

Literature of the Maghreb or North Africa

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Throughout these papers, i intend to expose that it is our aim to provide a sense of the diversity in the cultural givens of what is known today to literary scholars as the Maghreb (adj., Maghrebian) and, to historians as the Maghrib (adj., Maghribi), an area including Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. "Maghreb," which also serves as the Arabic word for Morocco, comes from the word Maghrib (root gharb, west), meaning the place where the sun sets, or the western region; as distinguished from the Mashreq, or Eastern part of the Arab world. The so-called Greater Maghreb includes Mauritania and Libya, but the linguistic bonding through French has tended to cause people to group the first three countries, despite great differences in their internal political and social structures

. We have used the term "North Africa"--despite the fact that some Maghrebians object to this term as evocative of the colonial past--for we have included in our selection writers who were born and raised in North Africa but are, or were, FrenchPieds-Noirs, that is descendants of French settler sand, thus, not strictly-speaking Maghrebians according to our terminology.(1)This, theft, is not an anthology claiming to provide a complete inventory of the writing of the area but rather a sampling, a literary and cultural smorgasbord

. Indeed, the second-generation of so-called "Beur" writers born in France and such major writers as Driss Chraïbi and Mohamed Khair-Eddine of Morocco, Mouloud Feraoun, Nabile Fares, and RachidBoudjedra of Algeria, and Abdelwahab Meddeb of Tunisia are not represented, in part, for want of space. Scholars have pointed out that the Maghreb is, and has been for centuries, a crossroads, an intersection of north-south commercial and cultural commerce between Europe and Africa south of the Sahara and east-west religious and intellectual penetration and exchange. The artistic and intellectual exchange that accompanied the trans-Saharan caravans and the eastern mysticism, with its poetry and music, that found its way to Andalusia Spain intersected and found mutual agency along the southern littoral of the Mediterranean.(2)

The period of French colonization represented in this number is recent. And one must remember that the French presence was only the latest in a series of invasions and occupations going back thousands of years, including those of the Romans, the Vandals, the Phoenicians, the Arabs, the Turks, and the Spanish. I once heard a lecturer aptly remark that North Africa was for millennia overlaid by veneer after veneer of foreign dominance and repeatedly rejected them with a » visceral twitch" Despite this rejection, traces of the multifaceted history of the area are found in its ruins and its architecture, in its cuisine and its music, in its rich olio of languages, and in its political and cultural complexity.

If we do occasionally encounter the adoption of trendy Hollywood lingo and "franglais" we also encounter artistic modes and even words that hark back to past cultural and linguistic eras.

After the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain in the fifteenth century, Andalusian philosophy and poetry reinvigorated the southern shores of the Mediterranean, and one still hears words in the Arabic and pied-noir sabir dialects of North Africa that evoke earlier colonial entities: Moroccans may refer to a European as a "Nazarene»; Algerians may refer to him as a Roumi (plural = Roumisor Iroumien, from Roman); and in the North-African French vocabulary many words have been adopted from Spanish, Turkish, Berber, and Arabic, some of them, like bled (from Arabic for country or region), having become part of the vocabulary of mainland France.

The three major languages involved in modern North-African literature are French, Arabic, and Berber (Tamazight in the case of the poets presented here).

Each of these languages brings with it a particular political and historical dynamic and a literary and cultural history that have placed their own brand on the product.(3)The Maghrebians who write in French are the product of an intense, if relatively recent, colonization that began with the French invasion of Algeria, and especially when the French had "pacified" the Fertile Crescent along the Mediterranean coast and became the latest in a long string of occupiers. France's colonial policy of cultural assimilation and the imposition of a "civilizing mission" to bring education modern health care, and the like to her overseas territories around the world eventually

resulted in the creation of a class of educated Maghrebians who authored essays and literary opuses in French.

The results often betrayed a dichotomous psyche. One of the earlier Francophone writers, Jean Amrouche is a case in point. The author of two important poetry collections, *Cendres* and *Etoile secrete* Amrouche acknowledged the fact of his cultural assimilation when he described the symbiotic relationship between his native culture and the French one he had acquired and assumed as part of his own: «France is the mind of my soul / Algeria is the soul of my mind."

Références

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- 3/ Diamond, P. (1995). *Status and Power in Verbal Interaction: A study of Discourse in Close Knit Social Network*. Amsterdam: Benjamin.