

Moati, Nine

Nine Moati (b. 1937) is a prolific French novelist of Tunisian background. Her narratives focus on relationships between women, aiming to re-create the lost worlds of Sephardic Jewry. Her writing is an invaluable voice for Sephardic identity and memories, including the *Shoah* as experienced by the Jews of North Africa.

Nine Moati was born in Paris in 1937 to Tunisian parents. In 1941, her family escaped the Vichy regime of France by fleeing to Tunisia. When the Germans occupied Tunis, her father joined the resistance but was arrested and deported. She went to France in 1956 to pursue her education, but soon returned to Tunisia to care for her dying mother. This seminal event inspired her first novel, the autobiographical *Mon enfant ma mère* (1974), relating the intimate experience of transmitting a unique Judeo-Tunisian heritage and essence from mother to daughter. Returning to Paris, where she was responsible for the education of her younger brother Serge, Moati worked as a radio journalist and writer for *Elle* magazine before launching a productive career as a novelist. Serge went on to become a well-known journalist, writer, and director

The recurring characters and descriptive details of Moati's literary universe place each novel in a specific historical context as experienced by the Jews of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. She often evokes the Sephardi itinerary of passage between France and North Africa, situating her characters' experiences in the trials of World War II, thus shedding light on a little-known chapter of Tunisian history. Moati frequently depicts an oriental atmosphere in narratives redolent of sensuality and evocations of fragrant memories portraying a time of generosity, warmth, and traditions of *convivencia* between Jews and Muslims. The cast of characters she has created comprise a slate of memorable women who navigate their lives and friendships through historical events that have been formative for unique Sephardic trajectories in countries like Italy, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, India, and France. As with many contemporary francophone Jewish writers from the Maghreb, her works are also expressions of the Jewish experience of the colonial and post-colonial periods, including immigration to France and issues of acculturation and assimilation.

Two of her novels, *Mon enfant, ma mère* and *Deux femmes à Paris* (1998), were made into films, in 1981 and 2000 respectively. In 1990 Moati received the prestigious Prix Barthou from the Académie Française for her novel *La passagère sans étoile* (1989). In addition to the works already mentioned, her oeuvre includes *Le mariage de Lucie Enriquez* (1978), *Madame Fortunée* (1984), *Rose d'Alger* (1991), *Le palais de la Neva* (1993), *Perla de Mogador* (1997), *La maison de mirages* (2000), *Villa week-end* (2003), *Les belles de Tunis* (2004), *Une terrasse sur le Nil* (2004), *L'Orientale* (2005), *Hannah et les derniers Ottomans* (2006), and *La valise de Mademoiselle Lucie* (2008).

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Nina Lichtenstein