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Podcast: Queens Of Words: Moroccan Women Zajal Poets by Catherine Cartier

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Abstract:

Zajal, which flourished in 14th century Andalusia, is a genre of poetry composed in spoken Arabic—Moroccan Arabic/Darija in this case. The genre reemerged in postcolonial Morocco, when it was largely published in newspapers. The recent history of zajal may appear male dominated: the 1992 edition of *Afaq*, the Journal of the Moroccan Writer's Union, highlighted modern zajal poetry but included only one poem by a woman poet. But many Moroccan women who write zajal today look to history for inspiration, often citing Kharbousha, an iconic figure who resisted oppressive rulers through her poetry, as an example they seek to emulate. Beyond this, Facebook and TikTok, provide a rich and accessible realm for sharing poetry. My research, grounded in interviews with zajalat (women zajal poets) and close readings of their work, examines how and why Moroccan women write zajal poetry today, and what their experiences on and off the page can tell us about Darija as a literary language.