate victims. The fact that some of these migrant women achieve a college degree is for Pedercini a rare event, like the social mobility a domestic worker may accomplish. He adds: "E incontrerò, il lettore, casi straordinari di volontà che hanno trasformato collaboratrici familiari in studiose e addirittura laureate che adesso servono il loro paese, dove sono ritornate per occupare posti di comando" (10). On the other hand, Pedercini does not explicate the method he uses to gather the oral narratives included in the anthology. For instance, he does not describe how he encountered these women, how their narratives were collected, whether he recorded them, took notes, or met the interviewees several times, nor the places where the interviews and meetings took place. Without any rigorous method or defined methodology, Pedercini narrates and translates (into the written, publishable text) these migrant women's experiences and incorporates them into his Occidentalist Italian male discourse. While the book compiles migrant women's narratives, it simultaneously invisibilizes women's existence and agency. In contrast to the *Lingua Madre* anthologies edited by Finocchi in which a biographical note of every woman is included at the end of the publication, no biographical note of Inés Gualacoto is included in the book, nor of any other woman whose story is orally narrated to Pedercini.

As the daughter of a Kichwa *warmi* (woman), Inés defines herself as a "*chola, mezza india e mezza bianca*" from a town near Cuenca, Ecuador's third largest city

(139). Similar to several Latin American contexts, in Ecuador, *chola* (or *cholo* in masculine form) has been historically a derogatory term to refer to indigenous peasants who, in order to move up on the social ladder, appropriate dominant Eurocentered ways of dressing, customs, language, and other cultural practices as they move to urban spaces. While Inés has the agency to leave behind her “white” father in Ecuador, she reproduces the ethnoracial, gender, and class dynamics that her indigenous mother experienced in Ecuador. Unlike her mother, however, she survived, together with her son.

Inés says that she is the product of a one-night stand between a middle-class light-skinned mestizo, whom she calls “white,” and a Kichwa woman, referred to as “*india*” and “*warmi*” (woman in Kichwa), who died while giving birth to her. That is all she knows about her mother. Inés is thankful she was not sent back to Kichwa people at the time of her mother’s death. She says: “sono stata fortunata che *taita* (father in Kichwa) mi ha adottato invece di ributtarmi fra gli indios, come normalmente avviene nel mio paese. E mi ha fatto studiare” (139). Inés feels fortunate that her biological father “adopted her.” She understands his taking custody of her in his house, providing care, protection, and education, as an act of benevolence and responsibility he was not obliged to do and one that differs from most mestizo men in the town who rape impoverished indigenous women. Her “white” father raised Inés and provided her with a high school education in Quito. At the same time, Inés is uprooted from her Kichwa origins, considered inferior as her Kichwa relatives could not have provided her the means to escape poverty. Kichwa is her mother’s culture and language, which Inés reserves only for herself and later her child.

Unlike the other diasporic Ecuadorian women whose texts are examined in this chapter and who migrated to Italy in the midst of the country’s most dramatic economic crisis at the turn of the century, Inés migrated to Italy at the beginning of the 1980s, a

decade in which immigration to Italy was not significant and did not represent a national crisis. Thus, Inés' migratory experience in Italy is quite different in the sense that there was a structural demand in Italy for cheap migrant labor and a limited population willing to offer its services to perform those jobs. Additionally, migration controls and procedures in Italy were not as strict and technologically advanced as they became in the 1990s and intensified in the current century. There was no need for a tourist visa—although the traveler had to show assets that could prove her financial capacity to support herself in Europe. There were no large monetary penalties for employers who hired irregular immigrants. This situation changed in 1990 with the first Italian law that regulated Italian immigration, known as *Legge Martelli*, and discussed in Chapter One.

Since the 1980s, the demand for domestic service in Italy, Spain, and Europe in general, “characterized by its invisibility, vulnerability and insecurity, has become practically” migrant women’s “only opportunity for work, regardless of their level of education and previous work experience” (Solé and Parella 62). Soon after her arrival in Florence, Inés describes the ease with which she finds a domestic job. She states: “Così misi un annuncio sulla «Nazione». Mi arrivarono una decina di risposte. Ne scelsi una e andai” (140).⁶ The protagonist narrates that she has been employed in Florence as a domestic worker for ten years by an Italian heterosexual couple who cannot have children. From the epistemological standpoint of an Occidentalized Andean woman of indigenous descent who is the product of her mother’s rape, Inés reproduces her mother’s experience in certain ways. She passively accepts that her male boss comes to her bedroom to have sexual intercourse with her. She does not resist her boss’ sexual desire, nor does she manifest pleasure during the sexual act, as if it were something without importance. In fact, Inés does not dwell on the details of the sexual encounter:

⁶ *La Nazione* is considered Florence’s most read and circulated newspaper.

“Lui venne in camera mia e dopo mi accorsi di essere incinta” (140). The sexual relationship is not lived as a violent act perpetrated on her psyche and body, nor an event that deserves much thought. Thus, it is not the center of her narrative.

When Inés tells the wife of the engineer, the “ingegnere,” as Inés calls him, that she is pregnant with her husband’s child, the Italian woman tells her: “Con aria molto tranquilla lei mi disse lo so chi è stato, è stato Giulio, ma non ti preoccupare, se vuoi abortire andiamo insieme da un medico, ma se vuoi tenere il bambino nascerà qui e starai, starete con noi” (140-41). In solidarity, but also from a position of power, the Italian female employer assumes Inés will stay with them whether or not she decides to have the baby. When the baby is born, the Italian couple calls Andrés, a Spanish name, “nostro figlio, nostro” (141). She also uses the term “nucanchic” (*ñukanchik* means our or ours in Kichwa) (141). Inés intercalates Kichwa words into her narrative, perhaps as a desire not to forget her Kichwa roots, her maternal bond. Having been born in a rural area near Cuenca and because her mother died during her birth, Inés does not even have a picture of her. Therefore, she can only imagine her mother’s face by looking at herself in the mirror. Inés states that she speaks Kichwa: “la lingua di mia madre che tengo dentro di me come una reliquia per non dimenticare chi mi ha messo al mondo e che non ho conosciuto e di cui ho nostalgia. Sì, perché si può avere nostalgia di una persona di cui non c’è memoria” (139). Her child, Andrés, has allowed Inés to change her maternal path. She will be able to transmit to her son her pluricultural identity. He will be able to remember Inés’ face, Inés’ language.

At the end of the narrative, Andrés is 8 years old and is spoiled by everyone in the house; Inés faces the dilemma of one day having the courage to leave that house with her son, who, after all, is *her* son. Although Inés says that she is treated like a family member in the Italian household, she is aware that one day she will have to leave that space and that family. She says: “se andassi via dovrebbe essere una fuga. Ormai ho

trent'anni. E sono dieci che sono lontana da Cuenca. Ma so che, purtroppo, dovrà pure venire il giorno del coraggio" (141). While the Italian couple continues to be kind to her and her son and treats Andrés as the child the couple could never engender, Inés ends the narrative with the determination that sooner or later she will leave that situation with her son and return to her roots in Cuenca.

"Clotilde:" Carework, Mourning, and Homeland

The author, Lucinda Jiménez Armijos (Balsas 1954-), was born and raised in a small town of the southern coastal Province of El Oro. In 2001, during Ecuador's most dramatic political and socioeconomic crisis, she migrated to Italy, at age 47, leaving her two children in Ecuador under the care of her mother. In Italy, Jiménez has worked as an educator in a childcare center, as a babysitter and as a seamstress. She currently lives in Fidenza, in the Province of Parma.

A semi-autobiographical narrative, written in first person, "Clotilde" describes the migratory process from Ecuador to Italy, experienced by many Ecuadorian women at the turn of the century. Clotilde's migration to Fidenza in 2001 occurs after her husband leaves her alone to support two small children. The protagonist says: "Quando i miei due bambini avevano quattro e due anni sono rimasta da sola: mio marito se n'è andato e il mio stipendio non era sufficiente per mantenere tre persone" (122). She understands her journey to Europe as a forced migration that implies a return as soon as the economic conditions allow for it.

The text underscores the chain migrations and expectations that people develop based on the narratives of earlier migrants. Clotilde states: "Avevo sentito da diverse amiche che erano venute a lavorare in Europa, che si trovavano bene e riuscivano a guadagnare abbastanza per poter mantenere i loro familiari" (122). While nation-state macro-narratives do not stress the structural demand for (domestic) migrant labor in countries belonging to the European Union, Clotilde is aware of the job opportunities

there and the constitution of a transnational family that this translocation will involve. The narrative also refers to the role of the Catholic Church in providing support and shelter to migrant women in problematic situations. After the woman she cares for dies, Clotilde says: “sono andata a stare per qualche tempo da un prete buono, don Camillo, che ospitava le donne immigrate mentre cercavano lavoro. (...) Don Camilo mi ha aiutata a trovare un altro lavoro con una signora con l’Alzheimer” (123). The Catholic Church performs the function of a kind of employment agency, almost always within the domestic sphere, depending on the contacts the priests and nuns have in their parish. It is clear that the Catholicism practiced by Latin American migrant women and their ability to speak a Romance language have facilitated their inclusion in Italian society—albeit subalternized in many instances—compared to women who practice other religions or speak non-Romance languages, such as Muslim or Buddhist women from Arab countries or China.

“Clotilde” represents the types of employment diasporic Ecuadorian women often obtain in Italy: in the carework sector. The protagonist describes at least three jobs she has had, all of them in the domestic realm. She states: “non potevo mangiare niente di ciò che era in casa, mi avevano addebitato parte dei contributi che erano di competenza del datore di lavoro, mi aveva fatto pagare anche tutte le spese per il rinnovo dei documenti. Lei se ne approfittava del mio stato di bisogno” (125). The power structure and relations of domination/exploitation between employer and worker that often develop in the domestic sector are exemplified in Clotilde’s experiences in Fidenza.

Jiménez Armijos’s text, however, also exposes the intimacy and emotional relationships that emerge in the domestic realm of carework. The author suggests that the fact that women migrants are spatially located away from the affection and love of their families, particularly their children, opens a space for creating affective

relationships with the persons they care for. Clotilde describes the affection she feels for the person she cares for and the mourning she experiences when that person passes away. She states:

Ho visto morire tanti anziani e, con ognuno di loro, è andata via anche una parte di me stessa; ogni volta che succede è come se dentro di te non restasse più nulla, come se ci fosse un vuoto incolmabile. Eppure la gente che incontri pensa e ti dice: «Non sono persone della tua famiglia, ti dispiacerà un po' ma non erano tuoi parenti!». Non è così: ogni persona che ho curato mi ha dato qualcosa e si è preso qualcosa da me. (123-24)

Taking care of the elderly implies that the cared-for person might die in a relatively short period of time. Thus, Clotilde alludes to the mourning that the caretaker experiences more than once in their working lifetime in Italy.

While Ecuadorian migrant women may be able to participate in the family mourning and funeral ceremonies in Italy of the cared-for person, they may be unable to participate in the suffering for the loss of their own relatives. They are able to share this pain with people who are not their biological families, but this pain may go unrecognized or it may seem impossible to others. Clotilde says:

la mia mamma era morta e non me lo aspettavo per niente. A quel tempo lavoravo da un'altra famiglia molto gentile che si era addirittura proposta di pagarmi il viaggio per tornare a casa per assistere ai funerali della mia mamma. Ma non sono potuta tornare: il mio permesso sarebbe scaduto da lì a pochi giorni e non potevo rischiare di restare bloccata in Ecuador. (125)

Clotilde manifests her fear of losing her permit of stay in Italy while being away for her mother's funeral in Ecuador. Although she is not an irregular migrant, but rather in the process of renewing her permit of stay which will expire soon, Clotilde does not travel to

her mother's funeral because she fears that her permit of stay will not be renewed and consequently, she might not be able to re-enter Italy.

In "Clotilde," the return to the homeland is understood, not as a possibility, but as a certainty. It will happen sooner or later. The protagonist says: "Qui in Italia ho trovato anche delle persone che mi hanno aiutata molto e mi hanno sostenuta; adesso ho nostalgia di casa ma sono sicura che quando tornerò in Ecuador mi mancheranno alcune delle amiche che ho conosciuto qui in Italia!" (126). While the return to Ecuador is desired and inevitable, it is also envisioned as a painful moment since it will involve the physical separation from the people with whom Clotilde has built relationships in Italy. Jiménez Armijos' narrative inscribes the different fears and desires of migrants, the pleasures experienced in building new human relationships, as well as the difficulties they may face, complicated by their juridico-legal situation in the country of migratory destination.

Migrant Women's Memories and Choices in "Vigilia di Natale" and "La scelta di Lucynda"

Kathiusca Alejandra Toala Olivares (Manta 1974-) migrated to Italy in 2002, during Ecuador's major socioeconomic and political crisis. Written in the first-person, the semi-autobiographical short story, "Vigilia di Natale," presents the themes of exile and the relationship with the homeland. The protagonist, also called Kathiusca and from the outskirts of the coastal city of Manta, is a domestic worker in Italy. While she prepares the Christmas dinner for the family that employs her in Italy, she recalls how she and her family prepared for the Christmas Vigil in Manta. Her memories are intertwined with the familial affection and collective cooking that this social/religious event involved. She describes how painful it is to leave one's town and family of origin. Kathiusca understands her migration to Italy to improve her socioeconomic life as a sort of exile. While nostalgically remembering her life in Ecuador, surrounded by her family,

her return to the homeland is absent in the narrative. It is neither expected nor desired. The homeland is essentially lost.

Kathiusca recalls cultural elements and practices shared with her family with nostalgia and happiness: “i protagonisti della cena della vigilia in Ecuador sono il pollo, il tacchino; la tradizione vuole che si mangi solo dopo la mezzanotte del 24 e non si usa il pesce, riservato al pranzo del 25. Ho ancora negli occhi quei momenti e sento ancora gli odori” (187). For Kathiusca, the food she prepares with her father is at the center of the family’s Christmas festivities. She positions her family as distinct from the others in town. She writes: “La mia famiglia in questo era completamente diversa dalle altre: non era mia madre quella brava a cucinare, bensì mio padre....era mio padre che si occupava di preparare il cibo e insegnarmi quella che lui chiamava «la tradizione»” (187). Unlike most families in the town, it is through her father that Kathiusca learns the traditions, particularly those related to cooking. The link with the homeland, thus, is through her father.

While Kathiusca remembers Christmas Eve in Ecuador with her family, she also mentions positive experiences in Italy as a way of relieving the pain caused by her exile. She adds: “Ogni Natale accanto la nostalgia per la mia terra, ho messo una scoperta nuova. Ho scoperto nuovi odori, nuove fragranze, e provato sapori che mi hanno fatto sentire di volta in volta cittadina romana, napoletana, siciliana” (190-91). Her domestic employment in Italy has allowed Kathiusca to learn how to cook different dishes from diverse Italian geo-cultural areas; this experience of preparing food for a family has partially given her a feeling of pertinence to the regions from where these dishes originate.

Kathiusca narrates intimate episodes of her family life, going back and forth in time and space, past and present, Italy and Ecuador. Nostalgia, sorrow, mourning her separation from her family, memories of happy moments lived in Manta, and her own

re-creation of those moments are some of the themes present in her narrative. Kathiusca addresses directly her father in the narrative:

Quando cucino chiudo gli occhi e provo a rivederti accanto a me che mi guidi la mano per non sbagliare... Questo Natale però non ce l'ho fatta, forse la nostalgia e la solitudine sono stati troppi forti; forse avevo bisogno di rivederti e risentirmi, per un Natale a casa mia. (191)

Toward the end, after preparing Christmas dinner for the Italian family for whom she works, Kathiusca excuses herself and goes to her room. She writes: “Non volevo sentire domande soprattutto spiegare quello che sento dentro a diecimila chilometri di distanza. Dopo tanti anni però ce l'ho fatta, la tua pasta con la maionese, il pollo e l'uva, la nostra pasta è di nuovo qui con me. Chiudo gli occhi e me ne porto una forchettata alla bocca. Buon Natale papà” (191). Unlike the Christmas dinner that the Italian family eats, Kathiusca's family dinner includes a pasta dish that she and her father used to prepare for the entire family. To the reader's surprise, while Kathiusca prepared the Italian dinner, which involved a series of elaborate dishes for several people and recalled her Christmas family dinner in Ecuador, she also prepared it secretly just for herself.

“Vigilia di Natale” represents the way many Ecuadorian migrant women perceive Italy, as an adopted home, their nostalgic “relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups and nations, between personal and collective memory” and “the mourning of displacement and temporal irreversibility” (Boym 9-10). Italy has allowed women migrants to improve their socioeconomic quality of life, and to live new experiences and learn things to which they would never have been exposed in Ecuador. Simultaneously, their migration to Italy has obviously distanced them from their family's affection and cultural activities intimately associated with kinship and ritual. The memories of their childhood in the homeland are idealized and reconstructed

nostalgically. As Svetlana Boym has stated, “Nostalgia appears to be a longing for a place, but it is actually a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams” (8). The protagonist yearns for a past time in Ecuador, a slower rhythm of her childhood experiences, surrounded by her family in the homeland.

On the other hand, from the perspective of an omnipresent narrator, the short story, “La scelta di Lucynda,” represents the subjectivities and experiences of two female friends: Lucynda and Bianca. Both are irregular immigrants who share a small apartment in Italy. After losing their jobs and their permits of stay (which have expired), they find themselves in a condition of vulnerability, marginality and poverty. In this context, Lucynda, born in Quito, casually becomes an eyewitness to a crime perpetrated on an elderly Italian woman, whom she tries to help and protect against the two thieves. This crime, which occurs on the street, forces Lucynda to make a difficult decision: whether or not to report the crime. Reporting the crime at the police station would result in her eventual deportation. If she does not report it, she will violate her own values.

The text alludes to one of most pressing problems of transnational immigrants, not only of Ecuadorian women: irregular status in the country of migratory destination. The fear emerges from the possibility that the permit of stay will eventually expire or be revoked. Lucynda’s experience alludes to the juridical-legal dependency on a job contract to renew a permit of stay for *‘lavoro subordinato,’* according to Italian law. Lucynda does not have a job. Therefore, she does not have an employer who can sponsor her to renew her permit of stay. Consequently, she has lost various civil and healthcare rights. The police officer tells Lucynda: “ci sarebbe la testimonianza da firmare, ma lei ha il permesso di soggiorno scaduto. Se non testimonia, quelli potrebbero cavarsela, ma se firma dobbiamo arrestare anche lei e mandarla a un centro di accoglienza, in attesa di rimpatrio. Non possiamo far finta di niente” (210). At the police station, Lucynda, aware

of the risks and deprivations that would result from being deported, makes the painful decision to report the crime, even though this act signifies returning to Ecuador in defeat because she has not obtained the financial goals she set for herself. The text reminds the reader that irregular immigrants will often not report crimes because doing so implies a detention and eventual deportation, according to Italian law.

From a clearly female gendered perspective, the narrative represents the situations and difficulties that Ecuadorian migrant women may confront in Italy and the strategies they may use to approach these circumstances. Toala Olivares emphasizes the fact that the moment a woman loses her permit of stay, she may be forced to accept situations that otherwise would be unacceptable. The author writes: “—allora, —le disse l’uomo mentre si riallacciava i pantaloni, —Ci vediamo la prossima settimana! Se hai i soldi per pagare l’affitto bene, sennò ci possiamo mettere d’accordo. Un modo si trova...Mica ti obbligo, scegli tu...” (207). Lucynda does not resist sexual violence. She passively accepts the sexual abuse of the landlord because it is the only way she can pay the monthly rent and have a place to stay. “Così i conti preferiva regolarli con Lucynda, bruna e formosa. Lei stava male ogni volta, ma faceva finta di niente per non far soffrire Bianca che, disperata, si chiudeva in cucina durante le visite del proprietario” (208). Bianca, a younger and more fragile woman, prays in the kitchen while the violence occurs. Lucynda commodifies herself to the extreme of using her body to pay the monthly rent.

Toala Olivares describes the violence and abuses migrant women may survive in severe socioeconomic situations, particularly linked to an irregular migratory status. She highlights how irregular migrant women have less access to institutional networks of support and assistance, either provided by public or non-governmental organizations, aggravated by a lack of familial, close and reliable social networks in Italy. The author implies that the fear of being reported, or being the object of some other kind of abuse,

prompts irregular migrant women to accept certain situations that are considered temporary. “Se hai i soldi puoi comprare tutte le cose luccicanti del mondo, ma se non hai un permesso di soggiorno non puoi nemmeno andare dal medico, altrimenti ti denunciano. Hai la libertà di essere trasparente, non quella di affermare i tuoi diritti, la tua umanità” (209). The lack of a permit of stay renders Lucynda in an invisible status in which she cannot affirm her rights or manifest her humanity.

The return to the homeland is imminent in the narrative. Although the return to Ecuador is a painful experience for Lucynda because she has not yet achieved her goals, including the reunification of her daughter in Italy and an improvement of their quality of life, it is a preferable choice because it conforms to her ethical values. Testifying as a witness to a crime means for Lucynda affirming her rights and humanity. Lucynda is aware of the dangers and solitude women may experience in a foreign country. Her instinct to help a fragile elderly woman who did not ask for help while she was intimidated by thieves and her choice to report the crime perpetrated on that woman alludes to female solidarity and a sense of justice. More explicit is the solidarity among migrant women. It is an act of love and generosity in a situation deprived of financial autonomy, contrary to the expectations many migrant women have before embarking on a migratory project. Before signing her statement for the police, Lucynda,

Si mise una mano nel reggiseno e ne tirò fuori un piccolo rotolo di banconote.

—Le dovevo mandare a mia figlia, per pagarle il viaggio fino in Italia, ma adesso non mi servono più. Sarò io a tornare da lei. Prendili e pagaci l'affitto, almeno fino a che non trovi un lavoro. (211)

The money Lucynda had saved with much sacrifice for the process of family reunification with her daughter is given to Bianca to pay the rent. Envisioning her return

to the homeland with her daughter and extended family, Lucynda's act indicates that she does not abandon Bianca by herself in a foreign country.

It is interesting to note how religion induces and influences the choices Ecuadorian women make. It allows them to accept and endure overwhelming situations. Once the separation of Lucynda and Bianca nears because of Lucynda's eventual deportation, Lucynda "Sorrise, le prese la faccia piena di lentiggini [that of Bianca] e la strinse al petto, cominciando a recitare una preghiera" (211). Prayer is a way of overcoming difficult situations women can experience. Praying together allows them to accept a painful separation and to take refuge in it. Praying is probably the last action they share. Lucynda's decision to file the police report points to her personal freedom to make choices that are in agreement with her own values and convictions, and to not feel obliged to accept subalternized and abusive circumstances linked to her irregular migratory status and socioeconomic marginality as a price she has to pay in order to remain in Italy.

Conclusions

The texts examined in this chapter are not part of a substantial or unified literary corpus written by diasporic Ecuadorian women. For the most part, their publications have been sporadic and coincidental, and not created with the intention of building an international literary career. My attention to these texts is not related to their literary quality but to my interest in better understanding the multiple identifications and locations of diasporic Ecuadorian women, which intersect with their locations in gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and juridico-legal status as migrants, as well as their subjectivities which would not be inscribed in social science research. Yet these texts necessarily have their own structures, styles, and intentionalities, which are nonetheless susceptible to analysis from a cultural and comparative perspective. Up until now, Ecuadorian migrants in Southern/Mediterranean Europe have often been studied under

Western sociological and anthropological eyes, to recall Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of hegemonic "Western" feminisms and codification of scholarship and knowledge about women from the global South ("Under Western Eyes" 17-22). The social scientist may interview Ecuadorian women in Italy and their families in Ecuador to gather 'raw data,' to later analyze it and make it accessible to small academic circles. Ecuadorians who write about their migratory experiences in Italy engage in self-representation and imagine specific spiritual, social and material changes in their specific situations. I argue that even though mestizo, black and indigenous Ecuadorians are in particular locations in particular spaces as documented or undocumented migrants in Italy, under White supremacist/capitalist logics that guide Italian dominant ideologies and praxis, diasporic Ecuadorian women are creating and accessing public spaces and ways of representation to inscribe their subjectivities and specific experiences, as Toala Olivares and Jiménez Armijos demonstrate.

Ecuadorian women who have migrated to Europe mainly for socioeconomic reasons and once there have decided to intervene in literary writing have not achieved the visibility acquired by their male counterparts, who migrated with the purpose of furthering their literary and artistic careers. The literature written by Ecuadorians in Italy is mostly written by women in Italian, nostalgically recalling a foregone past in Ecuador, while exposing recent experiences in Italy. Sometimes this literature challenges; sometimes it reproduces colonial understandings of the self. These texts gesture at a need for women's representations and discourses that envision immigrant women in Italy as political actors and agents and producers of knowledge.

Some of the texts discussed in this chapter have participated in the contest *Lingua Madre*, an intercultural project that involves women from numerous countries, including Italy. Similar to *Lingua Madre*, since 1994 the intercultural association Eks & Tra, based in Rimini, has organized every year a literary contest, numerous creative writing workshops and a series of cultural projects toward the dissemination of

intercultural knowledge and practices at schools and to the larger society. Since 2004, Eks&Tra collaborates with the Italian Studies Department of the University of Bologna and since 2005 with the Municipality of Mantova. Eks&Tra has collected almost two thousand narratives written by migrants. This archive, available online, about the memory of the literature written by migrants is considered the first of its kind in Italy. (Eks&Tra) The online magazine *Il Ghibli-Rivista della letteratura della migrazione* and *The Archivio Memorie Migranti* are also some of the initiatives that collect thousands of migrant written and oral narratives in Italy, which can be accessed online.

For Kathiusca Toala Olivares, Lucinda Jiménez Armijos and the pseudonymous Inés Gualacoto, migration is a necessary journey to improve one's quality of life. It is a decision that must be taken mainly for socioeconomic reasons. Their short stories reflect nostalgia for the homeland, which is desired and idealized in their memories. Recalling their past in Ecuador is also a quest for their origins, a way to maintain what they imagine as their origins, even when a pronounced spatial and temporal distance separates the protagonists from the homeland. These writers highlight how “nostalgia is always already predetermined—indeed over determined—in scripting immigrant attachment to the past” (Mannur 12). In “Vigilia di Natale” nostalgia takes a culinary take; and food becomes a symbol to mark Kathiusca's cultural difference and ethnic distinctiveness in Italy, but also, to recreate her past in her diasporic imaginary.

The return to the homeland is a constant theme in the texts examined here. Both in “Due Mamme e un Papà” and “Clotilde,” the return to Ecuador is implicit in the sense that it is desired and expected, as if there were no need to explicitly state it in the narrative. For Inés and Clotilde, the journey (and residence) in Italy is a temporary state that can only conclude with the return to the homeland, but only after having improved the migrant women's socioeconomic quality of life, as well as that of their children. Also in “La scelta di Lucynda,” the return to Ecuador is an inherent element in the decision to migrate to Italy. The difference consists in the choice that determines Lucynda's decision

to anticipate her return to the homeland, even if her much expected financial goals have not been achieved. Only in “Vigilia di Natale” is the return to the homeland neither explicit nor implicit. The narrative voice leaves open the possibility that her translocation to Italy may be definitive. While Kathiusca feels nostalgia and anguish, and even regret, at having abandoned the homeland, she does not pose the question of whether or not to return. The protagonist lives the nostalgia for the homeland as a sort of exile, as she does not envision the possibility for return.

As I have shown, the process of migration greatly influences the writing process of the Ecuadorian women migrants discussed here, as well as the hardships and the new socioeconomic and cultural conditions that they have encountered in the host country. Writing is the vehicle to visibilize their sorrows, pleasures, fears, and learning experiences and to render them public. While renowned diasporic Ecuadorian male writers in Spain understood migration as a necessary condition to facilitate their artistic and literary creativity, for Toala Olivares and Jiménez Armijos, migration becomes a dramatic factor that stimulates the creation of their literary works, whereas for the pseudonymous Inés Gualacoto, the oral life storytelling has been enough to transmit her experiences both in Ecuador and Italy.

CHAPTER VII

THE ECUADORIAN MIGRANT ON FILM: SPANISH, ITALIAN, AND ECUADORIAN PERSPECTIVES

*Cada vez se potencia más la movilidad de mercancías,
la movilidad de capitales, pero se criminaliza cada vez también
de mayor manera, la principal de las movilidades,
que es la movilidad humana, sino, vayan a ver
las cárceles para inmigrantes en la Unión Europea.*

—Rafael Correa Delgado, August 19, 2014

Foro Regional Esquipulas, Guatemala

On June 27, 2011, the 14th Genoa Film Festival opened with Fernando Miele's first feature film, *Prometeo Deportado* (*Prometheus Deported*, 2009), as the film's *anteprima nazionale* and part of the 12-film session dedicated to foreign cinema, *Oltre il confine: il cinema ecuadoriano*, 'Beyond the Frontier: Ecuadorian Cinema.'¹ Since 1998, the Festival has promoted auteur cinema, documentaries, as well as short and independent films produced in Italy and abroad, particularly from Europe and North

¹ The 2011 Genoa Film Festival had two "Oltre il confine" sessions: one dedicated to cinema from Kosovo and the other to cinema from Ecuador. "Il cinema ecuadoriano" session was possible thanks to the collaboration of Ecuador's Consejo Nacional de Cinematografía, Ministry of Culture, and the General Consulate in Genoa. In addition to *Prometeo*, other recent fictional films that received significant audience and media attention in Ecuador and abroad were shown, such as Tania Hermida's *Qué tan lejos* (2006), Víctor Arregui's *Fuera de Juego* (2002), Sebastián Cordero's *Ratas, Rateros, Ratones* (1999), and Camilo Luzuriaga's 'classic,' *La Tigra* (1990), as a way of providing a historic sense of Ecuadorian cinema. Additionally, the session included Pocho Alvarez' documentary, *Tóxico, Texaco, Tóxico* (2010), and the short films, *Esperándote* (Clara Salgado, 2009), Carlos Andrés Vera's *La verdad sobre el caso del señor Valdemar* (2008), Joe Houlberg's *Beueu* (2009), Ana Cristina Barragán's *Despierta* (2008), and Manuela Borghetti, María Rosa Jijón, and Sonia Maccari's *La Polverera* (2005).

America, which receive little to no exposure on commercial circuits. This was the first time the Festival presented Ecuadorian cinema.² *Prometeo Deportado* was a transnational production that involved Ecuadorian, Spanish, and Venezuelan collaborations. The screening in Genoa of Ecuadorian cinema evidenced two aspects: first, Ecuadorian cinema's visibility in Italy in general, particularly in Genoa, and second, that there was substantial public interest to support it.

The theater was filled to capacity and not everyone who waited in line gained entrance to the viewing auditorium. As Consul General of Ecuador in Genoa, I was asked to open the Ecuadorian session and to introduce director Fernando Mieles (Guayaquil 1970-). I found myself addressing an extraordinarily thrilled and proud Ecuadorian audience, myself included, as well as many curious Italian spectators. The Festival's coverage by private and public local media circuits certainly facilitated the promotion of Ecuadorian cinema for this cultural event. The Festival's directors, Antonella Sica and Cristiano Palozzi, had not expected such massive attendance for Ecuadorian film on a summer Monday evening in a closed space, even taking into account that the event offered free entry.³

² This was also the first time the Festival took place in the multiplex Cinema, The Space, located in the city's Old Port (*Porto Antico*). In previous years, the films were exhibited in several local and smaller cinemas.

³ In fact, soon after the evident success of the exhibition of Ecuadorian film within the 2011 Festival, through their cultural association Daunbailò, the Festival directors proposed the Ecuadorian Embassy and Consulate in Genoa to organize a festival exclusively dedicated to Ecuadorian arts, including literature, cinema, music, dance and photography. Entirely financed by the Ecuadorian state, Daunbailò organized "Ecuador Festival" with the collaboration of Ecuador's Consejo Nacional de Cinematografía, Ministry of Culture, Embassy in Italy, and General Consulate in Genoa. From December 14th to the 16th, 2012, the event presented four feature-length fictional films, one documentary, and six short films, in different public spaces of the city. The films were interspersed with conferences on Ecuador's economic development and sustainability, as well as its new socio-economic model based on the concept of "*buen vivir*." This last conference was delivered by then-Ambassador of Ecuador in Italy, Carlos Vallejo López. Ecuadorian filmmakers Tito Jara and Javier Andrade were invited to present their films at the Festival. All events were free and open to the public. Although the event fulfilled some expectations and reached a significant audience, it ended up being a sort of potpourri of

But the attention *Prometeo Deportado* received in Genoa was due mainly to its theme: Ecuadorian migration to the European Union. The film portrays diverse groups of Ecuadorians who, in their attempt to migrate to an unnamed European country, are detained by immigration officials. Awaiting deportation, these potential migrants are compelled to coexist in an airport waiting room for an indefinite period of time. Taking the ancient Greek tragedy, *Prometheus Bound*, attributed to Aeschylus, as a point of departure for the narrative thread, Mielles presents a tragicomedy of Ecuador at the end of 1990s, when transnational emigration reached its highest peak and Spain became Ecuador's secondary migratory destination, after the U.S. and followed by Italy. The discussion with the director after the screening engaged an audience that clearly identified with the film's plot and characters, deliberately constructed as archetypes of Ecuadorian society. Thus, almost every Ecuadorian watching the film would recognize or relate to at least one of the characters' actions and expressions. This might have been one of the few occasions in Italy on which Ecuadorians felt self-represented as the film was a representation created by another Ecuadorian and potential migrant.

In this chapter I examine the different narrative strategies, styles, and thematic concerns of Spanish, Italian, and Ecuadorian filmmakers, as well as other Latin American filmmakers translocated in Europe, in light of their representations of Ecuadorian migrants and diasporic communities in Spain and Italy. Through feature-length fictional films and documentaries, men and women directors have engaged in the (re)articulation of homeland, identity, ethnicity, otherness, and journey, as well as transnational subjectivities, the accommodation, adaptation, differential or segmented integration of Ecuadorian migrants in the country of residence, and counter-narratives of dominant

contemporary Ecuadorian culture and political economy, with a focus on cinema, without specific objectives or political vision.

immigration discourses both in Spain and Italy.⁴ Like most world cinemas today, the video and filmic representations of Ecuadorian diasporas in Spain and Italy discussed here are often the result of transnational collaborations that involve the films' production, locations, casting, distribution, and diasporan directors.

I begin my discussion with a brief overview of Spanish and Italian representations of immigrants/citizens of nation-states considered outside or not belonging to the European Union, followed by an examination of several videos and films that directly or indirectly feature Ecuadorian migration and diasporic communities in Spain and Italy. While this mapping is not exhaustive, I chart these filmic representations as a way to provide a critical framework for understanding the transnational cinematic context from which the different representations of Ecuadorian migration emerge and to contextualize my subsequent analysis of Mieles' *Prometeo Deportado* as a text that illustrates how, at the turn of the century, transnational migration, particularly to the European Union, became a national narrative in Ecuador, involving all social classes and all geographical regions and, through satire, the film presents a critique of global contemporary systems of migration control and dehumanization of peoples from the global South.

⁴ Building on Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's concept of "segmented assimilation," supported mainly by findings of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) conducted by Portes and Rubén Rumbaut during 1992-93, 1995-96, and 2002-2003 (Portes and Rivas 224), for the purposes of this dissertation, I understand differential or segmented integration of Ecuadorian migrants as the structural process in which immigrants enter social contexts in the host society. It refers to the diverse outcomes of the process of adaptation of migrants, i.e., the various sectors of society that a particular immigrant group assimilates (Portes and Zhou 82). Portes and Zou distinguish three main forms of adaptation: one, the acculturation and integration into the middle class, another to permanent poverty and assimilation to the underclass, and a third associates rapid economic advancement with deliberate affiliation to the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity (82).

Italian and Spanish Cinematic Representations of The Foreign “Other”

Considering the close geographical proximity, colonial ethnoracial constructions of otherness and alterity, and demographic statistics, it is no surprise that the representation of immigrants by Spanish and Italian filmmakers has primarily focused on African diasporas.⁵ When Spanish filmmakers have represented Latin American diasporas in Spain, they have often focused on Caribbean migrations, particularly Cuban and Dominican, such as Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón's *Cosas que dejó en la Habana* (1997), Icíar Bollaín's *Flores de Otro Mundo* (1999), Fernando Merinero's *La novia de Lázaro* (2002), Carles Bosch and Josep Maria Doménech's documentary *Balseros* (2002), Benito Zambrano's *Habana blues* (2005) and Fernando León de Aranoa's *Princesas* (2005).⁶ However, it should be noted that Helena Taberna's documentary, *Extranjeras* (2003),

⁵ In Spain, fictional films such as Montxo Armendáriz' *Cartas de Alou* (1990), Imanol Uribe's *Bwana* (1995), Lorenzo Soler's *Said* (1999), Clara López Rubio's *El conde inglés* (2001), Ignacio Villar's *Ilegal* (2002), Chus Gutiérrez' *Poniente* (2002), Alberto Rodríguez' *El traje* (2002), José Luis Tirado's documentary, *Paralelo 36* (2004), Valentín Carrera's documentary, *Hanan, de Marruecos a Galicia* (2005), Gerardo Olivares' fictional film with a documentalist style *14 kilómetros* (2007), Coke Riobóo's animated short, *El viaje de Saïd* (2007) and Irene Cardona's *Un novio para Yasmina* (2008) have represented African diasporic experiences in Spain. In the case of Italy, Michele Placido's *Pummarò* (1990), Maurizio Zaccaro's *L'articolo 2* (1993), Bernardo Bertolucci's *L'assedio* (*Besieged*, 1998), Marco Tullio Giordana's *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (2005), Vittorio De Seta's *Lettere dal Sahara* (2006), Carlo Mazzacurati's *La giusta distanza* (2007), Ermanno Olmi's *Il villaggio di cartone* (2011), Emanuele Crialesi's *Terraferma* (2011), and Juan Martín Baigorria and Lisa Tormena's *Aicha è tornata* (2011) are some of the fictional films that have depicted African migration to Italy. Both in Spain and Italy, state violence, human rights violations, discrimination, and exclusion experienced by African peoples and the dangerous border crossing of the Mediterranean Sea have been highlighted. The documentaries, *Come un uomo sulla terra* (Andrea Segre, Dagmawi Yimer, and Riccardo Biadene, 2008) and *Sangue verde* (Andrea Segre, 2010) narrate the weaving of colonial interrelations, Italian mafia and corruption, and migrant labor exploitation in Italy. While Andrea Segre's *Io sono Li* (2011) centers on the experiences of a Chinese woman in the small island town of Chioggia, her transnational motherhood, and the intimate relationship she develops with a local fisherman.

⁶ Southern Cone exiles and expatriates have also been represented by Spanish filmmakers, including Pedro Almodóvar's *Todo sobre mi madre* (*All About My Mother*, 1999). In depicting the story of an Uruguayan woman who ends up as a sex worker in Barcelona, Beatriz Flores Silva's *En la puta vida* (*In This Tricky Life*, 2001) has instead focused on the commodification of the female body and the global capitalist relations that interplay with women's lives and migrations.

indeed presents immigrant female perspectives in Madrid, coming from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, including those from Ecuador. Having explored Spanish female subjectivities in her previous films, on this occasion Taberna represents migrant women's creation of community and solidarity and the multidimensional construction of otherness. The film suggests that intercultural populations with different histories, traditions, customs and religions can be integrated into the larger Spanish society without losing their own cultural identities.

On the other hand, in addition to African diasporas in Italy, Italian filmmakers have turned to those from Romania and Central and Eastern Europe for fiction features such as Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica* (1994), Carlo Mazzacurati's *Vesna va veloce* (1996), Giuseppe Tornatore's *La sconosciuta* (2006), Federico Bondi's *Mar nero* (2008), and Daniele Vicari's *La nave dolce* (2012).⁷ Documentary films such as Tonino Curagi and Anna Gorio's *Via san Dionigi, 93: storia di un campo Rom* (2007), Katia Bernardi's *Sidelki/Badanti* (2009), and Rossella Piccinno's *Hanna e Viola* (2009) present the experiences of Eastern European and Roma communities in Italy, whereas Agostino Ferrente's *L'orchestra di Piazza Vittorio* (2006), defined as a "documusical," illustrates the formation of a multiethnic orchestra in Rome's neighborhood around the piazza Vittorio, where Italian musicians constitute an ethnic/national minority; and Alessandra Speciale's *Ritratto di famiglia con badante* (2009) focuses on the complexities of Italian families and migrant women domestic labor relations in Milan.

⁷ An interesting recent intervention in the representation of Roma people in Italy has been Laura Halilovic's *Io Rom Romantica* (Italy/Romania/Bosnia, 2014). As a Bosnia-Herzegovinian Roma woman director, Halilovic presents a semi-autobiographical fiction film about Roma life in Turin, prejudices, racism and privilege in ethnic relations in Italy.

Ecuadorian Diasporas in Different Filmic Styles

Dozens of feature-length fictional films, experimental short films and videos, and documentaries hint at or specifically portray Ecuadorian migration to Spain and Italy. Documentaries, however, have usually been produced by European sociologists in collaboration with visual artists/activists or “*artistas*,” in the words of Ecuadorian filmmaker and activist, María Rosa Jijón, and many of these have been encoded in the politics of European integration of immigrants and the representation of transmigrant subjectivities (Interview by Caroli).⁸ By transmigrant I refer to “immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state” (Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 48). Documentaries have tended to emphasize the recreation of homeland, national identity, and ethnicity, as well as how the migration process has changed people’s emotional and social relations both in the country of origin and settlement.

On the other hand, it is mainly since 2006, when Ecuador’s *Ley No. 2006-29 de Fomento del Cine Nacional*, ‘Law on the Promotion of National Cinema,’ was passed by Congress, and the *Consejo Nacional de Cinematografía* (CNCine) was created, that for the first time Ecuadorian filmmakers have had sustainable access to public funds to produce cinema.⁹ Since then, Ecuadorian filmmakers have been able to apply for government

⁸ In her article, “Antagonismo o activismo: dos caras de la misma artista,” Jijón identifies herself as “*artista*” to refer to her political participation in global social movements, interwoven with artistic creativity, after she herself became a migrant in Italy in 2000 (213). She adds that “Pasé de ser una artista cuya reflexión subjetiva y autorreferencial sobre la condición de extranjera se limitaba a la mera representación del *otro*, a la puesta en marcha de prácticas colaborativas y compartidas, emprendidas en contacto permanente con sujetos y organizaciones inmigrantes dentro y fuera del territorio italiano” (213).

⁹ After a long struggle undertaken by diverse groups of filmmakers, such as members of the Ecuadorian Association of cineasts Asocine, and previous attempts to advance a national law on the promotion of cinema, this law was finally passed on January 24, 2006 and published in the Official Registry No. 202, on February 3, 2006.

grants through different competitions promoted by the Consejo Nacional de Cinematografía, ascribed to the Ministry of Culture.¹⁰ Although still insufficient for such a high-cost cultural industry, the funds have significantly increased the number of films produced annually in Ecuador. By 2013, the number of Ecuadorian films had quadrupled. Ten Ecuadorian films were released in the country's commercial movie theaters, while in previous years only two or three films were released in a given year (Cueva 7). Some filmmakers have obtained support from Spanish and Latin American private media enterprises to jointly finance their pictures and the increasing presence of Ibermedia in Latin America has significantly influenced which films make it to production and which do not.

This new generation of Ecuadorian filmmakers, many of them trained in universities and film schools in the European Union, the United States, Cuba, Chile or Argentina, have inscribed new perspectives on the moving image practice, although academic research, particularly that published in English, has paid scant attention to this fast-growing production. As Ecuadorian film critic Christian León has noted regarding the lack of academic and specialized interest in the historic and emergent Ecuadorian cinema, “frente al proceso sistemático de crecimiento que ha tenido la producción cinematográfica en la última década, la investigación académica y la crítica especializada se han quedado rezagadas” (65). He adds, “Basta mencionar que, hasta la actualidad, no contamos con ninguna investigación general sobre la historia del cine ecuatoriano producido en el siglo XX, menos aun sus desarrollos en la última década” (65-6). Building on Gustavo Montiel Pagès and Andrés Di Tella, Ecuadorian film scholar Gabriela Alemán has classified Ecuadorian cinema in two tendencies within Latin American

¹⁰ Foreign filmmakers who are residents in Ecuador and illustrate Ecuadorian themes in their pictures are also eligible to apply for the CNCine grants.

cinema. On one hand, she perceives what could be understood as good commercial cinema in Spanish: films with elevated technical quality that are competitive and even exceptional on the local scene, but are still considered average in an international context. On the other hand, she also perceives an independent experimental film movement that is earning recognition in renowned international festivals, and is finding a way to create its own narrative and aesthetic system (80). Alemán identifies Sebastián Cordero, the *wonder child* of Ecuadorian cinema, with the first category and Fernando Miele with the second (80-1).¹¹

Some of these filmmakers have engaged with Ecuadorian emigration. Since Ecuadorians have traditionally migrated to the United States, especially since the 1960s, migration to the U.S. has been explored in several documentary and fiction genres, such as the return to Ecuador of a middle-class woman, Virginia, after living in New York City for 25 years, in Camilo Luzuriaga's fictional film, *Cara o Cruz (Heads or Tails)*, 2003). In contrast, the black and white 10-minute documentary, *Recordando el ayer* (Alexandra Cuesta. *Remembering Yesterday*, 2007), presents a portrait of New York City's Latin American quintessential neighborhood, Jackson Heights, Queens, where a large Ecuadorian community has settled and reconstructed its sense of homeland and transnational identity, and, consequently, has reshaped the neighborhood's landscape. *Recordando el ayer* was Cuesta's first film and it was presented in the 2007 New York Film Festival, in the section "Views from the Avant-garde." Cuesta, a diasporic Quiteña filmmaker, now lives between Los Angeles and Quito.

¹¹ In her article "Un acercamiento a las nuevas olas del cine latinoamericano: el caso de Ecuador," Gabriela Alemán refers to Cordero as "un caso excepcional dentro de la cinematografía ecuatoriana, el *wonder child* de un cine plagado por dificultades económicas y mayoritariamente desconocido en el exterior" (81).

Ecuadorian Cineastes Representing Ecuadorian Migration to Spain (Fiction)

In the wake of the Ecuadorian law on cinema, the creation of the *Consejo Nacional de Cinematografía* (CNCine), the increased availability of public funding for cinema in the country and Ibermedia's intensified investment in Latin American film productions, instead of englobing the cinematographic production that has emerged in the last decade as "Ecuadorian cinema," Ecuadorian filmmakers and critics have tended to discuss Ecuadorian filmmakers, "*realizadores*," in terms of their heterogeneity of interpretations and film praxis, the multiple roles cineastes perform (for instance, writing, directing, and producing), and the significance of engaging in a collective project where the director plays only one role. Thus, one could allude to the existence of Ecuadorian cinemas, in plural.

Building from, appropriating, and disposing of what is not useful or aesthetically applicable to them, and developing their own film visions, Ecuadorian writers-directors have used some of the strategies and film practices associated with different artistic movements including French New Wave (small production budgets, hand-held cameras, on-location and short shoots, the use of jump cuts and long shots), Italian neorealism (employing non-professional actors, on-location shooting and a "realistic" style), New Latin American cinema (building social-political consciousness and capable of transforming reality), "third" and postcolonial cinema (for instance, *Beur* cinema), and Hollywood, integrating them into their own cinematographic projects and political and commercial agendas to inscribe their own narratives. At the same time, Ecuadorian cineastes are cognizant of the Hollywood hegemony on Latin American screens, both in the films shown in movie theaters and those broadcast on local, cable and video satellite television, and the dominant "fascination over a good portion of the Latin American imaginary" (Fornet xii). Thus, competing with the transnational commercial mechanisms and dominant aesthetics of violence, sex, and narrative is not a small

concern of these young cultural producers who are able to make movies on very limited budgets. In this section, I am not interested in interrogating a national tradition in the films discussed. Since the early twentieth century, when Ecuadorian cineastes (and foreign ones in Ecuador) started making narrative films in Ecuador—including Augusto San Miguel, considered an Ecuadorian film pioneer—they have tended to work without coherent common styles, narratives, production networks or self-conscious group practices, and their films have been transnational and transcultural.¹²

When Ecuadorian filmmakers have depicted Ecuadorian migration to Spain, they often highlight the structural fragmentation of the family linked to transnational migration. Particular attention has been given to the experiences of children and adolescents whose mothers have migrated to Spain, especially at the turn of the century. Filmic representations have often reproduced stigmatizations and generalizations about the so-called absence of mothers in Ecuador, which have concealed the complex and gendered family situations that involve transnational motherhood and have blamed women—not men—for abandoning their children.

For instance, in Ana Cristina Franco's opera prima, *Queremos tanto a Helena* (*We Love Helena so Much*)—the first short featured in the filmic trilogy, *Los Canallas* (*Rascals*, 2009)—Helena is a high school student from the middle class who has been “left” to live with her maternal grandmother after her mother's migration to Spain.¹³ Abandoned also

¹² On August 7, 1924 Augusto San Miguel's first fiction film, *El Tesoro de Atahualpa* (*Atahualpa's Treasure*), was premiered in two commercial theaters in Guayaquil. In fact, in 2006, Ecuador's Ministry of Education declared August 7 the Day of Ecuadorian Cinema, in honor of *El Tesoro de Atahualpa's* premiere. However, no record of San Miguel's production has been preserved in cinematographic archives. In the following years, San Miguel made a number of feature films and documentaries and was the President and owner of Ecuador Films Company (Granda, “La epifanía” 60). For a brief history of Ecuadorian cinema, see Christian León's *Reiventando al otro. El documental indigenista en el Ecuador* (2010).

¹³ *Los Canallas* constituted the directors' graduation project at the Instituto Superior Tecnológico de Cine y Actuación (INCINE), the first film and audiovisual school in Ecuador founded in 2005 in Quito, and was produced by Ecuadorian filmmaker, Camilo Luzuriaga, INCINE's director.

by a father who never calls and a mother who has not sent remittances for a long while, Helena repeatedly attempts suicide while seeking attention and affection from those around her, including her new boyfriend, and developing a sort of threesome relationship with her boyfriend and her best girlfriend. As a migrant, Helena's mother is essentially associated with financial matters, while her father, who has not migrated, is expected to provide care (a phone call, a visit): expectations that are never fulfilled. Both parents are distant figures in Helena's daily life, but are present in conversations with her maternal grandmother.

Another such view is provided in Jorge Fegan and Nataly Valencia's *Hay golpes en la vida (Blows in Life)*—the second short in the same trilogy, *Los Canallas*—about a young couple composed of Daniel, a professional boxer, and his wife, Sofía. The spectator learns that Sofía's family lives in Madrid. After Sofía suffers a spontaneous abortion due to a car accident, she decides to leave her husband, as he refuses to give up boxing. She, however, has no one else to turn to. She has no family support in Ecuador. On the telephone, her mother is worried but unaware of her daughter's problems. A male colleague offers her hospitality in his apartment and they develop a romantic relationship, while Daniel dies during a boxing match. Her family's migration to Spain accentuates Sofía's vulnerability when faced with emotional and physical crises.

Mateo Herrera's *Impulso (Impulse, 2009)*, a black and white suspense film, opens with a close-up of Jessica (Cecilia Vallejo)—a middle-class adolescent who lives in Quito with her maternal grandmother and aunt—alone in her bedroom. The opening scenes of Jessica getting ready to go to school emphasize her loneliness and the tedium of her present life. Her mother migrated to Spain five years earlier and she has sent no money nor called in the last six months. In addition, Jessica has not seen her father in ten years. Misunderstood at home and at school, her adolescence is further complicated by the absence of nurturing references and bonds with her parents.

The narrative sequence depicts a continual relationship between Jessica's mother and money. Early in the film, Jessica tells her aunt that she will repay her friend's loan with the remittances that her mother will eventually send. The inappropriate use of migrant remittances is also featured—consuming goods instead of investing for the future—such as Jessica's purchase of a stereo on which she plays heavy metal at a disturbingly high volume late into the night. When Jessica's mother finally calls and speaks with the grandmother, after being asked how she is, the grandmother says: "*aquí, sin plata,*" 'here, without money,' which suggests the migrant should send money home. Jessica's sense of abandonment by her mother is portrayed in the *mise-en-scène* in which she tears apart a picture of herself as a child being hugged by her mother. She throws to the floor the piece of the picture where her mother appears, but keeps her image as a child. Here, Herrera communicates Jessica's rupture with her maternal family and her sense of uprootedness (without her parents). In the city, Jessica is tired of being constantly reminded of her mother's absence and sporadic sending of remittances by her grandmother and aunt. From that moment on, the protagonist searches for her own identity on her father's side of the family in the rural Andes. Without informing her grandmother or aunt, she leaves Quito to search for her father in a near rural town, a distance she can reach on her own. Later, when asked if she would be willing to go to Spain to join her mother, she responds with a curt "*sí,*" 'yes,' as if she knows that is the answer expected of her, without expounding on her feelings.

The long-term effects and impressions experienced by children whose mothers have migrated to Spain are dramatically exposed in Tito Jara's *A tus Espaldas* (*Behind your Back*, 2010). After his abusive father dies drunk on the street, Jorge's mother has serious financial difficulties that compel her to migrate to Spain while he is still a child (about six years old). After four months in Spain, Jorge's mother calls him on a neighbor's phone (the family lacks a telephone) and in an exaggerated peninsular accent, she recounts that she has found a job. She uses a lexicon that little Jorge does not

understand. The protagonist appears to be confused and there is poor communication between him and his mother. In voice-over, Jorge informs the audience that from that moment on his mother unfailingly sent remittances. The subsequent sequence of scenes shows Jorge moving with his maternal grandmother to the north of Quito, to a well-off neighborhood under the gaze of the statue of Quito's Virgin, which turns her back on the city's poor south—the image from which the film's title is taken. He enjoys parties with friends that his mother's remittances have allowed him to access, hinting at the social escalation he increasingly desires as he becomes an adult. However, in an ethnoracially-stratified society, his economic mobility does not equal a social escalation. As a way to symbolically and concretely erase his past of poverty in a marginal sector of southern Quito, at the age of 18 Jorge Chicaiza Cisneros legally changes his name to Jordi la Mota Cisneros. Jorge/Jordi changes a part of his identity but he keeps his mother's last name, as if keeping for himself only the memories of (and his gratitude for) her remittances, which lifted him out of Quito's poor South and made it possible for him to secure office jobs and enjoy middle class social circles in the North of city.

In *Hay golpes en la vida*, *Queremos tanto a Helena*, *Impulso*, and *A tus Espaldas*, transnational motherhood is represented through telephone calls from distant but somewhat present mothers. Migrant mothers are associated with remittances that help improve the economic quality of life of their children left behind in Ecuador. Maternal grandmothers play a major role of responsibility, custody, and affection for their grandchildren, which is not often provided. The generational gap is highlighted by representing grandmothers as caring, but unable to understand the difficulties, desires, and expectations of adolescents. In *A tus espaldas*, the absence of Jorge's mother weakens his identity and self-esteem. His code of values is fundamentally connected with economic profits. He is insecure and becomes determined to achieve material success at whatever cost. In *Hay golpes en la vida*, the director invites the viewer to perceive Sofía as a young woman who is alone in life after her parents migrated. This

lack of family network in Ecuador prompts her to move to her colleague's apartment. Similarly, in *Queremos tanto a Helena* and *Impulso*, there is a quasi-total abandonment by the migrant mother in Spain. This representation gestures at the discourse that has been elaborated in political, media, and socio-educational spheres both in the countries of origin and destination, which identifies the migratory process as the main cause of family disintegration and stigmatizes the children of migrant parents (Pedone 1).

Another perspective is offered in Tania Hermida's road movie, *Qué tan lejos* (*How much further*, 2007), which follows the journey taken by a Quiteña college student, Teresa (Cecilia Vallejo), Jesús, an actor of Cuencan origins, and a Barcelonan tourist, Esperanza, who becomes the foreign "other" in Ecuador. They find each other at different points in the Ecuadorian Andes; and the imposing Andean landscape becomes another character on the journey. Teresa presents herself to Esperanza as "Tristeza" (sadness in Spanish). While Esperanza (hope in Spanish) acknowledges the strangeness of her name, it is only at the end of the film, after finishing their journey (and learning about Ecuador), that Teresa reveals her real name to Esperanza.

While this fictional film does not directly portray Ecuadorian migrants in Spain, its opening sequence scenes establish Esperanza's Spanish otherness juxtaposed with Ecuadorian migration to Spain and the conceptions of Spain disseminated in Ecuador, partly based on what Ecuadorian migrants in that country have described to their relatives in the homeland. The movie begins with Esperanza landing in Quito. As she enters the airport concourse, one hears children's voices shouting "*¡papi!*" 'daddy,' among the crowd waiting for arriving passengers. Later, the taxi driver taking Esperanza from the airport to the *Gringa loca* Bed & Breakfast in Quito's historic center, evidently charges her more than what it is shown on the taximeter: 15 U.S. dollars.¹⁴ When she

¹⁴ Since January 2000, Ecuador's official currency is the U.S. dollar.

hands him 20 U.S. dollars, he claims not to have change and keeps it for himself. Their conversation is the following:

(taxi driver) –Total, ustedes allá ganan en miles.

(Esperanza) – ¿Allá en dónde?

–Allá en España, pues señorita si a usted se le nota clarito que es de allá pues.

–¿Y quién te ha dicho a ti que en España ganamos por miles?

–mi tío, mi primo, mi madrina. Uuh, si yo tengo un montón de gente en Murcia, oiga.

–Pues será en Murcia porque en Barcelona nos ganamos el sueldo igual que tú. 40 horas a la semana....

–Vaya robo, tío.

–¿Robo? ¡Robo es lo que le pagan a mi hermano por recoger brócoli todo el año! Bien decía mi tío que hay que tener cuidado con ustedes los españoles. ¡Ya se fueron llevando pues todos los tesoros de los Incas y ahora vienen hechos los muy muy! ¡Ahí nos vemos!

Like any Latin American, the taxi driver knows that European standards of living are higher than in South America but, as a relative of migrants in Spain, he associates Esperanza with Spanish tourists who, like the members of his family in Spain, make a lot of money. However, when she complains that he is cheating her, he expresses anger about the other aspect of migration, that is to say, the exploitation of migrant workers in Spain, and particularly in Murcia, where Ecuadorians constitute the largest national migrant group and enter already gender-stratified labor forces. In 2001, there were 28,441 Ecuadorians in the Region of Murcia, representing 2.37 percent of the total population. By 2011, despite the Southern/Mediterranean financial crisis, the Ecuadorian population had grown to 38,528 (3.20 percent) (INE). Murcia is a rural area

in Southeastern Spain where many Ecuadorians work in agriculture, as the taxi driver accurately asserts, but also in construction, labor markets that tend to employ males.

During a pause in the journey from Quito to Cuenca, somewhere between Alausí, Province of Chimborazo, and Zhud, Province of Cañar, the *mise-en-scène* featuring Esperanza at a rural bus stop in Ecuador's Southern Andes illustrates the transnational migratory movements of Ecuadorians toward Spain. Esperanza talks with a little girl who is by herself and seems to live nearby. Their conversation exemplifies the connections between Ecuadorian migration and Spain, interwoven with overtones of Esperanza's otherness as a foreigner who experiences a different Ecuador from the one the little girl lives. "Mis papás están en España, ya van a ser tres años. Pero ellos no están en Barcelona, sino en Murcia," the little girl tells Esperanza. The dialogue continues as follows:

-¿Los extrañas mucho?

-Más o menos no más. Y ¿aquí si le gusta?

-La verdad que llevo muy poquitos días pero tenéis un país precioso.

-Claro que una cosa es andarse paseando, ¿no? Pero a todos los extranjeros les gusta. Bonito dizque es el Ecuador.

Particularly since the 1960s, the Provinces of Cañar and nearby Azuay have been zones of transnational migration history, particularly to the U.S. The scene shows that the rural populations of these zones have continued to migrate to Spain, where migratory opportunities emerged since the 1990s. Hermida emphasizes that Ecuadorian emigration has involved families in the city, like the children in the airport and the taxi driver, as well as rural ones. The little girl indicates that she does not miss her parents very much, which highlights, again, the much-disseminated family disintegration discourse in Ecuador. Her words suggest that children may not miss their parents

because they are well taken care of by their grandparents in Ecuador, who devote more time to them than their migrant parents would in Europe or the United States, and within their social context.

In the thriller, *Rabia* (*Rage*, 2009), Sebastián Cordero, probably the most internationally accomplished Ecuadorian filmmaker, presents the suspenseful love story of two South American migrants in Spain: construction worker, José María, and domestic worker, Rosa—jobs that most Latin American migrants perform in the European Union. While their nationalities are never specified in the film, Cordero communicates through the characters' accents and cultural preferences that José María is Ecuadorian and Rosa is Colombian.

Based on Argentinean Sergio Bizzio's novel by the same name (2005), Cordero moves the location of Bizzio's novel from Buenos Aires to an unspecified Spanish town. After José María kills his Spanish employer in a fit of rage over losing his job, he hides in the villa where Rosa serves an upper-class elderly Spanish couple. José María, who may or may not be an undocumented migrant, feels he is unable to defend his rights in an unequal social and legal system. Without telling Rosa, he hides from authorities in the big house where Rosa works. As a *voyeur*, or rather, an *auditeur*, José María, an impulsive and protective man, is unable to defend Rosa from the sexual abuse committed by the couple's son. José, however, seeks justice/vengeance. He kills that man too, but this time he makes it appear as a suicide. José is portrayed as a solitary good man who seeks justice in an unjust society and whose impulses lead him to commit crimes, albeit for the right reasons.

Following its premiere at the 2009 Toronto Film Festival, *Rabia* was awarded the Special Jury Prize of Tokyo's International Film Festival and the Golden Biznaga for best feature film at the Malaga Film Festival. It has also been screened at other film festivals including those in Havana, Palm Springs, Rotterdam, and Guadalajara. *Rabia*

was Cordero's first feature film located outside of Ecuador. His other films *Ratas, ratones, rateros* (*Rats*, 1999), *Crónicas* (*Chronicles*, 2004), and *Pescador* (*Fisherman*, 2011) were filmed in Ecuador while his last feature, *Europa Report* (2013), was filmed in New York.

Transnational Ecuador. Transnational Guayaquil

Unlike the filmmakers discussed above, Viviana Cordero (Quito 1964-) — perhaps the most experienced Ecuadorian director discussed in this chapter, and Sebastián Cordero's older sister—links Ecuadorian diasporas in Spain to Ecuador's upper-class society and longer history of migration, which extends beyond the recent emigrations to Southern/Mediterranean Europe. Viviana Cordero completed her last year of high school at the American School of Paris. Later, she studied modern literatures at the University of Paris IV-Sorbonne. Since then, she has written and directed ten plays and four feature films: *Sensaciones* (co-directed with her late brother Juan Esteban Cordero, 1991), *Un Titán en el ring* (2002), *Retazos de vida* (2008), *No robarás...a menos que sea necesario* (2013), and one medium-length fictional film, *El gran retorno* (1995), that became a television series of 24 chapters. Additionally, she has written four novels.

In *Retazos de Vida* (*Pieces of Life*), Viviana Cordero interweaves six transnational migrations (Italy, Spain, Cuba, Ecuador, and an unknown country) and one domestic migration (from Vinces to Guayaquil), with the return to Guayaquil of Andrea, an upper-class woman in her mid-twenties. Following her mother's death while still a child, Andrea had to move to Spain with her father. In the opening sequence, the viewer learns that Andrea returns after living in Spain for 12 years. The *mise-en-scène* on the plane conveys puzzlement on the part of Andrea: sitting next to her is another Guayaquileñan woman with a clear peninsular accent, manifestly Europeanized, who tells Andrea: "Estoy súper contenta porque ya vamos a llegar. Así que brindemos, maja, joder!... Pues

vamos a brindar por la alegría de haber vuelto a mi tierra y porque después de ocho años voy a ver a mi hija.” Andrea is amused by the woman’s Spanish accent while claiming a territorialized identity with Ecuador. Andrea feels empathy with her. She also returns full of expectations, but also with anxieties and fears about returning to an unfamiliar city and meeting close family members she has not seen in more than a decade.

While Andrea seemed to have had a comfortable life in Spain and does not manifest a peninsular accent except for two interspersed uses of the idiomatic expression “*joder*,” she has become estranged from Guayaquil’s upper-class lifestyle. In fact, in Spain she was in contact with underprivileged Ecuadorian migrants through her job at a center for immigrants. As a woman who herself experienced absences and “forced” transnational migration, although not necessarily for financial reasons, Andrea brings a message from Lisette—a young Ecuadorian migrant she has met at the center—to her mother who lives in a marginal neighborhood of Guayaquil. From the outset, Lisette’s mother does not want to speak to Andrea as soon as she is told that Andrea brings a message from her daughter.

On her second attempt to approach Lisette’s mother, the woman lets Andrea inside her house and says that she also has something to tell her: “Cuando Lisette se largó de aquí, dejó botado dos niños. Y son los que yo estoy cuidando ahora.” The unforgiving resentment of Lisette’s mother for her daughter’s migration is emphasized when the viewer learns that she never responds to her daughter’s letters nor does she collect the remittances she regularly sends. Andrea responds: “Señora, su hija también sufre. Y sufre muchísimo. Yo lo sé,” while opening her laptop to show a video recording of her daughter crying and saying: “Mamita, mamita, aquí no es fácil, pero me fui para superarme, yo no quiero que sufras nunca. Dios lo sabe.” Death and subsequent migration have separated Andrea from her maternal family in Guayaquil. In the case of

Lisette, her family has been torn apart by Lisette's desire to provide a better socioeconomic life for her two children. Unlike *A tus Espaldas*, remittances have not eradicated poverty in Lisette's family; and transnational migration has not facilitated her children's integration into the middle class. For Lisette's mother, migration caused her grandchildren to grow up without a mother, for which money will never be a substitute.

What is interesting here is the sequence of scenes: the transnational migration that continues to dismember families in Ecuador. Soon thereafter, at the airport, Lorena, a top model who five years previously had migrated from Vinces to Guayaquil, is saying goodbye to her brother, Javier, who is flying to Madrid in search of means to support his wife and infant in Vinces. From very humble rural origins, Lorena made a modeling career in Guayaquil, and her brother will search for a better future abroad. Soon before Javier's migration, Mercedes—Lorena and Javier's mother—who has remained in rural Vinces, does not agree with Javier's migration to provide for his family because that implies separating himself from his wife and child. She tells her children: "La tierra de uno, es la tierra de uno. Aquí es donde hay que hacer funcionar las cosas. España no es la madre patria. España es la madrastra." From a dominant colonial perspective it has been customary in Ecuador (as well as in many Latin American countries) and accentuated in the wake of the augmented migratory waves to Spain, to refer to Spain as the mother country. In fact, many Ecuadorians believed that they were migrating to the country they considered the source of what they understood as culture and civilization, beginning with Ecuador's official language, Spanish, and widespread religious belief in Christianity.¹⁵ Upon arriving, however, many found hostility, racism, and xenophobia.

¹⁵ Until 2008, Spanish (castellano) was the only official language of Ecuador. In Art. 2 of Ecuador's Constitution of 2008, Kichwa and Shuar were included as official languages of intercultural relation.

On the other hand, Andrea's maternal grandmother, Marina (Marina Salvarezza), a widow who migrated from Italy many years ago, often interjects Italian phrases and words. Her new boyfriend is a Spanish expatriate, also a widower who migrated to Guayaquil many years ago and with whom she establishes a secret romantic relationship. Through Marina—played by Salvarezza, a well-known Genovese actress who has lived in Guayaquil for 36 years—the film refers to the historical Italian migrations to Guayaquil between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. As Ecuadorian historian Jenny Estrada has stated, 80 percent of Italian migration in that period was from the Region of Liguria and most settled in Guayaquil and its surroundings.¹⁶ Many of them, merchants, retailers, shopkeepers, artists, and artisans, did not take long to enter the local middle and upper classes, while contributing to the development of banking, commercial and agro-export sectors of the city, its province and the country in general.

Cordero engages with the contemporary immigration to Ecuador in the character of Thiago, a young Cuban who has left behind his mother and siblings and searches for a place to fit in. Thiago works as a professional photographer in the modeling agency owned by Andrea's maternal aunt. Thiago's presence in the film exemplifies the increasing Cuban migration to Ecuador, particularly since the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution and the migratory policies enacted thereafter, which eliminated the need for visas to enter Ecuador as a tourist from most countries, including Cuba. Although Cubans are not among the three largest foreign communities (Colombians, U.S. citizens, and Spaniards) in Ecuador, there is a general perception that there is a large Cuban community (Correa Alvarez 42). In the 2010 Census, there were 6,717 Cubans in

¹⁶ Inauguration conference at the photo exhibit "Guayaquil, Perla del Pacífico: una storia in foto." Museoteatro della Commenda di Prè. Genoa, September 24, 2011.

Ecuador, of which 75 percent lived in Quito and 12 percent in Guayaquil (INEC). Cordero's film depicts the characteristics of Cuban migration in Ecuador: high-skilled workers, mostly male, between the ages of 20 and 49 (Correa Alvarez 41). Interestingly, because Andrea's maternal aunt has a work commitment that prevents her guiding Andrea to around the city, Thiago, the foreigner, shows Andrea her birth city and how much it has changed over the years she has been living in Spain. An attraction between the two becomes apparent.

The film ends with Andrea saying, "Yo me fui de esta ciudad cuando era niña y ahora he vuelto para quedarme. La tierra me jala, como dicen." This phrase underlines the intimate family and symbolic feelings that have become a part of the national discourse, promoted primarily by the government of President Rafael Correa. This discourse and policy-making have encouraged the return of migrants and family reunification at home, portraying migrants as a young workforce with human and capital resources acquired abroad, which can contribute to the country's social, economic, and cultural development. In Guayaquil, a city where urban landscapes and her family have dramatically changed, Andrea—like Thiago, and previously her grandmother Marina—has found her place to fit in.

Ecuadorians in Front of the Camera in Spain: The Documentaries

When Ecuadorian migration had become a heated political issue both in Spain and Ecuador in large part because Ecuadorian migrant remittances became the second most important source of the country's gross national income (after oil exports), and Spain had just approved its first *Ley de Extranjería*, 'Ley Orgánica 4/2000,' diasporic Puerto Rican, Lisandra Rivera, and Ecuadorian, Manolo Sarmiento, (both located in Ecuador) went to Madrid in 2000 to film their full-length documentary, *Problemas*

Personales (*Personal Problems*, 2002).¹⁷ *Theirs* is one of the first attempts by filmmakers to document Ecuadorian migration to Spain. The documentary exposes the mixture of reasons that prompt Ecuadorians to migrate, focusing on financial aspects. Through the stories of two male migrants, the viewer gains a sense of what diasporic Ecuadorians do, what and where their aspirations and expectations are, how they entertain themselves, as well as how they manage their family relations and dilemmas regarding whether or not to return to Ecuador. In April 2002, the film premiered at the First Festival Internacional de Cine Documental “Encuentros del Otro Cine” (EDOC) in Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca, an event Rivera and Sarmiento founded and one that has become the most vital space in Ecuador for presenting documentaries that in the words of Sarmiento “challenge power, are at the border, could be described as documentaries without permission and manifest the significance of having a voice, even in the most adverse situations” (*Cosas: Una revista internacional*).¹⁸ At the Festival, *Problemas Personales* was voted the most popular film, together with Patricio Guzmán’s *El caso Pinochet* (*Pinochet’s Case*, 2001).

Also situated in Madrid, Pablo Vargas Hidalgo’s first short documentary, *Casa de Campo: un pedacito de mi tierra* (*Casa de Campo: a tiny bit of my homeland*, 2007) takes the viewer to Casa de Campo. This large park located on the outskirts of Madrid became notorious for the gathering and socialization of Ecuadorians, especially on Sundays. It

¹⁷ In 1992 Rivera moved to Ecuador and worked on “La Televisión,” a very influential cultural and journalistic program that has been broadcast at the national level every Sunday in prime time since its beginning in 1990. In this working environment, she met her husband Manolo Sarmiento, from whom she recently separated. Rivera has been an important participant as producer and executive producer in several Ecuadorian films, including *Ratas, ratones, rateros* (Sebastián Cordero, 1999), *Mientras llega el día* (Camilo Luzuriaga, 2004), *Crónicas* (Sebastián Cordero, 2005), *Esas no son penas* (Anahí Hoeneisen and Daniel Andrade, 2006), and *Pescador* (Sebastián Cordero, 2011).

¹⁸ The Film Festival, “Cero Latitud,” created in 2004 in Quito, has also been a focal space for the promotion of Latin American independent and *auteur* films.

also became a space for the stigmatization and stereotyping of the Ecuadorian community in Madrid, marking them as “all the same,” recalling Albert Memmi’s “mark of the plural,” as all drunkards, all loud, and cheerful people, all disposers of garbage on the street (85). Rather, Vargas Hidalgo highlights how Ecuadorians have appropriated this space to eat, dance, sing, and play sports, especially soccer, while underscoring the mobility of people, ideas, memories, and cultural products and the development of diasporic communities.

Following his communication studies at the University of Paris VIII, Vargas Hidalgo moved to Madrid and entered a master’s program in documentary filmmaking at the Escuela Internacional de Medios Audiovisuales. Soon, he was told of the “Ecuadorian park” in Madrid and became curious to investigate and represent the social and physical transformation of this space.¹⁹ His 15-minute independent documentary alternates images of Madrid’s Casa de Campo and landmarks of Quito’s historic center to emphasize homeland memories and migrant desires to eventually return to Ecuador. In the park, Ecuadorians recreate their homeland and national identity while being vulnerable to police violence. Migrant women and men interviewed narrate their experiences in Spain, which, after a difficult period of “adaptation” and “integration,” they tend to portray as positive. Migrants emphasize that in Spain they have been able to support themselves and their families, working in the care service, nursing assistance, construction, and transportation sectors. They also underscore that at least one day a week, on Sundays, migrants are able to taste traditional Ecuadorian food including “*hornados*” and “*yaguarlocros*.” They can listen to and play Ecuadorian music such as *pasillos* and *cumbia*, but also Rock Latino from the popular Argentinean group Soda Stereo, which gestures at the different generations that gather at the park.

¹⁹ Personal conversation. Madrid. June, 28, 2008.

Several ethnographic documentaries emphasize women's migration to Spain. In his second documentary, Vargas Hidalgo focuses on Ecuadorian women in Madrid. Through the lives of five Ecuadorian women migrants, the 19-minute documentary, *Mujeres entre dos orillas* (*Women between two shores*, 2009), exposes the diversity of the Ecuadorian migration in Spain as well as the responsibilities and roles women have and play as daughters, sisters, mothers, wives, workers, entrepreneurs, and friends. The film, coproduced by Ecuador's Secretaría Nacional del Migrante (SENAMI), was awarded first prize at the Festival of Documentaries on Migration, awarded by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Spain.

The connection between migrant women and sports is addressed in Manuela Borgetti, María Rosa Jijón, and Sonia Maccari's 30-minute documentary, *La Polverera* (*The Whopping Dust*, 2005). Borgetti and Maccari are Italian, while Jijón is a Quiteña who has lived in Rome since 2000 and has become an Italian citizen through marriage to an Italian citizen (who is also a politician, a former Senator affiliated with the Italian Democratic Party). The film depicts the collective identity formation of Latin American women who meet every Sunday to play soccer in a field next to Rome's emblematic Coliseum. While the Latin American women's soccer championship takes place, women socialize, eat Ecuadorian food, listen to music, and take a break from their domestic jobs. The documentary starts with narrow rectangular images of Quito and Rome, an airplane that lands, settling the gaze on the Coliseum. The camera follows several Latin American young women who speak about soccer tactics, their families and their homeland. Through interviews and participant-filmic observation, the viewer enters the world of these migrant women, who are not only domestic workers, mothers, wives, and daughters, but also skilled soccer players.

Situating his work in Barcelona, where the second largest Ecuadorian community in Spain lives, Diego Ortuño's *Bienvenido a tu familia* (*Welcome to your*

family, 2009) enters into the multifaceted journey of families after a period of separation. Coproduced by Televisió de Catalunya, which broadcast it in May 2010, the full-length documentary follows the bureaucratic and emotional process of family reunification of three Ecuadorian families in Barcelona, which involved the re-elaboration of affection, the reorganization of the family, and the accommodation of the newcomers to a different social and cultural context and a new life in general. Ortuño is a young Ecuadorian filmmaker who graduated from the School of Communication and Contemporary Arts of the Universidad San Francisco de Quito. He prepared this documentary while he was pursuing a master's degree in documentary filmmaking in Barcelona.

A religious theme is at the center of María Cristina Carrillo's documentary, *La Churona (The Curly Virgin, 2010)*. Quito-born, Carrillo moved to Madrid in 2005, where she entered a doctoral program in Social Anthropology at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. The film starts with the narration of the legend or miracle of the Virgen del Cisne, also known as "La Churona" or "La Churona," which occurred during colonial times, in 1594, in the small town of El Cisne, in the southern Andean Province of Loja. Carrillo then exposes the devotional and cultural significance of the Virgin, and the participation and commitment in the massive religious procession and adoration of the Virgin by all major powers of the town, including religious, administrative, military, and police authorities.

The film, in fact, focuses on the journey of the replica of the "original" statue of the Virgen del Cisne (the "original" remains in El Cisne) from El Cisne to Lavapiés, a Madrilenean Jewish neighborhood until 1492 when Jews were expelled from Spain and in the last decades it has been populated by diverse non-European migrant communities. Becoming the "*Virgen Viajera*" (the traveler Virgin that accompanies Ecuadorian migrants), the statue also goes through migratory travails, in parallel to the

inhabitants of El Cisne. Similar to human mobility, customs and immigration controls of the statue are highlighted in the film. And as a cultural product, the statue's copyright and authenticity are questioned. Ecuadorian migrant associations, entrepreneurs, and Spanish Catholic churches and priests become involved in the journey and parade of the Virgin in Madrid, while conflicts and personal and collective (spiritual and financial) interests of believers also form part of the mix. The symbolic presence of the Virgen del Cisne in Madrid's most central square, Plaza Mayor, where only the Virgin of Almudena, Madrid's patron Saint, enters, represents a shift in the religious, social and political attitudes in Spain, as a result of Ecuadorian migration.

The documentary, *Ecuapop: Los de aquí, los de allí* (*Ecuapop: The Ones Here, The Ones There*, 2008), directed by Alfredo Llopico, Clarisa Muñoz, and Víctor Pérez, focuses on 18-year-old Cristian Bonilla, an Ecuadorian who migrates to Valencia. This 50-minute documentary narrates Cristian Bonilla's life in Quito prior to his traslocation, the sense of mourning that migration represented for the loved ones left behind in the homeland, and how his passion for music served as a way to integrate himself into Spanish society. Llopico, co-director of the non-profit Santa Bárbara association in Onda, a town located in the Autonomous Community of Valencia, became interested in Ecuadorian migration through the international cooperation projects with Andean indigenous communities that were carried out by the association. After perceiving the racism, intolerance, and exclusionary practices of many Spanish inhabitants of the Provinces of Castellón and Valencia and the overtly racist discourse of a right-wing political party in Castellón, while remaining aware that it would be almost impossible to change the ideologies and cultural practices of Spanish adults, in 2007 Llopico proposed to Pérez, an English school teacher in Castellón, and Muñoz, an Argentinean young woman who had been working in Spain on several audiovisual projects, that they collaborate on a

documentary addressing young people in order to present it in schools and social and community centers (“Llegó el momento...”) (Llopico).²⁰

In fact, over 10,000 students in Spain have viewed *Ecuapop* and an educational guide has been created to assist schoolteachers and to facilitate discussion of the film in the classroom.²¹ Regarding the purpose of making the film, Llopico has pointed out that

La intención es desmontar los prejuicios que hay en España contra los inmigrantes. Intentamos desterrar los tópicos de que los extranjeros vienen a quitarnos el trabajo, de que son ladrones, de que nos hacen daño. ¿Si lo conseguiremos? No sé, pero queremos plantear esta situación a la juventud española. (El Universo)

somos cada vez más conscientes de que todos pertenecemos a algún colectivo susceptible de pertenecer mañana mismo al grupo de los señalados por el dedo acusador en esta sociedad tan rápidamente cambiante. Por lo tanto, no podemos quedarnos parados.

(“Llegó el momento...”)

While the documentary has been shown in Spain, particularly in the Autonomous Communities of Valencia and Barcelona, due to the current shifts in migration patterns, in which Spaniards are again the ones who emigrate, Llopico has stated that the film’s

²⁰ Interview with the author. August 26, 2014. In that interview, Llopico also informed me that Clarissa Muñoz had passed away from cancer on October 15, 2010 in her birth city of Buenos Aires, where she wanted to die.

²¹ Also, interview with the author. August 26, 2014.

narrative has become obsolete.²² It has served, however, as a useful tool for communicating that migrant youth are not very different from Spanish youth. Cristian, in fact, finds his place in Valencia when he joins a group of musicians from different nation-states, including Spain, and he resumes his interest in dee-jaying and hip-hop music mixing and culture. Thus, the transnational subculture of hip-hop among working class and inner city communities is seen as a link among migrant and native youth.

²² In fact, in 2013 Ecuador became the main receiving country of Spanish citizens with 10,163 emigrants, followed by the United Kingdom, France, and Germany (INE Press Release, 11). In the interview, Llopico confirmed for me the idea that the film no longer serves its initial purpose of the first years of the century, when Ecuadorian migrants were the largest national migrant group in Spain, alongside Moroccans. In 2013 Romanians, Moroccans, British, Italians, and Chinese led the influx of foreign nationals to Spain; Ecuadorians were the 13th largest national group to immigrate to Spain (8). According to Spain's Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) in 2013 two out of three Spaniards who emigrated were born in Spain, and in the case of emigration to Ecuador, it is significant that many Ecuadorians have obtained Spanish citizenship, and their children born in Spain before 2008 have also been granted Spanish citizenship (11). Out of the 10,163 Spanish citizens who immigrated to Ecuador, 3,365 were born in Spain, and among them, 2,848 were under 15 years old. Thus, only 517 Spaniards over 15 years of age and born in Spain migrated to Ecuador (11). It is interesting to note that at least 6,798 Ecuadorians residing in Spain returned to Ecuador, along with their partners (who may have different nationalities) and their 2,848 children who were born in Spain (11). On the other hand, Ecuador's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, Ricardo Patiño Aroca, has stated that by November 2013, between 6,000 and 7,000 Spaniards had travelled to Ecuador in the last few months of that year to work in different state-funded higher education, research, and health programs (Ecuavisa). I should note that part of the Ecuadorian government's development program (Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir) includes the creation and implementation of an intense campaign of recruiting highly educated Ecuadorian and foreign professionals to improve (and transform) the country's education (particularly higher education), healthcare, care and opportunities for people with disabilities and special skills, social security, energy, and production systems, interrelated with the development of science, research and technology as a strategy to eradicate extreme poverty and oil dependency of the country's economy. Before the 2008 Constitution, Ecuador did not have an explicit law regarding citizenship through *jus sanguinis*. As stateless persons, Spain granted Spanish citizenship to children born in Spain to Ecuadorian parents—something Ecuadorian migrant parents were glad to obtain for their children. Numeral 2 of Art. 7 of the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution recognizes Ecuadorian citizenship by birth to "las personas nacidas en el extranjero de madre o padre nacidos en el Ecuador; y sus descendientes hasta el tercer grado de consanguinidad;" thus, all children born outside of the Ecuadorian territory to at least one parent born in Ecuador are Ecuadorians by birth.

Migrant Youth in Spain and Italy

For several years the Laboratorio di Sociologia Visuale, 'Workshop of Visual Sociology' of the Department of Scienze della Formazione, 'Education Sciences,' at the University of Genoa has produced a number of documentaries in order to disseminate some of the results of their social science research to a larger audience and to use the visual text as a tool for the analysis of social realities in the European Union. In collaboration with other European universities, and often financed by the European Commission, the Laboratorio has produced films that engage with different aspects of migration in Europe, particularly in Barcelona and Genoa, including transmigrant subjectivities, sports, sexuality, incarceration, migrant youth subjectivities, and the exclusions experienced in the European Union. The films by Teodorani, Alessandro Diaco, Cristina Oddone, and José González Morandi on Ecuadorian migration, discussed in this chapter, have been part of the projects developed by this interdisciplinary group.

Alessandro Diaco, Eugenia Teodorani, Hugo Morango, and Paula Mota Santos' documentary *In between. Nove sguardi sulla scena europea (In between. Nine takes from the European scene, Italy, 2009)*, provides the memories, aspirations, expectations, and daily choices of migrant youth and second-generation immigrants in nine European cities of six countries: Genoa, Barcelona, Rome, Madrid, Berlin, Lisbon, Porto, Metz, and Utrecht. The film, part of the triennial project 2006-2009 "Transnational Research on European Second Generation Youth" (TRESEGY) and financed by the European Commission, documents how the experiences of migrant youth cross national borders in Europe and in fact, are very similar. Migrant youth feel a sense of "in-between-ness," with respect to transnational identities. They refer to the legal obstacles in obtaining residence permits and citizenship from the European countries they are born into, and the insistence of the native population on underscoring their difference. The documentary also highlights the discrimination migrant youth encounter in the job

market, the impossibility of obtaining public employment due to their lack of European citizenship, the spaces where solidarity and fraternity emerge, and the formation of groups of belonging—which have been understood as baby gangs, gangs, or *bande* by mainstream media and popular opinion.

Part of the “Yougang” project (2011-2013) that studies gang policies: youth and migration in local contexts, focusing on social science research on Spain’s youth policies and the gang scene, especially in Madrid and Barcelona and supported by the European Commission, José González Morandi’s documentary, *Buscando Respeto*, (*Searching for Respect*, 2013), with the collaboration of Italian sociologist Luca Queirolo Palmas, portrays Latin American youth and gang organizations in Barcelona. The film examines what it means to be a member of a youth organization, the diversity of people and the plurality of ideas within such an organization and how difficult it may be to reach a consensus. The “Yougang” project included a film workshop in which 20 gang members and other youth informants participated and they also appear in the film (Queirolo Palmas 3). Youth were trained in acting and wrote their own scripts. This film, in fact, is a participatory project that blends fiction and “real life,” as youth act in realistic situations that have actually happened in their own lives.

The access to Italian citizenship rights by migrant youth and/or second-generation migrants, as they are sometimes called, has been addressed in David Chierchini, Matteo Keffer, and Davide Morandini’s six-minute documentary video, *Italeñas* (2013). Part of the initiative, “*Insieme per lo Jus Solis*,” “Together for the *Jus Solis*” and the “*Schegge di Za*,” ‘Splinters from Za,’ a series of short documentaries produced by Zalab with the support of Open Society Foundations and the sponsorship of the Italian committee for Unicef, the video narrates the struggle of 19-year-old Ecuadorian, Melina Ramírez—born and raised in Genoa by her Ecuadorian parents—to obtain Italian citizenship. In a journalistic style, the documentary narrates the Italian legislative loop

and “schizophrenic” bureaucracy that limits citizenship to subjects born in Italy. The several close-ups of Melina, who dresses the same as any young woman in Italy and speaks Italian without a foreign accent, highlight the sense of belonging to Italy that she claims. However, her application for Italian citizenship was rejected on the basis that she lived more than one calendar year outside of Italy when she was four. During that time, Melina and her parents moved back to Ecuador. According to current Italian Law No.91 of February 5, 1992, Article 4, numeral 2: “Lo straniero nato in Italia, che vi abbia risieduto legalmente senza interruzioni fino al raggiungimento della maggiore età, diviene cittadino se dichiara di voler acquistare la cittadinanza italiana entro un anno dalla suddetta data.”²³ Italian authorities require Italian-born foreign applicants for Italian citizenship to provide proof of continuous residence in Italy, which authorities have interpreted as residence outside of Italian territory for no longer than one calendar year.

At 19, Melina claims to feel Italian but is denied citizenship by the country she considers her own. Her father, Homero Ramírez, states that “Lei non si sente ecuadoriana; è una italiana.” Melina’s story is narrated through a letter she sends to “*Radio 19 Latino*” and is read by Doménica Canchano, a Peruvian journalist who has lived in Italy for 22 years and runs the radio station that belongs to Genoa’s largest newspaper, *Il Secolo XIX*. Their stories intersect at the end of the video when the Italian law on journalism is also presented. A text appears on screen, stating that Italian law prohibits foreign journalists like Canchano, who is registered with the Italian Journalists’ guild, to own and, therefore, to register newspapers, television, and radio networks or any other traditional media communication enterprises.

²³ Law published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* No.38 of February 15, 1992.

The title of the video, *Italeñas*, mixes a part of the Italian morpheme “Italia,” “Ital” and the *Spanishized* demonymic morpheme “eñas,” from “*Ecuadoreñas*,” alluding to the common, but often pejorative way of referring to Ecuadorian women, as *Ecuadoregne*.²⁴ The documentary video promotes social awareness about Italian citizenship rights denied to children born in Italy to migrant parents. The denial of these rights is linked to that of other rights, in professions that probably some of the children born in Italy to migrant parents practice in that country. As non-Italian citizens, migrant journalists are confronted with legal discrimination by being unable to own a media enterprise or to disseminate alternative news and opinions—the internet and online social networks remain the only accessible media.

Ecuadorian Diasporas Viewed by Italian and Diasporic Peruvian Filmmakers

Eugenia Teodorani’s *Trans/Portes, Trans/Puertos (Trans/Ports, 2006)* focuses on Ecuadorian female migration in Genoa. The spectator learns about the lives of several women migrants and their families in the home country. The narrative is fragmentary. Sudden cuts are constant in the documentary, which reflects the family fragmentation that the interviewees have experienced both in Ecuador and Italy. Highlighting the lack of economic possibilities as the main driving factor for migration, the film portrays women’s transnational networks and their strong transnational family relationships involving grandmothers, mothers, sisters and children.

Diacó’s documentary, *La nostalgie du corps perdu (Nostalgia of a Lost Body, 2011)* focuses on the experiences of Luis Yépez Romero, a young Ecuadorian male resident in Genoa who, after abandoning and distancing himself from street youth

²⁴ Italian dictionaries do not register the word “*ecuadoregno*” or “*ecuadoregna*,” but “*ecuadoriano/a*” (*Devoto-Oli*). Although the term “*ecuadoregno*” or “*ecuadoregna*” does not appear in Italian dictionaries and connote negative attitudes, many working-class Ecuadorian migrants in Italy use it to refer to themselves, as they have learned it from the mainstream Italian population.

organizations, often called “*bande*,” became a kick-boxing champion in two regional, one European, and two world kickboxing club championships. Yépez’s narrative is intertwined with discussions by French and Italian scholars about the symbolic interconnections between the male body, youth migration, and sports as a path toward the differential or segmented integration of immigrants. In the film, the body is analyzed as an instrument for identity reaffirmation and space for self-discovery and transformation. The film includes black and white photographs and newspaper clips featuring Luis Yépez Romero as champion, as well as interviews with his friends and trainers. At the end, the camera conveys bright images while turning to the protagonist and the smile of his wife and their little daughter. Then, darkness returns. White words on a black screen appear as the final message of the documentary, referring to Johann Trollmann, a German-Sinti boxing champion who was tortured, sterilized, and killed in a Nazi camp in 1943, at age 36.

As a participatory project and work-in-progress, Cristina Oddone’s documentary, *Permiso de soñar* (*Permission to Dream*, 2012) depicts the lives of a group of young Ecuadorian males, members of “La Escuelita,” a collective they formed during their meetings in a drug rehabilitation project in the city of Chiavari, located on the Eastern Ligurian Coast. The young men describe the racism, discrimination, and lack of school support in Chiavari, especially regarding the teaching of Italian language skills, which prompted them to drop out of school. In contrast, they all seem to agree that they had a “normal life” in Ecuador, went to school, and were good students, but they could not keep up with the rhythm of school in Chiavari. They also expound on their conflicts with the law, their family relationships, and their desire to return to their country of origin to start a new life. The film portrays the failed migrant youth and school policies that have been implemented in Liguria. It has been presented in different venues in

Chiavari and Genoa, with discussions with the film's participants as a way to raise consciousness among community organizations and migrant youth.²⁵

Peruvian Alan Rodríguez Alvarez and Italian Marco Pellerano Montebelli's 13-minute documentary, *Dibujando un cambiamento* (*Drawing a Change*, 2007) won the First Prize of the 2007 Contest, "Sguardi Latinoamericani in Liguria," 'Latin American Gazes in Liguria,' organized by Genoa's Fundación Casa América, a non-profit Italian foundation that promotes Latin American cultures.²⁶ The *Itañol* featured in the title, *Dibujando un cambiamento*, accentuates the hybridization with which the Latin American youth interviewed in the film identify.

The documentary centers on the transformations of the city of Genoa as a result of non-EU migrations since 1997, particularly of Latin Americans. It does not focus on nationalities, but rather on the problems and subjectivities of diasporic Latin Americans and how they contribute to the city's cultural and socioeconomic development. The film also depicts the precarious working conditions of immigrants and the exclusions of migrant youth in Italian schools. At times, nostalgic Andean music is played as background music, such as *valses*, Andean ballads, and *pasillos* performed by renowned Ecuadorian singer, Julio Jaramillo and ballads from perhaps the most famous Genoese singer-composer Fabrizio De Andrè. Within the film, Marco Pellerano Montebelli expresses his own views about the difficulties and stereotypes associated with Latin American migrants, adding that he was born in Peru and was adopted by an Italian

²⁵ This documentary was presented and discussed with Ecuadorian youth in the "Ecuador Festival" that took place on 14-16 Dec. 2012 in Genoa.

²⁶ Marco Pellerano Montebelli is an Italian citizen of Peruvian origin. As an infant, he was adopted by an Italian couple.

family when he was six months old, which has allowed him to understand and move among different realities: Italian middle-class youth and Latin American migrant youth.

In contrast, through the narrative of a migrant's personal story, the journalistic documentary *Radici. L'altra faccia delle migrazioni: Ecuador (Roots. The other side of migrations, Davide Demichelis, 2013)* follows 43-year-old Viviana Barres, an Ecuadorian woman who has lived in Genoa for 22 years, to the return of her "radici," 'roots' on her journey to Ecuador after 15 years of absence. Produced by Italian national network RAI Tre, the film portrays Ecuador for an Italian television audience while examining the achieved social integration of immigrants and their transmigrant subjectivities.²⁷ As a way of countering prejudice and racialized stereotypes diffused among popular opinion and mass media exclusionary discourses on the migration of citizens not considered as belonging to the European Union, Demichelis emphasizes the culturally enriching aspects of immigration in Italy. The film also underscores previous Italian migrations to Ecuador, particularly to Guayaquil and Quito and the incorporation of Italians into Ecuadorian society. *Radici* premiered on June 21, 2013 and was broadcast a second time on prime time television on December 8, 2013 (the day of the *Immacolata Concezione*, a national holiday in Italy) and was viewed by a large audience.²⁸

Radici is a RAI Tre series of films depicting video-reporter Davide Demichelis' journeys to non-European countries (mainly in Africa, Asia and Latin America). The film on Ecuador was the second broadcast, followed by the first one on Senegal. Instead of having a local informant/travel guide in the destination country, and approaching and interviewing random people wherever the traveler goes, as many television travel programs do, an immigrant who lives in Italy and returns to her homeland guides

²⁷ Rai Tre is the cultural channel of the Rai public network system.

²⁸ Interview with the author. Genoa, August 29, 2014.

Demichelis. The migrant “translates” her country of origin for Demichelis, and therefore for Italians. The series, including the episode on Ecuador, describes the cultural, natural and economic resources of a particular country while the viewer also learns about a migrant’s emotional concerns and family relationships, as well as her ambivalence regarding her homeland and country of settlement.

Detained: Unaccomplished Migration in *Prometeo Deportado*

Fernando Miele’s *Prometeo Deportado* depicts the unfulfilled desire to migrate transnationally and the violence experienced by a group of potential Ecuadorian migrants in a European airport, from the perspective of potential migrants. The writer-director invites the spectators to assume the passengers are in Barajas Airport, as Madrid is the final migratory destination of some of them. The film also represents the ways in which Ecuadorians make sense of an airport detention, the internal power dynamics and reflections that develop in that closed space, as in a prison (or hell, recalling Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Huis Clos*), and the solidarity and social organization that are progressively built, as if it were a microcosm of Ecuadorian society. It is clear that the migratory attempt is meant to be understood in a political sense. It works as a satirical critique of power, specifically the dominant and dehumanized systems of human migration control that filter who is allowed to cross the border and who stays out and under which conditions. Here, Miele’s debut feature film focuses on Europe, perhaps as a metaphor for the rest of the global North, as world inequality continues to grow.

The opening scenes show a line of seemingly European and North American travelers and flight crew members passing smoothly and quickly through immigration control. To the side, there is a long line of worried Ecuadorians. Soon thereafter, they are detained without being given an explanation while immigration officials, who speak an incomprehensible language, retain their passports. In fact, they speak an invented, unreal language. This group of Ecuadorians belonging to all social classes is sent to a

small waiting room inside the airport; cameras in the room record every movement, even in the toilet stalls. It is a highly technological *panopticon*. Mieles wants the viewer to experience what a (potential) migrant might feel at a moment of airport border-crossing: uncomfortable, unsafe, unable to understand what immigration officials say, constantly under surveillance, and with little control over what is going to happen.

In a satirical and theatrical style, Mieles re-articulates Ecuadorian collective memory and identity, while portraying the Ecuador of the 1990s. During this period millions of Ecuadorians fled the country, particularly to Spain and Italy, but also to Venezuela and Chile, while others continued to migrate to the United States, in an ever more dangerous multiple border-crossing that involved several Central American countries and the Mexico-U.S. border. As stated earlier, at the turn of the century, migrant remittances represented Ecuador's second largest source for its gross national product, only after oil exports. Thus, many Ecuadorian viewers, whether in Ecuador or abroad, identified with the movie's exuberant characters. If the viewer was not the migrant, she may have had a relative, a friend, a partner, a child or a parent who had migrated to another nation-state.

Having previously worked in and taught theater in Ecuador, Mieles turns to a classical Greek tragedy to re-inscribe Prometheus' mythical narrative of stealing fire to give hope to humans, from the perspective of contemporary deterritorialized and displaced populations in a capitalist world-system. The film narrative follows Prometeo (Carlos Gallegos) and Afrodita Zambrano (Ximena Mieles).²⁹ Prometeo identifies himself as a magician. He provides hope to migrants by allowing them to escape from the dehumanizing experience in the airport by entering his magical trunk. Afrodita, a young

²⁹ Ximena Mieles, an actress who lives in New York, is Fernando Mieles's younger sister.

and attractive woman, does not even identify as Ecuadorian, but as a U.S. citizen. On her Walkman she only listens to U.S. American music. She has dyed her hair blond. She uses colored contact lenses that she never takes off, to the point of causing serious irritation to her eyes, which later obliges her to wear dark sunglasses and impairs her vision. At the beginning of the film, *Prometeo* appears handcuffed, alleging that he has put himself in chains. He is made fun of by other passengers for claiming to be a magician and being unable to free himself. Toward the end, without an explanation, the handcuffs are unlocked and the magic intensifies with the escape from the airport room thanks to his enchanted trunk.

The film's theme (migration) and style (tragicomedy) with a touch of Mieles' own version of 'magic unrealism/surrealism' enhanced box office sales. The film had 175,000 national viewers and remained 12 weeks in Ecuadorian cinemas—a record in Ecuador where the market is dominated by Hollywood films (as in most of Latin America with the exception of Cuba).³⁰ It received numerous international awards and it was presented in several international festivals. *Prometeo* won the Consejo Nacional de Cinematografía's competitions for film production and post-production; and it received the Augusto San Miguel Prize, the highest prize offered in Ecuadorian cinema.

It is interesting to mention, as Gabriela Alemán has noted, that the film had a rocky road from the time in which it was written in Cuba (2003) to its screening in movie theaters (2010) (81-82). By 2010, due to the European financial capitalist crisis, particularly experienced in Southern/Mediterranean countries such as Spain and Italy, many Ecuadorian migrants were already returning home and Ecuadorian migration to the European Union slowed down and occurred mainly as a family reunification process.

³⁰ Within the Ecuadorian cinema market, the sales were notorious but not enough to make a profit. If we take U.S.\$ 5 (the prize a movie ticket in 2010 and currently) and multiply it by 175,000 viewers, one could presume that the film returns were U.S.\$ 875,000 dollars, an amount that barely covered the production cost of US\$ 800,000.

The reception of the film by an Ecuadorian audience in 2003, when Ecuadorian emigration was at a high peak, became a mediated political debate at the national level, and most importantly, transformed entire families and communities and became a strategic economic resource to the state, might have been very different from the reception the film had in 2010. By that time, the film narrative represented the memory of Ecuadorians, not their families and communities' present desires, anxieties, and expectations, as it could have been in 2003.

After Ecuador's socioeconomic and political crisis at the turn of the century, which prompted between 1.5 million to 2 million Ecuadorians to migrate, the official political discourse and government plan that brought Rafael Correa Delgado to Ecuador's Presidency in 2007 shrewdly inserted the notion of Ecuadorian transnational emigration as the "worst national tragedy." The official discourse emphasized the fact that transnational emigration, primarily female, had affected millions of Ecuadorian adults and children, and resulted in what had been understood as fractured and dysfunctional families. It also highlighted that most citizens had lost hope in their homeland's capacity and resourcefulness and its governments. Thus, the need for specific government assistance that could efficiently serve migrants or "*Ecuadorianos en movilidad*" (Ecuadorians in mobility) through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Secretaría Nacional del Migrante became a political priority.

Mieles takes a serious theme such as Ecuadorian transnational emigration, which the Ecuadorian mass media and institutional political discourse had mostly represented in tragic terms, such as chronicles of U.S. chartered planes repatriating deported Ecuadorians and the social cost of human trafficking, to sarcastically and humorously critique world hegemonies and systems of power and reflect on Ecuadorian-ness. Mieles points at the collective memory of Ecuadorians regarding the socioeconomic political crisis that the country experienced at the turn of the century, as

well as the multi-sited consciousness and narratives of Ecuadorian citizens in relation to migration to Europe.

Mieles reveals how at the time transnational migration became a nationwide narrative and desire that involved most ethnoracial social groups, including the most marginal rural sectors of indigenous, Afro-descendants, and mestizo populations that lacked transnational migratory or transmigrant traditions outside the region, including the towns in the Coastal Provinces of Manabí, El Oro, and Esmeraldas, as well as professional middle and upper-middle classes and light-skinned mestizos in the largest cities, such as Guayaquil, Quito, and Cuenca.³¹

Mieles was inspired to write and direct *Prometeo Deportado* based on his own experience. He was deported from Spain's Barajas Airport in 1993, right after he had finished his film directing studies in 1992 at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV (EICTV) in San Antonio de Baños, Cuba.³² He had bought a one-way ticket from Havana to Barajas, as he had doubts about making a film career in Ecuador (Interview Ecuavisa). Before deportation, he was detained at the airport immigration control office for a few hours, which seemed like an endless period of time.³³ About the film as a collective experience of time and space and an allegory of migration, Mieles has stated:

³¹ Here I refer to communities that have a longer history of transnational migrant or transmigrant tradition, such as Otavalos, from Ecuador's northern Andean region, as musicians, merchants, and entrepreneurs, mostly to Europe and North America. Lynn A. Meisch estimated that by 2001 out of a population of 60,000 Otavalos, perhaps 4,000 had become "permanent transmigrants and another 6,000 were abroad on a short-term basis" (164). Moreover, males from the southern Andean provinces of Cañar and Azuay have historically migrated to the United States, especially since the 1960s.

³² Personal conversation. Genoa, June 26, 2011.

³³ Personal conversation. Genoa, June 26, 2011.

Para mí es un sinfonía en varios movimientos, la intención era que los Personajes tuvieran una pérdida de la noción del tiempo, tal y como la Sentí en ese momento que me pareció de nunca acabar. Cuando uno Vive ésto tiene la sensación de ser un delincuente, sentirse culpable, cuando en la realidad uno es quien está recibiendo una vejación. (Llinás 10)

In the film, Miele translates this undetermined sense of time by employing a Galapagos tortoise—an Ecuadorian symbol par excellence—as a marker of time in the movie narrative. At the beginning, the spectator sees a small turtle in the room, which may have “escaped” from the chest of an Ecuadorian man who transports (traffics) turtles and is detained separately from the first group of Ecuadorians. Later, immigration officials oblige him to take a pill that first will cleanse his intestines (he is embarrassed to defecate in his pants in front of immigration officials) and cause his death.

By the end of the film, the Galapagos turtle, walking around the room, is considerably bigger, which suggests that the Ecuadorians had been detained in that room for a long period of time. Keeping in mind that a Galapagos is a reptile considered the world’s longest living of all vertebrates and can live for more than one hundred years, Miele alludes to the length of time Ecuadorians have spent in dehumanizing living conditions in the airport, in a reduced airport space with a gradually decreasing amount of food, only sustained by tenacity and hope for reaching their migratory destination.

Miele has pointed out that after his deportation and “long repatriation journey to Ecuador,” which included stops in Cuba and Panama before arriving in Ecuador, he had a sense of guilt and fragmentation, as if he had done something wrong. He had to reconcile with his surroundings (in Ecuador) and with what exactly he was escaping from (Llinás 10 and Interview Ecuavisa). A long time had to pass for him to realize that

he had done nothing wrong (Interview Ecuavisa). After this complex sense of guilt and embarrassment, Mieleles wanted to bring those feelings to the moving image, and translates them into a light narrative that combined humor and satire.³⁴

Enclosed in what increasingly becomes a more limited space with less basic resources such as food, as more Ecuadorians are detained, the soon-to-be-deported passengers recreate their own version of Ecuador, embedded with their anxieties, fears and complexes. Thus, the room of an airport in a European city, where Ecuadorians are dehumanized, becomes their new home and the space where they narrate their stories, reproduce their idiosyncrasies, and manifest their own humanity, but also their cruelty. The scenes of Doña Murga washing and combing Afrodita's hair and sharing the Ecuadorian food she was expecting to bring to her relatives in Spain are exemplary of the solidarity that emerges, while the professional swimmer who kills a man in order to eat his food alludes to the basic instincts of humans and the manifestation of power. The denial of border-crossing, the dehumanization to which Ecuadorian (potential) migrants are subjected, and the use of satire to critique systems of power and domination recall the images of Iván Carrasco's short story "El ecuatañol," discussed in Chapter 3. In *Prometeo*, however, while the international system of migration control attempts to dehumanize subjects, potential migrants attempt to humanize their social contexts, whenever possible, while transforming the space provided by the foreign state into a reconfigured piece of Ecuador, with the codifications, problems, violence and abuses of power.

Mieleles' previous work in script writing and directing includes the fictional 20-minute short *Opus Nigrum* (1993), and the three documentaries *Jóvenes y Democracia* (16 min., 2004), *Aquí soy José* (68 min., 2004), and *Descartes* (2009). Mieleles'

³⁴ Personal conversation. Genoa, June 26, 2011.

cinematographic work has focused on the recovery of memory of his birth city, Guayaquil, and his country, as well as political and artistic themes. For instance, in *Aquí soy José*, Mieles focuses on French filmmaker Joseph Morder, who spent his childhood in Guayaquil. In *Descartes*, Mieles centers on Guayaquileñean filmmaker, Gustavo Valle, who later turned into a children's party photographer and whose short films produced in the 1970s only remain in the memories of the city's inhabitants and in scattered celluloid cuts from the films, or *Descartes*.

In 2001, Mieles portrayed the symbolic significance and popular memory of sports by directing the section on Guayaquil of Pablo Mogrovejo's documentary *Ecuador vs. el resto del mundo* (2001), about Ecuador's historic euphoria over its first participation in the 2002 Soccer World Cup. Commissioned by Guayaquil's Museo Antropológico y de Arte Contemporáneo (MAAC), in 2003 Mieles directed four video documentaries on Guayaquileñean visual artist Enrique Tábara Zerna. Since 1998 Mieles has taught film and theater at the Universidad Católica de Guayaquil. Internationally, Mieles worked as director's first assistant and actor in Cláudio MacDowell's feature film *O toque do Oboé* (*The Oboe's Call*, Brazil/Paraguay, 1998) and wrote the script "Guayaquil de mis amores" for the documentary project for the series *Mi Tierra* (My Land).

The counter-narrative represented in *Prometeo Deportado* probably gestures at what Ella Shohat stated back in 1996 regarding Third-World cinema. While the term 'Third-World' may be anachronistic today, after the end of the Cold War, in grappling with decolonial thinking, I agree with Shohat in that

Hegemonic Europe may clearly have begun to deplete its strategic repertoire of stories, but Third-World peoples, First-World minoritarian communities, women, and gays and lesbians have only begun to tell theirs...In the face of Eurocentric historicizing, the Third World and its diasporas in the First

World have rewritten their own histories, taken control over their own images, spoken in their own voices, reclaiming and reaccentuating colonialism and its ramifications in the present in a vast project of remapping and renaming. (183)

Here the category 'Third-World' can be useful for understanding Shohat's arguments regarding the representations of a diversity of peoples from the global South and its diasporas, including Ecuador. In *Prometeo*, Mieles rewrites and re-presents cinematographically the stories and narratives of populations that have often been studied and narrated by social scientists, politicians and European filmmakers.

Prometeo's images, and individual and collective voices engage in the remapping and re-understanding of Ecuadorian transnational migration.

At the beginning of the film, Mieles makes a Hitchcock-like cameo appearance, identifying himself as a "realizador de cine, director, guionista, hago películas, documentales, ¡filmmaker!...estudiante," while an immigration official inspects his passport. Soon after, *Prometeo's* trunk, in which *Prometeo* was traveling is detected by airport scanners and disturbing alarms go off. In fact, in an interview in Venezuela, Mieles states that these questions and answers happened in real life when he arrived at Barajas Airport and was later deported. While *Prometeo's* magic tricks throughout the film have inconsistently worked, at the end, *Prometeo* displays his magic at its best. The catharsis at the end of the film, by the escape of *Prometeo* and *Afrodita* through *Prometeo's* magical trunk—followed by the rest of detainees—marks the end of the pain and desperation and the beginning of hope in an unknown journey. After *Prometeo* and *Afrodita's* disappearance, an orderly line of curious and hopeful passengers forms in front of the trunk. This journey without destination annuls the imminent deportation. They are happy not to return to Ecuador. They are going somewhere else. A magical place.

Conclusions

In the absence of a transnational cinematographic mapping of diasporic Ecuadorian populations in Spain and Italy, the first part of this chapter could be understood as a framework for filmic production that has represented Ecuadorian migratory movements over the last 20 years and has transformed families, communities, larger societies and several nation-states. For decades now, sociologists, anthropologists and policy makers both in the European Union and Ecuador have been interested, for an array of purposes, in studying the social processes and everyday life of Ecuadorian migrants. Some of these sociologists and visual anthropologists have engaged in bringing to the big screen the ethnographic studies conducted in Spain and Italy (Teodorani, Diaco, Santos, Morango, Oddone, and Morandi). Other filmmakers have attempted to show an already 'digested' and translated version of Ecuador for a larger Italian television audience (Demichelis), or to advance political struggles regarding citizenship rights (Chierchini, Keffer, and Morandini) or to counter racist and stereotypical understandings of migrants considered as not belonging to the EU in Spain (Llopico, Pérez, and Muñoz) and Italy (Rodríguez Alvarez and Pellerano Montebelli).

Ecuadorian filmmakers who might have been trained in law and journalism, but also in film and television production (Sarmiento and Rivera) identified early on the social signification of Ecuadorian migration in Spain, especially in Madrid, where the largest Ecuadorian community in Spain resides, while others have opted for representing specific procedures and processes within migration, such as family reunification in Barcelona (Ortuño).

Since the mid-1990s, Ecuadorian migration has transformed, and continues to transform, both Ecuadorian and European societies. Pablo Vargas Hidalgo, a diasporan filmmaker who was trained in Europe and has represented his own social context in Spain. Having identified potential public support and themes to make films in Ecuador,

in recent years he has returned to Ecuador to further develop his film and photography production. Diasporic Ecuadorian women filmmakers have preferred collaborative projects and have involved Italian filmmakers to represent migrant women (Jijón) or the transnational religious aspects of migration (Carrillo).

Undoubtedly, Ecuadorian public funding for filmmaking has facilitated and promoted work by Ecuadorian filmmakers. This public support has been fundamental in the Ecuadorian representations of Ecuadorian diasporas (Mieles, Hermida, Herrera, Viviana and Sebastián Cordero), as these filmmakers have considered Ecuadorian diaspora a relevant social process to depict in their films. Mieles have opted for the representation of an allegory of Ecuadorian migration that can encompass all social classes and ethnic groups. Herrera, Franco, Fegan, and Valencia have paid attention to the subjectivities and narratives of middle classes, whereas Jara represents the experiences of migration by underprivileged populations in Ecuador and Sebastián Cordero, those in Spain. Viviana Cordero successfully intertwines transnational and domestic migrations that link Ecuador's upper classes and some of the lowest social strata.

Now that Ecuador, Spain and Italy have experienced shifts in migratory fluxes, related to the financial capitalist crisis, particularly experienced in Southern/Mediterranean Europe and Ecuador's policies and programs that promote migrants return, added to Ecuador's notable economic growth and improvement of social services including health, education, housing, and welfare system, business and investment opportunities for small and medium enterprises, return migration is the current political and social argument that is highlighted in mainstream media and recent academic essays. Whereas Ecuadorian society certainly changed when people left, it is now changing again with the return of migrants and the receiving of new foreign populations (mostly Latin American migrants from Cuba and Peru and Colombian

refugees), and subsequent changes are sure to occur. And filmmakers are already representing these movements, as Viviana Cordero has done.

There are very few Ecuadorian families that have not been affected by migratory processes, especially since the mid-1990s, all of which are inflected with class, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality constituencies. Some of them are now experiencing the return of family and friends. I argue that the new filmic representations of Ecuadorian diasporas will inevitably include the return of migrants and their 'second social integration' into a country similar but also different from the one from which they emigrated years ago. Many of these migrants are returning with new families: foreign partners and children born and raised abroad, who will also have to adapt to their new social context.

CONCLUSIONS: MOVING FORWARD

This dissertation emerges from my epistemological standpoint as a diasporic mestiza woman from the coast of the Andean region living in the northeast of the United States and later in northwestern Italy, my multiple positionalities as a graduate student in Comparative Literature, and the critical thinking that was stimulated by my teaching undergraduate courses in Comparative Literature, Women's Studies, and honors seminars in the Commonwealth College at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. My teaching of Spanish as a second language at Smith College and English as a second (or more appropriately, third) language at the Milan center of the Ecuadorian Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja has also informed this dissertation.

The selections of texts I read with my students, our lively discussions and collective analyses in the classroom, testing theories and preconceptions, all encouraged my continued interest in the comparative investigation of Ecuadorian diasporas in the European Union. Furthermore, the teaching of my first language, Spanish, in Western Massachusetts, prompted me to inquire into my own linguistic habits, which were not necessarily considered "standard" Spanish. Thus I found myself questioning the cultural and historical implications of the Spanish language I spoke and the one I taught to my female students. Thereafter, the pedagogy I developed in Milan while teaching English to Ecuadorian and other Latin American migrants opened a new set of questions about my own privilege as a formally educated heterosexual migrant woman in the United States and the potential for envisioning and contributing to social transformation, textual creativity, and knowledge production by young diasporic Ecuadorian populations in the European Union.

The ethnographic research I conducted in Italy in 2007 helped raise my awareness of the silent gap between social science research and literary studies regarding Ecuadorian transnational migration in general and Ecuadorian migration to

Spain and Italy in particular. This was especially evident in scholarship published in English. Ecuadorian social scientists as well as U.S., Spanish, and Italian sociologists, anthropologists, and political economists have studied Ecuadorian transnational migration. However, little scholarly research has been devoted to the literary and artistic creativity of diasporic Ecuadorians in Southern/Mediterranean Europe and their representations in filmic texts. I wanted to understand the socio-historical conditions of the production, reception, and consumption of literary and filmic texts created by diasporic Ecuadorians, as well as representations and self-representations of the Ecuadorian diaspora in Southern/Mediterranean Europe, particularly since the mid-1990s. This migration at the turn of the century represented nearly 1.5 million people, constituting more than ten percent of Ecuador's total population, and more than half of whom were women. This predominantly female migration transformed Ecuadorian society as women became the first link in the migration chain and the roles traditionally assumed by women changed, thereby profoundly affecting family structures through reaccommodation of gender and generational roles and the development of modalities for family reunification.

Contrary to common belief, the 1990s do not mark the beginning of Ecuadorian writing in Southern/Mediterranean Europe for a European readership. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Ecuadorian diplomats, scholars, exiles, and elite subjects wrote novels, short stories, poetry, political treatises, and essays from cities including Paris, Barcelona, Madrid, and Rome. Juan Montalvo Fiallos (1832-1889), Víctor Manuel Rendón (1859-1940), Jorge Carrera Andrade (1902-1978), Alfredo Gangotena (1904-1944), Jorge Icaza (1906-1978), and Demetrio Aguilera Malta (1909-1981) are but a few examples of earlier diasporic writing. What has changed, however, is the sex, gender, social class, ethnicity, and race of contemporary diasporic Ecuadorians in Southern Europe, as well as their subjectivities and experiences stemming from their migratory statuses. What has not changed over the last centuries is

the fact that to the present day, the majority of diasporic Ecuadorian writers and artists have been male.

Diasporic Ecuadorian women writers in Southern/Mediterranean Europe have not obtained the same visibility and recognition in the publication, circulation, and reception of their literary work as their male counterparts. Unlike the more visible Ecuadorian male writers in Southern/Mediterranean Europe, particularly those located in Spain, such as Mario Campaña, Leonardo Valencia, and Iván Carrasco, discussed in this dissertation, most of the Ecuadorian women writing and publishing today in Spain and Italy emigrated mainly for socioeconomic reasons. Their translocations are linked to family circumstances and a desire to venture into new cultural and geopolitical spaces, to develop financial autonomy, and to support their families, while often managing transnational motherhood.

In this dissertation "*Documenting the (Un)Documented: Diasporic Ecuadorian Narratives in Southern/Mediterranean Europe*," my intention has been to investigate the discourses, fiction, poetry, and films that represented diasporic Ecuadorians in Southern/Mediterranean Europe, more specifically in Spain and Italy, with particular attention given to the texts inscribed by Ecuadorians.

Soon after the defense of my dissertation prospectus, and once I had researched this topic in an interdisciplinary way for some time, my positionality and geographical location shifted considerably. My appointment as Consul of Ecuador in Genoa in November 2009 deeply impacted the direction of my dissertation, as well as the writing pace I had set for it. During the writing of this dissertation, as a graduate student and as a diplomat, I had to balance my research and writing with political governmental management and community action. I learned about the experiences and narratives of diasporic Ecuadorians from a position other than that of researcher, and from a multiplicity of sources and locations that were intrinsic to my service as a Consul.

Human suffering and violence are the aspects of my job that no seminar, no book, nor legal text could thoroughly prepare me to confront and transcend in the interest of social action and the protection of human rights.

Unlike the researcher who must locate and approach research subjects and/or participants, Ecuadorian migrants contact their Consulate to obtain a series of documents, to report discriminatory treatment, to request information and demand assistance, to complain, as well as to find solutions to their numerous problems. I have had the opportunity to speak to thousands of diasporic Ecuadorians belonging to different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, about their own experiences and those of their families both in Ecuador and in the European Union, mainly in Italy and Spain.

Accordingly, the writing and revising of this dissertation has coincided with the duration of my appointment to this diplomatic post. During this time, I have tried to understand the application of European Union treaties and directives as well as Italian and Spanish legislation regarding human rights, family issues, and migration. The complex bureaucratic administrative system that migrants face on a daily basis in Italy has also been, for me, a daily challenge. Simultaneously, informed by the experiences and standpoints of diasporic Ecuadorians, I have engaged in discussions to develop government strategies to improve their quality of life and consular services that move beyond conventional approaches. It is clear that social transformation does not come from one action and one actor, but from a multiplicity of intersectional actions, movements, groups, agents, and perspectives. I was aware that I could not transform society from an office located on Genoa's main street, but that I could be part of a change, even in small increments, one at a time. As a comparative literature student and Consul, I took the opportunity to intervene in the cultural production of diasporic Ecuadorians in order to facilitate their self-representation and deconstruct the

stereotypes attached to Ecuadorian migrants in Italy, themes that I have discussed in this dissertation and that I plan to continue studying hereafter.

While I have not devoted space here to the analysis of the ever increasing theater and music production of diasporic Ecuadorians in Southern/Mediterranean Europe, particularly hip hop, raggaeton, bachata, salsa, and the fusion of Afro-diasporic and Latin styles produced by migrant urban youth, I believe future research in that direction might well ameliorate the gap between social science and humanities regarding diasporic Ecuadorian populations in the European Union and promote the visibility of cultural movements led by urban (migrant) youth marginalized by dominant cultural and capitalist regimes.

Another artistic medium that must be further developed is the filmic representations of diasporic Ecuadorians, which may replicate the development of the Ecuadorian migration fluxes at the turn of the century. Over a period of about ten years, a significant number of Ecuadorians migrated transnationally. Nearly ten years after this migration, particularly since 2010, Ecuador overcame the political and socioeconomic crisis experienced at the end of the twentieth century. While Ecuador regained its economic and political stability, new socioeconomic opportunities in education, social services, labor, and investment attracted the attention of Ecuadorian migrants in the northern hemisphere, including the United States, Spain, and Italy.

On the one hand, the evident improvement of socioeconomic conditions in Ecuador and, on the other, one of the most dramatic crises that Europe—particularly Southern one—has experienced since the end of what dominant history has labeled as World War II, have stimulated the return of Ecuadorians to their home country. In other words, over a period of fifteen years, many Ecuadorians migrated to Europe and then were able to return to their homeland. At the same time, as the financial and mortgage crisis and unemployment worsened in Spain, many Ecuadorians who resided there

translocated themselves to northern European countries in search of better living and working conditions. Some of them had relatives in Genoa and Milan, and followed them to Northern Italy, while others moved to Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland.

An important contribution to feminist research and reflexive praxis in Diasporic Studies will involve the making of collaborative projects that include filmic practices and digital storytelling by diasporic Ecuadorian subjects. As current audiovisual technologies become ever more accessible to larger numbers of people, film, photography, and digital and information technologies continue to impact the way diasporic Ecuadorians construct and narrate their own life stories and events, to their families and to a larger public. They use current technologies to represent themselves—although mediated by visual tools and at times by researchers and collaborators. The appropriation of visual technologies by diasporic Ecuadorians will also be critical in the representation of the multiple subjectivities of returned migrants currently living in Ecuador and the deconstruction of metanarratives of Ecuadorian migrations and recent returned migrations. Unlike most of the documentaries discussed in this dissertation, these projects will require researchers and research participants to change relations of power during the filmic and representational process.

Another topic that needs continuous attention by literary scholars is the increase in fictional texts by Spanish and Italian authors, in which Ecuadorians appear primarily as secondary protagonists, including José Ovejero's *Nunca pasa nada* (2007), Alessandra Monaco's *Il Trasloco* (2013), and Marina Garaventa's *Le rose dell'Ecuador* (2014). An exception is Angel Racueno Aguado's novel, *El emigrante ecuatoriano* (2012), in which, from an omniscient narrator's perspective, he represents and explains from a Eurocentric anthropological perspective the journey of Pedro, an Ecuadorian migrant from Guayaquil, passing through French Guyana, Nigeria, Niger, Algeria, to finally arrive

in Almeria, Spain. Sonia Feingenbaum, Natalia Gómez, Yovany Salazar Estrada, and Maja Zovko are scholars who have intersected sociological approaches for the study of literature in which Ecuadorian migrants are represented, for instance in novels such as José Ovejero's *Nunca pasa nada*, Juan Valdano Morejón's *La memoria y los adioses* (2006), and Carlos Carrión Figueroa's *La seducción de los sudacas* (2010). As Zovko has stated, in the majority of these literary texts, migrants are represented as impoverished, lacking formal education, from the lowest social strata of their countries of origin, and as victims marginalized both in their countries of origin and migratory destination (171). These texts do not yet represent the heterogeneity of the Ecuadorian migration to Spain and Italy, which is also composed of people from the middle and lower middle classes, university educated, and professionals from large urban centers such as Guayaquil and Quito. The texts produced by Europeans will need to be studied comparatively from feminist and decolonial perspectives with literary and filmic texts created by Ecuadorians and read against the representations of diasporic Eastern Europeans, Roma, Africans, Asians, other Latin Americans, and other minorities that have been rendered invisible in dominant Occidentalist capitalist discourses.

In the case of cinema, fictional films featuring Ecuadorian characters are yet to be widely distributed. Ecuadorians have been represented by Spanish and Italian filmmakers almost exclusively in documentaries. More research on cinematographic representation must continue to be supported, especially considering the rapidly growing film production in Ecuador, Ecuadorian government grants to promote national cinema, and the increasing number of diasporic Ecuadorians who embark on filmic projects to represent Ecuadorian migratory processes and migrant subjects.

Another line of research that will require further examination refers to the changes in Ecuadorian society after the return of a significant number of Ecuadorian migrants and deportees primarily from the United States and the European Union, and

how these returned subjects reinsert and reintegrate themselves in a nation-state that since 2008 formally defines itself as pluriethnic and pluricultural, and within a society that in the last seven years or so has noticeably changed politically, socially, and economically. These social and cultural changes in Ecuador must also take into account the increasing presence of Cuban, Colombian, Peruvian, Nigerian, and Spanish labor and transit migrants, expatriates, and refugees. The critical study of testimonials, fiction, poetry, theater, music, and filmic representations of returned migrants will likely advance our understanding of a changing Ecuador from the perspectives of former migrants who re-enter their country of origin with new hopes and skills, and with intercultural and transnational experiences obtained abroad. These texts will allow researchers and public officials to pay closer attention to the advantages and difficulties of the social reinsertion and reintegration of former migrants, how Ecuadorians who never migrated view these “new” members of society, and how children and youth, who might have been born and raised in Europe, adapt to these new cultural and geographical spaces.

It is not surprising that some Ecuadorians who return to Ecuador will feel nostalgia for what they left behind in Europe. These subjects have become transcultural and transnational. These feelings will inevitably have repercussions in Ecuadorian society and transnational families, as parents may return to Ecuador while some children may decide to remain in Europe. This research will need to continue not only in Europe, but also in Ecuador, following the migration flows of Ecuadorians. Cultural and literary studies will need to track the ways in which young people considered to be migrant youth in Europe will self-represent themselves in Ecuador and how they will represent Ecuador from within its territorial borders, expressing several national affiliations and transnational cultural practices intrinsic to their diasporic experience.

APPENDIX

POEMS IN THE ORIGINAL AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Selection of poems that participated and were awarded in the Poetry Contest of the Ecuadorian Diaspora 'Jorgenrique Adoum' within the context of the International Genoa Poetry Festival 2010-2011, analyzed in Chapter Five.

EXTRaños DESCONOCIDOS

Víctor Hugo Zambrano Escobar

La casta ha expedido el decreto:

ordena crear el "gueto"

diferencia el color de la tes

e investiga de qué padres es.

Milenios tras el origen

cuando ya era erguido el aborigen,

la espontaneidad de los grupos

de iguales senas para los cupos.

Creyeron que lo extraño

les acarrearía daños....

y surgieron los grupos de iguales

para protegerse de los males.

Así sobrevivieron

los que otrora murieron

descifrando la vida de esa manera,
los inventores de fronteras.

Y transcurrieron los tiempos
y se multiplicaron los alientos,
surgiendo grandes poblados
pueblos más distanciados.

Lo etnio dijo presente,
en todo lugar fue vigente
desde y aquellos días
en que el grupo regía.

Siempre el rechazo a lo distinto
o por blanco o por tinto.
Es que los ojos poseen colores
pero carecen de valores.

Ese quién, que miró con estupor
es innegable fundador....
el forjador de lo ignorante
y que amara lo distante.

Amantes de brechas
¡que oscuras mente estrechas!
Allí en lo que desconozco
para ser ingenuamente tosco.

Requiero de una frase
que el mundo abrace!....
espero que el ser humano
un día reconozca su hermano.

UNknown STRANGERS

The caste has issued the decree:
it orders creation of the 'ghetto'
it makes skin color different
and investigates to which parents one belongs.

Millennia after the origin
when the indigenous was already erected,
the spontaneity of groups
of equal six-point die for the quota

They believed that the strange
would cause harm...
and emerged groups of equals
to protect themselves from the evil.

That way, they survived
who would have died in other times
that way deciphering life
the inventors of borders.

And time passed

and encouragement multiplied,
emerging large villages
more distant towns.

Ethnicity said present,
and everywhere was prevailing
from the days on
that group was in power.

Always the rejection of what is different
either as White or Dark,
what happens is that eyes have colors
but lack values.

That one who looked with astonishment
is the undeniable founder...
promoter of ignorance
that would love the far away
Gap lovers
that narrow dark minds!
Over there, of what I am ignorant
being naively coarse.

I require that the world
embraces a phrase!...
I hope one day the human being
will recognize his brother.

Mares diferentes

Christopher Emmanuel Peña Cujilán

Miro el mar y recuerdo mi infancia
recuerdo nuestros viajes hacia la playa
entonces busco alrededor y no se halla
¡qué ganas de regresar con ansia!

Recuerdo cuando mi madre decidió partir
en el aeropuerto le pedí si en la maleta me llevaría
mientras se alejaba un mar de lágrimas escondía
y sola en una ciudad frente al mar se fue a vivir

Recuerdo cuando también yo tuve que partir
descubrí cuanto es triste dejar tu casa y tus raíces
y como ésto se transforma en una de tus cicatrices
y cuánta voluntad se necesita para poder partir.

Mientras llega la noche veo el firmamento
pienso que el cielo sea igual en todo el universo
pero por algún ignoto motivo desde mi País se ve diverso
y cuando veo el mar, pienso en Él cada momento.

Different Seas

I look at the sea and remember my childhood

I remember our trips to the beach

I then search around and do not find it

What a longing to return!

I remember when my mother decided to leave

at the airport I asked her if she would take me in her suitcase

while moving away, she hid a sea of tears

and she moved by herself to a city facing the sea.

I remember when I also had to depart

I discovered how sad it is to leave your house and your roots

and how this transforms in one of your scars

and how much willingness is needed to be able to leave.

While night comes, I gaze at the firmament

I think that the sky is the same in the entire universe

but for an unknown reason, it looks different from my Country

and when I look at the sea, I always think of It.

1 1 1

“Si desta la progenie di...”

Diana Elizalde

A Mercedes, y a todas las mujeres ecuatorianas que emigrando dieron a sus familias y por ende al mundo entero un ejemplo inestimable de dignidad y valentía.

Si desta la progenie di
Colombo,
la necessità spinge
le radici fuori dalla terra

e sono donne, amici miei,
le guerriere:
dolci amazzoni,
che cavalcano il mare.

E' femmina l'avventura,
è femmina la speranza,
è femmina, fratelli miei,
la nostalgia.

Una volta fu l'uomo:
impavido e audace;
una volta fu l'uomo a
navigare l'ignoto.

Ed ecco che oggi
fiera madre altera,
cammina il sentiero, il domani,
la Donna:

è fianco,
seno,
sorriso,

è molto più di quello:
la volontà dell'indio,
la fierezza spagnola:
secolare connubio
ecuadoriano.

Brindate amici miei,
e senza paura
salutate le nuove
caravelle.

“The progeny of Columbus...”

The progeny of Columbus
wakes up
necessity pushes
the roots to get out of the earth

and women are, my friends
the warriors:
sweet Amazons,
that ride over the sea.

Female is the adventure

female is the hope
female is, my brothers,
the nostalgia.

One time it was the man:
fearless and bold;
one time it was the man
who navigated the unknown.

And here we have today
a proud, dignified mother,
walks the road, the future,
the Woman:
is hips,
breasts,
smile,

it's much more than that:
the Indian's will,
the Spanish fierceness:
Ecuadorian
millenarian alliance.

Cheers, my friends
and without fear
greet the new
caravels.

Mujer del alma blanca

Jazmín Dora Rodríguez Soledispa

De Dónde ha llegado Dulce estrella,
Voluntad y paciencia son tus características.
Mujer del alma blanca eres indispensable y especial
Tú que puedes realizar tantas cosas con increíble naturaleza.
Tú que cumples tu deber con grande dignidad
Sin esperar nada a cambio,
Es cierto que existe un papel
Pero..! es cierto que lo que das es mucho más de lo que recibes

Tú que nonostante por todo lo eres y haces,
eres una figura invisible.
En mi pensamiento infinito quiero dedicar a ti mis reflexiones
Diciendo que eres un sujeto trascendente gracias todo lo que haces.
Mujer del alma blanca.
Que has traído estabilidad, recuerdos y alegría.

Mujer del alma blanca.
De espíritu bondadoso, deseo bien para ti.
Desde mi mundo espero poder comprenderte.
Hoy rodeado de lindas plantas que viven la alegría de la primavera
Tantas voces felices y otras menos que dicen el contexto
Los sueños y las energías no se acaban, viven y se regeneran en todas estaciones.

Mujer del alma blanca. "Mujer Badante."

Woman of White Soul

From where has this Sweet star arrived,

Will and patience are your qualities.

Woman of white soul, you are essential and special
you that can do incredibly, naturally, so many things.

You that do your duty with enormous dignity

Expecting nothing in return,

It's true that it exists a piece of paper

But..! it's true that you give much more than what you receive.

Despite all that you are and do,

you are an invisible figure.

In my infinite thoughts I want to dedicate my reflections to you

Saying that you are a transcendental subject thanks to everything that you do

Woman of white soul.

You have brought stability, memories, and joy.

Woman of white soul.

Of generous spirit, I wish you well.

From my world I hope to be able to understand you.

Today surrounded by beautiful plants that live spring's joy.

So many happy voices and others less happy that reveal the context

Dreams and energy never die, they live and regenerate in all seasons.

Woman of white soul. "Mujer Badante."

Io ho un sogno

Dina Keyla Tamayo Saltos

Io ho un sogno:
aiutare chi ne ha bisogno,
vivere come voglio,
vedere l'onda che s'infrange sullo scoglio...

Vivere senza razzismo,
senza più bullismo;
una vita senza guerra
migliorerebbe molto la Terra!
Ma la gente se ne frega
e nell'ignoranza annega.

Ma ad alcuni questo interessa:
a quella persona che non pensa solo a se stessa;
a quella gente che subito agisce;
a quel popolo che di fame perisce;
a quei ragazzi che si vogliono applicare
e il Mondo provano a cambiare;
a quelle persone che insieme
lottano per la medesima ragione,
che sperano in un miglior futuro
molto più allegro e più sicuro.

Per tutta la gente che ancora ci crede:

niente è impossibile, basta aver fede

Io ho un sogno

che prima o poi si avvererà...

E Voi, se ci credete,

non temete e agite!

I have a dream

I have a dream:

to help those in need,

to live the way I want,

to see the wave that breaks the rocks...

To live without racism,

without any more bullying;

a life without war

the Earth would be so much better!

But people don't care

and are drowned by ignorance

But some are interested in this

that person that thinks not only about herself;

the people that immediately react;

the population that dies of hunger;

those guys who want to get engaged

and try to change the World

those people who together

fight for the same reason,

and hope for a better future

much happier and safer

For all the people who still believe:
nothing is impossible, one just needs faith.

I have a dream
that will happen sooner or later
and you guys, if you believe in it,
don't fear and act!

1 1 1

Io voglio

Katherine Moreira

Io voglio
una città in cui nessuno parli male degli stranieri
che non ci trattino male!
O, quanto mi piacerebbe una cosa così!
Ma purtroppo non posso cambiare le cose.
Però io vorrei anche un cagnolino che mi piace
ma anche quello non posso averlo.
Scrivere delle storie è molto bello
perché puoi scrivere le cose che tu pensi,
mi decido e prendo un foglio e una penna
e descrivo quello che ho in mente,
Una storiella.
E tolgo così tutto dal mio cuore.

I want

I want

a city in which no one talks bad about foreigners

that they don't treat us badly!

Oh, how much I'd like something like that!

But unfortunately I can't change things.

However, I'd also wish a puppy that I like

but neither that I can have!

it's very nice to write stories

because you can write things you think about,

I make the decision and take a sheet of paper and a pen

and describe what's on my mind,

a little story.

And that way I take everything out from my heart.

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