

**AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN  
CONTEMPORARY SPANISH TEXTS**

# New Hispanisms

## Cultural and Literary Studies

*Series editor: Anne J. Cruz*

*New Hispanisms: Literary and Cultural Studies* presents innovative studies that seek to understand how the cultural production of the Hispanic world is generated, disseminated, and consumed. Ranging from the Spanish Middle Ages to modern Spain and Latin America, this series offers a forum for various critical and disciplinary approaches to cultural texts, including literature and other artifacts of Hispanic culture. Queries and proposals for single author volumes and collections of original essays are welcome.

*Medical Cultures of the Early Modern Spanish Empire*  
Edited by John Slater, Mariáluz López-Terrada, and José Pardo-Tomás

*Memory and Spatiality in Post-Millennial Spanish Narrative*  
Lorraine Ryan

*The Formation of the Child in Early Modern Spain*  
Edited by Grace E. Coolidge

*Masculinity and Queer Desire in Spanish Enlightenment Literature*  
Mehl Allan Penrose

# African Immigrants in Contemporary Spanish Texts

## Crossing the Strait

Edited by

DEBRA FASZER-MCMAHON  
*Seton Hill University, USA*

and

VICTORIA L. KETZ  
*Iona College, USA*

ASHGATE

© Debra Faszter-McMahon, Victoria L. Ketz, and contributors 2015

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Debra Faszter-McMahon and Victoria L. Ketz, have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the editors of this work.

Published by

Ashgate Publishing Limited

Wey Court East

Union Road

Farnham

Surrey, GU9 7PT

England

Ashgate Publishing Company

110 Cherry Street

Suite 3-1

Burlington

VT 05401-3818

USA

[www.ashgate.com](http://www.ashgate.com)

#### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

#### The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:

African immigrants in contemporary Spanish texts : crossing the strait / edited by Debra Faszter-McMahon and Victoria L. Ketz.

pages cm.—(New hispanisms: cultural and literary studies)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4724-1634-6 (hardcover : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-1-4724-1635-3 (ebook)—ISBN 978-1-4724-1636-0 (epub)

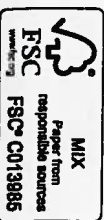
1. Spanish literature—Minority authors—History and criticism. 2. Emigration and immigration in literature. 3. Africans—Spain. 4. Literature and society—Spain—History—21st century. 5. Cultural pluralism—Spain. I. Faszter-McMahon, Debra, 1974—editor. II. Ketz, Victoria L., editor. PQ6073.E54A37 2015 860.9'3552—dc23

2014036136

ISBN: 9781472416346 (hbk)

ISBN: 9781472416353 (ebk – PDF)

ISBN: 9781472416360 (ebk – ePUB)



Printed in the United Kingdom by Henry Ling Limited,  
at the Dorset Press, Dorchester, DT1 1HD

*For Christopher, Pat, Alejandra, and Patrick*

# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	ix
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xi
<i>Foreword: Empathy, Ambivalence, and the Movement of Critique: A Prologue by Brad Epps</i>	xv
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
Introduction: Representations of Africa in Twenty-First-Century Spain: Literatures and Cultures Crossing the Strait <i>Debra Faszter-McMahon and Victoria L. Keiz</i>	1
1 Mediated Moralities of Immigration: Metaphysical Detection in <i>Marta Sanz's Black, black, black</i> <i>Shanna Lino</i>	37
2 What Happens on the Other Side of the Strait(gh)? Clandestine Migrations and Queer Racialized Desire in Juan Bonilla's Neopicaresque Novel <i>Los principes rubios</i> (2003) <i>Gema Pérez-Sánchez</i>	53
3 Alienation in the "Promised Land": Voices of Maghrebi Women in the Theater of Antonia Bueno <i>Victoria L. Keiz</i>	77
4 Searching for Justice in <i>Return to Hansala</i> by Chus Gutiérrez: Cultural Encounters between Africa and Europe <i>Ana Corbalán</i>	99
5 Celebrity, Diplomacy, Documentary: Javier Bardem and <i>Sons of the Clouds: The Last Colony</i> <i>Jill Robbins</i>	115
6 Tales of Two Shores: The Re-Establishment of Dialogue across the Strait of Gibraltar <i>Raquel Vega-Durán</i>	131
7 Parejas Mixtas: African-Spanish Couples in Cyberspace <i>Kathleen Honora Connolly</i>	145
8 <i>Oikos</i> and the "Other": Humanizing the Immigrant in Donato Ndongo's <i>El metro</i> <i>Mahan L. Ellison</i>	161

9	<i>Ekomo's Interventions</i> <i>Bertha Sampedro Vezcoya</i>	177
10	Unveiling Spain: Representation of the Female Body as a Metaphor for Contesting Orientalist Ideology <i>David N. Cowry and Cristina Ortiz Ceberio</i>	193
11	Grave Politics: Fighting Ventriloquism in the Maghreb <i>Brian Bobbitt</i>	207
12	African Poetics in Spain: <i>Um Draïga</i> and the Voices of Contemporary Saharawi Poetry <i>Debra Faszler-McMahon</i>	223
13	Abderrahman El Fathi: An Averroist Perspective of His Poetry <i>Cristian H. Ricci</i>	241
	Appendix: List of Works by Genre Addressed in This Volume	265
	<i>Index</i>	271

## List of Figures

6.1	Logotype of Entre Dos Orillas. Source: EDO, design by Zum Creativos, 2008.	134
6.2	Movie poster of <i>Cuento de las dos orillas</i> . Source: Jesus Armesio, 2006.	138

- Salvajes*. Dir. Carlos Molinero. Jorge J. Martínez, Marisa Paredes, Manuel Morón, Imanol Artias, Roger Casamajor, Maria Isasi, et al. Deerfield Beach, FL: Maverick Entertainment, 2004. DVD.
- Shelley, Toby. *Endgame in the Western Sahara: What Future for Africa's Last Colony?* London: Zed, 2004. Print.
- Sons of the Clouds: The Last Colony = Los hijos de las nubes: La última colonia*. Dir. Alvaro Longoria. Prod. Javier Bardem, Lilly Hartley, and Eliena Anaya. Madrid: Morena Films, 2012. DVD.
- Treinta y uno: Thirty-One: A Bilingual Anthology of Saharawi Resistance Poetry in Spanish*. Ed. Pablo San Martín and Ben Bollig. Vigo: Ediciones Sombrete, 2007. Print.
- "Um Draiga: Quienes Somos." Um Draiga: Amigos del Pueblo Saharaui en Aragón. 2 July 2013. <<http://asoc.umdraiga.com/quienes-somos/>>. Web.
- Argón. 2 July 2013. <<http://asoc.umdraiga.com/quienes-somos/>>. Web.
- Um Draiga: *Poesía Saharaui Contemporánea*. Zaragoza: Um Draiga, 2006. Print.
- Zunes, Stephen, and Jacob Mundy. *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010. Print.

## Chapter 13

### Abderrahman El Fathi: An Averroist Perspective of His Poetry<sup>1</sup>

Cristián H. Ricci

You will learn to live, finally, on the border of both worlds,  
a place that for many people could mean division,  
but that is also a site of encounter,  
a point of finding.

One day you will enjoy living on the border,  
and you will see yourself fulfilled,  
more hybrid,  
more satisfied than anybody else.

—Najat El Hachimi ("Letter from an immigrant," Emphasis added)<sup>2</sup>

[Aprendràs a viure, finalment, a la frontera d'aquests dos mons,  
un lloc que pot ser divisió, però que també és encounter,  
punt de trobada.

Un bon dia et creuràs afortunat de gaudir d'aquesta frontera,  
et descobriràs a tu mateix més complet, més híbrid,  
més immens que qualsevol altra persona.

—Najat El Hachimi ("Carta d'un immigrant")]

The first contemporary Moroccan literary works addressing the migration of African citizens to Europe originate from the 1950s to the 1970s. They were written in Arabic or French by a range of Moroccan authors publishing in Morocco, including Mohamed Zafzaf, Driss Charabi, Abdallah Laroui, and Tahar Ben Jelloun, among others. On February 7, 1992, 300 Maghrebis were shipwrecked off the coast of Almeria, Andalusia.<sup>3</sup> The first Moroccan intellectuals who reacted to this modern, clandestine migration in Castilian did so in the supplement of the Moroccan newspaper *L'Opinion* ("L'Opinion Semanal") and in *La Mañana del Sahara y del Maghreb* (*La Mañana*, 1990–2006), the cultural section of the first and only Moroccan newspaper produced in Rabat by Moroccan nationals and printed entirely in Castilian. Later, in 1993, Mohamed Sibari published *El*

<sup>1</sup> Part of this chapter was written while performing my research on *Moroccan Literature and the Broadening of Postcolonial Literary Studies*, subsidized by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

<sup>3</sup> The etymology of *palera* refers to a flat boat used to hunt ducks or patos.

*Caballo*, the first Moroccan novel about migration written in Castilian, whose main character is a desperate young man who wants to migrate to Spain.<sup>4</sup>

These texts reflect the cultural shifts that were occurring around the turn of the twenty-first century. Every year from 1995 to 2008 approximately 40,000 Moroccan and Sub-Saharan migrants landed on the coasts of Andalusia and the Canary Islands. In reaction to the increasingly aggressive language of Spanish media reports on the modern migration phenomenon, at times comparing it to the Berber invasions of the seventh century, a new "resistance fiction" arose in Morocco between 1995 and 2000. This new phase of Moroccan literature, written in Castilian, tracks the North African presence in Spain over the centuries as a way to validate the new migrant experience. During this period, fifteen novels and short story collections sharing this concern were published in Morocco and Spain. Beginning in 2004, Catalan presses began publishing female Moroccan or Amazigh authors who write in Catalan and have lived in Catalonia since their childhood.<sup>5</sup> In 2008, the "Ramón Llull Prize for Catalan authors" was awarded to Moroccan / Amazigh immigrant Najat El Hachmi for her novel *L'últim patriarca*.<sup>6</sup> This was the first time that the Llull Prize was awarded to a nonautochthonous Catalan author.

Such new and critically acclaimed Moroccan immigrant literature is exemplified by the work of Abderrahman El Fathi. While he is considered "the poet of migration," his works differ from other migration writers living in Morocco. While migration literature by Moroccan authors has most often been published in prose (particularly the short story), linking it to Moroccan oral tradition, El Fathi's genre is poetry, and he is a best seller not only in his homeland and country of residence, Morocco, but also in Andalusia, Spain. He has published seven poetry collections: *Triana, imágenes y palabras* (1998) [Triana, Images and Words], *Abordaje* (2000) [Boarding], *África en versos mojados* (2002) [Africa in Wet Verse], *Primavera en Ramallah y Bagdad* (2003) [Spring in Ramallah and Bagdad], *El cielo herido* (2003, in Spain) [The Wounded Sky], *Desde la otra orilla* (2004) [From the Other Shore], *DANZADELAIRE* (2011) [DANCEOFAIR], and a short play, *Fantásias literarias* (2000) [Literary Fantasies]. El Fathi's literature attempts to represent the here and now of Morocco, a country that suffers the clashes between Eastern and Western cultures. The confrontation between tradition and modernity, between the existential angst of social misery and the wonderful world that arrives to the Maghreb through satellite images of *Radio Televisión Española* (Spanish TV), are evoked in much of his verse, which notes the loss of tradition:

<sup>4</sup> In 1990, Abdelkader Uaracht's *El despertar de los leones* [The Waking of Lions] became the first Moroccan novel written entirely in Spanish and published in book format. In 1988, Mohamed Azrar published as a feuilleton (supplement in French newspapers) *Kaddour "el fantásico"* [Kaddour "The Dreamer"] in "L'Opinion Semanal." For more information, see Ricci, *Literatura periférica*.

<sup>5</sup> *Amazigh* is the correct term for "Berber," the indigenous people of northern Morocco and Algeria, whose main language is Tamazight, not Arabic.

<sup>6</sup> *See Ricci*, "L'últim patriarca."

Nunca fue tan oscura  
jamás vio un resquicio de luz  
*África* se desfiló en su travesía  
su ropa llega sola al blanco amanecer  
todos bailan a su son  
desfilan en su honor  
ofensas como espaldas  
espaldas como amores  
llovía de algas suspendidas en su frente. (*África* 65)

[It was never so dark  
She never saw a glimmer of light  
*África* fades away in her journey  
her clothes arrive alone at dawn  
everybody dances to her rhythm  
parades in her honor  
offerings like torsos  
swords like love gifts  
algae spores glittering on her forehead.] (*África* 65)

The poem portrays a feminized Africa that is fading away, losing its identity as a result of its emulation of white male Europe: "Africa fades away in her journey." It is the Africa celebrated for its music and for its authors and artists' (self-)orientalization ("everybody dances to her rhythm"), the Africa evoked by television images of "pateristas," which produce a morbid fascination, the Africa that works feverishly in the agricultural fields of Almería and Levante ("offerings like torsos").<sup>7</sup> While a majority of Moroccan Muslims may dislike words such as "postmodernity" and "globalization," El Fathi argues that only through consonance with other civilizations, and the development of a poetics of inclusion, can Moroccan poets address some of the dangerous consequences of globalization, including the increasing gap between rich and poor, and the growing sense of despair among the latter.

As evoked in the previous poem, El Fathi's work evinces the struggle between nostalgia for the lost empire (711–1492) and desire to revive the glories of the culturally majestic, *Averrois* Al-Andalus. This analysis of El Fathi's poetry centers

<sup>7</sup> In El Hachmi's letter, included in the collection of essays and fiction *Letras a un jeune marocain*, the novelist subverts and questions the writer's position of "solidarity" that hides a veiled appropriation of the discourse on Morocco through the "right of cultural / national affiliation." She argues that not only do such writers enjoy privileges at the expense of a social class that they "help" to oppress, but they also receive benefits in the West (whence they write) for doing so: "This is a double exploitation: the reality consists of the expropriation of the status of the exploited immigrants by the authors [...] [Writers] define the immigrants' citizenship by reducing them to an essence, and they do so by claiming that no one can be upset with their approach since the are able to legitimize their discourse by the fact that they are also Moroccans [...] writing 'for the subalterns'" (year 141). Paradoxically, Najat El Hachmi's *La cazadora de coscos* (2011) [The Body Hunter] is precisely an example of what she had condemned two years earlier.

on philosopher and literary critic Muhammad Abd al-Jabri's idea that the "future can only be Averroisist" (120-30), meaning that the Muslim West has inherited the legacy of "reason and rationality" (60). Averroisist Al-Andalus promoted the unity and understanding among all peoples, without geographic, philosophic, or religious borders. Al-Jabri praises the "Andalusian resurgence" as the model for hope in the contemporary era, arguing that only in the Maghreb and Andalusia did people escape the intellectually debilitating impact of Abbasid dominance.<sup>8</sup> Al-Jabri states that Arabs must put aside the "cognitive content" of Averroes' analysis, but not the methodology (122). He claims that this is the only way "to establish a dialogue between tradition and universal contemporary truth" or "to give a basis to authenticity within modernity and to give a basis to modernity within authenticity" (126-7). Al-Jabri's argument about Averroisist perspectives offers a North African theoretical framework similar to other postcolonial perspectives like those of James Clifford's concept of "two-sidedness," W. E. B. Du Bois' "double consciousness," and Richard Wright's "two warring souls in one black body" or "double vision" (*White Man Listen!*, 2, qtd. in Gilroy 161).<sup>9</sup> Morocco (and the Maghreb as a whole) lives with internal tensions as it is torn between, on the one hand, emphasizing the cultural values and identity of its region and, on the other, struggling with the aspiration (admittedly problematic, but very deep) to acquire modernity and openness to the world. In a complex world in turmoil, faced with the contradictions and challenges of modernity, some Muslim countries do not perceive the values of their culture and religion as being violated, nor do

<sup>8</sup> In 800 A.D., Ibrahim Ibn al-Aghlab was appointed as hereditary Emir of Ifriqiya to reign over an area that comprises much of the eastern Maghreb. By 909 the Aghlabid Dynasty was overthrown by the Fatimids, whose caliphate was more tolerant toward other religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and non-Islamite sects of Islam. The Fatimid Caliphs also promoted scholarly pursuits in their courts and established libraries in their palaces. Their caliphate was later replaced by the Almoravids and Almohads (both made up of Berber tribes). Therefore, in order to sustain his thesis, al-Jabri's argument would not favor the earlier (pre-Almoravid) caliphates. Instead, he would praise the Berber-Muslim Almoravid caliphate that ruled over the Maghreb and Andalusia (Averroes's father and grandfather were chief judges of *Corдова* under the Almoravid's rule).

<sup>9</sup> For Gilroy, Richard Wright localizes his double vision "in two connected but still independent conditions: being a product of western civilisation and having a racial identity 'deeply conditioned' by and 'organically born of' that civilisation. It is interesting that he expressed this dissident consciousness of the West in temporal terms. Claiming, in effect, that even split subjectivity carried some significant advantages: 'I've tried to lead you back to my angle of vision slowly. . . . My point of view is a Western one, but a Western one that conflicts at several points with the present, dominant outlook of the West'" (62). Of course, this double vision will be exacerbated in Najat El Hachmi's works *Jo també sóc catalana* (2004) and *L'últim paritara* (2008). For Clifford, "two-sidedness" expresses a profound dyotopic tension, a "constituted displacement under varying degrees of coercion, often extreme" (6) that would be, at the same time, in tune with a "double consciousness"/*nepantlismo* à la Gloria Anzaldúa, by which the author explores and exploits his double perspective in his role as participant, observer and displaced subject with multiple discourses and senses of belonging.

they see the West as a secular enemy plotting to main their traditions. At this crucial juncture, al-Jabri's neo-averroist approach offers important insights since the Moroccan philosopher believes that the history of the Mediterranean can no longer be made of conflicts and confrontations. Instead it should foster dialogic based on mutual respect and understanding as a way of combating ignorance, promoting tolerance, and embracing fruitful human, economic, and intellectual exchanges. The neo-Averroism of El Fathi's poetry fragments the rigidity of Western ideologies; it atomizes them, creating a personal rhetoric of estrangement.

From this perspective, El Fathi not only re-edits (re-writes) a hybrid cultural phenomenon based on the free transmission and selective acceptance of distinct philosophical and ideological principles, but also denounces European politicians' double standard when they falsely promote democratic processes of coexistence and the free market, while concomitantly validating new cultural and economic displacements.<sup>10</sup> The poet thus provides a voice for the subaltern *pateristas* and *harragas*, undocumented immigrants.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the border metaphor used by El Fathi successfully explains this type of eclectic and contradictory phenomenon. Cultures cannot ignore or shut themselves out, as they are at risk of being relegated to the periphery of an increasingly interdependent world system. From El Fathi's poems, the reader infers that one cannot divide the contemporary world into coherent civilizations with clearly identifiable boundaries. El Fathi does not underestimate the effects of mixing, blending, and ultimately, modernization or colonization.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the driving force of economically developed countries and the global economic order that they impose on poor countries (both bilaterally and through international organizations) gives rise to an exploitative relationship. The clash and confrontation in this type of interaction is a clash of interests and not of civilizations.

El Fathi's works grasp the contingency of the moment, particularly in *El cielo herido* (2003) [*The Wounded Sky*], *Primavera en Ramallah y Bagdad* (2003) [*Spring in Ramallah and Bagdad*], and "Me perdía en tus aires" ["Lost in your thin air"], featured in the edited collection *Lenguas en la frontera* (2008) [*Languages at the border*].<sup>13</sup> The above-mentioned term "conflict of interests" opens the way

<sup>10</sup> Iain Chambers argues that writing is not necessarily as a project intent on "penetrating the real," to re-write it, but rather enailing an attempt to extend, disrupt and re-work it, and it involves a certain distancing between ourselves and the contexts that define our identity (14).

<sup>11</sup> Harragas literally means "those who burn," referring to the burning of immigration papers among undocumented migrants in order to avoid being caught. This term, rather than *pateristas* (more common in Spain), tends to be used in North African media.

<sup>12</sup> Occident can be seen in El Fathi's poetry not only as a hegemonic "Other" trailing behind its colonial past, but also as a "model" in scientific and technological progress as well as in democracy and human rights.

<sup>13</sup> *Lenguas en la frontera* was the brilliant project of the former Director of the Escuela de Traductores de Toledo [Toledo Translators' School], Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla. In 2008, he successfully united by way of video-conference three Castilian-language poets: the Moroccan Abderrahman El Fathi, the Sephardic-Israeli Margalit Matitahu, who writes in Ladino, and the Chicano Francisco X. Alarcón. The project was eventually published as a collection of poems.

for a rational treatment of the affiliation between both sides of the Mediterranean. Relations between civilizations, past and present, are not adversarial but rather interpenetrative. This is noticeable, for instance, when El Fathi's verses, with profound lyricism, describe the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq or the Palestinian cause:

"Me perdía en tus aires"

En todo Sinaí, en lo más alto  
de la tierra, en Belén, Jericó y Ramallah  
se repetía ese abril en mis ojos  
y el llanto en mi habitación florecía  
sin ojos, con ausencia de sábado  
y viernes de un día olvidado  
siempre.

[...]

Vuelve a anochecer el día en Gaza,  
a multiplicarse el viento,  
y ella, sonora y desolada  
arranca el silencio de las  
palmeras.

Sembradas las calles de sal roja  
y cargados los cafés de agua  
rocosa.

Nadie oía sus pasos,

griaba la locura

entre el clamor de un sueño

[...]

En Belén, lloraba sal rocosa  
aquella niña, y continuaba la  
Danza Oriental del Tanque. (*Lenguas en la frontera* 41–2)

"I lost myself in your air"

All over Sinai, at the highest peak  
on earth, in Bethlehem, Jericho and Ramallah  
that April repeated itself in my eyes  
and the waiting in my room blossomed  
without eyes, with an absence of Saturday  
and Friday a forgotten day  
always.

[...]

Night is falling again in Gaza,  
the wind becomes stronger  
and she, loud and desolate  
wrenches the silence from the  
palm trees.

Streets sowed with red salt  
and cafés loaded with rocky  
water.

Nobody heard her steps  
yelling in madness  
among the outcry of a dream  
[...]  
In Bethlehem that girl was  
crying rocky salt, and continued the  
Oriental Dance of the Tank.] (*Lenguages at the border* 41–2)

These verses highlight that the issue of Al-Andalus is not confined to the North African-Southern European sphere. The broader debate is often inscribed in the confrontation between East and West, or between the global north and south, or between Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. In the poem there is a concrete reference to the Deir Yassin massacre of April 9, 1948, as well as the new Israeli occupation of Ramallah, the battle of Jericho, and the siege of Bethlehem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in April 2002. The poetic voice finds itself prisoner, caught between desires of revenge for the conflicts in Iraq and Palestine and colonial nostalgia toward the Western World. The idyllic experience of love and the acceptance of innate differences gives way to the poet-protester and, at times, warrior ("the Oriental Dance of the Tank"). In the case of the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, the cornerstone of reconciliation is not to be confused with that of a Medieval Andalusia that fostered an Arab-Jewish coexistence, as seen in "Primavera en Bagdad" [Spring in Bagdad], which references the US invasion of Iraq's capital. Readers may wonder whether El Fathi is not a mere romantic and visionary who goes further than politicians who give Palestinians false hopes. To transform a poem into action, one must remember that the struggle is not only against Israel's occupation of Palestine, but also against Arab governments' compliance with regard to Israeli and American plans for the region. El Fathi is part of a Moroccan counter-culture that insists on Pan-Arab identification and a commitment to the Palestinian struggle.

El Fathi's poems published in *Lenguas en la frontera* also echo his commitment to the borderland subject's voice. This is an interstitial, anti-establishment, and subversive literary space located amidst fantasy and "the testimony of song" (Alarcón, "Canto" 10–11). Indeed, the poems included in *Lenguas en la frontera* encourage the reader to reflect on the image of the Mexican campesino who harvests California's Central Valley and the "moor" who breaks his back in the Almería countryside. El Fathi visited California's San Joaquin Valley in October 2012, and he observed how Latinos work and live on the agricultural fields. According to him, there was no difference between the California farmworkers' unhealthy conditions, living in overcrowded migrant camps that lack clean toilets, heat, and electricity, and those indigent conditions he witnessed among his fellow countrymen in Murcia and Almería. The uneasiness reflected on the campesino's countenance is the same as that of the expelled Palestinian or Maghrebi who today feels strange in "distinct places." These examples serve as a reminder that there are so many people today who, independent of their creed or ethnicity, continue to be "extraños / que habitan / una misma / casa hogar" ["strangers / who inhabit / the same / shelter" (Alarcón, "Encuentro" 13).

The poetic voice treats the emergence of the new empire, the United States, with the same evocation of Palestine and the lost empire of Al-Andalus. In the following poem, the American "alliance of civilizations" rails against the "axis of evil," a term originally used by George W. Bush in the push toward the invasion of Iraq, and here directed more broadly as the Arab-Muslim world:

"Primavera en Bagdad"  
 Qué distante es mi dolor  
 en tus fronteras.  
 El rumbo de tu historia  
 late en tus calles, en tus calles,  
 en cada sorbo de aire quehrado.  
 Recibaban, airoosas  
 tus finas arenas versos  
 en todos los escaparatés,  
 en Dow Jones subía tu precio  
 en Washington subastaban tu  
 honor  
 y mi rabia humedida  
 en café amargo de Bagdad. (*El cielo herido* 5)

["Spring in Bagdad"  
 How distant is my pain  
 at your borders.  
 The course of your history  
 beats in your cafés, on your streets,  
 in every sip of broken air.  
 Your fine sand received  
 glamorous verses  
 in every showcase, display case?  
 on Dow Jones your price rose  
 in Washington they auctioned off your  
 honor  
 and my rage plummeted  
 in a bitter coffee of Bagdad.] (*Wounded Sky* 5)

In this poem, the reader realizes that while the poetic voice remains in Al-Andalus, the poet's mind is on the United States's invasion of the sacred city of Bagdad. Even though the voices of Arabic countries united in disapproving the US-led invasion of Iraq, little was done by their governments to try to prevent the conflict. Throughout *Primavera en Ramallah y Bagdad*, El Fathi mingles the lost Empire of Al-Andalus and the laments of the new empire. Besides drawing attention to the Palestinians' plight, these poems underscore the importance of poetry as a means of communication; indeed, poetry addresses an important element of the Palestinians' trauma, namely their inability to communicate their experience. Unsatisfied with the politely worded condemnations proceeding from the Arab League, intellectuals from several North African countries organized

protests and wrote manifestos and poems in defiance of their national authorities. Tension sprung from North Africans' desire to demonstrate their displeasure at the unjustified attack against another Muslim nation and their governments' reluctance to do anything that might harm their relations with a world superpower ("on Dow Jones your price rose / in Washington they auctioned off your / honor").

El Fathi's testimonial poetry results in "an allegory of an allegory," not only because of its simultaneous closeness to and doubts about "la engañosa Andalucía" [Andalusia the misleading] (*África* 3), but also because it shares the interstitial space that links the poet with the ethno-poetic commitment of other postcolonial African literature in Castilian, including that of Equatorial Guinean authors such as Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo and César Mbá Abogo. In this context—between the social needs that subdue all manner of cultural activities, economic engagement, scientific inquiry, literary exploration, and the essence of the testimonial genre built as a collective *racconto* of the life of a person (Arias 76)—El Fathi goes beyond Al-Andalus to tackle topics common to the Arab-Islamic as well as the Pan African worlds. The Moroccan writer does not find himself solely exposed to local (North African) mismatches, but he also feels devoted to the convulsions of all the Africans oppressed in today's world. After facing the bombings of ancient cities (Bagdad, Basra, and Nasiriyah), El Fathi cannot remain silent; he must denounce the injustice. Poets and artists act as channels for voicing the grievances and hopes of Palestinians. Even though the poetic voice is far from Iraq and Palestine, on the day the war ceases and another martyr, Chai Ali Najim, sacrifices himself in Ramallah, the poet knows that he has to write and denounce, with all his anger, the injustices that occur in Palestine and the economic reasons behind the war in Iraq.

The discontent with the current sociopolitical situation is heard in El Fathi's poetry. The poetic voice at times turns against the Western world as a whole: "despertaban / el silencio de su letargo / en Occidente en África y en mi techo" (*El cielo herido* 8).<sup>14</sup> Yet this discontent is also against the Arab world, symbolized by the poetic voice's own inertia in Iraq's defense: "I denounce my silence / I curse my existence / and the day my eyes saw you" (*Primavera* 76);<sup>15</sup> "I cry and curse my existence / I burn my clothing / my Arab identity / and I denounce my silence";<sup>16</sup> "And I will speak now without my body / I will speak out and they will not hear / my sorrowful silence / in all the skies of Bagdad" (*Primavera* 75).<sup>17</sup> The poetic voice not only denounces the destruction of Bagdad, but acts as the memory's depository for all that has occurred: "I will destroy my pride / I will

<sup>14</sup> I reproduce this verse line that corresponds to the poem "Primavera en Bagdad" from the poetry book collection *El cielo herido*. The title of the poem can lead to some confusion since said verse line cannot be found in the poetry book collection *Primavera en Bagdad*.

<sup>15</sup> "Denuncio mi silencio / maldigo mi existencia / y el día que mis ojos te vieron."

<sup>16</sup> "Loro y maldigo mi existencia / quemó mi ropa / mi identidad árabe / y denuncio mi silencio."

<sup>17</sup> "Y hablaré ahora sin cuerpo / me pronunciaré sin que oigan / mi acongojado silencio / en todos los cielos de Bagdad."

mute my rage / I will bury my silence / but my memory, yes my memory / will seek to find / my hidden desires / of a stealthy kiss" ("Primavera en Bagdad" *El cielo herido* 9).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the dominance of the future tense in the poem suggests the way to offer a forceful commitment to act, even if only in words, amidst such tragedy. Furthermore, the last quotation recalls Jacques Derrida's reflection over the right to philosophize from the cosmopolitan point of view, as long as one interrogates international institutions as to their responsibility to preserve human rights. One can argue that cosmopolitan liberalism, as a sociopolitical ethos, helps create the dominant hierarchy of value in which Muslims are framed and represented. In the absence of an institutional response or trustworthy higher authorities in the contemporary world, the poet assumes as his own the critique and analysis of the problem with humanism and the judgment of universal history.

To assume the aforementioned "responsibility" is the central question in postcolonial literature; it drives the mutation of the enunciating subject toward the field of intersubjectivity, in which the "I" is plural and his / her objective is to prevent violence and ethnocentrism associated with the history of Occidentalism (Ngugi Wa Thiong'o 36). Paul Carter emphasizes the urgency of developing an ideological framework that makes the migrant central, rather than ancillary, to historical processes. He proposes a lateral account of social relations, one that stresses the contingency of all definitions of self and other (qtd. in Chambers, 5). This complements Bhabha's concepts of "symbolic citizenship" and decentring the "I" (xvii). Iain Chambers notes that our previous sense of knowledge, language, and identity, our peculiar inheritance, cannot be simply erased from the story or cancelled. The affective power of El Fathi's poems lies in their focus on the human dimension of the Palestinian tragedy, relying on a visualization of the refugees' or immigrant's physical and psychological pain. What emerges from the details of the suffering and the sorrow for those who died fighting for their homeland is a portrayal of human suffering that is universally compelling rather than culturally specific.

Over the past century, imperialism, decolonization, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have polarized interpretations of Al-Andalus, exaggerating the tolerance in Granada and the role of Moorish culture in the birth of the Renaissance. Now, the modern arrival of Moroccans in Spain and the dispute over Spanish enclaves on Morocco's northern coast are placing the Iberian Peninsula's "Oriental question" under severe scrutiny. In this regard, El Fathi poeticizes Spain's location in the crossfire of a "clash of civilizations," so close to the Arab world and Europe's "shield" against Islam. With its crosscurrents and swings, El Fathi's poetry leans toward a mixture of signs, intentions of diachronic re(dis)coveries of places in ruins / ruined by imperial systems, such as Spain's appropriation of Ceuta, Melilla, and Perejil. At the rhythmic pace of the constant ebb and flow of "treacherous waves," the poet wades in the profound seascape in search of cadaverous and ancestral remains. In *Triana, imágenes y palabras*, the poetic voice embodies the frustration for the loss of Ceuta and Melilla:

18 "Destruí mi orgullo / silencié mi rabia / enterré mi silencio / pero la memoria, sí la memoria / busqué hasta hallar / mis deseos ocultos / de un beso furtivo."

"Poema XV"  
 Seba ahorrada  
 Melilla deseada  
 siempre quise verte  
 desde lo alto de mi balcón,  
 acariciar tus labios  
 desde Tetuán,  
 beber de tu agua desde Nador,  
 llenar mi boca con tu aire fresco.

Mis dos amores  
 como dos ojos  
 y un solo corazón.  
 Entre dos amores y un solo corazón  
 late por ti,  
 Seba y Melilla. (*Triana* 30)

["Poem XV"  
 Longed for Seba  
 desired Melilla  
 I always wanted to glance at you  
 from the height of my balcony  
 caress your lips  
 from Tetouan  
 drink your water from Nador  
 fill my mouth with your fresh air.

My two loves  
 like two eyes  
 and only one heart.  
 Between two loves and only one  
 heart  
 beats for you,  
 Seba and Melilla.] (*Triana* 30)

Although the poem is written in Spanish, the poet's choice to use the Arabic terms for Ceuta and Melilla ("Seba and Melilla") indicates a deliberate subversion of the colonial language. Furthermore, both cities are represented with female names and the poet (male) stands on the balcony waiting to see the feminized cities. There is subtle intertextuality with García Lorca's "Romance sonámbulo," where a woman waits for her egyptian lover. Ultimately, the woman dies, implying that the poetic voice in El Fathi's poem will never see the two cities returned to their true owner, Morocco. This type of lament for Al-Andalus as well as for the Spanish enclaves in Northern Morocco is perceived as "dangerous and irrational" by some Spaniards, because these spaces are tied to Palestine and seen as a symptom of the Arabs' "corrosive irredentism for Islamic lands long taken by the sword and then lost by the sword" (Shohat 110, Aidi 78). At times, El Fathi's poetry critiques secularists' undermining of Al-Andalus's pan-confessional humanism, as well as

jihadists' contention that it was a strict adherence to *sharia*<sup>19</sup> that led to the rise of Islamic Spain, and secular decadence that led to its ignominious downfall.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of what led to the downfall of Al-Andalus, Spanish conservatives are particularly worried that many North African migrants are settling in the same areas from which *Moriscos* were expelled centuries earlier, and this fuels hysterical warnings of an Islamic "Reconquista" (Aidi 80).

Another author who addresses the issue of contemporary migration toward the former Al-Andalus, the Amazigh poet Mezouar El Idrissi, offers important points of comparison and contrast to the work of Abderrahman El Fathi. El Idrissi also writes in Spanish, and while he is not as prolific as El Fathi, he also succeeds in offering an ethnic-supportive humanism with anguish and a markedly elegiac tone toward the crossing of the Straits and Palestine in the verses of his bilingual poetry book, *Elegía para la espaldada mojada* [*Elegy for a wetback*] (2005). El Idrissi's work launches into the reconquest of cultural legitimacy, an encounter with "otherness," and a continuous retracing of mutilated roots through itineraries of freedom, having as the true North a tireless search for an identity; a search through the Moroccan-Muslim poetic tradition as well as through Castilian canonical poets:

[El] martirio se separa [...]

y dibuja

la forma de Palestina

cuál huire que vuela

alrededor del lugar.

[...]

¡Granada! Nos hemos alejado de la costa.

La pasión de la tierra es mi brújula,

me arrebató el propósito de los antiguos pasajeros

que surca los confines de la muerte

y las costas de pérdidas

con el ansia revoltosa (23, 33)

<sup>19</sup> *Sharia* is the Islamic legal code for religion and morality dealing with many topics addressed by secular law including family, politics, and economics. *Sharia* varies among Muslim countries. The modern *Mudawana* or Family Code in Morocco (2004) has been praised by human rights activists for its measures to address women's rights and gender equality within an Islamic legal framework.

<sup>20</sup> Moroccan authors' longing for Al-Andalus became more political in the 1970s and 1980s. This took a jihadist turn in the latter part of the 1980s with Afghanistan's victory. The US-supported and oil-backed militants, in particular Tarzím al-Jihad, declared a holy war on countries and regions that were once Muslim but that were now in the hands of the "ungodly." Among those authors were the following: Redwan Abdaddu, Ahmad Belhay Ayt Warham, Abd Al-Rahman Al-Fasi, Ahmad Ben Mayyram, and Hassan Al-Amrani. Some Moroccan writers expressed that anger in Castilian: Jalil Trihak, Samira Abdelaziz Brighech, and Mohamed Bouissé Rekab. Their works express the frustration of the Arab-Islamic world, where the only possibility of hope is rebellion and/or jihad: ["Palestine and death / the anguish of having to kill hurts / Palestine and fear / Dark thinking is in the air"].

[Martyrdom spreads [...]]  
and draws  
the shape of Palestine  
such as the vulture that flies  
around the site.

[...]

¡Granada! We have moved away from the shore.

Passion for the land is my compass,

the purpose of the ancient pilgrims

that furrow the confines of death

and the lost shores

carries me away

with rebellious anxiety.] (23, 33)

In El Idrissi's poem, there is one main characteristic that links his verses with those of El Fathi: the symbolic center of the Mediterranean that crystallizes the difficulties of coexistence between strong and divergent cultural, political, and religious identities. The Mediterranean is, too, a place that raises the issues of spirituality and the human condition, a place linked to holy pilgrimages and rituals of all kind, of translations and meditation ("Martyrdom spreads / and draws / the shape of Palestine"). Being citizens of the Mediterranean and participants of its history does not come easily: this is a right acquired in the course of many centuries, from the birth of the three major monotheistic religions ("the purpose of the ancient pilgrims / that furrow the confines of death / carries me away"). El Idrissi's poem addresses increasing confrontations between civilizations and religions as well as dual movements, the journey into the unknown by Mediterranean peoples and the rediscovery of the region's heritage. Likewise, in *Abordaje*, El Fathi's poetic voice is assumed by the emigrant who finds his / her desires washed up on the Spanish shore because of the unforgiving Mediterranean waters: "dead sea that leads to death"<sup>21</sup> (*África* III): "There is no mouth to shout / there is no thirst to be quenched / there is no water in the Strait / There is life at the depths, / of a sea without water, / with eyes and rings. / That is how the Mediterranean looks at itself on the mirror of the Emigrant" (*Abordaje* 2).<sup>22</sup> In this vein, El Fathi's poetry oscillates between testimonial literature and lyricism, whereby, in John Beverley's words, *testimonio* stems from the "truth effect" that it produces in the readers (*Against Literature* 82). Arturo Arias complements John Beverley's definition of *testimonio* by considering it a hybrid genre within itself, which means that it should never avoid its "poetic nature" (77).<sup>23</sup> El Fathi's poetry,

<sup>21</sup> mar muerto que conduce a la muerte."

<sup>22</sup> No hay boca para gritar / no hay sed que la beba / no hay agua en el Estrecho. / Hay vida en las profundidades, / de un mar sin agua, / con ojos y anillos. / Así se mira el Mediterráneo en el espejo del Emigrante."

<sup>23</sup> John Beverley's definition of *Testimonio* reads as follows:

By *testimonio* I mean a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also real protagonist or witness of the event he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a "life" or a

as a result, recreates a genre that consolidates political solidarity, a subaltern voice, fiction, and lyricism.

For El Fathi, Castilian is the language in which he can best express his poetic "feeling." The poet defends his linguistic preference by remembering common idiosyncratic criteria that have existed between Northern Morocco and Southern Spain for thirteen centuries, a cultural closeness that encompasses the recovery of memory. For El Fathi, then, the majority of authors who write in Castilian in Morocco live *in-between* and *in* two worlds. They incarnate what it is to be Moroccan, but at the same time recognize what comes from Spain as their own (many are Hispanic philologists or historians, who obtained their doctorates in Spain including El Fathi). In this sense, El Fathi's poetry could be placed within the "liminal" category established by Gustavo Pérez Firmat: "liminality should be looked upon not only as a transition between states but as a state itself, for there exist individuals, groups, or social categories for which the 'liminal' moment turns into a permanent condition" (xiii-xiv).<sup>24</sup> From the liminal point of view of many authors (more than forty) who live in Morocco and write in Castilian, El Fathi writes about his existential rootlessness, which brings readers to positively reconsider the ideology and the versatility of his identity-building process, one that breaks away from a simplistic explanation of what could be considered an example of mere bilingualism.<sup>25</sup> It confirms Néstor García Canclini's assertion about the need for giving sufficient weight to the contradictions in the different processes of hybridization as well as to those cultural factors that cannot be hybridized (6).

The colonial legacy has produced in the imagery of many Moroccan poets and writers a feeling of brotherhood and rejection signaled by two dichotomous elements: the "yearning for Al-Andalus," and the modern challenges toward the

significant life experience. *Testimonio* may include, but is not subsumed under, any of the following categories, some of which are conventionally considered literature, others not—autobiography, autobiographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, novela-testimonio, non-fiction novel, or "fictographic literature" [...] the situation of narration in *testimonio* has to involve an urgency to communicate a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, and so on. (12-13)

<sup>24</sup> The interstitial or liminal nature of Moroccan writers of Castilian expression is attested by the singular character of Batijji in the short story "La resaca" / "The remnants" by Ahmed Ararou: "las palabras se hicieron peregrinas, y algunas cruzaron tantas veces, en los dos sentidos, el charco que separa las geografías, las culturas y los hombres, que acabaron por imponerse como patrimonio común" / "words became pilgrims, and some of them crossed so many times, both ways, the puddle that separates geographies, cultures and men that imposed on each other a common heritage" (34).

<sup>25</sup> In this sense, I would like to corroborate El Fathi's and Ararou's thinking by drawing reference to Abdelkebir Khathi's essay "Literary Nationalism and Internationalism" in which he outlines three paradigms—the laws of hospitality within language, the laws of hierarchy, and the laws of diasymmetrical plurality—as his departure point, "because one often believes that freedom of the literary imagination is not controlled from within by national and international laws" (4).

fundamental components that, under the current economic-cultural-religious parameters, deny any intent of Averroist approximation between the two shores. El Fathi's *Triana, imágenes y palabras* [*Triana, Images and Words*], a collection of poems that uses as a background the often controversial and conflictive Spanish-Moroccan cultural relation, alludes to the Conquest of Spain by the Moors and to their subsequent expulsion in 1609. The overlap of poetic longing and political issues—which, according to Gonzalo Fernández Parilla, blends perfectly with the symbiosis of this literary genre and the archive of the Arab's memory (14)—mutates in the poetics of El Fathi into a feeling of yearning for a place described, desired, and "anchored" in the body of a woman: "I achieved [love] in the secretion of pleasure / my shirt wet / rendered to your orgasm through eternity" (*Cielo herido* 17-18).<sup>26</sup> This yearning is for a very specific geographic space, the one between Tétouan and Triana (Seville). Together with these cities, the Mediterranean Sea becomes El Fathi's poetic space, center stage and source of inspiration in several poems of *Triana*:

El mar suscita amores sin límites,  
Así es su profundidad, su grandeza,  
INMENSOS como el MAR, así es  
Mí

Duda.

¿Es que nunca has visto el  
Mar?

Me preguntaba siempre  
Necesito conocer el objeto de mi  
Inspiración.

Continuamente conocer el objeto de mi  
Inspiración. (18)

[The sea inspires love without limits  
That is its depth, its greatness,  
IMMENSE like the SEA

My

Doubt.

Is it that you have never seen the  
Sea?

I've always asked myself  
I need to know the object of my  
Inspiration.

Continuously know the object of my  
Inspiration.] (18)

For El Fathi, forgotten history becomes metonymically associated with the South. It is the conducive site of healing, where the individual is sutured with the collective. El Fathi crosses time and the border heading south and north—trying

<sup>26</sup> "Lo alcancé [amor] en la secreción del placer / húmeda mi camisa, / rendido a tu orgasmo hasta la eternidad."

to find his place of emunciation and his *raison d'être*: ("My / Doubt. [...] I need to know the object of my / Inspiration". In this regard, the interstice, the place of "translation," is also a site of alienation: a space of inspiration and, at the same time, one of doubt. The following passage from *Abordaje* illustrates this statement:

Lloré tanto aquella noche.  
 Navegué, hacia un Sur yendo al Norte.  
 [...]
   
 mi mente atraca desde una roca  
 para arribar a un puerto del Sur.  
 Siempre el Sur, pero es el Norte.  
 [...]
   
 Desaparece el dolor  
 las olas se lo han llevado  
 Aparecen los tiburones se llevaron el anillo  
 Espera una madre  
 la Guardia civil se lo ha traído  
 Las novias lloran  
 en un Puerto sin barcos,  
 sin gaviotas  
 con pateras  
 con *MUERTE*.  
 Y una madre espera a su hijo  
 pero una ola se enamoró del moreno  
 y a las profundidades lo arrastró.  
 Así es el amor  
 un golpe de mar  
 una pálida niebla  
 con olor a musgo caliente.  
 No lamento su muerte  
 no lloro su ausencia  
 y no perdono a las *OLAS*  
 TRACIÓN. EL MAR.  
 Siempre el mar  
 LA MAR del SUR es tema  
 obediente. *El Norte* es traición. (*Abordaje* 28, 34)

[I cried so much that night  
 I sailed, towards a South going to the North.  
 [...]
   
 my mind docked on a rock  
 to arrive at a Southern port.  
 Always the South, but it is the North.  
 [...]
   
 The pain is gone  
 the waves have carried him away  
 Sharks appear they have taken the ring  
 A mother is waiting

the Civil Guard has brought him  
 Girlfriends cry  
 in a seaport without boats,  
 without seagulls  
 with pateras  
 with *DEATH*  
 And a mother waits for her son  
 but a wave fell in love with the swarthy man  
 and it carried him to the ocean's depths.  
 That's what love is  
 a tidal wave  
 a pale fog  
 with a hot moss smell.  
 I do not lament his death  
 I do not cry for his absence  
 And I do not forgive the WAVES  
 BETRAYAL. THE SEA.  
 Always the sea  
 THE FEMALE SEA of the SOUTH is tender,  
 obedient. *The North* is treason. ] (*Boarding* 28, 34)

Although pipelines and goods pass from South to North, for the people from the South, the sea is a barrier. Differences in living standards, political instability, and the dream of a better life push and pull them to leave. These *harragas* brave the sea in dangerous *pateras* while mothers talk about cemeteries at the bottom of the sea. Listening to their plight, El Fathi has attempted to capture their humanity instead of the cold silence of migration statistics.

It is worth drawing on James Clifford's assessment of rethinking culture through travel, which opens up a questioning of its perception as a rooted body and, in its place, introduces the idea of constructed and disputed *historicités*, sites of displacement, interference and interaction (qtd. in Chambers 1). El Fathi's search is centered on the Mediterranean, where places and identities are in continuous movement, where the traveler-*paterista*-poet cannot easily cross the border since it prevents him from returning "home." Identity, both cultural and geopolitical, never "trans-lates" into a "welcome-home;" it is never a final destination. Instead, it is always a futile and eternal departure. The neighborhood of Triana in Sevilla represents El Fathi's ethos, the dream of Al-Andalus and the desire to return to the Lost Paradise where the poet can fulfill his need for love. Triana thus becomes an interstitial space in El Fathi's poetry; this is evident in the characteristics that go beyond a simple multethnic and transnational celebration. This space is far from being idyllic, and the poetic voice lives it as a traumatic experience ("Yo, impassible, roto" [I, impassible, broken] (*El cielo herido* 6), sometimes with desperation, at other times with impatience or disenchantment:

¡Qué confusión más bella  
 la de sentirse en tierra!

Sentir tus humedades arenas

[...]

Tras mis mojadas espaldas  
de un ayer, hecho tierra  
en las playas de Tarifa

[...]

Una sombra coja deambulaba el

Boulevard

Es la historia africana que naufraga en el asfalto.

Se ven manos blancas

bajo las farolas

y miradas distantes

al atardecer:

Indiferentes ante la llamada del

almuecin

Resplandece la luna roja

en sus jaulas

de algodón.

Esas huellas siguen surcando

Zoco Grande y siempre,

con la misma cojera,

recuerdos del primer abordaje

al infierno húmedo de Andalucía. (*Cielo herido* 12, 20)

[What beautiful confusion  
that of being on land!

Feeling your wet sands

[...]

Behind my wet backs

of yesterday, I land

on the beaches of Tarifa

[...]

A lame shadow wandered the

Boulevard

It is the African history that shipwrecks on the asphalt.

White hands are seen

under the street lamps

and distant gazes

at dusk.

Indifferent to the call of the

Muezzin

A red moon shines

in their cages

of cotton.

Those footprints keep navigating

the Grand Souk square, and always

with the same limping,

memories of the first boarding

towards the humid hell of Andalucía. ] (*Wounded sky* 12, 20)

El Fathi's poem implies the complete disappearance of a linear conception of time. Mohamed Abd al-Jabri recognizes that the foundation of the Averroist principles lies in a possible future in which ideology lives in the present, but in the form of a dream; and by nature, dreams ignore the parameters of space and time (122). In the poem "Añoranzas del Andalús" (*Triana* 35), the time that prevails is the present, a historic present aligned with the poetic narration in which the "Córdoba de sultanes" makes the lyric voice long for its loss. El Fathi affirms that "su espíritu" [his spirit], that of Arab *Cordova*, capital of Al-Andalus, beloved and celebrated by Abderrahman III, "vive en Tetuán" [lives in Tetouan], the poet's native city, that still cries for the fall of the caliphate:

"Añoranzas del Andalús"

Tetuán llora tu huida,

Empuña su flor y ¡grita!

[...]

¡Córdoba!

¡espera, detente!

Cada vez más cerca

me sofocan tus suspiros

y me asustan tus cuchillos.

En mi piel tus muros

[...]

Eres tal vez un sueño:

"Abderrahman III, sacó su pluma

y te hirió, sólo te queda un corazón

[...]

Y río, de lágrimas,

y yo triste, sin tu mirada.

Córdoba de sultanes,

bellas princesas, el laúd

y la fuente, Abderrahman

te añora, su espíritu vive en Tetuán. (*Triana* 35-8)

["Longings for Al-Andalus"]

Tétouan cries at your flight,

Brandishes its flower and shouts!

[...]

*Cordova!*

wait, stop!

Progressively closer

your sighs suffocate me

and your knives frighten me

In my skin your walls

[...]

You might be a dream:

"Abderrahman III drew his quill

and wounded you, now you only have one heart

[...]  
 And a river, of tears,  
 and I sad, without your gaze.  
*Cordova* of sultans,  
 beautiful princesses, the lute  
 and the fountain, Abderrahman  
 misses you, his spirit lives in Tétouan]. (*Triana* 35–8)

The reader observes in El Fathi's poems an intent not only to unite his pain with the oppression of his town's dispossessed people (later translated in the emigrants' experience), but also of his own genealogy. El Fathi seems to rebuild, among other resources, the emotional strength of the poetic voice with the declared object of regaining the lost homeland. In "Aforanzas del Andalus," the poet translocates his verses by inserting rhythms and structures that signal hybrid dimensions like those of Lorca's *cantejondo*. The revival of Lorca's *cantejondo*, a singing style that draws on the Mediterranean's deeply hybrid cultural roots, puts the rich Arbo-Andalusian heritage centerstage. The Andalusian dream brings us closer to the *duende*, a deep inner source of inspiration. The poet highlights the same trope in "Poema en 15 versos de trágica vida de Poeta Enamorado," a tribute to Federico García Lorca:

Se asoma Lorca en la oscura  
 ciudad de Tetuán,  
 y en el balcón de los labios  
 trepan versos de verde primavera,  
 y al alcanzar el aire  
 una Voz,  
 desgarrada,  
 marcaba al ritmo de Camarón  
 un Fandanguito  
 entre el silencio impuestro  
 por la sangre de la Novia.  
 La voz silenciada en su cielo  
 y envuelta en una bocanada de aire  
 fresco, que una madre suspiraba  
 en lo más hondo de la Tierra. (*Triana* 9)

[Lorca leans out in the dark  
 city of Tétouan  
 and in the balcony of lips  
 verses of green spring climb,  
 and upon reaching the air  
 a Voice,  
 soulful,  
 set the pace of Camarón  
 a Fandanguito  
 between the silence imposed  
 by the blood of the Bride.]

The voice silenced in its sky  
 and cloaked in a breath of  
 fresh air, that a mother sighed  
 in the deepest hole on Earth.] (*Triana* 9)

The use of the present tense marks the timeless circularity and evidences that the North (represented in the figure of the Granada-born poet) also lives and breathes from and in the South. Lorca's poetic voice also lives in our present, where, according to the mentioned fraternity between the Hispanic and Moroccan worlds, it revives, reinvents and hybridizes the same tragedy sung in the play *Bodas de sangre* [*Blood Wedding*]. The "Verde primavera" [green spring] returns one more time next to symbols of frustration and death: "la sangre de la Novia" [the blood of the Bride], and a "Mother" who avenges the death of her son. Thus, when nature surges between people—Moroccans and Andalusians—they do not clash among themselves, but rather blend to produce new and original images. Thus, a new Mediterranean dream was invented soon after the Spanish Civil War, and continues to be invented now as more cadavers are being washed and found ashore: That dream has been invented by intellectuals, artists, and poets such as Lorca and El Fathi.

However, the collective historical memory of the former Moorish empire in Andalusia creates uncertainty regarding who exactly is host and who is guest, as well as fear that too much hospitality on the part of Spaniards will lead to a reinvasion by uninvited Moors (Rogozen-Solter 881). A considerable number of Spaniards, therefore, fail to move beyond the culturalist argument and underplay the urgent need to rethink the concepts of difference in equality, belonging, and what Homi Bhabha has called "symbolic citizenship" (xvii), in order to effectively deal with the new faces of Europe and a need for its redefinition.

While El Fathi is clearly a poet of migration, there are fundamental differences between him and those who are generally called migration writers. First, the literature of migration is generally characterized by the use of prose (short stories, novels, and theater), particularly in the case of Moroccan literature, which often employs the short story to convey Maghrebi oral tradition. However, Abderrahman El Fathi is a best seller in Andalusia, a region that not only has historically produced high quality poetry, but a region that is also known for its unmatched readership of the genre. It is evident that El Fathi represents a cultural reversion in which the poet not only engages in literary exchanges with "foreign" writers, but also with characters and even passages or verses from preceding authors. What is also original about El Fathi's writing is how his verses "return" to Spain not only in book format, but also as music in the concerts and albums of the singer and composer Ramón Tarrío (one of Tarrío's CD's is titled *África en versos majados*). El Fathi's poems have also crossed the Strait to be staged in *Cordova*.<sup>27</sup> These new

<sup>27</sup> The mythical Al-Andalus in Moroccan poetry written in Castilian has also been poeticized by Mohamed Chakor (*La llave y las llaves del sur*) as well as by Mezouar El Idrissi (*Ellegía*).

artistic renderings have also helped the circulation of El Fathi's literature and promoted new kinds of hybridizing processes. Indeed, his work challenges the notion of what it might mean to be a "poet of migration."

In her introduction to the collection of essays *Immigrant Fictions*, Rebecca Walkowitz raises important questions regarding immigration and literature. She underscores that in an age of globalization, contemporary literature is in many ways a comparative literature since works circulate in several literary systems at once and can be read within multiple national traditions (529). Citing a variety of scholars, Walkowitz questions the extent to which immigrant populations, which would mean extending the label to include all the works produced in a time of migration. If this is the case, the label "immigrant" or "immigration literature" would be redundant or, more importantly, it would open up questions about the discursive construct and its underlying restrictions. Salman Rushdie has emphasized in his collection of essays *Imaginary Homelands* that literature is self-validating and is not in the business of copywriting certain themes for certain groups (14–15), and again, that good writing "assumes a frontierless nation," likening writers who serve frontiers to border guards.

Abderrahman El Fathi's poetry demonstrates precisely this kind of "frontierless" literature. His works unify the subaltern voice of *patristas* and *harragas* with a refined lyricism that denounces the double standard of European politicians that falsely inculcate democratic processes of "convivencia" while validating new displacements via the free market. El Fathi exemplifies how the colonial legacy has created in the imaginary of borderland poets a dichotomist feeling of fraternity and rejection. His works mark a longing for Al-Andalus while acknowledging the modern interpellation toward a shared economic-cultural-religious parameter, employing an "Averroist" approximation to both sides of the Mediterranean Sea. This in-between" poetic space trespasses the official border between Spain and Morocco and creates an interstice where not only the poetic voice can feel at home, but perhaps all readers as well.

#### Works Cited

- Alarcón, Francisco X., Margalit Mañitahu y Abderrahman El Fathi. *Lenguas en la frontera*. Toledo: Escuela de Traductores/UCLM, 2008. Print.
- Al-Jabri, Mohamed Abd. *Arab-Islamic Philosophy A Contemporary Critique*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1999. Print.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999.
- Ararou, Ahmed. "La resaca." *La puerta de los vientos. Narradores marroquíes contemporáneos*. Barcelona: Destino, 2004. 51–7. Print.
- Artas, Arturo. "Authoring Ethnicized Subjects: Rigoberta Menchú and the Performative Production of the Subaltern Self." *PMLA* 116.1 (2001): 75–88. Print.
- Beverly, John. *Against Literature*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993. Print.
- . "The Margin at the Centre. On Testimonio." *Modern Fiction Studies* 35. 1 (1989): 11–28. Print.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *Locations of Culture: Discussing Post-Colonial Culture*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Chakor, Mohammed. *La llave y los latidos del sur*. 1992. Alicante: Càlamo, 1997. Print.
- Chambers, Iain. *Migration, Culture, Identity*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Clifford, James. *Immigrant Transculturales*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 1999. Print.
- . "The Transit Lounge of Culture." *Times Literary Supplement*. 5 May 1992. 3–6. Print.
- El Fathi, Abderrahman. *Abordaje*. Tétouan: U Abdelmalek Essaâdi, 1998. Print.
- . *África en versos mojados*. Tétouan: U Abdelmalek Essaâdi, 2002. Print.
- . *DANZADELAIRE*. Cádiz: Pato de Monipodio, 2011. Print.
- . *Desde la otra orilla*. Cádiz: Quórum, 2004. Print.
- . *El cielo herido*. Cádiz: Aulia Literaria José Cadalso-S. Roque, 2003. Print.
- . *Fantásticas literarias*. Tétouan: U Abdelmalek Essaâdi, 2000. Print.
- . *Primavera en Ramallah y Bagdad*. Tétouan: U Abdelmalek Essaâdi, 2003. Print.
- . *Triana, imágenes y palabras*. Tétouan: U Abdelmalek Essaâdi, 1998. Print.
- El Hachmi, Najat. "Carta d'un immigrant." *Inauguració del Congrés Mundial dels Moviments Humans i Immigració, organitzat per l'Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània*. 2004. Print.
- . *Jo també sóc catalana*. Barcelona: Columna, 2004. Print.
- . "Lettre." *Lettres à un jeune marocain*. Ed. Abdallah Tata. Paris: Seuil, 2009. Print.
- . *L'últim patriarca*. Barcelona: Planeta, 2008. Print.
- El Idrissi, Mezouar. *Elegia para la espada mojada*. Trans. Mezouar El Idrissi and Alberto Torés García. Málaga: CEDMA, 2005. Print.
- Fernández Parrilla, Gonzalo. *La literatura marroquí contemporánea. La novela y la crítica literaria*. Cuenca: U de Castilla-La Mancha, 2006. Print.
- García Canciani, Néstor. "Noticias recientes sobre la hibridación." *Trans. Revista transcultural de música* 7 (2003): n.p. Web. 6 Aug. 2013.
- Gilroy, Paul P. *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.
- Khatibi, Abdelkebir. "Literary Nationalism and Internationalism." *Crisscrossing Boundaries in African Literature*. 1986. Washington, DC: Three Continents P, 1991. 3–10. Print.
- Nguigi wa Thiong'o. "For Peace, Justice, and Culture: The Intellectual in the Twenty-First Century." *Profession* 9 (2006): 33–9. Print.
- Pérez Firmat, Gustavo. *Literature and Liminality: Festive Readings in the Hispanic Tradition*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1987. Print.
- Ricci, Cristián H. *Literatura periférica en castellano y catalán: el caso marroquí*. Madrid: Ediciones del Oto-U of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.

- . "L'últim patriarca de Najat El Hachmi y el forjamiento de la identidad amazigh-catalana." *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 11.1 (2010): 71–91. Print.
- Rogozen-Soltar, Mikaela. "Al-Andalus in Andalusia: Negotiating Moorish History and Regional Identity in Southern Spain." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80.3 (Summer, 2007): 863–86. Print.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991*. London: Penguin, 1992. Print.
- Shohat, Ella. "Columbus, Palestine, and the Arab-Jews: Towards a Relational Approach to Community Identity." *Cultural Readings of Imperialism*. Ed. Benita Parry and Judith Squires. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997. Print.
- Walkowitz, Rebecca, Ed. *Immigrant Fictions: Contemporary Literature in an Age of Globalization*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2007. Print.

## Appendix

### List of Works by Genre

### Addressed in This Volume

#### Anthologies of Multiple Genres

- En la jaima a las seis: Desde Enkarterri*. Historias saharauis. Bilbao: Enkarterri-Sabara, 2009. Print.
- Ndongo-Bidyogo, Donato. *Antología de la literatura guineana*. Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1984. Print.
- Ndongo Bidyogo, Donato and Mbare Ngom. *Literatura de Guinea Ecuatorial (Antología)*. Madrid: Sial Ediciones, Colección Casa de África, 2000. Print.
- Ngom, Mbare and Gloria Nistal Rosique. *Nueva antología de la literatura de Guinea Ecuatorial*. Madrid: Sial Ediciones, Colección Casa de África, 2012. Print.
- Rueda, Ana and Sandra Martín. *El retorno/el reencuentro: La inmigración en la literatura hispano-marroquí*. Madrid: Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert, 2010. Print.

#### Films

- Biutiful*. Dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu. Perf. Armando Bo, Nicolás Jacobone, Jon Kilik, Fernando Bovaira, Javier Bardem, Maricel Álvarez, et al. Mexico City: Menage Aroz, 2011.
- Bwana*. Dir. Imanol Uribe. Perf. Andrés Pajares and María Barranco. Líder Films S.A., 1996. VHS.
- Canicula*. Dir. Álvaro García-Capelo. Perf. Antón Reixa, Farid Fanni, Nathalie Seseña, Sergi Calleja, Eivira Minguéz. Morena Films, S.L., 2001. DVD.
- Corazones condos orillas*. I.E.S. Gran Tarajal and I.E.S. Vigás. *YouTube.com* 29 April 2009. 28 Feb. 2013 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4QEVbEj0EA>>. Web.
- Cuento de las dos orillas*. Dir. Jesús Armesio. Perf. Enrique Morente, Javier Ruibal, María Sanz, Ahmed Ben Yessef, and Rafael Saamartin. Almutafilm S.L. and Grup Cinema Art, 2007. Film.
- El rumor de la arena*. Dir. Daniel Iriarte and Jesús Prieto. Perf. Mohammed Abdelaziz, Josep Piqué, Javier Reverete. Cameo, 2008. DVD.
- En construcción*. Dir. José Luis Guerín. Perf. Juana Rodríguez Molina, Iván Guzmán Jiménez, Juan López López. Barcelona: Ovídeo TV, S.A., 2001. DVD.
- Flores de otro mundo*. Dir. Iciar Bollain. Perf. Julio Llamazares, José Sancho, Luis Tosar, Lissele Mejía, Marilyn Torres, Chete Lera, Elena Irueta, and Pascal Gaigne. Chatsworth, CA: Image Entertainment, 1999. DVD.