

*The Migrant Protagonists in Ignacio del Moral's La Mirada del Hombre Oscuro and José Moreno Arenas' La Playa*

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**Abstract**

The constant movement of populations in the search of better living conditions has been observed since the early days of the human history. In recent decades Europe has been facing an ongoing migratory wave that has been shifting the social, political, cultural and economic dynamics of its countries. Spain has experienced the impact of this movement by accepting migrants from Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. In an effort to better portray the migratory situation in the Iberian Peninsula, Spanish playwrights stage characters who are either torn by stereotypes confronting the unknown Other or who turn their back to the cruel reality of drowned bodies. Ignacio del Moral in *La Mirada del hombre oscuro* (1991) and José Moreno Arenas in *La playa* (2004) give their Spanish characters sharp and provocative language while they question their judgement toward the Other. The migrant characters of both plays remain silent, immobile and unable to react or communicate with the Spaniards. This presentation aims to discuss the silence and immobility of migrant characters and portray how they become the point of reference and overpower the protagonists. José Moreno Arenas and Ignacio del Moral invite the audience/reader to reflect upon the accuracy of certain judgements toward the Other, to reexamine the way each one of us perceive ourselves and the ones around us and to gain a better understanding of what common humanity embraces.

Keywords: Immigration, silence, drowned, beach, Africa, theater, stereotypes.

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## Introduction

The movement of migrant populations to the Iberian Peninsula has been of special interest in Spanish theater since the end of 1980's (Doll, 17). Spain became member of the European Union in January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1986 fact that had a positive impact on its economy. Numerous employment opportunities attracted immigrants from Africa, Latin America and European countries who came with the hope to find a job and a better life. As seen in Figure 1 in January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001 there were 1.3 million registered foreigners and in 2010 5.7 million, a number that represents an increase of 319%. According to the National Center of Statistics Spain went from having a migrant population of 2% in 2002 to approximately 12% in 2011. Figure 2 depicts the countries of origin of the migrant population as by 2012. The largest number of European immigrants comes from Romania. Morocco is the African country with the most immigrant representation due to its proximity with Spain. As it is expected and due to the common language and religion, there is also a large representation of Latin Americans with first being the citizens of Ecuador followed by those of Colombia.



Figure 1: Immigration in Spain 2001- 2010.<sup>I</sup>



Figure 2: Immigrants' counties of origin (2012).<sup>II</sup>

<sup>I</sup> Source: <http://www.ine.es/>

<sup>II</sup> Source: <http://migracioneseuropeas.com/inmigrantes-en-espana-de-la-acogida-a-la-comunion>

In the two plays to be discussed in this presentation, *La Mirada del hombre oscuro* written by Ignacio del Moral (1957 -) in 1991 and *La playa* written by José Moreno Arenas (1954-) in 2004, the migrant characters are Africans. They either do not speak at all or they speak in their native language, which does not allow them to communicate with the Spaniards. In both cases the Spanish characters describe the immigrants as dangerous, uneducated and poor in values. This rejection results from an ongoing fear of the Other. The Spaniards not only are unable to speak the language of Other but they also hesitate to come closer to get to know them better. Their attitude is historically justified. During most part of the twentieth century and until 1975 when Franco passed away, Spain due to its political and economic situation, was not attracting immigrants and therefore Spaniards did not get exposed to people of other ethnicities. The migrant wave forced the Spanish society to reconsider its homogeneity that until that time was promoted massively by the Franco regime (Doll, 19). They became ethnocentric and in their first encounter with the Other they applied all types of stereotypes to deliver racist and xenophobic statements. The presence of new ethnicities in the Iberian Peninsula inevitably led to radical changes that triggered interracial relationships, cultural and linguistic influences and above all, ways of understanding or rejecting the differences that the “Other” entailed.

It is for this reason that this presentation aims to draw the attention to the silent migrant protagonists who become the receivers of unfair and false accusations without being given the right to talk and defend themselves. From a humanistic point of view, the literarily or metaphorically silent African immigrants from victims and secondary class people (a per the description of the Spanish characters) become the point of reference. They represent the whole migrant body. Despite their silence they either explicitly stand up against any type of discrimination using their own words and acting for themselves, or they implicitly invite readers and audience to evaluate the Spaniards’ spiteful and condescending comments.

### **Migratory Policies**

To better understand the social context within which the plays were written, it is imperative to outline the Spanish government’s actions upon the arrival of migrant populations. The first initiative was taken in 1994 when the Minister Council (Consejo de Ministros) approved a plan called *Plan para la integración social de los inmigrantes* (Plan for the social integration of the immigrants). Its aim was to assess the constant movement of immigrants and help them integrate into the Spanish society. There was not a certain budget to support the plan and as such all actions were monitored by the *Observatorio Permanente de Migraciones* (Permanent Observatory of Migrations) and the *Foro para la Integración Social* (Forum for the Social integration).<sup>III</sup>

In 2000 the Interior Ministry presented the plan *Programa común de regulación y coordinación de la extranjería e inmigración*, (Common Program of regulation and coordination of immigration policy and movement), better known as *Plan Greco*, based

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<sup>III</sup> Source: [https://elpais.com/diario/1994/12/03/espana/786409207\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/1994/12/03/espana/786409207_850215.html)

on the following four principles: First the migratory wave should be seen holistically under the global tendencies and as a phenomenon that was welcome to Spain. Second, promote the integration of foreign residents with measures such as improvement of the procedures for citizenship, same rights in employment conditions, care for vulnerable immigrants and resistance against any type of discriminatory, racist and xenophobic actions. Third monitor the migrant wave to guarantee the balanced coexistence of immigrants and Spaniards in the Iberian Peninsula. Fourth maintain the protective system of refugees and displaced populations.<sup>IV</sup> In September 23, 2011 the Spanish Ministry Cabinet approved the *Plan Estratégico de Ciudadanía e Integración* (Strategic Plan of Citizenship and Integration), simply called PECEI.<sup>V</sup> Based on launching programs and informative seminars for the protection of human rights the program focused on equality and not discrimination, citizenship and intercultural understanding.

In September 27, 2013 and in an effort to overcome recession Spain implemented the *International Mobility Section of the Entrepreneurial Support and Internationalization Act* that was amended in 2015 and it is currently in effect. Its main objective is to attract professionals and highly skilled immigrants to “increase the competitiveness of the Spanish economy and the ability of Spanish companies to compete in a global environment”. This “transformed Spain's management of immigration... [as] ... in previous years, migration had focused on meeting the needs of a labor-intensive job market, often unqualified.” The plan is proved to be vital for the Spanish economy as “the investment generated by all categories over the next five years is expected to reach EUR 694 million and generate around 12,685 new jobs (8,581 direct and 4,104 indirect).”<sup>VI</sup>

The budget for the implementation of above plans is of great interest. From 308,5 million euros that was in 2009 it dropped to 166 million euros in 2010 result of the economic crisis. In 2014 it was 139,89 million euros, still affected by the crisis and for 2017 it will be increased to 373, 35 million euros. It is estimated to reach 428,35 million dollars thanks to funds from the European Union.<sup>VII</sup>

## **Plot synopsis**

In *La Mirada del hombre oscuro* del Moral situates the action in a beach in the south of Spain. It is in south Spain because African immigrants board in Morocco to enter the Iberian Peninsula by boat, since the distance between Spain and Morocco is only fourteen km. In the play a Spanish family of four, the parents and their two kids, looks for shells in the beach. Their Daughter, encounters Ombasi, an African immigrant who arrived to the Spanish territory by sea, illegally. Alone, as his friend who was with him drowned, tired

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<sup>IV</sup> Source: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2001-8154>.

<sup>V</sup> Source: [http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/destacados/Open\\_to\\_talent.pdf](http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/destacados/Open_to_talent.pdf)

<sup>VI</sup> Source:

[http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/destacados/Report\\_on\\_the\\_Implementation\\_of\\_the\\_International\\_Mobility\\_Section.pdf](http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/destacados/Report_on_the_Implementation_of_the_International_Mobility_Section.pdf).

<sup>VII</sup> Source: <http://www.laregioninternacional.com/articulo/espana/presupuesto-secretaria-general-inmigracion-emigracion-asciende-373-35-millones-euros-2017/20170427133827252475.html>

and afraid he hopes for the Spaniard's mercy and help. He talks to the family to explain his situation but because he speaks in his native language the communication fails leaving him practically mute. From that point on constant misunderstandings, false stereotypes and misleading beliefs deepen the cultural and linguistic gap between the two parties. By the end of the play the fear conquers the Spanish family. The Father refuses to get Ombasi in his car and acts violently against him. Ombasi reacts the same way confused by the Father's erratic behavior. At the last scene the dead body of his drowned friend appears on stage, foresees the future and informs the Daughter about each characters' fate. The Father after the fight will get blind from one eye. His wife and kids will abandon him. Ombasi will be taken by the Guardia Civil and will die sometime later by pneumonia. The "other side" that was so promising and in which, according to him, nobody would risk to die by pneumonia due to the high quality of health system, will be the one to condemn him to death.

Although Ombasi speaks in his native language, Ignacio del Moral writes the text, including Ombasi's lines, in Spanish as this is the only way for the readers to understand the plot. However, in the movie *Bwana* (1996) which is based on the play, Ombasi speaks indeed in his native language. This helps the viewer to better sense the frustration and misunderstandings of the language barrier and become compassionate for Ombasi, whom the Spanish family sees as an intruder and predator.

In the one act play *La Playa*, Moreno Arenas also chooses as a setting a beach in south Spain. The play is a soliloquy of a Spanish beachgoer toward an immobile African immigrant, who lays on the beach silent but he never shows up on stage. The Spaniard intends to initiate a dialogue with him, ("con alguien que-se supone- descansa sobre la arena" = with someone who is supposedly is resting on the sand) (Moreno Arenas, 137). He does not know that he is an immigrant and that, as at the end of the play is revealed, he has drowned. Despite the lack of response, the Spaniard starts a long soliloquy, a "perorata= boring speech" actually in which he gradually unfolds his bitter sentiments towards immigrants.

In a provocative way he insists that all his accusations have nothing racist and xenophobic: "Yo no soy racista" = "I am not a racist" repeats over and over. Using the same false stereotypes and calling the immigrants uneducated, dangerous and unfit for Spain, the beachgoer gradually reveals surprising personal information. An immigrant himself somewhere in Europe many decades ago, he claims to have been a person of good quality, unlike the today's immigrants. This is a reference to the massive migratory wave of Spaniards in the twentieth century toward western Europe and Latin America. Soler- Espiauba explains that during the twentieth century more than seven million people left Spain to look for a job and they never returned.<sup>VIII</sup>

"A lo largo del siglo XX más de siete millones de personas salieron de España para buscar trabajo y muchas no regresaron más" (Soler-Espiauba, 7).

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<sup>VIII</sup> For further information, refer to the documentary *El tren de memoria* (2005), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xgeGuPmhTs>

He respected the country to which he went because he did not enter it illegally at night and he did not steal nobody's job. His soliloquy is a direct attack against every immigrant, result of the superficial understanding he has of the Other and what this entails.

### **Motifs and themes**

In theater language is the main mean of communication between characters. It is also the mean for them to outline a picture of others or of themselves, doing the so called explicit self-presentation (Pfister, 124). The characters' speech in *La Playa* and *La Mirada del hombre oscuro* indeed reveals not only details about themselves but also about how the other characters are. In both plays however the "other characters" refer collectively only to one main character, the Other, which represents the whole migrant body of people having fled their countries looking for a better future. The expressive function of speech needs to be understood as a mutual exchange of information based on the same language. This is not the case of speech in *La Mirada del hombre oscuro* because Ombasi by not speaking Spanish, he cannot be understood nor communicate. This does not apply to *La Playa* either because it is a soliloquy.

However, the restriction in correspondence between language and characters can be substituted by non-verbal devices that could still be informative in nature (Pfister, 120). Such a substitution is partially observable only in *La mirada del hombre oscuro* but is not successful because Ombasi tries to explain who he is and what he wants with gestures but he is not understood. The drowned immigrant in *La Playa* lies lifeless on the beach. He is never on stage with the Spaniard and therefore he is never part of the action. It is for this reason that both immigrants remain practically mute. Their silence provokes empathy to the reader and audience who sense immediately the injustice and false accusations against two people who are practically unable to react.

Furthermore, the fact that both José Moreno Arenas and Ignacio del Moral do not option to give their migrant characters an actual voice, derives from their objectives in writing these plays. Del Moral explains that it was a mixture of personal concerns and questions that enabled him to write the play.

“...en el caso de *La mirada del hombre oscuro*, hubo un detonante concreto que, con preocupaciones y preguntas que ya bullían en mi cerebro, me llevó a componer esta fábula de la incomunicación” (Del Moral, 11).<sup>IX</sup>

Moreno Arenas prefers not to get involved to the action but he lets his characters acting for themselves. He simply depicts the reality from a distance and then his characters are the ones who will continue with the action. His protagonists are independent, rich and influential who lack compassion, sympathy and understanding. The rest of the characters

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<sup>IX</sup> Translation:

“In the case of *La mirada del hombre oscuro*, there was a concrete detonator that, combined with preoccupations and questions that were boiling in my brain, I ended up writing this story of miscommunication.”

are people of low socio-economical class, rejected socially, weak, innocent and all those in need, like the case of the drowned immigrant.

Se concretan en protagonistas poderosos, ricos, influyentes... que originan en el receptor rechazo y animadversión. Frente a ellos se ubican los miserable sociales, quienes nos provocan, si no afecto, si una relativa atracción o cierta complicidad. Este grupo lo constituyen los mendigos, los desheredados, los inválidos, los inocentes, incluso algún cadáver, o sea, los necesitados de lo que sea (Moreno Arenas, 15).

After all the lack of actual verbal communication or the failure of an attempted one facilitate the playwrights' intentions to point out the western society's unpreparedness to dialogue with the Other. The false accusations against the immigrants call for further discussion not only for their bold content but mostly for the reaction that trigger to the immigrants. But does this reaction exist? Do Ombasi and the drowned African immigrant defend themselves? Do they have the chance to confront the Spaniards and present their own point of view? It is imperative in a case of accusation to have defense but is this the case in these two plays? And what about the real world? Do immigrants have a voice for themselves or do they remain silent like the characters of the plays? A closer look at the plays along with survey data could answer these questions although the findings can only be indicative of the situation and not necessarily representative as attitudes, reactions and behaviors depend on each individual and in no way can portray holistically a society.

In *La mirada del hombre oscuro* the Spanish family confronts Ombasi with suspicion, fear and bias. When Ombasi approaches them telling in his native language that he is hungry, the Father and Mother refer to him as "éste" = "that one".

El padre: (*llama a la madre.*) ¡Dori! ¿Queda merienda?

La madre: ¿Para qué?

El padre: Para dársela a éste.

La madre: ¿Y para qué le vas a dar a éste la merienda? (Del Moral, 25).<sup>X</sup>

The word *éste* is pejorative and reflects the couple's already negative disposition toward Ombasi and therefore the Other. Ombasi in his turn tries in vain to tell them that he is hungry and introduces himself in his native language while using a non-verbal device at the same time by taping on his chest: (*Se señala el pecho*). "Ombasi, me llamo Ombasi" (Del Moral, 22). Later on he continues:

"Ombasi. Tengo hambre" ... "(*Se vuelve a señalar el pecho*). Ombasi. He venido nadando. Tengo hambre. Mi compañero se ha ahogado. Está muerto. (Del Moral, 23).<sup>XI</sup>

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<sup>X</sup> Translation:

The Father: (he call the Mother): Dori! Is there any snacks left?

The Mother: For what?

The Father: To give it to him.

The Mother: And why you are going to give to him the snacks?

His effort to communicate to the Spanish couple the simple need for food and the fact that a human being has drowned is unsuccessful. Both Spaniards are overwhelmed by the mechanical failure of their car and the appearance of someone who, according to their Son, wants to eat their Daughter.

Ombasi: La niña se ha caído, pero no es nada. Tengo hambre. Me llamo Ombasi.  
(*Para hacerse entender, señala a la niña, se señala a si mismo, hace gesto de comer*).

El niño: ¡Dice que se quiere comer a la niña! (Del Moral, 23).<sup>XII</sup>

This is the beginning of a series of miscommunication that Del Moral accentuates with humor, as the above scene shows, and bold, colloquial language that Ombasi cannot understand. When the Father desperate tries to find the missing spark plug to start the car and leave with his family away from Ombasi's supposed threat, the Mother refers to Ombasi as "he", although several times Ombasi said his name nobody made an effort to understand what he was saying. The Mother also accuses Ombasi of having stolen the spark plug. "A lo mejor la tiene él" (Del Moral, 29). When the Father tries to communicate with Ombasi and explains to him for what he is looking, (*A Ombasi. ¡Bujía; ¡Para coche; Hace ademán de arrancar el choce. Ombasi le mira*) (Del Moral, 29), the Mother in a diminishing way asks her husband if he thinks that Ombasi is going to understand him. "Pero, tú crees que te va entender?" (Del Moral, 29). However, she does not say that the lack of understanding is because they do not talk the same language but because Ombasi has not seen a car in his whole life (*¿Lo ves? ¡Este no ha visto un coche en su vida!*) (Del Moral, 30). Later on their Son asks if Ombasi comes from the jungle and the Mother answers "or from there".

*El niño: ¿Viene de la selva?*

*La madre: O de por ahí.* (Del Moral,30)

Ombasi in an effort to close the gap between him and the Spaniards and to convince them that he has good intentions, he repeats several times "Viva España". The sentence triggers the Daughter's curiosity who subsequently asks her Mother why Ombasi says always the same sentence. The Mother answers that this is the result of lack of education in people of color, referring in this case to African immigrants who she calls "personas incultas= uneducated people", a statement that subsequently triggers the following question: what does it mean to be uneducated and how is this determined?

La Niña: Por qué siempre dice lo mismo?

La Madre: Porque a lo mejor no sabe decir otra cosa.

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<sup>XI</sup> Translation:

Ombasi, I am hungry... (continuing pointing out to his chest). Ombasi, I have come swimming. I am hungry. My partner drowned. He is dead.

<sup>XII</sup> Translation:

Ombasi: he girl fell down but it is nothing. I am hungry. My name is Ombasi. (To be understood, he points to the girl, he points to himself and then makes a gesture of eating.

The Boy: He says that he wants to eat the girl.



La Niña: ¿No sabe hablar más?

La Madre: No.

La Niña: ¿Por qué?

La Madre: Porque estas personas negras son muy incultas (Del Moral,33).

Del Moral from the beginning of the play creates an antithesis regarding Ombasi's intentions and kind personality. From one side there is the "good, innocent immigrant" and from the other "the mean, biased Spanish family" that believes it has the right to reject any Other that looks different than them and comes from a less developed country. The family's reaction is justified up to a certain point as Spanish society at the time the play was written had not been exposed to the Other yet. But could this have changed ten years later? Maybe although statistics show that the attitude towards the immigrants varies depending on their country of origin. According to a survey conducted in 2003 by CIS (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas = Center of Sociological Research) and seen in Figure 3, it is evident that Spaniards prefer better Latin Americans (specifically Argentinians) than Moroccans and Americans. This preference has historical, political and cultural connotations and it cannot be generalized.

Tabla 6.1. Actitud de los españoles hacia nacionales de diferentes países

	"Simpatía que le despiertan los..."						"Confianza que le despiertan los..."					
	Mucha	Bastante	Poca	Ninguna	N.S.	N.C.	Mucha	Bastante	Poca	Ninguna	N.S.	N.C.
Brasileños	11.3	54.1	16.9	3.9	11.7	2.1	6.1	44.7	23.9	7.8	15.5	2.0
Franceses	7.1	45.7	29.6	7.5	8.6	1.4	6.0	42.6	27.6	9.6	12.3	1.9
Colombianos	5.6	41.7	29.4	10.6	10.8	2.0	3.9	32.5	32.6	14.9	13.9	2.2
Cubanos	11.2	51.8	19.4	6.4	9.3	1.9	6.0	41.7	26.9	9.6	13.6	2.2
Italianos	10.8	56.6	17.5	4.8	8.6	1.6	6.5	49.2	22.6	6.9	12.9	2.0
Mexicanos	11.9	56.0	16.1	4.1	10.2	1.7	7.3	48.6	21.7	6.5	13.9	2.1
Marroquíes	4.5	29.2	32.9	23.7	8.4	1.4	3.3	23.3	32.1	27.4	11.7	2.2
Peruanos	6.9	50.3	22.4	7.1	11.4	1.8	4.8	40.8	27.8	9.4	15.1	2.1
Venezolanos	7.9	53.7	19.6	4.5	12.4	2.0	5.1	45.1	25.0	7.5	15.1	2.1
Estadounidenses	4.9	35.0	32.2	16.1	9.8	1.8	4.1	32.6	31.0	17.1	13.1	2.1
Argentinos	14.9	58.6	13.3	3.5	8.0	1.8	8.8	51.2	19.9	5.7	12.2	2.2
Alemanes	8.1	50.3	22.7	7.6	9.4	1.9	6.7	46.1	23.3	8.6	13.1	2.1
Chilenos	8.0	51.5	20.4	5.7	12.5	1.8	5.2	44.9	24.7	6.9	15.9	2.3

Fuente: CIS, Estudio nº 2.545. Barómetro de noviembre 2003.

Figure 3: Spaniards' attitude towards citizens of different nationalities. <sup>XIII</sup>

The first encounter of Ombasi with the Spanish family is through their Daughter. Being a little girl and curious she wanders in the beach behind the dunes where she sees Ombasi and his drowned friend. Scared by the unknown man she runs to find her parents but she trips and falls. Ombasi without hesitation picks her up and takes her to her parents who surprised and afraid immediately reject his genuine help as they misinterpret it. This is a tender, human scene that it does not only reveal his sensitivity but it could also project to the future holding his own daughter. Later and as the plot advances, the night comes and the temperature drops. The children are cold and insist to stay by the fire that Ombasi

<sup>XIII</sup> Source:

<http://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/93165/1/LA%20INMIGRACI%C3%93N%20EN%20ESPA%C3%91A%20%282000-2007%29.pdf>

built. The antithesis of cold and warm aligns with the opposite emotional status of each side. It also creates the hope that the warmth of fire and Ombasi's warm personality will overpower the coldness that the family feels and the two sides will eventually merge. Finally, the parents by necessity only concede to accept a person's help who until that moment was begging for theirs. The momentary proximity is abruptly interrupted as the Parents refuse to befriend him. The instant hope immediately evaporates. The parents are ungrateful and unappreciative of Ombasi's survival skills and inviting nature. This attitude though cannot be overseen by the audience that, as another character, feels empathy and compassion for him.

In the same scene around the fire Ombasi offers the family clams using the Father's knife to open them. The Spaniards continue their insulting comments accusing him of being an AIDS carrier. Once again Ombasi with his calm personality and unable of course to understand the accusations, he shares a few cultural aspects and he evokes his dead friend with whom he was sharing this food. This is a very touching moment as it reminds everyone that friendship, collaboration and companionship can support human relations and overcome challenges. Ombasi unfortunately is left alone in the promising land to defend his life and his friend's memory.

Later on the Mother notes that her Son is sleeping by Ombasi's side. She comments that she does not want her son so close to "him" for the fear of lice or ringworm, very common in "those countries that are infected". Once again her superficial explanation is nothing more than an indication of lack of education and basic information.

La Madre: No me gusta que el Niño esté tan pegado a él. A lo mejor tiene piojos, o la tiña, que creo que en eso países la tienen mucho. Hasta la lepra (Del Moral, 58).

In *La Playa* there are similar accusations toward the immigrants although as already mentioned, there is not any interaction between the characters. The Spaniard beachgoer seems to be very sure of himself and has control of what he says. In his mind he justifies all the accusations against the immigrants based on personal beliefs. He clarifies that his "logical and irrefutable arguments" have nothing to do with racism – *Yo no soy racista*-. However, he believes that there are a lot of bad intentions in this side of the strait (referring to the Strait of Gibraltar):

Sí, sí ... por supuesto.. antes de dar a conocer mis lógicos e irrefutables argumentos, siempre lo hago... Siempre, siempre.... ¡Yo no soy racista! .. Si he de serle sincero, se trata de una táctica, ¿sabe...?... No me queda más remedio que hacerlo porque – créame lo que le digo- hay mucha leche en este lado del estrecho (Moreno Arenas,140).

His words contradict his own credibility because he warns of misunderstandings and wrong interpretations from people who try to convince for their opinion. The most surprising though is that he talks about lack of interest and response to things that people say. This ironically refers to his own case as no one responds to this continuous speech.

He says that people can manipulate words to make things appear different than what they really are.

...Y antes de que te des cuenta, sin que nadie se haya interesado siquiera lo más mínimo en saber lo que realmente ronda por u coco, te manipulan las palabras, te tergiversan las declaraciones, te interpretan – lo de interpretar es por utilizar una palabra suave y agradable para los oídos – hasta el tono de las expresiones y consiguen que aparezcas antes los demás como lo que no eres... (Moreno Arenas, 141).

Apparently this assumption describes his own approach. The things he says about the immigrants portray a false image of what they really are. He accuses them for spoiling the Spanish society. In addition, he accuses the media and young people for Spain's downfall. Thanks to the freedom of speech, they advocate "wrong" ideas that they contradict his "right ideas", they are more open to the Other and embrace his differences. He gets upset by the fact that the young people are receptive to African music without thinking of the consequences but he ignores that historically Spain has been a receiver of other cultures, such as the Arabic, and also the transmitter of its own culture to Latin America.

He describes the African immigrants with the same pejorative way that the Spaniards in *La mirada del hombre oscuro* do. They call Ombasi "nergo" and they refer to all immigrants as "negros". Similarly, here the beachgoer feels pity for the dark skin color and calls for mercy as the immigrants cannot escape from the negative consequences that their color brings to them. According to his words, they are poor creatures of God who need to accept living with this pigmentation that is a gift poisoned by a despised and cruel reality. "...Pobres criaturas de Dios... que han que resignarse a vivir pigmentados con el tinte más oscuro del color gris, ese regalo envenenado de una naturaleza despiadada y cruel" (Moreno Arenas, 144).

He differentiates himself from the Other by repeating several times that he is white: .... En realidad, yo soy blanco... ¡Blanco...! ¡Enteramente blanco...! ¡Completamente blanco...! ¡Absolutamente blanco...! ¿Para que andarnos por las ramas ...? (Moreno Arenas, 145).<sup>XIV</sup>

His persistence in the white color, that is clearly a proof of supremacy, detonates the absurdity of his so called "logical and irrefutable arguments" but it also makes the reader/ audience wonder who finally needs mercy. He is biased against any Other who does not look like him, who plays a different type of music or who tries to survive doing odd jobs, like selling clothes, jewelry or purses in the streets. This last comment is of special interest because it contradicts his accusation of immigrants being responsible of Spain's unemployment. In Figure 4 it is clear that foreigners who live in Spain are in higher risk to lose their jobs than Spaniards.

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<sup>XIV</sup> Translation:

... In reality, I am white!... White! ...Entirely white! ...Completely white! ...Absolutely white!... Why to change the topic of discussion?



Figure 4: Comparison of possibility of Spaniards and foreign citizens losing their job.<sup>XV</sup>

Later on he expresses even more bitter feelings when he calls immigrants illiterate in human rights. They demand to be seen and treated equally in the country in which they immigrate, when in their countries they do not dare to do so for lack of resources and stable government. Unraveling his contradictory arguments, he shares that when he was himself an immigrant somewhere in Europe more than thirty years ago, he was feeling inferior from the local people because they believed that they had more rights than his fellow Spaniards and himself. For this reason, they were all staying together to support each other, the same way that the immigrants still do. He fails to see this tendency as the result of the basic human need for support and contact with other people in times of necessity and loneliness.

Allí éramos todos como una piña....!Todos para uno y uno para todos ...! Se lo puede imaginar.... Había que defenderse con algo más que uñas y dientes de la altanería y de los improperios de aquellos cabronazos que se creían con más derechos que nosotros (Moreno Arenas, 157).<sup>XVI</sup>

His words portray two opposite sides, “aquellos = those” and “nosotros= us”. These sides are not that different from the ones he has built between himself now and the immigrants.

<sup>XV</sup> Source:

[http://www.revistasice.com/cachepdf/ICE\\_854\\_3748\\_\\_C50F00870BEC39801219B8CA4588DB.pdf](http://www.revistasice.com/cachepdf/ICE_854_3748__C50F00870BEC39801219B8CA4588DB.pdf)

<sup>XVI</sup> Translation:

There we were all united. One for all and all for one. It can be imagined. It had to be defended with more than teeth and nail from the arrogance and insults of those motherfuckers who believed to have more rights than us.

What is surprising though is that he does not realize that his past is a reflection of the present that so sharply criticizes. Being an immigrant himself, he belonged once to the other side and was seen as a lesser quality human being. He acknowledges that his feelings were hurt but that experience did not teach him any compassion. Today he perceives the immigrants in the same negative way he was himself perceived back then.

His ignorance, arrogance and refusal to accept the Other is so evident that he does not even try to approach the immobile immigrant to check on him. In reality he is also a dead person, empty from any sign of humanity and sensibility (Doll, 113). At the end of the play the silence of the drowned immigrant shakes the audience as it is revealed that the person is dead. According to Eileen Doll, the silence serves as the witness of racism that so much the Beachgoer refuses (Doll, 225).<sup>XVII</sup> The audience recognizes the human value of the laying immigrant who all this time was silent, being accused for nothing that was his fault. The mute, immobile man becomes now the point of reference and the main protagonist. Moreno Arenas invites the audience to evaluate the Spaniard's accusations, reestablish the dignity of the whole migrant body and question what are the limits between the Us and the Other.

## Conclusion

Since early 90's the Spanish government with migratory policies, plans and informative efforts attempted to decrease the cultural gap between Spaniards and immigrants. The Spanish playwright Jerónimo López Mozo in his article *Emigrantes y exilidados en mi teatro* (2008) acknowledges that Spaniards, although they negate it, they are racists. He adds that they are not the only ones in Europe. He explains that the ones who reject the accusation of being racists, like in the case of the beachgoer in *La Playa* ("Yo no soy racista"), they are the ones who are the most racists than anyone else.

Los españoles somos racistas, aunque lo neguemos, somos racistas. No somos los únicos en Europa, desde luego. Con frecuencia, quiénes rechazan la acusación más airadamente, lo son en mayor medida, aunque lo ignoren (López Mozo, 5).

The process of assimilation of immigrants into a new country is long but not simple. Educational programs, equal treatment in the professional and social sphere are keys for acculturation and coexistence. Human relationships based on friendships or love can bring people together<sup>XVIII</sup>. Mixed marriages, in most cases and when the marriage is based on bona fide, have facilitated the process not only practically but also culturally as they unite two people of different linguistic, ethnic and possibly religious background. In 1996 there was only 4,13% of mixed marriages in Spain when in 2005 the percentage increased to 10,8%. At the same year (2005) the children born by mixed couples

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<sup>XVII</sup> Original citation: "El silencio del Otro sirve de testigo del racismo que tanto deniega el Banista." (Doll, 225).

<sup>XVIII</sup> *Memoria fotográfica* (Beth Escudé y Gallés) and *Harira* (Ana Diosdano) are plays based on friendship between immigrants. The film *Las cartas de Alou* (1990) portrays mixed relationships based on true love.

represented about 11% of the total births<sup>XIX</sup>. These numbers indicate an ongoing contact of Spaniards with citizens of other countries that could certainly decrease the cultural differences and fear of Other.

If the Spaniards or any other citizens of any other country are racists and xenophobic is not to be analyzed here. What is to be addressed though is the impact of such an attitude on society and the manner in which this is depicted in literary works. Silence and voice, tolerance and intolerance, rejection and acceptance, compassion and insensitivity are contradictory terms that are abundant in both plays and they all derive from the bitter sentiments that racism and xenophobia entail. How each one of us will accept these attitudes depends on our education, values and above all the sense of responsibility we have to respect the others the same way we expect them to respect us.

In *La Playa* and *La mirada del hombre oscuro* none of the Spanish characters has reflected on their own flaws but they judge the African immigrants based only on stereotypes and false beliefs. The silence of the immigrants calls for a closer attention to what the Spaniards say and this is not again by accident. The playwrights invite us to evaluate what is being said keeping in mind that this has to be based on social justice and human rights, if we want to reestablish dignity and tolerance in a world that seems to be missing them more and more.

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XIX Source:

<http://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/93165/1/LA%20INMIGRACION%20EN%20ESPA%C3%91A%20%282000-2007%29.pdf>

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