

Ricci, Cristián H. *Literatura periférica en castellano y catalán: el caso marroquí*. Madrid: Ediciones Clásicas-Universidad de Minnesota Press, 2010. Print. 96 pages.

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This new study by Cristián Ricci is an indispensable guide for scholars and those interested in Moroccan literatures in its singularity and diversity. It comes in the wake of a wide range of texts and articles from various disciplines on Moroccan and (French) Maghrebian literature, as a whole. We have undoubtedly witnessed an unprecedented surge in publications on the Arab and Muslim world, from comparative and multifarious frameworks, in the last few years. In this light, the need for in-depth, comprehensive and committed research is more important than ever. Ricci frames his study in issues such as the translation of Arabic texts into Spanish, writers from the Maghreb who choose Spanish as their preferred literary language, as well as interest in the Semitic culture and language. The numerous Spanish words that can be traced to Arabic, the Arab-Islamic-Amazigh (Berber) presence in the Iberian peninsula; migrations or exile, just to name a few, are also treated in this new publication, which addresses very current, polemic and often ignored elements, essential to any study which seeks to delve into the particularity of Hispano-Moroccan literary relations.

Migration, affirms Mohamed Abrighach in *Moroccan and Sub-Saharan Migration in Contemporary Spanish Narrative*, easily exposes the deep-rooted distrust and suspicion held towards Morocco and its subjects. In this sense, migrants are perceived as the “new moriscos” and prodigal sons of the “Moriscan diaspora,” returning to conquer the former *Al Andalus* once more, as Daniela Flesler asserts in *The Return of the Moor*. What’s more, Morocco stands at the cross-roads between the East and the West and is therefore influentially positioned when it comes to tackling global events. The unfortunate terrorist attacks in New York (2001) and Madrid (2004) have placed issues regarding the Arab and Islamic world at the forefront, and have stirred up debates on this new reality, generating renewed interest and demand, with a sense of urgency, for sound research and studies.

Ricci employs postcolonial and *transmodern* theories in his analysis of literary writing by contemporary Moroccan authors who (re)present Spain, Morocco and particularly Hispano-Moroccan relations as a principal thematic in their works. *Literatura periférica en castellano y catalán* explores the location from which enunciative discourses are constructed, reflecting knowledge and academic lucidity, coupled with modes of writing fiction by authors, intellectuals, historians and literary critics, who live and think from the perspective of colonial and postcolonial legacies. New and singular theories emerge, exemplifying the cultural and historical particularity, which is fed by critical dialogue between Spain and Europe as a whole, but also with other writers and intellectuals from the different *southern* positions. Border epistemology therefore offers a critical reflection on knowledge production both from within the frontiers of the modern/colonial world system (imperial conflicts, hegemonic languages, directionality of translations) as well as from its external borders, erected between Spain and the North Africa-Muslim world (imperial conflicts with (neo)colonised cultures, and the subsequent phases of independence and decolonisation).

In his analysis on this relatively new phenomenon of Moroccan literature written in the more dominant languages of the Iberian peninsula, Ricci underscores the extent to which *convivencia*

between Maghrebians/Moroccans and Spaniards, and the voluntary adoption of the Catalan and Spanish language as an artistic expression, perfectly translate into four well-defined cultures, the sum of which gives rise to the base of a fifth: hybrid and interstitial, interrogating both the autochthonous (Morocco, Amazigh culture of the Rif) and the foreign (Spain/Europe) spaces. It is this hybrid element which prevails in Ricci's study, understood not as a mere synthesis which neatly resolves and settles cultural dialectics, but calls into question, through mimicry, acknowledgement and parody of the form and content, the exercise of power. He also draws on what Walter Mignolo calls the "colonial difference" in his *Local Histories, Global Designs*, which takes into account not only the former colonial authority but also neo-colonial practices that have persisted after Independence. Finally, Ricci employs hybridity to encompass the subversion of literary and historic texts, emerging both from the former metropolis and from the Moroccan territory itself, and ultimately giving rise to parodied and displaced forms (fractured and disruptive, in the words of Mignolo or Glissant, in his "All-World Treaty"), which undermine authority, from whichever literary tradition or culture it may come from.

Literatura periférica is roughly divided into three parts: a historical and literary analysis of Moroccan literature in Spanish and Catalan; a brief anthology of defining texts and a comprehensive bibliography of academics and scholars who have contributed to this emerging, dynamic phenomenon. Worth mentioning is the focus on the significant contribution of journals like *Ketama* and *Al Motamid* during the years of the Protectorate or the key figure of the poet laureate Mohamed Al Sabbag as one of the first Hispanists. Ricci also emphasises the inclusion of authors and works which have gone largely unnoticed in previous anthologies and studies, with the exception of *La puerta de los vientos* (2004), a canonical anthology edited by Marta Cerezales and Lorenzo Silva. Another key anthology mentioned is *Calle del agua. Antología contemporánea de literatura hispano-magrebí* (2008). The latter does not reflect, however, the works of Ahmed Ararou who, from the point of view of Ricci, and others such as Silva, Juan Goytisolo or Vicente Molina Foix, is one of the most outstanding Moroccan writers in the Spanish language, who has achieved and perfected a narrative technique which places him among the best short-story writers in Spanish. *Calle del agua* also unfairly overlooks Imazighen (Berber)-Catalan writers, such as Laila Karrass or Najat El Hachmi, focusing instead on Algerian and Tunisian Hispanism. Ricci underlines the term "Hispanism" in order to differentiate it from literature or literary fiction, since with the exception of the isolated example of Mohamed Doggui in Tunisia (a book of poems and two books in the press), one cannot readily affirm the existence of Algerian or Tunisian literature in the Spanish language.

Ricci does not adequately address, nonetheless, the oftentimes hegemonic, paternalistic treatment of Moroccan writers who opt for Spanish and the misleading confusion of a few anthologies that sometimes include translated versions of French or Arabic stories, all the while promoting and consolidating Moroccan literature in Spanish. Furthermore, sufficient attention is not paid to the significant differences between those writers living in Morocco who write in Spanish, on the one hand, and those "migrants" or descendents of migrants, settled in Spain, who naturally choose the language of their education (Spanish, Catalan) as their daily and literary form of expression.

To sum up, *Literatura periférica en castellano y catalán: el caso marroquí* is an indispensable reference for researchers and those interested in delving into a body of works on Moroccan fiction in the Iberian languages. It also serves as an essential tool for those in comparative research studies, both in Europe and in Latin America, with a particular emphasis on the different literatures written by "first, second and third generation" migrants.