

Darmon, Paule

Paule Darmon is a French artist, writer, and painter, born in Casablanca, Morocco in 1945 and currently living in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She is the author of screenplays, a play, and two successful novels, *Baisse les yeux*, *Sarah* (1980) and *L'Homme adultère* (1985).

Paule Darmon is a French artist, writer, and painter born in Casablanca, Morocco in 1945, who lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her father, Fernand Darmon, was a lawyer from Oran, Algeria, and her mother, Solange née Assouline, was a secretary and a hairdresser from Casablanca. Darmon, the oldest of their four children, left for France at seventeen. She studied painting in Grenoble at Marc Pessin's studio and has exhibited her work in Paris and New York, among other places. Her early figurative influence is from Bacon, Moore, and Schiele, while her later paintings are inspired from living and traveling in Spain and in South America, with sweeping and bold colors creating moving landscapes, presenting a new expression of light. Darmon sees her heritage as foundational to all her creative projects, and Albert Memmi's *Portrait du Colonisateur*, *Portrait du Colonisé* as influential in her understanding of self, family, and individuals.

Darmon is the author of various screenplays, a play, and two successful novels, *Baisse les yeux*, *Sarah* (1980) and *L'Homme adultère* (1985). In both novels, the main character is a woman of Moroccan heritage yearning to break free from the constrictions of familial expectations and provincial mentality. They can be read as a heavily autobiographical *Bildungsroman* where the young narrator struggles to emancipate herself from her family's Orient-style oppressive dynamics in defining moments from her childhood in Morocco and as a new immigrant to France, to marriage and adulthood. Traditional values are imposed by the mother and grandmother, as well as by her spouse—a Jew of European Ashkenazi origin. In both novels, the heroines have Ashkenazi husbands, and humorous and sometimes scathing observations about cultural difference abound. Both women navigate affectionate but domineering father figures, and want to please as much as to break away from the patriarch. Self-awareness of difference as Jewish women from North Africa is often juxtaposed to the imagined identity of the other—the French or the Ashkenazi Jew.

Darmon's themes place her firmly among French postcolonial Judeo-Maghrebi authors whose writing was born from the exile experienced at the moment of decolonization, and whose works mushroomed in the 1980s and 1990s (see Francophone Maghrebi Jewish Literature). As such they contributed to the growing diversity in immigrant narratives. Through their literary genre of "autojudeography," as coined by Thomas Nolden, these writers inscribe their difference in texts drawn from personal experiences of loss, memory, and the problematics of identity in exile.

Darmon, Paule. Correspondence with Nina B. Lichtenstein, July–October, 2017.

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“Paule Darmon: In Between Skies and Water”
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Nina Lichtenstein