CHAPTER 1

Introduction

THE SETTING

The weekly Thursday market in Órgiva is a kaleidoscope of regional, national, religious, and ethnic origins, as well as of lifestyle choices. At one stand, in this town about 60 km southeast of the city of Granada, an older woman speaking Spanish with the local Alpujarran accent and wearing a black skirt, short-sleeve floral print blouse, and gold crucifix buys vegetables from a local farmer. Nearby, a group of teens browses an array of knock-off sneakers sold by a West African immigrant who travels for hours to sell his wares at different Andalusian markets. Elsewhere, a man with an Italian accent wearing a cotton tunic and an embroidered kufi cap (the brimless, cylindrical hat also known as a topi or taqiya) sells incense and hand-crafted soaps. In front of a stand displaying dozens of bins full of aromatic spices, a Moroccan family confers in Arabic about what to purchase, and one of them places their order in Spanish. At a series of small tables, people sporting eclectic, mostly bohemian, clothes, piercings, and sometimes dreadlocks, many of whom arrived on foot from neighboring hippie communes, sell handmaid jewelry and pipes for smoking marijuana, with signs advertising their wares in a mix of Spanish and English, and bilingual brochures for a local exchange trading system, an alternative economic system based on barter.
Órgiva, a town of approximately 6,000 inhabitants nestled between the southern slopes of the Sierra Nevada and the smaller Sierra de Lújar mountains in the Alpujarra region of the province of Granada, boasts residents of nearly 70 nationalities and practitioners of various spiritual and healing traditions. With so much diversity tucked between terraced almond, olive, and orange groves, Órgiva has been called “the little Manhattan of Andalucía” (Sánchez Alonso 2015a). How does a small town in rural Spain come to be known as a literal global village distinguished by its harmonious cohabitation (convivencia)? How do narratives about this town represent its multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-confessional fabric, and what gets erased from such representations? How do its residents conceive of the town’s diversity and enact tolerance? What can the narratives about the town—both outside representations of it and residents’ stories about their lived experience—tell us about the workings of tolerance? Through an analysis of written, visual, and oral narratives about the Alpujarra and specifically the town of Órgiva, this interdisciplinary inquiry responds to these questions and considers their broader implications in an increasingly globalized, yet conflict-ridden world.

With the intensification of intercultural contact that we know as globalization, which produces increased commonalities and increased inequalities, comes an intensification of the need or desire to assert specific identities. The Mediterranean region in particular is one of the hotbeds of such issues. As Natalia Ribas-Mateos, a specialist in North–South Mediterranean migration explains, the Mediterranean is “one of the most active friction-planes when considering North-South imbalances in the globalized world” (2001, 22). For this reason, various scholars have turned their attention to literary and cultural aspects of migration from North Africa to Spain. Spain, and in particular the region of Andalucía, is home to many European converts to Islam, which adds another layer of complexity to this interfaith and intercultural confluence. In articles and book-length studies, various anthropologists have examined the workings of tolerance, or the lack thereof, in the context of migrants, converts, and/or Catholic nationals.
in Andalucía. Much of the work on Muslim converts and immigrants has focused on the city of Granada, but the traditional place of refuge of Granada, the Alpujarra, had yet to be studied in this light. Due to Órgiva’s position as the largest municipality in the Alpujarra region and a gateway to its more remote villages, it has long been known as “the capital of the Alpujarra.” In keeping with this, Órgiva is the epicenter for late 20th- and early 21st-century changes that are also seen, though to a lesser extent, in nearby areas of the Alpujarra.

Given the Alpujarra region’s particular and evolving role in Spanish cultural history, there are layers of narratives about the Alpujarra and Órgiva. Historically, the Alpujarra has been the site of the entrance and exit of various empires, an intercultural contact portrayed particularly in works of historical fiction about the Moorish Other. Fittingly, the Alpujarra has also been frequently represented in travel narratives and ethnographies that spring from other types of cultural contact. More recently, Órgiva itself has been represented via memoirs, a collaborative collection of residents’ testimonials, and various television shows. Taking Órgiva as a case study, this book has two goals: (1) to situate the latest written and televisual narratives about Órgiva against the backdrop of earlier narratives and analyze the portraits of Órgiva that they offer, and (2) to examine, in light of the silences in these recent narratives, the workings and texture of coexistence in the town—including its tensions and conflicting stories—by means of the narratives that those who live in the town tell about it. I use the residents’ expressions of their lived experience to consider how those with local roots integrate the transformation of their town, how the more recent arrivals portray their presence in the town, and how both groups negotiate difference and produce conceptions of coexistence. This allows me to analyze how representations of the town and everyday lived experience across difference formulate tolerance, in particular as it pertains to the various forms of migration that are part of the life of this Andalusian town. These narratives about coexistence have implications on the level of the autonomous community of Andalucía, the Spanish nation, and beyond.
The manifold narratives about Órgiva sometimes run counter to each other, but these ambivalences and contradictions reveal how tolerance is worked out and how more sustainable tolerance can be achieved. A deeper form of tolerance that is more likely to endure is based on both the recognition of mutual worthiness as human beings and of each side’s compromises, interests, and types of power. The various communities that live in Órgiva are engaged in a process of assessing the gains and losses of different ways of coexisting. Although written and especially televisual narratives about the town use terms such as “tolerance” and “multiculturalism” to mask tensions and power differentials, by recognizing that toleration is an ongoing negotiation of what will and will not be accepted—of what is established as halal versus haram to use Islamic terminology—we can identify the points of contact that create robust, respect-based tolerance.

Figure 2: A map indicating the location of Órgiva within Spain (with the coast of Morocco and Algeria below).
Figure 3: A map indicating the location of Órgiva within the Alpujarra (darker in the larger map) and Andalucía.

Figure 4: The sign on one of the main roads into town, announcing “Órgiva, Pura Alpujarra [Pure Alpujarra].”
THE BACK STORY: AL-ANDALUS, CONVIVENCIA,
AND ANDALUSIAN NATIONALISM

Understanding Órgiva and the Alpujarra in the present requires reviewing the region’s lingering past: al-Andalus, the Reconquista, and the consolidation of the Spanish state through measures such as the expulsion of the moriscos (Muslim converts to Christianity) in the early 17th century. This historical backdrop is still present in the body of written narratives (travelogues, memoirs, and the like) about the Alpujarra, at least in works published through the 1950s, in television episodes about Órgiva, and in some community members’ attachment to the area. Al-Andalus refers to the intersection between a time period (711–1492) and a geographic territory (nearly all of the Iberian Peninsula), and thus to medieval Muslim-ruled Iberia. This period of Muslim rule was initiated by the conquests of the Umayyad Caliphate and continued under a variety of often rival dynasties and emirates, some headed by Arabs and some by Amazigh (Berber) leaders. Under Umayyad rule, mostly Imazighen (plural of Amazigh/Berbers) but also some Arabs slowly settled the Alpujarra. As early as the 11th century, the district of Órgiva was mentioned in a text by the geographer and historian al-ʿUdhri (Trillo San José 1990, 49). The Muslim Arabo-Amazigh conquerors brought agricultural advances to rural areas: Trillo San José (1994) indicates that records from the middle of the 10th century point to the Arabo-Amazigh impact on agriculture in the Alpujarra (175). They instituted terraced agriculture and a system of irrigation channels, both of which are still in use today. Meanwhile, the major cities of al-Andalus, most of them in what is today the region of Andalucía, were home to not only Muslims but Christians and Jews and flourished as centers of intellectual inquiry and artistic production.

Centuries after the political end of al-Andalus, with the Christian conquest of the entire peninsula, al-Andalus still functions as a popular symbol for both paradise lost and religious conflict, depending on whether it is viewed as a time of interfaith tolerance and cultivation of knowledge and the arts, or as a time of intolerance under either
threatening Muslim power (Islamic Empire, Islam in Europe, etc.) or threatening Catholic consolidation of power (oppression and expulsion of Jews and Muslims, the Inquisition, etc.). A core element in the question of how to assess Muslim Iberia’s cultural legacy is the ongoing debate regarding the place of al-Andalus in Spanish cultural history. One of the key figures in the early 20th-century manifestation of these debates was Américo Castro (1885–1972), a philologist and historian who hailed from Granada and, as a result of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), carried out most of his professional life in exile in the Americas. Castro is famous for having developed the concept of *convivencia*, literally: “living together.” Focusing his interpretation of medieval Iberia on the scholarly and artistic synergy between Christians, Jews, and Muslims that took place there, Castro proposed that these three faiths enjoyed a Muslim-led tolerance that he dubbed “*la convivencia*.” According to this interpretation, tolerance was one of several significant Muslim contributions to Spain’s unique cultural history. The main opposing narrative of al-Andalus from Castro’s time posited that the authentic Spanish identity was Gothic, Germanic, and Roman in origin—that is, purely European—and that the period of Muslim and Jewish presence was a detriment to the development of Spain that must be overcome.

Built upon Castro’s narrative of harmonious coexistence in al-Andalus, the term *convivencia* has taken on a life of its own and is often used to refer to a utopian vision of interfaith harmony. The idea of the “Spain of the three religions” (anachronistic, since it was not yet “Spain”) grew out of this and has become a catchphrase that is featured in a certain vein of Spanish historiography and in the promotion of tourism in Spain. The question of how much tolerance, and of what sort, there actually was in al-Andalus has led to many a scholarly study. One conclusion of this research is that the systems of rule in place in al-Andalus (in which conquered areas were given considerable freedom in exchange for taxes paid by non-Muslim religious communities) neither prevented certain kinds of discrimination and occasional religious violence, nor are analogous to modern political regimes. For these reasons, calls to “reinstate” the harmonies
of *convivencia* in the present are problematic. However, as Christian Fernández indicates, in both the pre-modern and modern periods, one can find practices that are motivated by “a desire to accommodate rather than eradicate diversity.” Thus, while invocations of *convivencia* tend to ahistorically mythify interfaith harmony, they also reflect a persistent desire to find ways in which diversity and harmony can coexist. As contemporary nation-states grapple with tensions within their heterogeneous populations, liberals and progressives look to al-Andalus for inspiration.

The historical movements that are understood as the polar opposites of *la convivencia* are the Reconquista—the process of Christian kingdoms forming, conquering territories in the Peninsula, sometimes fighting amongst themselves, and eventually consolidating into a single kingdom, that was subsequently framed as a holy war of Spanish Catholics against Muslims—and, intertwined with it, the Inquisition. Given the gains of different Christian kingdoms in Iberia, by 1252 al-Andalus was reduced to the Emirate of Granada, an emirate of the Nasrid dynasty that itself was successively reduced from roughly half of today’s region of Andalucía and part of the region of Murcia down to about a third of today’s Andalucía. Muslim rule in Iberia ended in 1492 with the fall of that final holdout, the Emirate of Granada. As the Reconquista reduced and then eliminated Muslim-ruled areas, more Jews and Muslims lived under Christian rule. Many converted to Christianity in the face of decrees expelling unconverted Jews (1492) and unconverted Muslims (the early 1500s). Eventually, even converted Muslims (*moriscos*) were ousted through the final expulsion decrees (1609–14).

But between the fall of Granada and the final expulsion, the Alpujarra had a prominent role in Spanish history. The Alpujarra region was the first site of exile for the last Muslim ruler of al-Andalus, Boabdil (Abu ʿAbd Allah Muhammad XII), and the last site of Muslim uprisings against the Catholic Monarchs: the Rebellion of the Alpujarras (or *Morisco* Revolt) of 1499–1500 and that of 1568–71. During the Catholic Monarchs’ battles to conquer the Emirate of Granada (1482–91), the Alpujarra was the only area that was not occupied militarily by Christian forces (Trillo San José 1990, 49). Until the 1500s,
the Alpujarra was known for its terraced agriculture and its sericulture: the nobles of the time (regardless of religion) prized the region’s silk. These characteristics no doubt made the Alpujarra a worthy consolation prize for the ousted Boabdil. At the time of the Catholic Monarchs’ victory over the Emirate, as part of the Capitulations of Granada, Ferdinand and Isabel gave Boabdil as his fiefdom a territory in the Alpujarra, including the village of Órgiva. However, Boabdil only lived in the Alpujarra for a short time. In 1493, he sold his Alpujarran fiefdom back to the Catholic Monarchs and left for Fez.

The Capitulations of Granada also included stipulations protecting Muslims’ religious freedom and the continuation of their customs. However, these stipulations were only upheld by the Catholic Monarchs until 1499. In that year, when the Christian authorities broke the treaty of surrender by carrying out forced conversions and public burnings of Arabic manuscripts, Muslims in the Alpujarra rebelled against the Spanish authorities in what is known as the First Rebellion of the Alpujarra. The Castilians quashed the rebellion and bequeathed Órgiva to a Spanish military officer nicknamed “El Gran Capitán,” Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba (1453–1515), for his role in that victory (Trillo San José 1990, 49). The Castilians then gave the Muslims the choice of baptism or exile. Most accepted baptism, although an indeterminate number continued to live in Iberia as crypto-Muslims. That uprising was followed by the Second Rebellion of the Alpujarra and increasing socioeconomic tensions that led in 1609 to the first decree mandating the expulsion of the moriscos.

The momentum of the Reconquista and the Crusades created Spain’s first footholds in North Africa (Melilla and Ceuta) and when Spain lost most of its New World colonies in the early 19th century, its attention then turned to colonization projects in North and West Africa. Spain’s colonial project in North Africa was justified via a concept related to convivencia. In a contradictory stance, during the first half of the 20th century, Spanish military and colonial authorities espoused the idea of a Spanish-Moroccan hermandad (brotherhood) rooted in al-Andalus as a way to rationalize Spanish presence in the Maghreb. Although the official nationalist ideology of the Franco dictatorship
(1939–75) was based on a rhetoric that explicitly invoked the spirit of the Reconquista and its mission to restore the unity of Spain through Catholicism, the Franco regime also embraced a vein of Spanish historical revisionism that, starting in the 1930s and continuing for several decades, posited that Iberia had been the site of a different type of Islam, one that reflected Hispanic influence. Hence, anachronistic and appropriative terms such as “Muslim Spain,” “Spanish Islam,” and “Hispano-Arab” became common in academic circles, the media, and popular discourses. The rhetoric of Hispano-Arab hermandad was used to support a colonial campaign that resulted in Spain’s occupation of the Western Sahara (1884–1976), which has been claimed by Morocco, and Spain’s protectorate in two regions of Morocco (1912–56): the northern Rif and the southern strip adjacent to the Western Sahara. Spanish colonization in North Africa included the cultural elements (the colony as the object of academic study and artistic representation) typical of French and British colonial ventures, but with the twist of the hermandad rhetoric that positioned Morocco and the Western Sahara as the “little brother” receiving Spanish tutelage.

Alongside the development of Spain’s colonial relationship with North Africa, in the late 19th century, Andalusian nationalism (andalucismo) arose, demonstrating an equally complex relationship with al-Andalus. The culmination of andalucismo during the late 20th-century transition to democracy then led to the return of the open practice of Islam in Andalucía and the Alpujarra. In the 19th century, the Alpujarra experienced some industrialization through the establishment of lead, silver, and fluorite mines that remained active through most of the 20th century. Together with this industry that was dependent on new technologies, the period also saw the burgeoning of new conceptions of political and community identity in the form of regional nationalisms. Spain has a long tradition of strong cultural and/or linguistic regions, many of which espouse forms of nationalism known as nacionalismos periféricos (peripheral or non-central nationalisms). Toward the end of the 19th century, many of these regions, among them Andalucía, witnessed Romanticism-inspired regionalist movements that promoted political autonomy on the basis of
cultural difference from the other regions of the peninsula. While the andalucista (Andalusianist) movement saw different, mostly cultural manifestations during the following decades, it burgeoned after the Franco dictatorship (1939–75).

Spain underwent a deep and rapid cultural transformation in the post-dictatorship period. The Spanish transition to democracy that began with Franco’s death in 1975 included the establishment of a new political system and constitution (1978) as well as the outpouring of new and formerly suppressed artistic, social, and ideological movements. This surge of countercultural movements, known as La Movida (the Scene), which began in Madrid in 1980 and then manifested in other parts of Spain, responded to the end of years of oppression and the start of post-dictatorship economic growth with a spirit of freedom of expression that transgressed what had up until recently been taboo. As such, it entailed a reconfiguration of Spanish identity and cultural expression. This movement included, particularly in Andalucía, interest in the practice of Islam, a religious and lifestyle choice that was ideologically intertwined with the more strictly political side of the Spanish transition.

Alongside La Movida, in the post-dictatorship period the various regionalist and nationalist movements, which had been suppressed by the Franco regime, also experienced a resurgence. With the transition to democracy and the preparation of the 1978 constitution, which reorganized the country politically on the basis of Autonomous Communities, in 1976 the Partido Socialista Andaluz (Andalusian Socialist Party), later the Partido Andalucista, was established with the aim of demanding autonomy for Andalucía. It achieved this goal in 1981. From the perspective of supporters of regional nationalisms, Castilian centralism is a colonizing force. Among the regional nationalisms, that of Andalucía is positioned as both subordinated to centralist Spain and linked to al-Andalus. As a historically economically depressed region, Andalucía has sent laborers to other regions of Spain, where they often experienced the oppression of class and cultural hierarchies. This experience intensified Andalusian awareness of cultural differences from other Spaniards. Although within Europe
Spain’s “Europeanness” is questioned, within a national framework, that element of “Africanness” (backwardness, barbarity, etc.) attributed to Spain is ascribed specifically to Andalucía. Hence the Spanish saying that defends against the French adage “Africa begins at the Pyrenees”: Andalucía es África (“Andalucía is Africa”).

With the post-dictatorship period’s rise in cultural and political movements centered on regional nationalisms, the invocation of al-Andalus as part of the andalucismo movement also intensified. Andalucismo includes highlighting and celebrating the characteristics of Andalusian culture that are understood to be a part of its Andalusian heritage. The prevailing ethno-nationalist view of Spanish history, and within it Spanish demography, is that all Jews and Muslims were expelled and the areas they had inhabited were repopulated through a policy of bringing in Christians from elsewhere in the peninsula and distributing the Muslims’ confiscated property among them. A contestatory account posits that sizable Muslim and Jewish populations assimilated enough to escape the notice of the Inquisition and stayed in Iberia. According to some of these narratives, the remaining Muslims and Jews were relegated to working the lands of the Christian knights who had colonized the peninsula’s last Muslim kingdoms. Thus, andalucismo has included an identification with those most famously disenfranchised by powerful Castilians: the Moors.

As an economically depressed region that has been viewed from the outside as an extension of North Africa, the ideologues of andalucismo as well as certain veins of popular sentiment have embraced a moro (Moorish) connection. Whether by tracing a Moorish genealogy, using the Moor as a figure for the disenfranchised, or only carrying out a class analysis, key andalucista writers have pointed to Castilians and the central Spanish government as colonizers of Andalucía. These discourses, together with the partially overlapping geographic location, place names, and famous monuments, forge a strong link between Andalucía and al-Andalus that serves to heighten the perceived connection between the contemporary Spanish region and the former Muslim political and cultural entity. Andalucistas have often embraced the cultural achievements and splendor of al-Andalus in
order to enjoy the compensatory fantasy of a glorious and powerful past, as well as a fighting spirit.\textsuperscript{14} For instance, in 1918, Blas Infante (1885–1936), a musicologist and writer who is seen as the father of Andalusian nationalism, chose the green and white colors of the Andalusian flag because green was the color of the Umayyads and white that of the Almohads, the caliphates that represent periods of grandeur and power in that region.\textsuperscript{15}

Through at least the 1980s, there was a notably Islamist vein in Andalusian nationalism, as witnessed by the political party Liberación Andaluza (Andalusian Liberation), established in the mid-1980s and linked to La Yama’a Islámica de Al-Andalus (The al-Andalus Islamic Group), a convert cultural organization that seeks to promote Islam as integral to Andalusian cultural heritage (Stalleart 1999).\textsuperscript{16} This link between andalucismo and Islam as a religious practice (in contrast with the broader focus on Islamicate civilizations as accomplished) is intertwined with the cultural forces that led to the rise of Spanish converts to Islam in the post-Franco period.\textsuperscript{17} Christiane Stalleart indicates that the “neoconversos,” (in reference to, and contrast with, the earlier converts in medieval Iberia) while not forming a uniform group, arose as a phenomenon of the first years after the dictatorship, as part of the ideological opening of the newly democratic Spain (Stalleart 1999, 189).

Given the groundwork laid by andalucismo, during the intense social and economic changes of the transition to democracy, the early convert movement was particularly strong in Andalucía. Charles Hirschkind, in his work on converts to Islam in the city of Granada, states that many andalucista activists themselves converted to Islam and that “today Andalusia has the most rapidly growing community of converts in all of Europe” (Hirschkind 2014, 234). As Beebe Bahrami explains, those southern Spanish converts were “almost all middle-class intellectuals who, dissatisfied with Catholicism and secular ideologies, and alienated by Spain’s sudden rapid economic and political changes, sought a new yet not entirely foreign ideology to offer meaning to their lives” (Bahrami 1998, 126). The convert community is particularly active in the city of Granada (Hirschkind 2014, 234) and
that community has links to the Alpujarra. Rosón Lorente explains that the development of the Muslim convert community in Granada, which took officially recognized form in the mid-1980s, ran parallel to, and was intertwined with, the development of hippie communes in the Granadan Alpujarra (335). Specifically, a number of hippies (or “alternatives,” as some of them prefer to be named) from the Alpujarra converted to Islam and moved to Granada to join the convert community there (336–38). Based on what converts in Órgiva told me, some of these hippie converts to Islam later returned to the Alpujarra. As noted by Bahrami (1998, 127) and others, the familiarity of Spaniards and particularly Andalusians with Islam, albeit filtered through Orientalist and political andalucista lenses, has made them more likely, when searching for a meaningful ideology, to choose Islam.

**HISTORICAL MEMORY AND CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS: NARRATIVES ABOUT AL-ANDALUS IN IMMIGRATION AND CULTURAL POLITICS**

The narratives about medieval and early modern Spain that constitute Spanish historical memory contribute directly to current socio-political tensions surrounding immigration, the practice of Islam, and nationalism. Another aspect of Spain’s transition to democracy was the negotiation of its political and cultural relationship with Europe, and Spain’s migration history has a central role in this relationship. In 1982, amid heated debate within Spain, the country joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) decades after its founding. Similarly, Spain was a relative latecomer to European integration. It was not part of “the inner six” who established the European Communities in 1951, nor “the outer seven” who formed the European Free Trade Association. Rather, it joined the European Communities (which later developed into the European Union) in 1986.

Amid the other transformations witnessed in late 20th-century Spain, within the framework of human mobility, the country rapidly changed from being a sending country to being a receiving country, and Andalucía in particular shifted from being a region of out-
migration and emigration to one of immigration. Until the late 1970s, Spaniards, and especially those from rural areas, were migrants. As part of the late 19th-century European emigration to the Americas, many Spaniards left for Hispano-America. Later, in the 1950s, an intranational migration wave saw many leave impoverished rural areas for work in large cities. When the Franco government legalized extranational emigration in 1959, the trend of migrants leaving Andalucía and other depressed regions to work elsewhere in Europe continued until the early 1970s. Experiences as labor migrants elsewhere in Europe often served to heighten awareness of civilizational hierarchies within Western Europe itself. But the direction of movement switched as a result of Spain’s economic boom (“The Spanish Miracle” of 1959–74) and entry into what would become the European Union.

In the 1980s, a rise in North African immigration to Spain added to the questioning of Spain’s relationship to Europe and the legacy of al-Andalus. Before 1985, Moroccans did not need visas to enter Spain, and many young Moroccan men went to Spain temporarily to work in agriculture and industry. Paradoxically, Spain’s integration into the European Union led to a dramatic rise in North African immigration to the country. The European Schengen Convention, a 1990 supplement to the earlier Schengen Agreement, dissolved internal European borders, thereby making entry through Spain even more desirable for migrants who could then use the country as a stepping stone to other points in Europe. With time, many new migrants decided to stay in Spain, and in the 1990s, the number of Moroccan migrants in Spain began to rise significantly. For this reason, until 2002, Moroccans were the largest immigrant group in Spain. Since then, in yearly statistics they have typically been the second largest group, closely following Romanians or Ecuadoreans, and occasionally still are the largest group (*España en cifras*). These changes led the European Union to pressure Spain to intensify its policing of borders, a material expression of the broader pressure for Spain to “police” its cultural borders in terms of building and maintaining a European conception of national identity.
In *The Return of the Moor*, Daniela Flesler explains the particular cultural location of North African migrants in Spain as follows: “the current rejection of Moroccan immigrants is related to the fact that they are the one group most directly implicated in the question of Spanish identity in relationship to Africa” (3). On the one hand, as Flesler notes, the rejection of Maghrebi immigrants is a manifestation of what scholars such as Étienne Balibar, Martin Barker, Paul Gilroy (1990), and Pierre-André Taguieff have defined as cultural racism, new racism, or differentialist racism, terms used to name prejudices and discrimination that are based on cultural rather than biological differences. Although biological racism is generally rejected today in Western Europe, expressions of cultural racism point to some cultures being superior to others and certain cultures being intrinsically incompatible. Muslim immigrants in particular are seen as holding values and following traditions that are understood as being incompatible with democracy, modernity, and secularism. On the other hand, the rejection of these immigrants also results from their perceived connection to Spain’s past: “in the Spanish collective imaginary,” North African immigrants “become the embodiment of everything there is to fear from their history, the ghosts of a past that has not stopped haunting them, the return of the repressed” (Flesler 80). As Flesler skillfully argues, this haunting consists of both the perception of Maghrebi immigration as a return of the invaders of old as well as anxieties regarding how to establish clear boundaries with an Other that is so similar to the Self (195–96). Since at least the 1990s, right-wing Spanish populists have exploited and exacerbated this troubled relationship with Maghrebis by fomenting fears of a Muslim reconquest of Spain, primarily in the form of Maghrebi immigrants. With regard to Andalucía in particular, Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar (2017), in her study on relations between European converts and Maghrebi migrants in the city of Granada, points out that Andalusians’ marginality within Spain and Europe makes religious affiliation and immigration more sensitive topics, as there is a heightened desire to differentiate from those viewed as marginal (13).
In comparison with France, whose *foulard* affair has become known internationally, in Spain there have only been a limited number of issues regarding Muslims of immigrant origin being prohibited from wearing a hijab or headscarf to school. However, there have been violent manifestations of anti-immigrant sentiment, namely, in February 2002 in the town of El Ejido, a 75-minute drive from Órgiva, and in other towns in surrounding southwestern Almería. Western Almería province is known for its greenhouses made of plastic sheeting, where much of Spain’s fruits and vegetables are grown. This agricultural work is largely carried out by migrants, most of whom are Moroccan. After two murders were committed by Maghrebi migrants within a few days, another fatal incident led to an aggressive outpouring. The protests reacting to this third incident, in which a Moroccan with mental health issues killed a young Spanish woman in El Ejido, developed into 24 hours of violent xenophobic unrest that included the vandalism of a mosque and immigrant businesses and the burning of cars. Residents of Spanish origin also attacked Maghrebi immigrants with rocks, bats, and metal bars. Riot police had to come in to quell the situation and there were 22 wounded—yet no out-of-control protesters were arrested (Constenla and Torregrosa).

A bit further from Órgiva, about a 3-hour drive away in Córdoba, there is an ongoing ideological conflict centered on Christian/Muslim use of a historical monument that conservative discourse has connected to North African immigrants. Since the early 2000s, Muslims have been petitioning Roman Catholic authorities to allow them to pray in the Cathedral of Córdoba, a former mosque still known popularly as *la mezquita de Córdoba* (the mosque of Córdoba). In 2010, a fight broke out when a group of Austrian Muslim tourists began to pray in the cathedral and guards tried to stop them. When the Austrian Muslims were acquitted of injuring the guards, conservative commentators accused the Spanish justice system of bias. The Spanish clergy and the Vatican have continued to deny requests to allow Muslim prayer, which primarily come from Spanish converts to Islam. Conservatives frame this issue within the debates regarding
immigration policy and concerns about terror threats which rose after the 2004 Madrid train bombings. Consequently, Muslim North African immigrants have dissociated themselves from the efforts to allow Muslim prayer, fearing negative repercussions.22

Closer to Órgiva, less than an hour’s drive away in the city of Granada, there is a similar ongoing tension regarding *El Día de la Toma*, the annual celebration of the Catholic Monarchs’ capture of Granada and defeat of Muslim rule in Iberia. This event commemorates the public ceremony of January 2, 1492 (known as *La Toma de Granada*), in which Boabdil handed over a set of keys to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. The commemoration, in keeping with the Catholic Monarchs’ rule, blends Catholicism and military pomp and circumstance. First, a procession of officials carries the standard of the Catholic Monarchs from the city hall to the royal chapel (*la Capilla Real*) that is part of Granada’s cathedral. This is followed by a Mass in the cathedral, the offering of flowers at the tombs of the Catholic Monarchs, the continuation of the military parade carrying the flag of the Catholic Monarchs, and the grand finale of *la tremolación*, the waving of the military flag from the city hall’s balcony.

While some Granadans see this flag waving accompanied by a military band playing the national anthem as an expression of local tradition and Spanish pride, others see this homage to Ferdinand and Isabella as a distasteful glorification of the genocide of Muslims and Jews that the monarchs undertook soon after capturing Granada, one that threatens pluralism. As a result, as Rogozen-Soltar explains, in 1995 “a group of artists, professors, and generally elite intellectuals of Granada formed the ‘January 2nd Collective,’” and published a statement proposing that the *Día de la Toma* be replaced by a celebration of tolerance. Although the movement gained support, it was rejected by local and national government officials (Rogozen-Soltar 2007, 877–78). Since then Granada Abierta, a coalition of various associations that oppose the celebration, has continued to argue that the event is offensive and supports xenophobic, ethno-nationalist agendas. While the coalition has moved forward with alternate celebrations of multiculturalism and egalitarian pluralism (www.granada-abierta.org/),
no political party has dared to suggest ending the celebration of the Dia de la Toma and heightened security is needed at the event due to the presence of protesters and counter-protesters.

Rogozen-Soltar explains the connection between conceptions of European identity and this struggle over historical memory:

a contingent of the city finds the racist undertones and the implicitly Christian and triumphalist religious message of the Dia de la Toma not only offensive, but also embarrassing and harmful to Andalusia’s entrance into an enlightened, European sphere of secular modernity. This attitude is clear in the official publications and website of the Collective, including the main document to which adherents sign [. . .] The document goes on to state that “we understand that the [events of the festival] do not contribute to the consolidation of sentiments of reconciliation to which the city should be committed in its aspiration for progress” (Collective website). Moreover, the movement’s documents deploy the specter of backward, unmodern, presecular Spain, constructing members of the anti-festival collective as secular, modern, rational subjects of the enlightenment, as opposed to President Aznar, the local Andalusian government, and supporters of the festival” (Rogozen-Soltar 2007, 879–80).

For those against the celebration, what is at stake is not only putting an end to a display of military power against Muslims and Jews, but the desire to display their modernity—expressed in the form of secularism and tolerance, and thus their Europeanness.23

Another contentious issue in the city of Granada is centered more specifically on the presence of Islam as a religion currently practiced by residents. In 2003, after a 20-year struggle, a new mosque opened in Granada in the historic Albaicín neighborhood overlooking the Alhambra. Named the “Great Mosque of Granada,” the opposition to its construction came from Spanish Catholic residents of the Albaicín and Catholic authorities, who expressed concerns regarding whether the mosque’s minaret would be higher than the bell tower of a nearby historic church, whether there would be windows facing a neighboring convent, and how the facility would affect tourism in the area
(Rogozen Soltar 2017, 163–65 and 168). Some supporters presented the mosque project, led by the convert community, as an opportunity for Spain and Granada to showcase its tolerance (Rogozen Soltar 2017, 168–69). However, now that the mosque is open, it contributes to tensions between European converts to Islam and migrant Muslims (Rogozen Soltar 2017, 179).

The increasing reevaluation of local customs on the part of progressive Spaniards who wish to foment a more egalitarian culture and construct a tolerant, secular, European identity (as witnessed by the *Día de la Toma* and Great Mosque of Granada controversies), together with the rise in numbers of Muslim converts and North African migrants, has sparked a linguistic reevaluation. The term *moro*, or Moor, is emerging as another controversial remnant of al-Andalus and the Reconquista. Etymologically, *moro* comes from the Latin term *maurus*, meaning Mauritanian, which, in turn, comes from the Greek μαῦρος (*maûros*), meaning “dark” (*Diccionario de la lengua española*). Although in certain contexts *moro* is used to refer to a dark color, primarily it is used to refer to people from North Africa, in reference to their darker skin and hair, and by extension to Muslims. In that sense, the term doesn’t distinguish between ethnicities (Amazigh vs. Arab), but rather is vaguely centered on geographic, religious, and cultural origins—all figuratively associated with skin and/or hair color. In Ross Brann’s essay on the cultural history of the term “Moor,” he demonstrates that the term has been “unstable” (317) since the medieval period. First used in the Iberian context in the 8th century to identify Imazighen, by the 12th century, there are examples of Christian texts in which the term is used to refer to all Muslims (Brann, 311).

Today the term *moro* is used for people from the Maghreb or anywhere in the Arab world, and even *all* Muslims, carrying with it all the baggage from medieval and early modern usage. The register of the term is informal; it is not one that would be used in an academic or official setting, but rather in conversational contexts and in certain types of media. When used to refer to immigrants from the Maghreb, as Flesler indicates, the term serves to establish an identification between the contemporary migrants and those who invaded, Arabized,
and Islamized Iberia; in so doing, it transfers to the immigrants the negative affect associated with those seen as the enemy of Catholic Spain and the immigrants “become conceptually collapsed into this category of the imaginary and threatening ‘Moor’” (Flesler, 4). Moreover, these immigrants symbolize not only the historical Moor and the Moor of the Spanish national imaginary, but they also “embody the non-European, African, and oriental aspects of Spanish national identity,” and in that sense they are the carriers of the problematic aspects of Spanish identity and, too close for comfort, they are rejected (Flesler, 9).

The debate that is beginning to emerge regards whether or not the term is necessarily pejorative and offensive. There are certainly established uses of the term (e.g., to refer to a jealous, domineering man, regardless of origin) and colloquial expressions including the term that point to its derogatory nature. But it was not until 2014 that the term moro was officially questioned and hence became a topic on the national level. That year, Hilal Tarkou, a lawyer who had moved from Morocco to Catalonia decades before, made an official request to the director of the Real Academia Española (the national institution that sets the norms of the Spanish language) that the Academy add to its dictionary entry for moro the term’s use as a discriminatory and racist appellation. The request was not granted and at least one prominent Spaniard, the author Arturo Pérez-Reverte (b. 1951), who is himself a member of the Real Academia Española, responded quite dismissively to the request, describing it as “cheap demagoguery.”

Pérez-Reverte, a novelist and former foreign correspondent, argues that the fact that the term is sometimes used pejoratively should not be detrimental to “those who use it in its straightforward [recto] sense and need it to express themselves with efficacy [con eficacia].” Pérez-Reverte contends that moro is of the same ilk as “Black” as a reference to race and thus censuring someone for using moro would be as absurd as censuring someone “for calling Black someone who is of the Black race [(por) decir negro a quien es de raza negra].” Thus, he completely misses the fact that these categories based on physical traits are social constructs with negative social, political, and economic
consequences. Additionally, even within today’s commonly accepted logic of racial categories organized according to perceived traits, there is no “North African” or “Muslim” race and this understanding of race harkens back to medieval and early modern Iberian conceptualizations of difference that are equally entrenched in biological essentialism. Using the deep cultural history of the term *moro* in Spain as a justification (rather than seeing it as an impediment), Pérez-Reverte insists that, regardless of what the Academy decrees, he will continue to use the term *moro.*

Pérez-Reverte’s reaction, while presented as a commonsense attitude, is connected to the historical roots of the term in Spain. Brann explains that

> Because of its potent connotations, *Moor* arguably served as the principal linguistic vehicle for suppressing the indigenous nature of the Andalusi Muslim cultural heritage in Iberia and rendering Andalusi Muslims as others in a projected Christian Iberia. It enabled Christians in thirteenth century Castile to dismiss as “foreign” the substantially mixed Andalusi Muslim population to their south, as well as Castile’s own Mudejars, and to disregard the extent of social and cultural ties among all Andalusis, including Muslims from Africa (Brann 313).

Pérez-Reverte and those who share his stance of insisting on continuing to use the term *moro* are seeking, through a highly imprecise term, to define that which is and is not “Spanish,” understood as ethnically European and Catholic, whether in practice or as a cultural background. In the process, they exclude Arab and North African immigrants and their descendants, as well as those of other faiths, from a sense of belonging and from a sense of legitimacy as Spaniards.

Although the nascent debates regarding the term *moro* have not yet made it to the Alpujarra, confusion regarding the parameters of the term—i.e., to whom it applies—certainly has. After the Spanish expulsion decrees of the 1600s, outside of the Alpujarra, Spanish and European lore connected the isolated region to crypto-Muslims
who stayed in Iberia. In this way, the cultural location of the Alpujarra vis-à-vis Andalucía and all points beyond is analogous to that of Andalucía vis-à-vis Spain and beyond, and Spain vis-à-vis Europe. Thus, the Alpujarra in particular has a role in the contested narratives regarding Spanish national identity and the shifting definitions of what counts as European. Through at least the mid-20th century, Spain was seen from the outside as part of the Southern Mediterranean or even Africa. But nationally that identity as somehow morisco and backward was attributed to Andalucía and especially the Alpujarra.

In the 19th century, the Alpujarra’s supposed primitiveness and Moorishness attracted tourists from Spain and other European countries who sought a quaint, or even exotic, bucolic experience. Today Alpujarran villages such as Pampaneira, Bubión, and Capileira have become picturesque tourist destinations. Órgiva, the largest town in the Alpujarra, serves as the service and commercial hub for visitors to the western Alpujarra and also as the focal point for those seeking a variety of alternative lifestyles. Among the various spiritual traditions active in Órgiva, the town is home to the largest Sufi community in Spain, made up of some 35 families of European converts to Islam, most of whom are affiliated with the Naqshbandi order, a major Sunni Sufi group. These modern-day converts were drawn to the area in part due to the lasting image of medieval Muslim Iberia as a space of religious tolerance and convivencia. There are also other Muslims in the town: more recently, a small Maghrebi migrant population has settled in Órgiva. While their numbers are small, they are highly significant due to the intensity of the Maghrebi immigration issue throughout Andalucía and Spain, as well as the tensions surrounding Muslim immigrants in general in Europe as a whole.

These tensions arise from regional, national, religious, and civilizational identities. For instance, some of Órgiva’s residents of local origin still take pride in the region’s role in the Reconquista’s last stages, which also saw the rise of the Spanish Inquisition (established in 1478). Those who were trying to escape judgment by the
Inquisition attempted to prove that they were genuinely converted *moriscos* (rather than crypto-Muslims) by drinking wine and eating pork. Similarly, after the 17th-century expulsion edicts, *moriscos* used pork and wine to demonstrate that they were Old Christians and avoid expulsion from Spain. Thus, enjoying wine and pork became a way to ostentatiously demonstrate that one was an Old Christian and eventually became intrinsic to Spanish foodways and social life.

Indeed, the Alpujarra is one of the centers of the iconic dry-cured ham produced in Spain, specifically the type known as *jamón serrano* (from the *sierra* or mountains). These ham legs, which can be seen hanging from the rafters in restaurants and bars all over Spain, are cured and dried in the Alpujarra because of its unique climatological conditions. Although technological advances in climate control have made it possible to cure the ham elsewhere, Alpujarran *jamón* establishments still pride themselves in curing the ham in the traditional manner. Now, though, in contrast with other areas of the Alpujarra, Órgiva is becoming more well-known for halal foods than for *jamón*. In another part of Andalucía, an enterprising Tunisian has actually created “halal *jamón*”: lamb or beef cured in the same process as the famous Spanish *jamón*. But, as put forth here, so far Órgiva is more about maintaining separate yet linked spheres, than about creating a fusion (or simulacrum?) that allows all groups to follow the same gastronomic pursuits.

While other Andalusian cities and towns are known for tensions between local inhabitants and North African migrants or Muslims in general, Órgiva has gained notoriety as a place of harmonious convergence. There are certain factors that make Órgiva different from the places in Andalucía and elsewhere in Spain where anti-migrant or anti-Muslim sentiment has been expressed violently; however, what interests me most is how this difference and Órgiva’s relative harmony are constructed and questioned in narratives about the town. In contrast with the city of Granada, in Órgiva the lack of any major heritage site (such as the Alhambra or the Albaicín) means that Maghrebian immigrants are not part of the performance of exoticism that takes...
place in the Granada tourism sites. The main vestiges of the past in Órgiva’s built environment are the church and a chapel (previously a mosque and a Muslim monastery, respectively), a modest palace, and the ruins of a Muslim fortress. Tourism in Órgiva either caters to Spaniards and foreigners looking for easy access to nature and
charming villages, or Muslim tourists interested in the historical and contemporary ties of the town to Islam—including access to a delicious halal meal.30

Additionally, as a rural town Órgiva doesn’t offer the same number of job prospects as a large city. This means that, on the one hand, the orgiveños (the demonym for Órgiva) seeking jobs gravitate to big urban centers and aren’t likely to perceive that immigrants are competing with them for the same jobs, while, on the other hand, the economic migrants in Órgiva have sought out the town because of the lifestyle—not the job opportunities—that it offers.31 In one way or another, Órgiva’s residents are there by choice: whether they chose to stay there or to seek it out. For Maghrebi migrants and converts, Órgiva is a refuge from the tensions surrounding the celebration of El Día de la Toma and the new Grand Mosque of Granada. For migrants, it is also a refuge from the sometimes violent demonstration of anti-immigrant sentiment in other areas of Spain. For both incomers from large European cities and orgiveños, it is an alternative to industrialized, urban life. These circumstances lead to various questions: how is the town’s diversity portrayed for international, national, and regional audiences? What do members of its different communities say about the town and each other? How do they narrate the way the inhabitants coexist? How do the dynamics of Órgiva’s new convivencia provide insight into interfaith and intercultural contact in other parts of the world? Now that Spain has established itself as (politically) European, what it means to be Spanish and European is being redefined by immigrants and converts to Islam. This larger dynamic can be seen on the micro-level in Órgiva’s negotiation of erstwhile Moorish, Spanish, Muslim, and European identities.

THE METHODS BEHIND THIS NARRATIVE

With the unique perspective of my insider/outsider status, witnessing Órgiva’s transformation from a remote, monolingual village steeped in Catholicism and local traditions to an international, multi-faith town that hosts many alternative lifestyles, made me wonder how this shift
had come about, how this convergence of cultures had not produced the violent conflict seen nearby, and how certain groups within this human potpourri viewed each other and narrated their experience of cohabitation. No doubt inspired by my grandfather’s tales about Andalucía and my mother’s obsession with Washington Irving’s *Tales of the Alhambra* (which she read in Spanish translation in Cuba), before stepping foot in Spain I had started studying Arabic and the Islamicate world in college. Like the legacy of al-Andalus, would Órgiva have lessons to offer regarding tolerance? This led me to start taking notes on my incidental participant observation and carry out background reading, and to do targeted field research in Órgiva during the summers of 2019 and 2021.

My methodology can best be described as a combination of literary analysis, television studies, critical discourse analysis (the study of spoken and written discourse centered on examining the relationship between societal power relations and language use) and, to borrow from Shalini Puri and Debra Castillo, humanities-based fieldwork. As explained by Puri and Castillo (2), this type of fieldwork is ethnographic in many of its methods, but not meant to necessarily produce an example of the genre of writing known as ethnography (9–10). My qualitative, humanistic fieldwork consisted of participant observation, interviews, and the collection of oral narratives, followed by the interpretation of statements made and behaviors observed. To carry out this work, I drew not only on my experience in literary and cultural studies, but also on graduate coursework in ethnic studies, rhetoric, and oral narrative that included the critical assessment of ethnography. My approach rests on the understanding of stories not as direct records of reality or sources of truth, but as a means for social actors to express their lived experience and negotiate its meaning. As Marita Eastmond observes: “In the dynamic interplay between experience and expression, experience gives rise and form to narratives, but it is also organized and given meaning in the telling” (249). Each story is a construction of past experience conditioned by the circumstances in which it is produced and researchers must interpret these mediated expressions of experience, identifying organizing themes
and metaphors. As Eastmond notes, individual stories may draw on collective ones and their underlying ideologies, or may push against them, in the effort to construct meaning (253). Either way, individual narratives reveal how people make sense of their experience and the world around them.

In my fieldwork, through a mix of participant observation and interviews, I interacted with a variety of orgiveños (many with community leadership positions), residents of British origin, members of the Muslim convert community, and North African immigrants living in the town.32 I met some of these Maghrebi migrants through mutual friends and acquaintances, and another migrant by requesting help with learning more of the Moroccan dialect of Arabic (Darija). Subsequently, one migrant would introduce me to another, following the normal rhythms of small-town life in the summer in Spain, where socializing occurs as people stroll through plazas and outdoor cafes. I primarily elicited their perspectives on Órgiva and its inhabitants, using open-ended questions to allow interlocutors to take the lead in structuring their responses. Given that the precariousness of immigrant life does not provide a context conducive to more formal interviews, with the North African migrants I chose to use targeted interactions in the form of semi-structured interviewing. As a woman researcher, social norms would make it more difficult to have extended conversation alone with male migrants, and I wanted to compensate for the deference effect and social desirability effect that could make interlocutors reticent to share negative views with me. For these reasons, I also employed a research assistant who, as a male Moroccan immigrant residing elsewhere in Andalucía, was close to an insider interviewer. The migrants in Órgiva readily viewed this interlocutor as someone who was part of their in-group of Moroccan immigrants in Spain and these interactions took the form of something in between informal interviewing and semi-structured interviewing. Overall, I combined narratological and rhetorical analysis of both written texts about Órgiva and oral statements about the town that create narratives about it in order
to identify recurring concepts, categories, and tropes, and to draw conclusions about their ideological charge.

Paul Atkinson observes that “Ethnographers—or qualitative researchers more generally—too often claim to be special and different” (187). While I certainly don’t want to commit that mistake in an effort to claim authenticity and ethical superiority, I do bring an unusual positioning to this project. Although this is certainly not an example of insider fieldwork, it also is definitely not the classical type of fieldwork in which the researcher has no previous relationship with the community studied. Along with Ruth Behar and many others, I have reflected upon my situation vis-à-vis the paradox of traditional fieldwork that called on the researcher to share the “native” perspective while maintaining objectivity. Like Behar, I am “between places, between identities, between languages, between cultures, between longings and illusions, one foot in the academy and one foot out” (162). While insider/outsider status offers the benefits of ease of connection and of insight tempered by the ability to also evaluate from an external perspective, I recognize that one drawback is the accompanying emotional ties. This relationship to the site being studied no doubt led to particular conscious and unconscious choices in how I pursued and wrote about my research. To invoke Steinar Kvale’s metaphors about interviewers, although at certain moments I felt like a miner who had found a valuable “nugget” of meaning, I was also aware that I had an active hand in the construction of that nugget’s significance. Thus, I endeavored to approach my fieldwork as a traveler who sought to share experiences and listen, in order to weave that journey into a narrative:

The alternate traveler metaphor understands the interviewer as a traveler on a journey that leads to a tale to be told upon returning home. The interviewer-traveler wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations with the people encountered. The traveler explores the many domains of the country, as unknown territory or with maps, roaming freely around the territory. The traveler may also deliberately seek
specific sites or topics by following a method, with the original Greek meaning of “a route that leads to the goal.” The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of conversation as “wandering together with” (Kvale 4).