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## World Literature in Spanish: An Encyclopedia

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### Contemporary Moroccan Literature Written in Spanish

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The first literary works addressing the modern migration of African citizens from Morocco to Europe during the 1970s were written in Arabic or French by Mohamed Zafzaf, Abdallah Laroui, and Tahar Ben Jelloun, among others. On February 7, 1992, the first *patera* (a floating device used by smugglers to transport illegal immigrants from Africa) with 300 Maghrebis (inhabitants of northern Africa) shipwrecked by the coast of Almeria, in southern Spain, claiming 20 victims. The first Moroccan intellectual to react in Spanish to the modern and clandestine migratory process was Goncourt Prize-winner Tahar Ben Jelloun (1944–); he wrote a literary essay for Spain's *El País* newspaper titled *¿Cómo se dice 'boat people' en español?* (How do you say "boat people" in Spanish?).

After Ben Jelloun, Moroccan authors who had been writing poems and short stories in the Spanish supplement of Moroccan newspaper *L'Opinion* and in the cultural section of *La mañana* (1990–2006), Rabat's first and only Spanish-language newspaper produced by Moroccan nationals, began to denounce the onslaught of migrants who cross the Strait of Gibraltar in search of El Dorado (a mythical city of gold). Although such Moroccan literati as Abdul Latif Jatib, Mohammad Tensamani, and Mohamed Ibn Azzuz Hakim have sporadically published literary works in Spanish since the time of the Protectorate (1912–1956) in such newspapers as *España, Marruecos, Unidad Marroquí, Diario Marroquí, Diario de África*, and *El Lukus*, the modern migration outburst produced a reawakening of Moroccan literature in Spanish.

One of Morocco's first contemporary intellectuals of Spanish expression to write about migration was Sephardic León Cohen Mesonero (1946–), in a literary essay entitled *Camisas mojadas* (1992; Wetbacks), published in Andalusia's *Europa Sur* newspaper. A year later, Mohamed Sibari (1945–) published *El caballo* (1993; *The Horse*), the first Moroccan novel written entirely in Spanish; its main character is a desperate young man who wants to migrate to Spain.

Since 1995, every year approximately 40,000 Moroccan and Sub-Saharan migrants land in the Canary Islands and the coasts of southern Spain. As a response to the harshening Spanish media reports of the modern migration phenomenon, which compare it to the Berber invasions of the 17th century, a new "fiction of resistance" arose in Morocco between 1995 and 2000. This new phase of Moroccan literature in Spanish employed irony, neosymbolism, and historical annals as it tracked the centuries-long North African presence in Spain as a way of validating the new migrant experience. During this period, 15 novels and short story collections sharing this agenda were produced in Morocco and Spain. A paradigmatic case is that of

234

Abderrahman El Fathi (1964–); known as "the poet of migration," he published six books: *Triana, imágenes y palabras* (1998; Triana, Images and Words), *Abordaje* (2000; Boarding), *África en versos mojados* (2002; Africa in Wetback Verse), *Primavera en Ramallah y Bagdad* (2003; Spring in Ramallah and Baghdad), *El cielo herido* (2003; Wounded Sky), *Desde la otra orilla* (2004; From the Other Shore), and a short play, *Fantasías literarias* (2000; Literary Fantasies). El Fathi unifies

the subaltern (subordinate) voice of the *pateristas* (boat people), *harragas* (illegal immigrants), and refined lyricism, while denouncing the double standard of European politicians that falsely inculcate democratic processes of *convivencia* (living together) and free market as they validate new displacements (cultural and economic), and massive holocausts.

For his part, Mohamed Lahchiri (1950–)—the first editor in chief of *La mañana* newspaper throughout the 1990s—wrote three short story collections: *Pedacitos entrañables* (1994; Dearly Loved Pieces), *Cuentos ceuties* (2003; Ceuta's Short Stories), and *Una tumbita en Sidi Embarek* (2006; A Little Tomb in Sidi Embarek). Lahchiri was born in Ceuta, one of Northern Africa's two Spanish enclaves; his writings narrate the transformations of territories and people from the former protectorate into unequal, antagonistic spaces of postindependence modernity.

The group of Moroccan writers that proliferated in the last eight years places Spanish-language Moroccan literature within the framework of a literature without borders. This writing, composed in Morocco by Moroccans, with Moroccan topics and characters, is developing a series of questions about using the language of the "Other" (Spanish); the aesthetic practices of Western literature; and a deeply critical consideration of Western media's influence in Morocco. These authors address the discussions of Madrid's 11M bombings (the March 11, 2004 terrorist attacks of trains at the Atocha station) and, at the same time, re-create the shadows of intolerance as represented in the darkest days of 15th-century Spanish [\\*Inquisition](#) activities and of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco's Fascist dictatorship (1939–1975). The "threat" of terrorism is answered in literary texts that, while writing Maghrebi immigrants' lives and arrival to Spain, are surrounded by the ghosts of Spain's Muslim past. Within this group, Moroccan writers like Ahmed Ararou (1953–), Ahmed El Gamoun (1950–), Larbi El Harti (1963–), and Mohamed Lahchiri are very conscious of the ontological and epistemological differences between both cultures and can cross from one side to the other (from West to East), criticizing both cultures, with no need to request a "visa" from any "academic guard," neither from the East nor from the West. Without apostatizing their Arab–African–Muslim culture, in many cases they know "the house of their neighbor" (Spain), better than their own, as El Harti has observed.

In the last few years (2004–present), Catalan presses have published female Moroccan/Amazigh voices who write in Catalan and have lived in Catalonia since their childhood (Amazigh is the correct

234

235

term for "Berber," the indigenous people of northern Morocco and Algeria whose main language is Tamazight, not Arabic). It is worth noting that among the 600,000 Moroccans living in Spain, 200,000 belong to this group. In 2008, the Ramón Llull Prize for Catalan authors was awarded to Moroccan/Amazigh immigrant Najat El Hachmi (1979–), the first time that the award has been won by a non-Catalonian Her novel, *L'últim patriarca* (2008: The Last Patriarch) is narrated exclusively by the third—and only—daughter of Mimoun, a girl who announces at the story's onset the end of the family bloodline and her father's discriminatory, dictatorial ways. Once the eldest son in the family is born, the text highlights the excesses of paternal authority, as seen in the physical abuse and sodomy inflicted by the son's uncle. From that moment on, the fictional autobiography is told from the point of view of a grown woman, a textual move that subverts and perverts the status imposed by religious practices and traditions of a society (like many others—including European cultures) that encourage patriarchy. *L'últim patriarca* was originally composed in Catalan, and then translated to Spanish by Maria Rosa Prats, under the author's supervision. The novel is now being translated into eight different languages, including French, English, German, Arabic, Italian, Portuguese and Swedish.

Today some 40 authors write in Spanish and Catalan, and publish their works in Morocco and Spain. Their texts have been ignored by scholars. Nonetheless, these writings possess the potential to reshape the landscape of postcolonial Spain. These works can help revitalize Spain's

contemporary literature and contribute to a "South to South" dialogue between North Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, North American natives, and Chicanos who face modern imperialistic cultures.

Moroccan literature written in Spanish and Catalan should be placed within the ampler context of borderland studies, which relates to 19th-century Philippine literature in Spanish, and emerging diaspora literatures such as those by Tunisian, Algerian, sub-Saharan, and Latin American authors who study their intercultural experience in Europe. This cultural phenomenon has characteristics common to other world literatures, such as Chicano and Mexican American literature in relation to the pilgrimage of "modern" Aztecs to the mythical land of [\\*Aztlán](#).

Finally, it must be noted that there is also a Saharawi (or Saharai) literature in Spanish. This literature of the Western Sahara Desert region does not exhibit hybridizing processes; instead it reflects the Saharawi people's fight for independence from the Moroccan government. Most Saharawi writings depict the lonely people of the desert, their nomadic nature and unique identity. Representative poems, short stories, and novels are available online at the Saharawi website *Literatura saharawi*, <http://literaturasaharawi.blogspot.com>.

[See also Chicano Movement Literature and Publishing;](#)

[See also Equatorial Guinea's Generación del Silencio \(The Generation of Silence\);](#)

[See also Exile Writing in the Hispanic World;](#)

[See also Islamic](#)

[235](#)

236

Presence in Spain;

[See also Philippine Literature in Spanish;](#)

[See also Transculturation in the Hispanic World.](#)

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