

Thesis Prospectus

**Pendulums of Personhood? Expressions of Belonging, *Magrebidad*, and “Spanishness” in  
the Subjectivities of Spanish Writers of Maghrebi Origin**

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## Introduction

Having contrived a society of “Western” democratic values, a reputation of multiculturalism, and a vastness of perceived opportunity, Spain, once categorized as part of Africa itself<sup>1</sup>, has bewitched North African populations and amplified their immigrational flows. Naturally, societal tension has paralleled this increase, and not all Spanish citizens have expressed pleasure with heightened North African immigration. The anxious and collective Spanish-imaginary has deemed the North African immigrant as the “other”, and it clings to this visual of North African immigrants forcing their way through barbed wire fences with intentions to inflame Spanish citizens, take advantage of the Spanish government, and infest European streets with danger.

Similarly, there is a societal discourse which understands North African immigrants as feeling out of place and ostracized in Spain’s “Western” context or homesick and withdrawn for lack of cultural-compatibility. Resultantly, North African immigrants are perceived as an “other” not “tailored” to the cloth of Spanish citizenry. Typically, in any community, there is this notion that hybrid subjectivities and hyphenated identities inherently clash with their host societies. It is widely understood that immigrants experience a reality which is fraught with conflict due to ethnocentrism, distinctions between “us” and “them”, and differences in behaviors, beliefs, linguistic patterns, and soundscapes. Challenging psychological, behavioral, and cultural adjustment periods exist in any physical relocation process, and it is clear that many immigrant expressions report being emotionally pulled in two spaces and times.

However, it is surprising that, within those paralleling descriptions, many collections of Hispano-Maghrebi literature, poetry, and essays often illustrate feelings of confident selfhood,

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<sup>1</sup> Bailey, Cathryn. “Africa Begins at the Pyrenees’: Moral Outrage,”

fluidness in border, and a sense of comfort in Spanish society as if the migration did not occur. Are these immigrant expressions of belonging due to an increased acceptance of Spanish multiculturalism, historical fusion of Hispano-African linguistic and social cultures, Mediterranean lifestyle similarities, or large volumes of North African immigrants in Spain in general? What if the “other” does not feel like the “other”, and, instead, experiences a profound bond and homely satisfaction in Spain as if it were their country of origin?

This thesis project aims to examine the discourses of belonging voiced by contemporary Spanish residents and citizens of North African heritage or origin, who I refer to as Hispano-Maghrebis and as embodying *Magrebidad*. Specifically, I am interested in analyzing how Hispano-Maghrebis discursively implement and perform belonging in what, theoretically, is often assumed to be a “foreign” place. In short, my project questions: what is Hispano-Maghrebi identity, or *Magrebidad*, and how is it conveyed in contemporary literature by Spanish writers of North African origin or heritage who actively claim “Spanishness” as opposed to immigrant personhood?

Although each immigrant experience is subjective, I hypothesize that Hispano-Maghrebi literary persons will discursively enact a sense of belonging within Spanish society through invocations of: 1) their familiarity with Spanish cultural elements and behaviors, 2) their deep connection to the Spanish language, and 3) the interconnectedness of Mediterranean cultures and identities. Further, I hypothesize that Hispano-Maghrebi literary persons will explain these senses of belonging within the following three categories: legal reasons (such as policies of acceptance), personal efforts (such as practicing Spanish), and historical ties (such as believing Spain and Morocco have essentially always been the same country and culture). Therefore, I will assess and organize my data based upon the aforementioned hypothesis categories.

## Background

Spain, officially known as *Reino de España*, 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, colonial empire is the only European country to hold a physical border with an African nation, and therefore, its role for the European Union has largely encompassed processes of limiting “foreign bodies” from entering the “Western” sphere. Undergoing many rules throughout its history, Spain has absorbed cultural and religious elements from the Romans, the Visigoths, the Muslims, and the Christians. Contemporarily, however, Spain consists of a secular parliamentary of both democracy and monarchy which sustains power over seventeen autonomous communities (and two autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa). Although Spain’s constitution emphasizes that Spain recognizes no particular religion and believes in religious freedom, Spain’s most prevalent religion is predominantly Catholic Christianity<sup>2</sup>.

The Maghreb, originating from the Arabic term *al-Maghrib*, is defined by contemporary scholars, researchers, and residents as the Northwest region of Africa. More specifically, this expansive area encompasses the following countries: Algeria, Mauritania, Libya, Tunisia, territories of the Western Sahara and Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, and Morocco. Additionally, this region also houses two non-African, Spanish-controlled cities, Ceuta and Melilla, on the former (and frequently contested) coast of Morocco.

While the territory constitutes a multitude of cultures and linguistic particularities, Spain and the Maghreb have shared a past of conquering one another during the Al-Andalus, the Muslim-Spain ruled period (from 711 to the 11th century), the Reconquista, the fight for a

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<sup>2</sup> Pariona, Amber. “The Major Religions in Spain.”

Catholic ruled Spain (from 718 to 1478), The Kingdom of Spain Catholic ruled period (from 1479 to 1931), the dictator Francisco Franco ruled period of North African colonization in the Sahara, Morocco, Equatorial Guinea, Ceuta, and Melilla (from 1939 to 1975), and the contemporary era of democracy.

These periods of domination and influence, while painful in the collective Maghrebi memory, inherently forced 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 connections. Further, Spain has 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>3</sup>.

In effort to limit the permeability of Maghrebi Muslim identities into Spanish culture (and to convert or kill remaining Muslims in Spain), Inquisitionist Spain deemed its national food *jamón*, or pork, because practicing Muslims and Jews are forbidden to consume it<sup>4</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. Similarly, Spain’s historical fondness of wine hails from the same era of Christian conversion. Muslims were forced to drink it in order to violate their religious identity and in order to enforce a “Spanish”

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<sup>3</sup> Weisz, Martina L. “Religion, Power, and National Identity”

<sup>4</sup> Picard, Sophie. “Behind the Bite: Jamón Ibérico.”

one<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, Spain and the Maghreb both connect and paradoxically exist in intentional opposition to one another.

In the past few decades, Spain and Maghrebi nations (specifically Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania) have signed and maintained treaties of collaboration, friendship, and migration. Further, Spain is the primary economic partner for many Maghrebi nations<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, even contemporarily, there are experiences of mutual reliance, intermingling, and shared ideological discourse. At the heart of this connection is the Strait of Gibraltar, or *Estrecho de Gibraltar*. This strait, connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the Mediterranean Sea, is a site of mutual connection and selfhood between the Maghreb and Spain, Europe and Africa. Voyages across this natural “border”, or historically termed “Gate of the West”, are conducted daily and fairly easily due to around only eight miles of separation. Further, it is a site of both legal and illegal immigration.

Regarding immigration flows, Spain has only recently become a country of immigrants. Previously (from 1850-1950), Spain was regarded as a country of emigrants due to a large portion of its population emigrating to Latin American countries<sup>7</sup>. During 1960-1979, Spaniards continued emigrating elsewhere, primarily to other European states. However, with Spain’s signing of the Treaty of Adherence and European partnership in 1985, emigration flows reversed, and for the first heavily documented period, there was demand from immigrants to come to Spain. Hitting its immigrational peak in 2007, Spain’s immigrant flows have been relatively high except during the 2008 financial crisis. What do these numbers mean for Maghrebis?

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<sup>5</sup> Harvey, L. P. *Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614*.

<sup>6</sup> Gobierno de España. Spain and the Maghreb.

<sup>7</sup> Romero, Jaime Martí. “The Remarkable Case of Spanish Immigration.”

During 1960-1979, Maghrebi migrants primarily settled in Germany, France, and The Netherlands due to increased opportunities elsewhere and Spain's restrictions during Francisco Franco's dictatorship. However, once Spain reached democracy, emigration flows from the Maghreb increased in the 1980s, and Spain was one of the most popular locations for immigrant Maghrebis due to its demand for low-skilled laborers<sup>8</sup>. Since this demand caused such a high influx of migrants, Spain imposed more restrictions and visa requirements from those crossing the Mediterranean since the mid-1990s, and illegal immigration flows have risen as a result<sup>9</sup>.

Contemporary immigrational flows are similar. It is stated that, as of 2020, Spain has hosted around three million migrants--with over half of those being from Africa<sup>10</sup>. 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: "In the early twentieth century, the sub-region's geographic proximity to Europe, along with socioeconomic disparities between origin and destination countries following independence and the First and Second World Wars, enabled Europe's guest worker programmes to attract migrants from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia"<sup>11</sup>. These programs, present in Spain as "regularisation" since 2005, are legal routes of immigration created by Spain for African workers who aim to return to Africa but want recruitment and status in the process<sup>12</sup>.

Because of these high quantity migratory movements, Spain has reacted with particular migration policies--some of the most welcoming of all Western Europe. For comparison, France

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<sup>8</sup> Haas, Hein de. "The Myth of Invasion: the Inconvenient Realities of African Migration to Europe."

<sup>9</sup>Haas, Hein de. "The Myth of Invasion: the Inconvenient Realities of African Migration to Europe."

<sup>10</sup>"Migration Data in Northern Africa." Migration Data Portal, 2021.

<sup>11</sup>"Migration Data in Northern Africa." Migration Data Portal, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Fausto Miguélez, Albert Recio. "Spain: Large-Scale Regularisation and Its Impacts,"

(like Spain) experienced increased emigrational movements from Africa during the 1970s-1990s due to demand for low-skilled labor<sup>13</sup>. However, once this period of demand dwindled, France expected immigrants to return to their countries of origin. When they did not return, France adopted harsher immigration policies. An example of harshness is understood through France's campaign to actively expel illegal immigrants, give frontier police increased powers, create a politicized immigrant "crisis", and make "formerly legal migration flows illegal".<sup>14</sup>

However, unlike France, the Spanish government, *Gobierno de España*, website even claims itself an *activist* of the Maghreb: "Spain also plays a crucial role in the Euro-Mediterranean region, making decisive contributions to the inclusion of Maghrebi matters on the European Union's agenda"<sup>15</sup>. A noteworthy migration policy, however, is as follows: *Ley de Extranjería*, or the Law on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain. This policy has been amended many times in 1985, 1996, 1998, and 2000, in order to transition from temporary perspectives to immersionist, human-rights, and immigrant permanency perspectives. Regarding the facilitation of "easy" immigration, Spain holds a bilateral agreement with only the Maghreb nation of Morocco--allowing Moroccans to immigrate with less restrictions than other nationalities, provide and regulate labor opportunities, and promote and facilitate seasonal labor migrant movements.

Societally, Spain's immigration policies have been contemporarily described as a "fragile tolerance"<sup>16</sup>. In a way, North African immigration has been portrayed as a normalcy for some time, even during difficult economic crises. Spanish Foreign Minister Joseph Borrell, during the immigration surge of 2018, suggested that immigration, like gravity, cannot be stopped but

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<sup>13</sup> Quiminal Catherine (1996) Africans in France: French Immigration Policy and West Africa.

<sup>14</sup> Guiraudon, Virginie. "Immigration Policy in France."

<sup>15</sup> Gobierno de España. Spain and the Maghreb.

<sup>16</sup> Hedgecoe, Guy. "Migration Surge Tests Spain's 'Fragile Tolerance'." Politico.



rerouted. Other politicians, like Spain's Socialist prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, frame immigration as primarily a humanitarian issue which needs to be supported. Even far right politicians like Albert Rivera have agreed that immigration is a human issue, and humans cannot be abandoned by Spain<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, Spain's public reasoning and political understandings of immigration can be portrayed as some of the most welcoming rhetoric, not only in Europe, but in the world.

Despite this seemingly "rosy" exterior, it is important to acknowledge that Spain's immigrational policies are not uncomplicated or unwavering. Serving as a border for the larger European Union, other EU countries essentially outsource Spain as their border control "watchdog"<sup>18</sup>. Since Spain's 2007 heightened immigrational flows, the European Union has provided Spain's migration control industry (including private Spanish companies) with hundreds of millions of euros a year<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, Spain experiences a lot of external pressure to remove and combat increases in "foreign bodies", especially considering the tension produced by Spain's fence-border *within* Africa itself.

While this tension certainly extends to immigrants entering Spain, it is interesting to note that a new generation of "foreign bodies", Hispano-Maghrebis, do not claim foreignness and immigrant personhood. Instead, many are claiming "Spanishness", belonging, and comfortable subjectivities in Spain. At the forefront of this trend are Hispano-Maghrebi literary persons like Lamiae el Amrani, Najat el Hachmi, and Laila Karrouch--all originating from Morocco. All women, these writers are the epitome of *Magrebidad* and offer thoughtful expressions on society, selfhood, and subjectivities as the assumed "other". How does the idea of the "other"

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<sup>17</sup> Hedgecoe, Guy. "Migration Surge Tests Spain's 'Fragile Tolerance!'" Politico.

<sup>18</sup> Associated Press. "European Watchdog,"

<sup>19</sup> Statewatch. "EU-Spain: New Report Provides an 'x-Ray',"

exist externally if it does not translate to the minds and experiences of the “other”, the Hispano-Maghrebi, themselves? El Amrani, El Hachmi, and Karrouch’s works speak to this paradox.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Other scholars have studied belonging, immigration experiences, Maghrebi selfhood, and immigrant identity in Europe. Specifically referencing Maghrebi experiences, thesis project “Representing Al-Andalus: Andalusian Traces in Contemporary Culture in Spain and North Africa,” by Erin Elizabeth Roark will explore the duality and fusion of North African and Spanish identity while also providing historical context. Another thesis investigation, “Investigación Longitudinal Sobre la Segunda Generación En España,” [Longitudinal Research on the Second Generation in Spain] by Rosa Aparicio, will offer an introduction into the experiences of second-generation immigrant subjectivities. Alternatively, peer-reviewed article, “‘This Project We Call Spain’: Nationality, Autochthony, and Politics in Spain’s North African Exclaves,” by Daniel Karell discusses Spain’s autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla and their influence on North African immigrants.

Further, I will explore identity-specific studies which reference spectrums of immigrant belonging. Books like *Citizenship, Political Engagement, and Belonging: Immigrants in Europe and the United States* by Deborah Reed-Danahay and Caroline B. Brettell will provide sociological perspectives of why immigrants experience belonging in host countries. Similarly, articles like “Linguistic Isolation, Social Capital, and Immigrant Belonging,” by Stephanie J. Nawyn, Linda Gjokaj, and DeBrenna LaFa Agbényiga will offer understandings of belonging in relation to language as a “noneconomic social capital”. Correspondingly, “Immigrants' Sense of Belonging to the Host Country: The Role of Life Satisfaction, Language Proficiency, and Religious Motives,” by Karin Amit and Shirly Bar-Lev and “The Democratic Consequences of

Anti-Immigrant Political Rhetoric: A Mixed Methods Study of Immigrants' Political Belonging” by Kristina Bakkær Simonsen will contribute additional analyses on immigrant senses of belonging, satisfaction factors which contribute to the phenomenon, and implications of political belonging on the immigrant psyche.

However, *Here, there, and Elsewhere: The Making of Immigrant Identities in a Globalized World* by Tahseen Shams specifically focuses on Muslim immigrants and religiosity's imprint on immigrant identity experiences. Other imprints, generational ones, are discussed in “Immigrants' Identity, Economic Outcomes and the Transmission of Identity Across Generations,” by Teresa Casey and Christian Dustmann. This article will offer an analysis on immigrant identity transmission across generations and how that transmission is affected by the economic market of the host country. Michelle N. Murray's book, *Home Away From Home Immigrant Narratives, Domesticity, and Coloniality in Contemporary Spanish Culture* will reference immigration policies, belonging, and immigrant expressions of self exclusively. In essay “Scoring the National Hym(e)n: Sexuality, Immigration, and Liminal Identity in Najat El Hachmi's *L'ultim patriarca*,” by Jessica Folkart analyses Moroccan immigrant Najat El Hachmi's work and explores immigrant body, identity, border multiplication, and Spain as a gendered space which has been perceived as violated by North African immigrants.

Moreover, it is important to recognize specific Maghrebi immigrant analyses like *Coming of Age in Madrid: An Oral History of Unaccompanied Moroccan Migrant Minors* by Susan Plann. This study, centering around the subjectivities of migrant minors, lends itself to understanding subjectivities of those who are not necessarily pulled to migrate by a personal decision. "Translated Identities: Writing between Morocco and Spain," by Lara N. Dotson-Renta, alternatively, will provide more context regarding Hispano-Moroccan relations and how those

histories play out contemporarily. *Language and Muslim Immigrant Childhoods: the Politics of Belonging* by Inmaculada García-Sánchez will place belonging and migrancy on the same platform while referencing Islamic cultural contingencies. “North African Women in Spain: Dreams and Reality, Identity and Belonging,” by Laurie Ann Pasricha will cater to feminine-Maghrebi perspectives of immigration while also referencing immigrational catalysts.

As for works which specifically explain components of *Magrebidad*, it is important to consider literature from scholarly-perspectives in *Hispanismo del Magreb* online magazine and works such as “Hibridismo y Voces de Frontera en la Neo-Narrativa Hispano-Magrebí de Principios del Siglo XXI,” [Hybridism and Voices of the Border in the Hispanic-Maghrebi Neo-Narrative of the Early 21st Century] by Dra. Saadeya Mousa Abd El Azeem, “Revistas Literarias: Puente Cultural Entre España y Marruecos,” [Literary Magazines: Cultural Bridge Between Spain and Morocco] by Paloma Fernández Gomá, “Aproximación a la poesía Hispano-Magrebí Última Escrita por Mujeres,” [Approach to Spanish-Maghrebi Poetry Last Written by Women] by Isabel Llamas Martínez, and “Español, Hispanismo e Hispanidad En Argelia,” [Spanish, Hispanism and Hispanity in Algeria] by Salah Eddine Salhi. These works, articulated by scholars in the Maghreb region, will serve as a guide to how *Magrebidad* is defined by those who live and study in the region. Additionally, these articles will cultivate a more accurate representation from Maghrebi intellectuals on how Maghrebi and Spanish culture intertwine.

## **Research Design**

### *Case Selection, Data, and Methods*

To gain a comprehensive understanding of contemporary *Magrebidad*, I will engage in the method of triangulation. Primarily qualitative, my methodology will require me to draw on and crosscheck three different types of data: literary and poetic data, externally produced

interview and survey data, and potentially personally conducted interview data. Therefore, my analyses of *Magrebidad*, belonging, and selfhood will not be limited, skewed, or contradictory by only one type of source.

In reference to literary and poetic expressions, I will analyze this data set by focusing on phrases which refute or confirm my hypotheses, reference the content of my questions, and stand out in general. For more lengthy literature, like novels, I will home in on particular chapters which specifically reference my research interests. For smaller poetic expressions, I will analyze that which strikes me as relevant line by line. Therefore, I will categorize my data according to its connection to my hypotheses categories: expressions of familiarity with the Spanish landscape, understanding the Spanish language, feeling similar effects of Mediterranean identity, and explanations of legal reasons, personal efforts, and historical ties. Further, I will note the frequency of specific themes: immigrant selfhood, signifiers of familiarity, environmental descriptions, symbolic references, and reasoning as to why particular spaces are intimate.

Within the realm of literary data, particular affordances are expected. The nature of literature itself requires one to think deeply and extensively about a particular subject. Therefore, immigrant literary expressions, poetic and other, allow issues of identity to be explored, contemplated, and explained in depth. Typically long-winded, writings about *Magrebidad* and Hispano-Maghrebi personhood offer larger samples of contemplation. However, limitations exist as well. Published literary expressions require time, money, influence, and often education. Therefore, many works which reference or allude to *Magrebidad* do not include perspectives from those who do not have means of expression, linguistic skills, and educational backgrounds. Therefore, their expressions of belonging (or lack thereof) are not portrayed extensively in literary works.

Despite this setback, for my literary data, I will limit myself to the works of three Hispano-Maghrebi writers: Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae el Amrani, and Laila Karrouch. As aforementioned, these women are at the forefront of a trend. This trend is defined (by me) as a new generation of Spanish writers of Maghrebi origin or heritage who do not claim the identity of immigrants but, instead, claim complete Spanish citizenship. These individuals absolutely claim belonging in Spain and, in their discourses, engage in politics of belonging differently than assumed. Therefore, I will utilize the poetic works of *Tormenta de Especias* [Storm of Spices] by Moroccan immigrant Lamiae el Amrani. I will also analyze the biographical works of *Laila* by Laila Karrouch, *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] by Najat El Hachmi, and *Jo també sóc catalana* [I am also Catalan] by Najat El Hachmi (and translated by Julia Sanches). These works will build the framework for understanding *Magrebidad* selfhood and experiences from those who do not use the term directly but embody what I consider to be *Magrebidad*.

While Maghrebi literature is necessary for understanding *Magrebidad* from a first-person perspective, it does not offer a more casual environment to understand selfhood. Therefore, externally produced interview and survey data is helpful to use in order to gather multiple sentiments within the similar environments. Using these compilations, I will analyze the data by focusing on the paralleling experiences present in each interview, the statements which confirm or deny belonging, and statements referencing the interviewee's general feelings about immigration to Spain.

This data will be particularly helpful because interviews (whether in podcast, radio, or news cast form) allow individuals from various backgrounds to state their cases and experiences

electronically and verbally. With informal interviews, there is a conversation occurring between the interviewee and the interviewer, and the interviewer themselves can provide insight into the societal context of what the interviewee is saying. Unlike literature, this data source does not require the same educational levels as literary expressions because interviewers interpret the interviewees themselves. Resultantly, a wide range of perspectives are produced (more readily available than literary data). Further, external interview data (being data that I have no part in producing) will offer comparisons to the data I will produce.

However, particular restraints and limitations emerge as well. For example, secondary interview data will not specifically address my research questions. Therefore, all the produced data may not be applicable, though related. Further, the interviews and survey data may serve a particular purpose which may alter the interpretation or thought processes of those interviewed.

Despite limitations, as a primary source, I will rely on externally produced interview data where Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae el Amrani, and Laila Karrouch are the particular subjects of interest. Although their interview platforms vary, El Amrani, El Hachmi, and Karrouch express themselves in less formal and more personal environments than that of literature. For example, I will utilize a Spanish radio podcast interview with Lamiae el Amrani, “Aqui Marruecos Entrevista Exclusiva con Lamiae el Amrani”, with host Roberto C. Bustos from El Canal de Aqui Marruecos [The Here Morocco Channel].

Further, I will analyze the transcribed conversations in Najat El Hachmi’s interview, “An Interview with Najat El Hachmi,” by Jessie Chaffee from *Words Without Borders*. Najat El Hachmi has engaged in other interviews, specifically in news broadcasts, like “No soy una inmigrante, soy un paquete que alguien trajo aquí” [I am not an immigrant, I am a package that someone brought here] by ABC’s David Morán. Similarly, I will rely on Laila Karrouch’s news

broadcast interviews such as “Escrituras Migrantes: Laila Karrouch” [Migrant Writers: Laila Karrouch] by Ilaria Rossini from *Storie Migranti* and “Laila Karrouch” by Albert Om of *El Convidat*.

To incorporate aspects of a quantitative analysis and another externally produced primary source, I will also include survey data from the World Happiness Report in order to verify the happiness and emotional satisfaction levels of Maghrebi countries in comparison with Spain in general. Moreover, I will analyze the happiness levels of Spain from the perspectives of immigrants themselves and how those results relate to the qualitative literature I will have studied. Further, I feel it is essential to take notice of questionnaire data from the Afrobarometer, which questions Maghrebi country residents about their daily feelings of safeness/danger, corruption/liberty, and quality/quantity of basic necessities. This information will emphasize potential push factors of immigration to Spain and, therefore, contribute to my hypotheses.

My final source of data will require personal conduction of informal interviews, conversations, and readings with North African immigrants. This data is particularly useful because it provides freedom of analysis and understanding of context. Personally-produced interview data contributes positively to the broader subject of immigrant identity, allows me to check for data contradictions, and grants me the opportunity to ask more research-relevant questions. As a result, I will be able to analyze more easily and not only look for particular parallels of belonging, but reference and inquire about those subjects to my interviewees as well.

However, personally produced data inherently has restrictions and flaws, and my research will be no exception. For example, my interviews will be severely limited by my physicality and geographical location in Spain. Confined to the Northern Spanish city of Bilbao, it is less likely that I will encounter as many North African immigrants as I would in Southern Spain. Further, as



an outsider myself, I am also limited to my understanding of the city and where North African immigrants typically interact. Therefore, I may enter spaces of relaxation instead of discourse and unintentionally limit the scope of my research. Finally, interviews and conversations are naturally and subjectively filtered through the mind of the interviewer. Therefore, my personal emphasis may not be the intentional emphasis of the interviewee.

Despite these restrictions, it is my intention to gather interview and conversational material from North African immigrants while in Bilbao, Spain in order to ask questions such as: 1) How would you describe your identity? 2) What is *Magrebidad* or Hispano-Maghrebi identity? 3) Do you think the aforementioned terms are applicable to yourself? 4) If not, what term would be applicable? 5) Would you say that you primarily feel senses of intimacy and belonging in Spain or the opposite? 6) What fuels these feelings? 7) How do you perceive the Strait of Gibraltar? 8) What does the border symbolize to you, if anything at all? 9) What was your motivation for immigrating to Spain? 10) How do Spanish immigration policies affect your reality?

Further, I intend to discuss Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae el Amrani, and Laila Karrouch's works, read selections from them, and discuss the interviewees' interpretations of the literature and poetry in hopes to understand if *Magrebidad* and my generalizations and interpretations of it are relatable on the ground. Are *Magrebidad* and performances of "Spanishness" by literary persons of Maghrebi origin an "elite literary identity"? Or do these experiences and expressions have little resonance with individuals on the ground?

### *Limitations*

While immigrant populations have been analyzed in detail in various academic fields, North African Immigrant populations in Spain have rarely been sought out for interview, survey,

and understanding about *Magrebidad* itself. Therefore, wide-spread immigrant opinion on Maghrebi-selfhood, host-societies, assimilation, hybridism, and identity are limited in number. Further, it is important to note that, oftentimes, immigrant populations are in vulnerable positions which limit their ability to express themselves in their host country's language, describe themselves and their unique experiences on a widely available platform for analysis, or reveal themselves as particular immigrants for fear of persecution and exploitation. Therefore, this analysis of Hispano-Maghrebi identity is not objective, but subjective. My analyses only account for a small number of expressions from Spanish writers of Maghrebi origin and heritage (that of Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae el Amrani, and Laila Karrouch).

Further, the Maghreb and immigrants which hail from the Maghreb constitute a large geographical and cultural space which cannot be definitively defined. However, this thesis will contribute to a small understanding of Hispano-Maghrebi experience and belonging in Spain particularly. Since I have limited myself to the literary expressions of El Hachmi, El Amrani, and Karrouch, I will be able to make more generalizable claims and create more profound understandings of how "Spanishness" and *Magrebidad* is enacted and performed by these women in particular.

### **Proposed Chapter Outline**

#### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

- a. Purpose of Study
- b. Major Research Questions
- c. Background
- d. Theoretical Framework
- e. Research Design

- i. Case Selection
- ii. Data and Methods
- iii. Limitations

## **Chapter 2: Anti-Nostalgia and Origin Anxieties**

- a. Thematic chapter combining Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae el Amrani, and Laila Karrouch's works
  - i. Their rejection of Morocco (anti-Nostalgia)
    - 1. Lamiae el Amrani's descriptions of savannas and their former comfort in comparison with their lack of comfort contemporarily.
    - 2. Lamiae el Amrani's descriptions of sexism.
    - 3. Najat El Hachmi's semi-rejection of her heritage in [I am also Catalan]. It seems like she prefers "Spanishness", and she claims that she was "brought" to Spain with no say in the matter. Since she grew up in Spain, she claims "Spanishness" and certain belonging.
  - ii. Their rejection or uncomfortable associations with Maghrebi cultural elements (anxieties)
    - 1. Lamiae el Amrani's discussion of Moroccan shores as graveyards and emphasis on burial themes.
- b. Understandings of border
  - i. Is it physical? Is it fluid? Does it produce anxieties or have a symbolic meaning? How is it described in terms of selfhood by each woman?
    - 1. Lamiae el Amrani's hatred of the border and her descriptions of its "iron" nature and physical restrictions

2. “Translated Identities: Writing between Morocco and Spain,” by Lara N. Dotson-Renta
3. Revistas Literarias: Puente Cultural Entre España y Marruecos,” by Paloma Fernández Gomá
4. “North Africa's Spain: Peripheral National Identities and the nation-state as Neo-empire,” by Daniel Karell
5. “‘This Project we Call Spain’: Nationality, Autochthony, and Politics in Spain's North African Exclaves,” by Daniel Koshi-Karell
6. DiFrancesco, Maria. "Transcending a Watery Border: Unsettled Bodies and in-between Subjects in Por La Vía De Tarifa." In , 2012.

### **Chapter 3: Linguistics and Love**

- a. Thematic chapter combining Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae el Amrani, and Laila Karrouch’s works
  - i. Expressions of belonging which emphasize familiarity, passion, and comfort in the Spanish language
    1. Najat el Hachmi and her essay [I am also Catalan]
    2. Najat el Hachmi’s interview expressing her love for Catalan and Spanish because they were the first languages that she learned to write. They are her tools of expression, and she values them greatly.
  - ii. Expressions of belonging which emphasize one’s INTENTIONAL belonging because of love (for a person, for an environment, for a goal)
    1. Lamiae el Amrani’s poems

### **Chapter 4: Mediterranean Magic: Spells of Sameness across the Strait**

- a. Thematic chapter combining Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae el Amrani, and Laila Karrouch's works
  - i. Finding sameness in Mediterranean, Maghrebi, and Spanish cultures, as if they are historically and contemporarily "twins"/two halves of the same whole
    - 1. Lamiae el Amrani's discussion of "Sirenas" [mermaids/sirens] and their symbolic importance of "in-betweenness", feeling combined senses of belonging because of one's own duality
    - 2. Lamiae el Amrani's descriptions of nature: same moon, shores, air, etc
- b. Discussion on similarities between the Maghreb and Spain:
  - i. Cultural aspects
  - ii. Societal tendencies
  - iii. How do these spaces intertwine with the Mediterranean at the center of this sameness?
    - 1. "Representing Al-Andalus: Andalusian Traces in Contemporary Culture in Spain and North Africa," by Erin Elizabeth Roark

### **Chapter 5: Casual *Magrebidad*?**

- a. Personally-conducted interview section
  - i. Poetry and selections reading reactions
  - ii. Emotional Discourse: Tactics of Belonging: How are feelings of belonging actualized?
  - iii. How do women on the ground resonate with *Magrebidad*? Is it an elite, literary term? Is there an alternate term that one values?

- iv. How do interviewed women enact “Spanishness”? Is it similar or different to the generalizations found in Najat El Hachmi, Lamiae el Amrani, and Laila Karrouch’s works?

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

- a. A return to the research questions and hypotheses
- b. Clear analysis and definitive conclusion about what *Magrebidad*, how it is expressed by Hispano-Maghrebi writers in their works, in their interviews, and how it is expressed on the ground (from my personally conducted informal interviews)
- c. Themes and patterns in expression

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