

PENDULUMS OF PERSONHOOD? EXPLORING THE MULTITUDES OF IMMIGRANT  
WOMANHOOD IN SPANISH-MAGHREBI LITERATURE

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **KAITLYN C. SISCO: PENDULUMS OF PERSONHOOD? EXPLORING THE MULTITUDES OF IMMIGRANT WOMANHOOD IN SPANISH-MAGHREBI LITERATURE**

(Under the direction of Kristin Hickman)

Often considered articulations of in-between-ness and bearers of fraught selfhoods, the work of Spanish-Maghrebi authors has been widely debated in literary fields, with academics arguing that it constitutes a largely homogenous set of texts about the standard immigrant experience. However, by placing these texts in a single category, such arguments end up erasing the immensely varied identities expressed and represented by Spanish-Maghrebi authors. This thesis seeks to address this issue by paying particular attention to how Spanish-Maghrebi authors negotiate different types of immigrant subjectivities in their writing. Specifically, I analyze the works of three contemporary Spanish-Maghrebi writers, Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae El Amrani, and Laila Karrouch, in order to demonstrate the heterogeneity of their hybrid identities. Through close readings of their texts, I argue that Spanish-Maghrebi identities are not monolithic. Rather, Spanish-Moroccan authors like El Hachmi, El Amrani, and Karrouch negotiate their dual identities differently. Consequently, this thesis pushes us to consider the varied experiences of immigrant womanhood and underscores the importance of acknowledging such diversity amongst Spanish-Maghrebis.

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## I. Introduction

Negotiating itself into the arms of the Western world, Spain, once considered part of Africa, has sought to amplify its “Europeanness” by distancing its national identity from Arab, African, and Islamic cultures.<sup>1</sup> Attempting to counter its historical exclusion from the West, Spain has even engaged in a contemporary performance of hyper-correction: emphasizing its “Europeanness” by constructing its national identity in diametrical opposition to the Maghreb.<sup>2</sup> Spain’s dismissal of “Africanness” and “Arabness” (and subsequent push for “Europeanness”) has yielded two results. First, North African immigrants (also known as Maghrebis), in recent decades, have perceived Spain as a European beacon of hope and an entrance into Western democracy—leading to heightened immigrational flows.<sup>3</sup> Second, in response to an influx of immigrants, Spain has deflected its own European exclusion onto Maghrebis by arguing against their cultural compatibility and capacity to properly embody *españolidad* [Spanishness]. Essentially, the modernity of European and Spanish national identity is often built upon the exclusion and othering of North Africans.

While manifestations of this exclusion diverge, those with heightened power and definitive *españolidad*, such as far-right political parties (e.g. Vox), nationalists in Spanish society, and national Spanish literary committees, actively argue against Maghrebi inclusion into “Spanishness” by dismissing them both societally and categorically. Often masked as “inescapable” distinctions, *magrebidad* [Maghrebiness] and *españolidad* are framed as two

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<sup>1</sup>Cathryn Bailey, “‘Africa begins at the Pyrenees’: Moral Outrage, Hypocrisy, and the Spanish Bullfight,” *Ethics and the Environment* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 23-37.

<sup>2</sup>Martina L. Weisz, “Religion, Power, and National Identity,” *The Society Pages*, July 8, 2019 <https://thesocietypages.org/holocaust-genocide/religion-power-and-national-identity-jews-and-muslims-in-contemporary-spain/>

<sup>3</sup>Hein de Haas, “The Myth of Invasion: The Inconvenient Realities of African Immigration to Europe,” *Third World Quarterly*, 29, no. 7 (Winter 2008): 1305-1322.

antithetical identities.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the existence of a consolidated Maghrebi *españolidad* by Spanish-Maghrebi persons is understood as a paradoxical anomaly in both literature and broader society, and Spanish citizens and residents of Maghrebi backgrounds are often placed in non-Spanish categories, like “Hispano,” in popular categorical discourse. Such categorical grouping reflects a societal tendency to place Maghrebis apart from *españolidad* utilizing, not only discriminatory behavior, but terminology as well.

With this societal and categorical alienation come literary exclusion, and catch all “-phone” terms like “Hispanophone” [Spanish-speaking] literature were created to generate a similar reaction to that of “Francophone” [French-speaking] and “Anglophone” [English-speaking] literatures. Seeking to include authors from former colonies and territories, “-phone” literatures were designed to categorize ethnically “non-native” works (written in the native language) from ethnically “native” metropole literatures, like British literature, French literature, and Spanish literature. A derivative of the Latin term for “voice,” literatures attached to a “-phone” suffix indicate that the author is a speaker of a particular language but does not represent the ethnic, geographic, or linguistic culture behind that language.<sup>5</sup> Resultantly, “-phone” literary terminology carves out a linguistic space for individuals who, in colonial times, might not have been considered a part of metropole culture.

Although the terminology of “-phone” seemingly aims to recognize the voices of societal “others,” these terms—Francophone, Anglophone, and the like—only offer a false inclusion by denoting a “lack” of “Frenchness” and “Englishness.” Similarly, Hispanophone literature seeks to highlight the linguistically Spanish works of Spain’s territories and former colonies. However,

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<sup>4</sup>Jordan Bates, “Literary Canons Exclude Works No Matter How Selective Canon Makers Are,” *The Daily Nebraskan*, April 25, 2013, <http://www.dailynebraskan.com/culture/literary-canons-exclude-works-no-matter-how-selective-canon-makers-are/article>

<sup>5</sup>Online Etymology Dictionary, “-phone.” Last accessed April 2022, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/-phone>

it simultaneously maintains colonial power structures by underscoring a lack of “Spanishness” on the part of the authors—categorizing them as “Hispano” and non-Spanish (even if they are citizens or residents of Spain). With these phonetic terms come more categorical derivatives, and “Hispanophone-African,” “Hispano-African,” and “Immigrant” literatures are among the common and contemporary literary labels.<sup>6</sup> Academics like Olivier Milhaud, Leslie Singel, and Olli Löytty have suggested adding the prefix “post-” to particular literatures, such as “Post-Francophonie,”<sup>7</sup> and “Post-Immigrant,”<sup>8</sup> in order to construct a postcolonial literary and categorical space.<sup>9</sup> However, the aforementioned terms still indicate colonialism and foster an “inescapable” binary.

Such binaries are especially complicated for writers of immigrant background and writers who are children of immigrants. These individuals, often considered occupants of “in between-ness” and bearers of “fraught” identities, are automatically deemed an “other” not tailored to the cloth of Spanish citizenry due to their heritage or origins. Therefore, their identities and the literatures that they create are similarly othered. Understood as Spanish, non-Spanish, or a monolithic product of immigration, Spanish writers of Maghrebi origin, whom I refer to as Spanish-Maghrebi authors, are often permanently hinged to their country of birth or their parent’s homeland.

However, it is surprising to find that, within the aforementioned tendencies and homogeneous binaries, Spanish-Maghrebi literature, poetry, and essays often illustrate varied expressions of self, feelings of confident Spanishness, and even intense anti-otherness. Since

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<sup>6</sup>Josefina Bueno Alonso, “Género, Exilio y Desterritorialidad.”

<sup>7</sup>Olivier Milhaud, “Post-Francophonie?” *EspacesTemps.net*, Last accessed December 2021, <https://www.espacestemp.net/en/articles/post-francophonie-en/>

<sup>8</sup>Leslie Singel, “Commuters, Wanderers, and 'International Mongrels',” 2017.

<sup>9</sup>Arthur Robert Lee, ed. *Other Britain, Other British: Contemporary Multicultural Fiction*, 2008.

these articulations of identity are unexpected when considering the binary projected onto them, Spanish-Maghrebi authors make a statement with their identity negotiations, and it is important to recognize how such identities are enacted and articulated by the authors themselves.

In this thesis, I examine how immigrant people, women more specifically, end up negotiating their hybrid subjectivities. Moreover, I look at three Spanish-Maghrebi authors who navigate precisely this projected binary tension: Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae El Amrani, and Laila Karrouch. These women, either children of immigrants or first-generation immigrants themselves, approach questions of deliberated, hyphenated identities in a multitude of ways. Cultivating literature based on Spanish-Maghrebi cultural intersections, these authors diverge in their performances of dual identities. Najat El Hachmi, a woman of immigrant background from Nador, Morocco, is one of the most popular Spanish-Maghrebi authors in Spain due to her provocative titles, immigrant narrative content, and articulations of a feminist Catalan-Spanish identity. Lamiae El Amrani, a Spanish poet from Tétouan, Morocco, is noted for her dual Arabic-Castilian linguistic style and paralleling hybrid-personhood metaphors. Laila Karrouch, a Spanish author from Nador, Morocco, is acknowledged for her autobiographically infused, immigrant narratives and unapologetic defense of Berber, Moroccan, and Spanish cultures.

While all of these women hold either Spanish residency or citizenship, a recent discourse about Spanish-Maghrebi authors has emerged, and academics like Josefina Bueno Alonso and Núria Codina have endeavored to articulate a *magrebidad*, “Hispano-African,” or “unique” identity for Spanish-Maghrebi authors. Bueno Alonso compares “Hispano-African” authors (and their subsequent works) to “Francophone” authors in *littérature beur* and argues for a literary homogeneity in “Hispano-Maghrebi,” “Moroccan Borderland,” and “Amazigh-Catalan” literary



categories.<sup>10</sup> Such categories are based on paralleling themes of divided personhood between the Maghreb and Europe, but Codina disagrees—arguing for literary heterogeneity and emphasizing the distinction between “Hispano-Maghrebi” and “Hispano-Moroccan” literatures.<sup>11</sup> Instead of offering an alternative categorization, Codina centers on author Najat El Hachmi’s uniqueness and contends that “immigrant literature” prototypes are irrelevant when thematic elements are analyzed. Despite these divergences in discourse, the aforementioned academics neglect to tackle the complexity of the positionalities of Spanish-Maghrebi authors.

Although all of these women occupy the same hybrid, they position themselves and their subsequent selfhoods in contrasting, even contradictory, manners. El Hachmi positions herself with two feet firmly planted in Spain, defensively speaking against the Maghreb and Morocco, and hypersensitive to the possibility of being deemed a shill for her involvement in white Western feminism. Alternatively, El Amrani positions herself with her back toward Morocco, singing adorations toward Spain, and offering expressions of Spanish-Maghrebi similarities. Finally, Karrouch inhabits a different position, similar to a melting pot immigrant identity, and emphasizes her ability to plant both feet in Morocco and Spain. As a result of these wide-ranging positionalities, I have become interested in what I am broadly calling “feminine Maghrebi *españolidad*,” or the multiplicity of ways that Maghrebi women cope with their dual identities in Spain. Ultimately, this thesis argues that Spanish-Maghrebi identity is not monolithic or enacted in mirroring ways, as argued by the aforementioned academics. Instead, I contend that Spanish-Moroccan authors like Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae El Amrani, and Laila Karrouch negotiate their hybrid identities differently.

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<sup>10</sup>Núria Codina, “The Work of Najat El Hachmi in the Context of Spanish-Moroccan Literature,” 117

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 123.

Employing the literary methodology of close reading, I survey texts from these authors, and I demonstrate how all three women renounce their presumed “pendulum” identities. El Hachmi performs concrete Spanishness by expressing origin estrangement (both mentally and physically) from the Maghreb, a condition I term “anti-nostalgia”; El Amrani utilizes her Spanishness to critique Morocco without total severance from the Maghreb; and Karrouch negotiates her identity by unproblematically harmonizing both her *españolidad* and *magrebidad*.

As mentioned above, I primarily explore the autobiographically imbued, non-fiction works of El Hachmi, El Amrani, and Karrouch along with available interview material. Such texts and subsequent author interviews allow me to examine the ways in which complex, hybrid identities are expressed and negotiated in detail. Chapter 2 of this thesis contains a general history of Spanish, Moroccan, and immigrant relations in the broader European context. I review the existing scholarly categorizations of El Hachmi, El Amrani, and Karrouch’s works in order to determine how their identities have generally been analyzed and classified. Further, I review the work of anthropologist Ulf Hannerz and employ his concepts, “flows,” “boundaries,” and “hybrids,” as a theoretical framework for understanding immigrant identity in a globalized world.

In Chapter 3, I analyze Najat El Hachmi’s autobiographical essay *Siempre han hablado por nosotras: Feminismo e identidad. Un manifiesto valiente y necesario* [*They Have Always Spoken for Us: Feminism and Identity. A Courageous and Necessary Manifesto*] (2019).<sup>12</sup> I argue that El Hachmi comfortably situates her identity within Catalonia, Spain, expresses her broad Spanish identity under regional Catalanian-ness,” and articulates a selfhood based on Moroccan anti-nostalgia, expressions of admiration for Spain, and passion for the Catalanian

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<sup>12</sup>All English translations of *Siempre han hablado por nosotras* by Najat El Hachmi are my own.

educational system and feminism.<sup>13</sup> Describing personal experiences with sexism in Islam to explain her contempt for Morocco and negotiate her Spanishness, El Hachmi acts as the embodiment of Hannerz’s “boundary” because her own Spanishness is blatantly unquestionable to her.

In contrast to the blunt, more tongue-in-cheek approach by El Hachmi, Spanish-Maghrebi author Lamiae El Amrani negotiates her hybridity, origin anti-nostalgia, and Spanishness in a more subtle way. In Chapter 4, I examine her poetry collection *Tormenta de especias* [*Storm of Spices*] (2010)<sup>14</sup> and argue that she claims broader Spanishness (instead of regional identity) by offering an example of literary anti-nostalgia for Morocco and belonging in Spain which is hidden by traditional metaphor, common “immigrant” motifs, and alluring, folklore-like aesthetics.<sup>15</sup> Utilizing an Arabic-Castilian linguistic combination and recognizing the risk-reward reality of immigration, El Amrani deliberates her Spanish identity by covertly critiquing the Maghreb without totally alienating herself from it. Therefore, she acts as Hannerz’s “flow” identity, moving toward Spain in the process.

Chapter 5 involves Laila Karrouch who differentiates herself from other Spanish-Maghrebi authors by consolidating her *magrebidad* and *españolidad* identities instead of articulating them as contradictory. Like El Hachmi and El Amrani, Karrouch demonstrates an immigrant narrative in her autobiographical novel *Laila* (2017),<sup>16</sup> which emphasizes comfort and anti-otherness in Spain.<sup>17</sup> However, I argue that she expresses simultaneous belonging in both Morocco and Spain without framing her identity as fraught between two spaces. Essentially,

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<sup>13</sup>Najat El Hachmi, *Siempre han hablado por nosotras*.

<sup>14</sup>Lamiae El Amrani, *Tormenta de especias*.

<sup>15</sup>All English translations of *Tormenta de especias* by Lamiae El Amrani are my own.

<sup>16</sup>Laila Karrouch, *Laila*. Madrid, Spain: Oxford University Press, 2017.

<sup>17</sup>All English translations of *Laila* by Laila Karrouch are my own.

Karrouch is what Hannerz might term a “hybrid” due to her unproblematic harmonization of two selves.

In all of the aforementioned analytical chapters, I draw upon the concept of “Mediterraneanism” to further dissect the identities of Spanish-Maghrebi authors.

Mediterraneanism, for the purpose of this thesis, can be defined as an ideology which recognizes the inherent similarities and commonalities<sup>18</sup> present in all Mediterranean cultures.<sup>19</sup> Specifically for Spain and Morocco, a shared Andalusian culture becomes especially relevant for this project.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, in Chapter 6, I propose a few conclusions about the contemporary hybridity of Spanish-Maghrebi authors and reiterate my overall argument. Through my analysis of El Hachmi, El Amrani, and Karrouch, I contend that Spanish-Maghrebi authors must deal with “proving” their Spanishness and duality in a national environment that defines them as monolithic. However, as demonstrated by three distinct Spanish-Moroccan authors, hybrid identities are polythetic, actively diverging in their negotiations, and ultimately unfixed.

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<sup>18</sup>Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

<sup>19</sup>United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan QSR. “The Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Environment.” *The Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Environment* | UNEP MAP QSR, 2017. <https://www.medqsr.org/mediterranean-marine-and-coastal-environment#:~:text=They%20are%20Albania%2C%20Algeria%2C%20Bosnia,scene%20of%20intense%20human%20activity.>

<sup>20</sup>I define the Mediterranean regions as those countries with coastlines on the Mediterranean Sea: Turkey, Italy, Croatia, Monaco, Syria, Lebanon, Slovenia, Albania, Greece, Montenegro, Spain, Israel, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, and Malta.

## II. Contextualization and Literature Review

### *Historical Relationship Between Spain and the Maghreb*

Officially known as *el Reino de España*, Spain is a southwestern European country which, due to its colonial history, maintains territory across the Strait of Gibraltar (in the Maghreb) and in parts of the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. This once vast, imperialist empire is the only European country to hold a physical border with an African nation through its control over two North African cities, Ceuta and Melilla. Therefore, its role for the European Union (EU) has often encompassed processes of limiting “foreign bodies” from entering the “Western” sphere. Undergoing many rules since its conception, Spain has absorbed cultural and religious elements from the Romans, Visigoths, Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Presently, however, Spain consists of a secular parliament that sustains democratic power over seventeen autonomous communities and two autonomous, North African cities, Ceuta and Melilla. Although Spain’s constitution recognizes no official religion and emphasizes religious freedom, Spain’s most prevalent religion is Catholic Christianity.<sup>21</sup>

The Maghreb, originating from the Arabic term *al-Maghrib*, is contemporarily defined as the Northwest region of Africa. More specifically, this area encompasses Algeria, Mauritania, Libya, Tunisia, territories of the Western Sahara and Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, and Morocco. As previously mentioned, this region also houses two “non-African,” Spanish-controlled cities, Ceuta and Melilla, on the former (and frequently contested) coast of Morocco. While the territories constitute a multitude of cultures and linguistic particularities, Spain and the Maghreb have a shared history of conquering one another: the Muslim-ruled period in Al-Andalus (from 711 to the 1000s), the *Reconquista* and contested Catholic-ruled period (from

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<sup>21</sup>Amber Pariona. “The Major Religions in Spain.”

718-1478), the Kingdom of Spain Catholic period (from 1479 to 1931), and the Francisco Franco dictatorship period of Maghrebi colonization in Morocco (1912-1956), the Western Sahara, Ceuta, and Melilla (from 1939 to 1975).<sup>22</sup>

Generating similarities like Islamic architectural styles and flamenco cultural productions, these periods of domination and influence imposed a mutual fusion of identities. However, it is important to emphasize the fact that, although Spain and the Maghreb are metaphysically tethered across the Strait of Gibraltar, many Spaniards have been conditioned to deny their African Arab connections. Spain has even historically constructed its national identity in diametrical opposition to the Maghreb. For example, in the late medieval period of Catholic Spain, racial and religious tensions were intentionally formed against known North African cultural characteristics. Words like “raza” [race] and “linaje” [lineage], once only used for animal breeds, were repurposed to use against Muslims and “Moors” from North African nations.<sup>23</sup> Inquisitionist Spain also deemed its national food *jamón*, or pork, because practicing Muslims and Jews were forbidden to consume it—all in effort to limit the permeability of Maghrebi identities into Spanish culture.<sup>24</sup> Typically hung visibly in and outside of Spanish homes, *jamón* still serves as a symbol of anti-Maghrebi, anti-Islamic, and anti-Jewish identity in contemporary times. Therefore, Spain and the Maghreb paradoxically exist in both connection and rejection of one another.

In recent decades, Spain and Maghrebi nations (specifically Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania) have signed and maintained treaties of collaboration, migration, and trade.<sup>25</sup> Such agreements are primarily shaped by *El estrecho de Gibraltar* [The Strait of Gibraltar], or the

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<sup>22</sup>L. P. Harvey. *Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

<sup>23</sup>Martina L. Weisz. “Religion, Power, and National Identity”

<sup>24</sup>Sophie Picard. “Behind the Bite: Jamón Ibérico.”

<sup>25</sup>Gobierno de España. *Spain and the Maghreb*.

body of water that connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Mediterranean Sea. A site of interdependence and mutual culture for the Maghreb and Spain, voyages across this natural “border,” or historically termed “Gate of the West,” are conducted daily due to only around eight miles of separation. This close distance has fostered both legal and illegal immigration, but Spain has only recently become a country of immigrants. From the years 1850-1979, Spain was regarded as a country of emigrants due to a large portion of its population leaving for Maghrebi (mainly Morocco), Latin American, and other European countries.<sup>26</sup> However, with Spain’s signing of the 1985 Treaty of Adherence and European Partnership, emigration flows reversed, and for the first heavily documented period, there was demand from immigrants to come to Spain since it was now officially considered part of the European Communities, or the “West.”

Hitting its immigration peak in 2007, Spain’s current immigrational flows have remained relatively high, excluding the period of the 2008 Financial Crisis. It is recorded that in 2020, Spain hosted around three million migrants, with over half of those individuals hailing from Africa.<sup>27</sup> More specifically, Western European countries legally gained around two million Algerians, two million Moroccans, and half a million Tunisians. Migration Data Portal Organization suggests that these strong immigrational flows from the Maghreb to Spain have been historically consistent as well due to the “sub-region’s geographic proximity to Europe,” socioeconomic disparities after WWI and WWII, and the attractiveness of European guest worker programs.<sup>28</sup> These programs, present in Spain as “regularization” since 2005, are legal routes of immigration created for African workers who aim to return to Africa but want Spanish recruitment and status in the process.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Jaume Martí Romero. “The Remarkable Case of Spanish Immigration.”

<sup>27</sup>“Migration Data in Northern Africa.” Migration Data Portal, 2021.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Fausto Miguélez and Albert Recio. “Spain: Large-Scale Regularisation and Its Impacts”

Given this high quantity of migratory movements, Spain has reacted with particular migration policies. Presenting itself as tolerant, the Spanish government's website, *Gobierno de España*, claims Spain to be an activist on behalf of the Maghreb: "Spain plays a crucial role in the Euro-Mediterranean region, making decisive contributions to the inclusion of Maghrebi matters on the EU's agenda."<sup>30</sup> It is from such a perspective that Spain has crafted its migration laws. For example, the *Ley de Extranjería* [Law on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain], promotes human rights and offers assistance for permanent migrants. There even exists an "easy" migration arrangement between Morocco and Spain. Specifically, Morocco is the only Maghrebi nation with which Spain holds a bilateral agreement, and it is this agreement that allows Moroccans to immigrate with less restrictions than other nationalities and to expedite more seasonal labor.<sup>31</sup>

Despite this surface level simplicity, it is important to acknowledge that Spain's immigration policies are not uncomplicated. Serving as a border for the larger European Union, other EU countries essentially outsource Spain as their border control "watchdog."<sup>32</sup> Following Spain's increased immigration in 2007, the EU has even provided Spain's migration control industry (including private Spanish companies) with hundreds of millions of euros each year.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Spain experiences considerable external pressure to combat increases in "foreign bodies," especially considering the tension produced by its border within Africa.

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<sup>30</sup>Gobierno de España. Spain and the Maghreb.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Associated Press. "European Watchdog."

<sup>33</sup>Statewatch. "EU-Spain: New Report Provides an 'x-Ray'."



*Literature on Spanish Language and Migration*

It is in this context of Spanish nationalist aversion to “foreign bodies” that many scholars have studied Maghrebi immigrant selfhood, hybrid literature, and even El Hachmi and Karrouch. Specifically, among academics like Núria Codina, Cristián H. Ricci, and Josefina Bueno Alonso, there is a discourse that situates Spanish-Moroccan writers as being members of “Moroccan Borderland literature” (written in both Spanish and Catalan), “Amazigh-Catalan literature” (works of writers of Maghrebi origin who have lived in Catalonia since their youth and write in Catalan), and “*Literaturas hispanoafricanas*” [Hispano-African literatures] (containing both Spanish and Catalan literature with authors’ roots in Morocco, migrant literatures written in Spanish/Catalan due to social immersion, and Spanish/Catalan writers who write in Spanish/Catalan due to personal preference of language).<sup>34</sup> These scholars and their categorizations consider Spanish-Maghrebi authors like Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae El Amrani, and Laila Karrouch to be inherently distinct from Spanish national literatures due to their thematic focus on migration and use of particular motifs like travel, borders, seas, and homelands.<sup>35</sup> Further, these academics perceive “Hispano-Moroccan” literature as being populated by writers who emphasize their own identity in commonality with Spanish culture.

Josefina Bueno Alonso is at the forefront of these homogeneity arguments and claims that the corpus of Spanish and Catalan writers of Moroccan origin (and Maghrebi writers in general) is forged through unity in common migration experiences. Specifically, Bueno Alonso argues that “[Laila] Karrouch and [Najat] El Hachmi...share similar identity discourse that, in addition, bears close resemblances to the [French] *littérature beur*, as both literatures represent

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<sup>34</sup>Núria Codina. “The Work of Najat El Hachmi in the Context of Spanish-Moroccan Literature,” 117.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 116-117.

the divided existence between France and Maghreb or between Moroccan/Amazigh and Catalan/Spanish culture.”<sup>36</sup>

Bueno Alonso believes Najat El Hachmi to be the epitome of this literature, and she expands on this belief in her article, “Género, Exilio y Desterritorialidad en *L’últim Patriarca*” [Gender, Exile and De-territoriality in *The Last Patriarch*].<sup>37</sup> A novel by El Hachmi, *The Last Patriarch* is narrated by an unnamed Moroccan immigrant daughter and focuses on the story of the narrator’s father, Mimoun Driouch (who fulfills the titular role of the “patriarch”). The unnamed narrator recounts the trajectory of her father’s life, from his birth until her admission into college. After his marriage and his children’s births, the patriarch Driouch believes that his destiny is to leave Morocco and immigrate to Catalonia, Spain. However, this transition is not easy. He harbors a lot of anger toward his wife and children, who attempt to integrate into Spanish and Catalan society. Throughout this transition, the patriarch Driouch limits his wife and daughter—imprisoning them to a patriarchal existence even when distanced from his “patriarchal” homeland. Consequently, the novel also details the unnamed narrator’s search for her own identity and fight for ideological, sexual, and personal freedom from patriarchy (represented by her father).<sup>38</sup>

From this autobiographically influenced novel, Bueno Alonso argues that a new genre of contemporary “Hispano-African” narrative has emerged—a fictional one marked by two axes: gender and exile.<sup>39</sup> According to Bueno Alonso, El Hachmi utilizes these thematic elements in a similar way to that of “Maghrebi French writers by endowing the text with a certain exoticism.” Moreover, Bueno Alonso addresses how the work’s migrant subject “constructs de-territorialized

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 117.

<sup>37</sup>Josefina Bueno Alonso, “Género, Exilio y Desterritorialidad.”

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, 1.

text,” questioning national identity, belonging, and literary categories in the process.<sup>40</sup> To specifically categorize El Hachmi’s work in this thematic genre of gender and exile, Bueno Alonso makes use of a particular term: “desterritorialidad” [de-territoriality].<sup>41</sup>

The term refers to, in the context of El Hachmi’s work, the loss of territory in an *emotional* way, where the individual breaks relations with the history and memory of a particular territory. In this case, that territory is Morocco, and El Hachmi articulates an intentional “territorial amnesia” bound to feelings of strangeness and origin-detachment. Bueno Alonso claims that this term is important in the realm of “Hispano-Maghrebi” and “French-Maghrebi” literatures because the complex course of de-territoriality inherently gives the writer, especially female writers, status of the “nomadic subject” and “other” against both their host societies and the traditional societies of their origins (that many claim to dislike).<sup>42</sup>

Prime examples of de-territoriality in El Hachmi’s work are encountered by way of the Islamic veil and the protagonist’s intense sexuality. By refusing to wear the veil and engaging in constant sexual promiscuity, the protagonist intentionally rebels against patriarchal structures, sexism, her origins, and her father (a clear vehicle for these issues).<sup>43</sup> According to Bueno Alonso, this origin resistance (or de-territoriality) is frequently highlighted in other “Hispano-Maghrebi” and “French-African” literatures. Therefore, Bueno Alonso argues that El Hachmi fits the mold of this hybrid Maghrebi literary phenomenon a bit *too* perfectly by rejecting her origins completely.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, 8.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 6-9.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid, 10-12.

Bueno Alonso is joined by academic Cristián H. Ricci in this regard, who confirms that French-speaking Maghrebi writers (*beurs*) use their works to forge the same paths to freedom from patriarchy as their Spanish-speaking counterparts.<sup>45</sup> Ricci even claims that El Hachmi forges this freedom “in a gross and insulting way” in one of her novels, *La caçadora de cossos* [*The Body Hunter*].<sup>46</sup> Ricci expands upon this hybrid Maghrebi commonality and suggests that these literatures are not only similar due to an arbitrary focus on immigrant identity. Instead, Maghrebi hybrid works are intentionally monolithic because immigrant narratives guarantee sales.<sup>47</sup> Essentially, the main takeaway of Cristián H. Ricci and Josefina Bueno Alonso is that Spanish-Maghrebi literature is extremely reminiscent of French-Maghrebi literature. Consequently, we can understand authors like El Hachmi as a typical prototype of hybrid Maghrebi works.

Although Bueno Alonso and Ricci arrive at a literary concurrence, there is clear disagreement in this realm of scholarly literature about hybrid homogeneity and nuance. Academics like Núria Codina resist the idea that writers like Najat El Hachmi fit into common “Hispano-Moroccan” literary categorizations. Codina perceives these classifications as problematic and discusses Najat El Hachmi’s literary divergence and home country “estrangement” in detail. Specifically, Codina argues that the aforementioned categorizations do not apply to all Spanish-Moroccan authors. Instead, the heterogeneity of this literary corpus, such as El Hachmi’s divergence in themes, demonstrate that “Amazigh-Catalan literature, as a form of *migrant literature*, cannot be characterized by a general discourse attributed to the background of the writer.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>46</sup>Codina. “The Work of Najat El Hachmi,” 123.

<sup>47</sup>Bueno Alonso, “Género, Exilio y Desterritorialidad.” 4.

<sup>48</sup>Codina. “The Work of Najat El Hachmi,” 124.

To justify her position against homogeneity, Codina analyzes the autobiographical genre often categorized as “Hispano-Moroccan literature.” In this genre, Codina investigates how Laila Karrouch and Najat El Hachmi approach the subject of “homeland” and the migration process differently. According to Codina, many immigrant literatures define “homelands” as distant after immigration, romanticize origins with nostalgia, and express the migration process as a constant conflict between two identities. Since these themes are considered common, Codina utilizes the work of Laila Karrouch to demonstrate the pattern. However, according to Codina, the works of El Hachmi represent differentiation in these perceived migrant literary “commonalities.” This argued divergence is tied to El Hachmi’s many examples of literary rebellion, or what Codina terms as “emotional estrangement” from Morocco, in comparison with other Spanish-Maghrebi authors like Karrouch, who emphasize their origin “nostalgia.”<sup>49</sup>

Specifically, Codina analyzes El Hachmi’s fictional works, one of those being *La filla estrangera* [*The Foreign Daughter*]. Similar to the *L’últim patriarca*, this work discusses the hybrid identity struggles and religious pressures experienced by a Moroccan immigrant and female narrator (the foreign daughter referenced in the title). A story of rebellion against her mother and her origins, this novel details a more emotional journey of linguistic, personal, and generational discovery against new desires distinct from her roots, her ties to a particular land and her cultural origins, like insisting on straightening her hair to counteract her heritage. Therefore, different from other Spanish-Maghrebi authors like Karrouch, there are clear expressions of origin “emotional estrangement” instead of origin nostalgia.<sup>50</sup> Essentially, Codina’s arguments contrast those of Bueno Alonso and Ricci by stating that North African women negotiate their identities in a myriad of ways. Moreover, since Najat El Hachmi and

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid, 120.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

Laila Karrouch contrast in their relationships to their homeland, Codina contends that all “Hispano-Maghrebi” authors should not be placed into one literary category.

### *Theoretical Framework*

While the above-mentioned academics discuss El Hachmi, El Amrani, and Karrouch, I utilize an alternate theoretical basis for my analysis. Specifically, I employ the pre-existing framework of Ulf Hannerz, an anthropologist from Stockholm University, and apply it to a new context, the Spanish-Maghrebi case. In his article “Flows, Boundaries, and Hybrids: Keywords in Transnational Anthropology,” Hannerz questions the current anthropological vocabulary used to describe globalization, hybridity, and transcultural personhood more broadly.<sup>51</sup> This jargon, from Hannerz’s perspective, is too abstract and does not accurately reflect the “ongoing reorganization of cultural diversity” in our globalized world.<sup>52</sup> As a result, he argues for “fresh” terms—ones that foster immediate understanding of contemporary cultural-contact.

Deemed “keywords of transnational anthropology,” the concepts of “flows,” “boundaries,” and “hybrids” are highlighted by Hannerz as being a “conceptual tool kit” for understanding globalization and identity.<sup>53</sup> Put simply, “flows” have orientation and actively approach a physical location or an identity. “Boundaries” are non-continuous and intentionally cut off one location or identity completely. “Hybrids” are a harmonic collage of two or more identities or locations, with no preference for either.<sup>54</sup> Such a conceptual tool kit becomes especially useful for considering the cases of El Amrani, El Hachmi, and Karrouch. Therefore, I

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<sup>51</sup>Ulf Hannerz. “Flows, Boundaries, and Hybrids: Keywords in Transnational Anthropology,” Stockholm University, 1997.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 2-3.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, 3.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid, 7.

apply these terms to my research analysis—utilizing them to answer a new question about identity negotiation and employing them as a guide for interpreting what Spanish-Maghrebi authors can tell us about hybridity.

Broadly associated with technological, ideological, and cultural exchanges, the first term, flows, can be understood in two ways. According to Hannerz, flows are either 1) shifts of “something over time from one location to another” or 2) “temporal” with “no spatial implication.”<sup>55</sup> More importantly, flows have *directions*.<sup>56</sup> In the context of globalization and immigration, these flows (and their directions) imply a personal identity shift *toward* a different location or personhood. However, Hannerz underscores that one does not lose anything in the process of redistribution. Instead, flows lead toward a direction but can simultaneously be maintained at the source.<sup>57</sup> Individuals defined in terms of flows are *en route*.

Opposing flows, a boundary is an entirely different concept. In particular, Hannerz states that “if ‘flow’ suggests some sort of continuity and passage... ‘boundaries’ have to do with *discontinuity* and obstacles.”<sup>58</sup> More importantly, boundaries imply a “sharp line of demarcation.”<sup>59</sup> Such a demarcation and clear division between two components imply that boundaries encourage the entrance of one thing and force the exit of another (sometimes manifested in behaviors of social exclusion or cultural rejection). In summary, boundaries are neither blurred nor “between” two things. Instead, boundaries assert themselves as clearly differentiated from one identity and clearly belonging to another, without any confusion involved in this distinctiveness.

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, 7.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

A hybrid occupies a different position within the conceptual toolbelt. Dissimilar to flows and boundaries, a hybrid, as its name suggests, insinuates the mixture of two or more components. More specifically, Hannerz utilizes the term to articulate a synergy between “two languages, two linguistic consciousnesses... commenting on one another, unmasking each other, entailing contradiction, ambiguity, irony.”<sup>60</sup> Although it has been used in relation to W.E.B. DuBois’s negative sensation of “twoness” or “double-consciousness,” this combination of selfhoods is advantageous from Hannerz’s perspective. Further, Hannerz asserts that contemporary hybrids do not articulate their position in terms of DuBois’s tragedy.<sup>61</sup> Instead, hybrids celebrate their multiplicity and view it as an opportunity for “cultural recombination” and “renewal.”<sup>62</sup>

This positive interpretation is at the heart of contemporary hybridity, and it is “precisely from the dynamics of [this] mixture” where hybrids draw their vitality.<sup>63</sup> Although analyzing the identity articulations of others becomes increasingly complicated given Spanish-Maghrebi history and our increasingly globalized world, in what follows, I draw upon Ulf Hannerz and his terms flows, boundaries, and hybrids to think about authors Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae El Amrani, and Laila Karrouch. As I hope to demonstrate, these terms help us parse the multiplicity of identities inhabited by these Spanish-Maghrebi women in their literary works.

Resultantly, I examine Spanish-Maghrebi authors in a different way than previous academics and thus offer a new approach to understanding contemporary Spanish-Maghrebi selfhood. Broad in nature, terms typically employed for anthropological description, such as “immigration” and “immigrant,” become unimaginative when applied to practical situations.

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid, 13.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid, 12.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, 12.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, 14.



Consequently, Hannerz's flows, boundaries, and hybrids help conceptualize and ground my research—providing an essential way to think about those authors of dual heritage and background.

### III. Najat El Hachmi

Seemingly fashioned by the cloth of Western feminism and Spanish belonging, Najat El Hachmi strongly differentiates herself from other Spanish-Maghrebi authors by negotiating an identity which is undeniably regionally Spanish. Born in Nador, Morocco in 1979, El Hachmi immigrated with her family at the age of eight to the Catalonian city of Vic, located in the province of Barcelona, Spain.<sup>64</sup> After being educated in Arab literature at the University of Barcelona, El Hachmi gained prestigious recognition for publishing her first autobiographical essay *Jo també sóc catalana* [*I Am Also Catalan*], which discusses her childhood identity negotiation process and gradual feelings of belonging in Spain. El Hachmi navigates similar, autobiographically-influenced topics in her fictional novels *L'últim patriarca* [*The Last Patriarch*], *La caçadora de cossos* [*The Body Hunter*], and *La filla estrangera* [*The Foreign Daughter*].

Winning the 2008 Prix Ulysse and Ramon Llull Literary Prize for *The Last Patriarch*, El Hachmi explores the feminine struggle with sexism, “machismo,” and oppression under Islamic and Moroccan institutions—ones that follow the novel’s protagonist to Catalonia, Spain.<sup>65</sup> El Hachmi expands upon this familial estrangement in *The Foreign Daughter*, where the relationship between Muslim and Moroccan tradition (represented by the protagonist’s mother) and progress (represented by the protagonist’s Spanish integration) grows ever more strained.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>“Najat El Hachmi,” *The Modern Novel*, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.themodernnovel.org/europe/w-europe/catalonia/najat-el-hachmi/#:~:text=Najat%20El%20Hachmi%20was%20born,Catalonia%20when%20she%20was%20eight.&text=Her%20first%20book%20was%20called,her%20family%20integrated%20into%20Catalonia>.

<sup>65</sup>“Contributor: Najat El Hachmi,” *Words Without Borders*, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/contributor/najat-el-hachmi>.

<sup>66</sup>Najat El Hachmi, “LA FILLA ESTRANGERA: NAJAT EL HACHMI: Casa Del Libro,” *casadellibro*, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://www.casadellibro.com/libro-la-figlla-estrangera/9788429774689/2590537>.

Such tropes are common in El Hachmi's works and demonstrate her various attempts to sever ties with Morocco. This severance, coupled with her criticisms of Moroccan society and tradition, inevitably push El Hachmi's identity toward Catalanian-ness. Therefore, in this chapter I argue that El Hachmi situates her broad Spanish identity within Catalonia, Spain, and articulates a selfhood based on Moroccan anti-nostalgia, admiration for Western ideological structures, and passion for the Catalanian educational system. These negotiations of self, often founded on Western Mediterranean feminism, fulfill the role of Ulf Hannerz's "boundary."<sup>67</sup> As a boundary, El Hachmi draws a line of uncrossable demarcation between Spain and Morocco, articulating her identity in diametrical opposition to *magrebidad* and asserting herself as undeniably Catalan. Consequently, she offers a sharp contrast to her Spanish-Maghrebi counterpart, Laila Karrouch, who I will discuss in the following chapter, and directly renounces assumptions that hyphenated identities universally oscillate between two shores.

Combining a palpable distaste for Morocco with concrete Western feminism, El Hachmi reconfigures what it means to occupy a hybrid by completely rejecting immigrant identity and notions of monolithism. Given her extensive literary background, this rejection of immigrant personhood can be widely encountered. However, in this chapter, I primarily focus on her nonfiction works, *Siempre han hablado por nosotras: Feminismo e identidad: Un manifiesto valiente y necesario* [*They Have Always Spoken for Us: Feminism and Identity: A Courageous and Necessary Manifesto*]<sup>68</sup> and *Jo també sóc catalana* [*I am also Catalan*],<sup>69</sup> where El Hachmi breaks traditional immigrant ties and conveys her opinions from the perspective of a Spanish-Catalonian woman. Arguing against structures which oppress and limit the freedoms of women,

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<sup>67</sup>Hannerz. "Flows, Boundaries, and Hybrids," 7.

<sup>68</sup>Najat El Hachmi, *Siempre han hablado por nosotras*

<sup>69</sup>Najat El Hachmi, *I Am Also Catalan*, partial trans. Julia Sanches. (Columna, 2004).

*They Have Always Spoken for Us* authoritatively comments on feminist philosophy, which, for the sake of this thesis, can be defined as “both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms.”<sup>70</sup> Specifically El Hachmi renegotiates her regional Spanish identity by placing it in commonality with Western feminism, a branch of feminist philosophy cultivated around common Western cultural beliefs, and against Moroccan patriarchal traditions.<sup>71</sup>

Before proceeding with analysis, it is necessary to recognize the distinct nature of both Spanish and Catalan cultures and the complicated history between Spanishness and Catalonianness. It is also important to emphasize that these two identities (Catalan identity and Spanish identity) are not interchangeable for all of those living in Catalonia. Instead, they are even antonyms at times. However, for El Hachmi specifically, these two identities appear somewhat synonymous in her works; she writes equally in Spanish and Catalan and expresses pride for both Spanish regional identity and Spanish national identity. Language choices and articulations of pride (for both Catalan and Spanish identities) are powerful tools in literature. Therefore, going forward in this chapter, I often cite Catalan and Spanish identities together, sometimes interchangeably, because that is the nature of El Hachmi’s identity; she is a Spanish-Catalan woman, expressing both selfhoods equally.

To successfully articulate her Spanish belonging, El Hachmi utilizes three primary vehicles in her works: origin anti-nostalgia, adoration for Catalonian educational systems, and advocacy for Western feminist ideologies. However, her most blatant technique is her utilization of origin anti-nostalgia—meaning that she underscores a diametrical resistance to

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<sup>70</sup>Noëlle McAfee, "Feminist Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/feminist-philosophy/>.

<sup>71</sup>Violet K. Dixon, Western Feminism in a Global Perspective. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse* 3 (02) (2011), <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=395>

Morocco, its religious traditions, and its familial structures in order to corroborate her own regional belonging in Spain. Therefore, contempt for one's homeland (and its cultural and religious structures by extension) occupies an important part of El Hachmi's Spanish-Maghrebi identity negotiation process. This process concretely dismisses notions of a "pendulum" personhood, draws a sharp line of demarcation between her and Morocco, and differentiates El Hachmi from other Spanish-Maghrebi authors.

### *Anti-nostalgia*

In the opening chapters of *They Have Always Spoken for Us*, El Hachmi clarifies her definition of feminism and addresses the grounds on which her Moroccan anti-nostalgia evolved: experiences with patriarchy, sexism, and Islamic-based trauma.<sup>72</sup> On the very first page, El Hachmi writes,

Cuando digo feminismo, cuando digo libertad, me refiero a vivir sin que me releguen a un segundo plano, sin que mi existencia, mi opinión, mi placer y mi dolor valgan menos que la existencia, la opinión, el placer y el dolor valgan menos que la existencia, la opinión, el placer y el dolor de mis hermanos hombres. Cuando digo libertad digo dignidad, me refiero a dejar de sentirme encerrada en la cocina, en casa, en la familia, en la religión o en la tribu.

[When I say feminism, when I say freedom, I mean living without being relegated to the background, without my existence, my opinion, my pleasure and my pain being worth less than the existence, opinion, pleasure and pain of my male brothers. When I say freedom I say dignity, I mean to stop feeling locked in the kitchen, at home, in the family, in religion or in the tribe.]<sup>73</sup>

Sacudirme de encima las incontables mordazas, leyes del silencio y normas ancestrales que me limitan, que hacen que mi existencia sea infinitamente más limitada de lo que podría ser, que me relegan, una y otra vez, a ocupar un lugar sin valor, sin importancia... En las páginas siguientes explicaré el machismo concreto del que provengo y de qué manera se ha ido transformando en teorías aparentemente feministas.

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<sup>72</sup>El Hachmi, *Siempre han hablado por nosotras*, 9, 11.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

[Shake me from the countless jaws, laws of silence and ancestral norms that limit me, which make my existence infinitely more limited than it could be, that regulate me, time and again, to occupy a place without value, without importance...In the following pages, I will explain the concrete machismo from which I come and how it has been transformed into seemingly feminist theories.]<sup>74</sup>

Although El Hachmi does not use the term “anti-nostalgia” directly, she heavily criticizes Morocco and her ancestry at the onset of her work, citing various laws and traditions as provoking her unadulterated hatred. Clear from the text, El Hachmi desires to be disassociated from Morocco and Islam, and this disassociation is explained throughout the manifesto as being linked to feminism. For El Hachmi, that feminism defines Islam as an oppressive force which limits the experiences of women, and she uses various methods to confirm this perspective.<sup>75</sup> For example, El Hachmi utilizes both metaphor and visual imagery in order to provoke empathy within the reader and provide tangible symbols of anti-nostalgia. Specifically, El Hachmi explains the “concrete machismo from which [she] comes” by relying on one key metaphor: the curtain in the middle of the courtyard.<sup>76</sup>

As a child in Morocco, El Hachmi narrates an experience attending her cousin’s wedding. Trailing behind her mother to the ceremony’s courtyard, El Hachmi was saddened to find the space divided by gender and a curtain from end to end.<sup>77</sup> On one side of the curtain, the men’s side, El Hachmi describes a liberating energy of entertainment, dancers, and noise. On the other side, the women’s side, El Hachmi describes a depressing scene: regulated silence, saddened shadows sitting against the wall, and feelings of being “como fantasmas” [like ghosts] to the world.<sup>78</sup> Although disheartened by this situation, El Hachmi emphasizes that it is one to which

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, 11.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid, 25.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid, 26.

she was accustomed, and it is this same curtain dichotomy (oppressed women and liberated men) that she sees reflected in other Moroccan memories. In particular, El Hachmi uses the curtain in the middle of the courtyard as a precursor to another anti-nostalgia metaphor: the veil. A visual image for silence and concealment of personhood, the veil is considered by El Hachmi as the embodiment of gender oppression. She utilizes a famous saying among veiled women to authenticate her argument. She writes,

Dicen “chis” a cada momento y evocan el famoso dicho: “Que tu voz nunca se oiga más allá del umbral, que los desconocidos nunca sepan si en casa hay mujeres o no, que no puedan ni imaginar el sonido que emite tu garganta.”

[They say “shhh” at every moment and evoke the famous saying: “May your voice never be heard beyond the threshold, may strangers never know whether there are women at home or not, may they never even imagine the sound that your throat emits.”]<sup>79</sup>

Such an evocation is powerful in the hands of El Hachmi, who sculpts this phrase, the curtain, and the veil into symbolic elements of her “muted” childhood and anti-nostalgia for Morocco more broadly. The above excerpt speaks to the silence that El Hachmi, and many women in Morocco, have faced at the hands of patriarchy. Therefore, this forced silence becomes a tool for El Hachmi’s feminist purpose and a loud indicator for her Spanish belonging. Paradoxically, she does not extend this same anti-nostalgia to Spain when discussing the subject of “machismo.” Instead, El Hachmi unfairly absolves Spain of all culpability and even claims that “machismo” and the veil “emigrated” to and “colonized” the Western world.<sup>80</sup> Considering Spain’s imperialist past and patriarchal present, this absolution of Spanish chauvinism reveals El Hachmi’s implicit naivete to Western sins. However, more importantly, this statement also demonstrates the intensity of her anti-nostalgia for Morocco—an intensity only manageable if

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid, 30, 35.

she blindly ignores the sexism of the Spanish society she so adores. Consequently, from El Hachmi's view, the veil's presence in this society proves that the curtain in the middle of the courtyard transcends Morocco and continues to perpetrate the ultimate crime: "patriarcado religioso" [religious patriarchy].<sup>81</sup>

This anti-nostalgic, highly critical sentiment towards Morocco is further developed in the chapter "Ser o no ser una mujer musulmana" [To be or not to be a Muslim woman], where El Hachmi concretely grapples with her national and religious identities.<sup>82</sup> Employing nightmarish references to chains, death, and imprisonment in the chapter's opening pages, El Hachmi makes a clear statement: she, and women like her, feel trapped in Morocco's religious structures.<sup>83</sup> For example, El Hachmi articulates her experience as a Muslim child wearing the veil and submitting to traditional Islamic practices. In this context, she relays scenarios of body and gender entrapment.<sup>84</sup> Throughout the chapter, she writes,

En el caso de las mujeres que nacimos en el islam, el machismo concreto se articula férreamente en los mensajes de un predicador que vivió hace más de mil cuatrocientos años y que afirmaba recibir directamente de Dios las palabras que acabarían configurando el texto fundamental del islam, el Corán.

[In the case of women who were born in Islam, concrete machismo is fiercely articulated in the messages of a preacher who lived more than a fourteen hundred years ago and who claimed to receive directly from God the words that would eventually shape the fundamental text of Islam, the Qur'an.]<sup>85</sup>

Todo el islam posee una característica inmutable: su animadversión por las mujeres, su misoginia estructural.

[All Islam has an immutable feature: its animosity towards women, its structural misogyny.]<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid, 64.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid, 37-50.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid, 41-42.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid, 40.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid, 43-44.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid, 37.



Por todo ello, no fuimos plenamente conscientes de nuestra *identidad* islámica hasta que no reclamamos nuestros derechos como mujeres, pues, como decía justamente Rosa Luxemburgo, el que no se mueve no nota las cadenas.

[Therefore, we were not fully aware of our Islamic identity until we claimed our rights as women, because, as Rosa Luxemburg rightly said, the one who does not move does not notice the chains.]<sup>87</sup>

Although the above excerpts recognize Islam's important positionality in El Hachmi's past, they also leave nothing to interpretation, with religious "chain" references being coupled with blatant critiques of "machismo."<sup>88</sup> Such imagery is important for El Hachmi's identity negotiation, and she employs it to describe other instances of origin anti-nostalgia, such as that which was cultivated at her secondary school in Spain.

A teenager passionate about becoming a symbol for "true, fundamentalist Islam," El Hachmi describes the day that she willingly entered school wrapped in a headscarf.<sup>89</sup> Once inside the building, El Hachmi's academic director quickly informed her that she was forbidden to wear it in school. Such a policy is implicitly Islamophobic and, at the time of the event, made El Hachmi a victim left emotional and outraged. However, El Hachmi reacts differently now. Disregarding her school's capitulation to hegemonic culture, El Hachmi reflects on Spain's intolerance of Muslim headscarves as a moment which fostered anti-nostalgia for Morocco and gratitude for Spain. As a result, a subtext of Catalan conformity exists in El Hachmi's Islamic rebellion, and this contradiction demonstrates the lengths that El Hachmi will go to avoid her roots. Moreover, it can be interpreted as the exemplar of El Hachmi's selfhood: an extreme rejection of all things traditionally Maghrebi even at the cost of reinforcing islamophobia herself. Praising the academic director for removing her from school and referring to her as a "woman of

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid, 46.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid, 66.

character who was defending the rights of girls to parents of Moroccan origin,”<sup>90</sup> El Hachmi writes,

¡Qué suerte tuve! Nunca le agradeceré lo suficiente que me impusiera ese límite. Gracias a ella no pude cavar mi propia tumba abrazando la prisión del islamismo.

[How lucky I was! I would never thank her enough for imposing that limit on me. Thanks to her, I could not dig my own grave by embracing the prison of Islamism.]<sup>91</sup>

Grateful for Western feminism and combative against Islamic tradition, El Hachmi demonstrates a dynamic in the above excerpt, a dynamic that inherently comes to define her hybridity.

Specifically, from the above comparisons, it can be deduced that El Hachmi’s hybridity is hinged to the idea that feminism is synonymous with Spain and death is synonymous with Islam and Morocco. Such comparisons are extreme, cryptic, and biased given Spain’s Francoist history of sexism, but they are fundamental components of El Hachmi’s identity negotiation process.

Without this complete rejection of Morocco, El Hachmi cannot justify her unwavering allegiance to Spain, so dark idioms referencing prison, death, and graves populate the majority of El Hachmi’s work, with the above excerpt being only one example of her intentional emotional estrangement. She confirms similar sentiments in her interviews: “Un velo es un prisión ambulante” [The veil is a walking prison].<sup>92</sup> Resultantly, from this discussion of anti-nostalgia, it can be concluded that El Hachmi’s version of *españolidad* is complementary to her complete rejection of Moroccanness, and this mutually exclusive context allows her Catalanian personhood to freely overwhelm any remnant of her past.

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid, 67.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Jesús Ruiz Mantilla. “Najat El Hachmi: ‘Un Velo Es Una Prisión Ambulante.’” El País, August 20, 2021. <https://elpais.com/revista-de-verano/2021-08-20/najat-el-hachmi-un-velo-es-una-prision-ambulante.html>.

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From my research on other authors, this overtly unequal dynamic in the Spanish-Maghrebi hybrid is unique to El Hachmi. However, all three writers seem to merge in one area of identity; they corroborate their Spanishness through expressions of linguistic love for Catalan, Castilian, and educational systems. El Hachmi confirms this connection early in her migration story and states that because Spain first taught her how to read and write, her identity quickly became tethered to the tools of Catalan language and education.<sup>93</sup> Interchangeable with “freedom,” these tools were frequently called upon in El Hachmi’s early migration and propelled her towards a more regional Spanish identity. For instance, El Hachmi highlights education as an emotional haven and home as she grew evermore estranged from her parents’ tradition. She writes,

Y a mí me aterrorizaba la idea de dejar de ir al colegio, donde me sentía a gusto, a veces más a gusto que en casa.

[And I was terrified of the idea of being taken out of school, where I felt at ease, sometimes more at ease than home.]<sup>94</sup>

Materializing as almost a reaction to what she describes as a “muted childhood,” this comfort in Catalan language and educational systems fostered more than new invocations of “home.” As we can draw from the above excerpt, it also nurtured a new, regional sense of self. Demonstrating education’s importance for her identity, El Hachmi’s fear, provoked by the possibility of being removed from school, confirms an unwavering attachment to Catalonian systems. This attachment is reinforced in her other works, such as her autobiographical book *I Am Also Catalan*.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>El Hachmi, *Siempre han hablado por nosotras*, 41, 55.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid, 41, 56.

<sup>95</sup>El Hachmi, *I Am Also Catalan*.

Arguing for recognition and expressing love for Catalan, *I Am Also Catalan* explores El Hachmi's childhood from the perspective of her mother, who was an active witness to El Hachmi's rejection of Morocco and integration into Catalanian culture.<sup>96</sup> Crucial for confirming her full Catalan identity, El Hachmi's acquisition of Catalan is characterized as innate by her mother, who connects their scorned mother tongue, Amazigh, to the previously banned Catalan as "sister languages."<sup>97</sup> Although El Hachmi experienced "increasingly feeble ties...to Morocco," this linguistic connection between minority languages created a comfort for El Hachmi, and in time, her mother states that no one was able to "pry a word of Amazigh" from El Hachmi's lips.<sup>98</sup>

El Hachmi validates that her love for Catalan was sort of inherited in an interview with *Words Without Borders*.<sup>99</sup> In this interview, El Hachmi explains that, like in her autobiographically inspired book *The Foreign Daughter*, Amazigh remains a family language after immigration but is significantly reduced after relocation. Although there is a process of loss and discovery in relocation, Catalan became "a refuge" for her and acted as an internal space for thought, written expression, and literary inspiration. Moreover, while she is the same person in all languages, El Hachmi asserts that her identity is most expanded by Catalan because it has more emotional and "linguistic tools" available.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, linguistic love and admiration for the Catalanian educational system comprises a large portion of El Hachmi's selfhood, somewhat neutralizing her harsh, anti-nostalgic criticisms against the Maghreb.

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid, 8.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid, 11.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid, 7-9.

<sup>99</sup>Najat El Hachmi, "An Interview with Najat El Hachmi," Interview by Jessie Chaffee, *Words Without Borders*, March 30, 2016, <http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/dispatches/article/an-interview-with-najat-el-hachmi>.

<sup>100</sup>El Hachmi, Interview, *Words Without Borders*.

## *Mediterraneanism*

Moving away from the articulations of Spanish regional identity, El Hachmi verifies that broader, Mediterranean subjectivity dwells in Spanish-Maghrebi discourse as well. Bound together by shared histories, the Strait of Gibraltar, and geographical borders, Spain and the Maghreb have negotiated their relations long before Spanish-Maghrebi authors like El Hachmi. However, such relations come to a head in Spanish-Maghrebi writings, and El Hachmi illustrates how broader Mediterranean consciousness, Western feminist ideologies, and rejection of immigrant personhood foster a complimentary connection between El Hachmi's version of *españolidad* and her rejection of *magrebidad*. Resultantly, the interconnected Mediterranean of many Maghrebis binds them to Spanishness, and El Hachmi utilizes this linkage to argue for Western ideological causes, her concrete inclusion into *españolidad*, and her perspective as a Spanish woman in *They Have Always Spoken for Us*.

Asserting her inclusion into Mediterranean institutions, El Hachmi creates a case for transcontinental feminist camaraderie and expresses how such spaces become a refuge for Spanish-Maghrebi women. A natural collaboration due to “decades of solidarity between feminists on both shores of the Mediterranean,” Western feminism acts as a primary informant for El Hachmi's opinions.<sup>101</sup> One such opinion regards hatred for “patriarchal colonizers.” For El Hachmi, that primary “colonizer” is fundamentalist Islam.<sup>102</sup> By making this comparison, El Hachmi paradoxically draws nearer to her origins and uses it as ammunition for feminist purposes. Specifically, she plays off her internal juxtaposition and approaches Islam (in order to claim heightened Maghrebi understanding) and simultaneously distances herself from it (in order to argue for Western personhood).

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<sup>101</sup>El Hachmi, *Siempre han hablado por nosotras*, 127.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid*, 127-9.

This approach can be completed by those of hybrid background, like El Hachmi, who clearly takes advantage of her position. Actively defending “white” feminism against the inclusion of “Islamic Feminism” and Islam more generally, El Hachmi aligns herself with Western feminists and removes herself from Islamic contexts. However, interestingly, she simultaneously claims that her own “second-rate citizen” experiences in Morocco give her the authority to critique “machista Islam.”<sup>103</sup> Therefore, in this negotiation of self, El Hachmi must argue for her inclusion into Western feminism and also defend herself against minority feminist groups. For example, she writes,

Digan lo que digan, en las mujeres blancas occidentales yo he encontrado solidaridad, ayuda y comprensión, un apoyo imprescindible sin el cual ahora no estaría aquí escribiendo todo esto.

[Say what you want, in white Western women I have found solidarity, help, and understanding, an indispensable support without which I would not be writing all this now.]<sup>104</sup>

Pues no, mujer, no es así, seas musulmana, negra, gitana o cualquier otra cosa, lamento decirte que tu enemiga no es la mujer blanca occidental. Tus enemigos son el patriarcado que te maltrata, el polígamo al que le importa muy poco el daño que te provoca el hecho de que se case por segunda vez, el jefe que te paga un sueldo más bajo que a tu compañero de trabajo, el padre que vela por tu virginidad... Lo siento, chicas, pero os equivocáis: vuestro enemigo no es la señora que os pregunta por qué lleváis pañuelo, vuestro enemigo es el hombre que se cree con derecho a violaros por el simple hecho de ser mujeres. Si os parece una idea muy blanca, muy occidental, peor para vosotras, la historia va como va, y resulta que, en lo que respecta a derechos conquistados, las occidentales nos llevan la delantera.

[Well, no woman, it’s not like that, whether you’re Muslim, black, gypsy or anything else, I’m sorry to tell you that your enemy is not the white Western woman. Your enemies are the patriarchy that mistreats you, the polygamist who cares very little about the damage caused by the fact that he marries a second time, the boss who pays you a lower salary than your co-worker, the father who watches over your virginity... I’m sorry girls, but you’re wrong: your enemy is not the lady who asks you why you wear a headscarf, your enemy is the man who believes he has the right to rape you for the simple fact of being women. If it seems like a very white idea, very Western, worse for you,

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid, 99-100.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid, 108.

history goes the way it goes, and it turns out that, with regard to conquered rights, the Westerners lead us.]<sup>105</sup>

From the above excerpts, it is clear that El Hachmi speaks primarily from the perspective of a Western woman, and she defends herself (and her feminist arguments) from any critics who might perceive her as a shill for dismissing her roots. Specifically, El Hachmi attempts to refute notions of eurocentrism by aligning herself with feminism more broadly and attacking the darker sides of patriarchal religion (such as abuse). Engaging in whataboutism and avoiding critiques of her own hypocrisy, El Hachmi's arguments against Islam are unconvincing, especially since she ignores the patriarchal hegemonies of European Christianity. This strategy is extreme compared to El Amrani and Karrouch, who avoid such tactics in their consolidation of Spanishness. However, for El Hachmi, it is a staple of identity negotiation, and it becomes clear evidence against Spanish-Maghrebi monolithism.

In an interview with *ABC*, El Hachmi further solidifies her Mediterranean identity by rejecting migrancy completely. She bluntly states,

No soy una inmigrante. En realidad soy un paquete que alguien decidió llevar de un sitio a otro. Yo me considero plenamente catalana.

[I am not an immigrant. In reality, I am a package that someone decided to take from one place to another. I consider myself fully Catalan.]<sup>106</sup>

Such an unwavering sense of self is essential to El Hachmi's arguments because, although she feels "more at ease in the host country (Spain) than the country that was supposed to be" hers, the media has always assumed otherwise due to her origins.<sup>107</sup> As a result, she fights against

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid, 109.

<sup>106</sup>Najat El Hachmi, "No soy una paquete que alguien trajo aquí," *Interview* by David Morán, *ABC*, February 2, 2008, [http://www.abc.es/hemeroteca/historico-02-02-2008/abc/Cultura/no-soy-una-inmigrante-soy-un-paquete-que-alguien-trajo-aqui\\_1641607730451.html](http://www.abc.es/hemeroteca/historico-02-02-2008/abc/Cultura/no-soy-una-inmigrante-soy-un-paquete-que-alguien-trajo-aqui_1641607730451.html).

<sup>107</sup>El Hachmi, *Siempre han hablado por nosotras*, 76.

stereotypical assumptions, and her approach is to avoid questioning her Western Mediterranean connection and negotiate her European-Spanish selfhood with finality. El Hachmi does so by claiming full integration, stating “you cannot live with one foot on either side of the Strait,” and underscoring that she chooses Spanishness.<sup>108</sup> She states,

A lo mejor estoy colonizada, pero ¿sabéis qué?, puestos a escoger, prefiero la colonización liberadora que la castración perpetua del patriarcado, aunque sea el propio.

[Perhaps I am colonized, but do you know what?, asked to choose, I prefer liberating colonization than perpetual castration of patriarchy, even though it is my own.]<sup>109</sup>

From above, it is clear that El Hachmi negotiates her identity by way of radical, provocative hypercorrection, and she enacts her Spanish-Maghrebi identity by expressing extreme praise for the West and an unbending anti-nostalgia for Morocco. Above, we can even extract contradictory notions of this praise, with El Hachmi calling the West and Spain a “liberating colonizer” to somewhat appease her critics. Therefore, embroidered with the beads of Catalanian personhood and Western feminism, El Hachmi conciliates the “paradoxical” debate between *españolidad* and *magrebidad* by choosing an undeniable regional Spanish identity: Catalan. Different from other Spanish-Maghrebi authors, El Hachmi acts as Ulf Hannerz’s boundary, and she draws a harsh line in the sand against any notion of Moroccaness. Consequently, El Hachmi is not only a solid representation of Spanish-Maghrebi variability, but the epitome of it.

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid, 56-58, 76.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid, 114.



#### IV. Lamiae El Amrani

Christened “the daughter of Granada,”<sup>110</sup> and a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of its importance as “the main point of contact between Morocco and Andalusia,” the city of Tétouan, Morocco, has naturally birthed other “Spanish” daughters.<sup>111</sup> One of those daughters is Spanish-Maghrebi poet Lamiae El Amrani. Using her works as vehicles for identity negotiation, El Amrani grapples with the multicultural aspects of her selfhood through indirect metaphor and by actively pursuing broad Spanishness, unwavering Mediterranean familiarity, and a subtle Moroccan anti-nostalgia without total severance from the Maghreb. However, this severance is unnecessary in El Amrani’s case, whose *españolidad* is undeniably complimented by her origins.

Growing up in a northern Mediterranean port city a few miles south of the Strait of Gibraltar, El Amrani’s childhood in Tétouan undoubtedly propelled her toward Spanishness due to its former status as the capital of Spain’s Moroccan protectorate.<sup>112</sup> This propulsion is confirmed by El Amrani’s education at the University of Abdelmalek Essaadi, the University of Seville, and the University of Zaragoza, where she received her undergraduate degree in Spanish Language and Literature, her Master’s in Cultural Management, and her PhD in Communication, Criticism of Culture, and Journalism respectively.<sup>113</sup> Such academic and childhood experiences are narrated throughout her poetic works, and similar to Najat El Hachmi and Laila Karrouch, El Amrani’s poetry collections and single poem publishings are autobiographically-marked, offering thoughts on the immigrant experience, Spanish belonging, and origins. However, given El Amrani’s chosen medium of expression, her articulations are slightly more metaphorical,

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<sup>110</sup>Eric Calderwood, *Colonial Al-Andalus Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), Chapter 7.

<sup>111</sup>UNESCO World Heritage Centre. “Medina of Tétouan (Formerly Known as Titawin).” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed February 20, 2022. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/837>.

<sup>112</sup>James A. Chandler, “Spain and Her Moroccan Protectorate 1898-1927,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 10, no. 2 (1975): 301-22, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/260149>.

<sup>113</sup>Lamiae El Amrani, “Linked In,” <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lamiae-el-amrani-14a47236>.

subtle, and symbolic. Poetry publishings like *Un suspiro inapreciable de una noche cualquiera* [A Priceless Sigh of Any Night], *Poesía Maya Contemporánea; Antología en trilingüe: maya, español y árabe* [Contemporary Maya Poetry; Trilingual Anthology: Maya, Spanish, and Arabic], and *Tormenta de especias* [Storm of Spices] encapsulate these styles of selfhood expression.

Since El Amrani does not explicitly state that her poetry is autobiographical, to analyze her texts, I employ the concept of the “implied author” (IA), originally coined by Wayne C. Booth in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), and the interpretations of literary academic Dan Shen.<sup>114</sup> Put simply, the IA is not the “flesh-and-blood” author. Instead, it is the impression of the author that readers gather from the real author’s texts. According to Booth, this impression is “created” by the real author “as they were discovering or creating themselves” in their writing and can correspond with the real author themselves, even if not explicitly stated.<sup>115</sup> Shen summarizes this and states that “the difference between the ‘real author’ and the ‘implied author’ (the real author’s ‘second self’) is that between the person in daily life and the *same* person in the process of writing with a certain ‘air’ or stance...making textual choices.”<sup>116</sup> Consequently, I use this concept when analyzing El Amrani’s poetry to connect the poetic voice (the IA) to the real author, Lamiae El Amrani.

In the prologue of *Tormenta de especias*, this connection from poetic voice (IA) to Lamiae El Amrani is referenced. Written by literary critic and writer Abdelkader Chaui, the prologue comments on the nature of poetry itself and this implicit connection between poet and poetic verse. Specifically, Chaui claims,

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<sup>114</sup>Dan Shen. “What Is the Implied Author?” *Style* 45, no. 1 (2011): 80–98.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.45.1.80>.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid, 80-81.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid, 81-82

Escribir es algo más elaborado, y requiere una sensibilidad muy graduada; es, sencillamente, cuando el poeta, como es el caso de Lamiae, se propone concebir literariamente una "visión del mundo" y de su propio ser.

[Writing is something more elaborate, and it requires a very gradual sensitivity; it is, put simply, when the poet, as is the case with Lamiae, intends to literarily conceive a "vision of the world" and of her own being.]<sup>117</sup>

En el porqué de la poesía reside su esencia, es decir, cuando la poesía habla, de algún modo, de su poeta y de ella misma (el juego de la lengua y su poder de transformar lo real en sublime, en fantástico) es cuando renace su capacidad infinita de conjugar nuestra existencia y revelar nuestra vida.

[In the reason of poetry lies its essence, that is, when poetry speaks, in some way, of its poet and of itself (the play of language and its power to transform the real into sublime, into fantastic) is when its infinite capacity to combine our existence and reveal our life is reborn.]<sup>118</sup>

From the above excerpts, approved by El Amrani to be included upon publication, Chaui speaks of poetry's ability to create visions of the world and of the poet and to connect the real and the sublime to the poet and real life. Consequently, Chaui indicates that El Amrani intentionally placed visions of herself in her poetry, and it is from this prologue (and other indications of the IA) that I primarily analyze *Tormenta de especias* [*Storm of Spices*] as an autobiographically-influenced source.<sup>119</sup>

Clearly impacted by El Amrani's current residence in Seville, Spain, this work references El Amrani's natural progression toward Spanishness, given the city's ancient Andalusian, Moroccan, and Spanish cultural connections.<sup>120</sup> This more intuitive progression toward Spain directly contrasts to the blunt, sometimes indelicate approach of El Hachmi. Therefore, Spanish-Maghrebi poet El Amrani negotiates her dual identity in a more effortless way. In this chapter, I

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<sup>117</sup>Lamiae El Amrani. *Tormenta de especias*, 10.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid, 11.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>El Amrani, "Linked In."

examine *Tormenta de especias* [*Storm of Spices*]<sup>121</sup> and argue that her poetic voice (and therefore El Amrani herself) claims broader Spanishness (instead of regional identity) and acts in accordance with Ulf Hannerz's "flow" concept. As a flow, El Amrani concurrently preserves her Moroccan roots while actively pursuing Spain. Thus, her poetic voice offers an example of subtle literary anti-nostalgia for Morocco and belonging in Spain which is hidden by traditional metaphor, Arabic-Castilian linguistic combinations, and indirect characterizations of Spain as a lover and the Maghreb as a captor.

### *Covert Anti-nostalgia*

This literary duality is utilized extensively throughout El Amrani's works, especially in *Tormenta de especias* [*Storm of Spices*]. A poetry collection narrated from the poetic voice of El Amrani (and Spanish-Maghrebi immigrant women more generally), *Tormenta de especias* aims to amplify feminine voices from the "south" (the Maghreb) who idolize the "paradise that everyone talks about" (Spain).<sup>122</sup> If we read the poetic voice for El Amrani herself, such an amplification somewhat requires the poet to distance herself from her homeland. Similar to Spanish-Maghrebi authors El Hachmi and Karrouch, El Amrani employs various strategies to create this distance. One of those strategies is origin anti-nostalgia. Approaching anti-nostalgia in a more elusive way than the other authors, El Amrani conducts a sort of covert estrangement from Morocco and draws upon descriptions of uncomfortable Moroccan savannas, burial themes, and intentional memory loss to characterize Morocco as an environment to be avoided and a memory to be suppressed. Therefore, El Amrani's identity negotiation is serpentine and reveals subtle resistance against Morocco without total detachment.

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid, 67.

Articulating this emotional estrangement, El Amrani's anti-nostalgia poems are varied in subject matter. However, akin to El Hachmi, many poems touch upon discomfort, darkness, and sexism. Resultantly, El Amrani's subtle literary departure from Morocco becomes a fundamental element of her identity negotiation process. We can see this process at work in poems like "Apuntes para la memoria"<sup>123</sup> [Notes for memory], "Aljibe"<sup>124</sup> [Well], and "Sin alas"<sup>125</sup> [Without wings]—all of which I analyze.

Distant memories and repressed childhood experiences commonly populate the human mind regardless of one's origins. It is also not unusual for childhood recollections to unconsciously surface in poetic verse. However, El Amrani's poetic voice diverges from the norm by actively voicing a tainted remembrance, and at times an intentional suppression, of childhood, her past, and Morocco itself. Resultantly, if we connect the poetic voice to El Amrani, anti-nostalgia manifests itself through *anti*-remembrance, or the conscious decision to forget traumatic pasts. The first manifestation of anti-nostalgia appears in "Apuntes para la memoria" [Notes for memory].<sup>126</sup> El Amrani writes,

Una taza de café sobre la mesa, [a cup of coffee on the table]  
Una silla coja, [a lame chair]  
Un tapiz medio roto, [a half broken tapestry]  
Y su memoria borrada [and her memory erased]  
A golpe de fuego. [at the stroke of fire.]  
Ella escribe cartas, [She writes letters,]  
Sobre un techo agujereado [about a roof punctured]  
Por la dureza del tiempo. [by the harshness of time]  
En su cara se dibujan caminos [On her face are drawn paths]  
Gastados por la lejía, [worn by bleach,]  
Y sigue escribiendo [she continues writing]  
Con tiza sobre ese techo blanco, [with chalk on that white roof]  
a escondidas de su memoria. [hidden from her memory.]<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid, 21.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid, 49.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid, 25.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid, 21.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

Discussing the process of anti-remembrance and alluding to Moroccan architectural styles, this poem underscores the broken remnants of one's memory ("half broken tapestry") and how these halved pieces were intentionally erased "at the stroke of fire."<sup>128</sup> In my opinion, the element of fire represents the poet's literary passions in Spain, seeing as though they catalyzed both migration and memory erasure. Such an interpretation, corroborated in an interview about El Amrani's passions, meshes well with the poem's other thematic elements. For example, "the harshness of time," white houses, and white roofs allude to Morocco.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, we must examine how such elements relate to El Amrani's origins.

While similar architectural structures appear throughout Spain, El Amrani's home in Tétouan, Morocco, provides understanding as to what the poem's "white roof" could represent. Nicknamed "The White Dove" due to its city-wide white color scheme, Tétouan is a city indirectly described by the poetic voice as "punctured" and hosting the "harshness of time."<sup>130</sup> While these negative elements do not necessarily provoke strong anti-nostalgia, like the extreme anti-nostalgia of El Hachmi, the poetic voice does emphasize that Moroccan memories are intentionally "escondidas de su memoria" [hidden from her memory].<sup>131</sup> Therefore, if we read the poetic voice for El Amrani herself, El Amrani's anti-nostalgia for Morocco is indirectly demonstrated by way of memory erasure—highlighting that this "homeland" is only vaguely her home, even in her mind.

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<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid.

Other poems like “Sin alas”<sup>132</sup> [Without wings] and “Aljibe”<sup>133</sup> [Well], reject past memories more directly. Specifically, the poetic voice demonstrates a more somber, psychological tone in her remembrance of Morocco. In the following excerpt of “Sin alas,” this remembrance is gloomy but compliments the excerpt from “Aljibe,” which sketches a psychological departure from Morocco. El Amrani writes,

La ilusión la ha abandonado, [The illusion has abandoned her,]  
su vida se ha enterrado [her life has been buried]  
bajo esos gritos, [under those screams,]  
bajo esas sabanas que alguna vez, [under those savannas that once,]  
que una vez, la acariciaron, [that once, caressed her,]  
la vida la ha dedicado [life has dedicated her]  
a una plancha insatisfecha, [to an unsatisfied iron]  
a una voz de huracán, [to a hurricane voice,]  
a unos ojos que truenan, [to thundering eyes,]  
a unas manos que ladran. [to barking hands.]<sup>134</sup>

Paseando por tu mente [Passing through your mind]  
encuentro desiertos, [I encounter deserts,]  
puertos abandonados, [abandoned ports,]  
...  
Naces en una orilla [You are born on a shore]  
Sin nombre. [without name]  
pero con número..., [but with a number...,]  
ese número te acompaña [this number accompanies you]  
hacia un fondo [towards a point of departure]  
Sin fondo, [unfathomable,]  
hacia un viaje [towards a journey]  
sin retorno. [without return.]<sup>135</sup>

Although other poems like “A orillas de Marrakech” [On the shores of Marrakesh]<sup>136</sup> explicitly reference Morocco and contain similar tropes of buried screams, the above excerpt of “Sin alas” more readily articulates the poetic voice’s personal relationship with her homeland and explains

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid, 25.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid, 49.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid, “Sin alas,” 25

<sup>135</sup>Ibid, “Aljibe,” 49.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid, 45.

how this relationship, once comforting in its “savannas,” has morphed into something undesirable.<sup>137</sup> Specifically, “Sin alas” metaphorically expresses the reasoning behind the poetic voice’s departure from Morocco: traditional gender roles and sexism. Coupled with themes of burial, fear (screams), entrapment (“without wings”), and abandoned illusions, the poetic voice articulates a life tethered to an “unsatisfied iron” and subservient to “barking hands” and “thundering eyes.” Therefore, with these hints toward gender oppression, the poetic voice can speak to El Amrani’s anti-nostalgia for Morocco which is neither obvious nor omitted. Instead, it is simply convoluted.

As demonstrated above, this is distance more official in “Aljibe”<sup>138</sup> [Well], where psychological departure from Morocco is accompanied by forgotten memories. Describing the immigration process and how relocation is performed in the mind, the poetic voice details how she and others of immigrant background intentionally abandon their past lives. The mind becomes a desert, ports of remembrance become neglected, and key sites, like those of birth, become nameless destinations. Essentially, the poetic voice indicates that El Amrani has mentally and physically departed from Morocco in this piece. The poem’s title gives us more insight into this process of anti-nostalgia. Typically an Arab cistern or an excavation site used to obtain water far within the ground, a “well” represents how psychologically “deep” the poetic voice had to go to retrieve these memories. Such a process illustrates that El Amrani is no longer intimately connected to her homeland. Instead, it is now distanced, and she actively journeys, or “flows” as Ulf Hannerz might say, “hacia” [toward] Spain “without return.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>Ibid, 25.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid, 49.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.



## *Love and Language*

Although slight infidelity to one's homeland is not mutually exclusive to belonging elsewhere, it is definitely intertwined with belonging in the Spanish-Maghrebi case. Similar to El Hachmi, the origin anti-nostalgia expressed by El Amrani's poetic voice is corroborated by her belonging in Spain and catalyzed by her admiration for various Spanish people and systems. Thence, love-based belonging is one way that the poetic voice negotiates El Amrani's subjectivity in poetry. These negotiations can be divided into three subcategories: belonging based on love for language, for people, or for place-specific possibilities. Poems like "El estrecho" [The Strait],<sup>140</sup> "Como Colón en la barca" [Like Christopher Columbus in the boat],<sup>141</sup> and "Retrato de un viaje" [A portrait of a journey],<sup>142</sup> depict this relation.

Voicing her experiences in poetic verse, El Amrani (as per the nature of a poet) makes very deliberate linguistic and grammatical choices. One of those choices is implicitly the language itself, and, making a statement about her duality, El Amrani paradoxically emphasizes her Spanishness by writing each of her poems in both Arabic and Castilian.<sup>143</sup> While most of the work (the title, introduction, prologue, and chapter titles) is in Spanish, each poem is first introduced in Arabic and then followed by a Spanish version. At first glance, this linguistic duality could be perceived as representing El Amrani's "pendulum" selfhood formed by two linguistic realms. However, upon further examination and based on El Amrani's poetic content, it is clear that El Amrani takes this societal assumption of her hybridity and turns it on its head: articulating a selfhood initially informed by Maghrebi personhood (represented by the first

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<sup>140</sup>Ibid, 57.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid, 63-65.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid, 67.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid.

Arabic translation) but primarily fueled by and toward Spanish identity (represented by the second Spanish translation).

Although the decision to include both Arabic and Castilian is not explicitly referenced in *Tormenta de especias*, El Amrani offers an explanation in her interviews. Specifically, El Amrani states that she chose to include Arabic in her work because Arabic poetry is close to her heart.<sup>144</sup> However, this love is overshadowed by a different love: a love for Spanish. Nurtured by extensive educational and personal time in Spain, it is unsurprising that El Amrani's admiration for Spanish language grew. Therefore, this love expanded to the poetic sector, where she encountered a proclivity for reading Spanish and Latin American poetry, like that of Pablo Neruda,<sup>145</sup> and poetry in the indigenous languages of Latin America.<sup>146</sup> These linguistic and poetic encounters motivated El Amrani to write her own work<sup>147</sup> and publish it in small magazines.<sup>148</sup> Resultantly, El Amrani underscores her Spanish identity by primarily expressing herself in Castilian and crediting Spain's literary masterpieces for cultivating her poetic confidence.

A similar trajectory from the Arabic world to the Spanish-speaking world materializes when El Amrani's poetic voice discusses relationships, and it is clear that, for Spanish-Maghrebi authors like El Amrani, the insatiable thirst to belong in Spain is often quenched with love for Spanish people. While El Hachmi does not take the route of person-based belonging, El Amrani's poetic voice explicitly exhibits its importance for Spanish identity negotiation in

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<sup>144</sup>El Amrani, interview, 12:00.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid, 12:18.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid, 17:00-20:00.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid, 12:09.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid, 12:20.

poems like “El estrecho” [The Strait], where Spanish identity and intense human connection are united by personal choice.<sup>149</sup> In this poem, El Amrani writes,

Y me dijo: [And he said to me:]  
Porque te quiero [Because I love you]  
me voy a esconder en tu pecho [I am going to hide in your chest]  
y me voy a entregar a otra cama, [and I am going to surrender to another bed,]  
la cama de esa luna de dos orillas. [the bed of that moon of two shores.]<sup>150</sup>

A prime example of love’s analogous relationship with Spanish-Maghrebi belonging is exemplified in this poem, and highlighting the magnitude of Africa and Europe’s liquid border, El Amrani’s poetic voice uses the distance between the Maghreb and Europe (“El estrecho” [The Strait] of Gibraltar) to stress difficulties during the immigration process. However, instead of focusing on those distance-related issues, the poetic voice changes thematic direction: stating that because of love, or “porque te quiero” [because I love you], immigration and belonging occur.<sup>151</sup> The gravity of this exchange between partners and nations is underscored, and the poetic voice’s partner (maybe even representative of El Amrani herself) states that, because of this strong love, this person will give themselves to another bed and another shore.<sup>152</sup> If we accept the poetic voice as a representation of El Amrani, this poem becomes particularly impactful. Considering that El Amrani immigrated as an adult, this poem’s references to love on another shore and belonging speak to the power of her love-based identity making.

For El Amrani, this feast of love does not turn into famine, and she extends her poetic admiration to places as well, where place-specific possibilities fuel her feelings of Spanish selfhood and belonging. Poems like “Como Colón en la barca” [Like Christopher Columbus in

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<sup>149</sup>El Amrani, *Tormenta de especias*, 57.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

the boat]<sup>153</sup> and “Retrato de un viaje” [A portrait of a journey]<sup>154</sup> demonstrate this locational attachment. Similar to Karrouch, El Amrani (through her poetic voice) confirms that this attachment was cultivated in Morocco itself, where Spain’s reputation preceded it. In “Como Colón en la barca” [Like Christopher Columbus in the boat],<sup>155</sup> El Amrani’s poetic voice alludes to the Spanish explorer and colonizer Christopher Columbus, and instead of distancing herself from his image, draws herself closer to him because of his work for the Spanish crown and Spanish legacy. In this excerpt El Amrani writes,

Desde una orilla [From a shore]  
se vislumbra [one glimpses]  
entre niebla sagrada [between sacred fog]  
y ecos de antigua Giralda, [and echoes of ancient Giralda,]  
un nuevo mundo, [a new world,]  
donde brotan [where sprouts]  
ríos de esperanza, [rivers of hope,]  
almas justas, [righteous souls,]  
sueños posibles. [possible dreams.]<sup>156</sup>

If we interpret the poetic voice as El Amrani herself, from this excerpt, one can deduce that, at the onset of migration, El Amrani possibly identified with Columbus and the mindset of an explorer. Considering a “new” place like Spain alluring, the poetic voice’s reference to la Giralda somewhat confirms this interpretation.<sup>157</sup> A famous al-Andalusian era bell tower in El Amrani’s current residence of Seville, Spain, la Giralda is a site of cultural connection and architectural hybridity between Muslim and Christian forces. Therefore, for El Amrani, its presence somewhat parallels her hybrid personhood, and the poetic voice references it in admiration with words such as “dreams,” “righteousness,” and “hope.”

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<sup>153</sup>Ibid, 63-65.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid, 67.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid, 63-65.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid, 67.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid.

This admiration for Spain and dream mindset carries into other poems, although the poetic voice emphasizes that the immigrant journey comes with a price. One can see this distinction in “Retrato de un viaje” [A portrait of a journey].<sup>158</sup> El Amrani writes,

Allí bajo el agua [There under the water]  
nos obligaron a dejarlos [We were forced to leave them]  
para poder encontrar [so we could find]  
el Oasis..., [the Oasis...,]  
del que todo el mundo habla. [that everyone talks about.]<sup>159</sup>

Although this poem explores the negative aspects of immigration, such as the sacrifices made and the lives lost (presumably) across the Strait, it also emphasizes that the journey is somehow worth it to reach “the Oasis which everyone talks about.”<sup>160</sup> This word “Oasis” confirms a positive relation between El Amrani’s poetic voice, El Amrani herself, and Spain, as the term denotes a haven of safety and relaxation. Therefore, in El Amrani’s identity negotiation process, Spain is not a relation that causes concern. Instead, it becomes a place of peace and permanency.

### *Mediterraneanism*

Although she asserts her connection to Spain through love and her emotional disconnection from the Maghreb through anti-nostalgia, El Amrani exhibits her similarities to Laila Karrouch by articulating a belonging in both regions due to her roots and personal preferences. Resultantly, El Amrani negotiates her Spanish identity by hinging herself to absolute Mediterraneanism. This Mediterraneanism ensures that her identity as a Spanish woman cannot be contested due to her geographical and cultural connections to the broader Mediterranean region.

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<sup>158</sup>Ibid.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid.

Using folklore aesthetic symbols like the mermaid, El Amrani claims her transnational Mediterranean belonging while primarily defining herself as a Spanish woman. For example, in her “Introduction” by Ángeles Mora, El Amrani is referred to as a “woman of the south [Morocco]” giving testimony “from the other side of the Strait [Spain]” and “far from traditional prejudices.”<sup>161</sup> This designation suggests that, although El Amrani is physically removed from Morocco, she still understands the universal (and specifically Mediterranean) experiences of women. El Amrani’s poetic voice articulates the paradox of transregional belonging in poems like “Sirena durmiente” [sleeping mermaid]<sup>162</sup> and “Espuma de sirenas” [Siren foam].<sup>163</sup>

Half-fish and half-woman, the mermaid is the epitome of hybrid identity and hypnotic love. However, El Amrani’s poetic voice does not describe this creature with reference to fraught personhood. Instead, if we interpret the poetic voice as representative of the poet, El Amrani uses its mysticality and comfort in the water to represent herself, her fluid identity negotiation process, and Mediterranean selfhood more broadly. In the following excerpts of “Sirena durmiente” [sleeping mermaid]<sup>164</sup> and “Espuma de sirenas” [Siren foam],<sup>165</sup> El Amrani writes,

Rodeada de azul, [Surrounded by blue,]  
entre girasoles flotantes [between floating sunflowers]  
desliza sus labios [she slides her lips]  
Sobre la superficie [over the surface]  
Buscando una estrella. [looking for a star.]<sup>166</sup>

...y recuerdo tu cama azul, [and I remember your blue bed,]  
donde por vez primera, [where for the first time,]  
Me regalaste una noche,... [you gave me a night,...]  
Bendita esa noche... donde..., [Blessed that night... where...,]  
tus manos de espuma [your foam hands]  
moldearon mi alma, [shaped my soul,]  
y tus labios de luna llena [and your full moon lips]

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<sup>161</sup>Ibid, 7.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid, 37.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid, 53.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid, 37.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid, 53.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid, “Sirena durmiente,” 37.

cobraron las deudas [collected the debts]  
De un pasado que nos separaba. [of a past that separated us.]<sup>167</sup>

Titularly, these poems undoubtedly connect to mermaids and hybrid personhood. As mentioned, the hybridity of a mermaid is explicit. However, words like “entre” [between] and “flotantes” [floating] establish in-between-ness as well.<sup>168</sup> Instead of perceiving this hyphenated selfhood as negative, the poetic voice emphasizes belonging and comfort in both spaces and within the stretch of water between homeland and hostland, acting as a natural flotation device between both. Connecting the poetic voice to the poet’s immigration story, these verses demonstrate how El Amrani’s identity is tied to her relationship with water, or the Strait of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean Sea, and this relationship is not fraught. Instead, it is somewhat natural.

For example, the poetic voice highlights comfort in the Mediterranean region by describing the sea as a “cama azul” [blue bed] whose “foam hands shaped her soul.”<sup>169</sup> While water is often considered a transitory state, the poetic voice redefines its purpose as both permanent and tranquil. She even describes the influence of this in-between-ness on her “soul” and how its moment of impact “blessed” her<sup>170</sup> and offered glimpses of “stars” (opportunities and dreams) elsewhere.<sup>171</sup> Resultantly, the poetic voice indicates that El Amrani concretely belongs to both Morocco and Spain, not because she wades between two selfhoods, but because she is a mermaid compatible with the entire Mediterranean.

This comfort in Mediterranean spaces was not cultivated arbitrarily, however. Instead, it is rooted in the cultural and historical connections between the Maghreb and Spain. El Amrani’s

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<sup>167</sup>Ibid, “Espuma de sirenas,” 53.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid, 37.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid, 53.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid, 53.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid, 37.

poetic voice underlines this point in “Con los límites a cuestras” [Bearing the Weight of Borders]<sup>172</sup> and “A las cuerdas de una guitarra” [To the strings of a guitar].<sup>173</sup> Proclaiming a broad Andalusian intersection between past and present, these poems describe the poet’s experiences, create the perfect cocktail for El Amrani’s “flow” identity towards Spain, and explain why Spain is not considered a “foreign” environment. In “Con los límites a cuestras” [Bearing the Weight of Borders]<sup>174</sup> and “A las cuerdas de una guitarra” [To the strings of a guitar],<sup>175</sup> El Amrani writes,

...con la patria anhelada, [with the desired homeland,]  
 con la frontera detestada, [with the detested border,]  
 sueños de un flamenco africano [dreams of african flamenco]  
 con la señal en la frente [with a sign on his forehead]  
 se prohibido el paso [the forbidden passage]  
 para una nueva vida. [to a new life.]<sup>176</sup>

...Música que nace [Music that is born]  
 misteriosamente del sudor [mysteriously from the sweat]  
 de unas cuerdas, [of some strings,]  
 y que cae como un abanico [and that falls like a fan]  
 entre voces de flamenco [between voices of flamenco]  
 el aire canta con voz aguda [the air sings with a sharp voice]  
 a un rojo clavel posado [to a red carnation perched]  
 en el cabello de una bailaora. [in the hair of a dancer.]<sup>177</sup>

As illustrated above, El Amrani’s poetic voice employs cultural elements, like the Andalusian flamenco, to connect the larger Mediterranean. Understanding these areas as one cultural community, El Amrani’s poetic voice outlines her hatred for the border in “Con los límites a cuestras” [Bearing the Weight of Borders]<sup>178</sup> and unfolds the frustration that many Maghrebis feel

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<sup>172</sup>Ibid, 69.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid, 99.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid, 69.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid, 99.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid, “Con los límites a cuestras,” 69.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid, “A las cuerdas de una guitarra,” 99.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid, 69.



when forced to cross a border to enter “la patria anhelada” [the longed for fatherland] of Spain.<sup>179</sup> Such a frustration stems from the fact that Morocco and Spain share similar cultural landscapes, and El Amrani’s poetic voice utilizes her love from the cross-cultural “flamenco africano” [African flamenco] to reinforce this idea. Therefore, if we connect the poetic voice to the poet, El Amrani suggests that Morocco and Spain are metaphorically one nation—producing a transnational, Mediterranean subjectivity that cannot be broken by a border.

Similar Mediterranean connections are emphasized in “A las cuerdas de una guitarra” [To the strings of a guitar],<sup>180</sup> where “flamenco” and elements of Spanish artistry (like fans, carnations, and dancers) are once again cited by the poetic voice as borderless elements of cultural comfort. These repeated themes, used as tokens to prove El Amrani’s Spanishness and Mediterranean identity, provoke both familiarity and memory for the poetic voice (and El Amrani by extension). Therefore, El Amrani utilizes a structural style of repetition to pursue Spain and even argue for its cultural compatibility with Morocco. This argument about immigration is clearly relevant considering her poetic voice’s reference to the border. However, instead of over-emphasizing its harshness, the poetic voice expresses a desire to enter and allow these corresponding cultural elements to consume her.

Acting as a sort of intermediary between the styles of Najat El Hachmi and Laila Karrouch, Lamiae El Amrani negotiates a non-regional, broad Spanish selfhood in *Tormenta de especias*, a selfhood that is undoubtedly complimented by her Moroccan roots. While her Spanish identity is confirmed through references to cross-cultural connections, Mediterranean comforts, and subtle origin anti-nostalgia (compared to El Hachmi), El Amrani’s intimate love for Spanish language, people, and possibilities is by far her most compelling case for

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<sup>179</sup>Ibid.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid, 99.

*españolidad*. Consequently, by drawing herself closer to Spain and embracing her hyphenated selfhood, El Amrani draws closer to herself—creating a new route for Spanish-Maghrebi navigation.

## V. Laila Karrouch

Unwavering in her attempts to consolidate both Berber and Catalan cultures, author Laila Karrouch is the only Spanish-Maghrebi writer in this thesis to embody an uncomplicated hybrid, harmonizing her Spanish and Moroccan selfhoods without tension. Born in Nador, Morocco, in 1977, Karrouch immigrated to Vic, Catalonia, Spain, in 1985 at the age of eight<sup>181</sup> and has lived in Spain for over thirty-five years.<sup>182</sup> This background (from Nador to Vic at the age of eight) parallels that of our aforementioned author, Najat El Hachmi, and proves interesting for comparison considering their extreme literary divergences. Specifically, Karrouch approaches the subject of immigration and identity negotiation in a different way: emphasizing regional Spanishness, minority Moroccanness, and steadfast cultural consolidation.

First recognized by her 2004 autobiographical novel *De Nador a Vic*, Karrouch is described by her literary agency, Sandra Bruna, as being the “first writer of Arab origin to publish an original work in Catalan.”<sup>183</sup> This work, a Catalan narrative about integration and immigration, won the 2004 Columna Joven literary award and arguably carved out a space for Berber and Catalan interaction. This same connection is further forged in works like *Petjades de Nador* [*Footprints of Nador*], *Un meravellós Llibre per a nens i nens* [*A wonderful book for children and toddlers*], and *Quan a l’isma se li van creuar els cables* [*When the wires were crossed*], all of which contribute to Karrouch’s notable Amazigh-Berber oral storytelling style transcribed in Catalan.

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<sup>181</sup>Laila Karrouch, *Laila*. (Madrid, Spain: Oxford University Press, 2016), 15.

<sup>182</sup>Laila Karrouch, “Laila Karrouch: Intento Tocar Esos Temas Tabú Que No Hablamos De Ellos.” Interview by Rihab Marmid. Marruecom. 6 April 2021, <https://marruecom.com/2021/06/04/laila-karrouch-intento-tocar-esos-temas-tabu-que-no-hablamos-de-ellos/>

<sup>183</sup>Sandra Bruna Agencia Literaria. “Karrouch, Laila.” Sandra Bruna. Accessed January 15, 2022. <http://www.sandrabruna.com/autor/karrouch-laila/>.

Despite these contributions, Karrouch's autobiography, *Laila*, is most significant for this analysis. Chronologically detailing the immigration experience of her family and the surprises of gaining entrance into a new culture, this coming-of-age story reflects on Spanish and Moroccan cultures, the challenges of assimilation, and the gradual navigation of self without conflict. Karrouch's self-authored "Author" page claims that one of the autobiography's goals is to "enrich the fantasy of our children with that of those living across the Strait."<sup>184</sup> Therefore, distinct from other Spanish-Maghrebi writers, Karrouch attempts to seamlessly intertwine her Spanishness and Moroccanness—even going as far as articulating them as unproblematically fused and potentially aspirational for Moroccan children.

As with Najat El Hachmi's chapter, but for different reasons, going forward I will refer to Laila Karrouch as both Spanish and Catalan interchangeably because that is how Karrouch presents herself in writing, although the two cultures are very much distinct. For Karrouch specifically, Spanish identity and Catalan identity are recognized as independent but synonymous in her identity expression. Favoring no singular identity, she explicitly refers to herself as a Spanish, Catalan, and Moroccan woman, and I mirror this harmonization when referring to her.

To articulate this harmonization, Karrouch uses brevity when discussing the Muslim experience (compared to El Hachmi), expresses a diluted origin anti-nostalgia, and couples her slight critiques with expressions of longing for Morocco and praise for Spain. Put simply, Karrouch's articulations emphasize the compatibility of her subjectivities due to the interconnectedness of the Mediterranean experience. In reference to Ulf Hannerz's terms, Karrouch's unproblematic embrace of multiple identities align with a "hybrid" due to her non-

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<sup>184</sup>Karrouch, *Laila*, "Autora".

preferential synergy between all selves.<sup>185</sup> This chapter underscores this unique identity performance. I argue that Karrouch communicates a Spanish-Maghrebi selfhood that rejects notions of “fraughtness,” thereby presenting her identity as harmonious and amicably solidified in both Spain and Morocco. Therefore, Karrouch is not a pendulum in constant oscillation. Instead, equal Spanishness and Moroccanness are concurrently performed.

To corroborate this argument, I utilize the observed theoretical tropes for analysis: anti-nostalgia, love for language and Spain, and Mediterranean interconnectivity. As mentioned, I primarily focus on Karrouch’s youth-oriented autobiography, *Laila*. However, I also rely on various personal interviews and quoted material. For example, I depend on Karrouch’s comments in a forty-minute television interview by El Convidat,<sup>186</sup> which questions Karrouch in Catalan in her own home, as well as a 2010 interview by Lluís Simon titled, “Els immigrants som persones, no comodins” [Immigrants are people, not wildcards], which comments on the compatibility of Spanish, Catalanian, and Moroccan cultures.<sup>187</sup>

### *Diluted Anti-nostalgia*

Composed of dark imagery and melancholic metaphors in previous chapters, origin anti-nostalgia takes a distinct turn in *Laila*, directly opposing El Hachmi’s sentiments against religion and homeland. In this work, Karrouch confirms her distinctiveness by articulating a nostalgia for Morocco, even after migrancy. However, similar to El Hachmi and El Amrani, this nostalgia is not solitary, and two patterns of diluted anti-nostalgia emerge: 1) one based on the necessity of

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<sup>185</sup>Hannerz. “Flows, Boundaries, and Hybrids.”

<sup>186</sup>Laila Karrouch. “Laila Karrouch.” Interview by El Convidat. 23 Dec. 2013, <https://www.ccma.cat/tv3/alacarta/el-convidat/laila-karrouch/video/4821231/>

<sup>187</sup>Laila Karrouch. “Els immigrants som persones, no comodins”. Interview by Lluís Simon. *Campus*. 23 July 2010, <https://campusreus.org/entrevista/els-immigrants-som-persones-no-comodins-entrevista-a-lescriptora-laila-karrouch>

integration and 2) another based on experiences with sexism. As mentioned, Karrouch pairs these patterns with explicit yearnings for Morocco. Consequently, these nostalgia combinations fuse, counterbalancing feelings for both countries, creating a diluted anti-nostalgia, and harmonizing Spanish-Maghrebi selfhood.

This dichotomy, or collaboration, between origin anti-nostalgia and nostalgia inherently informs Karrouch's selfhood. Resultantly, she introduces it in the opening chapter of *Laila*, corroborating her Spanishness in the process. Seemingly paradoxical, her longings for Morocco are not necessarily antithetical to Spain. Upon further examination, they are more so tied to a yearning for familiar figures like her *yaya* [grandmother] and childhood itself. Discussing her family's departure from Nador in 1985, Karrouch emphasizes these emotional connections by describing her last visit to her Moroccan home. Synonymous with her "dear and sweet *yaya*," who made it a space of light and laughter, this home consists of familiar fabrics, elongated rooms, and a communal kitchen. Her neighbors and friends, referred to as "tía" [aunt] or "prima" [cousin], are a part of this space as well, and Karrouch takes great care and priority when describing them, even "recording in [her] memory as many images as [she] could."<sup>188</sup> Such specifications may seem irrelevant in the grand scheme of Karrouch's work. However, these minute details, different from the articulations of El Hachmi and El Amrani, speak to the emotional foundation Karrouch built in Morocco prior to departure.

This same specificity is not extended to Karrouch's expressions of anti-nostalgia, however, which is why they are diluted in comparison to other authors. Oftentimes, Karrouch only mentions her origin estrangement in the context of Spanish integration because she cites it as a "necessity of her identity negotiation process. For instance, upon departure, she writes,

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<sup>188</sup>Karrouch, *Laila*, 7-11.

No me atrevía a mirar atrás. Sabía que aquello me causaría más dolor... ¡Qué recuerdos tan melancólicos! No pude evitar apartar la mirada.

[I didn't dare look back. I knew it would cause me more pain... What melancholy memories! I couldn't help but look away.]<sup>189</sup>

Este es el avión que me lleva al país de la gloria—pensé—. ¡Qué envidia deben de tenerme las niñas del pueblo! En esos momentos no añoraba a nadie, la verdad, excepto a la abuela y al abuelo.

[This is the plane that takes me to the land of glory—I thought—How envious the girls in the village must be of me! In those moments, I did not miss anyone, truly, except grandma and grandpa.]<sup>190</sup>

With these quotes alone, there are contradictory notions; Karrouch indicates that, at this time, thinking about Morocco causes her pain due to its “melancholy memories” and family connections. This description indicates a positive association with Morocco. However, as shown above, a point of anti-nostalgia emerges out of excitement and necessity. Completing the physical act of “looking away” on the plane, Karrouch forces an emotional detachment from Morocco. This emotional departure is further illustrated by an emphasis on “not missing” anyone at the onset of migration.<sup>191</sup> Combined with the word “pain” to describe both Morocco and leaving it, Karrouch expresses a watered-down anti-nostalgia, more intent on harmonization than critique.

Similar to El Hachmi, Karrouch's anti-nostalgia is more forward when referencing sexist traditions, and since sexist structures transcend borders, Karrouch highlights her father as a catalyst for Moroccan anti-nostalgia. For example, when explaining her family's structure, Karrouch explains how her brother Nouridine's preferential treatment became a point of withdrawal from Morocco: “De todas formas, el preferido era Nouridine, el único varón entre

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<sup>189</sup>Ibid, 14.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid, 15.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid.

cuatro hembras” [In all ways, the favorite was Nourdine, the only male among four females].<sup>192</sup>

Such gendered treatment provoked slight distaste for Morocco, and this familial hierarchy forced Karrouch to confront not only her origins, but how Moroccan traditions affect her mother and herself.

After being in Spain for quite some time, Karrouch describes herself as having “dominated” the situation.<sup>193</sup> Unfortunately, her mother was in a depressed state, with Karrouch noticing her mom’s “wet and sad eyes.”<sup>194</sup> From Karrouch’s descriptions, this sadness was not linked to immigration. Instead, it was tied to Karrouch’s father and his attempts to preserve Moroccan tradition. Karrouch writes,

Mi pobre madre no salía de casa porque mi padre decía que había que mantener la tradición.

[My poor mother did not leave home because my father said that tradition had to be maintained.]<sup>195</sup>

Mucha gente la miraba porque llevaba chilaba y un pañuelo en la cabeza. Ella no se sentía muy cómoda; mi padre lo notó en seguida, pero no dijo nada. Una vez, mi madre le preguntó si podía sacarse el pañuelo, pero él le contestó que no. Ella no insistió.

[Many people looked at her (Karrouch’s mother) because she wore a djellaba and a headscarf. She didn’t feel very comfortable; my father noticed immediately, but he didn’t say anything. Once, my mother asked him if she could take off the headscarf, but he said no. She did not insist.]<sup>196</sup>

The above excerpts outline a clear gendered power dynamic, with women’s discomfort and personal desires disregarded for religious tradition. These familial structures, favoring men and particularly the voice of the father, come to define parts of Karrouch’s origin anti-nostalgia.

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<sup>192</sup>Ibid, 31.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid, 40.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid, 40-41.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid.



However, only creating slight tension, they do not completely alienate her from Morocco. Therefore, different from El Hachmi and El Amrani, Karrouch's identity negotiation process includes varied elements, ones that become complicated when combined.

This complicated, but balanced, hybridity continues in Karrouch's chapter "Añoranza" [Nostalgia], where Karrouch simultaneously expresses longing for Morocco and Spain during her first post-migration vacations. Set in 1987, this chapter describes Karrouch's second consecutive summer without vacations in Morocco. During this period, Karrouch conveys a sense of longing for her family members in the Maghreb. However, she also expresses an intense ache for Spain as well. For instance, during these early holiday periods, Karrouch writes,

No quería que mi padre se volviera a plantear la posibilidad de regresar a Marruecos.  
¡Eso ni pensarlo!

[I did not want my father to reconsider the possibility of returning to Morocco. That's not even thinking!].<sup>197</sup>

Un día me desperté y sentí añoranza de mi casa de España. Quería volver. Sentía que allí todo era más vivo, más alegre. Sentía que era mi hogar.

[One day (while on holiday in Holland) I woke up and felt longing for my home in Spain. I wanted to go back. I felt that everything there was more alive, more cheerful.]<sup>198</sup>

¡Qué descanso y qué gusto volver a oír hablar castellano por la calle!

[What a relief and what a pleasure to hear Spanish spoken again on the street!]<sup>199</sup>

Articulating new invocations of "home" while on vacation in Holland, Karrouch undeniably expresses nostalgia for Spain in the above excerpts. This nostalgia proves especially interesting considering that, during this earlier period after migration, Karrouch would more likely express yearning for her "home" in Morocco. Since this Moroccan-longing is not the case, Karrouch

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<sup>197</sup>Ibid, 61-62.

<sup>198</sup>Ibid, 67.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid, 68.

frequently interjects her own anti-nostalgia with nostalgia and inadvertently asserts selfhood in both spaces. In this way, Karrouch confronts her hybridity directly. In an interview by El Convidat, Karrouch does the same:

Volia ser com les dones d'aquí. Jo volia ser com les dones d'aquí.

[I wanted to be like the women here (in Spain). I wanted to be a European woman and have a lot of money.]<sup>200</sup>

Hi ha dos tipus de catalans, els de naixement i els de sentiment. I aquí hi entrem tots els que hi volem entrar. Jo entro en aquest grup.

[There are two types of Catalans, those of birth and those of feeling. And here we enter all those who want to enter. I belong to this group.]<sup>201</sup>

Estar entre dues cultures moltes vegades és un conflicte. Però li trobo més avantatges que inconvenients.

[Being between two cultures is often a conflict. But I find it more of an advantage than a disadvantage.]<sup>202</sup>

From the above citations, Karrouch reveals the attitudes by which she approaches her own hybridity. Specifically, she is both Spanish and Moroccan, intending to compromise neither. More importantly, Karrouch illustrates that anti-nostalgia does not define her identity for either country. Instead, characteristics of anti-nostalgia only inform minute parts of an overall “advantageous” hybridity. Resultantly, harmonization and consolidation prevail in Karrouch’s identity negotiation, and she confirms such interpretations through her linguistic decisions.

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<sup>200</sup>Karrouch. “Laila Karrouch.” Interview by El Convidat. 23 Dec.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid.

*Language, Education, and Athletics*

Demonstrating love for both the Spanish and Catalan languages and embracing anti-otherness, Karrouch utilizes various linguistic tools to convey a clear sense of Spanish selfhood. For example, she made a conscious decision to write *Laila* in both languages, confirming her emotional ties to both Spanish and Catalan identities. However, interestingly, Karrouch also engages in a distinct, Berber storytelling style. According to common strategies of Berber oral tradition, women often present very detailed backgrounds, characters in an atemporal or chronological order, connected episodes around a main theme, and messages of self-assertion.<sup>203</sup> Therefore, with both of these components working simultaneously, Karrouch creates a literary rendering of herself, one which navigates a harmonious *españolidad* and *magrebidad*.

This linguistic harmony is developed alongside Karrouch's love for Spain, which is founded by reputation as well as new societal, academic, and athletic opportunities. From Karrouch's descriptions, it appears as though her love for Spain was constructed *before* her arrival—meaning that Spain's reputation in Nador influenced the way that she navigates her Spanish identity. For example, Karrouch is asked by Moroccan friends if she will ever return. Instead of quickly claiming “yes” (in support of full Moroccanness) or “no” (in favor of premature Spanishness), Karrouch gives a more convoluted, even political answer, and states,

—No lo sé, Hakima. Quizá no vuelva nunca. En Hispania estaré muy bien. Tendré todo lo que quiera: juguetes, ropa nueva, zapatos, faldas... Allí todos tienen mucho dinero.

[—I don't know.. Maybe I'll never return. In Spain, I will be very good. I'll have everything I want: toys, new clothes, shoes, skirts... There, they have lots of money.]<sup>204</sup>

Este es el avión que me lleva al país de la gloria—pensé.

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<sup>203</sup>Fatima Sadiki. “Oral Knowledge in Berber Women's Expressions of the Sacred.” The Global South Project. Accessed January 18, 2022. <http://www.globalsouthproject.cornell.edu/oral-knowledge-in-berber-womens-expressions-of-the-sacred-page-8.html>.

<sup>204</sup>Karrouch, *Laila*, 8.

[This is the plane that takes me to the land of glory—I thought.]<sup>205</sup>

This response indicates that love for Spain was cultivated from *within* the Maghreb itself. Therefore, Spanishness is not so far removed from Moroccanness. Instead, it is somewhat promoted. Moreover, this association with Spain as something “better” is further perpetuated by Karrouch, who refers to Spain as the “land of glory.” Such a description lends itself to praise, even exaltation—meaning that, from the eyes of Nador (and Karrouch by extension), Spain is a powerful and loved entity.

Once in Spain, this reputation was exchanged for experience, and Karrouch illustrates how a love of Spanish traditions informed her identity at the onset of immigration. For example, when the winter season arrived, Karrouch “discovered that [she] really liked Christmas,” and per Spanish tradition, Karrouch put out her shoes in hopes of receiving gifts from the Three Kings.<sup>206</sup> Describing her love for “very beautiful songs” about Jesus, Mary, bells, and chocolate, Karrouch even informs her Muslim father that the Three Kings are very generous because they offer Children presents, “unlike the King of Morocco.”<sup>207</sup> It is in this context that new Spanish traditions and academic experiences arise. Karrouch writes,

Me gustaba mucho mi nueva vida. Todo era tan distinto. Pasaban los días. Yo ya era capaz de decir palabras en español.

[I really liked my new life. Everything was so different. Days passed. I was already able to say words in Spanish.]<sup>208</sup>

No me sentía diferente de ellos.

[I did not feel different than (my Spanish classmates).]<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>205</sup>Ibid, 15.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid, 42.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid, 41-42.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid, 39-40.

<sup>209</sup>Ibid, 112.

Me gustaba estudiar, me apasionaba el atletismo.

[I liked to study, I was passionate about athletics.]<sup>210</sup>

—(Durante el mes de Ramadán y durante las prácticas del atletismo,)—Lo cumpliré un día y descansaré dos—le propuse.

[(During the month of Ramadan and during athletic practices,)—I proposed that I will practice one day and rest two.]<sup>211</sup>

From these excerpts, multiple elements of identity emerge: newfound love for Spanish education, undisputed belonging, and unwavering harmonization between two, seemingly conflicting, portions of self. Above, Karrouch expresses how the Spanish educational system and athletics impacted her personhood, offering new means of expression and passion. Even when her religious tradition asked her to fast for Ramadan, Karrouch chose to harmonize her cultures, simultaneously participating in Spanish athletics as well as religious tradition by playing for one day and resting for two.<sup>212</sup> This harmonization confirms an unwavering love and commitment to both Spanishness and Moroccanness. Therefore, different from El Hachmi and El Amrani, Karrouch articulates an identity both capable and intent on consolidation.

### *Mediterraneanism*

While, at times, Karrouch is inevitably torn between Spain and Morocco's "opposing" cultures, she primarily communicates an unproblematic connection between the two nations—a connection catalyzed by broader Mediterraneanism. One instance where this relation emerges is in word choice, and in effort to express the historical ties between the Maghreb and Spain, Karrouch (and the characters that she presents) refer to contemporary Spain as "Hispania." For

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<sup>210</sup>Ibid, 114.

<sup>211</sup>Ibid, 53-56.

<sup>212</sup>Ibid.

example, in the opening chapters, Karrouch's neighbor asks "¿Es verdad que te vas a Hispania?" [Is it true that you are going to Spain?].<sup>213</sup> Karrouch affirms her migration, also using "Hispania." The term is utilized in other areas of the work, like by Karrouch's father, to say "Ahora estamos en Hispania" [Now we are in Spain].<sup>214</sup>

An antiquated spelling of "España," Hispania has had many meanings and alternate political, geographical, and social implications depending on the context. However, more concretely, it refers to Spain during the periods of ancient Roman, Visigoth, and Al-Andalusian, or Muslim, rules.<sup>215</sup> Geographically including parts of both Portugal and Spain, Al-Andalus was considered "Muslim Spain," and kingdoms within Spain itself, such as medieval Majorca, used "Hispania" to refer to Muslim territory within the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>216</sup> Such a connection to contemporary Muslim Morocco proves extremely interesting for Karrouch's identity negotiation process, and her emphasis on Spain as historically Muslim, through word choice of "Hispania," covertly argues for a sort of inherent belonging of all Maghrebi, Muslim peoples in Spain. As a result, Karrouch indicates that her family is not necessarily immigrating to "Hispania." Instead, they are simply going to a Mediterranean, connected home.

These points of historical Mediterranean connection are further coupled with points of contemporary contact. During her first walk around her city's "Plaza Mayor" open-air market, Karrouch describes immediate comfort in its layout and its magnitude because, "at first glance, especially the clothing stalls, looked very similar to those in Morocco."<sup>217</sup> This correlation between the markets of Morocco and Spain are not necessarily coincidences. Instead, they

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<sup>213</sup>Ibid, 8.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid, 17.

<sup>215</sup>Gabriel Ensenyat Pujol. "The Meaning of Hispania in Mediaeval Majorca." Essay. In *History of Catalonia and Its Implications for Contemporary Nationalism and Cultural Conflict*, 46–56.

<sup>216</sup>Ensenyat Pujol. "The Meaning of Hispania in Mediaeval Majorca."

<sup>217</sup>Karrouch, *Laila*, 33.

demonstrate an intrinsic history between Mediterranean communities, the styles of their merchant displays, and ways in which residents become entangled in the commercial sphere.

Karrouch finds Mediterranean commonality in religion as well. When explaining her comforts in the Christian Spanish context, Karrouch emphasizes the similarities between many Mediterranean religions, especially Christianity and Islam, due to their paralleling figures and fables. For example, Karrouch writes,

El Jesús de aquí (España) es el mismo que el nuestro, pero ... nosotros le llamamos de otra forma, Sidna Aissa, y que María es Mariam. El *rafiki* nos había hablado de todos estos temas en la mezquita.

[The Jesus here (in Spain) is the same as ours (in Morocco), but ... we call him differently, Sidna Aissa, and that Mary is Mariam. The Imán had talked about all of these topics in the mosque.]<sup>218</sup>

Consequently, Karrouch simultaneously preserves her Moroccan selfhood while embracing its contours within broader Spanishness and Mediterraneanism. This harmonization of self is clearly intentional, and Karrouch utilizes Mediterraneanism to corroborate her idea that Moroccan and Spanish cultures are inherently compatible. For example, in an interview with Lluís Simon, Karrouch is asked if integration into Spanish and Catalan cultures is possible.<sup>219</sup> In her response, Karrouch conveys her unproblematically balanced selfhood and the way that Mediterraneanism is a bridge. She states, “Moroccan and Catalan are different but compatible cultures. In the world, if we are not elastic we cannot move forward.”<sup>220</sup> Comments in *Laila* corroborate this perspective, and Karrouch writes,

Todavía vivo en la ciudad que me acogió hace dieciocho años y que me ha enseñado tantas cosas de la vida, positivas y negativas. Este lugar ha sido muy importante para mí, y al igual que mi ciudad natal, Nador, siento que forma parte de mí y yo formo parte de

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<sup>218</sup>Ibid, 43.

<sup>219</sup>Karrouch, Interview by Lluís Simon.

<sup>220</sup>Ibid.

ella, ¿por qué no decirlo? Me siento española y privilegiada por poder conocer dos culturas diferentes, opuestas, cada una con su magia y su encanto

[I still live in the city that welcomed me eighteen years ago and that has taught me so many things about life, positive and negative. This place has been very important to me, and like my hometown, Nador, I feel like it's part of me and I'm part of it, why not say it? I feel Spanish and privileged to be able to know two different cultures, opposite, each with its magic and its charm.]<sup>221</sup>

No he perdido mi cultura ni mis raíces, sino que he ganado otra cultura y otras costumbres. Me gusta hacer un buen cuscús para comer y una tortilla de patatas para cenar. ¿Por qué no?

[I have not lost my culture or my roots, but I have gained another culture and other customs. I like to make a good couscous for lunch and a potato omelet for dinner. Why not?]<sup>222</sup>

In short, a broader Mediterraneanism and shared history between the Maghreb and Spain creates a space for elasticity for Spanish-Maghrebi authors. Karrouch clearly capitalizes on this intrinsic unity, settling the perceived uncertainty of her selfhood. The above excerpts concretely demonstrate the Mediterranean connection within Karrouch's identity and utilize food, cultural elements, and simple experience to describe Karrouch's identity negotiation process. Such a process, the parting words of *Laila*, affirm the nonchalant attitude that Karrouch has about her own identity. Containing multitudes, Spanish-Maghrebi women are not necessarily struggling for survival, desolate between two lands. Instead, in the case of Karrouch, they sometimes cultivate undeniable compatibility, unrelenting in their efforts of self-consolidation.

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<sup>221</sup>Karrouch, *Laila*, 153.

<sup>222</sup>Ibid.



## VI. Conclusion

Suspended in our collective imagination as neither here nor there, the identities of Spanish-Maghrebi women are assumed to be simple products of immigration—unanchored and perpetually oscillating between two possibilities. In this thesis, I have explored this assumption by examining three Spanish-Moroccan authors Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae El Amrani, and Laila Karrouch and their works. Autobiographical in nature, their publications act as instruments of self-reflection and self-assertion. Therefore, I have used them to question “feminine Maghrebi *españolidad*,” or the complex ways that Moroccan women perform their hybrid identities in Spanish-language literature.

As a framework for analyzing their different identity performances, I have employed the work of anthropologist Ulf Hannerz. Hannerz’s article “Flows, Boundaries, and Hybrids: Keywords in Transnational Anthropology,” argues for a new vocabulary to describe globalization and globalized peoples. According to Hannerz, previous terms are somewhat abstract and have failed to fully ground the features of multiculturalism. Therefore, new terms should be emphasized: flows, boundaries, and hybrids. Such terms describe the current, but ever-changing, landscape of transnational personhood and offer a concrete understanding of the different “formulas” one might encounter when analyzing anthropological subjects.

To put it briefly, “flows” have direction and actively approach a physical location or a non-spatial identity. While flows gravitate away from the source, the source itself is preserved in full. On the other hand, “boundaries” intercept the continuity proposed by flows and cut off one area entirely (whether it be the source or a new location). Essentially, a “sharp line of demarcation” is drawn by boundaries to reject one identity and embrace another.<sup>223</sup> Finally,

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<sup>223</sup>Hannerz. “Flows, Boundaries, and Hybrids,” 7.

“hybrids” demonstrate somewhat of a mosaic synergy of selfhood, flowing equally toward and away from the source. Throughout this thesis, these terms have acted as a theoretical framework and a handbook for understanding identity, particularly that of Spanish-Maghrebi authors.

Concerning methodology, I have engaged in a close reading of the chosen texts: Najat El Hachmi’s non-fiction book *Siempre han hablado por nosotras: Feminismo e identidad. Un manifiesto valiente y necesario* [*They have always spoken for us: Feminism and identity. A courageous and necessary manifesto*] (2019), Lamiae El Amrani’s poetry collection *Tormenta de especias* [*Storm of spices*] (2010), and Laila Karrouch’s novel *Laila* (2017). With this close reading method, I have confronted Spanish-Maghrebi literature from a detail-oriented perspective, attempting to extract deeper meanings, patterns, and connections from each author’s articulations. Such methods of analysis have allowed me to argue that, although El Hachmi, El Amrani, and Karrouch occupy the same, Spanish-Maghrebi hybrid, they do not negotiate their subjectivities in the same ways. Instead, their articulations of self are vastly different. El Hachmi, a boundary, completely rejects Morocco; El Amrani, a flow, is drawn towards Spain. Lastly, Karrouch, a hybrid, consolidates her *españolidad* and *magrebidad* without preference.

Within the realm of literary analysis, there are, of course, limitations. One should heed caution when comparing authors’ identities to the fictional characters and poetic expressions that they create. However, despite the fact that fictional characters are not completely representative of the authors themselves, the Spanish-Maghrebi authors in this study still explore the multiplicity of what it means to be an immigrant woman in their fictional works. Thus, even their fictional characters can illustrate the writers’ hybrid negotiations. Another limitation is that published works require time, funding, influence, and often education. Therefore, the publications that I have included in this thesis cannot concretely represent all Spanish-Maghrebi

women and those who do not have means of expression, linguistic skills, or educational backgrounds. Regardless, literature provides positive affordances as well. The nature of literature requires one to think deeply and extensively about a particular subject. Resultantly, immigrant literary expressions, poetic and other, allow issues of identity to be explored, contemplated, and explained in depth.

More importantly, this thesis contributes to a larger discourse about immigrant personhood, perceived pendulum identities, and heterogeneity. Adorning their subjectivities with sundry characteristics and unexpected articulations, my chosen Spanish-Maghrebi authors reject the monolithic casts created for them. Consequently, this study offers us a glimpse into the varied experience of immigrant womanhood, an experience which transcends the Morocco-Spain context and takes us into broader negotiations of personal multiplicity.

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