

# Moroccan Immigration in the Mediterranean Region: Reflections in Ben Jelloun's Literary Works

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Like an inexhaustible fountain, the emigration of Moroccan citizens to Europe, mainly to France, has steadily gathered momentum since the end of French–Spanish colonial rule over Morocco and its subsequent independence in 1956. This phenomenon has reached such a high proportion as to become a central issue not only for the Moroccan state and society, but also for the European countries situated on the Mediterranean coasts, ‘hosting’ the millions of Moroccan (and other) immigrants. This massive migratory movement has considerably affected almost every facet of Moroccan life both within the country and abroad, leaving a profound imprint on Moroccan literature. The most prominent Moroccan writer to have intensively discussed the various issues embodied in this phenomenon and its consequent inter- and intra-cultural effects is Tahar Ben Jelloun. This article sheds light on one of the weighty affairs and paramount concerns preoccupying the countries and societies of the Mediterranean region – Moroccan immigration to Europe. It discusses a broad cluster of issues affecting migration throughout the period of Morocco’s modern history, including the last decade of the twentieth century.

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## Overpopulation in Post-Colonial Morocco, 1956–1970s

Morocco’s population (excluding Jews and foreigners) more than doubled between 1935 and 1971, increasing from about 6.5m to about 15m.<sup>1</sup> This growth did not result from official pro-natal policy.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, in 1966, the Moroccan government initiated its first family planning programme in an attempt to slow the growth rate.<sup>3</sup>

Between 1971 and 1975, a birth rate of 48.8 per thousand was recorded, indicating a rise over the previous decade. A considerable decline in the mortality rate – from 30–40 to 15 per thousand during the period 1935–71 due to improvements in health and the social infrastructure – also contributed to population growth.<sup>4</sup> In 1971, about 70 per cent of Moroccans were below the age of 21.<sup>5</sup> Pressure on the actively employed population and on the national economy was increased by the paucity of women in the labour force. These factors not only stunted economic growth, but also exacerbated the severe

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unemployment, housing shortages, creation of urban slums, and deterioration of the physical and social infrastructure.<sup>6</sup> Prospects of improving socio-economic conditions were also severely hindered.<sup>7</sup> The significant acceleration of Moroccan emigration to Europe, therefore, was no surprise.

In addition to the powerful 'push factor' promoting Moroccan emigration, the 'pull factor' of Europe's appeal should also be noted. Following each of the world wars, the recovering European economies encouraged the immigration of Moroccan and other foreign workers, enticing them with the offer of higher living conditions. Furthermore, the Moroccan government actively encouraged emigration, welcoming it as a safety valve to release adverse internal pressures, and benefiting from the foreign remittances.

Following the oil crisis of 1973, however, the wheel of economic success had turned and recession plagued the European economies, causing countries such as Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands to restrict immigration. Although the French economy also suffered a decline, France remained almost the sole foreign labour market for Moroccan emigrants during the mid-1970s, despite the application of certain restrictions.<sup>8</sup>

### **Moroccan Distress as Fertile Ground for Immigration: Reflections in Ben Jelloun's Writings**

The sun concealed its fingers within the ashes of the cloud separating me from life. For a while, I have been living the life of an uprooted tree. Dried out and displayed in a shop window. I no longer feel the land. I am an orphan... I no longer bleed... My room is a suitcase wherein I place my savings and loneliness. Within my eyes an extinguished dream, an olive tree waiting for the wind and for the day.

The gloomy monologue in the opening paragraphs of Ben Jelloun's book, *Reclusion*, exposes the emotional and physical distress of an anonymous Moroccan immigrant living in France during the 1970s.<sup>9</sup> Obscuring the identity of the protagonist, Ben Jelloun uses him to symbolise the cause of other Moroccan immigrants in France and beyond, as well as that of immigrants worldwide.

Ben Jelloun locates the immigration experience in an overwhelmingly bleak context of physical misery, emotional barrenness and near death, with no reference to the possibility of a better life. It might thereby be seen as reflecting his own direct or indirect experiences as a 27-year old immigrant to France in 1971.<sup>10</sup> Deeply troubled by the miserable living conditions and daily suffering of Moroccans at home, and later as immigrants in France, he purports 'to tell the French about the Maghrib and the Maghrbeans

about France'.<sup>11</sup>

Ben Jelloun's dual identity as a Moroccan Arab Muslim and a French-speaking European enables him to appeal to both cultures and to maintain a dialogue between them, upholding the values of 'interculturality'.<sup>12</sup> 'I try ... to play the role of intermediary between two cultures, between two imaginations, and at the same time, to try to soften the conflicts and the shock', he writes.<sup>13</sup> Ben Jelloun's decision to publish in French further attests to this; it also accentuates what he perceives as the increasing integration of the French language into Maghribean culture. Indicating the use of French by a broad section of Maghribean novelists, among them Rashid Mimouni from Algeria and Abdel-Wahhab Meddab and Fawzi Mellah from Tunisia, he deems their work 'more African than anything else. You cannot classify them as French texts.'<sup>14</sup>

Ben Jelloun is haunted by the desperate socio-economic conditions that engulfed Moroccan citizens in the aftermath of the colonial period; he blames unrealised expectations and a subsequent sense of hopelessness for generating the growing migration of Moroccans abroad. His book, *Muha the Fool, Muha the Wise*, emits a cry of despair and fury towards the governing elites in Rabat who abandoned responsibility for the people, either out of indifference or incompetence, leaving them alone in their struggle for survival. With characteristically surreal and colourful language, bursting with associations, Muha states:

Oh, I know, independence promised us a lot. Mountain cascades of wild laughter. But, in fact, independence [merely] granted us passports... It gave us a name, some human dignity, but we never lost human dignity, even in moments of crisis. Independence! It nationalised profit and coated the zinc of the slums with national colours.<sup>15</sup>

Correspondingly, the central figure, Muha, who is both foolish and wise, is particularly critical of what he sees as the total failure of elites to reduce sharp discrepancies between the abject poverty of the masses, and the abundant wealth concentrated in the hands of a relatively small governing class. The hopelessly poor, the children in Muha's poetic and allegorical terminology, 'were born with death thrust upon their brow... living with vipers and sleeping with goats'. He expresses much empathy with them, combined with abhorrence and indignation towards 'the fat, misers and stinking... [rich people who are] hastening to hoard [more] money... [and who] are already hunchbacks'. He repeatedly scorns the rich Moroccans who live in 'villas of gold that turn their back to the sea'. Muha is infuriated by what he deems the self-interested and hard-hearted attitudes of the elite, those who live in a 'frozen lake of complacency'. 'Why, dammit, do I see what you are incapable of seeing?' he cries, continuing to explain their

selective vision: 'You are too well covered... in imported woollen clothing. Your skin [is therefore] impenetrable to any message... you are absent: your heads are buried under an abundance of banknotes.'<sup>16</sup>

Another social ill that figures in Ben Jelloun's narratives – not only in *Muha the Fool*, *Muha the Wise*, but also in *The Sandchild* and *The Sacred Night* – is the sexual exploitation of women in Morocco. In these texts, he alludes to the suppression of femininity and the position of women in both family and society, as well as their classification as hermaphrodite, when 'required'.<sup>17</sup> 'Women, why do they raise you in the darkness with wooden sexual organs, without any caress and tenderness?' Muha asks, concluding: 'Yes, there is something ill in the relations between the Kabili-Berber-Arab man and woman.'<sup>18</sup> Ben Jelloun also condemns the corruption prevailing in Morocco's ruling classes, the suppression of political rights and the growth of militant Islamism.<sup>19</sup>

These adverse phenomena and their debilitating effects prompted many Moroccans, like Ben Jelloun, to leave the country in an effort to escape from the despondency of poverty, hunger and harsh political conditions. Unfortunately, for many, including the emigrant in Ben Jelloun's *Reclusion*, it transpires that the very act of emigration that represented a solution merely leads to further distress. Does Muha, who had never left his small village, indicate this when he asks rhetorically: 'Why does death carry us in a boat towards the horizon?'<sup>20</sup>

#### **A Moroccan Immigrant in France: Trading one Form of Distress for Another**

I came upon the edges of my own heart, expelled from mine, partly due to my will, mainly due to necessity. I came – we came to earn our bread, to save our death, to earn the future of our children, the coming years which had already become tired to earn a continuation generation which would not be shamed by us... We travelled and all our baggage was one suitcase, an old suitcase bound with a rope, within it woollen clothes, splinters of lightening, a picture of the children, a pot, some olives and hope, fat as memory, slightly blind and heavy. We arrived here in waves with a crazy song in our heads, a song withheld, and already a yearning, and scales of a dream. From afar, the flute stuttered. Onto the human landscape a covering was spread, heaven of steel and within it, small and large holes, deep and transparent.<sup>21</sup>

Ben Jelloun deals intensively with the physical, emotional and even mental crises caused, or strengthened, among Moroccan immigrants by living in

France. His uniquely surrealistic, colourful and sensuous narrative style penetrates the reader's awareness, thereby revealing the grave distress of Moroccan immigrants.

Cracked are my illusions. The day mixed with the sweat of my body and I doubt. I am embittered... Difficult is the crack. To live with one's head sunken within the body. To survive between the workplace and the pieces of the dream, our food, our place of dwelling. Difficult is the reclusion. Rare is the word. Rare is the extended hand...<sup>22</sup>

Ben Jelloun's polymorphic language, which includes a rich *mélange* of symbolism and fantasy, descriptive dialogues, quotations, listing of formal codes, poetry and even references to Qu'ranic messages, sheds strong light on the tormented daily life of the immigrant. 'Death lives with me in the cage, in the temples, in the kidneys', the immigrant states.<sup>23</sup> Not only is he socially isolated and poor, but his *amour propre* and cultural identity have been rudely trampled on by his French employer, an implicit symbol of French society, as a whole.

Although deliberately exaggerated, the harsh regulations that the French employer presents to the immigrant on his arrival at work clearly illustrate the most difficult, sometimes virtually impossible, conditions created by the 'host' society. This code is designed to prevent any 'undesirable' interaction between the 'host' society and the immigrants, and to preserve what it perceives as its own superior identity, values and way of life. The long list, comprised of many strict prohibitions, reflects *reductio ad absurdum* the fears, prejudices and contempt prevalent towards the foreigner, the 'other'.

- It is forbidden to prepare food in the room. (There is a kitchen at the end of the corridor.)
- It is forbidden to entertain women. (There is a brothel, Chez Maribel, nearby.)
- It is forbidden to listen to the radio after nine o'clock.
- It is forbidden to sing in the evening, especially in Arabic or Kabilian,
- It is forbidden to slaughter lambs inside the building. (Wait until you return to your hole to shed the blood of lambs.)
- It is forbidden to masturbate in the room. (Use the toilets for that purpose.)
- It is forbidden to meditate in the corridors.
- It is forbidden to: repaint the walls; touch the furniture; break windows; change the lamps; be ill; get diarrhoea; engage in politics; forget to go to work; think about bringing the family; have children with French women; flirt in church; wear pyjamas in the street;

complain about the objective and subjective conditions of life; sympathise with leftists; read or write curses on the walls; fight amongst yourselves; strike blows; play with a knife; or seek vengeance.

- It is forbidden to die in this room, or in the area of this building. (Go die elsewhere, in your own country, for example – it is more convenient.)
- It is forbidden to commit suicide. (Even if you are locked in Flery-Merogi. Your religion forbids it and so do we.
- It is forbidden to climb trees.
- It is forbidden to paint yourselves in blue, green or purple.
- It is forbidden to ride a bicycle inside the room, to play cards, to drink wine (not champagne).
- It is also forbidden to dress up as a woman or return by another road from work.

The list ends with a stern warning: 'Beware! We recommend that you obey the regulations. If not, you will return to the suitcase or to the cellar. Then you'll sit in a transit camp until returning to your countries.'<sup>24</sup>

This text also demonstrates the extreme imbalance of power between the strong 'host' society and the weak immigrant. This relationship, as Ben Jelloun illustrates, generates oppression, humiliation, isolation, violence and a near sense of death.<sup>25</sup> Not everybody can stand this hardship, as evidenced by the case of the immigrant's room-mate, who 'is not here [and who] is hospitalised because it hurts him in his head', and who is a 'bird... chained and bound in a lunatics gown'.<sup>26</sup>

Each day in the miserable life of the immigrant passes in 'extinguished dullness', causing him to feel like 'a paper ball in a canal drain'. The lonely nights are no better. He yearns for human warmth and love, but the harsh reality prevents it and he has no other choice but to push 'his loneliness into the throat' and mourn inside his own body. 'My back is tired. The sky burdens my kidneys. I can hardly breathe. The smoke chases me ...'<sup>27</sup>

Doing his utmost to maintain his mental balance, the immigrant adopts several ways to comfort body and soul, and to kindle the flame of life that still burns deep within him. In an interesting inversion, he reminisces about the homeland that he left in fury and frustration, representing it as a place of shelter and source of warmth and pleasure. 'The child and the olive tree' and the sea's 'blue wavelet' symbolise the essence of his life in Morocco; they are among the objects that reappear in his mind as he recalls home and lifts, albeit temporarily, the burden from his soul. The bowl of 'potatoes in garlic and cumin' provides an analogy. 'I swallowed them... With the cumin come the dreams and the night passed over without any disturbances.' A

similar effect is provided by memories of 'the sands and the sea', and the sprigs of *na'na* (mint) that he brings to his 'cage' at the end of the working day. However, after recalling the sights, sensations and flavours of home, the chaotic day 'is drained into the sewer', and his heart quivers. His source of comfort thus becomes 'a perfume of longings'.<sup>28</sup>

Another temporary refuge from life's pressures is provided by alcohol, despite the fact that it is prohibited by the immigrant's religion, namely Islam. 'When we seclude ourselves in sad (and some say dark) bars and drink, it is not in order to forget but in order to gain a sense that we also exist. [Whilst drinking] we return and meet ourselves as slightly cracked mirrors.' He drinks beer, he adds on another occasion, because of 'a yearning to be something other than a torn sock'. The immigrant's imagination and the well-intentioned blurring of reality helps him to secure sporadic breaks from the 'supermarket of blood and sweat, [the] supermarket of slavery and indifference'.<sup>29</sup> Alcohol also helps him to feel more connected to the French environment, where drinking wine is so intrinsic to local culture.

The unrequited love affair that he imagines with the woman whose picture hangs on the walls of the Metro has a similar effect; it moistens his dried soul and thirsty body.<sup>30</sup> This 'romance' – a blend of magical realism and vivid illusions – is clearly an escape into the world of imagination and fantasy, which enables him to survive the day.

### **Moroccan Demography at the Turn of the Century: Implications for Morocco and Mediterranean Europe**

Population growth in Morocco averaged 1.6 per cent between 1995 and 1999, a sharp fall from the rate of 2.5 per cent during the 1980s. Projections based on the 1994 census held in Morocco suggested that the population would grow to some 28.2m by mid-1999. The same source revealed a young population, with 9.4m aged 14 or under. The number of working age Moroccans (15–64) was estimated at 17.5m, including 8.9m women.<sup>31</sup>

Unemployment rose steadily in the late 1990s, becoming an acute problem. It was feared that any significant aggravation of popular socio-economic distress might lead to political turmoil and outbursts of religious radicalism.<sup>32</sup> According to official figures, urban unemployment rose from 17 per cent to 22 per cent between 1997 and 1999. It was highest amongst workers under the age of 34 and those with high-school diplomas and university degrees. Government efforts to create an estimated 200,000 jobs annually were insufficient to absorb the 300,000 young workers who entered the job market every year.<sup>33</sup>

A steady decline in agriculture during the 1990s exacerbated unemployment, especially in rural areas, such as the impoverished Rif region, which were already suffering acute hardship. On the other hand, the manufacturing and service sectors – especially tourism – developed rapidly, providing new avenues for profit for urban Moroccans.

These two developments – the shrinking of agriculture and the growth of urban employment opportunities – accelerated migration towards towns situated along the coasts of both the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>34</sup> In many cases, this demographic movement within Morocco has merely preceded legal or illegal immigration into Europe.

In 1999–2000, an estimated 60 per cent of the Moroccan population was urbanised, up from 35 per cent in 1971, and 51 per cent in 1994. Particularly large concentrations were located in Casablanca (3.2m) and in the capital, Rabat-Sale (1.8m), situated on the Atlantic coast, and in Tangier-Tetouan (1.3m) on the Mediterranean coast. Other large urban centres included Marrakesh, Meknes and Fez, altogether numbering 3.3m<sup>35</sup>

In 1998, a medium to long-term development programme for the impoverished northern region, the centre for the growth of *kif* (marijuana) was formulated and largely financed by the EU. This was intended to help Morocco progress towards membership of the Euro-Med free-trade zone.<sup>36</sup> The EU, and most prominently France and Spain, Morocco's most important trading partners and main European allies, offered funds to improve economic conditions in the northern regions, whose poverty they regarded as the prime cause of illegal immigration and drug-trafficking. (Morocco is the largest supplier to the European hashish market). EU countries, especially France and Spain, were also concerned by other Maghribian issues, such as socio-economic turmoil and growing Islamism. France and Spain perceive the Maghrib as a strategic extension, aware that any serious economic ferment or politico-religious violence might adversely affect their own domestic arenas.<sup>37</sup>

In practice, however, financial help from Europe has been insufficient to generate any substantial improvement in Morocco's economy. Moreover, as reported in late 2000, the economic situation worsened. After falling steadily to 13 per cent of the population (3.2m) in 1991, the poverty rate rose again by two-thirds to 19 per cent (5.3m) in 1999. Poverty rates remain highest in the central and north-central regions, affecting 36 per cent of rural Moroccans and 24 per cent of town dwellers in the area of Meknes-Tafilalet, situated between Rabat and Fez.<sup>38</sup>

According to a recent Moroccan study, poverty, unemployment and demographic distribution are such that 'up to 89 per cent of young Moroccans aspire to emigrate to Europe some day'.<sup>39</sup> This is already clearly reflected in the growing Moroccan emigration to Europe. Furthermore,

whereas France was once the prime destination for Moroccan immigration – in 1995 half of all Moroccan immigrants to the EU migrated to France – since the second half of the 1990s, Spain, and to a lesser extent, Italy, have also attracted significant Moroccan immigration.<sup>40</sup>

These changes reflect the tougher stance adopted by France and other EU countries in order to block, or at least significantly reduce, the flow of immigrants into their territories. In 1995, several EU countries began to enact the Schengen Accords, which weaken internal EU borders and strengthen external ones. As a result, entry into Spain became a virtual guarantee of unimpeded passage to Germany, France, or nearly any other EU country – a powerful temptation for many Moroccan (and other) immigrants.

Infiltration into Spain is generally attempted either through its two sovereign enclaves on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa (Ceuta and Malilla) or through the narrow Straits of Gibraltar, separating Morocco from Spain.<sup>41</sup> This passage has been termed 'the sea of death' because more than 3,000 'boat people' have drowned since 1994 while attempting to cross it.<sup>42</sup> The Moroccan migratory pressure on Spain has reached 'alarming' proportions, reported a Spanish daily newspaper, noting that in 1999 alone, Madrid refused visas to around 770,000 Moroccans, compared with some 400,000 in 1997.<sup>43</sup>

This move has duly disappointed both potential Moroccan immigrants and the Moroccan government; the latter views emigration as a safety valve to release socio-economic pressures that might threaten the kingdom's political stability. The Rabat government also enjoys an annual remittance of \$2bn., currently Morocco's second largest source of hard currency.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, the growing presence of Moroccan immigrants in Spain, as well as in France and other European countries has exacerbated violent forms of racism.<sup>45</sup> This was illustrated, for example, in sporadic attacks launched by Spaniards during 2000 in the south-east on vehicles carrying agricultural goods imported from Morocco.<sup>46</sup>

It is not surprising that the subject of immigration has echoed strongly in the Moroccan arts. A film on clandestine Moroccan immigration, initiated by Moroccan director Muhammad Smail, was nipped in the bud when the 'extras' he had hired to be filmed on the beach at Oued Laou themselves crossed over to Europe at the first opportunity. 'They have taken their parts too seriously', the film director wailed.<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusions

'Morocco seems like a tree whose nourishing roots are reaching deep into the [North] African ground and whose leaves are breathing in the wind

blowing from Europe.’<sup>48</sup> This picturesque metaphor, uttered by the late Moroccan king, Hassan II, in the 1980s, suggested that both North Africa and Europe were vital for the survival of Morocco. On the one hand, the country receives its basic sustenance of heritage and character from its specific position in North Africa; on the other, it needs Europe’s economic oxygen. The metaphor gained even greater relevance a decade later, when a growing number of Moroccan ‘leaves’, that is to say immigrants, turned to Europe in order to realise the photosynthesis process, necessary albeit not always sufficient, to stay alive.

Morocco’s long history of emigration to Europe dates back to the colonial period of the nineteenth century when the French employed Moroccans (and other North Africans) to help them develop the infrastructure to support the colonial empire. Moroccan labour immigration to Europe increased in the aftermath of both world wars, and again after Morocco’s independence. France and Spain, the two colonial powers which ruled Morocco during 1912–56, formed the most attractive geo-economic and cultural bridges for Moroccans crossing to Europe. For many decades, France was the main lodestone for Moroccan and other Maghribean immigrants. During the 1990s, however, Spain became increasingly popular as a destination for illegal immigration.

The vast and steadily increasing Moroccan migration movement has fundamentally affected both the sending and the receiving countries, leaving an imprint on almost every facet of life. The arts, most prominently literature, have been powerfully influenced by this experience. Tahar Ben Jelloun, a Moroccan-born writer of international reputation who has lived in France since the early 1970s, has devoted much of his writing to the issue of immigration. In an interesting resemblance to King Hassan II, Ben Jelloun has also used the tree metaphor to refer to Moroccan emigration.

We are a country whose people were rooted out... Trees that were uprooted, counted and sent to the cold. On arrival in France, our branches are no longer heavy. The leaves are light, dead, falling leaves. The roots are dry and we are not thirsty. If I compare ourselves to a tree, it is because the wholeness in us tends to die and the resin no longer flows. Everybody thinks that this selective uprooting is ‘normal’, but what is an uprooted tree capable of in the dawn of its days? What is a foreign body capable of on a tired land?<sup>49</sup>

Despite the use of the same metaphor, the king and Ben Jelloun each referred to the tree in a different context, projecting a different exegesis. Whilst the king viewed the tree through what he perceived as the interests

of the state and its leadership, Ben Jelloun regarded it as the individual, the Moroccan immigrant himself. The king interpreted the issue of emigration positively, as a blessed phenomenon enabling people to continue their lives across the Mediterranean Sea while remaining rooted in their homeland, and moreover, stimulating its economy through remittances. Both King Hassan II (who died in summer 1999) and his successor King Muhammad VI were duly aware of Morocco's 'pressure cooker syndrome' and the consequent need to regularly release internal socio-economic tensions. This was essential to prevent the eruption of widespread turmoil in the country, which might in turn engulf the political arena and even endanger the monarchy.

Ben Jelloun, in sharp contrast, discusses the immigration experience from a painful and even traumatic standpoint, painting it in especially bleak colours. His character, a typical immigrant, is the one who pays a high price for harsh displacement, facing physical, emotional and occasionally mental chastisement. Ben Jelloun's immigrant cares little for how the Moroccan State might benefit from his move. On the contrary, he criticises the Moroccan ruling elites, blaming them for many of the domestic hardships that led him to leave. The distress of the immigrant is so acute, however, that it largely eclipses and to some extent even distorts other aspects of immigration, most importantly the prospect of being bound to the horn of plenty and attaining a better life.

Many Moroccan immigrants to Europe, however, merely cling to the dream of a better life – one characterised by the fond flavours of *na'na*, salvia and cumin, the fragrance of jasmine and wild roses, and the colourful sights of bougainvillea bushes, olive trees and the blue Mediterranean sea with its golden sands.

#### NOTES

1. A. Findlay, A. Findlay and R. Lawless, *International Migration Project, Country Case Study: The Kingdom of Morocco* (Durham: University of Durham 1978) p.4. During the years following independence, about 95 per cent of the Jewish Moroccans numbering between 250,000 and 300,000 and about 90 per cent of the French citizens numbering about 350,000 migrated from Morocco. G.H. Blake, 'Morocco: Urbanisation and Concentration of Population', in J.I. Clarke and W.B. Fisher (eds.), *Populations of the Middle East and North Africa: A Geographical Approach* (London: University of London 1972) pp.411–12.
2. Natal policy aims at changing the rates of female fertility whether by reducing it (anti-natal policy) or by increasing it (pro-natal policy).
3. Morocco, Tunisia (1962) and Egypt (1965) were the only Arab countries to implement a family planning policy during the 1960s. For more details on Morocco's anti-natal policies not only during the 1960s, but also later in the 1980s–1990s, see B. Maddy-Weitzman, 'Tradition, Population Growth and Family Planning in Morocco' in A. Ayalon and G.G. Gilbar (eds.), *Demography and Politics in Arab Countries* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuhad 1995) pp.51–67.

4. Findlay, Findlay and Lawless, *International Migration Project* (note 1) pp.5, 8.
5. Economist Intelligence Unit, 'Morocco, Annual Supplement 1971', *Quarterly Economic Review* (London: EIU 1971) p.2.
6. Economist Intelligence Unit, 'Morocco, Annual Supplement 1972', *Quarterly Economic Review* (London: EIU 1972) p.2. Urban unemployment was estimated in 1972 at 30 per cent.
7. For a general discussion on the issue 'why poor countries are so poor', which might be analogous also to Morocco's economic situation, see D.S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some are Rich and Some so Poor* (New York: Norton 1999). For comparative 'overpopulation syndromes' in Middle Eastern countries, see A.R. Omran, *Population in the Arab World: Problems and Prospects* (New York: Croom Helm 1980) and G.G. Gilbar, *Population Dilemmas in the Middle East* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass 1997).
8. Findlay, Findlay and Lawless, *International Migration Project* (note 1) pp.30, 32. Also significant was the fact that following the fall of Saigon in 1975, Vietnamese political refugees sought and were granted political asylum in France, thus also joining its labour market.
9. T. Ben Jelloun, *Hesger* (*La Réclusion Solitaire*) (Paris: Denoel 1976), translated from the French into Hebrew by I. Hazan (Tel Aviv: Prague/Scene 1999) p.9. All translations in this essay of extracts from *Hesger* (*Reclusion* in English) into English are mine, Y.R.
10. Ben Jelloun was lucky, however. About a decade and a half after his arrival in France he was warmly adopted by the French cultural establishment which awarded him France's coveted literary Prix Goncourt for his novel *La Nuit Sacrée* (*The Sacred Night*) (Paris: Seuil 1987). The book was translated into Hebrew by A. Paldor (Tel Aviv: Am Oved 1991).
11. E. Amar in the epilogue of *Muha Hashoteh, Muha Hahakham* (*Muha le Fou, Muha le Sage*) (Paris: Seuil 1978), translated from the French into Hebrew by E. Amar (Jerusalem: Carmel 1999) pp.145-6. The translation of extracts from *Muha* (*Muha the Fool, Muha the Wise*) into English is mine, Y.R. The definition of the term Maghrib is equivalent to that of North Africa, embracing Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania.
12. D.D. Fisher, 'The Blank Spaces of Interculturality', *Research in African Literatures* 28/4 (1999) p.85. For a survey on other Maghribean writers who were born and raised in the Maghrib but are, or were, French Pieds-Noirs, that is descendants of French settlers, see E. Sellin, and H. Abdel-Jacoud, 'An introduction to Maghrebian Literature', *The Literary Review* 41 (1998) pp.161-72.
13. *Middle East Report* (March-April 1990) p.33, an interview with Miriam Rosen in Paris.
14. For Ben Jelloun's explanation on this preference, see an interview by *UNESCO Courier*, 6 (Aug.-Sept. 1991) p.4. For another reference where Ben Jelloun describes his relations with the French language as 'a love story,' see *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (22 May 1983). For an illuminating article on three Moroccan authors writing in the French language, which includes a reference to Ben Jelloun's novel *Harrouda* (Paris: Denoel 1973), see also Z. Mezgueldi, 'Mother-word and French-language Moroccan writing', *Research in African Literatures* 27/3 (1996). *Middle East Report* (March-April 1990) p.31.
15. Ben Jelloun, *Muha* (note 11) p.25. *Muha*, a shortened name of Muhammad, is the village fool and a traditional popular character in the Maghrib, resembling the Middle Eastern Juha.
16. *Ibid.*, pp.20-3, 25-6, 28, 30, not necessarily in that order.
17. Ben Jelloun, *The Sandchild* (*L'enfant de sable*) (Paris: Seuil 1985), translated into Hebrew by Y. Knaz (Tel Aviv: Ben Haholot 1987).
18. For example, Ben Jelloun, *Muha* (note 11) pp.39-40, and Ben Jelloun, *The Sacred Night* (note 10) pp.27-9, 45, 57. Although most Kabilians live in Algeria, many have also immigrated to Morocco and Europe. The Berbers comprise about one-third of the Moroccan population, hailing from the mountainous regions of the Rif and Atlas. Most expatriate Moroccans are of Berber origin, referred to in France as Beur. EIU, *Country Profile, Morocco* (2000) p.14.
19. T. Ben Jelloun, *Corruption* (New York: New Press 1996) translated from the French into English by C. Volk. The bureaucrat protagonist in this book struggles against the silence of the moral majority in Morocco, who live, as other societies, with corruption as an inevitable fact of life. Not that corruption is unique to Morocco, but as in many other developing

- countries, government salaries are so low that functionaries are strongly tempted to accept bribes. For a protest against the growing effect of militant Islam, see Ben Jelloun, *Muha* (note 11) pp.63–4, and *The Sacred Night* (note 10) pp.88–9, 174–7. For a description of political oppression and social deprivation, see for example, Ben Jelloun, *Muha* (note 11) pp.82–5; and *Reclusion* (note 9) pp.19–20, 33–4, 51–2, 63.
20. Ben Jelloun, *Muha* (note 11) p.26
  21. Ben Jelloun, *Reclusion* (note 9) pp.33–4.
  22. *Ibid.*
  23. *Ibid.* p.47.
  24. *Ibid.* pp.13–14. Kabilian is the language spoken by the Berbers in Algeria and by Algerian immigrants in Morocco. The reference of the French employer to the Kabilian language indicates either that the French did not differentiate between the origin of the immigrants, perceiving them all alike, or that the group of workers was comprised of Algerian immigrants in addition to the Moroccans. Maghribean immigrants to France were originally mostly Algerians, but immigration from Morocco and Tunisia has gained in importance over the years. Fléry-Merogi is a prison south of Paris.
  25. One of Ben Jelloun's most notable works of non-fiction is the meticulously documented essay on racial violence against North African immigrants, *French Hospitality (Hospitalité française)* (Paris: Seuil 1984).
  26. *Ibid.* p.14, 73, 75–7. Ben Jelloun referred to the mental problems of the immigrants in *La Plus Haute des solitudes: Misere affective et sexuelle d'émigrés nord-africains* (Paris: Seuil 1977). The work sums up the conclusions of research work he carried out for his dissertation in social psychiatry, examining immigrants hospitalised in psychiatric institutions in France.
  27. *Reclusion* (note 9) pp.47, 16, 18, 15, respectively.
  28. *Ibid.* pp.19, 47, 79. Na'na is a strain of peppermint indigenous to the Mediterranean and Middle East regions.
  29. *Ibid.* pp.25, 10, respectively.
  30. *Ibid.* for example pp.70–1, 81.
  31. EIU, *Country Profile, Morocco 2001* pp.1, 49. The 1994 nation-wide census held in Morocco numbered the Moroccan population as 26,073,593. This data did not include, however, the approximately 1.5 million Moroccans living abroad. B. Maddy-Weitzman, 'Morocco' in B. Maddy-Weitzman (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, 1995* (Boulder: Westview 1997) p.506.
  32. For more details on the connection between the socio-economic, political and religious issues, see Maddy-Weitzman, *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, chapters on Morocco, Vols. XIV–XXII, 1990–98, and B. Maddy-Weitzman, 'Islamic Challenge in North Africa' in B. Maddy-Weitzman and E. Inbar (eds.), *Religious Radicalism in the Greater Middle East* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass 1997) pp.171–88.
  33. EIU, *Country Profile, Morocco 2001* pp.26–7.
  34. For a Moroccan literary work which deals extensively with the migratory movement from the poor, Berber-populated Rif area in northern Morocco towards the cities on the Mediterranean coast on the eve of independence, see M. Shukri, *For Bread Alone* (London: Saqi 1993), translated by P. Bowles from the Arabic, the language of origin of *al-Khubz al-Hafi* (Tangier: P. Owen 1973).
  35. EIU, *Country Profile: Morocco 2001* pp.2, 27.
  36. *Ibid.* p.27. For a detailed survey on Morocco's economic relations with the EU, see Maddy-Weitzman, 'Morocco', *Middle East Contemporary Survey, 1995–98*. In addition to the northern Rif area, the Western Sahara phosphate-rich region, which Morocco claims to be an integral part of its kingdom, and the Atlas mountainous region, are economically impoverished and backward areas.
  37. For a survey on the interests and problems in the relations between the North (that is to say, Europe) and the South (that is to say, the Maghrib) see G. Gera, "'The North" versus the Maghrib – Fear, Profit and Strategy' in Yehudit Ronen (ed.), *The Maghrib: Politics, Society and Economy* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University 1998) pp.83–90.
  38. EIU, *Country Report, Morocco* (Oct. 2000) p.24.
  39. G. Stolz, 'Europe's Back Doors', *The Atlantic Monthly* 285/1 (Jan. 2000) pp.26–33. No

- details were given, however, of the age or any other characteristic of those Moroccans.
40. The Moroccan immigrant community in Italy is the largest Maghribean group in the country, numbering some 200,000 persons. See H. Liebernoma, 'Celebrating the Ramadhan at Home', *Ha'aretz*, 12 Jan. 2001, a report from Florence. See also *The Economist*, 12 Aug. 2000. For more data on Moroccan Immigration to the EU countries, see K. Miller, 'Trends in Migratory Movements and Flows of Remittances between the Maghrib and Western Europe', *IMAROM* (Interaction between Migration, Land and Water Use and Resource Exploitation in the Oases of the Maghrib) (Amsterdam: IMAROM 1999).
  41. Morocco does not officially recognise Spanish sovereignty over Ceuta (covering about eight square miles with a population of about 70,000) or over Melilla (covering less than five square miles with a population of about 60,000). *The Atlantic Monthly* (Jan. 2000); *The Economist* (12 Aug. 2000).
  42. *The Economist* (2 Jan. 1999); (12 Aug. 2000).
  43. *El Mondo* (7 July 1999). The EU estimated at the end of 2000 that 500,000 illegal immigrants entered it during this year alone, up from an estimated 40,000 in 1993. *The New York Times* (25 Dec. 2000). For more details on Moroccan immigration to Spain during the 1990s, see also I. Bodega, J.A. Cebrian, T. Franchini, G. Lora-Tamayo, A. Martin-Lou, 'Recent Migrations from Morocco to Spain', *International Migration Review* 29/3 (1995) pp.800-19.
  44. *The Economist* (2 Jan. 1999). The impact of remittances is a subject of debate. Some researchers claim that remittances tend to increase income inequalities, whereas others conclude the opposite. For a study which offers a spatio-temporal perspective in this regard, see R.C. Jones, 'Remittances and Inequality: A Question of Migration Stage and Geographic Scale', *Economic Geography* 74/1 (1998) pp.8-25.
  45. In early 2000, for example, about 5,000 Spaniards in the town of El Ejido went on the rampage against Moroccan immigrants, smashing their shops, damaging their cars and shanties and even torching mosques. For more details see *Middle East International* (25 Feb. 2000), p.15. The tidal wave of racist and anti-racist feelings prompted T. Ben Jelloun to write the book *Racism, as Explained to my Daughter* (New York: New Press 1999), translated into English from the French by C. Volk, translation into Hebrew from the French by R. Miran (Jerusalem: Bavel 1999). For another of Ben Jelloun's references to racism see, for example, his interview in *Newsweek* (21 Sept. 1998) by Judith Warner in Paris.
  46. EIU, *Country Report, Morocco* (July and Oct. 2000) p.18, p.17.
  47. *The Economist* (12 Aug. 2000).
  48. K. Miller, 'Trends in Migratory Movements and Flows of Remittances between the Maghrib and Western Europe', *IMAROM*.
  49. Ben Jelloun, *Reclusion* (note 9) p.39.