

# Some Key Figures

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Key figures of Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian literature.

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## Literature Key Figures

**Driss Charibi** - One of the most prolific Francophone writers from Morocco, Driss Charibi is also one who has stirred quite a bit of controversy following the publication of books such as *Le Passé simple* and *Naissance à l'aube*. These books offer a reading/writing of Moroccan history that diverges with the mainstream version(s), to say the least. His other publications include the following. *Les Boucs* (1955), *Une Enquête au pays* (1982), *La Mère du printemps (l'Oum er-Bia)*(1982)*Mort au Canada* (1983), *La Civilisation, ma Mère!...* (1984), *D'Autres voix, Mohammedia*, (1986), *Naissance à l'aube* (1986), *Le Maroc des hauteurs* (Photos) (1986), *L'Inspecteur Ali* (1991), and *L'Homme du livre*.

**Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine** came from an Amazigh family from southern Morocco. This south, especially the towns of Tafraout, Tiznit, and Agadir are always present in his writings. Khaïr-Eddine was famous for his unbridled sense of freedom, making him one of the most controversial figures of Moroccan literature in French. Along with Abdellatif Laïbi and Mustapha Nissabory, Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine launched the artistic journal *Souffles* in 1966. This publication sent a strong signal that Moroccan Francophone literature was there to stay, but on its own terms. It signaled the end of the era that put the ideological message in writing before artistic expression. Khaïr-Eddine's writings defy all conventions and put all artistic and political suppositions into question.

This was clear even in his first book *Agadir* (1967). Subsequent works confirmed the rebel in Khaïr-Eddine. He proclaimed himself a "linguistic guerilla" with the goal of claiming new ground for unrestrained artistic expression. His works include: *Corps naïf suivi de Histoire d'un Bon Dieu* (1968), *Soleil Arachnide* (1969), *Moi l'Aigre*(1970), *Le Démonterreur* (1973), *Ce Maroc!* (1975), *Une odeur de mantèque* (1976), *Une vie, un rêve, un peuple, toujours errant* (1978), *Résurrection des fleurs sauvages* (1981), and *L'Agende et vie d'Agoun'chich* (1984).

**Abdelkarim Ghellab** (b. 1919) Ghellab's received his education at the Al-Qarawiyyin University of Fes and Cairo University where he got his BA in Arabic Literature. When he returned to Morocco he worked in many different government administration, especially Foreign Affairs and education. He is the current editor in chief of rightwing opposition Independence Party (H'izb Al-Istiqlal). Of all the writers that Morocco has produced since the turn of the century, Ghellab is probably the oldest and the most influential. As a senior founding member of the Moroccan Writers' Union and as the editor of the *A'alam* daily newspaper and its literary supplement, Ghellab wields much influence on the country's intellectual circles and the cultural life as a whole. His views on social and cultural issues, especially those of Arabization, modernism, and cultural diversity, are reminiscent of Salafi schools of thought.

Ghellab's writings cover a wide range of disciplines, especially fiction, literary criticism and politics. The four novels he published between 1965 and 1988 emphasize the bourgeois perspective from which Ghellab looks at recent Moroccan history. He is frequently criticized for over-emphasizing the role played by the urban bourgeois classes in the struggle for independence and glossing over the hardships that the poorer rural areas of Morocco underwent for the same cause. *Dafanna Al-Mad'i* (*We Buried the Past*) (1968) and *Lm'aallam Ali* (*Master Ali*) (1971) are both set against the backdrop of French military presence in urban centers and how the educated elite of the cities organized anti-French resistance. These two novels offer good illustrations of Ghellab's tendency to lapse into a type of revisionist history where the role of the urban elites is highlighted. Ghellab published two other novels: *Saba'at 'abwab* (*Seven Doors*) (1965) and *Wa A'ada Azzawraq 'ila Annaba'i* (*The Boat Returned to the Source*) (1988). He also published several books on literary issues for example *Maa'a Al-'adab wa Al-'udaba'* (*On Literature and Literary Figures*) (1974) and *A'alam Shaa'ir Al-H'amra'* (*The World of the Poet of the Red Town --Marrakech*) (1981). His political books include: *Tarikh Al-H'araka Al-Wataniya bilmaghrib* (*A History of the Nationalist Movement in Morocco*) (1987), *Fi Al-Fikr Assiyasi* (*On Political Thought*) (1992) and *Maa'rakatuna Al-A'arabiya fi Muwajahati Al-'istia'mar* (*Our Arab Struggle Against Colonialism*) (1967).

**Tahar Ben Jelloun** is certainly one of the better known Maghrebi intellectuals, but he is also one of the more controversial. Some critics attack him for being "auto-exoticizing," claiming his fiction has little other purpose than titillating the occidental reader. In fact, Ben Jelloun, winner of the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 1987, is a writer of remarkable talent who alternates between realistic fiction and the fantastic, with the self-proclaimed aim of emphasizing the "irréalisme de l'écriture." Among his better known novels are *Harrouda*, *Moha le fou*, *Moha le sage*, *L'enfant du sable*, *La Nuit Sacrée*, and *L'Homme rompu*. He has also published poems, his first collection appearing in 1972 (*Cicatrices du soleil*) and his most recent in 1993 (*La Remontée des cendres*). He is the translator of Mohamed Choukri's novel *Le pain nu* (1990) from Arabic. Having studied Social Psychology in Paris, Ben Jelloun has also published an essay on the situation of North African immigrant workers in France called *La plus haute des solitudes* (1977).

**Abdelkader Khatibi** is probably one of the most influential Moroccan literary figures both as a novelist and critic. His work is informed by his Moroccan and Arabo-Islamic heritage as well as by Western philosophies such as deconstruction. Among his most discussed works are *La Mère tatouée: autobiographie d'un décolonisé* (1971), *Le Lutteur de classe à la maniére taoïste* (1977), *De la mille et troisième nuit* (1980), *Maghreb pluriel* (1983), *Amour bilingue* (1983), *Dédicace à l'année qui vient* (1986), *Figures de l'étranger dans la littérature française* (1987), *Par-dessus l'épaule* (1988), *Pardoxes Du sionisme* (1990), and *Un Actéon à Stockholm* (1990). Khatibi has also

written a drama, *Le Prophète voilé* (1979).

**Abdellatif Laïbi** was a founding figure in postcolonial Moroccan Francophone literature. He is a prolific poet. The themes and issues that Laïbi deals engages critically in his writings have led him to a dramatic conflict with the Moroccan security which at one point resulted in an 8 year imprisonment in a facility reserved for dissident intellectuals. Laïbi's works include *Race* (1967), *L'Arbre de fer fleurit* (1974), *Le Règne de la barbarie suivi de Poèmes oraux* (1976), *Histoire des sept crucifiés de l'espoir* (1977), *Chroniques de la citadelle d'exil* (1978), *Anthologie de la poésie palestinienne* (1990), *Pour les droits de l'homme: histoire(s), image(s), et parole(s)* (1989), *Discours de la colline arabe* (1985), *Je t'aime au ras de la mort* (1988), *L'Accouché vif: prosoïmes* (1986), *L'Oeil et la nuit: roman itinéraire* (1969), *Le Baptême chacaliste* (1987), *Le Chemins des ordalies* (1987), *Les Rides du lion* (1989), *Narration du déluge* (1986), *Saida et les voleurs de soleil* (1986), *Sous le bâillon, le poème: écrits de prison, 1972-1980* (1981), and *Tous les déshirements* (1990).

**Mohammed Aziz El-Hababi** (1922-1993) El-Hababi's did most of his schooling in France where he received a Ph. D. in literature. He was then appointed dean of the University of Rabat. He also Taught at the University of Algiers. El-Hababi was one of the founding members of the Moroccan Writers Union and became its first president in 1961. He was the editor in chief of two publications: *Takamul Al-Maa'rifa* and *Dirasat Falasfya wa 'adabiyah*. In Morocco El-Hababi is best known as leading figure in philosophy and literary theory. His main areas of investigation were Islamic philosophy and the contemporary trends in Western thought, especially 'personnalism' on which he wrote his Ph. D. thesis as well published many articles and books. Among his published works there are two novels: *Jil Aththama'* (*The Generation of Thirst*) (1967) and *'iksir Al-H'ayat* (*The Elixir of Life*) (1974). He published two collections of poems: *Bu's wa Diyaa'* (*Misery and Light*) (1962) and *Yatim Tah'ta Assifr* (*Sub-Zero Orphan*) (1988). El-Hababi's most extensively published in French. The following are some of the most important titles he produced: *De l'Âtre À la personne: essai d'un personnalisme réaliste* (1954), and *Le Monde de demain: Le Tiers monde accuse* (1980).

**Mostafa Nissabory** is another writer consider part of the post-colonial "new generation of Moroccan Francophone writers." Although not as prolific as Mohammed Khair-Eddine and Abdellatif Laïbi, he, too, played a major role in the experimental publications, beginning in 1964 with *Poésie Toute*. This was followed by *Eaux vives* (1965) and the artistic journal *Souffles*. Nissabory's works include *Plus haute mémoire* (1968) and *La mille et deuxième nuit* (1975).

**Khната Bennouna** is one of the few women writers who have managed to enter the almost exclusively male field of literary creation. Working mainly in short fiction, Khната is regarded as a very political writer. Some of her readers even argue that her concern with political matters weighs down her writing and gives it a rather heavy didactic tone. Her novel *Al-Ghad wa Al-Ghadab* (*Tomorrow and Wrath*) (1981) uses techniques of autobiography writing along with ambiguity and other contemporary tropes to create a dense text that questions the existing social and political constructs. Besides being an overtly political writer, Khната is also known for her resistance to a literary trend that encourages Moroccan writers to follow conventions set by Middle Eastern poets and novelists. In fact she resisted what viewed as an eastern

"tutelage." Although resisting imitation of Arab writers, Khnata deals with many issues that are of acute urgency to that part of the world. Indeed her books frequently dealt the Palestinian both from a political point of view and a humanitarian one. Other works by Bennouna include *Liyasqet Assamt (Down with Silence!)* (1967), *Annar wa Al-'ikhtiyar (Fire and Choice)* (1969) which won the Morocco Literary Prize in 1971, *Assawt wa Assurah (Sound and Image)* (1975), *Al-A'asifah (The Tempest)* (1979), and *Assamt Annatiq (Talking Silence)* (1987). Bennouna currently works as a principle of a high-school in Casablanca.

**Mohammed Berrada** (b. 1938) English Translations Berrada's education makes him a good example of intellectual hybridity; he went to school in Morocco, Egypt and France. Although he wrote some fiction and poetry, the most significant bulk of his work is in literary criticism and translation. Berrada is well read in both the Arab and European literary traditions. His writing is very much influenced by modernist literary theories which emphasize ambiguity and dynamic narrative techniques which challenge the reader and create a new relationship between the reader and the text. It is relevant that he was the translator of such influential works of criticism such as Roland Barthes's *Le Degr e z ero de l' criture* and Bakhtin's *Le Discours romanesque* as well as the works of fellow Moroccan philosophers and cultural critics: Mohammed Aziz Lehbabi and Abdelkebir Khatibi. He also wrote on critics who brought new and revolutionary insights into the literary criticism tradition of the Arab world. His book *Mohammed Mandur wa Tanthir Annaqd Al-A'rabi (Mohammed Mandur and the Theorization of Arab Criticism)* (1986) explores Mohammed Mandur's critical approach to Arabic literature and the extent to which it has enriched the literary production among younger generations of Arab writers.

Berrada also collaborated with Mohammed Zniber and Algerian Francophone writer, Mouloud Mammeri, in the writing of *Frantz Fanon  aw Maa rakatu Ashshua ub Al-Mutakhallifah (Frantz Fanon and the Struggle of Developing Countries)* (1963). The publication of this book clearly indicated Berrada's commitment to dealing with one of the most urgent issues that independent Morocco grappled with: decolonization. The works of Frantz Fanon are of tremendous importance to the development of a post-colonial tradition of literary criticism. The importance of this theme in Berrada's work is accompanied with a departure from traditional narration to embrace a more polyphonic narrative technique. Indeed, Berrada's fictional works, especially *Lua bat Annisyan (The Game of Forgetting)* (1987), put the reader in a situation where he/she has to wade through the different voices in order to re-construct the story line. In fact, while reading the reader is actually negotiating his/her own subject position and re-narrating the events accordingly. Berrada's other works include *Salkh Al-Jild (Skinning)* (1979), translations of Mohammed Aziz Lehbabi's *Mina Lmunghalaq  ila Lmunfatah (From the Closed to the Open)*, Tahar Ben Jelloun's *H adith Al-Jamal (Talk of the Camel)* (1971), Abdelkebir Khatibi's *Fi Lkitabta wa Ttajriba (On Writing and Experience)* (1990), and Abdellatif La bi's *Qas a- id tah t Al-Kimamah (Muzzled Poems)* (1982). Berrada currently holds a teaching position at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts in Rabat.

**Rabia' Mubarak** (1940- ) Rabia' also belongs to the first generation of Morocco's contemporary writers. His contributions to national literature include short stories, plays, novels, and even children's books. His background in psychology and education helped him has greatly influenced his writings as will become clear from the titles of some of his books.

The list of his publications is long but here are some of his most significant works. *Dar wa Dukhkhān (A House and Smoke)* (1975), *Rih'alat Al-H'asad wa Al-H'ubb (Voyage of Harvest and Love)* (1983), *Attayyibun (The Good Ones)* (1972), *Rufqata Assilah'i wa Lqamar (In the Company of Weapons and the Moon)* (1976), *Arrih' Ashshatwiyya (The Winter Rain)* (1977), *Badru Zamanihi (Full Moon of His Time)* (1984), and *Burju Assua'ud (Tower of Fortunes)* (1990). He also wrote at least a dozen children books and psychological studies on the process of socialization and cognitive aspects of childhood. Rabia' is currently a Professor in Mohammed V University of Rabat.

**Mohammed Zefzaf** (1945- ) Zefzaf is probably Morocco's most prolific fiction writer. His stories are usually set in an urban context, usually Casablanca, where characters are tossed and have to find their way around the town and the people. He plays on problems of contact between the center as represented by the big towns and its educated residents and the rural margins with its poor and provincial inhabitants. Zefzaf's novels, adacious works do not consider any topic to be outside literature's reach. Needless to say that this stance has earned quite a few crises with the local security forces.

Zefzaf's fiction includes: *H'iwar fi Laylin muta-'akhhir (Conversation Late one Night)* (1970), *Al-Mar-'ah wa Lwardah (The Woman and the Rose)* (1972), *'arsifah wa Judran (Pavements and Walls)* (1974), *Buyut Wate-'ah (Low Houses)* (1977), *Qubur fi Lama-' (Tombs in Water)* (1978), *Al-'aqwa (The Strongest)* (1978), *Al-'afa'a wa Lbah'r (The Viper and The Sea)* (1979), *Ashshajara Al-Muqaddasa (The Sacred Tree)* (1980), *Ghajarun fi Al-Ghaba (Gypsies in the Forest)* (1982), *Baydat Addik (The Rooster's Egg)* (1984), *Muh'awalat A'ysh (An Attempt to Live)* (1985), *Malik Al-Jin (The King of the Jins)* (1988), *Malak 'abyad (A White Angel)* (1988), *Aththaa'lab Allathi Yath-har wa Yakhtafi (The Fox that Appears and Disappears)* (1989), *Al-H'ayy Al-Khali (The Back Neighbourhood)* (1992), and *Al-A'arabah (The Cart)* (1993). Zefzaf currently teaches in a high-school in Casablanca.

**Abdelhak Serhane** was born in 1950 and now teaches psychology at the Université Ibn Tofail in Kénitra. In 1993 he was awarded the Prix Français du Monde Arabe and is becoming a major voice in Moroccan literature. He came to public attention in 1983 with the publication of his first novel *Messaouda*. In this, *Les enfants des rues Ã©troits* and *Le Soleil des obscurs*, Serhane explores the underside of traditional society, including the corruption, sexual perversion, hypocrisy and poverty that victimize everyone, but especially the young. In 1989 he published a book of poetry called *L'Ivre PoÃªme*. A second volume, *Chant d'ortie*, appeared in 1993. In 1995 he published a work of non-fiction called *L'amour circoncis*, a comprehensive which lays open the erotic ideals, conventions and practices in Morocco, and in the process explains the identification of the individual in Moroccan society.

**Edmond Amran Elmaleh**--Born into a Jewish family in Safi Morocco, Edmond Amran Elmaleh is one of the writers of a new generation who has contributed to the continuation of a vibrant, diverse tradition of Francophone literature in Morocco. His books include the following titles: *Parcours immobile* (1980), *Aïlen ou la Nuit du rÃ©cit* (1983), *Mille ans, un jour* (1986), *Jean Genet, Le Captif amoureux et autres essais* (1988), *Le Retour d'Abou El Haki* (1990), and *abner abounour* (1995).

**Leïla Abouzeïd** (b.1950) (also spelled Layla Abu Zayd) Born in El Ksiba in the Middle Atlas mountains of Morocco, Leïla Abouzeïd studied English at the University of Texas, Austin and journalism at the World Press Institute in St. Paul Minnesota. In Morocco, she has worked in television and the media. She also served in the government in the seventies, and again in 1983 and 1991. Today she writes full time and has published short stories, memoirs and novels. She is best known for *'Am Al Fil*, originally published in 1987 in Beirut. The novel is an exploration of the status of women in post-colonial Morocco.

**Ahmed Lemsih** (1950- ) Lemsih is the only Moroccan poet to choose writing poetry in Moroccan Arabic instead of Standard or Classical Arabic. His reputation as opposed suffered from that choice for a long time because other poets and the intellectual readership refused to take his venture seriously. Over the years he managed to publish an impressive amount of poetry written in a language that many judged unsuitable for such literary production. Lemsih's latest collection of poetry *Shkun Trez Lma...??!* (*Who embroidered the water??!*) (1994) caught the critics by surprised and stunned readers and reviewers by its poetic quality. Lemsih manages to find poetic rhythms and original metaphors in the most common forms of language.

Although Lemsih published a large number of poems in Morocco's most prestigious literary journal, he only published two other collections of poetry: *Riyah'...Allati Sata-ti* (*The Winds that will Come*) (1976) and *Fayadan Aththalj* (*Snow Flood*) (1986). Apart from writing for *Al-Ittih'ad Al-Ishtiraki*, Lemsih holds a teaching position in a high-school in Rabat.

**Jean Amrouche** (1907-1962) is one of the pioneers of Algerian literature in French. He was born into a Catholic family in the Kabyle mountains. At a certain point the family was forced to emigrate to Tunisia where he was educated and began his career. As a high school teacher in Tunis, Albert Memmi was one of his students. During the Algerian Civil War he saw it as his duty to explain the French to Algerians and Algerians to France. He published his first book of poetry, *Cendres* in 1934. This, and his second volume, *À%toile secr te* are marked by themes of mysticism and exile. Amrouche was also concerned with the preservation of his Amazigh (Berber) cultural heritage. He collected songs from the Amazigh region of Kabylie in his 1939 book *Chants berb res de Kabylie*.

**Marguerite Taos Amrouche**--Born in 1913, Marguerite-Taos is the younger sister of Jean Amrouche. Like her brother, she was concerned with preserving the cultural heritage of the Kabylie. In 1966 she published a collection of tales, poems and proverbs called *le Grain magique*. She also collected and recorded songs and chants from this culture. She also wrote two novels: *l'Amant imaginaire* (1975) and an autobiographical novel *Jacinthe noire* (1947).

**Mouloud Mammeri** was born on the 28th of December 1917 in Kabylia. A patriot who struggled for the independence of Algeria from French Colonization, he also studied in Morocco and in France before becoming director of the Centre de recherche anthropologiques in Algiers. But Mammeri is probably best known as a staunch advocate for cultural pluralism in Algeria and for the struggle

for the recognition of the Amazigh culture and language throughout North Africa. In 1980 his lecture on ancient Amazigh poetry from Kabylie was canceled by the authorities. This act of cultural repression triggered massive demonstrations all over Algeria. Among the people in the front ranks of the demonstrations were Kabylie artists and intellectuals.

The date in which the demonstrations started is still celebrated as Tafsut Imazighen "The Amazigh Spring" by Amazigh cultural movements all over North Africa. Mammeri was a founder of a review, *Awal*, dedicated to research into Amazigh culture, language and history. His novels include *La Colline Oubliée* (1952), *Le Sommeil du juste* (1955) and *l'Opium et le Bâton* (1965). He also collected the poems and stories of his native region in *Contes Berberes de Kabylie* and *Poèmes kabyles anciens* (1980).

**Abdelhamid Benhedougga** was born in 1925 in El Mansoura (Bordj-Bou-Arridj), and pursued his higher education in Tunisia. He returned to Algeria in 1954 where he taught Arabic literature. In 1955 he left for France where he held odd jobs to earn a living. He returned to Tunisia in 1958 where he wrote for the radio and press of the FLN. He returned to Algeria in 1962 and has written for the theater, radio and television, including the BBC and Radio Tunisia. His publications include a collection of articles called *Al Djazair Bayn El amsi wal youmi* (Algeria Between Yesterday and Today, 1958) a collection of poems, *Al-Arwah Ash-Shaghira* (Empty Souls, 1967) and several novels, most recently *Wa Ghadan Yaoum Djadid* (Tomorrow is a New Day, 1992). His novel, *Je rêve d'un monde...*, (*I Dream of a World*) has been published in French translation in number 15-16 of *Algérie Littérature / Action*.

**Kateb Yacine**--Born August 6, 1929 in Constantine, Kateb Yacine is one of the most respected writers in the Maghreb. His most famous novel is *Nedjma*, was published in the midst of Algeria's anti-colonial war against the French. It arguably the most important novels in the Francophone Maghrebi tradition. Yacine has described it as "autobiographie au plurielle" in which three narratives, memories of his childhood and his mother, infatuation with his cousin Nedjma and Algerian history. He has also published poetry (*Soliloques*) and theater (*Le Cercle des repré-sailles*) and other novels. He died on October 28, 1989.

**Jean SÃ©nac**--The child of an unknown father, Jean SÃ©nac was born in 1926 to Jeanne Comma in 1926 in a village near Oran. It is said that this status as a "bastard" was the source for his poetic genius and, indeed, SÃ©nac frequently uses his quest for identity as a metaphor for Algeria's status as a newly independent nation. This search is most pronounced in SÃ©nac's only novel *Le baouche du PÃ©re*, a remarkable autobiographical novel published after SÃ©nac was brutally murdered on August 19, 1962. He was a protégé of Albert Camus who became very much a father figure for the young poet, a relationship strained by SÃ©nac fervent support for Algerian independence. SÃ©nac was an Algerian citizen by choice and his love for the nation is always present in his poetry. Some of his collections are *DÃ©rision et Vertige*, *Poèmes*, and *Avant-Corps*.

**Mohammed Dib** is by far Algeria's most prolific writer and a major figure of world literature. His

work provides a fascinating, moving picture of Algerian history beginning with a trilogy *Algérie* which covered the period from 1939-1942. The trilogy includes the novels: *La Grande Maison*, *l'Incendie* and *Le Mâtier À tisser*. Dib is an innovative writer who often explored experimental techniques. For example, *Qui se souvient de la mer* is a novel about the war for independence in Algeria, set in a mythical, science fiction like city. In so doing, the novel becomes a compelling allegorical narrative of the specific conflict in Algeria and of the psychology of resistance to oppression.

Dib's other novels include: *Le Talisman*, *La Danse du roi*, *Habel*, and, most recently, *Le Désert sans détour*. He has also published collections of poetry such as *Ombre gardienne*; *Feu, beau feu* and *O vive*.

**Assia Djebar** is certainly the best known woman writer (if not the best known overall) of the Maghreb, at least in the West. She taught history for many years at the University of Algiers, and much of work is pervaded by persistent historical questioning. But above all Djebar's work is concerned with the situation of women in Algeria and with giving them the voice that elements in society would have them denied. She is also a prize winning film-maker.

*Les Enfants du nouveau monde* (1962), the first of her works to receive widespread critical acclaim, is a novel which deals with the Algerian anti-colonial war and, in particular, the role women played in it. *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (1980) takes its title from Delacroix's famous painting and is made up almost entirely of conversations between women. *L'Amour la fantasia* (1985) is an extraordinarily complex work which weaves together historical narratives of French colonization and autobiography. In *Loin de Médine* (1991) she explores the lives of the women in the life of the prophet Mohammed. Her other novels include *La Soif* (1957), *Les Impatients* (1958), *Les Allouettes nées* (1964) and *Ombre sultane* (1987).

**Tahar Ouettar** (also spelled Tahir Wattar) is one of the more important figures in Algerian literature written in Arabic. He began his higher studies in Constantine, Tunisia, but left in 1956 to join the Civil Organization of the FLN. After the war he edited periodicals in Tunisia and Algeria. He also served as Controller of the FLN and Director General of Algerian Radio. He has published novels, plays and short stories in Arabic. Titles include: *al-Laz* (*The Ace*, 1974) *'Urs baghl* (*The Donkey's Wedding*, 1978), *Az-Zilzel* (*The Earthquake*, 1974) and *al-Shama'a wa'l-dahaliz* (*The Candle and Dark Tunnels*, 1995). He currently resides in Algiers.

**Ahlam Mosteghanemi**--Ahlam Mosteghanemi is the author of *Dhakhirat al-jasad* (1985), the first novel published by an Algerian woman in Arabic. In 2000, an English translation bearing the title *Memory in the Flesh* was published by the American University in Cairo, as a result of the novel receiving the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature. Holder of a B.A. in Arabic literature from the University of Algiers and doctorate in sociology from the Sorbonne, Mosteghanemi has written two novels, two volumes of poetry and has published a collection of essays called *Algérie: Femmes et Écritures*.



**Leila Sebbar**--Born and raised in Algeria, Leila Sebbar moved to France at the age of 17. In fact, many of her novels deal with the situation of Algerian women who have immigrated to Europe. Some of the titles which built her reputation are: *On tue les petites filles* (1980), *Des femmes dans la maison* (181) and *Sh razade* (1982).

**Rachid Boudjedra**--It is said that the publication of Rachid Boudjedra's first novella *R pudiation* (1969) announced a new generation of Algerian writers. Through a story recounted by a young Algerian to his foreign lover concerning the life of his mother who had been repudiated by his father, Boudjedra questions the values of his traditional society. According to the author, the text is partially autobiographical, stemming from the repudiation of Boudjedra's mother by his father.

Boudjedra's fiction is provocative, experimental and moving. *Topographie id ale pour un agression caract ris e*, for example, is the story of an illiterate immigrant lost in the Paris metro through which Boudjedra examines complex philosophical and aesthetic issues. *FIS de la haine* is a work of nonfiction in which Boudjedra examines the roots of the current crisis in Algeria. The book pulls no punches towards the FIS, the West, or anyone else. And yet Boudjedra makes every effort to sort out the bloodthirsty ambitions of the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) from the more tolerant tradition of Islam, and the ruthless, money-driven character of the West from its noble humanistic tradition. Since 1982 he has written exclusively in Arabic and the issuing French versions of his novels.

**Mohamed Sari** was born in 1958 in M nacer, in the Cherchell region of Algeria. He and is currently a professor of Arabic literature at the University of Algiers. He has published literary criticism and three novels in Arabic, including *As-Sa'ir* (1986) and *'ala Djibel Ad-Dahra* (The Mountains of Dara, 1988). His newest novel, *Le Labyrinthe*, has been published in French translation in *Alg rie Litt rature / Action*, Nos 41-42.

**Tahar Djaout** was one of the first of a far too long string of intellectuals to be killed in the violence that has shaken Algeria since the canceled 1992 elections. One of the men arrested for the assassination allegedly said that Djaout was targeted because, "he wrote too well, he had an intelligent pen, and he was able to touch people; because of this he was a danger to the fundamentalist ideology." Since his assassination, Djaout has become an important symbol for freedom of expression and the movement for a pluralist state in Algeria, but beyond all this, the world lost a phenomenal literary talent when he died.

Djaout was born in Kabylie, (1952) studied mathematics at the university, then became a journalist. As such he was a staunch advocate for democracy, and a harsh critic of corruption in the Algerian government and of the FIS. Although he began his literary career in poetry, he is best known for his novels. The three which brought him the most attention are: *Les chercheurs d'os*, the story of a boy who goes off to search for the remains of his brother after the Algerian war for independence; *Le Invention du d sert*, in which a writer working on a history of the Almohad movement in North Africa confronts the ghost of history, bringing an ancient religious

reformer back to life in his mind to confront the street of Paris; and *Les Vigiles*, the story of a young inventor and a old war veteran who confront the corruption of their society. A posthumous novel, *Le Dernier Acté de la raison*, was published in 1999, in which Djaout imagines life in a state controlled by a fundamentalist government and one individuals resistance to it.

**Rachid Mimouni**--Decades after Algerian independence Rachid Mimouni's literary production in French shows the incredible ability of Maghrebi writers to use French as a language of artistic creation and expression. Although he died at very young age in his self-imposed exile in Tangiers, Morocco, Mimouni left behind an impressive body of work that grapples with some of the most powerful issues in modern Algerian history. Some of his works are: *Le Fleuve d'atourné* (1982), *Une paix à vivre* (1983), *Tombéza* (1984), *Paris Dakar* (Written in collaboration with Leila Sebbar and others) (1987), *L'Honneur de la tribu* (1989), *La Ceinture de l'ogresse* (1990), *Le Printemps n'en sera que plus beau* (1990), *De la barbarie en général et de l'intégrisme en particulier* (1993), *La Malédiction* (1993).

**Aissa Khelladi** is a journalist, novelist, playwright and poet who has lived in France since 1994. He has published books on the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, plays, poetry and several novels, most notably *Peurs et Mensonges* and *Rose d'abime*, both of which deal insightfully and unflinchingly with the situation in contemporary Algeria. His writing is intense and gripping and often very innovative in its style. Khelladi is also the director of the important new review *Algérie Littérature / Action*.

**Abdelkader Djema** is a novelist and journalist who was born in Oran in 1948. He was obliged to leave Algeria in 1993. His books include *Une Acté de cendres, a récit* which tells the story of a dispossessed and haunted man who lives in his office after losing his wife and falling out of favor with his superior. It is a personal narrative which gives a glimpse into how one mans deals with the chaos in Algeria today. Other titles by Djema include *Saison de pierres* and *Mémoires de n'gre*.

**Malika Mokeddem** is also trained as a physician. She was born in 1949 in the Algerian desert and was the eldest of ten children. In 1966 she left Algeria to study medicine in France where she now lives. Her first novel was written while she was practicing medicine in an office she opened in the immigrant quarters of Paris. She is a prize winning author of three novels foreground the situation of Algerian women. *Le siècle des sauterelles* is set in the first half of this century, and *L'Interdite* deals with the rise of fundamentalism.

**Merzak Allouache** is, of course, best known as a film maker. His most famous film, *Bab El Oued City*, tells the story of a poor neighborhood in urban Algiers and the rise of Islamic militancy. The novel *Bab El-Oued* was written to exorcise frustrations that arose during the making of the film.

**Albert Memmi** (1920) was born in the Jewish quarters of Tunis. His most famous novel, *La Statue de Sel*, written in 1953, treats the themes of identity and alienation in the story of a boy from the Jewish quarter of Tunis. He moved to France in 1956. Other works include *Agar* (1955), *Le Scorpion* (1969), *Le Désert* (1977), *Le Pharaon* (1989), *Le Mirliton du ciel* (poetry, 1990). Memmi is also the author of important philosophical works such as *Portrait du colonisé* (1957).

**Hédi Bouraoui** (b.1932) (who currently resides in Canada) moves across cultures, creating a rich dialogue between images, symbols, and words in his poetic work. Some publications include: *Musocktail* (1966), *Tremblé* (1969), *Immensement croisé* (1969), *Eclate module* (1972), *Vésuviade* (1976), *Sans frontières* (1979), *Ha-tu-vois* (1980), *Vers et l'envers* (1982), *Ignescent* (1982), *Seul* (1984), *L'icône* (1985), *Echosmos* which also includes Bouraoui's own English translations of his work (1986), and *Bangkok Blues*.

**Salah Garmadi** (1933-1982) wrote both in Arabic and in French. A popular poet, his collections of poetry in French include *Avec ou sans* (1970) and *Nos ancêtres les Berbères* (1975).

**Abdelaziz Kacem** (b.1933) writes both in French and Arabic. With highly polished language expressing his biculturalism, Kacem employs myth and history to articulate the present. His work in French is *Le Frontal* (1983).

**Mustapha Tlili** (b.1937) speaks of solitude and of residing in the space of the "in-between" of three cultures: Maghrebi, French, and American. His four novels: *La Rage aux tripes* (1975), *Le bruit dort* (1978), *Gloire des sables* (1982), *La Montagne du lion* (1988).

**Majid el Houssi** (1941) reflects in his writing the difficulties inherent in the process of acculturation. The search for self, memory, and identity manifests itself in the use of Berber and Arabic historical patrimonies. He currently resides in Italy. Some of his works include *Je voudrais écouté-riquement te conter* (1972), *Imagivresse* (1973), *Iris-Ifriqiya* (1981), *Ahmedta-O* (1981), *Le Verger des poursuites* ( ).

**Moncef Ghacem** (b. 1946) is poet and translator, residing in Tunisia. His poetry resounds with the power of his Mediterranean heritage and the sea, a voice articulating against injustice. Poetry in French: *Cent Mille Oiseaux* (1975), *Car vivre est un pays* (1978), *Cap Africa* (1989). His most recent publication is a string of engaging short stories, inspired from his native town of *Mahdia: L'Épervier* (1994).

**Abdelwahab Meddeb** (b. 1946) has an original style which combines mythology, mysticism, Western and Eastern cultural references; an intertextuality and "interlanguage" which reveals the writer's (self-) conscious use of language. His works: *Talismano* (1979), *Phantasia* (1986), *Les Dits de Bistami* (1989), *Tombeau d'Ibn Arabi* (1990), *Récit de l'exil occidental* (1993), *Les 99 stations de Yale* (1995), *La Gazelle et l'enfant* (1992).

**Fawzi Mellah** (b. 1946) has written both drama and narrative. His work, usually with an interesting didactic point to make, is rooted in the sociocultural and historical realities of Tunisia, but end up revealing grains of truth pertinent to developing countries in general, to wit: the structure of the state and the discourse of power. His works: *Noron ou les Oiseaux de passage* (1973), *Le Palais du non-retour* (1975), *Le Conclave des pleureuses* (1987), and *Elissa, la reine vagabonde* (1988).

**Hélène Beji** (b. 1948) is known as an essayist and novelist, reinterrogating such concepts as modernity and the state; discussing the implications of the rise of the new bourgeoisie vis-à-vis traditional culture. Her novel is *L'œil du jour* (1985).

**Tahar Bekri** (b. 1951) is well-known as a writer, essayist, and literary critic. His works include: *Poèmes bilingues* (1978), *Exils* (1979), *Le laboureur du soleil* (1983), *Les lignes sont des arbres* (1984), *Le chant du roi errant* (1985), and *Le Cœur rompu aux océans* (1988). He has also published a book on the literature of Tunisia: *Littératures de Tunisie et du Maghreb* (1994).

**Amina Saïd** (b. 1953) is a contemporary poet who has published: *Paysages, nuit friable* (1980), *Métamorphose de l'île et de la vague* (1985).

**Hafedh Djedidi** (b. 1954) is a poet, novelist, and journalist covering cultural affairs. He has published: *Rien que le fruit pour toute bouche* (1986), *Chasses/croisades* (written with Guy Coissard; 1986), *Intempéries* (1988), and *Le Cimetière ou le Souffle du Vénérable* (1990).

## Read up on Tunisian literature!

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