The Politics of Possibility:
Migrant Feminist Ethics in Madrid, Spain

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INTRODUCTION

"I might go to the U.S. next year," Pilar stated very matter of factly.

Taken aback by her comment, I looked at her in disbelief and immediately followed up the question about her future plans that had provoked this unexpected response, and asked with uninhibited surprise, "Why?! How?!"

Pilar was my first *compañera* (literally translated as "companion," but which I use in place of "informant" to refer to the women with whom I worked in the field), and had remained one of my closest friends throughout my time in Madrid. This current conversation took place about four months after we first met, and through our previous conversations, I was able to learn a lot about her, including many fascinating details about her life in Bolivia prior to migrating abroad and her current endeavors as a domestic worker and activist in Madrid. Yet, despite the intimacy and familiarity we had been developing as friends and as colleagues, there were several exchanges where I found myself very surprised by certain revelations regarding her past, present and future; personal details that did not seem to match the understanding I had developed of her up to that point. For example, when she told me about her plans to finish and defend her undergraduate thesis in Spain, I was immediately skeptical given the physical and emotional demands of her job as a domestic worker and the prohibitive costs of university classes. Yet, although I questioned the possibility for her to finish her degree as an undocumented migrant engaged in a poorly paid and minimally protected work sector, she seemed entirely confident about the prospect.

Similarly, when Pilar mentioned the possibility of traveling to the U.S. in this current conversation, it was difficult for me to reconcile such a seemingly ambitious desire for the future with the sober reality of her oppressive present. After my startled response, she explained that in

addition to studying and working in Madrid, she had recently started volunteering for a consulting business, through which the trip to the U.S. would be organized. Pilar candidly explained that because the company valued her contributions, they offered to send her to the U.S. for additional training. As she explained the details of the situation, she spoke with complete conviction, as if the entire proposition was well within the realm of possibility, *as if* it would come to fruition exactly as suggested to her and as she desired. She also explained, "In Bolivia, I actually wanted to open my own consulting firm after finishing my degree. Now I can do it." On this and several other occasions when Pilar explained newly formed intentions and plans for the future (which seemed to happen often), there was often a distinct disjuncture between her appraisal of the future and my own. Whereas she seemed to approach the future with relaxed certainty, as if what she desired could come to fruition, I was skeptical. I often wondered what the chances were that an undocumented migrant woman with minimal labor protections and social rights would achieve her stated goals, particularly when such goals resembled those of more privileged groups of Spanish society, and given the lack of precedence for disadvantaged and marginalized "others" to realize any such grand aspirations. The achievement of university degrees and the enhancement of one's career through business trainings abroad were not characteristic events in the lives of undocumented migrant women. Yet, this lack of precedence, or an *actual* reality, with which to substantiate optimistic appraisals of the probability for a positive outcome to materialize, did not seem to inhibit Pilar's belief in and engagement with such a possibility. Statistical calculations of probability from my end would not have offered Pilar more or less reassurance and, hence, more or less motivation and direction, vis-à-vis an unknown future. For Pilar, the possibility was as "real" as actuality. Yet, despite regular evidence of a steadfast equanimity regarding what may or may not unfold in her future, I could

not approach the future as she did. I remained skeptical and could not escape the question that regularly dominated my thoughts: *What are the chances?* I also wondered each time we spoke, how Pilar, whose past and present life has included significant struggle and suffering, could still think in terms of possibilities, that *anything is possible?*

The Politics of Possibility

Shift in Research Perspective

Despite such regular, privately held thoughts of skepticism throughout my fieldwork, I gradually came to shift my perspective. After eighteen months of rich interactions with migrant feminist women in Madrid, Spain, I realized that Pilar was not the only one who approached the world as if *anything is possible.* Because Pilar and many of the other women with whom I worked could navigate recurrent experiences of inequity and deprivation and still recognize and embrace the possibilities immanent in their everyday lives, I realized that I needed to shift my perspective. As an anthropologist, I wanted to understand these women's experiences with grassroots activism as they did. In order to appreciate the nuances of their activities, interactions and visions, I realized I needed to start from a premise of possibility. *The Politics of Possibility: Migrant Feminist Ethics*, then, begins from this premise. I recount some of the experiences I shared with migrant feminists in Madrid, based on an epistemological shift in understanding, from a narrow focus on actuality to an open engagement with possibility. With this shift, as I go on to explain, I make room for emergence, contingency, creativity, desire and care, as cultivated by ethical practice. In making room for the unknown and the possible, I strive to "unleash the vitality" of their world (Biehl and Locke 2010).

However, such a change in direction took time. I began my dissertation research in Madrid with the intention of investigating "female migrant domestic workers' struggle for social justice," as I explained in my dissertation proposal. I wanted to explore "their efforts to enact alternative visions of justice and belonging." In other words, I was interested in social change and how female migrant activists would achieve it. In my understanding at the time, change was the *sin qua non* of grassroots activism and there were more or less effective methods for achieving it. I, therefore, would explore migrant women's particular approach, and the likelihood such an approach would result in change. Specifically, I tasked myself with exploring the efficacy of legal activism. "Are legal structures an ideal mode for the transformation of contested cultural categories and the attainment of social justice?" I asked as one of my pre-fieldwork inquiries. Or, does legal reform ultimately "reinforce the law's authority, centrality and supposed rationality?"

As evidenced by my dissertation proposal questions, I began my fieldwork with the assumption that social justice – in the form of improved labor protections and living standards for migrant women – was the desired effect, and legal reform would prove either a viable or ineffective cause depending on my findings. Beginning with some knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of using the law to pursue equality with regards to gender, as debated by liberal, social and radical feminist theorists,[1] I set out to investigate the particularities of legal activism amongst migrant feminists in Madrid. With ethnography's capacity to expand and enrich general knowledge with the distinctive details and nuanced insights of a localized context,

[1]Radical feminists see legal activism as a necessary evil, given the impossibility of equality within an inherently patriarchal legal system; liberal feminists regard legal reform as the fundamental means for achieving equality; and social feminists see liberal rights as an impediment to social transformation (Jhappan 1998).

[2] As various authors have argued (e.g. Laidlaw 2010; Keane 2007; Mahmood 2005), analytical uses of the term agency are often misplaced and misleading.

I was hopeful about the capacity for my research to refine theories of activism, specifically with regards to the efficacy of legal activism.

However, it was not until towards the end of my fieldwork that I began to recognize the limitations of my analytical approach and some misplaced assumptions on which my research was based. Although my focus on change seemed logical and necessary, given my thematic interest in activism, these women's explicitly stated goals to achieve change, and my own political zeal as a feminist, I realized that my approach to exploring the dynamics of change was overly deterministic and, more importantly, was not consistent with how these women approached their work. Whereas I structured my research so that I could discover the most effective pathway to actual change, these women structured their activist efforts according to the *possibility* for change. That is, they did not seem to perceive their work as a striving for actual change and, thus, narrowly structure their activities according to calculations of cost-effectiveness and probability; rather, they seemed to engage and embrace their work with the simple yet significant understanding that anything was possible, that anything could happen. Because they approached social and political change with flexibility and openness, there was more room in their political efforts for innovation, ethical reflection, desire, care and other qualities and experiences typically overlooked with traditional strategies based upon "tried and true" methods.

I also assumed that change would unfold by way of a linear and causal connection. If these women adopt strategy *x* (e.g. legal reform), then outcome *y* (e.g. better labor protections) would result. Implicit in such an approach to apprehending an unknown future is the assumption that the future will be conformable to the past. If the future is presumed to unfold in a like

manner as the past, then our knowledge of the past becomes determinative of our knowledge of the future. The actual determines the possible. The known determines the unknown.

Yet, through my interactions with these women, I eventually realized that such assumptions were not only limiting, but also problematic. Causality, linearity, efficacy and probability were not the appropriate concepts with which to analyze these women's experiences with activism. As discussed at the start of this introduction with Pilar's story, these women approached their work as if anything was possible. With time, I realized the significance of such a premise. Given the unpredictability of the future, the only certitude they, or anyone, can have regarding the future is that one does not know what will happen. As Graeber writes, "This is the only thing that we can say for certain. Anything could happen" (2012:33). Thus, our "scientific," or seemingly "magical" "technologies of the future," as Graeber puts it, such as statistical quantifications of probability, are nothing more than performative measures to prove we know that which we do not know. As such, I realized that prioritizing possibility and allowing room for contingency and emergence was more appropriate for fully grasping the experiences of these feminist activists.

In emphasizing possibility, however, my aim is not to offer a romantic appraisal of an unknown future, particularly with regards to a collective whose conditions of marginality and oppression might result in more cynical assessments. In this case, I would simply be "performing" the same "scientific" practice that Graeber critiques regarding the imposition of theories that prove delusive or irrelevant (e.g. theories of agency or resistance, which I explain later). While there were certainly admirable qualities of optimism and desire on the part of these women worth noting, as well as impressive moments of acuity and creativity worth highlighting, my aim is not to offer a conclusive statement of their imminent redemption, as facilitated by

some inherent cultural capacity or impregnable agency.[2] There are known formidable and asymmetric forces of power that can adversely circumscribe their futures and, as such, must be taken into account, as I do in the next chapter. What an emphasis on possibility allows, however, is the recognition that there are myriad alternatives from which actuality can unfold, one of which *may* be redemption in some form. But rather than immediately appeal to notions of triumphant resistance, I strive to linger in the experience of possibility, and explore what it means and looks like for these women. Therefore, I argue that the unknown need not be seen as an analytical inconvenience, whose elusiveness can and should be demystified with rigorous theory and strict computations. Rather, with an emphasis on possibility, along with ethnography's capacity to capture the nuances and complexities of a given experience or context, the dynamic, emergent and contingent can be recognized as rich and constitutive elements of activists' efforts.

An Inversion of Conventional Epistemology

With my emphasis in this dissertation on possibility instead of actuality, I challenge common epistemological assumptions and offer a new take on grassroots activism and the dynamics of change. Rather than highlight causality, reasons, and outcomes, in accordance with an emphasis on actuality, I focus on emergence, particularities, and possibility. Such an emphasis on causality and reasons is evident in the field of social movement studies, which documents the various strategies and factors that are more or less effective or propitious in the pursuit of a social movement's goals. For example, resource mobilization theories highlight the organizational capacities, including skills, knowledge, networks, material resources, and the

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rational or strategic logic, that enable organizations to effectively mobilize support (e.g. McCarthy and Zald 1977; McAdam et al. 1996). Other more "culturally oriented" theories offer interpretations of efficacy and success by analyzing the role of cultural categories, such as cognitive frames, ideological packages, and discourses (e.g. Klandermans et al. 1988; Snow and Benford 1988). In general, much of the literature within social movement studies is dedicated to understanding the causal connections between the particular characteristics of various social mobilization efforts and the outcomes. And as the edited volume, *How Social Movements Matter* makes clear, what ultimately "matters" are the outcomes. Thus, whether the outcomes are political in nature (e.g. the responsiveness of decision-makers), economic (e.g. the changed behavior of economic actors and institutions), or cultural (e.g. shifts in opinion, belief and shared identities), with careful analysis of past and present social movements, we can gain insight into how future efforts can and should unfold. The possible becomes contingent upon the actual.

This dissertation challenges the central place of actuality within conventional epistemology and much of the social movement literature. While I maintain the traditional empiricist approach of ethnography, in that I privilege the concrete richness of experience as a productive source of knowledge, I do so without the empirical skepticism of Hume regarding that which we cannot experience. That is, I argue that the known, or actuality, need not be constitutive of the unknown. Possibility, or the unknown, is substantive in and of itself, without an analytical evaluation of its distance from or proximity to actuality (e.g. actual effective strategies and successful cases of social mobilization), nor a metaphysical position of skepticism. I argue that possibility is primordial vis-à-vis actuality, and is that from which actuality unfolds, not vice versa.

In this way, my arguments in this dissertation follow Deleuze's philosophy of transcendental empiricism, and his writings on difference and becoming – everything is constantly changing and reality is a becoming, not a being (Deleuze 1968). With only difference (i.e. change) and no identity (i.e. sameness), then empiricism must always be about creating. The unknown, novelty, or difference precedes the known, convention and sameness. As Deleuze writes:

> Empiricism is by no means a reaction against concepts, nor a simple appeal to lived experience. On the contrary, it undertakes the most insane creation of concepts ever seen or heard (1968: xx-xxi).

Thus, whereas Kant's philosophy of transcendental idealism emphasizes the limits of our knowledge, or the incapacity of the human mind to fully comprehend that which does not exist in space or time, Deleuze believes in the capacity to know that which we cannot yet experience. Because there is no identity, and there is only difference and creation, then there already is and always will be the unknown within the known. With becoming the fundamental basis of reality, then possibilities are always immanent; there is an ongoing production of something other than what is. Actuality then is contingent upon possibility.

This inversion of conventional epistemology is useful within a study of grassroots activism because it allows for an appreciation of nuances that otherwise would be dismissed with assumptions of improbability, unconventionality or utopianism. As I illustrate in the chapters that follow, I spent much of my research doubting the efforts and goals of the women with whom I worked, and subsequently could not fully appreciate their activities and visions. Other social organizations and individual activists similarly dismissed the activities of many of the feminists with whom I worked, particularly those who belonged to the feminist organization, *Territorio Doméstico* (TD), whose activities are the focus of Chapter Four. Critiques were largely centered

on what was perceived as TD's lack of political advocacy or political impact (*incidencia política*), or what social movement theorists would identify as critical for social movement success. According to these other activists, TD only engaged in recreational activities (*actividades lúdicas*) such as social gatherings over shared meals and coffee, and as such, their efforts were less likely to translate into the necessary changes that migrant women needed. Without *incidencia política,* for example in the form of greater visibility on a national and international level or the formation of alliances with powerful social and political actors, these women's work would remain merely "utopic."

The Place of Possibility

Yet, I argue that although these women's activist efforts do not conform to *actual* past or present standards of success, their practices and visions of the future do not necessarily have "no place," as the etymology for the Greek word for "utopia" suggests. As Malkki (1995) argues regarding future visions of Hutu refugees, I argue that migrant feminists' future visions, or imagined possibilities, need not be dismissed as mere day-dreaming, utopic and/or improbable, given our conventional emphasis on the past as decisive, and our knowledge of present limiting conditions. Starting with a philosophy of becoming and the primordiality of possibility, I argue that history does not unfold as discrete events that *happened*, but is that which is constantly *happening*, as concrete and contingent particulars of continuously evolving stories. As such, migrant women's visions for the future have a definitive "place" within a reality where possibility is, in fact, the very dynamic of change.

Moreover, in the eighteen months that I spent interacting with various collectives of migrant feminist women in Madrid, I was able to observe and participate in various "places" of

possibility. That is, I argue that the possibilities envisioned and desired for the future were not mere mental and fantastical fabrications, but were embodied and fully lived. The world that these women strive to produce is a world already in production through their day-to-day activities. As ethnographies of resistance have shown, much of the efforts towards broad social change effectively begin with or primarily entail micro-productions of the world. What one desires for the future on a larger scale is given form and substance in the terrain of everyday life, with everyday "tactics" (Certeau 1984) or "arts of resistance" (Scott 1990) (also see Taussig, 1980; Guha, 1983; Fals Borda, 1984; Comaroff, 1985; Scott, 1985; Ong, 1987). In the case of the migrant feminists with whom I worked, I argue (and will go on to elaborate in the next section) that an ethics of care is what specifically gives shape and substance to their particular world of political possibility; an ethos contradistinctive to the toxicity of neoliberalism. Through their ethical practices of care, which is at the foundation of their political efforts, these migrant feminists enact the very transformation that they seek of an otherwise enervating world. Munn's (1992) work on Gawan "intersubjective spacetimes" similarly demonstrates the "real," dynamic and observable process of a potentiality's cultivation and transformation through specific social interactions. The possibilities desired – be it social justice broadly speaking in the case of migrant feminists, or individual and communal fame in the case of the Gawans – are as real as the social exchanges that engender such possibilities.

Thus, if these migrant women imagined, desired and effectively lived an alternative world, then as an anthropologist my role should not be to judge the probability that such visions would become actualized. Rather, what I can offer, and what ethnography is primed to do, is an exploration of the dynamics of possibility itself; a depiction of their vision of an alternative reality, as they see it and live it. *The Politics of Possibility* is precisely an ethnographic portrayal

of this distinct "place" of possibility. Whereas I had been focused in the early part of my research on actuality (as an outcome or determinant of an outcome), in the chapters that follow I linger in the experience of possibility, and explore it as a real and dynamic "place."

Political Implications

In addition to the theoretical import of an emphasis on possibility, I also bring attention to the political implications. As I have discussed, with an epistemological shift in focus from actuality to possibility, reality can be discerned as an ever-changing flow of differences rather than constituted by fixed identities. Implicit in the notion of what is "real" is an ongoing process of change, or an ongoing bifurcation between possibility and actuality. Possibility then is as much a part of the real as is the actual, and is, in fact, what begets actuality. With this theoretical shift, we become more open to experiences otherwise dismissed as unconventional or improbable, and individuals and collectives rejected as non-existent or "crazy" (as one of my *compañeras,* Jamileth put it). Possibilities are no longer marginal, but are primordial. I therefore argue that these women embody possibility with their insight, initiative and creativity. If we understand actuality to mean having the force and authority of normativity – i.e. having legal existence, political voice, and/or social recognition[3] – then these women, along with their alternative vision and political practices, embody the possibility that exists beyond and challenges normativity, or the normative standards considered oppressive and debilitating.

Moreover, it can be said that it is precisely the implausibility and radicality of these women's demands, vision and methodology that renders their particular trajectory towards social

[3]Foucault's work on discourse, and his argument that all knowledge is political, helps to substantiate my point that actuality (what we know and do) is premised on constructions of normativity, on politically, socially, legally mediated ideas of what *ought to be*; hence Foucault's interest in and emphasis on epistemology instead of ontology.

change a possibility at all. As Badiou (2005) argues, for change to occur, what is required is not consistency with current logic. Rather, it is precisely the epistemic inability to grasp the possibility for change and novelty that is necessary. It is precisely because the toxicity of certain ideas and beliefs has been normalized and sedimented in the familiar and doxic world of norms, legal code, and language, that change emerges as a possibility at all, that social groups such as migrant women are moved to act. Here, the Platonic principle of the ideal as always separate and distant from conventional knowledge and actual experience is applicable. Meaningful change is inherently exceptional and qualitatively distinct. Thus, with the recognition of possibilities, not only is a place and a part given to those otherwise legally nonexistent, politically voiceless, and socially marginalized, "the part with no part" (Badiou 2005), but such a part can also be recognized as potentially transformative.[4]

Agamben (1999), with insight from Aristotle, makes a similar argument. Rather than see potential as merely the peripheral antecedent of actuality, he prioritizes potentiality and affirms its autonomous existence, for potentiality can both be and not-be. According to Agamben, true freedom is found not in actuality but in potentiality; the capacity to not-be. Povinelli (2011),

[4]Badiou (2005) lays out two theses as "prerequisites for any possible ontology": 1) "The multiple from which ontology makes up its situation is composed solely of multiplicities. There is no one. In other words, every multiple is a multiple of multiples"; and 2) "[t]he count-as-one is no more than the system of conditions through which the multiple can be recognized as multiple" (29). Badiou argues that because multiples are made up of multiples, that there is no ontology of the one, it the through operation of "count-as-one" that certain elements are rendered "inconsistent," as elements that do not "count." Thus, "[w]hat *presents* itself is essentially multiple; *what* presents itself is essentially one" (Badiou 2005: 23). In other words, prior to the imposition of conditions that render a multiple as a seemingly unitary "one," we can see the seemingly unitary one as essentially multiple. In contemporary Spain (as in other countries dominated by a neo-liberal logic), although the possession of capital determines one's ability to "count" for something, or to be included in the dominant order, there are elements of the multiple/dominant order that exist but have been excluded. The second part of Badiou's work *Being and Event,* centers on the "event," as that which constitutes a break with the existing ways of counting, or the logic according to which individuals are made to belong or not.

through her fieldwork with indigenous groups in Australia, similarly identifies a potency in this incapacity, the potential to not-be sacrificed, to not-be victim, to not-be voiceless, marginalized or invisible. Like Povinelli, I aim to attribute a quality of exceptionality to migrant women's capacity to endure in a world beyond the space of actuality, where laws, social norms, and political voice offer recognition and existence. Migrant women may be the unrecognized subjects of contemporary processes of normalized violence and suffering, but they have not been reduced to "bare life" (Agamben 1998), nor are they merely waiting idly alongside the doorkeeper of Kafka's Law.[5] However, unlike Povinelli, who seeks to acknowledge the force of day-to-day persistence within late liberalism as a powerful statement of "not-this," or unlike Berlant, who uses the notion of "lateral agency" to refer to modes of extension, distraction, and "getting by," I go beyond endurance and distraction to highlight the creative endeavors that also reside in and emerge from the space of possibility, beyond the realm of actuality. My fieldwork allowed me to see beyond "not-this," to see the emerging possibilities of an alternative "this." Rather than simply expose and explain the powers of normativity, how it normalizes and exacerbates violence and suffering (as, for example, with Adorno's critical theory of negative dialectics), I recognize that the space of possibility can also harbor and kindle imagination and invention. Specifically, I recognize their alternative "this" as an ethics of care.

By shifting our analytical position from a fixed anticipation of the actual to an open exploration of the possible, we can gain a deeper appreciation for these women's activities as they work towards a more ethically inspired world. Thus, rather than focus on the question of the possibility *for* change, I focus on the *possibility* for change. With this subtle shift in emphasis, the story is no longer a strict evaluation of the feasibility of one's political project and

[5] From the parable, "Before the Law" in Franz Kafka's 1915 novel, *The Trial.*

the efficacy of their strategies, but rather is about the experience of possibility itself, as told and lived by those who imagine and cultivate it.

Migrant Feminist Ethics

Ethical Perspective

In addition to the notion of possibility, the second important concept that emerged from my research and on which my dissertation is based is ethics. I propose an ethical perspective as a method of analysis as well as a normative framework advocated by the feminist activists with whom I worked in Madrid.

As a method of analysis, I argue that an ethical perspective offers a more nuanced look at the dynamics of change as negotiated by political activists, in that it allows for a more open exploration of the contingent, emergent, imaginative, and rhizomatic aspects of the process of change. Deleuze and Guattari use the botanical concept of the rhizome to refer to our knowledge of experience. That which is rhizomatic has neither beginning nor end, and is always a middle from which other experiences grow. Deleuze and Guattari aim to move away from the more traditional and "arborescent" conception of knowledge, which looks for origins, conclusions and linear connections, and instead move towards the recognition of "ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (1980:7).

As I discussed in the previous section, I had initially approached these women's efforts in teleological terms. I was overly focused on the notion of change, such that I narrowly evaluated their efforts in terms of efficacy and probability. And as with many other studies of subaltern

and subordinate groups, I assumed that change was contingent upon resistance. I assumed that change for such a minority group would necessarily involve the confrontation and transformation of some oppositional force (in this case, Spanish law), and that asymmetries of power as expressed institutionally, discursively and socially, would determine the capacity for confrontation and transformation.

Moreover, working with a group of feminists, I assumed that resistance was their *raison d'etre.* In addition to being an analytical endeavor, feminism is fundamentally a politically prescriptive project (Verloo and Lombardo 1999); it was birthed as the proactive response to women's subordinate status. In intellectual and pragmatic engagements with systems of thought and practice that have directly contributed to women's oppression (e.g. law, politics, theory etc.), the point is to reject, obliterate, or transform such oppressive systems. Thus, how could I not assume that resistance against and destruction of repressive structures was these women's deep-seated and sustaining purpose? How could a feminist project be oriented otherwise? And with the popularity of resistance studies, given the theoretical capacity to speak to notions of agency and power and, thus, advance potentially redemptive analyses of oppressed groups, resistance was an attractive concept with which I could analyze migrant women's political efforts.[6] Many activists recognized Spanish law as an undeniable source of migrant oppression and were, therefore, adamant about challenging any laws that contributed to their suffering.

However, as I spent more time with these women, I came to recognize an energy and vision that went beyond mere contrariness and an explicit desire to dismantle and overturn adverse forces. As other scholars have also recognized in their respective ethnographic contexts

[6] The concept of resistance, along with variations of practice theory, was particularly useful for counteracting the static analyses of structural-functionalism and its inadequacy to account for change, which the political movements and dramatic economic changes of the late-twentieth century required.

(e.g. Constable 2007; Mahmood 2005), resistance in the case of my research was not the appropriate lens through which to capture these women's political activities, for the care they exhibited for one another, the solidarity shared, and creativity expressed emerged from a dynamic other than a dialectic of domination and resistance. While resistance to oppression in the form of unjust legal norms (or the lack of fair legal norms) was certainly a relevant force as I mentioned, as a theoretical framework it could not adequately explain the distinct rhythm and substance of their interactions, such as the frequent lively gatherings over *pupusas*, *café* and *vino,* the countless hours spent discussing personal matters rather than political strategy during their regular business meetings, and their unconditional guidance and support for one another that was evident beyond the explicitly political spaces and visible episodes of collective action. I argue that such experiences are neither peripheral events nor mere cultural adornments within a broader narrative of political action, where "political" is understood as that which is "effective" or impactful. Rather, their relationality is "the very stuff" of politics.[7]

Thus, I see ethics as a more nuanced way of considering how individuals, engaged as activists, thoughtfully and purposefully move through a world of both indeterminacies and fixed boundaries. Navigating the complexities of migrancy does not just come down to power and interest, but also entails evaluations of what is right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, or helpful and unhelpful, and addresses the interconnectedness of one's place in the world. A focus on ethics, then, shifts our attention from antagonistic battles to cooperative interactions, from individual claims to shared responsibilities, and from self to other. I refer to such a dynamic, marked by intimacy, solidarity and desire, as an ethics of care.

[7] I use Foucault's words regarding the centrality of relationality within ethics (1997:300).

My approach to ethics is specifically grounded in the Aristotelian tradition. That is, I emphasize the contingency and specificity of ethical practice; decisions about what is right or good are made according to the particularities of a given situation. This normative approach to action is often contrasted with deontological ethics, such as the Kantian imperative to act according to a morality of fixed rules, and out of a categorical duty to do what is right. Foucault's later work (1997) specifically opposes this rigid approach, and advocates ethics "as a practice of freedom," of which conflict, reflection and creativity are significant parts. And Faubion, who incorporates Foucault's emphasis on freedom into his own work, states that if there is no freedom, then "by analytical fiat," "it falls outside the ethical domain" (2011:36-37). These and other theorists of ethics (e.g. Keane 2014; Laidlaw 2002; Lambek 2010; Williams 1985) recognize ethical practice then not as culturally scripted action or as emerging from psychological dispositions of which people are unaware (e.g. Mischel and Shoda 1995; Ross and Nisbett 1991), but rather as action that is skillfully, carefully, contingently, and perhaps "artfully" fashioned (Nehamas 1998).

Problematization

Applying this perspective of ethical practice as thoughtful and exploratory engagement to an analysis of activism, we gain more nuanced insights into how social change may evolve. That is, rather than see change as necessarily unfolding in deterministic and linear ways, according to a principle of efficacy and along a simple, domination-resistance continuum, we can recognize more nuanced elements that are a part of the process of change. Specifically, I argue that in addition to the notion of possibility that enriches our understanding of change (i.e. change as

constituted by actuality *and* possibility), the notion of problematization also yields significant insight.

For Foucault, "problematization" is a fundamental part of ethical practice, for critical to problematization is "thought," which is distinct from ideas and attitudes:

> Thought…is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem (1991: 388).

Through this process of thoughtful "objectification," one is able to reflect on one's activities and the conditions of one's existence as a "problem." But for Foucault, a "problem" is not a pre-packaged dilemma simply in need of a solution, but rather is an assemblage of knowledges, structures, "meanings," and "conditions" yet to be articulated and whose relations have yet to be delineated. Problematization then is not the identification of ready-made issues (e.g. "oppressive Spanish laws"), but is an active process, or "motion," requiring the delineation of the very contours and mechanics of a "problem."

Thus, activism, approached as a form of ethical practice, or a *thought*ful process of problematization, involves the delineation and articulation of the "problems" within one's present situation; it involves making visible what otherwise might remain obscure, ambiguous or "normal" and which would, thus, remain unchanged, be it an individual behavior or a social condition. In this dissertation, I argue that a significant part of the process of engendering change requires a critical engagement with the conditions, meanings, and assumptions that underlie a potentially problematic situation. Facilitating change is not simply a matter of saying something is "wrong" and attaching a pre-determined solution (as identified for example by theories of actually constituted change), but instead requires bringing attention to what has sustained the acceptance of a particular condition or situation as "normal," up until the moment

of problematization. Thus with critical engagement, there is a disruption of the status quo, or the presumed normality of a situation. "The cast of normalcy sustaining the reality-effect of the public sphere," as Taussig (1989:8) puts it, is made known for what it is – "ordered disorder" or "terror as usual." Ethical problematization then is the first step towards the provocation of change. As a "catalyst of revisionary resolution," "problematization constitutes the dynamic interface between one discourse and another" (Faubion 2001); it signifies the shift from a discourse of "normality" to a discourse of "abnormality."

Normality and Normativity

It may be said that what constitutes "normality" is not merely a detached, quantitative description of what society does most often and/or of what there is the most of in society (i.e. migrant women's suffering is chronic and, therefore, normal). Underlying conceptions of normality is the normative dimension of how things should or ought to be. The pervasiveness and severity of migrant women's suffering may not only be described as an empirical reality, but is also a prescription for normality. That is, their suffering is expected and thus structured into the normal fabric and course of everyday life, for it sustains the well-being and livelihoods of more privileged Spanish citizens, materially and symbolically. In traditional Marxist terms, the exigencies of capitalism, such as the flexibilization of labor, have rendered migrant women's instability a necessary condition for Spanish citizens' stability. And as postcolonial and postmodern studies on "otherness" have demonstrated, beginning with Said's (1978) influential work, there is an ontological and discursive necessity of the "other" for constructions of the Occident or the privileged "self" (e.g. Ang 1996; Asad 1973; Bauman 1977; Clifford 1986). "Their dark wildness exists so as to silhouette our light" (Taussig 1989).

Bringing migrant women's suffering out of the shadows, or illuminating "their dark wildness," is part of the process of ethical problematization. Ethical reflection brings the normal and normative into critical view for reevaluation and reconfiguration. Throughout this dissertation, I emphasize visibility, and its counterpart invisibility, as an important theme. As the ensuing chapters will show, visibility is the socio-political quality that makes the difference between a life that is documented, sheltered, safe and grievable (Butler 2009), and a life that is marginalized, diseased, exploited and persecuted. In spite of the increasingly severe and pervasive forms of suffering that migrant women endure, their experiences remain invisible and "normal" (or non-problems), while the recent precarious shifts in social, political and economic conditions for Spanish citizens have been collectively denominated a "crisis" – an event worthy of ethical reflection and political intervention. But because migrant women's suffering is both normal and normative, their suffering has not risen to the level of an event and thus to the level of ethico-political action; "it is as if something yet nothing has happened" (Povinelli 2011).

An Ethics of Care

I discuss the political activities of the migrant feminists with whom I worked as a politics of ethicality, for through their political practices, the invisible or the unknown becomes visible and known. In emphasizing the disruption and the provocation of change caused by the visibilization of the aberrant and problematic, I advance Ranciere's (2004) notion of politics. For Ranciere, politics should be rethought of as interruption and "dissensus," rather than a mechanism for establishing consensus, as is conventionally assumed with traditional understandings of politics. With a politics of ethicality then, the invisible, unknown, undocumented, and illegitimate can appear on stage; the abnormality of the normal, or the

injustices of existing political and social arrangements, can be laid bare for scrutiny and transformation; and those who are traditionally silenced can be given voice and authorship, such that a new narrative of normality can be written.

As a normative framework, an ethics of care responds to a reality increasingly grounded in neoliberal forms of rationality; a logic that rationalizes and moralizes the value of life in economic terms. Rather than encourage social responsibility, the emphasis is on fiscal responsibility; rather than strive towards collaboration, the focus is on competitive advantage; and rather than promote care for the other, the effort is made towards generating profit for oneself. According to Jamileth, one of the women I worked most closely with in the field, "the development that we praise so much of the 'developed' world obeys only the interests of capital." Thus, within a dominant framework premised on such precarious principles, the distinction between well-being and suffering is no longer clear, such that the detrimental effects of the rejection of Spanish citizenship, the deregulation of labor, and the denial of healthcare all fall under the purview of normality, and of what should or ought to be. Any potential interpretation of transgression or flagrancy according to certain ethical standards regarding the experiences and treatment of marginalized "others" is overshadowed and dismissed by more dominant economic interpretations that treat human suffering as an implicit and necessary norm.

Rather than an ontology of the self that is at the center of the neoliberal paradigm and liberal humanist thought, an ethics of care is premised on an ontology of relationality. Rather than the autonomous individual who can maximize profit margins and fuel economic growth, feminist ethicists identify interdependency and care for the other as critical components for the good life (e.g. Gilligan 1982, 2008; Noddings 1984; Ruddick 1995; Tronto 1993). Because we are fundamentally vulnerable and dependent as humans, we should recognize and support one

another's needs rather than diminish them.[8] Strathern's (1988) use of the concept, "dividualism"[9] captures this idea of interrelationality, and is perhaps representative of the range of anthropological theorizing on the relational premise of various conceptions of personhood (e.g. Robbins 2002; Ram 1994; Sugimoto 2003). With relationality as an ontological priority, one's subjectivity then is shaped by interactions with and responsibility to the other. As such, ethics becomes primordial.

With an emphasis on interrelationality and responsiveness to the specificities of individual needs, a feminist ethics of care can be seen as constructing a new constellation of normativity, or a new set of ethical parameters for guiding actions. Their personalized attention to one another's needs enables the visibilization of suffering otherwise dismissed as "normal" or uneventful, and ultimately engenders, according to these women's vision, the transformation of a normality predicated on abnormalities.

Possibility + Ethics

In bringing the two concepts of possibility and ethics together, I argue that ethical practice is that which cultivates possibility, for with problematization, there is also revisionary thinking, or the imaginative production of alternatives for a situation apprehended as problematic. Problematization necessarily militates against closure. As Faubion states, the "ethical field is the primary site of cultural invention" (2001:99). With ethical practice and concomitant "cultural

[8] Some have argued that the autonomous, rational man on which Western liberal humanism is predicated is more an ideological principle than an empirical account of reality as it is lived (c.f. Busby 1997).
[9] The term 'dividual' was coined by Marriott (1976) in his research in India. Strathern uses the term in her research on the Melanesian person.

invention," possibilities abound. We can begin to imagine what an alternative world can and should look like.

A theoretical framework that incorporates both ethics and possibility, then, can better capture the complexities and nuances of the political practices of these migrant feminist *compañeras*. However, an ethnography of possibility, or the unknown, is distinct from the existing literature on migrant domestic workers' experiences, including women's experiences in Spain, for it largely captures the known quality of their oppression (more Aguilar Idáñez 2010; Garcia Paz 2009; García Sainz 2011; Perez Orozco and Lopez Gil 2011). As I have argued, although oppression and marginalization are undeniable aspects of migrant women's experiences around the world, their precarity is not the exclusive determinant of their experiences. The ethical imagination, which I argue is at the base of activist efforts, is also an influential force. As Faubion argues, "Neither culture nor society nor the social group thus stands, always and everywhere, as an insuperable boundary, either to the ethical imagination or to ethical practice" (2001:89).

Therefore, what I advance in this dissertation is not a conclusive statement or detailed listing of migrant women's capacities and possibilities, but rather a simple affirmation of possibility itself. Rather than foreclose the possibilities continuously unfolding with analytical frameworks that demand coherence and resolution, I leave the analytical space open to what may come, to the "lines of flight escaping in every direction" (Deleuze 2006: 280). With an emphasis on possibility, this dissertation follows Levi-Strauss' notion of "bricolage," for with an "untamed mind" that can diverge from conventional paths, as "a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course," we can recognize, as did my feminist *compañeras*, that anything and everything is possible (1966:16).

Fieldwork

Over the course of eighteen months of fieldwork in Madrid, Spain, I spent significant time with two groups of women, whose activities I focus on in Chapters Four and Five respectively – *Territorio Doméstico,* a local, feminist domestic worker association, and *las Brujas Migrantes,* a group of three migrant women who perform as witches to bring attention to migrant women's issues. With *Territorio Doméstico,* I participated in their monthly organizational meetings, which occurred on the first Sunday of each month, and in various other meetings that were dedicated to miscellaneous topics, such as the drafting of organizational documents, coordinating the group's participation in various public events, including marches, demonstrations and concerts, and educating members of the group on the particulars of legislation relevant for them as migrant domestic workers.

The time I spent with *las Brujas Migrantes* was more informal and casual. That is, in addition to semi-structured interviews with each of these women, I largely spent time with them over coffee, shared meals in their homes, and on walks around the city. And, as I explain in Chapter Four, I was able to observe one of their performances as witches during a press conference hosted by *Territorio Doméstico*.

While an account of my experiences offers the opportunity to recognize the efforts of many amazing women, narrative coherence and theoretical focus also preclude dedicated attention to *all* of the talented and inspiring individuals who I was fortunate to have met during my time in the field. For example, in addition to my time with TD and *las Brujas,* I also spent significant time with the migrant association, *La Red de Mujeres de Latinoamérica y del Caribe* (the Network of Latin American and Caribbean Women). As with TD, I participated in *la Red's*

monthly organizational meetings, as well as other meetings dedicated to specific projects. I specifically dedicated considerable time and energy towards the design and implementation of a research project exploring the "impacts of the crisis on migrant women in Madrid." I helped formulate research questions, led focus groups, conducted interviews and offered an analysis of the data. Despite my sustained interactions with this group, and the close friendships I developed with these women, I do not formally address my experiences with them in this dissertation.

I also spent time at various academic conferences (on topics such as "the crisis," domestic work, and migration), I interviewed representatives of labor unions, feminist organizations, and other migrant associations, and I spent several consecutive weeks observing the dynamics of "an employment exchange" (*una bolsa de empleo*). Throughout Madrid, as well as most of Spain, *Caritas,* a Spanish-based and Catholic-inspired humanitarian organization, organizes and manages many *bolsas de empleo* to help largely migrant individuals secure employment. In one of these employment exchanges held in a local parish, I sat with Spanish women, who worked as volunteers, as they interviewed migrant women in need of work. Through this experience, I was able to gain a broad perspective on the diverse backgrounds and situations of migrant women in Madrid, which included interesting details on their various educational, professional, linguistic, legal, and familial experiences.

Finally, amongst the many other individuals whose stories I do not fully address or that I leave out entirely in this dissertation, but who nevertheless left an impression on me, was Pilar, whose story I began this introduction with. I single Pilar out in particular because she was the first "contact" I made in the field, and the *compañera* with whom I grew the closest. I not only was fortunate to have interviewed her on several occasions, but I was also able to enjoy her

company over many shared meals in our home, at academic conferences, at *bolsas de empleo,* and on walks and even bus rides throughout the city. But perhaps the most important reason I specifically highlight Pilar in this introduction is because I consider her life to be poignantly illustrative of a life of possibilities. Despite all the closures, boundaries and impositions that she has experienced and encountered in her life and which I consider to be extreme in many ways, I also see many paths of becoming, or emergent possibilities. Specifically, despite her experiences as an orphan, in poverty, with police persecution, in legal invisibility, and in social isolation, one can also identify experiences of boundary crossing, (relatively) gainful employment, political activism, volunteer work, and academic study. In addition to these possibilities that have unfolded throughout her life, and which themselves may generate further possibilities, there is currently the prospect for her travel to and work in the U.S., as mentioned at the start of this chapter. Although it remains to be seen whether or not she will, in fact, make this journey, we can identify a current journey, involving desire, anticipation, uncertainty and preparation that together constitute a rich and dynamic counterpart of the anticipated trip itself.

Dissertation Overview

The chapters in *The Politics of Possibility* are divided into two thematic parts. In the first part, "Normalization of the Problematic" (Chapter 1-2), I address the normalization of migrant women's suffering in Spain. In order to appreciate the significance of ethical practice – i.e. problematization and revisionary thinking and practice – it is important to first understand the parameters of the ethical field, or the conditions that structure the field of action and provoke ethical practice in the first place; for example, laws, political discourse, historical narratives,

cultural ideologies, and social norms. It is precisely through ethical engagement with these limits, that possibilities *beyond* such limits are cultivated.

Chapter 1 discusses the historical, legal, discursive, material, and normative factors that have led to the normalization of migrant women's suffering in Spain. Specifically, I consider how migrant women's place in Spanish society represent a paradoxical inclusive exclusion, in that they are permitted to exist for the productivity, flexibility, and sovereignty that they enable, without the accountability, equity or humanity they deserve. I therefore argue that not only is their suffering normal, it also normative.

Chapter 2 specifically considers the discourse of crisis that has reinforced migrant women's condition of marginality and invisibility. Whereas current Spanish experiences of instability are framed as profoundly disruptive and provocative, that is, as a "crisis," migrant women's experiences of chronic instability and violence are overlooked or minimized. I argue that the normality of the precarious condition in which migrant women are situated is further consolidated as normative, given the particularities of the current historical moment when fiscal responsibility more resoundingly displaces any moral imperative to alleviate social suffering, and the pervasive and acute conditions of instability demand a more pragmatic hierarchization of ethical responsibility; not everyone can be taken care of in the same way at the same time.

The second part of *The Politics of Possibility* (Chapters 3-4) addresses migrant women's ethical problematization of the normalization of their suffering. Although migrant women's experiences of suffering have remained largely obscure or inconsequential, these activists work to bring to light the normality of *their* abnormality and thereby "punch a hole in knowledge."[10] Moreover, it may be said that these women's activist efforts not only constitute the work of an

[10] A paraphrase of Badiou's statement following Lacan's formulation in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I*, p. 228.

event in that they challenge established criteria and conventions, but that they are themselves the event. They embody the unconventional, illegitimate, unaccounted for and, therefore, the potentially transformative elements of an established order premised on exclusive principles and mechanisms, such as citizenship and capital.

Chapter 3 considers the activities of *Territorio Doméstico,* specifically their ethical practices of care. With their normative framework of ethical care, these women offer a new logic for inclusion and the ability to count for something. Rather than base one's inclusion on an ability to maximize profit, they acknowledge the totality and embrace the complexity of each person, recognizing that one's needs are not deficiencies but rather are a fundamental component of humanity. Thus, those who are excluded under the current rubric of normality – e.g. Latinas, migrants, lesbians, domestic workers, and prostitutes – are included in their normative framework of ethical care. In this way, they "rework that sort of portable encyclopedia from which opinions, communications and sociality draw their meaning" (70).

Chapter 4 considers the efforts of *las Brujas Migrantes,* specifically their performances that work towards the problematization of what is normal. With their appropriation of the character of a witch, an ostensibly depraved and irrational figure, they strive to challenge ideas accepted as "truth," and to expose the contingency of such ideas. I also consider their individual processes of what I call ethical "recknonnection." In keeping with the theme of visibility, I use the term ethical "reckonnection" to refer to the process of problematizing and reckoning with past traumatic experiences through narration, and through which such experiences become a dynamic and constitutive part of the present and future. As these women "remember," ethical insights emerge, political commitments are reinvigorated, and inspirations take form. The past becomes embodied, and the personal becomes political as well as possible.

Following these ethnographic chapters, I then conclude with a discussion of the parallels between ethical and analytical problematization. Just as ethical practice can create this space of possibility by transcending the normal and the normative, so can our analytical frameworks transcend conventional positivistic approaches and offer new ways of seeing the world.

CHAPTER ONE

The Normality and Normativity of Migrant Women's Suffering

Introduction

This chapter considers the historical, legal, discursive, and material conditions within which migrant women are situated as oppressed and rendered invisible. While a focus on ethics, particularly conceived as a practice or ethos in the Aristotelian sense of virtuosity – as opposed to the Kantian view of rule-based actions – tends towards ideas of freedom and the ability to deliberately choose one action over another, this dissertation does not locate such practices within a normatively vacant and politically unobstructed space. Rather, I recognize the asymmetries and contingencies of power, as expressed through law, discourse, institutions and history, which shape the moral imagination and individual and collective practice.

It is precisely critical attention to the normative, the institutionalized and the structural that gives rise to ethical practice. That is, ethical practice begins with the problematization (and/or rationalization) of existing moral injunctions, social practices, discursive frames, legal codes, and/or other normative forms. As Foucault (1997) argued in his later work on ethics, the self-constitution of the ethical subject involves "a mode of subjection," or the establishment of one's relation to a particular rule or authoritative discourse. Ethics, in other words, necessarily dovetails with discourse and power-relations. There is no autonomous subject who fashions herself at will. But, however formative such social, legal and discursive parameters of this ethical field may be, these parameters must not be seen as causes that necessarily and uniformly compel action, but instead, as Faubion argues, as "a constellation of points of reference," which individuals thoughtfully and artfully seek to align their actions with or differentiate their actions from; or which some seek to transform entirely, as may be the case with activists.

This chapter, then, lays out the "constellation" that has been both limiting as well as enabling for migrant women. While I discuss these parameters as separate categories – the socio-political, legal, material, discursive and philosophical – I do so for analytical purposes but recognize the overlaps between and complexities of each category. First, I review the history of migration to Spain.

History of Migration: From Emigration to Immigration

Until the mid-1970s, Spain was a country of emigration. Spanish first emigrated primarily to Latin America, and then to Western European countries such as France, Germany and Switzerland in the wake of the economic boom following World War II and labor shortages in these countries. Their emigration as "guestworkers" ended with the oil crisis in 1973 and the resulting economic recession (Kleiner-Leibau 2009).

Early immigrants to Spain were Northern or Western Europeans who came as tourists or retirees. It was not until the mid-1980s that migration from other non-European countries began. The Spanish experience with migration in the late 20th century has been referred to as "astonishing" and "spectacular" given the unprecedented magnitude and speed with which migration occurred, and the social and cultural changes with which it came (Reher and Requena 2009). The incredibly rich and diverse migration flows from Latin America, North Africa, and Eastern Europe dramatically altered the social and cultural landscape of Spanish villages and cities. These massive and unparalleled waves of migration in the 1980s and 1990s changed Spain from its traditional status as a country of emigrants to a country of immigrants (Goytisolo and Nair 2000). At the end of the 1990s, immigrants represented 2.9% of the total population

(Padron Municipal Continuo/INE 1998). Over a decade later in 2012, foreign nationals represented 12.1% of the Spanish population (INE 2012). While the population of native Spanish (those born in Spain) grew 3.6% in these years, the immigrant population increased 511% during this same period (Reher and Requena 2009). Put in another way, between 1997 and 2007, the immigrant population was responsible for 72% of the growth of the Spanish population.

There were many reasons for the significant flows of migration to Spain. Among the most cited are the economic, demographic and political factors. First, Spain experienced impressive economic growth between 1957 and 1973, which was known as the "Spanish Miracle," and then again between 1995 and 2007. Between 2000 and 2007, Spain's annual average growth of GDP was 3.5%, which was significantly greater than the EU's average of 2.2%. Political agreements with the U.S. and admittance into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Community played a large part in generating such growth, enabling liberalization of trade and increased direct foreign investments (Lieberman 1995; Reher and Requena 2009). Additionally, as Spain's economy grew, requiring large numbers of foreign laborers, the origin countries from which many laborers came were simultaneously experiencing economic problems and rising debt, thus "pushing" thousands of individuals to seek jobs elsewhere.

Second, the country's declining birth rate and aging population are cited in conjunction with Spain's economic growth as reasons for Spain's need for migrant workers. A report by the UN population division projected that Spain will have the oldest population in the world by 2050 and stated that Spain will need 12 million people to migrate to the country in order to preserve the current ratio of four workers per retiree (UN DESA Report 2013). However, Spain's need

for migrant workers is not simply the result of a lack of Spanish labor, but derives also in part from the refusal of Spanish people to work in certain low paying, physically demanding and unstable sectors of the economy, or what have been described as "3-D jobs" – dirty, dangerous, and demeaning (e.g. picking fruit and vegetables) (Calavita 1998).

Finally, generous immigration policies enacted at various points of Spanish history can also be seen as a significant reason for increased migration flows. Specifically, several regularization campaigns, which took place in 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2005 granted amnesty to thousands of migrants and allowed recently legalized migrants to then petition their family members to join them through policies of family reunification (Papademetriou et al. 2004). Additionally, because other European countries at this time were enforcing stricter immigration policies, Spain became an even more attractive destination for migrants.

Despite what experts consider one of the biggest immigration booms in modern times, migration to Spain has slowed considerably in the last two years in light of the recent global economic downturn. Overall, Spain's foreign-born population grew just 1% in 2009, compared with 17% in 2007, according to municipal registry rolls. With the current difficulties securing employment (Spain has an unemployment rate of 20%; *extranjeros* represent 28.4% of the unemployed in Spain), many migrants have been returning home. Approximately 8,000 migrants applied to return home through the Spanish government's Voluntary Return Program (*el Plan del Retorno Voluntario*). Through this program, unemployed, non-EU nationals residing in Spain could return to their home country in exchange for payment of accumulated unemployment benefits, as well as payment for all travel expenses (El Gobierno de España website).

Feminization of Migration

Since the early 1980s, an increasing number of women have been migrating from one country to another on their own. Women now make up about half of the global migrating population, or approximately 95 million women.[11] Transnational networks (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Phizacklea 2000, 2003), growing and/or contracting economies, immigration policies (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000), women's roles in sustaining the family (Sassen 2003), and marriage (Constable 2003; Freeman 2005) are amongst the many factors that combine in complex and historically specific ways to influence the voluntary or forced migration of women. In all of these situations, gender can be seen as "a first-order structural variable, which affects all social processes and the organization of the socio-economic system at the macro, meso and micro levels" (Pérez Orozco et al. 2008).

Female migrants overwhelmingly take up care work. The combination of retrenchment in social expenditure, increasing numbers of indigenous women in paid employment, aging populations, and the decline of the extended family and community networks has contributed to what has been called a "care deficit" or "crisis of care" throughout Europe (Dyck et al., 2005; Lutz 2007; Mitchell et al. 2004; Perez Orozco 2006). Because of this deficit, many ask the highly politicized and sobering questions, "Who will take care of the children, the sick, the elderly? Who will make dinner and clean house?" (Hochschild 2003:3). Overwhelmingly, the answers to these questions have been found amongst *other* women from developing countries. Global circuits of care that rely upon migrant labor are now common, serving as an "escape route" (Pérez Orozco et al. 2008) for welfare states that can not meet the growing and changing needs

[11] UN data accessed online: http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/ on 7/19/12.

of its citizens, whilst engendering new complications in women's home countries and reinforcing existing inequalities (Anderson 2000; Datta et al. 2010; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Yeates 2004).

Crisis de los Cuidados

As with other European countries, Spain is also in the midst of a crisis of care (*una crisis de los cuidados*) and for similar reasons plaguing other European countries, for example: Spain's conservative and family-based welfare model (Almeda and Sarasa 1996; Esping-Anderson 1996, 1999; García Sainz 2012); [12] the progressive aging of the Spanish population and longer life expectancies;[13] cuts in social expenditure;[14] greater incorporation of women in the public workforce;[15] and the transition from extensive to nuclear families (Martínez Buján 2010; Colectivo IOE). Spanish feminist scholars have analyzed and criticized the exclusive association of caretaking responsibilities with the family unit, particularly with women, within Spanish welfare policies (Carrasco et al. 1997; Fernández Cordón and Tobío Soler 2005; Moreno and Salido 2005; Stark and Regnér 2002; Threlfall et al. 2005; Valiente 2001), echoing well-established critiques made by feminists on the other side of the Atlantic of the "second-shift"

[12] Despite the enormous changes in the Spanish welfare state since the end of the Franco regime, remnants of the old welfare system still survived, including maternity and single parent benefits that are among the lowest in the EU.
[13] Within the EU, Spain has one of the highest life expectancies: 84.9 years for women and 78.9 for men (INE 2010).
[14] Spain is one of the countries of the EU that spends the least on support of families and young children; only 0.5% was dedicated to such expenditure in 2002, while the average was 2.2% (Moreno and Salido 2005). At the same time, there is a lack of care services for the elderly in a context of an ageing population; only 3.14% of the elderly over 65 years have access to home help and residencies are available to 3.78% of this population (Martínez Buján 2005). These figures have only gotten worse in recent years with the economic downturn.
[15] In 1998 the female employment rate in Spain was 35.8%. In 2008, the female employment rate rose to 54.9%. Its equivalent in other EU countries is higher (UK 65.8%, Germany 65.4%, France 60.7%) (Ibáñez 2010)

(Hochschild 1989) and the "cycle of vulnerability" (Okin 1989). While North American feminists began debating in the early 1960s the issue of domestic work and campaigning for greater political recognition of what has traditionally been regarded as a private matter (Okin 1991), Spanish mobilization around similar issues did not begin until the late 1970s with the end of Franco's reign when women were able to discard their legally and socially prescribed roles as "the queen of the home" (*la reina del hogar*) and "the perfect wife (*la perfecta casada*) (Nash 2012:45).[16]

As in other European countries, domestic service is the main branch of employment for third-country female nationals in Spain,[17] which has the largest number of domestic workers of the developed countries in the world, approximately 750,000.[18] And as in other European

[16] Although Spanish feminist, María Cambrils denounced "the slavery to which society has condemned us (*la esclavitud a que se nos condena en la sociedad*) as early as the 1920s (Cambrils 1925:VIII), Spanish mobilization around the issue did not begin until later.

[17] Although domestic service is the primary source of employment for domestic workers, it is not necessarily the most desirable because of all the challenges and dangers associated with it. As one woman explained at a conference, domestic work is merely the "trampoline" from which one can jump to other areas of work. As soon as one is able (typically after acquiring the third permit), a migrant domestic worker often immediately seeks employment in for example, restaurants or the hotel industry.[17] And although many women who migrate to Spain come with university degrees and/or professional experience, because of the bureaucratic challenges associated with gaining legal recognition of one's educational and professional work status in one's home country through the processes known as *convalidación* and *homologación*[17] respectively, domestic service is the only available option for many foreign national women.

[18] According to the International Labor Organization, 2013. The *Encuesta de la Población Activa* also keeps track of these numbers. Although, it is very difficult to approximate the number of domestic workers because of the highly informal nature of domestic work. These numbers, therefore, also reflect the divide between those who enjoy the rights associated with regularized status and formal, contracted work, and those who lack documentation, a formal contract and, hence, social and political rights. According to la 2009 *Encuesta Población Activa,* (EPA), there were approximately 711,600 domestic workers in Spain, which represents the largest population of EU countries. Of this number, only 329,614 (46.3%) were registered with Social Security. In 2011, 895,000 homes reported having employees, yet only 294,279 employees were registered with SS. The discrepancies between these numbers reflect the difficulties with approximating the number of domestic workers, which can be attributed to the highly informal nature of domestic work. These numbers, therefore, also reflect the divide

countries, migrant women have been significant caretakers of families and homes and have, therefore, offset more potential difficulties associated with a fragile and declining welfare state. As one Spanish activist put it, migrant women serve as the "mattress" (*colchon*) to soften and conceal the complications and hardships characterizing care-work in Spain.

Although social groups, Spanish legislation and academic scholarship have begun to address the problematic gendered division of labor in Spain and the need to facilitate women's engagement in meaningful activity and work in the public sphere,[19] feminists still acknowledge the persisting devaluation of carework and the continued exclusive association of domestic responsibilities with women. This enduring dichotomy and hierarchization of work – with domestic work seen as inferior to employment in the public sphere – contributes significantly to the marginalization and invisibility of migrant women, the majority of whom work as domestic laborers. And even within existing discourses and political agendas that promote gender equity and women's empowerment, "women" and "gender" remain significantly circumscribed categories. That is, the focus of initiatives for "gender" equity and the advancement of "women" are middle- and upper-class, Spanish women, [20] and there continues to be a widespread neglect

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between those who enjoy the rights associated with regularized status and formal, contracted work, and those who lack documentation, a formal contract and, hence, social and political rights.

[19] The conservative government of the *Partido Popular* (1996–2004) made "reconciliation of work and family life" a key issue on the political agenda. Family responsibility, non-governmental provision and voluntary work were emphasized in welfare issues (Valiente 2000, 2001). The socialist government, *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (2004–2001) declared gender equality a priority and the lack of a nationwide network of care services was addressed; the Law for the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Attention to Persons in Situation of Dependency was adopted in 2006, and the 2007 Organic Law for De Facto Equality between Women and Men treats the "reconciliation of personal, family and work life" as a central issue (Peterson 2007).

[20] It should be noted that there have been critiques regarding the exclusion of working-class Spanish women, unemployed Spanish women, and housewives from many of the social benefits included in many of the Spanish reforms (Peterson 2007). Additionally, Spanish policies have attempted to address *la conciliación entre la vida personal y profesional*, "maintaining a work-

for the needs and rights of non-Spanish, working-class women, i.e. migrant women, despite their critical role in mitigating *la crisis de los cuidados* (cf. Kofman et al. 2000; Peterson 2007). And not only do they play an integral role in caring for the elderly, children, and persons with disabilities (and husbands as many argue), migrant domestic workers can also be seen as making significant contributions to the global economy by increasing paid job opportunities for female and male workers with family responsibilities, and through their income transfers within and between countries. But despite their critical role in sustaining the care sector, the prevailing gender order, and home and host country GNPs, domestic work continues to be undervalued and invisible, and migrant women remain among the most marginalized groups within Spain and elsewhere.

Spanish Law and Migrant Domestic Worker Challenges

Female domestic workers in Spain, as well as throughout the world, work in extremely difficult and oppressive conditions, sustaining long hours, low pay, and physical and emotional abuse, all of which are exacerbated by many women's undocumented status[21] (cf. Constable 1997; Parreñas 2001). Migrant domestic workers and women in the entertainment/sex industry are increasingly recognized in the international community as the most widely exploited and

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life balance," feminists critique the continued identification of work-life balance as a women's issue and inattention to the role and responsibility of men (Stratigaki 2004).

[21] Because residence permits are obtained through one's history of social security payments, the undocumented nature of much of migrant women's work has led to an inability to contribute to social security and, therefore, to accumulate the necessary time for earning residency. And until recently domestic workers could only contribute to social security through full-time employment, thereby precluding a large number of women contracted on a part-time basis. Additionally, because much of the work in the care sector is contracted out on a part-time and/or informal basis, migrant women were less likely to have access to the full range of benefits attached to full-time employment, e.g. pensions, maternity leave, sick leave. As a result, female migrant domestic workers are found in a vicious cycle of "illegality" and vulnerability. According to EPA, 44% of domestic workers are undocumented.

most vulnerable to abuse and violence among female migrant workers (Stasiulis and Bakan 1997). Indeed, the precariousness of domestic service has led to its recognition by the United Nations in 2009 as a modern and domestic form of slavery. Documented cases of chattel-like treatment such as imprisonment in the employer's home and physical and sexual abuse are common in Asia, in particular in the Gulf Region. In the Middle East, an alarmingly high incidence of enslavement, imprisonment, rape and physical abuse of Asian maids has been documented (Middle East Watch Women's Rights Project 1992).

Spanish laws and policies have played an undeniably pivotal role in engendering and exacerbating experiences of exclusion and abuse for female migrant domestic workers. For example, for years domestic work was treated as "different" from "normal" types of work as reflected in the social security system (Colectivo IOÉ 2001). While a general insurance regime (*Régimen General*) covers most industrial and service sector workers, domestic service was, for many years, covered by a special regime (*Régimen Especial*). Such a distinction translated into less protection for domestic workers in the form of unemployment benefits, sick leave, maternity leave and written contracts. And even with a distinct legal category, which purported to protect domestic workers, Spanish employers often circumvented the few regulations within the *Régimen Especial* because of cultural perceptions of domestic work as an inferior form of employment, and because migrant workers were often unaware of the few rights they did have (Gavanas et al. 2007). And although on August 1, 2011 domestic service was finally included in the *Régimen General* with the passage of *Ley 27/2011*, there have been numerous complaints of the legislation for being a "*papel mojado,*" or a useless and ineffective law,[22] due to employers'

[22] This was one of the concerns raised during a March 2012 meeting of domestic workers in Madrid, organized by the *Red de Mujeres Latinoamericanas y del Caribe en España*, and summarized in: "Conclusiones del Primer Encuentro de Trabajadoras del Hogar Y de Cuidados"

continued reticence to issue formal contracts and pay social security, which employers still perceive to be an option rather than an obligation as an employer, because domestic work continues to be disregarded as a legitimate form of labor. And in the cases where contracts have been drafted, contracts are often violated in the form of excessively long work days, reductions in salary, and no remuneration for sick leave. Moreover, a recent revision to the new legislation on December 28, 2012 (*Real Decreto Ley 29/2012*), presented yet another setback for domestic workers – responsibility for registration and payment of social security can now be transferred to domestic workers. In other sectors, such a responsibility resides solely with employers. With this change, domestic work continues to maintain its status as an inferior form of employment that does not merit the same professional standards that apply to more "legitimate" forms of work. The recent revision also raised the base amount of social security payments, which has made it more expensive to formally contract domestic workers and, hence, more likely that domestic workers will remain in the informal economy without social rights and labor protections.

An outdated law regarding the Rights and Freedoms of Foreign Nationals Living in Spain and their Social Integration (*Ley Orgánica* 4/2000 *sobre Derechos y Libertades de los Extranjeros en España y su Integración Social*), or what is more commonly known as *la Ley de Extranjeria,* or "Law of Foreigners," further compounds the difficulties and burdens for domestic workers, particularly because of its incompatibility with social security regulations. According to the Law of Foreigners, residence permits can only be obtained through one's history of social security payments. But because the majority of domestic workers are undocumented, they are not entitled to formal, contracted employment and, hence, to social security and thus are precluded from the ability to accumulate the necessary time for earning legal residency (as well

as the social benefits attached to social security). Thus, the aporia of these legal requirements is that undocumented persons must effectively be documented in order to no longer be undocumented.

If one does not have proper documentation to reside and work in Spain (which is the case for the majority of migrant women upon their arrival), there are three ways for a foreign national to gain "legal" status: a) *arraigo laboral*; b) *arraigo social*; and c) *oferta por contrata* (job offers depend on a catalog of *trabajos de dificil cobertura*, "positions of difficult coverage," which is published every four months by the *Instituto Nacional de Empleo,* or INEM). *Arraigo social* is the most feasible and common route for obtaining legal status. Although *arraigo social* is a viable and common route to "legality" – and, hence, to relative stability and security – it is nevertheless only a first step to the more coveted *permanente,* or permanent residency. Through *arraigo social*, one is required to have lived in Spain for three consecutive years and must have a one-year job contract in hand before she can submit an application for the first residency permit. Once the first permit has been granted, she is then entitled to one year of legal residency in Spain. Then, in order to acquire the second permit (the first renewal of the first permit), one must have been working and paying social security in order to then be granted two more years of legal residency. With the third renewal, and proof of ongoing social security payments, she is entitled to another two years. And with the fourth and last renewal, she is finally entitled to permanent residency. During each of these stages, during the application process for each permit, there is significant wait time, which can range from three months to one year (according to anecdotal evidence). The application process typically consists of: collecting and organizing all of the requisite elements, including original documents with official stamps from one's home country; waiting for an appointment to deliver the application; and waiting for a response to the

application, which can come down to a denial if any paperwork is missing or signature is lacking, in which case, the process would have to be started all over again. In short, by the time one reaches the stage of application for the highly coveted "*permanente,*" almost ten years may have passed. Additionally, in the case of migrant women, the large majority of whom work in domestic service, which remains an unregulated sector, acquiring contracts and social security registration is a significant challenge.[23] Therefore, with the difficulty of securing formal, contracted work, and the challenges of putting together a successful application at each stage, the road to permanent residency and, hence, belonging and stability, is an arduous and precarious journey.

In June of 2011, the International Labor Organization adopted the historic Convention on Domestic Workers, its 189th convention. The Convention, or *Convenio 189* as it is referred to in Spain, set specific international labor standards for the estimated 53 million domestic workers worldwide. To date, sixteen countries have ratified the Convention, including three European countries, Italy, Germany and Switzerland.[24] Domestic worker activists throughout Spain are currently engaged in a national-level campaign to encourage the Spanish government to ratify *el Convenio 189.* A small group of activists from around Spain, known as *el Grupo Turín,* began the campaign after their participation in an ILO-sponsored, domestic worker conference in February of 2013 in Turin, Italy. Since then, the group has rallied other non-profit organizations,

[23] As I learned in the field, to get around the hurdle of acquiring the requisite contract and social security registration, many migrant women secure false contracts through Spanish acquaintances and make the social security payments out of their own pockets. However, this has also proven more difficult with the recent increase in the base payment of social security.

[24] 10 countries have registered C. 189 at the ILO: Bolivia, Germany, Italy, Guyana, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Paraguay, the Philippines, South Africa, and Uruguay. Five countries finished their ratification process at the national level and are in the process of registering at the ILO: Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Argentina and Switzerland. Upon ratification, a government formally makes a commitment to implement all the obligations provided in the Convention.

migrant associations, and labor unions to join their efforts. However, despite their vigorous campaigning efforts, the Spanish government's stance has remained defiantly against the ratification of *Convenio 189*. According to a representative of *Comisiones Obreras* (one of the two largest labor unions in Spain):

> It's terrible because there's a tremendous crisis, there are set-backs in rights in all areas, social and labor. We've had the bad luck that when this new law [*Ley 27/2011*] was passed, in order to improve the domestic work sector, it was passed within, let's call it, a bad context, which is concretely speaking, the Spanish and global crisis.

In her view, domestic workers' needs have been obscured by the rhetoric surrounding the pervasive and destructive Spanish "crisis," which does not include migrant women's challenges. Their issues remain non-issues, particularly during a turbulent time of aggressive reforms and widespread resistance.

In addition to the Spanish state's refusal to ratify the Convention despite international and national pressures, another example of the State's continued disregard for migrant women's needs and critical role within the care sector is the 2006 *Ley de Dependencia*,[25] which seeks to improve care services for Spain's elderly and disabled populations. Despite the State's ostensible efforts to address care issues, the legislation overlooks the role of migrant women as the primary caretakers of the elderly and disabled. A professor of sociology at the *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid* describes the inadequacy and inefficacy of the law in addressing the care crisis in the following manner:

> They only had in mind the perspective of people who require care, the cared for, but did not think about those who provide care. What is lacking is a gender perspective in its totality. The situation has to be looked at in its totality, not only the people who require care, but also the people who provide care.

[25] Formally is *Ley de Promoción de la Autonomía Personal y Atención a las personas en situación de dependencia y a las familias*

The law provides a catalog of services available to those categorized as "dependent"[26] as well as subsidies to offset the costs of care for families. Thus, although the law provides financial aid to families, the support effectively translates into a reinforcement of the current gendered division of carework,[27] and continues to treat migrant women as an insignificant or non-existent group within the system of care.

To summarize, migrant women's long-time categorization within a "special" category of employment distinct from other "normal" forms of employment, their inevitable and prolonged experience as "illegal" non-persons due to a harsh and outdated *Ley de Extranjeria,* their conspicuous absence from *la Ley de Dependencia,* a law that specifically deals with the provision of care, and their privation of recognition on an international level with the possible ratification of the ILO Convention, can all be seen as contributing to the normalization of these women's experiences of invisibility and precariousness. As many scholars have argued, the law is but one of many symbolic systems that give shape and meaning to our cognitive and material worlds. As a respected (and feared) source of authority, the law presents an ideational framework through which individuals and societies can interpret their world and according to which they can model their actions (c.f. Borneman 1992, Ngai 2004).

Discursive Constructions of Migrants Women's Suffering

[26] According to this law, only a subsector of the population is dependent, as opposed to the universal quality of dependency characterizing all individuals and groups, as feminists have vociferously argued.

[27] Because women continue to be primarily responsible for the provision and management of care (women are predominately the ones who contract and manage outside help), the distribution of financial aid does little to offset the burden that continues to fall on women. Critics of the law highlight its inability to offer more equitable solutions to the continued "second-shift" that women work.

The discourse of Europeanness and Spain's attempts to establish itself as a modern, European country can be seen as having contributed to the normalization of migrant women's suffering. Martin-Cabrera (2002) argues that migrants, many of whom are postcolonial subjects, find themselves the object of neo-racist violence because their appearance in Spanish society suggests that "the temporality of modernity has been fractured from within." The presence of migrants from less developed countries and the notions of "backwardness" that they elicit contradict Spain's narrative of progress and rationality. And because migration to Spain continues to be largely understood as an exogenous process, one that is formed and shaped by conditions outside the receiving country (i.e. extreme poverty and relentless crime that are thought to be endemic to migrants' home countries), their unwelcome presence is often referred to throughout the media as an "invasion" or an "assault"[28] against which Spain, the southern flank of Fortress Europe, must defend itself (cf. Sassen 1999). Indeed, the powerful discourse of "otherness" that is pervasive throughout Spain and Europe, exemplifies and reinforces migrants' perceived condition of inferiority, and contributes to their lived experiences of invisibility and marginalization.[29] Migrants' otherness renders them "problems" to be contended with and against which the integrity of an "us" must be protected, rather than as resources, "subjects" or

[28] See for example the article from Spanish newspaper, *El País*, "*La Guardia Civil frena una entrada masiva de inmigrantes en Melilla*": http://elpais.com/diario/2005/08/27/espana/1125093618_850215.html

[29] Barth's (1969) writings on relational theory elucidate the dynamics of identity formation as premised on dichotomizations of "us" versus "them." Also helpful to consider are historical developments, including: the expansion of welfare states, the rise of labor movements seeking to control access to jobs and social benefits, processes of democratization and the concomitant tightening of ties between citizens and states, the emergence of the "new crustacean type of nation" (Polanyi 1944: 122), and the profusion of bureaucratic techniques for administering the boundaries of the nation. Leading up to and following World War I, the need to distinguish between "them" and "us" became more critical, as did the implementation of immigration controls. It is within this historical context, that the idea of the "immigrant" as "other" became institutionalized (Torpey 2000).

"co-participants," as one migrant activist leader put it, emerging from an integrated and complex economic and political global experience. Thus, animosity and hostility generated by presumptions of migrants' inferiority vis-à-vis Spain's identity of European superiority can in part explain the disregard for migrants' needs.

Yet, attitudes towards migrant groups in Spain are more complex than mere resentment or direct racist or xenophobic hostility. Cornejo Parriego (2007) notes that the "whitening" of Spanish identity through Europeanization requires the "darkening" of the general European population. While the presence of migrants from developing countries may be challenging for Spain, it in fact secures Spain's position as a "European" country. Graham and Sanchez (1992) put it this way: "It is almost as if constructing and adopting the same 'others' or outgroups as the rest were considered the hallmark of Spain's membership of the 'club'" (415). Subscribing to a "cosmopolitan liberalism" (Maddox 2004), wherein diversity is celebrated as a benchmark of creativity and productivity, ensures Spain's place within a European political and economic order that is undergirded by Enlightenment's enduring narrative of progress.

Yet, however necessary pluralism and cultural diversity are for Spain's construction of its identity as a modern, European state, the differences that do exist within Spanish borders are tolerated and domesticated – they are permitted, engaged, and made visible to the extent that such differences are productive, profitable and safe. They are approached as "fertile grounds to be cultivated and harvested, or as wild kingdoms full of threatening beasts to be tamed" (Maddox 2004: 32). But to the extent that such differences suffer, need healthcare and require labor protections, the differences are ignored, minimized or bracketed. As Foucault (1976) observed, with the shift in authoritative governance from "let live and make die" to "make live and let die," the state rarely directly and openly uses its right to kill; rather, it supports lives to the extent that

lives prove profitable, and they are permitted to endure until *they* can no longer tolerate the burdens and demands of a life lived on the margins; their own suffering, return migration, and/or ultimate death becomes their choice, not the state's. Against the backdrop of a strong liberal discourse touting individual rationality and autonomy, those who suffer, suffer because of their own incapacities and irrationality.

Also influencing the normalization of migrant women's suffering and the idea that as autonomous individuals they are accountable for their own problems is the current discourse of "crisis." While there is a lack of consensus regarding the causes of a crisis in general and there are competing interpretations of the development of "the crisis" in Spain,[30] there is a strong eschatological perspective underlying the crisis discourse. That is, political rhetoric in Spain has framed the crisis as a transitional phase, part of the path to progress. And because the economic and political horizon promises growth and stability, current experiences of instability and suffering are to be understood and endured with pragmatism and a sense of sacrifice (I will further explore the discourse and experiences of crisis in the next chapter).

Specifically in the case of migrant women in Spain, their work as domestic laborers are supported only to the extent that they can continue to maintain the state's detachment from responsibilities of care, and can ensure the reproductive and productive capacities of Spain's more profitable and necessary members. So it may be argued that migrant domestic workers have been given the minimal number of rights and quality of protection that allow them to continue to exist as laborers, but not enough to live as full persons. The excessively long and arduous road to legality, for example, with at least the hope of legality in the end, ensnares migrant women into the long and complex bureaucracy of legalization, and ensures their

[30] Many civil society groups argue that the "crisis" is merely a "scam," or *"una estafa."*

precariousness for a sufficient period of time, which ultimately proves beneficial for the Spanish state and its citizens. As sociologist, Cristina Garcia Sainz reminded me in an interview during my fieldwork, "An illegal status means greater employability." The more desperate they are, the cheaper their services and the more capacity they will have to sustain Spain's economy of care. And as Graciela, president of SEDOAC, one of Madrid's two domestic worker associations, put it: "Domestic workers' precariousness is a convenience for the Spanish state." Recognition of their suffering through the concession of much-needed protections is withheld because their lack of recognition proves economically and politically advantageous.

Finally, it may be said that not only does state law and political discourse normalize and exacerbate migrant women's suffering, many migrant women themselves internalize and reproduce the hierarchies of value and treatment established through liberal discourses of self-sufficiency, European progress and the necessity of crises, and imposed through state law, media outlets and political rhetoric. As many migrant women had communicated to me, they approach their ability to work in Spain with gratitude. They see their work in Spain as an opportunity and a privilege for which they should be appreciative, for it enables them to earn money to send home to their underprivileged family members in their home countries. And as such, any deprivations and suffering endured on their part must be accepted as a small price to pay for the necessary sustenance of lives back home.

Normative Ethics and Philosophical Positions on Care for Others

More broadly speaking, the theoretical literature on normative responses to suffering offers more insight into the normalization, dismissal and appropriation of migrant women's suffering. In addition to the historical, socio-political, discursive, and legal specificities of the

migrant experience in Spain, various strands of normative ethical theory shed light on the contemporary hierarchization of suffering; on why native Spanish and Spanish citizens' experiences of un- and under-employment, evictions, material instability, and failing health elicit relatively more of an ethical and political response than do migrant women's comparable or even relatively worse experiences of suffering (if such a measurement on a material or psychological scale can be made).[31] As Pogge has argued, "The global poor who labor all day for a few dollars a month, are unable to cause us the slightest inconvenience and unable even to alert us to their plight" (2008: 133). Pogge's reference to "the global poor" can be likened to Spain's migrant population, for they may be considered outsiders of an exclusive national community (or "communities" in the case of Spain's many nationalist movements). Peter Singer's 1972 well-known article, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" set off a pressing and ongoing debate on the moral obligations towards the suffering of distant "others." Singer, along with other utilitarian ethicists and moral cosmopolitans such as Nussbaum (1994), argue that distance or community membership should not impact one's decision to help others in need. Because of the equal moral worth of persons and our status as "citizens of the world," the needs and interests of one national or cultural group should not be prioritized over the needs and interests of others. Critics of cosmopolitanism and utilitarianism (e.g. liberal nationalists), however, question not only issues of desirability – whether or not the suffering of distant "others" could and should elicit the same or a greater moral desire to act, as compared to the desires elicited by the suffering of one's compatriots – but also issues of viability, whether adequate responses to the extreme suffering of "others" are realistic or too demanding (cf. Kagan 1991). Licthenberg (2013), for example,

[31] Certainly, there are strident contentions throughout civil society for the state's lack of an adequate political response to Spanish citizens' experiences of suffering; this is addressed in the next chapter.

moves away from ideas of moral duty and obligation – made central with Kantian, or deontological, ethics – and focuses instead on the question of viability. Because there already seems to be consensus regarding the current indefensible and deplorable distribution of wealth, we should be less concerned with the philosophical question of the extent of an act's or rule's moral quality, and more concerned with the pragmatic question of *how* we can make the alleviation of suffering less demanding.

In Spain, one can detect numerous perspectives across the normative spectrum on suffering. For example, as one informant, a strong migrant activist leader, explained to me, because many recognize the generalized effects of an indiscriminate and unforgiving neoliberal paradigm, more solidarity movements between and amongst groups of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds are emerging. Yet, on the other hand, many individual migrants still cite instances of animosity and resentment, and refer to others' explicit commentaries on the need to attend to Spanish citizens' problems first. In fact, the recent Spanish law barring undocumented migrants from accessing the Spanish public healthcare system can be seen as an example of the institutionalized preference given to Spanish citizens' healthcare needs at the expense of the undocumented population, who are blamed for the rising expenditures in healthcare.[32]

From Invisibility to Visibility

[32] *Real Decreto de medidas urgentes para garantizar la sostenibilidad del Sistema Nacional de Salud (SNS)*. Prior to this change in legislation, foreigners who were registered in the local municipality where they resided had the right to health services on the same conditions as the Spanish, according to Article 12 of the *Ley Orgánica 4/2000* (Organic Law 4/2000), which establishes the rights and liberties of foreign resident in Spain. However, with the 2012 changes, more than [#] undocumented migrants have been denied access to the health system and are now only entitled to urgent health services.

As we can see, there are specific historical, socio-political, legal, discursive, and normative ethical factors that contribute to migrant women's subordinate status and the dismissal of their suffering. And implicit in this discussion of these hierarchies of value are institutionalized norms in whose construction migrant women have not equally participated. Returning to Pogge's quote, "The global poor who labor all day for a few dollars a month, are unable to cause us the slightest inconvenience and *unable even to alert us to their plight*," we see that an appropriate ethical response to the suffering of the global poor, or one's poor neighbors, requires not only a sufficiently binding moral force, but also the ability for these distant "others" "to alert us to their plight." At issue then is the capacity for suffering "others" to articulate and make their suffering known and, therefore, to contribute to dominant productions of suffering and need. As Fraser (2009) argues, social justice is primarily achieved through a "parity of participation," or the equal participation in the discursive practices of the public sphere; the issue is not just about having a right to be recognized, but to debate the terms of recognition. We cannot fully understand the experience of a lack of recognition of one's suffering without addressing the structural and institutional factors that contribute to these others' invisibility. As Kleinman and Das (1997) argue in their edited anthropological volume, *Social Suffering,* an acknowledgment of suffering does not come down to being able to imagine another's pain, but rather requires an exposé of the processes that hide or mask instances of suffering. It is with the problematization of exclusive processes of representation that more equitable and inclusive processes can begin to be imagined and realized. Chapters Four and Five will specifically address how migrant women activists move from a position of invisibility to visibility. While this chapter looked at some of the structural, historical and theoretical elements of migrant

women's invisibility, the next chapter will offer more detailed accounts of migrant women's current experiences of suffering in Spain, specifically as experienced within a context of "crisis."

CHAPTER TWO

"We are Always in Crisis"

Introduction

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the invisibility of migrant women's suffering is due to a complex interaction of historical, socio-political, economic, legal and discursive factors. This chapter focuses specifically on the current, pervasive "crisis" discourse in Spain as a dominant organizing frame for contemporary experiences and, as such, a significant factor that has reinforced the normalization of migrant women's condition of invisibility. As with dominant discursive frames that organize and convey a particular reality, the crisis discourse obscures and distorts another reality, namely the destruction and disorder that characterize migrant women's everyday life. As I will go on to explain, "the crisis" in Spain is largely understood as an event, as an exceptional and intermediary situation whose conditions profoundly differ from the ordinarily rhythmic and stable quality of a prior mode of being. In "the crisis" framework, the emotional and material instability amongst Spanish natives is experienced as profoundly disruptive and unprecedented. However, with a strong discursive emphasis on "crisis" as catastrophic, exceptional and urgent, migrant women's experiences of chronic instability and violence are overlooked or minimized. Thus, in addition to insidious ideas about race, national belonging, individual autonomy, Europeanness, and gender roles that have normalized migrant women's invisibility over the years, the contemporary organizing framework of "crisis" further contributes to the normality of their abnormality.

This chapter begins by considering the universality of the crisis discourse and how it has gained significant traction through political influence and the allure of economic-based models.

However, I also recognize the strident opposition to the discourse of crisis throughout Spanish civil society. While it may be argued that the crisis framework dominates political rhetoric, media representations, and popular discourse, many civil society groups reject this formulation of crisis as unexpected and extraordinary and instead highlight the structurally induced, enervating effects of an increasingly intractable and unsustainable neoliberal model of governance. As such, many groups refer to the predominant discourse as *una estafa,* or a "farce," a cover by which the Spanish state can exact harsh austerity measures. Yet, although many civil society groups recognize the indiscriminate and ruthless quality of market-based policies, and the pervasive suffering caused by such political and economic austerity, ethical objections remain largely circumscribed. That is, grievances remain focused on the experiences of Spanish natives, while the experiences of migrant collectives, such as migrant women, remain marginal or non-existent within public discourse. Thus, even within a potent counter-discourse of *estafa* and the incisive critiques of an increasingly potent neo-liberal form of rationality and morality, migrant women's needs remain invisible.

I then look at the otherwise neglected and minimized details of migrant women's everyday experiences and the challenges they face. I discuss the normality of the abnormality of migrant women's experiences so that I may then consider in the following two chapters the ethical problematization of processes of normalization; for, as I argue, however potent and seemingly insuperable the boundaries between "us" and "them, or visible and invisible, the ethical imagination and ethical practice can unsettle such divisions and generate possibilities for change.

The Crisis Discourse

Crisis Everywhere

Throughout the eighteen months of my fieldwork in Madrid, Spain, "crisis" was a ubiquitous term that could be seen and heard in numerous forms and diverse contexts. I saw "crisis" printed on storefront advertisements, activist pamphlets, and protest placards; debated in Twitter feeds, Facebook posts and online blogs; and spray-painted on buildings, lampposts, and garbage bins. It was even printed on a loaf of bread that I purchased daily, which read, *precio anti-crisis!,* an affordable price for a time of crisis! I heard "crisis" cited in television news reports, political speeches, personal anecdotes, conference presentations, and popular television programs. It was discussed with urgency and solemnity, sometimes with humor and sarcasm, regularly with force and anger, and often with familiarity and pragmatism.

The diverse reach of the concept of "the crisis" was also evident in the profusion of studies and news reports that referred to it as *the* reason for various problems plaguing Spain and its people. For example, "the crisis" is why Spanish families are buying less food;[33] it is why Spaniards are not as happy;[34] it is why Spaniards are getting older and having fewer children.[35] "The crisis" attacks nervous systems.[36] It is why there are longer lines at soup kitchens.[37] "The crisis" leads to greater climate change. Salaries are diminishing because of "the crisis."[38] And cows in Spain are producing less milk because of "the crisis."[39]

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[33] "La crisis lleva a las familias a comprar menos comida", El Pais, January 7, 2013
[34] 2013 UN Report
[35] "La natalidad desciende por tercer año consecutivo por el impacto de la crisis", El Pais, November 1, 2012, and
Instituto Nacional Estadistica, 6/29/12
[36] "The mental health risks of economic crisis in Spain: evidence from primary care centres, 2006 and 2010", The European Journal of Public Health, 2013, Vol. 23(1)
[37] According to Caritas, a Spanish Catholic charity
[38] "La crisis funde los salarios", El Pais, November 25, 2012.
[39] El Pais, December 28, 2012

"Crisis" was also frequently referred to in many of my casual conversations and interviews with colleagues, friends, and new acquaintances. As with academic studies and news reports, "the crisis" was offered as the primary reason for a number of difficulties. For example, one woman explained: "Before I was able to find work, now it's very complicated. Because of the crisis, I haven't been able to find a job." Another woman explained: "I had an academic scholarship before, but because of the crisis I lost it, and they haven't given any more financial aid since then." Thus, despite the variance in context and expression, "crisis" was a dominant concept that organized and colored individual and collective interpretations of contemporary circumstances. "The crisis" could literally be seen and heard everywhere.

In many of the examples above, the phrase "the crisis" was rarely supplemented by any further clarification or specific explication about related antecedents. "The crisis" was simply *the* root cause for individual and social problems and did not require any further explanation. By simply mentioning "the crisis," it was assumed that the meaning was clear and mutually understood. The evental status of contemporary experiences – as exceptional, intermediary and disruptive – is evident in the use of the definite article, "the" (or *la* in Spanish), with "crisis." Throughout my interviews, conversations, and numerous other discursive encounters and contexts, "crisis" was regularly articulated as "the crisis" (*la crisis*), as opposed to "a crisis" (*una crisis*). Use of the definite article, "the" reinforces the singularity of the current conditions to which "the crisis" refers. It is not merely "a" crisis, but rather *the* event that everyone in Spain speaks of and by which everyone has been affected.

In fact, in the early part of my research, I too assumed I knew the meaning of "the crisis." I arrived in Spain in 2012 armed with what I later realized was only a cursory understanding of the country's current social, economic and political situation, which had been informed by local

and international news reports that were replete with sensationalist rhetoric and economic jargon. I, therefore, employed the term in the similarly matter-of-fact manner as had my interlocutors. For example, some of my questions were phrased as: "Did you arrive before the crisis?" "How would you say the crisis has affected you?" I inquired into the specificities of the effects of "the crisis" but did not present or interrogate the specificities of "the crisis" as a discursive construct, and instead referred to it as some absolute yet amorphous entity that was necessarily impinging upon people's lives.

However, despite how often I heard, read, saw, and used the phrase, *la crisis* during my time in the field, it was not until several months into my fieldwork that I realized that what "the crisis" was, was not in fact as obvious as I and others had assumed. Despite its ubiquity and recurrent and casual use, "the crisis" seemed to obscure more than it revealed and obfuscate more than it explained. As I argue, missing from this picture of unprecedented and catastrophic suffering are the everyday challenges that migrant women face. With so much attention on the current moment and its current challenges, the structurally induced and historically rooted experiences of suffering that migrant women have endured have been further neglected and substantiated as normal *and* necessary.

The Fiscal Crisis

Although "the crisis" was often referred to as a categorical concept, obviating the need for in-depth explanations, when "the crisis" was explained in greater detail, in newspaper articles for example, it was explained as an economic phenomenon. The causes and development of "the crisis" were attributed to a situation of high debt levels and low economic growth. Moreover, the causes and progression of "the crisis" were often framed into a seemingly coherent narrative,

such that the explanation resembled a story, or a dramatic account with an identifiable beginning, middle and end. The story that is commonly reproduced across various media outlets generally unfolds in the following manner:

Spain's economy, the Eurozone's fourth largest and the world's twelfth largest, was once considered a model of fiscal responsibility and heralded for its miraculous growth between 1998 and 2007. In just five years, Spain's GDP fell by 16%, due largely to the collapse of the country's key construction sector, and unbridled, risky lending practices within the banking industry. With the bursts of the property- and credit-bubbles, Spain entered its first recession in 2008 since 1993, with its surplus quickly turning into a large national deficit far exceeding the European Union's budget deficit limit. Bank bailouts in the billions of dollars were then disbursed in order to offset losses from real estate investments, but which ultimately resulted in a deepened deficit and a significant downgrading of the country's credit rating. Spain then quickly became the center of attention of other European states (which briefly shifted from a focus on Greece) and the so-called troika of lenders – the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank. Their concerns for the Eurozone's stability ultimately translated into Spain's implementation of a series of austerity measures, which included reduced spending, slashed public services, and tax hikes, all with the stated purpose of reducing the deficit and growing the economy.

It is often at this point in the story that interpretations start to diverge, specifically with respect to government actions. Many Spanish citizens, civil society groups and representatives of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), Spain's former ruling political party, denounce recent political measures as untenable and disastrous. The short- and long-term harm inflicted upon the Spanish population through harsh austerity measures are seen as unjust and abhorrent,

for any anticipated future prosperity – if even possible – will not undo the immediate damage of historically high rates of unemployment,[40] reduced wages, restricted healthcare,[41] shrinking pensions, increased evictions,[42] and deepening poverty[43] (As I argue later, although many Spanish civil society groups recognize the economic component of "the crisis," they emphasize the economic implications in terms of its connection to political mis-governance. That is, civil society groups fault the Spanish government for its over-reliance on an economic paradigm that calculates the value of life according to its profitability.).

However, President Mariano Rajoy and representatives of his ruling party, the People's Party (PP), argue that austerity is necessary and in fact effective for facilitating the country's emergence from a momentary period of crisis. However difficult and painful the present moment may seem, the country will again, according to PP, enjoy a thriving economy and ultimately return to a normal life. In this formulation, a normal life is contingent upon a thriving economy.

While the "road to recovery" and the long-term outcome of austerity measures are debated, the fiscal crisis narrative has become a popular and enduring story. The crisis narrative has gained a preeminent place within the popular imagination; like any good story, the account (which we can call *The Fiscal Crisis*) has numerous strong narrative elements. For example,

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[40] 27.3% amongst the general population in the first quarter of 2013, and just over 57% amongst the country's youth, which represents the highest level of unemployment in the industrialized world, along with Greece

[41] In the form of costly medical insurance, inaccessible medical treatment and an increase in preventable deaths and injuries

[42] There has been a substantial rise in *desahucios,* or "evictions," with an average of 317 each day.

[43] According to an Oxfam Report, if the current austerity measures are maintained, by 2022,18 million Spaniards, or 38% of the population, could be in poverty. Eurostat figures released in April 2013 showed that only Bulgaria and Romania had a higher percentage of people deemed at risk of poverty.

there is a captivating plot, which thickens according to seemingly indisputable economic principles; the inclusion of provocative statistics adds an element of drama and intensity; and a linear movement of events, unfolding according to the easily comprehensible logic of cause-and-effect. Thus, elements of drama, positivism and objectivity, contribute to the story's iterability and predominance.

Yet, as I argue in this chapter, the identification – or misidentification – of the story's protagonists merits exploration. According to Spanish civil society groups, Spanish citizens are the main characters, whose suffering as evidenced by high unemployment rates, long lines at soup kitchens, vacant storefronts, rising electricity bills, and increasing number of suicides should elicit the concern of the audience, and whose celebrated outcome must be premised on an improved overall well-being. Yet, according to ruling politicians and international financial bodies with a vested interest, the protagonist is the suffering economy, whose extreme pains, in the form of a swollen national deficit, poor credit health, and a substantial decrease in national output, must find treatment in the form of reduced public expenditures and tax increases, and will only then eventually experience economic recovery and growth.

Yet, in both formulations – the suffering society and the suffering economy – migrants in general and migrant women more specifically are absent. They remain insignificant characters whose needs and suffering remain obscured by more prominent issues regarded as more pressing, such as, according to civil society groups, the need for more participatory forms of democracy, greater political transparency, fairer labor laws, more affordable healthcare and education, and greater gender equity. Yet, migrant women, the majority of whom are undocumented, are not disputing *degrees* of participation, transparency, affordability and equity, for as non-persons or trivialized characters in a story with predominant themes of racial, gendered and nationalist

exclusivism, they lack basic access in the first place to healthcare, education, political participation, and regulated job markets. They do not fall into the categories of "citizen," "worker," "patient," "student," or "woman," or any other functional and visible category and, therefore, cannot dispute these categories on the same terms as the Spanish. How can their opinion matter if they are not members of society; how can they demand fair labor protections if domestic service is not considered work; how can they receive affordable healthcare if denied access to the healthcare system; how can they study if they are always working; and how can they as women seek an equitable and sustainable balance between the private and public realms if marginalized in both? Migrant women, therefore, are not privy to the privileged use of liberal democratic discourse in the defense and promotion of their interests, let alone to the experience of "rights" and "liberties" associated with such discourse. As marginalized "others" unable to speak the dominant language in the dominant spaces, migrant women do not participate in the authorship of any publicly recognized rendition of the story of "the crisis." They cannot offer substance to the meaning of suffering, nor to the normative responses to such suffering.

Finally, it may also be said that in addition to the problematic misidentification of protagonists in the dominant crisis stories, as authored by Spanish civil society and the Spanish government, one can note a similarly problematic identification of the antagonist, specifically in the economic rendition (as appropriated by politicians). In this version, the antagonist is often vaguely understood as the unpredictable and mysterious "free" market system, whose accountability for various social problems becomes difficult to assign because of "the market's" vagaries and nebulous quality. With the proverbial "invisible hand" at the helm of public policy and economic and social dynamics, it becomes difficult to determine the etiology and concrete contextual components of emerging social problems and, hence, easier and permissible to submit

to and accept such problems as inevitable. Thus, the ethical question of how to care for those who have been marginalized and oppressed in specific ways by history, legislation, ideology, and social practice becomes all too easily sidestepped with laissez-faire and neo-liberal forms of rationality. And if a response is formulated, it lacks specificity and efficacy, for it is based on a logic that rationalizes and moralizes the value of life in economic terms; namely, profit, fiscal responsibility, entrepreneurial capacity and competitive advantage. But ultimately, those whose lives diverge from or falter in the face of these all-important economic values become the new antagonists; their own deficiencies become the source of their own plight.

Political Rhetoric

The economic dimension of the causes of and approaches to Spain's challenges is substantiated by political agendas driven by neo-liberal modes of rationality, and is facilitated by an authoritative rhetoric that present an ideational framework within which individuals can organize and make sense of the world. Agendas with an eye towards balancing budgets and improving credit ratings overlook the pains and anguish associated with homelessness, poverty, ailing health, and emotional insecurity. Following Foucault and his work on discourse theory (cf. Foucault 1969), I argue that the combination of authority and language yields significant influence. While many critically assess and reject the discourse of current political authorities (which I address later), others consciously or unconsciously accept the knowledge and meanings produced by them. For these faithful followers – or perhaps simply the distressed and weary who seek refuge in words that offer hope and redemption – the words of political officials often carry the status of "truth."

Political representatives have specifically reinforced the evental status of "the crisis." They emphasize the current situation as being exceptional and disruptive. For example, "the crisis" is often represented as a kind of dark chasm in Spanish history from which Spain either "is slowly emerging,"[44] (according to politicians touting the success of the government's austerity programs), or into which Spain has descended and "hit bottom,"[45] (according to politicians seeking to lambast the government for its unpopular austerity measures). In July of 2012 following President Mariano Rajoy's announcement of the government's impending budgetary cuts, Rajoy stated: "This is the reality, and it's a dismal one. We're in an extraordinarily grave situation and it is urgent that we get out of this hole as soon as possible." Other government representatives have referred to the current conditions as "critical" or "extreme." Regardless of the side of the political spectrum offering its particular political spin, all share the understanding that Spain is currently in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Such statements and descriptors not only frame the current situation as exceptional and dire, they also can be seen as validating unpopular government measures. For example, following the implementation of another round of budgetary cuts in July of 2012, President Rajoy stated: "I have had to make decisions that I would not have done in normal circumstances."[46] And according to Treasury Minister Cristobal Montoro: "We are in a critical situation that has forced us to respond with the most austere budget of the Spanish democracy."[47] The urgency and exceptionality of the situation are what require stringent measures, however difficult or

[44] The Minister of Employment and Social Security, Fátima Báñez, January 2, 2012, *El Pais*
[45] The President of Galicia, Alberto Núñez Feijóo, January 2, 2012, *El Pais*
[46] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/31/business/global/daily-euro-zone-watch.html?_r=0
[47] http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-03-30/spain-to-slash-spending-raise-corporate-taxes-to-cut-deficit.html

unpopular they may be. Moreover, not only are such measures necessary, they are also morally imperative. For example, according to Rajoy:

> We as Spanish have arrived at a point where we can no longer remain indecisive about choosing to stay as we are, or to make sacrifices. Our circumstances don't allow us this liberty. Necessity obliges us to act, regardless of whether or not we like it. I'm the first to be doing that which I don't want to have to do.[48]

Here, a Spinozan form of ethics is invoked, as Rajoy frames his actions of austerity in terms of necessity, or a choice made in light of the rational recognition and acceptance of things as they are: "Our circumstances don't allow us this liberty [of remaining indecisive]. Necessity obliges us to act…I am doing that which I don't want to have to do." Unlike the contingently and freely inspired form of ethics that I argue is at the center of migrant women's activist efforts, Rajoy appeals to a form of ethical decision-making that is reason-based and necessity-driven. There is no creativity or exploration, but a simple candid recognition of nature and its demands for a rational response. Moreover, Rajoy not only recuses himself from the impending fall-out of his unpopular measures by framing his actions in terms of necessity and inevitability, he also speaks of such choices as a collective act made under shared circumstances by using the pronouns "we," "our" and "us": "*We* as Spanish…can no longer remain indecisive," "*our* circumstances don't allow *us* this liberty," and "necessity obliges *us* to act." In this way, both the Spanish government and its citizenry are seen as making the difficult, yet necessary choices together. Framing the experience as a shared responsibility allows for Rajoy to not only share the burden of making difficult decisions, but also allows him to engage his audience on a more intimate level as partners or allies, and thereby avoid the potential opprobrious imputation of authoritarian governance a la Franco.

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[48] July 11, 2012, http://www.eleconomista.mobi/economia/noticias/4110868/07/12/Rajoy-Los-espanoles-no-podemos-elegir-Las-circunstancias-no-son-tan-generosas.html

As with his use of personal pronouns, Rajoy's use of the term, "sacrifice" in the above quote can also be seen as working towards the affective manipulation of public sentiment. Whether invoking its religious connotations of sacred offering or its secular meaning of a selfless good deed, the term "sacrifice" inspires feelings of altruism and hope. Such evocations of hope are reflective of the strong eschatological perspective underlying the discourse of crisis. That is, political authorities have framed "the crisis" as a transitional phase that is part of the path to progress.[49] And because the economic and social horizon promises growth and stability, current experiences of instability and suffering are to be understood and endured with pragmatism and a sense of sacrifice. For example, speaking to the slight decline in unemployment in 2013 compared to the previous year, Rajoy stated:

> …it is very important, because it shows that there is hope and that this country can and will move forward and that all the efforts that have been put in will have made sense.[50]

The harsh budget cuts and concomitant suffering *will have been* worthwhile.[51] The future perfect tense displaces the ethical exigencies of the present situation to a future experience: the

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[49] "Crisis" has historically been used as an eschatological concept (Kosselleck 2006). For example, in 1762 Rousseau used "crisis" to highlight the delicacy of the existing social order and the impending radical transformation of society: "We are approaching a state of crises and a century of revolutions." Thomas Paine similarly utilized the term to suggest a final reckoning in his journal titled, *The Crisis,* whose commentaries warned that the current moral challenges through recent American developments would result in salvation and democracy, or destruction and despotism. Paine wrote: "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." His emblematic quotation of resilience and faith in a promising future parallels political calls for a sacrificial endurance through contemporary times that try the Spanish soul.

[50] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/08/spain-mariano-rajoy-austerity

[51] Another example from Rajoy: "If people see that what we have done is producing results, and also see that what has been done is creating a solid base for the future, I think we are in condition to recover." retrieved from: http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304713704579093410864260806). Rajoy also uses phrases such as, "working in this direction without wavering" and "the benefits of reform cannot be achieved without hard work" (http://www.cfr.org/spain/conversation-

suffering that is experienced now "will make sense" *once* we experience stability and growth again in the future.[52]

Perhaps contributing to the strength and appeal of an ethics based on a future reflexive interpretation of current suffering is an enduring tension through Spanish history between the old and the new, or the past and the future. Significant historical moments can be understood in terms of this strained desire to move vigorously and tenaciously towards a more promising future, as with for example the resulting collective denunciation of a conservative, fascist Spain following the Civil War in favor of a liberal democracy, and the rejection of a traditional, "backwards" Spain in the early 1990s in favor of a modern European state. In fact, *el Pacto de Olvido,* or the Pact of Forgetting, which was established in 1977 following the Spanish Civil War, codified into law the desire to put the previous decades of strife and suffering behind, in order to focus on the future of Spain. Years of death and destruction would ultimately find their resolution in a democratic future and would thus render silence and amnesty a price worth paying for a rapid transition. Similarly, contemporary political discourse can be seen as advocating for a focus on what lies ahead and directing attention away from current struggles. A brighter, more stable future can and should justify and displace present pains. Specifically, cuts in public services and tax increases are a small price to pay for the transition to a stable and vital economy. This exchange thus renders acquiescence and silence the appropriate and necessary response. And if the prescription for silence and consent can not be freely and generously given,

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mariano-rajoy/p31519). Again, Rajoy demands a sense of sacrifice for what *will have been* for the good of the country.

[52] Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) offers a similar reflection with her example of Le Guin's story of "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," which tells the tale of a city, Omelas, where the happiness and well-being of its inhabitants depend on a small child's confinement to and humiliation in a small broom closet.

then it will be exacted and forcibly implemented, as has been evident with government policies,[53] the numerous instances of police brutality vis-à-vis a disgruntled, unemployed, homeless, and hungry citizenry,[54] and the continued exploitation, incarceration and marginalization of migrants.

No es una Crisis, es una Estafa

As suggested earlier, elements of "the crisis" discourse are not universally accepted. Specifically, for Spanish civil society groups, "the crisis" is not the unexpected breakdown of normal processes and institutions that PP politicians suggest, but rather is the final tear in a series of ruptures and the gradual fragmentation of an inherently precarious politico-economic system. Disgruntled Spanish, therefore, refer to the government's discourse of crisis and associated austerity measures as a "scam" (*una estafa)* as well as a "robbery" (*un atraco*). They criticize the large sums of public money that have been drained from public services, such as education and healthcare, and poured into the country's banks, whose unbridled practices they regard as having contributed to the economic and social problems plaguing their country in the first place. Indeed, a popular phrase heard in the rallying cries of the country's rampant demonstrations and protests is, "*No hay pan para tanto chorizo,"* which figuratively means, "There isn't enough money for all of these thieves." In their view, "the crisis" is nothing more than a clever ruse for the consolidation of an aggressive neoliberal state, whose policies lead to greater deregulation and privatization, the definitive dismantling of the welfare system, and enhanced unilateral political authority. As Schmitt wrote, "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception"

[53] Legislation passed in 2013 fines demonstrators for unsanctioned protests outside political offices, masked disorderly conduct, and harassment or insults of officials up to 600,000 euros.
[54] For example, in February of 2013 in the autonomous region of Valencia, Spanish police indiscriminately attacked students protesting recent cuts in education; these students were as young as 13, 14 and 15 years of age.

(1922[2006]: 5). Sovereignty is not the mere possession of absolute authority; sovereignty is the ability to decide what is an exception and to make decisions accordingly; it is the paradoxical capacity to stand outside the law in order to assert the law. In this view, the Spanish government's invocation of a state of exceptionality and emergency through the crisis discourse is regarded as a convenient political tool for advancing the Spanish state's politico-economic agenda, improving its geopolitical position, and rescuing the aura of an impervious and enduring sovereign essence, particularly given recent revelations of the Spanish state's own contingent and obsequious relation to the ruthless vagaries of capital.

In addition to the unsustainability and intractability of market-centered approaches to social and political governance, many critics also cite as systemic causes for contemporary problems the Spanish state's de facto two-party political system,[55] an inherently flawed electoral

[55] Spain's present-day political system was conceived during the Spanish transition in the late 1970s to guarantee political pluralism and guard against another fascist dictatorship. However, contemporary Spanish politics have come to be known as a *partitocracia,* or "particracy," wherein two political parties – the conservative *Partido Popular (PP)* and the social democratic *Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol (PSOE)* – have dominated Spanish political processes. Spanish decry this absence of alternative political views that they believe would enrich public debate and ultimately contribute to a more effectively governed country. In fact, because of the general disillusionment amongst Spanish citizens with their democratic system and

law governing Spain's structure of representative democracy,[56] and the erosion of social consensus, on which the much-heralded Transition to democracy was based over thirty years ago.[57] These systemic issues, which have been blurred by the optimism of a post-Franco democratic state and the euphoria of decades of impressive economic growth and uninhibited consumption, are now publicly acknowledged and denounced as the reasons for the current predicament. Thus, the gravity of contemporary issues cannot simply be explained by one-dimensional economic models and exempted by theories of the market's self-healing powers[58] (or even Keynesian models of government intervention), but must take into account more fundamental issues involving trust, transparency, dialogue, equity and well-being. Nor can there be a return to some imagined normalcy of everyday life, as PP politicians proclaim with their

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representatives – specifically the widespread corruption on the part of both political parties – many refer to the two parties as one egregious political unit, *PPSOE*.

[56] According to Spain's electoral law, closed electoral lists restrict voters to the selection of a party rather than a specific candidate, thereby maintaining unpopular and/or incompetent politicians in office. Moreover, high-ranking party leaders, not party members, determine candidate nominations for these electoral lists, which in effect guarantees loyalty to party leaders instead of the Spanish public and, hence, limits parliament members' capacity to act independently, according to their constituents' needs and not their party's. The absence of whistleblowing and institutionalized measures of accountability has contributed to widespread corruption on all levels of governance, from local municipalities to the President of the country. Currently, 730 politicians are being prosecuted in Spain for alleged corruption cases. Most recently, the ex-treasurer of PP, Luis Barcenas, was indicted for distributing kickbacks and illegal payments from construction businesses to fellow conservative party politicians, including President Rajoy. The Royal Family has also been embroiled in an ongoing case of corruption involving Princess Cristina and her husband, Inaki Urdangarin, Duke of Palma, who is charged with the embezzlement of public funds through his non-profit institute.

[57] With the government's recent refusals to partake in the *dialogo social*, "social dialogue" – the tripartite communicative mechanism established in 2008 between the government, labor unions and employer organizations for dealing with employment – prior to enacting controversial labor reforms in 2012, Spanish citizens have been unable to engage in processes of policy development and reform. This and other breakdowns in public debate and consensus have substantiated recent calls for a more participatory form of democratic governance.

[58] For example see "The rescue of Bear Stearns marks liberalization's limit," *Financial Times*. Retrieved 8-4-2014.

rhetoric of sacrifice and hope. Rather, according to many civil society groups such as *Democracia Real Ya,* what is needed is a fundamental and profound ethical shift. Indignant citizens and non-citizens seek more than a simple economic facelift, and instead demand the complete overhaul of irrelevant, unsustainable and overtly injurious economic and political practices. They seek more sustainable answers to the standard ethical question, *how ought we to live* and to its related derivations, how ought we to work, how ought we to study, how ought we to govern, how ought we to house our people, and how ought we to care.

Yet, although civil society groups recognize the intensity, exceptionality, and hence, eventality of their current suffering, and vociferously demand a profound shift away from neo-liberal-calculations of life and its governance towards a more humanitarian and egalitarian form of rationality, migrant women's needs and voices largely remain on the margins of this counter public discourse and collective ethical reflections. Corresponding answers to the question of 'how ought we to live,' do not include migrant women, or at least in a sufficiently compelling manner.

Inclusive Exclusion

Up to now, I have argued that migrant women's needs have been largely dismissed or ignored. However, it can also be noted that there have been some representation of their experiences by some Spanish civil society groups. However, I argue that it has been inadequate or merely nominal, for reasons I suggested in the previous chapter – the paradoxical inclusive exclusion of migrants for the sake of demonstrating a cosmopolitan liberal ethos (or as Agamben has argued, for the assertion of sovereign power). For example, *la Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH)*, an organization that works on behalf of and with evicted families and

individuals, has defended migrants against impending or actualized evictions. Additionally, many groups have denounced the government's exclusion of undocumented migrants from access to public healthcare services. However, these groups reference migrants' current experiences as simply another sub-group of the broader suffering population. That is, migrants' problems are simply offered as a variation of the same issues for which they demand justice, while the specificities of migrants' situation, including the historical, structural and racialized nature of their oppression, are not mentioned or explored.

One example of my observance of the misrepresentation and minimization of migrants' situations comes from a meeting I attended of 15-M, one of Spain's main social movements denominated as such because of their historic protests on May 15, 2011 in Madrid's iconic plaza, *Puerta del Sol.* The meeting began with a panel of representatives from each of the affected sectors and demographic groups, including healthcare, education, housing, women, and workers. Each representative stood up and gave a five-minute presentation on their respective issue. After the representative of *PAH* gave her presentation, she introduced a dark-skinned woman who was seated next to her as *her* "special guest" who would briefly explain her plight as a recently evicted migrant. After the panel presentations, the audience directed a series of questions, which evolved into several thoughtful discussions, to each of the panelists. However, what I found striking about that evening was that not a single question was directed towards the migrant woman, nor did any discussion regarding migrants' experiences develop. Also, following the "special" guest's brief presentation, the *PAH* representative made a comment regarding "how important the plight of migrants are to *us,* for *we* care deeply about *them*." By the end of the evening, I could not help but feel somewhat cynical regarding these groups' concern for the

"plight of migrants." Their inclusion of the "special guest" seemed superficial at best and paternalistic at worst.

I observed a similar attitude regarding migrant women on the part of various feminist groups in Madrid. For example, at a meeting of the Spanish Committee of the international Convention on the Elimination all of Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), representatives of various feminist organizations were discussing the format of a national level report documenting the current status of women's issues in Spain, which would ultimately be submitted to the Spanish government. In their framework for this report, there were a total of six broad categories – health, employment, education, violence, and an "other" category, which included migrant, disabled and gypsy women. I attended the meeting as a representative of *La Red de Mujeres de Latinoamérica y del Caribe,* a Latin American women's organization (referred to as *La Red* for short), along with Carolina, another member of *La Red*. According to their system, Carolina and I represented the "other" category. Although I found their framework problematic, I elected to keep my opinions to myself as a newcomer to the group. However, still troubled by this "other" category, I later asked Susana, another member of *La Red* and Vice President of *Rumiñahui,* a well-established, local Ecuadorian organization, what she thought about this arrangement of women's issues. Her response perfectly echoed my thoughts from the CEDAW meeting:

> If we're talking about the problematic of women, in all of these groups, then why not talk in terms of transversality? We've always agreed that there needs to be a transversal group where they consider everything, moreover we [as Latin American women] believe that we can intervene in the groups we consider most important; for example, employment, health, and violence. It doesn't make sense to keep us separated. The issue was supposedly that we had to divide the categories because of conflicting schedules, this group has their meeting times, their schedule, etc. I thought it was important that *La Red* be included in these important groups of health, employment and violence. Yes, I think we can deepen the understanding of these issues of health, employment, we can talk about it all.

As Susana stated, a transversal or "intersectional" approach to women's issues seemed more appropriate, for migrant women's experiences could and should contribute to not only a deeper understanding of issues of health, employment, education and violence, but could also help inform the kinds of responses developed.

In addition to the two experiences mentioned above, I had several other interactions and experiences in the field that similarly point to such a disjuncture between Spanish organizations' stated interest in migrant women's issues and their actual practice. Gina, a migrant women activist and representative of the Spanish National Federation of Immigrant and Refugee Associations (*Federación Estatal de Asociaciones de Inmigrantes y Refugiados en España*), expressed her candid opinion that Spanish organizations' efforts with respect to migrant issues had more to do with maintaining organizational viability via project-based funding, than it did with any sincere interest in helping migrants achieve equality and visibility. Similarly, Belén, a representative of ACSUR, a non-governmental development organization, highlighted the irony behind the National Platform of Domestic Work – despite its focus on domestic work issues, the organizations that make up the platform are all Spanish and none of whose members are domestic workers. Domestic worker associations in Madrid, such as *Territorio Doméstico* and *Servicio Doméstico Activo* (SEDOAC), which are made up largely of migrant women, have not participated in the Platforms' efforts, largely because of the Platform's failure to incorporate migrant domestic worker associations into their organizational structure, and because of their inability to accommodate domestic workers' busy schedules, so that domestic workers would be able to attend meetings held during the week.

However, although migrant women activists, like Susana, could critically assess the marginalization of women's issues within the broader and predominant discourse of "the crisis,"

there were also indications of migrant women's own internalization of this discourse. For example, I worked with *La Red* on the design and implementation of a study originally titled, "The impact of the crisis on migrant women in Spain." The group wanted to be able to document what they perceived to be migrant women's qualitatively "new" and "more severe" experiences in recent years, and like the studies and reports previously cited, they attributed these difficulties to "the crisis." Because I had developed a more critical view on "the crisis" by this point in my fieldwork, I challenged the group's formulation of the title and approach to the study. As I saw it, underlying their study was the assumption that some vague entity was necessarily impinging upon migrant women as an already abject group. Although there have been discernible shifts in migrant women's experiences in recent years, such that more migrant women have become unemployed, now desire to return home to their native countries, suffer from depression and family strife, and work longer hours for less pay, I was not disputing the merits of their accounts of current acute experiences of suffering. Rather, I sought to bring nuanced attention to the complexity of their problems and to contextualize the specificities of their experience. The normalization of their abnormality extended beyond the normalization of Spanish experiences of abnormality and was rooted in a distinct set of structural and historical conditions. I did not want to reproduce the story conveyed by "the crisis" and miss an opportunity for these women to contribute their own rendition as authors and protagonists. Although it took me some courage to bring this issue to their attention, to challenge the premise of their study, I was pleased to have found my comments well received with equally reflective comments and thoughtful debate.

In short, notwithstanding occasional gestures of amicable interest and cooperation on the part of Spanish social groups, migrant women's suffering remains an obscure and unaddressed problem. And given the potency of the crisis discourse, with its explanatory power rooted in economic models, and its capacity to elicit empathy and action, even many migrant women have themselves internalized the discourse and accepted the commonly held assumptions regarding the economic and evental nature underlying the discourse.

Migrant Women's Side of the Story

Migrant women's needs can be seen as having been obscured and dismissed within the various dominant renditions of the crisis story, including the fiscal, eschatological, and ethical. An economic-based narrative of crisis, with its one-dimensional interpretations and so-called "hard" data, seems to offer a logical framework for interpreting present-day problems, but can be seen to elide many of the important details of a life of precarity. A political rhetoric based on an ethics of future reflexivity and which offers viscerally compelling language for resilience in the face of trial, disregards and distracts from the regular despair and chronic poverty that both Spanish citizens and migrants face. And although dominant civil society groups seek fundamental ethical shifts in the conceptualization of and approaches to well-being and suffering, such considerations are circumscribed in that they only superficially address the needs of migrant women. "The crisis" then in these various versions obscures the various interrelated, contextual components and complex historical antecedents of the challenges that migrant women face.

The misrepresentation of migrant women's suffering can be understood in light of their unfavorable position within a constellation of normativity they have not configured. Though migrant women may be "present" in terms of the requisite functions they perform as domestic

laborers, they are absent in terms of a life that can and should be sustained. They may live, but should suffer. They are a life that may be killed but not sacrificed (Agamben 1998).

The following section offers the details of five migrant women's experiences. While migrant women's life-stories are rich and complex, I focus on the components of these women's migratory trajectories that have presented the most difficulty and persecution. I focus on that which makes their situation uniquely problematic so that we can then better understand the unique possibilities that ethical practice affords.

Details of Migrant Women's Experiences

> I was scared, sad and distressed, but there was nothing I could do, you have to [go], because you can't survive otherwise.

The quote above is from Noemi, one of the first women I interviewed in the field and who is from Honduras. However, this quote could easily have been stated by any of the other women I later interviewed. Noemi's statement reflects the great difficulty and ambivalence surrounding the decision to migrate. For women with children, the decision is especially difficult because one does not know when she will see her children again but nevertheless feels obliged to migrate in order to provide a better future for her family, as many women put it, specifically in the form of an education that otherwise would not be affordable with the meager (or nonexistent) salaries in their home countries. And given the dangerous and difficult conditions in many of these women's native countries, there is greater urgency for them to seek solutions elsewhere to lift their families out of poverty, ensure their safety and health, and provide an alternative to an otherwise dismal future. For example, with an unemployment rate of

28% and the highest rate of intentional homicide in the world, Honduras presents many obstacles for its youth working towards a stable and positive future.[59] According to Noemi:

> Before things were fine. But now there is a lot of delinquency, organized crime, and drugs and therefore everyday things get worse. Those who have money, use it for drugs. People are not left to work…. Business people have to pay these gangsters so that they leave them in peace and so that they don't kill them. Everyone is afraid. There are a lot of people there who don't like to leave their homes.

Noemi went on to explain that because she has five sons and at the time did not have a husband who could help support her family, she "*had to* emigrate so that they could study" and eventually join her abroad, where they would be far from the dangers that increasingly tempt and entrap many of her country's youth. She stated, "I didn't come here looking for wealth; the only thing I wanted was to be with my children." Noemi had to endure six years of separation from her children before she could secure the financial means to bring them to Spain. And although they are all with her now in Madrid, she nevertheless still feels the anguish she felt ten years ago when she left Honduras. Amid tears she explained, "I lost their youth. I lost it. And it still makes me sad."

Lucrecia's situation was similar. She too left her country, Nicaragua because of the difficulty finding adequate employment and her inability to support her five children to the extent that she desired. Like Noemi, she wanted to give her children an education through the university level and knew this would only be possible by earning a more sustainable income abroad. She stated: "Making this decision to leave was very difficult, but I had to make it. I had to be strong and brave and decide to leave without looking back." And although she made the difficult decision to leave her children, bravely forge ahead, and not "look back," she has since then encountered a variety of new and daunting challenges. She stated:

[59] According to a 2011 Global Study on Homicide by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

> You come here thinking that everything will be beautiful and perfect, because of the stories you hear, but once you get here, you realize that it's a different story.

Discriminatory laws, racist and sexist norms, and a harsh economic climate are strong elements in this "different story" that Lucrecia has lived for the last eight years. But even before one arrives to Spain and has to contend with the challenges of navigating a formidable, bureaucratic legal system and what these women consider a "racist" society, the journey itself to Spain can also be arduous and risky. Maria, who came from the Dominican Republic in 2004 (when the situation in Spain was relatively less challenging in terms of strict immigration laws and employment opportunities), travelled for four months before she finally arrived to Madrid. She was shuttled through the Czech Republic, Italy, and Barcelona, staying with nine other migrants in unknown, cramped quarters, by a network of individuals who led her to believe that they were facilitating her and the others' dreams for a better life abroad, when in fact they sought only to extort money from them as desperate and disoriented migrants. Other women who were able to avoid corrupt networks and fraudulent travel agencies, and organized their own migratory journeys to Spain, still had other harrowing experiences to speak of, including several rounds of deportation and cruel tactics of intimidation by unforgiving customs authorities at the Barajas Airport in Madrid. And if one is able to survive the grief of leaving one's family, the fear and risks of the journey itself, and the humiliation upon arrival, one then has to begin a new set of challenges associated with actual life *in* Spain. According to Lucrecia, despite what one expects or hopes for, life for a migrant "is hardly a bed of roses."

Lucrecia's challenges, and those of many others, largely derive from her undocumented status, for she and many others come to Spain as a "tourist," without the appropriate documentation that authorizes legal residency and/or work. Lucrecia has lived in Spain for eight years – and thus has not seen her children in eight years – and has been denied her first permit

three times, largely because of the very demanding and complicated procedures involved in applying for a permit. Without a work or residence permit, she is a non-existent person. She cannot secure a work contract as a domestic worker, which would give her access to certain labor protections and social rights (at least in theory); she cannot earn a fair salary that would enable her to adequately support herself and her children in Nicaragua; she cannot walk freely throughout the streets of Madrid without fear of police interrogation, detention in Madrid's infamous center of internment for foreigners (CIE), and ultimately deportation; and she cannot go to the doctor for preventative healthcare or treatment for a chronic illness for which she requires medication. As she puts it: "The experience I have had has always been vulnerable, persecuted by the Law of Foreigners and the police."

The immigration detention center in Madrid shares many of the negative traits characterizing the eight other vilified detention centers around Spain. Amongst the many problems that human rights groups cite are: deplorable sanitary and safety conditions, physical abuse and torture, barred contact with friends and family, inadequate medical services for more vulnerable groups, and lack of transparency regarding detainees' status and length of internment. Pilar, who came from Bolivia in 2007 (and whose story I briefly alluded to in the introduction), was detained by the police on the first day she arrived to Madrid, along with her mother and aunt, who had already been living in Madrid prior to Pilar's arrival. The police had "randomly" stopped them on the street, and because none of them had legal documentation, they were taken to the local police station where they were detained and interrogated for several hours. Pilar and her mother were eventually released with letters of expulsion and a fine of 500 euros each. Pilar's aunt on the other hand was sent to Madrid's CIE.

Although many have managed to circumvent the awful fate of life in an immigrant detention center, the lack of documentation for approximately 80% of migrant women in Spain has translated into other forms of abuse and prison-like treatment. Specifically, many migrant women describe experiences working as domestic laborers in terms of its isolating, exhausting and demoralizing conditions. Zoila, who came from Ecuador in 2002, explained to me why she cried regularly when she began her first job as a domestic worker in Madrid at the age of 25:

> I wasn't used to this kind of work, I didn't know how to work with kids. I had never worked with kids. Everything was new. There were four kids, and I had to take care of all of them by myself, and I had to maintain the [family's] apartment. Everything was completely different. I had a very bad time. I wanted to go back home. I had to do everything in the house that I had never done before. I endured this work for one year and six months and then I could do no more. I was very tired. So I left and looked for something else.

Zoila explained that working as an *interna,* or a domestic worker who lived in her employer's home, was so taxing that the exhaustion was patently visible to others. One day when she was travelling on a bus, a woman who sat next to her said, "You work as an *interna,* don't you?" Zoila responded, "Yes, how did you know?" The women replied, "I can see the exhaustion and despair in your eyes." The horrid work conditions for *internas* in Spain (as well as abroad) are so common and well known that the term, *interna* has taken on connotations as abhorrent and terrifying as the term "slave," which many often used to describe domestic work.

Although Zoila was able to find another job in another home that was relatively less physically taxing, she ended up trading in the extreme physical exploitation for emotional abuse. She explained how she fought often with her new employer, who regularly violated her privacy and spoke to her disparagingly. For example, Zoila's employer had entered Zoila's room without permission and found Zoila's recently acquired Book of Mormon, the main religious text for the Church of Latter Day Saints, which Zoila had recently joined. Upon her "accidental"

discovery, her employer criticized and humiliated Zoila for her decision to join the church. With this and many other similarly humiliating experiences in mind, Zoila summarized her time working as a domestic laborer in the following way:

> Domestic work is like slavery. Domestic workers are exploited as much as possible. One does not have the right to rest, to go to the doctor, they never agree with you, when one asks for permission to go to the doctor, there is always a "but" or an "if." You don't have rights to anything.

Zoila's experience of exploitation and denigrating treatment was similar to Osiris' early experiences as a domestic worker. However, Osiris, who came from Honduras at a slightly younger age than Zoila, at the age of 19, had a lot of difficulty finding work. Once she finally did find work after several unsuccessful months of searching, her first experience as a domestic worker was similarly difficult and demoralizing; she too had to quickly transition from her previous life as a free-spirited, eager youth, to the life of an underappreciated caretaker who was responsible for an entire home and family:

> The beginning was very difficult for me, but I was caught between a rock and a hard place. I wouldn't have done it but my situation required it. I had to clean their chalet, take care of their children, and clean their cars. I worked weekends, even on Sundays, and holidays, and didn't get paid for this extra work. And they always yelled at me. According to the mother, all I did was sit and talk and the house was always dirty. I told them that what I did was all that I could do. That is, it wasn't possible to do everything they asked of me. It wasn't possible.

Despite all that domestic workers do and the specialized knowledge and training that their work requires – tending to the disabled, elderly, infants, those with Alzheimer's disease, family's homes, cars and food – they are paid miserable salaries and have few or no rights and protections. Osiris summed up domestic workers' experience in the following way: "We're the ones who work the most, but we're the ones who are treated the worst."

Apart from the specific hardships associated with life as a domestic worker, many women also speak to the general disrespect and specifically racist treatment they receive throughout Spanish society. Noemi, after living in Spain for ten years and who is now a Spanish citizen, stated that she will never claim to be Spanish because "I can't." "They will never accept us as Spanish. They make you feel that you are not Spanish." Zoila offered a similar reflection:

> I'm tired from work. But I'm especially tired of how the people are. It's very different. Up to the point that they're racist. Everyday I'm reminded of this. Sometimes it makes one think and say, "I came here for this?" [*at this point she started crying*] There are things that you should never say to anyone.

The harsh words, enervating work conditions, financial instability, separation from one's family, and persecution by the law all inform migrant women's oft-repeated claim, "we are always in crisis" (*siempre estamos en crisis*).

Resolving the Disconnect

The Indiscernible Divide between Well-being and Suffering

Given all of the obstacles presented and limits imposed by a formidable and exclusionary legal system, racist, nationalistic, and sexist ideologies, a de facto deregulated domestic service industry, and even economic and geopolitical processes that compel labor migrations in the first place, migrant women find themselves with few options for securing and maintaining a stable life, or simply few options for mere survival, as Noemi had put it. Yet, the life that is lived in survival mode does not necessarily equate to constructive and healthy living. As these women toil under oppressive and exhausting conditions, and face constant persecution by the law and social norms, the physical and ordinary reproduction of life effectively translates into the gradual and acute attrition of these same lives. Migrant women's situations have been institutionally,

legally, historically and ideologically structured such that they have to care for those who oppress them, seek protection from a state that persecutes them, and suffer so that others may thrive. The distinctions, therefore, between everyday life and crisis, the ordinary and extraordinary, normality and abnormality, and the ethical and unethical are neither clear nor investigated. For these women then, crisis is not an aberration in the normal vibrancy of everyday life, or a mourned departure from an idealized past as the discourse of crisis suggests. For Noemi, Lucrecia, Zoila, Pilar and Osiris, "crisis" is a structural reality that has been insidiously woven into the texture of their everyday life, for the sake of productivity, profit and flexibility.

The Event and the Everyday

Conceptualization of "the crisis" as *the* event not only reinforces the singularity of current difficulties, it also reifies the "normality" of the everyday against which "crisis" is contrasted. "The crisis" is not extraordinary in and of itself; it is extraordinary by virtue of the purportedly "ordinary" trajectory of everyday life that it has disrupted. Thus, in bringing attention to "crisis" as a discursive construction and to its concomitant expectations for suffering, I am not necessarily interested in the metaphysical questions of 'what is suffering' and 'is suffering real,' and the metaethical question of 'is one form of suffering more or less ethically problematic.' That is, I do not aim to dispute the materiality or "actuality" of Spanish experiences of suffering and the merits of their demands for justice (i.e. Do Spanish experiences in fact constitute a catastrophic event and, therefore, deserve the justice that Spaniards seek?). Nor do I argue that migrant women's chronic experiences of suffering are "more real" and, therefore, deserve more political attention. Despite my standard social constructionist or

postmodernist approach to "crisis" as discourse and representation, I see the suffering and instability that Spanish citizens cite and experience as "real." I see their suffering as "real" in the phenomenological sense of privileging the lived, embodied experience of the individual; in a Marxist perspective that views suffering and inequality as historically and materially situated within an oppressive economic order and set of relations; and as a critical theorist who recognizes that social inequality in fact undermines the well-being of many. Thus, I bring critical attention to the use of the term, "crisis" not to debate a metaphysical "reality" or "actuality" (and thus move past absolute relativist and philosophical stalemates), but rather, to offer a more critical look at assignations of normality. I make visible "the self-evidences on which our knowledges, acquiescences and practices rest" (Foucault 1991). As a Protestant theologian cited by Schmitt (1922:19-22) put it:

> The exception explains the general and itself. And when one really wants to study the general, one need only look around for a real exception. It brings everything to light more clearly than the general itself.

This chapter then has addressed the normalization of what is problematic in order to better appreciate the problematization of what is normal in the latter half of this dissertation.

Ambivalence and the Provocation of Change

Yet, however disturbing and enlightening an event may be, it may not necessarily lead to profound change; it may instead lead to a rationalization and acceptance of the situation as such. The discursive oscillation between an event's epochal and mundane qualities can be seen as signaling the tension between acceptance and change. In the examples of the articles and studies cited at the beginning of this chapter, "the crisis" is presented as both menacing and surprising

like an environmental disaster, and as real and familiar like a daily *café con leche* (coffee with milk). Also, that the crisis concept is often cited casually and matter-of-factly as the primary causal factor for a wide range of problems, from the global and environmental to the local and intimate, suggests that the urgency and spectacularity of the concept are receding into the banal and structured rhythm of everyday life. I do not discount the significance and moral exigencies of ongoing contemporary challenges, but merely highlight the inherent and productive tension between the rationalization of contemporary issues and the problematization of these issues, particularly in light of the progressive passage of time that has led to the increasingly embedded quality of the problems associated with "the crisis." Social life often adjusts and accommodates accordingly, as dictated by necessity and survival (cf. Bhaba 1994; Nordstrom 1997; Whyte 1997). "The crisis" then soon becomes less the unexplainable and unexpected intrusion into the everyday, and more the ostensive determinant of the everyday, whose logic is more easily explained with the rationality of economic models and the empiricism of years of lived experience. As Derrida (2007) argues, the appearance of rules, norms and criteria to evaluate certain situations, implies the progressive disappearance of the event; the extraordinary dissipates as patterns and standards emerge. Taussig (1989) describes the oscillation between rationalization and problematization in the following way:

> A state of doubleness of social being in which one moves in bursts between somehow accepting the situation as normal, only to be thrown into a panic or shocked into disorientation by an event, a rumor, a sight, something said, or not said - something that even while it requires the normal in order to make its impact, destroys it. Suddenly an unanticipated event occurs, perhaps a dramatic or poignant or ugly one, and the normality of the abnormal is shown for what it is. Then it passes away, terror as usual, in a staggering of position that lends itself to survival as well as despair and macabre humor (8).

Despite what may be the progressive assimilation of the crisis concept into the familiar and self-evident terrain of everyday life, or "terror as usual," the transformative potential of

eventalization or ethical problematization does not necessarily dissipate into the oblivion of the "everyday" or transform into "despair and macabre humor." As I will go on to argue, female migrant activists' efforts to unsettle the self-evident point to enduring cynicism and frustration, as well as imagination and desire. In the next two chapters, I explore the practices of ethical problematization that can lead to the configuration of new constellations of normativity, or what I focus on as *possibilities* for change.

CHAPTER THREE

What it Takes for a Butterfly to Fly

I waited anxiously for Maite and Amalia at the entrance of *La Eskalera Karakola,* Madrid's renowned center of feminist activity. As I stood there in front of the bright red doors, with "La Eskalera Karakola" spray-painted in large blue script at the top, I looked at my phone for the umpteenth time and noticed that they were now thirty-two minutes late, or one minute later than the last time I had checked the time. Although I had grown accustomed to waiting for others to arrive for various meetings and appointments over the course of my fieldwork, I nevertheless felt and exhibited nervous anxiety whenever I did have to wait. Perhaps I had not yet settled into the more relaxed tempo according to which my Latin American *compañeras* seemed to move through the world; or perhaps I was just an eager anthropologist who was excited for each opportunity to be with such a feisty and uplifting group of women. But in that particular moment, I knew that I was nervous about the task that we had set for ourselves that evening. We had agreed to meet in order to prepare materials for a city-wide march celebrating International Women's Day, in which we and some others would participate as members of *Territorio Doméstico* (TD), a feminist association of migrant domestic workers. I was excited to participate with these women in a public event and to be able to act as one of their representatives, for I imagined it would somehow consummate my membership in the group. But I was also worried that we would not have enough time to adequately prepare, given that the march was supposed to start in another hour. So "why the tardiness?" I wondered.

Just when I had gotten to the point of real concern, wondering if I had shown up at the right place and at the right time, and if and how I should try to contact Maite and Amalia to inquire into their whereabouts, they finally arrived. They approached me with their usual sweet and calm demeanor, we exchanged the customary two-kiss greeting, they apologized for their tardiness, and they proceeded to ask me how I was doing, as if they had not a care in the world. I was more relieved that they had arrived than frustrated that they had arrived late. But notwithstanding my relief, I was still anxious about the work we had to do.

We entered the *La Karakola*, which was small and eclectic, with an interesting collection of folding chairs, wall hangings, and tea mugs littering the room. Although I immediately wanted to get to work and inquired into the specificities of our task and the location of the requisite materials, Maite and Amalia were calmly engaged in conversation, which seemed much more lighthearted than what was my draconian attempt to jumpstart our work. They briefly stopped their conversation and we began searching through the rooms for the materials we would need. We collected tape, staples, previously made placards, and markers that happened to be

children's markers found in a bin containing other children's supplies, which I later learned kept kids occupied as their recalcitrant mothers participated in their political meetings in the next room.

We finally started our work, creating signs by attaching thick pieces of paper together with tape and staples, and writing various slogans on the signs with the children's markers. Although we kept busy and produced several signs, I could not help but feel a little disappointed in the quality of it all. For example, our writing on the placards did not exactly resemble the evenly spaced and neatly aligned letters of digital typography, which in my mind seemed more appropriate for a political march in Spain's capital. And why had we selected pink, purple, green and yellow to deliver our political message of social justice and equality? I also wondered if others beyond the membership of our group would understand and appreciate the import of the messages on the signs. For example, one sign read, "No to a rise in social security payments," which did not seem very catchy or compelling. But despite how much I worried over the aesthetic quality and political efficacy of our work, I gradually relaxed into the amicable and uplifting company of these two women. I worried less about political objectives and tuned in more to the conversations about family, friendships, and work that arose over the course of the hour that we sat on the floor assembling signs. The sweet and gratifying connections we shared were further heightened when Pepa arrived and triumphantly announced her provision of cakes in which we would indulge "to celebrate our womanhood." Pepa's unexpected delivery of this arsenal of sweets seemed appropriate in that moment, for her vivacious and easy-going character, which seemed to always lighten the mood of any situation, further dispelled any traces of doubt and worry on my part. We immediately stopped what we were doing, sat down on some chairs

we had arranged into a circle, and proceeded to sing earnestly and joyously as we waved two lighters back and forth in the air:

Empleadas del hogar,
Mujeres del mundo
En un mismo lugar,
Lucha por tus derechos
Y tu dignidad
Oye pibe, no me explotes mas,
Pagame ochocientos
y la seguridad

("Domestic workers,
Women of the world
In any given place
Fight for your rights
And your dignity
Listen kid, don't exploit me anymore,
Pay me 800 euros
And social security")

Vamos a cambiar, vamos a cambiar
Cambiemos juntas, cambiemos juntas
Hay que luchar, hay que luchar
Luchemos juntas, luchemos juntas
Tenemos derechos, tenemos derechos
Ponte en mi lugar, ponte en mi lugar

("We are going to change things, we are going to change things
Let's change things together, let's change things together
We have to fight, we have to fight
We have rights, we have rights
Put yourself in my place, put yourself in my place")

Upon finishing the song, we let out an exuberant cheer, embraced one another warmly, and then dove into the delectable treats. By the time we had finished off most of the cakes, other TD members started to arrive to join us for the march. Satisfied with the number of placards we had created, we all proceeded to dress into our regalia for the evening – bright red aprons (whose cheap fabrication and gaudy design of yellow and black polka dots and a scripted *España* suggested its provenance from one of the many tourist shops in Madrid) with rainbow-colored feather dusters as an accessory. I knew we wanted to gain greater visibility for domestic worker issues, but upon adorning ourselves with polyester aprons and feather dusters, I could not help but wonder if *this* was the kind of visibility we wanted. "Is this how change would happen, the change we had sung so victoriously about just moments ago?" I also wondered, "Wouldn't our aprons and feather dusters just reinforce the presumptive connection between servitude and female migrants prevalent throughout Spanish society, and which we worked so fiercely to dispel? Were we not female warriors with powerful ideas and a broad range of capacities?" Despite any elation I felt during that exquisite moment of spirited song, political desire, intimate belonging, and sweet indulgence, a sense of disappointment and unease came over me once

again. How would any part of our improvisational and frivolous ensemble that evening attract the kind of serious political attention we needed? Yet, regardless of my reservations in that moment, I was again carried away by the euphoria generated by our crew of dynamic women with their friendly banter, infectious laughter and songs of solidarity and change. With high spirits and feather dusters in hand, we left *La Karakola* and proceeded to walk towards *la Plaza Jacinto Benavento*, where the march would begin.

We walked down the cobblestone streets of the historic *La Latina* neighborhood, occasionally bursting out in song and mostly using the time to catch up with one another, for it had been a week since our last TD meeting. On the way, we encountered many perplexed looks from strangers, as well as a giant vulva propped atop a wooden board, which was carried quite regally by four gallant women. When we finally arrived to our destination, I was further impressed by the sight and sounds I encountered – multi-piece bands playing catchy rhythms, digitally printed placards delivering incisive political messages, and large groups of people representing various feminist organizations and miscellaneous social causes, such as "Women

against War," communist youth, and the LGTB community. I was also impressed by the turnout, which included a noticeable number of men, given the less than ideal rainy weather. Notwithstanding the distinct differences between these other groups and our own small, motley crew, the women with whom I stood in the rain seemed proud, determined and carefree. As if to quiet my mind and the escalating thoughts about what these women could and would actually achieve through their work as an organization, the group again erupted into song:

> "The job I have is unique
> You take care of everyone
> And they pay you horribly
> Get up, domestic worker
> Fight for your rights and visibility
> In the case of an accident, it's special
> Well, you don't have rights
> Not even for claiming payment
> Get up, domestic worker
> Fight for your rights and visibility"

Shift in Epistemological Approach

Notwithstanding the high regard with which I held the women of *Territorio Doméstico,* I felt a distinct degree of skepticism in the early part of my research regarding their capacity to achieve change, as conveyed in the account above. However, as this chapter will go on to demonstrate, I eventually came to shift my perspective from a narrow interrogation into what constitutes an "effective" pathway to change, to a more open appreciation for the particularities, contingencies and ethical quality of these women's political activities. I started my fieldwork intent on learning more about the specific challenges they face as migrant domestic workers, the specific resolutions they seek, and *the* strategic approach for achieving such resolutions. But because I was so fixated on the notion of change in the form of "actual" outcomes such as legal reforms and political rights, and particularly as I came to fervently desire and demand change for

these women as I learned more about their precarity, I became blinded by ideas of cost-effectiveness and proven standards of success. I drew comparisons between their work and other groups' strategies known or presumed to be "effective," such as a sizeable membership base or adequate material resources, as could be seen in my experience in the Women's Day march. After all, the past is considered a decisive point of reference. Moreover, I assumed that any desired outcome would unfold by way of a linear and causal connection. If a group adopts strategy *x*, then outcome *y* will result.

However, after several months of working alongside these women, I realized that a strict analysis of outcomes, impacts and consequences in such formulaic terms was limiting; it prevented me from fully appreciating these women's work and vision. This chapter, therefore, presents this shift in analysis from a narrow focus on actuality to an open engagement with possibility. Rather than make judgments about the possibility for change based on empirically proven efficacy and statistical quantifications of an uncertain future, I explore the dynamics of possibility as an experience that is itself rich, regardless of anticipated "actual" outcomes. For within the space and time of ideation, experimentation, and relationality in this world of grassroots feminism, rich and substantive experiences, however unconventional, invisible and uncertain, were unfolding. I therefore linger in and explore this experience of possibility. With an epistemological shift from actuality to possibility, my aim is not to merely accommodate a conceptual impasse in theoretical reasoning – the difficulty of making a conjecture about an unknown future through inductive logic or a strict empirical approach. My shift in analytical focus from actuality to possibility is prompted first and foremost by the ethnographic recognition of migrant women's political practices of ethical care. As marginalized and invisible women with provocative ideas and unconventional practices, they exist beyond actuality and strive to

challenge normativity. They embody possibility with their insight, initiative and creativity. Their ethical practices of care, premised on principles of interdependency and the sustenance of life, challenge predominant and enervating ideas of individualism and the maximization of life. These women's very invisibility, incongruity and unconventionality then, present the necessary rupture for a revision or transformation of actuality, knowledge, and normativity. Their practices become "the leap between the ostensible and the subjunctive" (Lambek 2010: 6).

In what follows, I offer an ethnographic look at *Territorio Doméstico's* ethical practices of care; what I consider to be scenes of immanent possibility, where the outcomes may have been tentative, but the desire, creativity, intimacy and solidarity were distinctly felt and observed, as in the ethnographic scene described above. We may not have known what would come from our participation in the march, but we were united and capacitated through song, friendship, creation, and performance. And through this engagement and capacitation, for a brief moment I believed that "change," in whatever form and degree, was possible.

This chapter, then, aims to begin to move from a brief moment of belief in the possibility for change to an expanded *knowledge* of possibility. With an ethnographic exploration of a world of ethically informed politics, and analytical receptivity to contingency, difference and emergence, an incipient belief in possibility can become the basis for a nuanced and intimate understanding of a marginalized group's political efforts as *they* see and live it. Rather than simply report on their activities, recounting the events that transpired over the course of my fieldwork with the use of conventional theoretical models of social mobilization and standard cause-effect logic, the hope is that we can come to understand and approach change and the possibilities for it, on the basis of *their* terms and *their* vision. Ultimately, our work is about shifting and expanding our analytical view so that it aligns with theirs; it's about tracking the

shifts from critical transcendence to implicit acceptance and vice-versa, that occur in both the work of activists and analysts.

Ethnographic Context for Evaluation of Possibility

Infarto Social

Against a background of widespread social unrest and explicit calls for change, it seems natural in retrospect that I focused on the question of change, and if and how it would be achieved. Not a day seemed to pass during my time in the field when there was not a strike, protest, march or sit-in somewhere in Madrid to read about, speak of, photograph and/or participate in. The strident presence of indignant subjects and ubiquity of assorted protest paraphernalia throughout the streets and plazas of Spain's capital collectively contributed to an incredibly palpable and inspiring spirit of defiance. Such an atmosphere of discord and activism often led to my optimistic appraisals of what migrant women could achieve, for the current conditions seemed to match what Marx considered the requisite structural fragility for revolutionary change. In fact, one of my *compañeras,* Graciela articulated a phrase in my first interview with her that became an emblematic expression for me, for it poignantly captures Spain's condition of fragility – *infarto social,* or "social heart attack."[60] Amid the toxic effects of longstanding neoliberal habits, an inadequate flow of income and care to sustain Spain's populace, and misguided remedial treatment in the form of austerity, the fatal collapse of Spanish society seemed imminent. Yet, in spite of indications of ongoing distress and struggle, the

[60] She borrowed this phrase from Spanish author, José Luis Sampedro, who used the phrase in a slightly different manner; specifically, the overwhelmingly fast and aggressive pace of contemporary Western life, largely informed by increasingly invasive and pervasive technology.

streets of Madrid still exhibited a vigorous spirit of defiance and tenacity. One could still detect a vibrant pulse.

For example, during the *Marea Ciudadana*, a public event commemorating massive protests held 32 years ago "in defense of liberty and democracy," hundreds of protesters joined together to sing, "Do you Hear the People Sing," a popular song from the musical adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel, *Les Miserables*. They sang:

Do you hear the people sing?
Singing a song of angry men?
It is the music of a people
Who will not be slaves again!
When the beating of your heart
Echoes the beating of the drums
There is a life about to start
When tomorrow comes!

Upon hearing these impassioned lyrics evoking France's revolutionary past sung by hundreds of angry protesters, how could I not be moved to believe that change was possible, to believe that a new life could in fact "start tomorrow"? At other public events, I found myself similarly moved by the presence of *batucadas*, a collection of drums and bells playing in a mesmerizing, Brazilian style of percussion that often provoked the energetic and rhythmic movement of protesters and demonstrators. It was as if, in these moments, any longstanding

angst or ire were finally given reprieve through the free and expressive movements of one's body. I also often heard the chant, *Si se puede! Si se puede* ("Yes, it can be done! Yes, it can be done!") at various events. Because the words were delivered with such impressive force and regularity, they continued to echo through my mind days and weeks after the event and I, in my later reflections on the possibility for change, believed that "it can be done! It can be done!" Even the "silent screams" (*mudos gritos*), where protestors would raise their arms in the air and vigorously shake their hands, were powerful testaments of the indignation and determination pulsating through Madrid. As a participant in these spirited moments of unrest, I believed that change was in fact on the horizon. Change seemed possible.

Impossibility

Yet, opposing these strong impressions of the possibility for change to ensue were my equally strong, if not stronger, impressions of the *impossibility* for change, particularly with respect to migrant women's experiences of invisibility and precarity. However moving these expressions of dissent and desire, and despite what seemed like ripe historical conditions for change, I found it difficult to overlook all of the formidable obstacles that migrant women faced.

I could not rationalize their capacity to effect change given the nature and scope of their demands, their condition of marginality, and the powerful forces that stood in their way.

When I began my fieldwork, I was specifically interested in migrant activists' capacity to achieve change through legal channels. Activist domestic workers, as well as activists advocating on behalf of domestic workers, seemed intent on procuring legal protections on both a national and international level. Although some changes were recently made to Spain's law on domestic work, they proved nominal, for widespread negligence amongst employers was well-known yet disregarded. Activists not only called for the actual implementation and reinforcement of the legal reforms already passed, they also demanded additional protections, such as the right to unemployment, which other sectors enjoyed. They simply demanded the same status and treatment accorded to other forms of employment considered "legitimate" and "normal." In terms of international legal standards, activists demanded that the Spanish government ratify the International Labor Organization's 2011 Convention on Domestic Work, a historic set of guidelines that aims to improve labor conditions for domestic workers around the globe. At the time of my fieldwork, only two other countries had ratified the Convention, neither of which was in Europe.

Yet, however reasonable activists' demands seemed, there were formidable factors with which they had to contend, such as the historically rooted and structurally entrenched factors outlined in the previous two chapters. For example, in order to achieve any of the above-mentioned legal changes, activists would have to concurrently tackle issues of a diminishing welfare state, a deepening crisis of care, unjust gender norms, insidious ideologies of race and nationality, a complex bureaucratic system, and ever-alluring ideas of European modernity. Could individual and social well-being really compete with economic interest and profit? Could

foreign nationals be regarded as equals within a shared national community? Could men really be held equally responsible for caretaking responsibilities? Would Spanish employers, who themselves were struggling with shrinking pensions, be willing and able to pay domestic workers a competitive wage? And would migrant women ever feature in or be able to author any dominant narrative, be it historical, economic, or legal in nature? Given such a complex interaction of deeply embedded factors amounting to a powerful web of normativity, I found it difficult to answer affirmatively to any of these questions that I often asked myself.

Moreover, my skepticism regarding activist migrant women's capacity to achieve any or all of their demands was informed by social theory. As discussed in the introduction, the literature on social movements identifies specific elements that contribute to "successful" mobilization efforts, including political opportunity, networks, and organizational capacity (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Given the number of grassroots campaigns and social uprisings that have emerged in the last several decades, with increasingly stratified societies and interconnected publics making use of innovative forms of information technology, it is not surprising that theoretical analyses focus on questions of outcome and develop hierarchies of efficacy. With the intellectual pursuit towards the totality of knowledge, evolving in a cumulative manner, each case of uprising or unrest becomes a case for comparison and contrast that should lead to more definitive ideas about mobilization efficacy and success. Moreover, with influence from neo-pragmatist scholars such as Richard Rorty (1998), questions of political expediency are given even greater weight at the expense of, for example, epistemological and metaphysical inquiries into suffering, injustice and activism.

With this social theory in mind, and this progressive form of thinking deeply entrenched in my own analytical approach to the experience of social mobilization, I evaluated migrant activists' capacity to effect change in conventional terms; i.e. to what extent were well-known factors such as political opportunity, networks and organizational capacity, contributing to or limiting the possibility for change. First, in terms of political opportunity, it may be said that the current atmosphere of "crisis" does not present viable political conditions for facilitating migrant DWs' mobilization efforts. As a representative of the Spanish labor union, *Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO) put it, "it has become more difficult to improve this cursed sector because of the current disastrous global and national situation." Putting domestic workers' interests on the public agenda is simply unimaginable given the number of issues emerging from a deeply afflicted and disaffected Spanish society. Moreover, as other labor union representatives had informed me, and as the news media seemed to report regularly, processes of public debate, dialogue and consensus building were virtually non-existent. For example, the Spanish government no longer was receptive to "social dialogue" (*el dialogo social*), the tripartite communicative mechanism established in 2008 between the government, labor unions and employer organizations. With lines of communication strained between majority Spanish groups and the Spanish government, the opportunity for migrant groups to meaningfully engage public officials seemed even less likely.

Second, in terms of collaborative networks, I discovered through my fieldwork that collaboration between migrant domestic worker collectives and other Spanish social groups amounted more to mere affectation than sincere and productive engagement. As discussed in the previous chapter, although collaborations were not non-existent, those that did exist seemed paternalistic and expedient (for the continuity of Spanish organizational funding, and for the

deployment of a cosmopolitan liberal rhetoric). Such disjunctures between stated purpose and practice have been a particularly charged point of critique for migrant activists. Activist domestic workers specifically criticize labor unions in Madrid for doing little to seriously engage domestic workers and their issues, in spite of their publicly professed interest in domestic work issues and migrant activists' repeated invitations (as well as not-so-friendly exhortations) to collaborate. According to Lucrecia, a long-time member of *Territorio Doméstico*:

> We've never been able to identify with the unions. But we have taken to the streets, and sent them the message that they need to listen to us and we're going to continue making the effort to make them listen, to take us into account.

And according to Amalia, another member of TD:

> I tell you, these people have never come to listen to us, so they can communicate to the government what *we* want. Never has one of their representatives presented her/himself here [at one of our meetings]. How can a person who has never been in our shoes act as our spokesperson? How can a person represent us who has never sat with us to talk?

Lucrecia's and Amalia's resentment regarding labor unions' inability to engage their association and, thus, effectively represent their needs and demands at the table of negotiation with government officials, was a widely shared indignation amongst migrant DW activists, as I learned over the course of my fieldwork. In fact, this issue became patently clear to me at a domestic work conference in December of 2012, which was attended by domestic workers, feminist activists, and representatives from Spain's two main labor unions. At this conference, there were several panel presentations, including a panel of labor union representatives who spoke on the recent legal reforms in social security law and the current and anticipated challenges for domestic workers. Following their presentations, Rafaela, one of the more vocal and visible domestic worker activists of TD, as well as throughout Spain, delivered an impressively incisive statement of DW's frustration with labor unions:

> You don't even consider the associations. I'm part of an association, and I know that if we had been a part of your negotiations [with the government], we would not have let something as important as sick leave remain off the table. The inequalities that domestic workers face in the 21st century are inhumane. It's a shame. Labor unions are there at the negotiation table, but you don't represent us, because not once have you approached us to ask us what we think, what we want, what we need. So what are you doing? What are you doing so that this law helps us rather than hurts us? We're here fighting for our rights as workers. You have to take steps towards including us in the conversation, as protagonists. We're experts. We're very good at negotiating, but the problem is, you don't let us speak.

In addition to several, interjecting claps of enthusiastic support from the audience during her statement, Rafaela's comments received a resounding round of applause at the end. I was amazed by not only her audacity to respond so candidly and emphatically to these union representatives, but also by the audience's unanimous support. How could there be such a caustic divide between two groups who purportedly worked towards the same end of social justice?

A week after the conference when I spoke with the CCOO representative whose comments provoked Rafaela's enraged response, he explained how CCOO has always been an active proponent of domestic work issues, particularly since the 1950s when Spanish feminists began to express their ire with respect to the invisibility of domestic work. He stated:

> In terms of unions never having done anything for domestic workers, it's not true. It's an unfounded opinion. Historically, we've always defended everyone, including domestic laborers as workers.

He specifically highlighted CCOO's central role in introducing legal reforms for domestic workers first in 2006 and then in 2011 with more substantive changes in social security law:

> We were the ones who in 2006 were able to establish an agreement with the government for the first time regarding domestic workers' full integration, and we signed it. With the then socialist government, we agreed on the necessity for domestic workers to have the same rights and obligations as the rest of the workers. Before legislation did not require those working less than 72 hours to declare social security. That is, there was a legal underground economy. In eleven months we have succeeded in getting more than

> 115,000 more enrolled. This is more than 40%. We have made it so that one third of the underground economy resurface.

Thus, according to Enrique, because CCOO has always worked hard to improve the situation of domestic workers, domestic workers' resentment towards them was misplaced. Upon analyzing his responses, I could identify two reasons offered for why activists' representation of labor unions' position vis-à-vis domestic worker associations was unfounded (As my time in the field went on, I found his explanation to be a standard response from other labor union representatives). First, labor unions are *the* organizations legally recognized by constitutional law to negotiate directly with the Spanish government; [61] domestic worker associations are not. As such, domestic workers simply cannot "speak" as "protagonists" as they demand. He explained:

> In Spain, the majority labor unions participate in the social dialogue, these are the ones who have more than 10% union representation, which is measured every four years…. Keep in mind that there is no structured organization within the organizations of domestic workers. I don't want to attack TD personally, nor any other…. But it's important to organize within the terms that Spanish legislation permits for the representation of workers. I think the union is ideal…. I continue to think that one of the limitations in some organizations' list of demands is their aspiration to be an interlocutor of their own problems, which to me is sensible. But one has to be conscious of the practical and physical limitations of this desire. Ultimately, democracies have a system of representation. If not, it's very difficult to allow all 650,000 domestic workers to represent themselves. This is impossible. Practical effects.

Second, CCOO cannot engage with TD on the level they desire because of *their* inadequacies, not CCOO's. That is (and this relates to the third element identified as important for mobilization success), according to Enrique, TD lacks strong organizational capacities that would make engagement and collaboration meaningful and effective.

> It's a problem of dialogue. There is no state-wide platform. So who do I call? I have to meet with the minister. I have to tell him that I want this and this and this. There are a

[61] CCOO and UGT have consistently been the two dominant unions in the last several years.

> lot of domestic workers who are not a part of my organization; it would be nice if I could have a dialogue with all of them. We've tried. Who do I call? I call each one of the 650,000 domestic workers in their homes?....You have to have a sufficient level of representation. A neighborhood association is legitimate, the domestic workers of Carrabanchel has 100 members, and that is legitimate. But it represents 100 people.

In addition to a small membership base and an inadequate organizational structure, Enrique as well as other labor union and NGO representatives also cited the following aspects (specifically as they relate to *Territorio Doméstico*) as hindrances to effective collaboration and mobilization: the lack of a legal status, inefficient communication (email correspondence between members of TD was difficult and inconsistent because of limited access to computers), and atypical hours of operation (political activity was largely limited to Sunday evenings, when domestic workers had time off). Thus, why would organizations like CCOO engage an association like TD, which lacked a conventional structure and political practices, when an alliance would prove neither pragmatic nor effective? Although such an opinion was never expressly stated in these terms, various comments made by representatives of labor unions and Spanish NGOs, as well as my own observations of existing (and non-existing) interactions between Spanish and migrant groups suggest strong reservations regarding the competency of migrant organizations like TD, as well as a disconnect in vision between the two sides.

Such appraisals of TD's organizational capacities were based on the actual; what is known to be actually effective and successful. And, as discussed at the start of this chapter, I too had assumed that known or actual standards of success were the standards by which possibility should be measured. How else can we account for an unknown future, other than with the known? But as I came to realize, my skepticism and estimations of their agendas as "ambitious" reflected my own misguided assumptions, rather than any misplaced goals on their part. It was I who needed to shift my approach and assumptions, rather than these activists who needed to

change their political practices or scale back their vision for a new world. Once I was able to let go of my own limiting assumptions and allow room for contingency and emergence, that is, for ethical practice, I was able to inhabit and appreciate the space of possibility, the space where these women could be found and where their visions for change took shape.

Scenes of Immanent Possibility

In this section, I focus on the work of *Territorio Doméstico* and present three ethnographic scenes that aim to capture the experience of possibility, as cultivated through ethical practices of care. As possibility, these experiences intimate movement beyond the boundaries of normativity and normality that have enclosed and suppressed migrant women.

This is what we do

It was 5:30 on a Sunday evening. I sat in a room no larger than 20 by 25 feet on one of several folding chairs that had been arranged into a circle. Women slowly trickled into the room, greeting each other with kisses and wishes for a happy new year. I heard Rafaela remark to another woman about how it had been a tough year for her, but that she had survived, and that this year, she would survive again. "We can't endure alone, but we can as an organization," she stated. Rafaela, who was the only one I knew there, introduced me to the others as "the Filipina" whom she had met at the domestic work conference last month. I was neither a researcher nor an American; I was *la Filipina*. I later realized that reference to my Filipino heritage was a useful point of reference for domestic workers, given the large contingency of Filipino women in Madrid and throughout the rest of Spain and who are known as one of the first non-Spanish groups to work as domestic laborers. Given their long history and experience in this sector, and the trust they have gained from Spanish employers, Filipino women were once described to me

as the Mercedes Benz of domestic workers – they're amongst the most desirable and expensive "brands" because of their distinctive reputation. After several brief introductions to some of the other women, I eventually settled into a conversation with a Guatemalan woman named Alma, who was seated next to me, and whose kind and spirited demeanor drew me in immediately. Although we only chatted for a few minutes and I was disappointed to have had to end our conversation, our interaction that evening would be the first of many, as she would later become one of my most intimate *compañeras* during my time in the field and someone who I would grow to greatly admire.

After a total of fifteen women had drifted in, and approximately thirty minutes after the planned start-time of the meeting, we eventually moved towards commencing. With the Christmas holidays having just ended, and thus several weeks of personal news to catch up on, beginning the meeting did not appear to be an urgent matter. When Rafaela finally did call the meeting to order (Rafaela had volunteered herself to direct the meeting that evening), we began with introductions, as there were two new faces in the group, including me. The introductions were pleasantly full of fascinating personal details beyond the standard mention of name, place of origin and occupation to which I was accustomed. Amongst us were women from Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, Spain, Honduras, Senegal and the U.S. There were domestic workers, former Sandanistas, a Masters student, mendicant nuns, undocumented migrants, and migrants turned Spanish citizens.

Following introductions, we moved onto what I considered at the time to be the "official business" for that evening (I still had not realized the artificiality of the distinction I had imposed on their activities, between what presumably was personal and political business, or what was informal and official). One woman updated the group on a fundraising activity that had taken

place two weeks ago. The group had recently begun selling homemade food at a local market, and their mercantile debut was reported a success. Then the group proceeded to discuss a collective statement that a few members had produced regarding the new and problematic law on social security for domestic workers. Soon after the topic was raised, a debate quickly ensued. Some felt that it was imperative that everyone in the group review the document prior to its publication and dissemination. Rafaela, who was one of the three members who had drafted the statement, felt that because she and the two other women were given permission by the group to put the document together, and were therefore entrusted with its quality and content, it was not necessary for everyone to review it, nor would it be practical. Given the timeliness of the issue, it was more important in her opinion that the statement get publicized sooner than later.

Although the matter was never actually resolved in that meeting, it eventually sparked an interesting conversation regarding the nature and structure of *Territorio Doméstico's* work. Alma, the kind and intriguing Guatemalan woman with whom I spoke at the start of the meeting and who was relatively new to the group, articulated a question that had been ruminating in my own mind: "Who is in charge?" She too wondered why they needed to consult everyone regarding the document. Couldn't the official leader of the group just give her stamp of approval?

Pepa excitedly responded to Alma's question, as if it was a question she had been waiting for all evening: "There is no leadership!" She then proceeded to say, "We are not an NGO, we are all equal!" Several other thoughts were then shared:

Alma: "That's novel. We have to change how we think (*Hay que cambiar el chip)*."[62]

[62] I often heard this phrase, *hay que cambiar el chip,* which roughly translates as "we need to change how we think," throughout my time in the field. Domestic worker activists used the phrase to refer to the cultural shift necessary for the positive revaluation of domestic work and

Lucrecia: "It's because *your* voice is worth a lot."

Rafaela: "One doesn't create Territorio, *we are creating* Territorio."

Pepa: "You have to say, 'I am *Territorio Doméstico.*'"

Rafaela: "*We* do the doing, as we like to say."

The effort to share in the decision-making process was what I later learned to be a fundamental component of *Territorio Doméstico's* practice of *horizontalidad,* or "horizontality." In its conventional use, horizontality describes the decentralized nature of organizational practice and structure, a particularly distinctive aspect of the larger Spanish 15-M movement and the global Occupy movement, which was inspired by 15-M. However, as I came to spend more time with TD, I learned that *horizontalidad* had its own distinct meaning. Paula, one of the members of the group, clearly described TD's unique vision and practice of horizontality in an email exchange shortly after the meeting:

> We know that horizontality is not achieved by simply sitting in a circle. It's a delicate work that requires tending to each day. It means always looking after one another. It means paying attention to the personal process of each member, and at the same time to the group process. We accompany each other in personal matters, in the acquisition of a critical conscience, in motivating each other to speak in public. We don't force anyone to do anything. We know and respect the point at which each one of us is at. When we write, produce texts, organize actions, events and everything else, we try to do it all according to a methodology that allows us to listen to one another and allows everyone to contribute. Through the years, we've developed trust and respect and as such we can express our disagreements or discomforts without conflict. We know that we're all learning and that we can make mistakes…. And we always have a partner at our side to accompany us without reproach or condescending or pedagogical attitudes.

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domestic workers. As I will discuss in the Conclusion, the phrase became emblematic for me, for I consider it a relevant directive for researchers whose assumptions and analytical approach also require modification.

As this chapter will go on to demonstrate, TD's practice of *horizontalidad* is synonymous with a feminist ethics of care. Although members of TD never explicitly referred to their work as an ethics of care during my time with them, at the center of their vision and practices are the same principles espoused by feminist ethicists – interdependence (as opposed to independence), specific attention to personal needs (as opposed to abstract or formulaic morality), and care for individual development *as part of* the political process (as opposed to a distinction between personal and political matters, with care deprioritized as a personal matter). In fact, TD's emphasis on the care for the specific needs of women as migrants, as domestic workers, and as any other category or status that gives meaning to their lives, was what prompted the formation of their organization in the first place in 2006. According to Rafaela, who was one of the original founders of TD, there was a need for a space where the political and the personal could be fused; "where each could be a protagonist *in her own way*"; in other words, not according to how dominant others defined political protagonism. Moreover, the location of their meetings, *la Kasa Publica de Mujeres de La Eskalera Karakola,* the renowned space of intransigent feminist activity in Madrid, espouses TD's commitment to a feminist ethics of care. *La Karakola,* as it is simply called, was established in 1996 as a shared space where women, in all of their specificity, could comfortably and confidently gather as "lesbians, Latinas, femmes, trans, poets, migrants, untouchables, artists, agriculturists, domestic workers, journalists, bakers, fruit vendors, prostitutes, professors, geeks and many more."[63] It was not coincidental nor is it inconsequential

[63] *La Karakola* was established in November of 1996 when a group of women, determined to create a collective space for "the experimentation of new forms of relationality between women," occupied what was once an old bakery in the Lavapies district. Due to a housing crisis in the 1990s, and inspired by Madrid's counter-cultural movement, *la Movida Madrileña*, squatting became a popular practice in Madrid, as well as other city centers, and eventually became known as the *okupa* movement (a derivative of "occupy"). Despite many confrontations with legal

that *Territorio Doméstico* has been meeting in *La Karakola* since its inception in 2006. The relationship between *La Karakola* and *Territorio Domestico,* as I came to learn, has been mutually formative and inspiring.

The second part of TD's meeting that evening more clearly reflects TD's commitment to an ethics of care. After we discussed TD's practice of horizontality and finished reporting on recent organizational business, the group turned their attention to Vilma, a strikingly beautiful, petite and soft-spoken Honduran woman in her 50s who had come to a TD meeting for the first time as Alma's friend. As Alma later explained to me, she brought Vilma with her that evening because she was confident that the group would be able to give her the kind of help she needed. "TD is the association that does the most for immigrants, it does solid work," she asserted. According to Alma, TD was not a "shell" (*cascarón*) with no substance "like other immigrant associations."

Vilma shared with the group her recent experiences that had prompted her to come that evening:

> I've been working with an 86 year old man for four months. I met him through my cousin. It started off fine, but soon he started to ask me repeatedly to go to bed with him. He didn't want a domestic worker; he wanted an employee for the bed. Of course, I always refused him, but he kept asking. So I was always afraid to sleep at night, and to shower. And during the day, when I would take him for walks through the neighborhood, he would embrace me tightly as if he had difficulty walking. He walked with a cane, but he was just fine, it was just an act. Also, I never had a fixed schedule; I just worked from six in the morning until very late at night. He was just horrible. He only put on the heat 20 minutes a day. And I was only paid 700 euros a month. And then, this past Thursday, when I refused him for the last time, he told me, "Get out of here!" and pushed me out the door. I was forced to leave without pay.

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authorities over the years, *la Karakola* has maintained its place as a center of feminist activity in Madrid.

When Vilma finished speaking, an intense discussion quickly ensued regarding Vilma's options and how the group might be able to help her. For example, they considered how she might be able to collect her last month's pay; whether or not she, as an undocumented migrant, could bring charges against the man; and how they could warn other women about the reviled employer. Throughout the discussion, I was struck by the amount of compassion and interest with which the TD women engaged Vilma, the amount of time they dedicated to her story, and the diverse range of ideas generated. Vilma's newcomer status did not seem to adversely condition the group's response or commitment in any way.

Regardless of the energy, warmth and persistence I could detect from these women, I wrote in my notes that evening, "What could they and Vilma really do?" Again, my progressive feminist mindset directed my thoughts towards ideas of change in terms of the achievement of "actual" results regarding the specific infraction discussed that evening, and distracted me from appreciating the "results" that were unfolding in that moment and the new possibilities cultivated. For example, in the process of discussing possible next steps, I noted a distinct shift in Vilma's attitude. When she first spoke to the group, she spoke with a noticeably demure tone, but by the end of the discussion she was distinctly more assertive and upbeat. Thus, whether or not she would be able to formally or informally challenge this man and gain the compensation she was owed was perhaps irrelevant, or a less meaningful conjecture to make at that moment, for the confidence Vilma now demonstrated, the care with which the group received her, the companionship they promised her going forward, and the desire and resolve they shared seemed more significant as components of mere possibility. In their consideration of appropriate responses to the morally reprehensible aspects of Vilma's situation, and in the uncertainty of how the situation would unfold, there was life, connection and traces of becoming.

Moreover, these women could point to their shared experience of camaraderie, care and conviction as a foundation for the cultivation of new and different (i.e. contingent, emergent and unique) possibilities; whether it would be another job with a more trustworthy employer whom the group was now dedicated to helping Vilma find, or the start of a campaign, spearheaded by Vilma, to help end the widespread abuse of domestic laborers. As an alternative normative framework to the more limiting and iniquitous neoliberal model, these women regarded their ethical practices of care as enabling and responsive.

Following the discussion of Vilma's situation, the group turned the time over to Jamileth who, like Alma, would also become another one of my closest *compañeras*. Jamileth had just returned from a trip to her home country, Nicaragua, which was her first trip home since she arrived to Spain three years ago. The trip was financed through donations from various TD members and with income generated through fundraising activities. She explained that the trip was extremely useful in that she was able to attend to what she referred to as "family business." For several years, Jamileth's now twenty-one year old son had been sexually abused by Jamileth's brother, and because she had learned of her brother's opprobrious acts while she was in Spain, she had to manage the family conflicts, including the litigation that developed, as well as her son's trauma, from abroad. TD's financial support enabled her to more adequately and delicately care for her son and attend to all the legal issues unfolding.

In our discussion of Jamileth's trip and possible next steps moving forward, many offered their support in the form of personal invitations to speak more intimately over lunch or coffee, suggestions for the creation of an online petition to influence the Nicaraguan government to take steps towards the prevention of child abuse, and visions of a Pan-American or cross-Atlantic

collaboration in the fight against child abuse. And as with the group's response to Vilma, I was again impressed by the amount of attention and compassion offered to Jamileth. My surprise was due largely to the fact that Jamileth's issues were not directly related to her experience as a domestic worker, which is presumably what a group that calls themselves a *domestic worker* association would politicize and prioritize. The time and energy expended on a family-related issue did not seem logical in strategic calculations of how to effectively challenge and vitiate unjust structural norms and institutional practices enveloping and encumbering domestic workers. Such privately held doubts corresponded with other activists' criticisms of TD for its lack of "political impact" (*política incidencia*), which I discussed in the introduction. For example, would their time not be better spent on the development of strategies that would lead to greater visibility of domestic worker issues on an international and national level?

However, I have since then come to realize the problems with my initial evaluation (as well as other activists' shared criticisms) of TD's work. First, although I understood the theoretical concept of intersectionality central in feminist theory, I did not fully appreciate its import until my time in the field and through sustained interactions with these women. Specifically, given the dynamic, complex, and historically and culturally specific nature of women's experiences, the politicization of domestic work for TD meant and required personalized ethical care for one another in all of their complexity and specificity. Ethical care was both their vision of an alternative world, as well as the means for its realization. Thus, attending to personal matters related to one's family was not evidence of political imprudence or poor strategic planning in conventional understandings of "effective" and "successful" political activity, but was precisely the departure from convention that would facilitate the transformation of convention itself.

Thus, their focused discussion of Jamileth's family issues and the resolutions tendered, were the result of an astute recognition of the overlap between various axes of identity, such as the traditionally dichotomized domains of "the personal" and "the political," and of the need for a response that could meaningfully and substantively address such complexity as it is lived. Although it was already clear that sexual abuse was a reprehensible crime for anyone to endure regardless of nationality and legal status, what became more evident through that meeting was that these women's position as migrants placed distinct constraints on their ability to manage what might be considered strictly personal matters, such as the implications of sexual abuse in one's family. Whether it is an inability to console one's own child who had been the victim of abuse because of a physical distance generated by an inherently unjust, global economic system and complicated by nationalistic ideologies (or what others might choose to euphemistically consider the result of a mother's "sacrificial love"), or an inability to seek redress for sexual misconduct because one's life can not even be considered a violable life in the first place, there are distinct incongruities in many aspects of these women's lives that must be seen as the result of specific structural inequalities, and not of mere chance or individual negligence. Thus, the personal *is* most certainly political. These women believed that it is precisely attention to the specificities of each person's situation through a practice of ethical care that would transform broader systems of oppression.

The second problem with my initial evaluation of TD's work was my narrow focus on "actual" change. As I've argued thus far, a strict focus on change, and cost-effective approaches towards its realization, distract from an appreciation for the experience of possibility itself as well as other possibilities cultivated in the moment. Although it was uncertain what would result

from any of their suggestions that evening, and whether any of the proposals would even materialize, there was a particular dynamic unfolding in that specific moment with distinct spatial, temporal and visceral qualities. Physical gestures of support were extended with hugs and a simple placement of one's hand on Jamileth's shoulder; creative ideas were generated and developed; concrete plans for the near future were elaborated; emotional connections were strengthened through intimate discussion of a traumatic experience; and the materiality of their language indexed a distinct dynamic of relationality, as "objectifications" of an ethos of care (Keane 2014). What would come from that evening's expression of horizontality, or the shared commitment to "look after and accompany one another," as Paula had described, was not necessarily clear; nor did it have to be. As I see it now, what mattered was the experience of possibility itself and the cultivation of further, unknown possibilities.

By the time the meeting had ended, the time was 9:00 pm, long past their typical 8:00 pm ending time. As we all packed up our belongings and put chairs away, Rafaela approached me and apologized for the meeting's late ending. She first addressed me with a calm and apologetic tone, but then smiled and stated with greater conviction, "This is what we do." In that moment, I took her comment, *This is what we do,* as a simple and off-the-cuff statement of the events that transpired that evening. So I simply and respectfully replied, "No need to apologize, I learned a lot." But I did not fully appreciate what "I learned" or what they "do" until much later. Specifically, I can now look back at her statement and define the "this" of *this is what we do* in terms of one of the objectives printed in *La Karakola's* pamphlet. The pamphlet reads:

> Our work cannot be reduced to denouncing relations of inequality, but rather must be seen as enabling the possibilities for women otherwise invisible, silenced, and nonexistent in other spaces.

Their work is not just about resisting; it is about enabling. As I see it now, *this* is what *Territorio Doméstico* does.

Second scene: orgasms and rights

At TD's next meeting two weeks later, we began by going around the room sharing personal news. Rafaela began by emphatically stating: "I left our last meeting feeling full of life! Really, I tell you, I felt energized!" Then Jamileth, who was seated next to Rafaela and whose turn was next, stated: "I've been working on something, something I've been wanting to do for a long time. But it's been difficult." She proceeded to explain all the challenges that she had had to deal with in launching a radio program on migrant women's issues. For example, she explained that simply finding the time to work on the program was a challenge, given her work as an *interna* (domestic worker who lived in her employer's home) who worked twelve hours a day, six days a week. Securing the necessary funds to purchase a computer in order to work on the program was also difficult, given the fact that she earned a meager salary, and any extra income that was not already allotted to basic living expenses were remitted to her children in

Nicaragua. As Jamileth recounted all of her problems, I scribbled in my notebook, "Follow up. What kind of radio program? How would she do it?" When Jamileth had mentioned "radio," my mind immediately reverted to thoughts of Facebook and Twitter, what I considered to be the more effective modes of activist work. I wondered if anyone listened to the radio anymore and how she would be able to launch such a program without the adequate time, resources and audience.

Although it was clear that Jamileth had been facing some difficult challenges, she was buoyed by the support of other TD members. Rafaela for example, whose own energy and creative spirit seemed boundless, immediately responded to Jamileth in perfect candor, "You can do it. You're intelligent, "you're a good woman" (*eres una buena tia*). Her confidence was infectious, for after she expressed her faith in Jamileth, others soon chimed in and offered similarly encouraging words as well as concrete suggestions for how she might be able to move forward.

As with the first ethnographic scene, I could not fully appreciate the desire and support expressed in this exchange with Jamileth. I had been too focused on ideas of efficacy, and could not appreciate possibility as unfinished yet nevertheless complete; "complete" in the sense of a notable dynamism inhering in that moment, irrespective of anticipated outcomes. Rather than appreciate emergence and possibility, I could only think of causality and consummation. I thus considered Jamileth's desires to launch a radio program as bordering on "fantasy" and "day-dreaming," similar to what Malkki (1995) argues are the usual assessments of imaginations of the future. After all, there was no precedent, or actual past event, that could substantiate the likelihood that Jamileth would be able to realize this desire.

However since then, as I've argued, I have been able to shift my analytical gaze from the actual to the possible, and can now appreciate that moment as itself worthy of analytical attention. Although I may not have believed that Jamileth's proposed idea was possible, the others did. Jamileth and the others inhabited that particular space and time *as possibility*, as exhibited by their explicit words of encouragement, their concrete suggestions for realizing her project, and Jamileth's bodily and verbal expressions of confidence. It is this particular dynamic of support and personalized attention that can be seen as an example of their practice of *horizontalidad,* or an ethics of care.

Although I now know of the radio program's current "success" and the many other projects Jamileth has since then envisioned and developed, this knowledge does not substantiate the exceptionality of this experience of possibility by virtue of a logic of causality (i.e. knowledge of the effect validates the functionality of the cause), but rather can serve to bring attention to possibility as an ongoing production. If possibility is prioritized as that which begets actuality, rather than vice-versa (as with calculations of probability), then experiences such as the group's discussion of Jamileth's ideas, would not be so quickly dismissed. The experience could then be evaluated as itself substantive and as possibility, as these women evaluated and experienced it.

After we spent several minutes discussing Jamileth's situation, we carried on with our sharing of personal news. Two other women expressed their recent difficulties finding employment as Muslims, which they attributed to a general mistrust for veiled women. Another woman discussed ongoing health issues. Teresa, a Spanish woman in her 70s, told us how she and her friends had dressed as "sausages" at her neighborhood's Carnival event over the weekend. We all laughed, knowing full well that she was not referring to one of Spain's iconic

tasty *tapas*, but rather to the country's current political leaders who were seen as thieves, stealing the bread of its people (*No hay pan para tanto chorizo!* as the disillusioned in Spain liked to say). After the last woman in our circle shared her news, and we were about to move onto the next item on the agenda, Jamileth suddenly blurted out, "There's something else!" We all turned to Jamileth, who looked at all of us intently, with her lips pursed together as if a big smile was lurking close behind. "Something good happened to me," she stated. "But I can't tell anyone." We looked at her perplexed. Alma responded, "You have to tell us, Jamileth. Come on, tell us!" After some additional goading from the others, Jamileth broke out into laughter and professed: "An orgasm!"

That evening's meeting remains a memorable experience for me, not because of the discussion we later had regarding the new domestic work law, nor because of the plans we made to publicize a statement regarding the law. Rather, what resonates with me is the time and attention purposefully dedicated to non-explicitly "political" matters. In a meeting convened by feminist activists, who were clearly aware of the structural forces impinging on their lives, discussion of health concerns, amusing costumes, and personal projects was important and necessary. Personal news, whatever their nature, were not pre-agenda or "small-talk" items, as we might call them here in the U.S. They were part of the agenda and, more importantly, can be seen as having facilitated the discussion of later items on the agenda regarding what might be explicitly considered "political," as well as the actions carried out after the meeting. As a result of their dedicated attention to each other's needs, individual morale was boosted and collective commitments were renewed.

Thus, that a story of an orgasm could be granted a place within a political agenda that included the discussion of labor rights and grievances must not be seen as a problematic intrusion of the personal into the political and, hence, evidence of a lack of political militancy or commitment. Nor should the unconventionality of the subject matters raised and of their meeting's proceedings be theoretically accommodated by simply expanding our definition of what is "political." By simply stating that there are different kinds of political work, of which ethical practice is one form, difference would still be predicated on sameness. As I explained in the Introduction, I follow Deleuze's reconceptualization of "difference" in my analysis of the politics of possibility and ethical practice. Rather, than conceive of difference in relation to a more fundamental identity, Deleuze sees "difference" as "difference in itself," the singularity of which is derived from the particularities of its circumstances.

Thus, by treating feminist ethical practices of care as "different" in the traditional sense, digressing perhaps towards unproductive conclusions of cultural relativity (or even its more sinister counterpart of neo-racialism[64]), migrant women's practices would simply be seen as epiphenomenal and trivial, and migrant women themselves would thus remain subordinate in a context of widespread activism (as I illustrated in the previous chapter regarding their inclusive exclusion vis-à-vis the more dominant Spanish civil society groups). While specific gendered and ethnic experiences and norms can certainly be seen as informing the group's political philosophy and practices, I see that evening more appropriately evincing a sophisticated *ethical* recognition of the importance of attending to each other's needs and acknowledging the totality of each person. Because these women are not *just* domestic workers, as circumscribed by Spanish law and society, but are also inventors, students, mothers, sisters, lovers, lawyers,

[64] Stocking 1982.

designers, dreamers, agnostics, and religious devotees, TD has purposefully based their political approach on the specific care and support for each person as a complex being, whose individual interests and shared political goals they believe can be more adequately developed and pursued with a feminist ethos of care. Ethical practice then is itself productive and generative. As Lambek argues, "it is preferable to see the ethical as a modality of social action or of being in the world than as a modular component of society or mind" (10).

Third scene: kitchen conversation

I arrived about forty-five minutes late to Pepa's and Maite's apartment. Rafaela, Pepa, Maite, Jamileth and I had agreed to meet that Sunday evening to draft a document, which Rafaela would need as a participant in an upcoming domestic work conference in Turin, Italy. When I walked into the apartment, I expected to find them all busy at work. Instead, Pepa was nowhere to be found, and Jamileth, Rafaela and Maite were casually chatting at one end of the long dining room table. They immediately greeted me with warm smiles and a kiss on each cheek, and then motioned for me to join them at the table. Maite offered us tea, coffee and cookies, and soon we were all sitting at the table drinking, nibbling, and "gabbing" (*platicando*), as these women liked to say. Despite their warm reception and the engaging conversation, I wondered when we would get to "business."

During our initial exchange, I shared with Jamileth and Rafaela some news of my personal life, including a collapsed kitchen cabinetry and the resulting chaos in our flat. I also mentioned that I was feeling a little stressed regarding a favor that Graciela, President of SEDOAC (another domestic worker association in Madrid) had asked of me earlier that day. She wanted me to participate in her stead in a public debate that would occur just three days from

then, with representatives of PSOE, labor unions, and other social activists. I was, to say the least, nervous and worried I would not have enough time to prepare. I expressed these concerns, assuming that they would appreciate the weight of the request given the visibility my participation in the event would give domestic workers and their issues. However, Rafaela's response surprised me; she advised me not to participate, as it should not be a responsibility I take on alone. "TD always works on projects together, as a team," she stated candidly. Her comments not only pointed to TD's emphasis on shared work and consideration of emotional needs and personal situations, they also intimated a disconnect between SEDOAC and TD.[65]

After another thirty minutes of friendly chatter, I tried to steer the conversation towards the task with which we were charged that evening. Eventually, Maite brought in an old laptop for us to work on, and then we spent the next thirty minutes unsuccessfully trying to retrieve an email that outlined the requisite details for the document we were supposed to draft. Then, Pepa suddenly appeared in the doorway of the dining room with her usual enthusiastic greeting, as well as a tray of cheese and *membrillo*. Not surprisingly, the combination of Pepa's lively presence and the sweet taste of quince jelly distracted us from our work and we were once again engaged in lively, friendly chatter.

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[65] I was only able to scratch the surface of the nature of the relationship between SEDOAC and TD, for reasons of lack of time and difficulty obtaining information, given their awareness of my close working relationship with both of them. Although, as I learned, the differences between SEDOAC and TD correspond with the distinctions I have been referring to and problematizing – between "conventional" political practices and "unconventional" political practices; or between a strategic orientation towards the "political" and an orientation towards the "personal." SEDOAC, which was formed shortly before TD, embraces what its current President and original founder, Graciela, refers to as *incidencia política,* or political advocacy. Political advocacy in Graciela's terms includes: raising the visibility of domestic worker issues on a national and international level; creating alliances with political parties and labor unions; political lobbying; and research. TD's work on the other hand, according to Graciela, focuses largely on *actividades ludicas*, or "recreational activities," and is therefore focused "inwardly" on its own members and their personal development.

When we again returned to our project, there were only three of us left to finish the work – Rafaela, Ana (who had just arrived) and myself. Pepa and Maite had disappeared somewhere, and Jamileth bid us goodbye, as if the tea, cheese and conversation were precisely what she came to the meeting for. But after another thirty minutes of slow work, as well as increasingly prominent hunger pangs on my part and a little too much inhalation from Ana's cigarette in the closed room, I decided it was time for me to leave. By 10:00 PM that Sunday evening, it was apparent we had not made much "progress" and I was ready to give in. At that point, I still had not revised my understanding of "progress."

After explaining to Ana and Rafaela that it had been a long day for me and it was time for me to leave, on my way out I heard women's voices coming from the opposite end of the hall from which I was about to exit. I walked towards the sounds of laughter and chatter, thinking I would find Pepa and Maite, who I needed to thank for their hospitality. When I walked through the entrance to what turned out to be a very small kitchen, not only did I find Pepa and Maite standing there, much to my surprise I also found three other TD members. Although it was nice to find all of them there, I also wondered why these women, as TD members, had not joined the rest of us in the dining room. We were, after all, working on an important project that would give TD greater visibility on an international level and that would help Rafaela strengthen her skills and knowledge as a political activist.

At the time, I interpreted that scene in the kitchen in terms of a disregard for the more important, explicitly "political" work in which the rest of us were engaged in the dining room. However, with a more nuanced understanding of ethical practice as encompassing thoughtful and astute negotiations between desire and structure, and involving both affect and strategy, I now

appreciate that scene in the kitchen as a foundational part of their political activities. That night in the kitchen, four women were offering advice to one of their *compañeras* on a personal issue. However, although I did not know all the details of this woman's situation, I could nevertheless recognize and appreciate the language of care, both spoken and embodied, that was exchanged in those moments in that room. Rather than view the interactions in the kitchen as marginal and unproductive, as a distant and inconsequential form of activity in relation to the ostensibly more important political work happening down the hall, or even down the street with respect to other social mobilization efforts, I now see that scene in the kitchen as an integral part of these women's political activities, whose "consequences," "impact" or "efficacy," to use the language of social mobilization theories, is not necessarily clear, easily measured, or imperative for us to know.

If analyzed as an experience of possibility, letting go of the typical intellectual striving for complete knowledge, particularly with respect to an uncertain future, we can appreciate these women's time together in the small yet intimate space of that modest kitchen on a Sunday night before the start of another workweek, as an experience of individual and collective "strengthening" (*fortalecimiento*) and "empowerment" (*empoderamiento*), two terms often used by TD members to describe their reasons for participating in TD. This scene in the kitchen can be described as one such experience of empowerment and strengthening. One can intuit through their interactions the renewal of each one's capacity to endure any challenges that may come in the days and weeks ahead, particularly for women enmeshed in precarious webs of illegality. As Amalia, one of the women in the kitchen that evening, later explained to me:

> I never miss a meeting, because in the first place you get empowered; you learn about the laws, you feel a sense of security when talking with the other women. It's not good to remain isolated, because you can't achieve anything. It's better to be in a group, to associate yourself with others, to be in a network; in this way, you learn.

According to Amalia, it is through interconnections and interdependence that one "learns" and one grows. After Amalia's comment, I took the opportunity to share my admiration for her: "You are a strong woman, Amalia," to which she then replied, "Now I can say I am strong. But before I was afraid; now I am not. TD has strengthened me."

Jamileth also expressed on numerous occasions in numerous ways her appreciation for the empowerment, support and strength that TD cultivates. In one particular interview, she described her personal experience in the following way: "With TD, I feel empowered; but like a butterfly with wounded wings." I found this statement particularly striking, in part for the beautiful and tender image it conjures, but more importantly for the experience of becoming that it evokes. In Guattari's and Deleuze's discussion of becomings:

> Lapses, parapraxes and symptoms are like birds that strike their beaks against the window. It is not a question of interpreting them. It is a question instead of identifying their trajectory to see if they can serve as indicators of new universes of reference capable of acquiring a consistency sufficient for turning a situation upside down (1997: 63-64).

Rather than analyze symptoms through a Freudian, "archaeological" penetration of one's unconscious in search of origins, Deleuze and Guattari look for "trajectories" and "becomings." A bird beating its beak against a window, or a wounded butterfly striving to take flight, is not merely an indication of the forces that constrain, but also can be read as an opportunity for emergence, for moving beyond or adroitly navigating through that which encloses and oppresses, including the socio-political, legal, material, and discursive elements of one's environment. What I have been arguing in this chapter is that ethical practice is precisely what allows for emergence and the artful navigation of one's lived experiences.

Thus, notwithstanding the small space of the kitchen into which the five women were all cramped, the small and seemingly uncomfortable chairs on which three of them were seated, their initially obscure location, and their physical distance from a supposedly more dominant group, I see that scene in the kitchen as emblematic of immanent possibilities. Difference, absence, and minority are not just descriptors of inferior conditions, subordinate to a normatively greater quality or position – e.g. sameness, presence, and majority – but are themselves potentially provocative, transgressive and transformative. It is precisely the deviations or distance from the norm, known, and normative that are generative of possibilities. Therefore, rather than dismiss that scene in the kitchen – or TD's participation in the Women's Day march, or any of their TD meetings – as inconsequential or as mere "difference," we can more appropriately approach such experiences as harboring possibilities for change; "change" in its varied, contingent and emergent forms. It only seems appropriate then that one would find in that small kitchen in an unassuming apartment on a narrow street of Madrid, the practice of a kind of ethos, typically dismissed as "ineffective" or as "women's business," that is precisely the form of practice that they believe can and should overturn the more pernicious norms operative in the dominant spaces of Madrid and beyond.

When I asked Jamileth what it would take for a butterfly to fly, to not only take flight amid harsh and intense environmental forces, but to also sustain one's flight, Jamileth offered what I then considered a surprising response. I was expecting a response along the lines of "affiliation with one of the dominant labor unions," or "immigration reform." But Jamileth simply responded: "Being with other women. That is a rich experience."

CHAPTER FOUR

From Guns to Aprons

Introduction

In this chapter I highlight the work of *las Brujas Migrantes,* the Migrant Witches, who perform as witches on the radio and at public events to bring attention to migrant women's issues. While numerous migrant associations and feminist organizations in Madrid and throughout Spain address women's issues, this group stands out for their irreverent, yet incisive humor. They speak to issues such as gender-based violence, unemployment and domestic worker exploitation, while dressed as witches using Christian prayers.

In what follows, I will examine the significance of *las Brujas Migrantes* in terms of their difference. I argue that it is precisely their difference – their departure from conventional politics, their inversion of known symbols and practices, their aberrant presence and iconoclastic ideas – that harbors and enables possibility. In conventional evaluations of contemporary social movements, it is conformity with established standards of political practice and consistency with past cases of "effective" and "successful" efforts that substantiate the likelihood change will ensue. It is assumed the future will unfold in a similar manner as the past. However, as I argued with *Territorio Domestico* and their ethical practices of care, the differences envisioned, embodied and articulated by these migrant "others" are disruptive of conventional practice and knowledge and therefore *are* possibilities for change. In this chapter I argue that the Migrant Witches provoke us to reconsider our established ways of thinking, and allow us to imagine what change may look like. The affective and semantic dissonance created by their performances presents the necessary ruptures through which change may emerge.

In my analysis of the Migrant Witches, I alternate between their individual past experiences in their home countries and their shared present experience as the Migrant Witches in Madrid. I weave their individual past and present experiences together in order to demonstrate how the violence and suffering from their pasts continue to form an intimate part of their present. I specifically focus on the act of remembering, as prompted by one's inquiry into another's past, as a means by which the past is integrated into the present as well as the future. In the act of remembering, the past does not simply emerge as an ethereal, mental representation in one's present consciousness, but rather, as I argue in this chapter, it becomes a substantive part of the present and future in that it presents the normative basis for ongoing and future political actions. Past traumatic experiences become a dynamic and constitutive part of the present and future, for as these women "remember," ethical insights emerge, political commitments are reinvigorated, and inspired ideas are concretized. Keane (2014) refers to a similar process of ethical reflexivity and justification prompted by the demands of social interaction, which he refers to as "ethical affordances," or the non-deterministic ways people apprehend and articulate their experiences of the world. Verbal interactions are the "preeminent site" where people demand and/or provide explicit rationalizations (17). And as Keane argues, through ethical affordances justifications can:

> …become crystallized as explicit objects of reflection, they may be rendered available as ideas that can readily be referred to over and over again, potentially consolidated as norms to be defended or criticized. In short, they have the potential to become historical objects (19).

Through the explicit verbalization or "objectification" of one's ethical stance, prompted by, for example, "ethnographers to be wised up" (2014:18), ethical precepts are shared and thus may, as I argue, endure as the normative structure of incipient or evolving political projects. With attention to the materiality of social interactions, one can begin to note the durability and

replicability of the ideas "crystallized" and norms "consolidated" during verbal interactions. What these three women articulate as they narrate the past then, are not just cursory reflections or rehearsed feminist rhetoric, but rather, can be seen as becoming the very foundation of ongoing and future political work and, hence, possible change. Thus, it may be said that efforts to engender social change are not just undertaken in the public spaces of organizational meetings and street demonstrations, but are also cultivated in the more intimate and mundane spaces of one's memories and their narration to others.

I also include these women's pasts because in addition to all the violence and trauma they endured, their pasts also reveal the continuous production of possibilities, of openings to change. Rather than just focus on change as the singular end-result ensuing from the execution of pre-defined strategies and objectives proven to be "effective," I emphasize the openings *towards* change that are created and cultivated; the spaces and moments in which ideas are developed, relationships are created and strengthened, and ethical sensibilities are negotiated and sustained. I aim to bring attention to these moments of possibility, precisely because they are what have structured and colored these women's lives; they are what motivate them *a sacar adelante,* or "to keep going" as these and other migrant women liked to say. Amid the horrors of their pasts, which have included war, rape, sexual abuse and poverty, and despite not knowing with certainty the outcome of their efforts, they nevertheless continue to press forward, relying upon their relationships with others, and their individual desires, creativity, and ethical discernment to work towards the possibility for change.

While it may be said that time affords the luxury of greater clarity and understanding, that I can identify certain past moments in these women's lives as openings towards meaningful change because of my knowledge of the productive outcomes of such possibilities, my point in

weaving these women's pasts through the present is not to establish connections of causality, but to emphasize the ongoing production of possibilities. Change is that which *is happening* and *has been happening*, and not which simply happened or should happen. As I have argued throughout, possibility cannot be merely thought of as the peripheral antecedent of actuality, but as that which begets actuality. Actuality unfolds from possibility. As such, we can think of possibilities as numerous and diverse, as continuously forming and informing, emerging and diverging. I, therefore, strive to linger in some of these moments of possibility, to explore the motivations, justifications, desires, opportunities, ideas and relationships that encourage these three women, the Migrant Witches, to continue to *sacar adelante* despite all the barriers and seeming *im*possibilities they face. In so doing, I hope to leave open the analytical field for what they *may* achieve, so that we as researchers may also remain open to the possibilities of what *we* may learn.

Present: Sin ellas, no se mueve el mundo! ("Without these women, the world stops moving")

The first time I saw *las Brujas* perform was at a press conference organized by *Territorio Domestico*. At this public event held at *la Karakola*, TD sought to bring attention to two important issues – the Spanish government's refusal to ratify the ILO's historic convention on domestic work, and the recent Royal Decree Law 29/2012, which raised the amount of social security contributions for domestic workers, and assigned management of social security

contributions to domestic workers, rather than to employers on whom the responsibility typically falls in other sectors. At this much-anticipated press conference, for which TD and I had spent significant time and energy planning, approximately fifty people were crammed into *la Karakola's* small space. Many were seated on chairs, some sat on the floor, and others stood against the walls of the room's small perimeter. Amongst those who attended were many of the

feminist and migrant activists who I had grown accustomed to seeing at various public events; newspaper and television reporters; friends and family of TD members; as well as random passers-by, who presumably had been lured in by all the commotion on the other side of the locale's peculiar façade, and whose time off from work that day, thanks to San Jose, perhaps permitted the indulgence of their curiosity.

Six TD members, who were seated at a long table at the front of the room, gave a presentation that included an incisive critique of the Spanish government's "patriarchal and classist disregard for domestic work." Through this press conference they intended to "make visible and oppose the flagrant violation and political pillaging of rights affecting not only domestic workers, but all women, migrants, and workers in general." In between each woman's presentation of the specific ways recent legislation has proven detrimental for migrant women, Pepa led the audience in several of TD's favorite slogans: *Sin ellas, no se mueve el mundo!* ("Without these women, the world stops moving!") *Se acabó, se acabó, se acabó la esclavitud!* ("It's over, it's over, slavery is over!"). Following their presentation and a series of questions from the audience, the Migrant Witches made their entrance.

Three women wearing black pointed hats, black-rimmed glasses, dangling earrings, floral shirts and long flowing black skirts, glided into the room on brooms. Once positioned in front of the audience and after a few cackles from each of them, Jamileth, who acted as the presiding witch that afternoon, unrolled a scroll of paper that extended down to the floor. Jamileth scanned the audience intently, and with a raspy voice she introduced herself and her two companions:

> We are the Migrant Witches, without territory or border, fighting for the human rights of wandering women. From south to the north, the scream of silence rises, and from east to west through all of the corners of mother earth, we give value to the words of hidden and excluded women. We pray in protest of the patriarchal, misogynistic, and capitalist system, which dismantles dreams and hopes. And because we faithfully believe that another world is possible.

Past: Jamileth and the Messenger Witch

That same aged, raspy voice heard that afternoon of the press conference in Madrid was heard every morning at five o'clock for nine years on a radio program in Bocana de Paiwas, a small rural town in central Nicaragua. Despite the early hour, many in the town would rise just to hear the old witch's condemnations for the day. *La Bruja Mensajera,* or the Messenger Witch, as Jamileth was known, travelled everyday by broom from a nearby mountain to the radio's cabin in order to publicly name and shame local perpetrators of domestic violence. For example, following one local man's reprehensible behavior towards his wife, the Witch stated:

> Hee hee hee, in my magic ball I see Tony. Let's see, Tony, what happened yesterday? Hmm? You're there, I see you there… Look, Tony, until recently they told us that we shouldn't get involved in a couple's problems, that it was a private thing, but not anymore, Tony, not anymore. On several occasions this man has hit his wife and his little girl. That's awful, you shit! Look, you can see their bruises. And don't you come to me with lies, because I can see those blows in my ball, Tony. And it's lucky I'm seeing them and you, too, Tony.

And as with other offenders, she finished her condemnation with the following unnerving promise: "I'm going to be watching to see if you mend your ways." However dramatized and slightly playful these warnings were, they were born out of a real conviction to combat rampant violence against women in her hometown, Paiwas and beyond.

Jamileth created the program *la Bruja Mensajera* ("the Messenger Witch") as well as the town's only radio station, *la Palabra de Mujer* ("Woman's Word"). She wanted to redress the isolation of her town, largely due to the devastating effects of Hurricane Mitch in 1998 when an important bridge connecting Paiwas to nearby towns and cities was destroyed. But with what may well be described as witch-like clairvoyance, as well as persistence and creativity, Jamileth not only reestablished connections with other towns with her creation of the radio station, she also established a bold and effective means for combating gender-based violence. For nine years, prior to her migratory journey to Spain, Jamileth played the role of the 86-year old witch who denounced past or impending incidences of domestic violence in Paiwas with the aid of her crystal ball and her mystical powers of perception (as well as anonymous notes left for her by sympathetic residents and fearful survivors of abuse).

In our casual conversations and more formal interviews, Jamileth often reflected on her work as the Messenger Witch with an air of playful and fond remembrance, particularly given the unconventionality of her program and the antics it inspired. But despite the humor and eccentricity of the program, there was nothing whimsical or fictitious about it. The figure of the all-seeing witch was Jamileth's creative and proactive response to domestic violence, whose pervasiveness and ghastliness she had become intimately familiar with through her work at a local feminist organization serving abused women. Yet, despite its recurrence and severity, domestic violence remained invisible to local authorities and, hence, beyond any punitive

measures. Despite a lack of support from authorities, a lack of significant material resources, the lack of a broad base of supporters, the lack of cultural receptivity towards gender progressive ideals – in short, the lack of many of the factors that traditional social movement experts might identify as necessary ingredients for change – Jamileth devised and implemented a strategy that was radical yet nevertheless "effective." It may be said that it was precisely the novelty of the program and the radicality of its underlying message of gender equity that created the necessary breach from which change could begin to emerge. By publicly broadcasting violent transgressions against women on the town's first and only radio station through a figure explicitly known for its recalcitrance and eccentricity, Jamileth disrupted conventional practices and ideas of *machismo* (the term Latin American feminists used to refer to male aggression and violence) that had become sedimented as doxa and habitus. With the Witch's omniscience, it was difficult for gender-based violence to remain "normal." Moreover, the radio became the means by which those who were traditionally ignored and silenced, could be seen and heard.

In my first interview with Jamileth, when she explained the details of her work as the Messenger Witch, she also cited her mother's death as the primary reason for her resolve to address gender-based violence. In the early part of this interview at the kitchen table of her "home" (she lives in her employer's home working as an *interna*), I asked her, "How did your mother die?" She offered the following details:

> My mother was in charge of a cooperative during the war, like a convenience store, she was in charge of finding products and transporting them somehow to Paiwas, it was the zone of refugees. Then, during one of her many trips, she went into a military van… she was part of the organization of women, of the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Association of Women, or AMNLAE, which is part of the Front.[66] So, she went into this van, and some went looking for her, and they killed her and two other women. This was in '87, almost

[66] Sandanista National Liberation Front (FSLN), the Leftist political coalition responsible for overturning the Somoza dictatorship in 1979 and which then became the target of the U.S.-backed Contra movement during the 1980s.

> at the end of the war. But this changed our lives completely. Then, in those years working in the women's center, I learned a lot about support, but more than support, cultivating sisterhood amongst women, because it is something very distinct. You not only go and listen to a woman who tells you her story, you come to believe her, you become her accomplice, her ally. And this for me is indispensable, because a woman that has been the victim of abuse, rape, aggression, is a woman who has lost a big part of her life, physically and psychologically, so she has to enter in this process of reconstructing the pieces, as they say, "I'm like a broken mirror." You have to reassemble the pieces, although you're not going to look in a broken mirror the same way again. But it means finding this complicity and helping women. After so many years of working in the women's center, and doing the work of listening, I started to get sick, because so much listening, the stress affects you in a particular way. So, I started to look for possibilities for leaving the country to study something to do with theater. And upon discovering drama therapy, I said that I wasn't going to study therapy in order to become a therapist, but rather to give myself therapy. And that's how I came. And now, being here, I have my personal project, I want to start a self-sustainability project because I believe the secret to a woman's liberation is to be economically independent. I believe in economic independence, or of opening another door, or whatever. This, opening myself to the possibility of finding another way to respond economically to our interests….

Jamileth continued for another several minutes explaining the details of the self-sustainability project that she and her sisters had been planning for several years, and which she further explained in our second interview several weeks later. Despite the seemingly abrupt deviations in her response above from one distinct experience to another, what emerges is a clear, cartographic representation of her present identity as a feminist activist (or as an "activist defender of women's human rights" as she once referred to herself). I had presented her with a precise question: "How did your mother die?" In my mind, I asked her about a specific past event and, therefore, there should have been specific details for her to offer. However, as evidenced by the broad range of experiences referenced in her response, her mother's death was not the bounded event I had imagined. For Jamileth, her mother's death extended, and continues to extend, far beyond the specific time and location of the physical death itself. Her response suggests the development of a long and amazing trajectory as a feminist activist that has been significantly informed by her mother's murder. So to respond to an inquiry into her mother's

passing, she offers a guided navigation through the maze of her past, highlighting the formative experiences in her life, while leaving other experiences uncharted.

As psychologists, historians and linguistic anthropologists have argued, the act of remembering is never a simple replication of a static past, but rather is always an interpretive reconstruction serving, for example, to legitimate one's present identity.[67] Jamileth's quick progression from the past to the present, then, can be interpreted as defining her present identity for a new acquaintance and interested anthropologist. However, I see her response as more than a simple definition of her present identity. I see her response as the verbal expression of latent possibilities in her journey as a feminist. This "map" includes not only traversed paths from the past into the present, but also possible trajectories into the future. For example, when she speaks of her past work at the women's center, she speaks in terms of her present-day ideas about support, complicity, and sisterhood, which are the pillars of one of her current projects:

> In those years working at the women's center, I learned a lot about support, but more than support, cultivating sisterhood amongst women, because it is something very distinct. You not only go and listen to a woman who tells you her story, you come to believe her, you become her accomplice, her ally. And this for me is indispensable.

With her movement from the past tense to the present-tense, we see how the past has informed her present ideas, as well as how it *might* continue to inform the future. The ideals of "support," "complicity" and "sisterhood" that she references are the basis of a project that she, Alma and Alicia call, *Cómplice,* or "Accomplice." The purpose of *Cómplice* is to reach out to women typically uninvolved in traditional forms of political work, and to bring them together as "accomplices" in order to denounce "real" crimes, such as rape and abuse, as opposed to what migrants are typically accused of, such as crossing international borders. Her narration of the past, then, with reference to her current project, is not a dialectical movement between a fixed

[67] e.g. Antze and Lambek's (1996) *Tense Past.*

past and a fixed present, resulting in a simple rendition of an established present identity. Rather, the shift in tense with reference to an incipient project can be more adequately thought of as a concrete instance of *coalescence* between the past and present, whose material form can be identified as the normative ideas that emerged during our verbal exchange: "You not only go and listen to a woman who tells you her story, you come to believe her, you become her accomplice, her ally. And this for me is indispensable." Through her response to my question about her mother's death, she is able to explicitly articulate how future actions regarding the abuse of women should be approached.

Another opening, or possible trajectory, in Jamileth's response can be identified in her mention of her studies in drama therapy as the reason for leaving Nicaragua to come to Spain. She left Nicaragua three years ago with a scholarship to study drama therapy in Madrid. Drama therapy, which is a creative and experiential approach to self-discovery and personal and social transformation, has significantly informed Jamileth's recent work as a Migrant Witch, for it relies on humor, gesture, and costume to inspire change amongst her audiences. Her reference to the artistic basis of her current performative work, whose course continues to develop and whose outcome remains unknown yet rich with possibility, represents yet another opening.

Finally, after weaving through her work at the women's center and her studies in drama therapy, Jamileth finishes her response with yet another possible path to be pursued, or an alternative approach to life as it is currently imagined and lived – a self-sustainability pilot project that she and her two "feminist sisters" have been developing over the years. In this project, they envision living in the countryside, cooking with biogas, living off the food of pigs and chickens, and relying primarily on water for electricity. They hope to combine economic independence, environmental sustainability, and feminist autonomy to reverse the destructive

and disempowering effects that an over-reliance on capital has created. When I first heard her speak of this project, I immediately thought of it as ambitious and utopic. But since then, I have been able to shift my perspective to adopt this lens of possibility through which Jamileth, Alma and Alicia see the world. After explaining some of the details of this project, Jamileth said to me: "So, am I quite a dreamer? Yes. Can I likely do things normally? Yes. But life itself is a risk."

In short, what at first seems like a digressive response can be seen upon further analysis as a cartographic outline of Jamileth's journey as a feminist activist, which includes ethical justifications for how political work can and should be approached. Thus, what emerges is not a well-defined self-representation, but can more appropriately be likened to perhaps a silhouette, whose outline bears the traces of the shadow of its past, and whose soft contours and the changing light of the background suggest impermanence and variability. In her response, or justification of her identity, are immanent changes, possibilities for development in her work as an accomplice, a Migrant Witch, and a feminist sister. So perhaps rather than asking, "How did your mother die?", a more appropriate inquiry for Jamileth would have been, "How *has* your mother died?"

Later in the same interview, I asked Jamileth: "How did you become interested in women's issues when you were younger?"

She responded:

> I think I inherited this interest. My mother who was the first women in the town who used to say, "Without the recognition of women's rights, there is no revolution." Then, when my mother died when I was 13, then I thought, it was like rescuing this important banner. It might have been something unconscious, but when you become conscientious of what it means to be a woman, and to be a woman in a patriarchal and *machista* society, it's not pretty. I'm proud to be a woman, but it's just that society screws you. It screws you in education, in health, in walking down the street, in the protection of your family, in church. You're screwed in everything. It's as if we're cut with scissors and sewn

> together with a thread. So, I think all of this, and all the suffering that women endure, to see my female neighbors crying, to have a woman come to me and tell me a story of []. So, if we as woman don't have the strength and capacity to unite and defend ourselves, the wicked ones will eat us alive.

As with the previous response, she weaves back and forth here between the past and present and concludes with insight for the future. She starts with her mother's death in the past, moves to her present indignant understandings of what it is like to be a woman today, back to her past experiences at the women's center helping those who had been abused, and finally to her present conviction that women today need to be vigilant and unified in order to secure their dignity and integrity for the future. But rather than see these various experiences as distinct and successive, we can see them as contemporaneous. Her ethical negotiation in the present of a traumatic event that we might consider to have "occurred" in the past, can be seen as part of a dynamic and ongoing process of transformation, from a traumatic moment into the ethical basis for present-day and future activist work. What once inspired Jamileth to take up her mother's banner and the Latin American feminist cause at the age of thirteen, appears to have moved her again in our present conversation, for she articulated her thoughts about the disillusioning experiences of womanhood with a distinct shift in the tone of her voice; that is, with greater passion:

> …when my mother died when I was 13, then I thought, it was like rescuing this important banner. It might have been something unconscious, but when you become conscientious of what it means to be a woman, and to be a woman in a patriarchal and *machista* society, it's not pretty. I'm proud to be a woman, but it's just that society screws you. It screws you in education, in health, in walking down the street, in the protection of your family, in church. You're screwed in everything.

She then concludes with a definitive statement that she and other women must be strong and united: "So, if we as woman don't have the strength and capacity to unite and defend ourselves, the wicked ones will eat us alive."

The past, present and future, then, interact not as consecutive entities, but coalesce on a shared plane of temporality and affectivity. Bergson, who saw time neither as linear nor causal, said of the past:

> In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness that would fain leave it outside…we feel vaguely that our past remains present to us…. (1911:5)

While Jamileth presumably developed the clarity and confidence that she demonstrated in her response, over several years of reflection and diverse experiences since her mother's death, the conversation itself, the social exchange between an anthropologist and a feminist activist, can be seen to have presented the opportunity for further clarity and the solidification of her ideas into an "objective" form, as Keane refers to the ethical justifications that emerge from social interactions. The materiality of her response then become available for reappropriation either by herself for her own feminist agenda or by her audience who, inspired by her words, may proceed to memorialize such statements in an extensive exegesis of migrant feminist activity in Spain. [68]

Many of Jamileth's responses to my questions about her past can be evaluated in this way – as a dynamic and ongoing part of a "past" traumatic experience, which facilitates greater ethical clarity and motivates further action towards engendering change. The final example I share is of Jamileth's response to a question I posed about whether she had ever been the victim of abuse. Jamileth had just finished sharing the story of a man she had denounced in Nicaragua during her tenure as the Messenger Witch for his sexual abuse of his daughters, as well as the story of her own son's experience with sexual abuse, perpetrated by Jamileth's brother. She responded:

[68] Linguists might cite entextualization as an example…

> A man tried to rape me when I was seven years old. I was on my way to sell food. I used to sell cornbread. And this has been the most significant experience of abuse for me, for at this young age I was conscious that a man wanted to rape me. But since then, there are other subtle violations you think for many years are normal. I was a prostitute, prostitute in the sense that you receive money in exchange for sexual service. I knew that I needed money and I did it…. Then I thought, when I get married, when I have my partner, I'll have to educate myself. And if you don't have a consciousness, a feminist education, if you are not conscious of what you are living, of how they want to train you so that you can please society, so that you can please others, so that you can enter marriage...that you have to say yes to sexual relations even if you don't want them…that you have to satisfy the sexual needs of others…. Then you realize you have been raped many times, saying yes without wanting to. It's disgusting…. Being at the service of others, you become converted into an abused being, you prostitute yourself without the income….Then I say, fuck, we have to be more curious, not only saying yes to everything; we have to question everything, right?

Here, we again see this movement from a prior traumatic event to a present ethical resolution. However, the movement is not a linear shift between two consecutive and bounded events, enabled by one's ability to remember. As I've argued, I take memory not to be a *re*production of a past event, but rather a *productive* practice facilitated by a process of ethical reckoning, connecting the past with the present and future through affect, ethical negotiation, and the articulation of normative ideas. Because of the ethical connections and coalescence between past, present and future, I refer to this process as a process of ethical "*reckon*nection." The anger, conviction and clarity Jamileth evinced as she spoke of her personal experience with attempted rape and prostitution are not mere affective repercussions of a specific past traumatic event, as might be assumed with a Freudian analysis, but rather can be seen as part of a continuously unfolding experience whose significance evolves in the process of reflection and materializes in the form of normative statements and political projects.

As I've been arguing, because such expressed statements about how one should view and approach the world as a woman are substantive and material, and thus have the capacity to endure, such normative statements can inform ongoing or future political projects. Her

provocative statements about rape as an everyday, ubiquitous experience perpetrated by friends, family and church leaders leading to her conclusion that women can not say "yes" to everything but rather must question everything, can be seen as the normative basis for ongoing and future actions. They may resonate with her or others with whom she works as concrete ethical justifications for the pursuit of specific personal and shared goals. Events then such as Jamileth's experience with attempted rape and her mother's death are not bound by definitive outcomes, but rather are generative of numerous possibilities. As I've argued regarding ethical practices of care and their cultivation of unknown futures, ethical reckonnections do not entail a determinate movement towards a specific, temporally and spatially bounded event, neither towards an origin awaiting discovery or an outcome requiring a well-executed strategy. Rather, there is contingency, emergence, uncertainty and possibility. As the next section will show, statements articulated in a present moment such as "women have to question everything," can inform and facilitate the realization of future possibilities.

Present: The Migrant Witches

Following the Witches' introduction at the press conference, Jamileth stated, "let us pray." However, instead of immediately continuing with what presumably was going to be a solemn prayer, Jamileth, suddenly stopped and said "wait, wait, wait" as if something important had just occurred to her. Jamileth took off her glasses and stated with a cackle, "I can't see!" She pulled off her frames, looked down at them, and pointed to where the lenses of her plastic frames should have been (there were no lenses in her frames). Although she had initially expressed surprise with her inability to see, she stated in a very matter of fact manner, "You know how it is, with the crisis and all." After Alma, Alicia and Jamileth laughed quite animatedly at Jamileth's

comment regarding her inability to afford lenses for her frames, Jamileth quickly recomposed herself, pulled her scroll back up to her face for reference, and again solemnly stated, "Let us pray."

After what seemed like an exchange between the Three Stooges, the Three Witches proceeded more earnestly with a litany, or a prayer typical in Christian worship. In Christian services, the clergy usually recites a series of petitions, to which the congregation responds formulaically. The Witches follow this same format, although in their performances they include political critique and apply their own dramatic flair. Jamileth began the litany, using the same cadence characteristic of Christian litanies – a quick, even tempo ending with a deeper and extended intonation. She intoned: "Saint Decided, we are the migrant witches, sick of having to endure misogyny and the underground ecooo-no-myyy." The rest of us then replied in a slightly uncertain and awkward manner, "amen." Disappointed with our lack of synchrony and passion, Jamileth demanded that we do it again. She repeated the same prayer as if disappointed with our weak response: "Saint Decided, we are the migrant witches, sick of having to endure misogyny and the underground ecooo-no-myyy." This time we all stated in perfect unison and with greater conviction, "Aaa-men." Satisfied, the Witches then proceeded to recite several more petitions, alternating between the three of them:

> Saint Euphemism, who invents the border in order to legalize discrimination, racism, homophobia and classism.

Aaa-men.

> Saint Fair, free us from the laws and interests of the state and the society, which enslaves women without papers and with miserable salaries.

Aaa-men.

> Saint Bastard, the rotten cucumber robs domestic workers through excessive contributions to social security.

Aaa-men.

Saint Tavern, free us from the bad fibers of those who govern.

Aaa-men.

Santa Trout, constructing an inclusive and non-sexist world is a possible goal if we all join the fight.

By the end of the litany, Jamileth's rhythmic and scathing incantations seemed to have drawn all of us in, for there was a surprising sense of solemnity in the room, and our last few "amens" were delivered with less theater and more sincerity. Had it not been for the references to Saint Trout and Saint Bastard, one might have perhaps mistaken our gathering for a makeshift mass of devout religious followers. As Jamileth explained to me, the Witches select the names of their saints for their rhythmic correspondence with other words in their prayers (e.g. the Spanish word *trucha* ("trout") rhymes well with *lucha* ("fight"); and *taberna* ("tavern") rhymes well with the verb, *gobierna* ("governs"). In addition to Saint Fair, Saint Bastard, Saint Euphemism, Saint Trout and Saint Tavern, to whom they appealed for intercession that day in the above petitions, they also regularly pray to Saint Exploitation, Saint Progress, Saint Confused and Saint Knowledge.

Notwithstanding the humor and absurdity behind some of the saints' names, they carefully construct their prayers to reflect the severity of women's grievances and the weight of their desires. In their prayers, and in their political work more generally, they speak to conditions that are not specific only to the female migrant experience in Spain. They call attention to issues such as domestic violence, abortion, and rape, which affect many women regardless of color, citizenship status, or place. It may be argued that in all of these cases, migrant women would fare worse vis-à-vis Spanish citizens because they lack legal protections and social and financial resources with which to confront and endure any such unfortunate

circumstances. Given the extremities that characterize migrant women's experiences in Spain, the Migrant Witches do recognize the need for focused attention on their experiences; the experiences of those "without papers who have been enslaved," who pay "excessive contributions to social security," and for whom discrimination and racism are everyday realities, as the litany above expresses. However, as Jamileth explained to me, her experience as a migrant woman is not a limiting experience; it doesn't confine her understanding nor should it limit her political activity. Rather, as she explains, being a migrant affords her a deeper and truly transnational perspective on some of the most horrifying experiences that women around the world endure. She eloquently explained:

> Being an immigrant gives you the luxury of seeing the shit that happens to women in a developed country… [As] women, we don't have development anywhere. You come to this country thinking everything is in place, but it's not true because they continue killing women, they continue raping women, and women don't participate equally in political spaces or in places of decision-making.

With a broad yet intimate perspective of the exclusion, exploitation and violations that women experience on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, or the North-South divide, Jamileth recognizes the need to first and foremost engender in women a critical eye and a rebellious spirit. Rather than highlight specific identities and their respective political rights, the Migrant Witches focus on "agitating" all women, giving them the knowledge and awareness to identify injustice as it is variously manifested, the language and courage to denounce such wrongs, and the desire and support to prevent further aggressions and exclusions. In another one of the Witches' performances, where they rely upon the more traditional and occult powers of sorcery rather than the Christian prayers of faith, they stir an imaginary pot whose contents include a particularly potent concoction of "disobedience, self-esteem and vitality," in the hopes that all women may:

> Disobey the mandates of politicians, bankers, bishops, fashion designers, and all the bastards that utilize the bodies of women…. With these potions, let's deconstruct the

> capitalist logic that believes that fucking money makes everything possible, we're going to demolish their lies so that their days are counted, and we can all attend its funeral.

In this incantation, they call attention to the deceit and distortion that underlie the authority of established institutions such as capitalism, patriarchy, nationalism, Catholicism, and the fashion industry, and identify these forces as the mechanisms that have kept and continue to keep women oppressed. With these references, they demonstrate the non-correspondence between what is claimed and what is; for example, the non-correspondence between "capitalist logic that believes that fucking money makes everything possible" and the exploitation of migrant women on which capitalist logic relies; or the non-correspondence between the protection that state laws and borders purportedly offer, and the suffering and racism they in fact foster. In other words, these Migrant Witches problematize what is "normal."

With this particular incantation, then, they strive to conjure awareness and disobedience. It may be said that it is precisely the ethical precept that women "have to be curious" and "have to question everything," that once articulated and offered as justification to an inquiring interlocutor, has the capacity to endure as a concrete normative direction for Jamileth or other political *compañeras* to pursue and build upon. Her decision to take up the figure of a witch and the use of Christian prayers in the Witches' performances can precisely be seen as the material, embodied and affective extension of Jamileth's conclusion that women "have to question everything." By embodying the figure of a witch, an iconically unconventional and recalcitrant figure, *las Brujas* publicly and categorically reject any presumed association of inferiority and illegitimacy with women, which motivated the persecution, excommunication, and murder of thousands of women throughout Europe. The historical "production" of witchcraft was a viable mechanism for the Catholic Church, as well as disgruntled, mischievous and vengeful neighbors,

to maintain or assert authority and power vis-à-vis allegedly hedonistic, heretical and licentious others. And it was not a coincidence that the large majority of those believed to embody these undesirable and maleficent traits were women (Stewart and Strathern 2003).

Thus, through their performances as Witches they deconstruct the imputed association of inferiority with women, as well as the veneer of normality maintained by dominant yet oppressive institutions such as capitalism. They strive to expose the contingency of ideas expressed as normative and perceived as normal. Their critiques are, as Foucault states:

> …not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices we accept rest.... Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as one believes, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such (1988:154).

Thus, productive criticism is not simply a matter of calling attention to what is "wrong," but rather, requires bringing attention to the assumptions that have led to the belief that things are "right" or "normal." For the Migrant Witches, their appropriation of such a provocative figure along with their provocative use of accepted Christian traditions bring such assumptions into a performative arena where ethical reflection and negotiation can rework and transform the logic on which such self-evident truths are based. As Jamileth stated: "I want to reclaim the accusation that I am a witch, that I am a whore, and that I am crazy"; in other words, "question everything," revise the assumptions on which such accusations are based, and "reclaim" them as one's own. To be a witch is not to be depraved, but may be the capacity for harnessing one's creative energies; to be a whore is not to transgress puritan ideals of heterosexuality and monogamy, but may mean a woman's ability to make decisions about her own body; and to be crazy is not indicative of irrationality but rather, suggests a radicality, ingenuity and ethicality that can overturn the categories that limit, misrepresent and marginalize women.

Thus, the Witches are not merely actors reciting powerful diatribes in a dramatic play. Nor are their calls for an "inclusive and non-sexist world" and the defeat of "all the bastards that utilize the bodies of women" mere clichéd feminist refrains. Their affect, words, and gestures emerge from the dynamic coalescence between past and present lived experiences, as facilitated by a process of ethical negotiation, or "reckonnection" as I have called it. Their feminism, or their politico-ethical stance, is not a purely intellectual exercise, but is the substantive, embodied and active expression of "reckonnected" experiences. As both Alma and Jamileth have explained on separate occasions, their feminism is "not of the books, but of the streets." Thus, Jamileth's demands for greater sorority, vigilance and curiosity, and the Witches' collective prayers to Saint Euphemism, Saint Progress and Saint Exploitation are not residual effects of unchanging, "past" traumatic events. Rather, they are the dynamic and agonistic expressions of an ongoing experience. And as a dynamic and ongoing experience, Jamileth's ethical convictions and the Witches' performances can then be seen as both the present expression of previous openings towards change, as well as openings themselves towards changes yet to come. Again, departing from possibility as our premise, as the fundamental basis from which actions arise and change unfolds, rather than the actual as the normative starting and end point, then we can remain open to the possibilities immanent in each moment, as these women envision them and work towards their realization.

Alma's deliverance of one of the final petitions in the Witches' litany can similarly be interpreted as a significant part of this "rhizomatic" unfolding of experiences, or what I have been arguing is the continuous production of possibilities with neither definitive beginning nor end. In this petition, Alma prayed:

> Saint knowledge, now is the time to rise up and protest against all forms of violence and exploitation of women.

I see this prayer as an example of an ethical "reckonnection," for it indexes Alma's violent past as well as openings towards the future; with the help of Saint Knowledge, women may still "rise and protest." The next section will go on to explore some elements of Alma's past that have led to this present expression of feminist conviction and promise.

Past: Alma and Herstory

I spent a lot of memorable time with Alma in the living room of her small apartment, at TD meetings, and on walks together to the metro from *La Karakola* and to pick her son up from school. But prior to any in-depth conversations with her, all I knew about Alma was that she was a political refugee from Guatemala; this was how she had introduced herself at my first TD meeting. With each of our subsequent conversations, this small fact flowered in the most surprising and inspiring ways to reveal a profoundly complex history and to suggest, as I argue here, a range of possibilities for the future. Her stories were so rich that I often found myself feeling overwhelmed at the end of our meetings. I found it bewildering that a woman with such a traumatic past was now present at my side sharing her stories, and with such a serene and confident attitude about the future. How could she, and thus how could I, bridge the terror of her past with the reality of our present and, thence, with some form of grounded optimism for the future? How and why did she believe that "another world is possible," as the Witches state at the start of each of their performances? How and why could *I* believe that "another world is possible"?

Each time Alma shared her stories with me, it was as if I was watching a dramatic television series unfold, for I often stood next to her like an eager puppy or sat across from her quite literally on the edge of my seat, waiting to find out what would happen next. In her stories, well-known actors like Rigoberta Menchu, Jimmy Carter and José Efraín Ríos Montt all made appearances, thus adding a further element of drama and intensity. But unlike television dramas, or even historical accounts of the past (which in fact are not too unlike television dramas), Alma's stories had no definitive beginnings or ends. As I've argued with Jamileth, by virtue of Alma's rendering of the past through a specifically feminist lens, certain elements of her past continue to reach into the present, and perhaps future, tentacle-like as Das (2006) puts it, with no certainty of how the past will grasp onto the present and shape the future.

Like Jamileth, Alma focused her stories in the specifically gendered ways her past has unfolded. At the start of one interview, for example, I asked her to share with me what life was like for her as a child in Guatemala. I often phrased my inquiries to her in very open-ended terms, for I had quickly become familiar with her proclivity for offering many details, as well as her tendency to move quickly and seamlessly from one distinct story to the next. Also, Spanish siesta had just commenced for both of us and we had at least another two hours before either one of us would have to leave to pick up our child from school. But on this particular day, when I had simply asked her to tell me more about her childhood, she selected stories and revealed details that collectively represented more than a simple report of the past as some static object to be revisited; I see them as actively creating her present feminist identity and shaping her future.

She told me about how her participation in the Guatemalan Civil War began at the young age of 13, when she and other girls used their budding domestic skills to help the Robin Garcia student front provide food for peasants, who had come into the city from Quiche to denounce the

massacres in their towns. She explained that because her mother abandoned her and her sisters when she was six months old, and because her father died when she was four, her grandmother, who practiced her own version of a feminist ethic, raised Alma and her sisters. Alma explained her grandmother's influence on her by jokingly stating, "It's her fault." Because of her grandmother's tenacity, in the absence of brothers, uncles, fathers, and grandfathers whose lives were taken by the War, because of her grandmother's insistence that they care for the sick and elderly, and her insistence that her and her sisters' femininity resembled the skill and elegance of the Totanac women of Mexico, Alma grew into the staunchly progressive feminist that she considers herself today. And like her many aunts and grandmother, she learned how "to keep pressing forward."

Alma also recounted how when she was older, she worked with the Red Cross in Quiche to attend to the devastation caused in the northern rural area of Guatemala. As a result of the military-led government's "scorched earth campaign" – the effort to eradicate any and all resources useful to the leftist insurgency, including the people – she witnessed and attended to numerous horrific injuries and deaths. Following her work with Red Cross, she worked with *Tierra Viva*, a feminist organization that focuses on women's sexual and reproductive rights, and then with the Guatemalan National Organization of Widows (CONAVIGUA), helping not just widows, but all women within the indigenous Mayan community, who had been victims, or whose families had been victims, of the Guatemalan government's acts of extreme violence. According to the UN-sponsored Historical Clarification Commission (CEH), an estimated 200,000 people had been killed, for which government forces were largely responsible through acts of genocide and terror. A majority of those killed were Mayan. According to the Human

Rights Watch, government-sanctioned acts of terror included "keeping young women alive to be raped over the course of three days" ().

Alma's exposure to the horrors of gender-based violence was not limited to her work with the Red Cross, *Tierra Viva,* and CONAVIGA. She also shared the story of her niece who, starting at the age of 13, had been the victim of sexual abuse for several years, perpetrated by her stepfather. The man who professed to care for his stepdaughter and her mother also served as a high-ranking official within the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), which fought against the Guatemalan government. During the years he sexually abused his stepdaughter, he was also involved in the signing of the peace accords from 1996 to 2000. Because of the traumatic experience, the girl and her mother, with the help of Alma created an organization that would more systematically and aggressively address gender-based violence than what had been done up to that point in their country. According to Alma, *Fundación Sobrevivientes* has done incredible work.

In our many conversations, Alma referred often to her sister, Norma, and her organization, speaking very highly of their work. She would often say something along the lines of, "Her name is Norma Cruz, her organization is called *Fundación Sobrevivientes,* you should look her up," and she would say this many times as if she had not already spoken of her in a previous conversation. I see these numerous, laudable references to her sister, as well as later discussions about her desire to extend her sister's efforts in Spain as a Migrant Witch and Accomplice, as subtle yet nevertheless significant cracks in an otherwise inescapable narrative of incredible suffering and violence; cracks through which the possibilities for change may emerge. I argue that our exchange in the form of an interview, which prompted stories from a violent past and, in turn, assertions of the necessity for proactive work such as her sister's, can form the

ethical foundation for ongoing and future political work. As Keane has argued regarding ethical affordances, social interactions and the justifications they prompt are what "endow ethics with its historical character, something that endures beyond the momentary situation." Alma's rationalization and optimism emerge in explicit material form and, therefore, become more readily available for future social interactions or experiences that may require optimism and ethical justification.

Thus, in scavenging through her past, Alma does not highlight the traumatic events that have "made" her into who she is today, as in a Freudian psychoanalytic excavation of one's past to unearth the defining events of one's life. In bringing my attention to her specifically proactive, feminist efforts (Robin Garcia student group, Red Cross, *Tierra Viva*, CONAVIGUA, *Fundación Sobrevivientes*), Alma's narration reveals not a determining past, but an immanent future. She finds hope in her sister's efforts as well as her own.

Towards the end of the interview that afternoon, and after almost two hours of engaging stories, Alma stated:

> I tell you these things not because I read about them in a book. I have been the protagonist. Nobody told me what happened in the War in Guate and about the massacres, because I was there. I was there when the army [embarked on their mission] to massacre people, when helicopters shot down at people. I bathed in a river of blood, tending to all of the hundreds of wounded people, some of whom we were able to save. Nobody told me about the armed conflict. Since I had a memory, I knew something was happening, because it wasn't normal that we were woken up in the middle of the night and taken out to the patio. I always knew that we had to move from one house to another. I have been a protagonist.

It wasn't until much later that I could fully appreciate what Alma meant with her self-description as a "protagonist." At the time, I could certainly appreciate Alma's, as well as Jamileth's, recognition of their brand of feminism as having emerged directly from lived experiences and not studied theories. They are feminists "of the streets," for they were and are "there"; they were

there to see women killed, to help women overcome abuse, to bathe in a river of other people's blood. They were actors, not observers. And more importantly, as protagonists in stories of exploitation, misogyny and privation, they have worked aggressively towards countering any further experiences of suffering.

However, I've since then come to a slightly more nuanced understanding of her self-description as a "protagonist." In addition to her role as an activist, she is also a protagonist by virtue of her role as a narrator. In the act of narrating "past" events, she actively constitutes "*her*story" as an ongoing and ethically informed production, rather than *his*tory as an imposed and exclusive construction. As I've argued with Jamileth's stories, Alma's selective articulation of past events, her expressed optimism about the future, and her verbal affirmation of her present role as a protagonist are concrete continuations or elaborations of an ongoing story that challenges normative representations of past and present violence and exclusion. And by virtue of a narration that keep her stories alive and active, cracks or openings are formed in an otherwise oppressive and inescapable narrative, and new ethically grounded trajectories into the future are created. Her voice and *her*story have the capacty to make the invisible visible, the normal abnormal, and the impossible possible. As Deleuze writes: "History amounts only to the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to 'become,' that is, to create something new" (1995:171). Now as a protagonist and narrator, Alma's stories are not explanations of what "happened" in the past, but rather are dynamic articulations that allow her "to create something new."

Present: The Politics of las Brujas

I explained at the start of this chapter that the value and significance of *las Brujas'* work cannot be measured in terms of any immediate political gains accrued, but rather in their difference; in their disruption of "normal" or "proper" politics, established traditions, and popular beliefs. Their identity as Witches, a known iconoclastic figure, and their appropriation of the Christian litany provoke a reconsideration of what is "normal" and reveal the assumptions underlying historical and contemporary categories of normality. To be a witch is not to be depraved, but perhaps creative; to be religious is not to be righteous, but perhaps oppressive; and to be a woman is not to be an object, but a subject. With their unraveling of self-evident truths, or "that sort of portable encyclopedia from which opinions, communications and sociality draw their meaning" (Badiou 2013: 70), they begin to weave together their own stories, of which they may be the protagonists and narrators. Thus, it is with the exposure of limits and exclusions that alternatives and possibilities can be imagined. Kulynych (1997) writes:

> …performative resistance…reveals the existence of subjection where we had not previously seen it….We bring normativity to our performances as ethical principles that are themselves subject to resistance. By unearthing the contingency of the 'self-evident,' performative resistance enables politics (334).

Here, Kulynych utilizes the concept of performativity to counter traditional interpretations of the Foucauldian subject who is unable to resist because of the invasive and pervasive nature of disciplinary power (cf McCarthy 1990). With the concept of performative resistance, the resisting subject is brought into being; by virtue of performance, resistance and politics *become* possible.[69] As I've argued in a previous chapter, I move away from the concept of resistance in order to broaden the analytical scope to capture ideas of indeterminacy, "lines of flight,"

[69] As discussed in a previous chapter, Foucault's later work attends to the idea of self-creation through an ethic of care for the self; subjectivity is not already constituted or managed by subjugating technologies of power

possibility, negotiation and ethical struggle. However, what I take from Kulynych's concept of performative resistance is the emphasis on the enabling of politics through disruption; an "unearthing of the contingency of the self-evident." Politics then is the point at which the invisible or the unknown becomes visible and known, rather than the exercise of power by or between known and accepted elements. Politics *begins* with the introduction of the "illegitimate" and invisible; it is the means by which the invisible parts of the community can appear on stage and lay bare the workings of power and the injustices of existing political and social arrangements. To achieve change, one must begin with change. And as the marginalized, "bracketed" (Povinelli 2011), "void" (Badiou 2005) and "the missing people" (Deleuze 1997), *las Brujas* as migrant women present and embody this opportunity for change.

In addition to their presence as subjugated bodies in performative spaces, the Migrant Witches' language, both gestured and articulated, also present and enable opportunities for change. Habermas' theory of communicative action has challenged conventional understandings of politics as strategic, instrumental action (e.g. policymaking), and emphasizes the discursive and informal aspects of participation (Kulynych 1997). According to Habermas (1998), the public sphere is a "linguistically constituted public space" (361). It is neither an institution nor an organization. As a "communication structure," the opportunities for political participation are broadened. In this understanding of participation as discursive, the Migrant Witches' performances would not necessarily be construed then as a deviation from "standard" politics or incapable of political efficacy, for they too are involved in the diverse process of communicating and thematizing information. However, despite Habermas' ostensibly "more democratic" conceptualization of the public sphere, his emphasis on discourse does not necessarily resolve issues of exclusivity. Rather, according to many critics, his theory of communicative action,

with its emphasis on rationality, rules, and procedures, is inherently exclusive. With such a strict idealization of communication and participation – what he calls the "ideal speech situation" – his theory is necessarily premised on the exclusion of certain, *non*-ideal forms of interaction, expression and experience. For example, rational expression, spoken argumentation, and consensus are emphasized at the expense of expressive narratives, non-verbal forms of interaction, and heterogeneity (Braaten 1995; Chambers 1995; Gould 1996).

The Migrant Witches' use of humor, creativity, and affectation can, therefore, be seen as contravening ideal principles, rules and procedures. Their speech is evocative of culture, colored with metaphors and tropes, accompanied by gesture and eccentric costume, and verges on the absurd and impossible. Habermas would be hard-pressed to recognize the Migrant Witches' long plastic noses (one of which has a painfully obtrusive wart at the tip), regular use of expletives, and frequent cackles as falling within the bounds of the ideal speech situation. Yet, despite their difference and unconventionality, all these elements of their speech and performance have reached and influenced many women; women whom Spanish NGOs, labor unions and other "properly" political organizations, who rely on more standard communicative rules for establishing consensus, have not been able to reach or draw into their fold. Labor union representatives for example regularly complain about migrant women's lack of interest and participation in "politics" and blame them for their inability to escape the oppression they criticize. However, what the Migrant Witches make clear with their disruptive political practices, is that "politics" is not the space and means by which equality and justice are achieved, but is itself a space and procedure that needs to be transformed.

Alicia recited the Witches' final petition of their litany that afternoon:

> Saint Sword, hope should not die looking at the chaos and destruction of the dignified life of millions of citizens, we should act, creating the changes for a new, inhabitable world.

With these words, Alicia's past experiences with war and suffering are given a present ethical resolution, yet also offer uncertainty and possibility. As will be made more clear in the following section, her words are like a "mobile mirror," for there is an "indivisible unity of an actual image and its virtual image" (2005: 76). There is a fusion of a traumatic past and an active present with hints of an unknown future.

Alicia

Unfortunately, I did not first meet Alicia until close to the end of my time in Spain. Because of our late introduction to one another, I didn't have many opportunities to converse with her and to become as intimately familiar with her past in El Salvador or her present experiences in Spain, as I had with Alma and Jamileth. With the few exchanges we did have while I was in Madrid, in addition to our continued exchanges online in the months immediately after I left the field, we were nevertheless able to develop a relationship of trust. As with many of the other women I worked with, it seemed effortless to establish a relationship with Alicia. In meeting these women for the first time, there were immediate feelings of comfort and affection. Whether such intimacy can be attributed to some generalizable quality of cultural affability, shared feminist strivings for solidarity, a mutual experience of foreignness in Spain, or some combination of these and other factors, I can confidently attest to these women's consistently warm reception, their patient responses to my constant queries, their generous efforts to include me in their social gatherings, and their kind disregard of my linguistic blunders and American idiosyncrasies (such as my persistent attention to time).

Prior to meeting Alicia for the first time, Alma and Jamileth had spoken of Alicia often, usually to remark on her delicious *pupusas*, which she sold on an informal basis to help support herself financially, and to remind me of my need to interview her. "Aidyn, you have to meet with Alicia," they'd say. "She's a special woman with an incredible story." Of course, I was intrigued by their insistence and the few alluring details they offered. However, Alicia and I were unable to connect for several months. In the period that we tried to meet, I tried to get more information from Jamileth and Alma about Alicia, but they both always responded in the same fashion – "You have to ask her yourself." Their reticence was maddening, but drew me in further. "Why would they not tell me about her?" I wondered. It was not until I returned to the U.S. that I finally understood Jamileth's and Alma's discretion and their deference to Alicia's desires about how her story should be told.

Alicia is originally from El Salvador. Like Jamileth and Alma, her country's history includes significant social inequality, years of economic austerity programs, and a civil war involving government-sanctioned (and U.S. supported) terror-tactics and gross violations of human rights. And like Jamileth and Alma, Alicia became intimately familiar with gender-based violence prior to her migration abroad. However, unlike Jamileth and Alma, Alicia was a direct victim of sexual assault. She explained:

> I was raped numerous times, and in the worst ways that you can't even imagine. I don't even know how many of them were there, nor what their faces looked like. I was 26 years old. I was a prisoner in a very small and dark cell. I didn't even know if it was day or night, I only remember that there were a lot of them, and they were there all the time. This, this you never forget, you carry this memory with you until you die.

Alicia did not offer more details about this experience, nor did she need to. With just these few lines, I was immediately made aware of many things. My eyes were opened to the horrors of war, the tenacity of Alicia's spirit, the significance of the bonds between Jamileth, Alma and

Alicia given their many striking commonalities, and the necessity of their political work as Migrant Witches and Accomplices. Thus, although our discussion of this particular event from Alicia's past was brief, I could imagine how it has continued to unfold throughout her life, given what I already knew about her work as a Migrant Witch and her commitment towards ending gender violence. As with Jamileth and Alma, I could imagine the possibilities created through moments of ethical reckoning, wherein such a poignant experience and its narration to others and/or herself provide the ethical motivation behind certain political projects or pronouncements of political conviction. Thus, with her statement, "you carry this memory with you until you die," we can think of memories not as perfect reproductions of events that *happened* in the past, but as dynamic productions of possibilities for the future. This memory that Alicia will "carry" with her, may traverse through public performances, street demonstrations, organizational meetings, or even dissertation theses, and thus "carry" with it, myriad possibilities.

Present: Three Accomplices

I end this chapter with a brief story of one surprisingly "productive" afternoon I spent with Jamileth, Alma and Alicia, for it captures several of the points I have been making regarding these three women's present political efforts. Jamileth had invited me to join her and the others in Alicia's home to "eat and work." She explained that she wanted to work on her latest brainchild, *Cómplice,* or "Accomplice" and she wanted my help. I was, of course, more than excited to help her and the others and, in effect, become one of their "accomplices." Moreover, I knew that interactions with these women were always entertaining and uplifting, so I was certainly not going to pass up the opportunity.

I arrived at the metro stop for Alicia's neighborhood at approximately two o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, and as I ascended the escalator to emerge onto the quiet and peaceful streets of her neighborhood, I remember feeling skeptical about the "work" we would accomplish that day. Sundays were a hallowed time for leisure and rest in Spain, so the thought of political work on a Sunday seemed unfitting. As I walked towards Alicia's apartment, I found no children playing in the parks, elderly strolling on the sidewalks, taxi cabs buzzing down the road, or fruit vendors stocking their front-of-the-store wares. Rather, I could imagine families and friends gathered inside homes and restaurants, lingering over meals and engrossed in conversation, an experience I knew would likely last all afternoon, as was often the case with the Spanish weekend *comida,* ("lunch"). So I was not necessarily hopeful about what the four of us would accomplish that day.

After struggling for several minutes with the apartment building's defective buzzer, I entered Alicia's flat on the eighth floor to find Jamileth, Alma, and a woman I had not yet met, sitting in the living room. After greeting each other with kisses, and introductions with their Mexican friend, Susanna, everyone shuffled places on the sofas and chairs to make room for me. We proceeded to fill the next hour and a half with conversation that was at once entertaining, informative and provocative. We discussed miscellaneous topics, including my "endearing" American accent, my sweet daughter, whose many pictures on my phone I was more than willing to share, suggestions for Alicia who was presently unemployed, and the fear of dying alone in a foreign country in the absence of one's family. Soon, as our hunger pangs started to beckon us towards the kitchen, we proceeded to the small space of Alicia's kitchen, where we watched her make her specialty item, *pupusas,* a traditional Salvadoran dish made of a thick corn tortilla filled with beans, cheese, and/or meat. Although we offered to help Alicia with the preparation,

we were ultimately too busy drinking our boxed red wine and *Estrella Damm* beers, and discussing the implications of being unemployed as a migrant in Spain. As soon as the *pupusas* were ready, we shuffled back into the living room, where we settled back onto the sofas and excitedly devoured our *pupusas*. Despite the back-and-forth movement between the living room and the kitchen, the affable and spirited tenor of our conversation remained strong.

Although the four hours I ended up spending with these women in Alicia's apartment seemed to match my slightly romanticized image of the Spanish weekend meal and *sobremesa* – roughly translated as, "the time spent after lunch or dinner, talking to the people with whom you shared the meal" – the experience did not match my expectations for the work I thought we would accomplish. However uplifting that afternoon was, I remember specifically discussing *Cómplice* only for a few minutes, specifically in terms of the difference between a vision and a mission statement. Jamileth needed to prepare a business plan for a potential funder interested in the work of *Cómplice*, and needed our input. Thus, although I felt grateful for my time with them, I also left Alicia's home feeling disappointed that we had not produced anything substantial, such as an actual business plan, with which to move forward.

According to Jamileth, part of the purpose of *Cómplice* is to address the current minimal participation amongst migrant women in grassroots political activity. According to Jamileth, many migrant women are not politically active because of misconceptions about what "political" work entails and the inconvenience of getting involved, particularly given the lack of correspondence between domestic workers' long and demanding work schedules, and the times at which strikes, marches, and organizational meetings are often held. Thus, in Jamileth's vision, *Cómplice's* "meetings" would be held at times and in locations convenient for migrant women, where and when these women were comfortable and available; this may mean meeting in bars,

Alma's living room (as she had already been doing) or in a park. And during their meetings, they would discuss the issues relevant and important for these women; they would make personal what is political, and political what is personal. That is, as I discussed in the previous chapter with the work of *Territorio Doméstico* and their ethical practices of care, the line typically drawn between the personal and political would be erased, and the two conventionally distinct categories would be fused, such that a truly grounded and inspired form of politics could be articulated and effected.

Moreover, the name of the project, *Cómplice,* or "Accomplice," is inspired by their idea of political work – giving attention to what is "personal" for these women, or issues that are otherwise unknown and dismissed. Despite feminists' long-standing arguments against women's categorical association with the personal sphere, or exclusive dissociation from the public sphere, including politics, migrant women's issues remain relegated to the *non*-sphere of activity, neither occupying space within Spanish women's realm of personal issues, nor in Spanish men's world of politics. Thus, with my earlier argument of politics as that which brings the invisible, or the normalized abnormal, to light, then as "accomplices," together they bring attention to the "non-issues," or what they believe to be the truly grievous crimes. For example, living and working in a foreign country without documentation does not constitute a crime from their ethical standpoint, particularly vis-à-vis the rape, exploitation, social marginalization and political disenfranchisement that afflict migrant women. Thus, as with their appropriation of the figure of a witch, their utilization of the notion, "accomplice" seeks to make visible a contradiction that remains unnoticed and "normal"; in this case, the vilification of an innocent individual, such as an undocumented migrant who moves abroad to support one's family, and the simultaneous dismissal or normalization of the exploitation, disenfranchisement, or rape of that same

individual. And nor can the simultaneity of these experiences be considered an unexpected coincidence, for it is precisely the vilification or process of othering that enables the exploitation of these women, as I discussed in Chapter One. As accomplices, then, these women strive to inspire women to question everything, to problematize the "normal," and reconstruct what it means to be a "crime," a "criminal" and an "accomplice," as *they* see it.

Although I was initially skeptical about that afternoon's experience, later and more thoughtful reflections reveal a different analysis. Instead of relying upon the traditional theories of social mobilization and politics, and assumptions about causality, efficacy and productivity, as I had during my fieldwork, I now approach that experience from their perspective; in terms of politics as ethical practice. Moving away from these earlier assumptions, I'm now able to better appreciate their work as Witches and Accomplices that afternoon in Alicia's home (which resembled other get-togethers as Witches and Accomplices on different occasions in terms of shared meals and coffee, and long, congenial conversations). Their care and support for one

another, as evidenced by, for example, their sincere interest in one another's current concerns (i.e. unemployment and distance from one's family), and the simple sharing of a meal, can be seen as the basis of their "work." Their ability to offer each other encouragement and security is what Honneth (1995) would identify as essential for recognition and, hence, justice. Through the development of self-confidence and self-respect, as facilitated by moral responsibility and solidarity, one can more adequately pursue her political goals and desires (Honneth 1995). Or, as Jamileth put it, with the support of "other crazy women like me," one is better positioned to "do crazy things."

Moreover, Chaloupka argues that it is precisely at the margins that "the actual force of the demonstration resides, no matter what happens at the microphone…[T]he outrages and improprieties, more than the speeches and carefully coherent position papers" is the work of politics (1993: 157). I, therefore, use this story to exemplify an alternative understanding of "productivity" and politics. We can see what these women do not just as a critical undoing of the oppressive and disciplinary forms of structural violence and biopolitical governance, but also as a critical doing, the creation of supportive bonds that enable them to "question everything" and to believe "that another world is possible." While the condition of womanhood is what underlies experiences of exploitation, abuse and manipulation, as they remind their audiences, it is also their womanhood that is the source of "empowerment and sorority." An ethical perspective then allows us to see that invention is the other potent half of ethical practice, which includes problematization. Politics is not simply where and how equality is achieved, but is itself the standard that is need of transformation.

A few days after our get-together that afternoon in Alicia's home, Alma and I met for a walk. In our conversation, she described to me how incredible she thought it was that she, Alicia and Jamileth had "found one another," given their similar backgrounds with war and gender violence, as well as their presently shared political convictions. And because of the poignancy of the overlap in their experiences, she said she thought it would be great if someone wrote a book to capture their stories. She stated: "In the past we shared guns, now we share things of this apron." Although I initially found her comment to be amusing because of the seeming absurdity of such a transition from "guns" to "aprons," I was able to later find greater significance in her juxtaposition. Specifically, while the transition between the two can be seen as quite stark, from "guns" to "aprons," its singularity is precisely what demonstrates the unpredictability of the future, and the myriad possibilities that can emerge, even where the *impossibilities* seem to abound.

Moreover, as Alma spoke of the extraordinary nature of their backgrounds and the seemingly fortuitous intersection of their paths, I could not help but share the same thoughts regarding my encounter with them. The intimacy I felt with each of them, some similarities in our past and present experiences, and the inspiration their stories have offered me, all seemed to also come together in a poignant way. With their performances as Witches and their individual narrations of past and present experiences, I could only imagine how the potency of their words might translate into possibilities *for me*; how their words could offer the material foundation for a future still unknown.

CONCLUSION

Throughout my time in the field, I often struggled with understanding the nature of my contributions, if any, as an anthropologist; a not uncommon, self-reflexive struggle for many ethnographers. As we live and work over an extended period of time with groups living on the margins of society, both local and global, we often become actively involved in the conflicts and endeavors that we initially experience as a mere intellectual exercise. As anthropologists, we're able to move beyond the sterility of our own theoretical constructs, and the veneer of statistical numbers, headline news and bureaucratic categories, to see the intricacies of human life as performed, desired, imagined, grieved, discriminated, exploited, diseased, transformed, celebrated, empowered and becoming. As we become intimately familiar with the lives of others as actually *and* possibly lived, we find more nuanced and even transformative ways to share and engage in the experiences of others. Yet it is precisely these connections and intimacy, this movement from the conceptual to the visceral, that lead to the uncertainty and frustrations about how to remain committed and engaged to a cause that is no longer within the reach of our willing hands and the stride of our eager steps. I knew that once I left the field and all its vitality and inspiration, I would have to transfer my energy and dedication to writing a dissertation, and that this dissertation would have to translate any prior desires to help drive change, into something "of value" for the women with whom I worked. But I had yet to understand how an academic treatise on migrant women's experiences could ultimately be "of value" for a distant group whose lives are marked by material instability and urgency. Or perhaps, would I have to temper what might be romantic expectations of the value of my dissertation?

While each woman I interviewed and worked with contributed a unique and valuable perspective to my own evolving understanding of female migrant domestic workers' experiences in Spain, Alicia's story (the last of the three Migrant Witches I address in the previous chapter) resonated with me in a particularly powerful way. Her brief, yet profound story of rape helped me to realize that my dissertation was not going to be *for them*, but rather *for me*. Also a survivor of rape, I too consider myself a protagonist whose reflections on the past can similarly generate ethical insight into the possibilities of an unknown yet pliable future. I had been focused on the question of how I could make a contribution to their work, based on my own sense of ethical responsibility and a shared commitment to countering various forms of gender-based violence. I have also been heavily influenced by the compelling and well-meaning talk of a form of anthropology that is engaged, accountable, and transformative. The diversity of descriptors such as public, public-interest, engaged, activist, applied, militant, and advocacy attest to the importance of an anthropology that moves beyond its traditional tasks of empirical study and theoretical elaboration. I, therefore, gallantly assumed the responsibility of using my work to help others, utilizing the usual justification that we, as critical theorists, can give voice to those who are voiceless and disenfranchised. After all, as anthropologists, we have the capacity to discern, listen to and expose stories that typically fall between the cracks.

However, I have come to realize that many of these women, such as the Migrant Witches, are not voiceless, and that there are many who are in fact listening to them, including myself. As protagonists and authors of a distinct story, they have created their own brand of feminist politics that centers on relationships, solidarity, and responsibility. I don't claim that they do not face incredible bureaucratic, legal and social hurdles as migrant women, but I do recognize that they possess a distinct and respectable form of political acumen, ethical care, and individual tenacity

that does not require my theoretical elaborations for them to continue moving forward, *a sacar adelante* as they put it. It is their *ethical* elaborations that ultimately help me to continue moving forward.

My acknowledgement of the value of my dissertation as determined primarily by my own personal (i.e. not strictly academic) appropriation of it (e.g. how I utilize the normative ideas that have emerged for my own political projects), does not minimize the potential of an applied, public, engaged, militant, etc. anthropology in other contexts. Nor am I advocating a self-interested approach to doing anthropology. Rather, I simply recognize *their* contributions to my political work and offer a candid and pragmatic consideration of the very personal ways in which theory can be bridged with politics.

Thus, having focused so intently on what *my* potential contributions might be, I overlooked how these women have helped me; how their knowledge and experiences give life to my own words; how their ethical "reckonnections" shared during interviews may continue to resonate in my own work as an activist, reminding me, for example, to always question everything. And as I narrate my past experiences with these women in this present dissertation, I too am forced to consider and justify, for myself as well as for my dissertation committee, my inclusion of certain past experiences and the role they play in the present and imminent future. In the process of my narration and justification, like Jamileth and Alma, certain ethical insights have emerged and political commitments have been strengthened; these are developments in my own personal and ongoing story, in which ethnography has played an important role.

Hay Que Cambiar el Chip ("We have to Change how We Think"): Ethical and Analytical Problematization

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that these women's particular practice of politics can be seen as a form of ethical practice, for it involves the problematization or visibilization of experiences otherwise treated as "normal." And with problematization, there is the possibility for revisionary understandings and experiences. I make a similar argument regarding the intellectual exercise of analytical problematization. Specifically, in this dissertation I have problematized the conventional epistemological emphasis on actuality and have argued for an emphasis on possibility. With this shift, I have been able to better understand and appreciate experiences and visions otherwise overlooked or dismissed as utopic, improbable, ineffective or unconventional. Thus, it is precisely this ability to problematize as analysts, to look beyond conventional theory and accepted models, that enables the possibility for new or revisionary thinking. By bringing attention to what is unknown, misunderstood or dismissed, or by "questioning everything," as the Migrant Witches insist, we open up the possibilities for understanding the world in which we live. Without problematization, then, ethical or analytical (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive), we are unable to move beyond the ideas and beliefs that have been normalized and sedimented in our familiar and doxic world of norms, legal code, language, and theory.

Leaving the conceptual space open to possibilities, then, necessarily implies a rhizomatic approach to knowledge, or the apprehension of reality or "culture" according to the fluidity, creativity, emergence, boundlessness, contingency, and contradictions that characterize it. While the emphasis on the contingent, historical and fluid is certainly evident in current socio-cultural anthropology, there is still the tendency to approach knowledge as that which is progressively formed. That is, while we may recognize the fluid, emergent and historical particularities of

distinct ethnographic realities, there is still the assumption that general knowledge forms by way of progressive accretion; that what we learn from distinct ethnographic cases will "add" to a progressively more complete form of knowledge, such as the current knowledge in the literature on social movements, gender or migration. And, although we may reject notions of "truth," or a perfect form of knowledge, we nevertheless seem to strive to approximate it. We tend towards the belief that with a certain amount of computation (e.g. statistical probability) and theorizing, we can develop more rigorous models and definitive conclusions, as I had assumed at the start of my fieldwork.

However, what I have been arguing for with a shift in emphasis from actuality to possibility, is not the rejection of empirical evidence and the complete refusal of any appeal to validity or method, but rather, the capacity to expand our imagination, to leave ourselves open to "the most insane creation of concepts ever seen or heard" (Deleuze 1968: xix). Thus, in our approach to unknown futures, rather than begin with or rely solely on known actualities to structure our imagination, we should allow our or others' imagination to structure our knowledge. As Deleuze (2004) puts it, "reason is always a region carved out of the irrational – not sheltered from the irrational at all, but traversed by it…" (262). Therefore, I do not abandon any effort to facilitate productive forms of analysis; rather, I seek to expand the kinds of productive analyses we can generate.

For example, although I explore "crisis" as discourse, or as a political tool and social construction, I do not reduce the suffering, instability and injustice that both Spanish and female migrants experience to mere representation; as detached from any referent in "reality." As I

argued in Chapter Two, I see their suffering as "real."[70] Thus, although my aim is not to produce a more accurate or "real" account of suffering (in order, for example, to determine which form of suffering – Spanish or migrant – deserves more or less ethico-political attention and action), I nevertheless recognize the possibility for productive analysis. That is, I argue that although a purely epistemic criterion of demarcation between better and worse accounts of suffering (or between the best and the worst) is impossible, given the deep archaeological layers at which discourses operate as Foucault has argued, one analysis can be better than another in its capacity to expand our imagination as researchers, useful for the particular historical and cultural circumstances in which we produce our knowledge. As Alcoff (2002) states, "social struggle requires us to be able to say one account is better than another." Thus, while it is important to acknowledge that historical context, subjectivity, power and discourse contribute to the organization and representation of experience, it is also important to recognize that our analyses (notwithstanding their own discursive basis), can help facilitate productive academic discussions and, perhaps, the possibility for effective political action. Our knowledge may not need to "aim towards" truth or knowledge that is ultimate and complete, but it may at least move, in rhizomatic fashion, "away from" the merely subjective (Alcoff 2001: 842). By remaining open to the unconventional and seemingly impossible, and thereby expand our imaginations, we can recognize political ideas and normative frameworks as potentially productive and useful for the current historical moment, such as these women's ideas about how ethical care can revolutionize

[70] As I state on page 89 of Chapter Two, "I see their suffering as 'real' in the phenomenological sense of privileging the lived, embodied experience of the individual; in a Marxist perspective that views suffering and inequality as historically and materially situated within an oppressive economic order and set of relations; and as a critical theorist who recognizes that social inequality in fact undermines the well-being of many."

currently enervating social and political practices. By remaining open to others' insight and knowledge, however "crazy," we ourselves remain open to possibility.

Ever-Recurring Possibilities

I close this dissertation with reference to some discoveries I made about Jamileth, after my time in the field, through an online search. I was curious to learn more about her, and her pragmatism and humility did not lend to full disclosures of the magnitude of her work as an activist. She had mentioned to me that a documentary titled, "The Jungle Radio," was made about her program, *la Bruja Mensajera* ("the Messenger Witch"), which she had developed in her hometown in Nicaragua. I had the opportunity to watch the film while in Madrid. In my online search, I learned that her program, *la Bruja Mensajera,* had earned significant praise, both locally and internationally. It not only had caught the attention of the German film Director, Sussane Jagger, but the film itself received international acclaim with several awards, including First Prize at the Espiello VIII Film Festival in 2010, the International Federation for Human Rights Prize in the 2010 Freedom Festival, and Special Mention at the Hague's Movies that Matter Festival of 2011.

I also learned in my online search that well-known Uruguayan writer and activist, Eduardo Galeano featured Jamileth's innovative and bold work with the Messenger Witch in his book, *Mirrors: Stories of Almost Everyone,* which is a compilation of vignettes that collectively challenges accepted views of history, as told by those typically unseen and forgotten by history. As Galeano writes: "Official history has it that Vasco Núñez de Balboa was the first man to see, from a summit in Panama, the two oceans at once. Were the people who lived there blind?" Thus, following what has become a truism regarding the "fictive" construction of history by the

victors, Galeano writes with the vanquished in mind, referring to individuals such as Jamileth, whose experiences remain invisible and whose voices have been silenced. In the vignette dedicated to Jamileth, he describes the work of the Messenger Witch with the following:

> Radio Paiwas was born in the heart of Nicaragua on the eve of the twenty-first century. The early morning program attracts the largest audience. The Messenger Witch, heard by thousands of women, frightens thousands of men. The witch introduces women to friends they have never met, including one named Pap Smear and an old lady named Constitution. And she talks to them about their rights, "zero tolerance for violence in the street, in the home, and in bed too," and she asks them: "How did it go last night? How did he treat you? Did it feel good or was it a little forced?"

He goes on to allude to the necessity of her program, given the blind eye that police have turned towards instances of gender violence. Instead of responding to complaints, "the police are busy chasing cow thieves, and a cow is worth more than a woman" (2009: 348).

I see both the film and Galeano's account as part of the ongoing production of possibilities; as part of the experience of becoming. I mention these two events not to offer a functionalist interpretation of the efficacy of Jamileth's strategies and, thus, establish lines of causality between her efforts in the past and these "successful" outcomes. Rather, my purpose is to reinforce the importance of remaining open to possibility, which I was not readily able to do in the early part of my fieldwork. Had I maintained a stance of skepticism, and pragmatically dismissed the visions and efforts of women such as Jamileth, I would not have been able to recognize the rich and generative quality of their creativity, initiative and relationality, through which many trajectories have been cultivated. Thus, with an eye towards possibility as primordial and productive, we can see *la Bruja Mensajera,* not as an event that happened, but as that which continues to happen, as manifest in *las Brujas Migrantes,* "The Jungle Radio," *Mirrors,* and now *The Politics of Possibility and Migrant Feminist Ethics of Care.* As I have

been able to recognize the possibilities that can emerge from Jamileth's work, so too can I recognize the possibilities immanent in this dissertation.

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