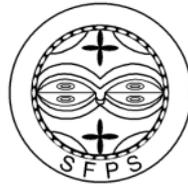


# *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*

## A Biannual Publication



### **Editor's note**

SARAH ARENS 2

### **Article**

CHARLES FORSDICK, 'Encounters with ... *Culture and Imperialism*' 3

### **Review Essay**

yasser elhariry, Review of *Abdelkébir Khatibi: Postcolonialism, Transnationalism and Culture in the Maghreb and Beyond* 11

### **Book Reviews**

Spencer D. Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912–1956*  
KAOUTAR GHILANI 15

Rosalind Silvester, *Yin Chen's Fiction: An Aesthetics of Non-Belonging*  
SHUANGY LI 16

Erin Twohig, *Contesting the Classroom: Reimagining Education in Moroccan and Algerian Literatures*  
KHALID LYAMLAHY 18

Rachel Douglas, *Making The Black Jacobins: C.L.R. James and the Drama of History*  
JONAS ROSS KJÆRGÅRD 20

## **Editor's note**

There we are, in 2021, in year two of a deadly pandemic, political upheaval and ecological disaster in many parts of the world that concern – directly or indirectly – the contributors, readers, and editors of the *Bulletin*. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you, for all your patience, support, and loyalty, we would not be able to keep going without you. With this, slightly belated, issue we are delighted to introduce a new series called ‘Encounters with ...’, where scholars revisit works that have had a major impact on their research. We are honoured that Professor Charles Forsdick has agreed to start off the series with a wonderfully personal and incisive essay reflecting on Edward W. Said’s seminal *Culture and Imperialism*. If you are interested in contributing an article about a critic, a particular book or article that has had a lasting impact on your thinking and writing, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Bonne lecture,

SARAH ARENS  
UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

## Review of *Abdelkébir Khatibi: Postcolonialism, Transnationalism and Culture in the Maghreb and Beyond*

Edited by JANE HIDDLESTON and KHALID LYAMLAHY. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020. 432 pp. Hb £95. ISBN: 978-1-789622-33-1.

As surprising as it sounds, Jane Hiddleston and Khalid Lyamlahy's hard-hitting collection of essays on Abdelkébir Khatibi represents the first major English-language publication devoted to the Moroccan thinker and his work. Like every time I put on a different Miles Davis record, surprise is what I feel whenever I read a page of Khatibi, or a page of criticism on Khatibi. In this sense, there can be no greater homage to, or recognition of, Khatibian destabilisation and instigation than the editors' thoughtful interfolding of elements of surprise into the collection's structure. Stabbing *sursauts* of jolt after intellectual jolt permeate the pages of the book.

A darker, different surprise lies hidden, couched deep in all of this, a kind of unkind critical *sursaut*—what Khatibi once called *cécité* in the context of french literary-critical norms with regard to postindependence Maghrebi literature. It is no small irony that the blindness and deafness that Khatibi alludes to throughout his work have haunted the legacy of his own *œuvre*. Though he needs no introduction in francophone postcolonial circles, one would have thought that his generic hybridity as a writer—his relentless pacifist invasions and countercolonisations of thought and language—could long ago have provided creative answers to some of the most difficult questions in literary and humanistic inquiry beyond our field.

Of course, critics like Matt Reeck and Françoise Lionnet have rebutted the longstanding dismissive smugness of intellectual attitudes toward Khatibi, and Hiddleston and Lyamlahy's collection bolsters the ongoing uphill effort that aspires toward nothing less than the total rehabilitation of Khatibi across 'Critical Thinking: From Decolonization to Transnationalism', 'Cultural and Philosophical Dialogues', and 'Æsthetics and Art in the Islamic World and Beyond'. These titles for the first three of the collection's four parts do nothing if not impress Khatibi's *obliqueness* (one of his favourite words) as a thinker. He cuts across, slashes through categories. Each of the book's parts conveys a never-ending sense of iterological<sup>16</sup> movement and fluidity between concepts. The fourth part, 'Translations', includes fresh renditions of selections from Khatibi by the first English-language translator of his poetry, Matt Reeck, as well as by Olivia C. Harrison. Here, Reeck and Harrison's hands at the translational task constitute an invaluable contribution to the emergent project of translating Khatibi into English. For translation, too, is never-ending in its engagement with the kinships of lingual flux.

Khatibi's writings are notoriously difficult if not impossible to classify, an observation that forms an arabesque or filigree running throughout the book. Thanks to this, there is naturally an enormous amount of elasticity in Hiddleston and Lyamlahy's editorial groupings. Their categorical freedoms are productive, since all of the essays, when read as an ensemble, at the same time, provide a remarkable articulation of Khatibi's thought that constantly stresses *inter-* and *trans-* as generative prefixes for the cultural, lingual, national, colonial, or semiotic. In fact, *inter-* and *trans-* poke many holes in the blind eyes of the Western literary and humanistic enterprise. Like the dyes that pattern and hue the Moroccan carpets discussed in Lyamlahy's contribution to the collection, and to use the kind of sanguine imagery beloved by Khatibi, everything bleeds into everything else—words, languages, signs, objects, artefacts, texts, national borders, identities and communities, both real and imagined (but almost always imagined).

Khatibi's infinite cool, as this book shows, lies in his constant rejection of the hippest

---

<sup>16</sup> With his tongue in his cheek, Michel Butor writes, 'Je propose donc une nouvelle science (elles poussent comme des champignons, ces années-ci, on en récolte à l'ombre de toutes les Sorbonnes; quelques-unes parmi la moisson finiront bien par porter fruit), étroitement liée à la littérature, celle des déplacements humains, que je m'amuse à nommer itérologie' ('Le voyage et l'écriture', *Romantisme*, 4 (1972), 4–19 [7]).

paradigms, constructs, and theories of the moment—like... postcolonialism! As Hiddleston and Lyamlahy highlight in their introduction (an excellent and eminently teachable overview of Khatibi), he once ‘insist[ed] that he has not read postcolonial theory and has little to say about it’, a rejection that ‘appears [...] to be based on the misapprehension that postcolonial thought has not properly mourned the passing period of colonial rule’ (p. 31). At a time when Homi Bhabha’s words echoed in the hallways of globish academe, as Alfonso de Toro’s contribution displays (pp. 126–130), Khatibi’s interest in unfashionable elsewhere was already taking modes of thinking associated with a field or theory or school (structuralist, poststructuralist, deconstructionist, postcolonialist) toward unexpected and exciting new places. The volume’s most surprising interventions, then, nudge us away from unavoidable if seminal Khatibian notions like *bi-langue*, *pensée-autre*, *double critique*, and *étranger professionnel*, away from his dialogues with Jacques Derrida, and toward his many underexplored texts and concepts (and Hiddleston and Lyamlahy’s handy bibliography of Khatibi’s œuvres offers a thoughtfully organised chronological blueprint for where we may go next). Such essays dare to perform the kind of creative and speculative criticism in literary and cultural studies that must be the future of our field. They showcase a retuning of the ear, a reshaping of the tongue, and the belief that, in this case, Khatibi can guide, if not take, us there.

Some of this newly uncovered terrain actually articulates a refutation of some of postcolonialism’s most hallowed figures (Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Memmi) and concepts (nation-building, identity formation). For instance, in her contribution to the volume, Olivia C. Harrison dwells upon how Khatibi’s ‘tricontinental dimensions’ lend themselves to transcolonial dynamics ‘structured through horizontal forms of relationality’ (p. 152) that ‘look beyond France to forge transversal relations with the rest of the Third World’ (p. 153). Her reading of Khatibi’s anti-Zionist pamphlet *Vomito blanco* (1974), one of his most polemical and ‘seldom discussed’ (p. 163) texts, not only brings the Palestinian question under the purview and critical-ethical imperative of francophone postcolonial studies but shows how the text actively ‘refutes Jean-Paul Sartre’s “conditional Zionism” and the “impasse” of Memmi’s anticolonial Zionism’ (p. 158). At the same time, *Vomito blanco* offers a remarkable double critique of both Zionism and pan/Arab nationalisms (pp. 155, 159, 170).

If dropping the Maghrebi intellectual like this in the midst of one of the planet’s most impassioned political debates weren’t enough, Edwige Tamalet Talbayev entirely uproots Khatibi from all land-based attachments to have him bear on the millennial space of the Mediterranean Sea. In this regard, she signals a riveting departure from Khatibi’s well-known dialogues with Derrida on language and franco-Maghrebi identity. While Alison Rice astutely observes that ‘if language in general is a liberating space when it has been freed from belonging’, and that ‘Khatibi contends that the French text of his creation is a freer space to inhabit as a writer because the tongue of composition remains a second language’ (p. 75); and while Dominique Combe, in his magisterial and ludic portrayal of the Khatibi-Derrida dialogues, suggests that ‘Derrida and Khatibi’s relationship is one of both imitation and rivalry, not to say jealousy (a word often used about language itself), against the background of a friendly complicity’ (p. 210); Talbayev counters that ‘Khatibi ascribes the origin of his bi-directional reading’ of the Maghreb’s ‘intrinsic plurality [...] to a trans-Mediterranean lineage running from the Syriac and the Greek in ancient times to Arabic and Islamic thought’ (pp. 90–91). Khatibi’s ‘unpredictable swerve’ (p. 92) thus ‘draw[s] from the fluctuation of the Mediterranean as a critical method’, which effectively moves us past all manner of *bi-langue*, or patterns of North African de/colonial de/territorialisations, and closer to a more mindful ‘prob[ing of] the form’ of ‘memorial idiom [...] beyond the comfort of Manichean visions of belonging and being’ (pp. 95–96). Khatibi’s ‘triangulation of desire unit[es] Morocco, France and Spain in a cross-Mediterranean “*chaînon indestructible de filiation symbolique*” [“*indestructible chain of symbolic filiation*”]’ (pp. 105–106). In a final twist, this vision for a new Mediterranean (p. 108) becomes, in a double chiasmatic return (p. 107), intercontinental and interscriptural (p. 106), leaving *bi-langue* and *Amour bilingue* (1983) far, far behind.

Other contributors to the book abandon Mediterranean littorals altogether. Nao Sawada

and Charles Forsdick's essays jump ship; they all but strip Khatibi of the Maghreb and the Mediterranean space. They plunge him headfirst into the unknown, placing him in dialogue with Japanese literature and sinology respectively. Sawada shrewdly delineates three problematics in Khatibi's *Ombres japonaises* (1988)—'exoticism', 'the body and language', and 'Eros and Thanatos' (p. 221)—that isolate his encounter with 'the imaginary of the other whose thought is ideographic' (p. 226). Invoking Victor Segalen's influential notion of the *exote*, Sawada insists that 'Khatibi's exploration of [Junichirô] Tanizaki is not the result of a naïve trip made from an Orientalist standpoint, but an encounter with an *Other*, an Other that is absolutely different, an absolute Other' (pp. 221–222). Forsdick also pursues this line of thinking, specifically how Segalen inducts Khatibi into the surprising ways 'in which French is shaped lexically and syntactically by the presence of Tahitian' (p. 184)—or even Maori. Segalen aims to discern traces left by colonisation and destruction, 'an objective manifested not least in the very language of [his] text, "cette accumulation lancinante du lexique maori" ["this haunting accumulation of Maori words"]' (p. 185). Khatibi's unsettling brushes with Japanese, Tahitian, and Maori reveal 'the particular richness—both conceptual and creative—of their achronological encounter' (p. 190) in his imaginary. His 'achronological dialogue' (p. 195) with world languages followed no preprogrammed training and were quite frequently long-gestating—then sudden, unanticipated—discoveries along already unpredictable intellectual swerves.

Khatibi's interest in the far-flung and far-afield stems from one of the most understudied aspects of his persona and intellectual trajectory. Andrew Stafford's deeply researched articulation of Khatibi's sociological writings early in his career—a role frequently given no more than lip-service in most discussions of Khatibi—demonstrates to what extent he was 'a pioneering sociologist and essayist' (p. 43). Stafford depicts a striking portrait of Khatibi as a 'Marxian sociologist, trained in Paris, decolonizing Moroccan sociology and aware of the interventionist, albeit "indirect", responsibility of sociology' (p. 48). Delving deep into Khatibi's role at the helm of Moroccan sociological publications in the 1960s and 1970s, and his relentless engagements toward a praxis of decolonising European sociological archives, ideologies, and methodologies, Stafford showcases how figures as eclectic and varied as Ibn Khaldūn, Karl Marx, and Émile Durkheim 'are all combined—or left floating—in Khatibi's thought' (p. 63).

The floating indeterminacy of the essay, as one of Khatibi's privileged modes of writing, and which Stafford characterises as 'a writing of prose that could easily be poetry' (p. 52), lends itself to dreamier contributions by Assia Belhabib, Alfonso de Toro, and Lucy Stone McNeece. Out of a global backdrop of cultural commodification and mercantilisation, Belhabib extracts an 'added aesthetic value of the sign' (p. 113), a kind of 'galloping technology' (p. 114) and 'frenzy of communication' (p. 115) that amount to 'an aesthetics of transparency' simply shunned by Khatibi's novels (p. 116). In an extension of the Khatibian resistance to the global hegemony of aesthetic transparency, de Toro lauds what he dubs Khatibi's 'epistemological accent', or 'living, thinking and writing at the intersection or interface of systems [...] to belong to two or more cultures and to live with several identities' (p. 126). This revolves around an expansive series of conceptual idioms coined by de Toro himself, namely 'performative pluri-language' (p. 129), 'cosmo-humanism' (pp. 131–132), and 'multi-polyphonic [...] plural universality' (p. 134). McNeece furthers Khatibi's intellectual affinities along the expansive historical continuum of global mythology, educing in the process his attachment to 'esoteric or hermetic traditions' (p. 264), such that he succeeds at 'reinstating some of their ancient functions' (p. 264) and 'incantatory force' (p. 263). The writer becomes "'subject to" to the process of writing for which he often seems to be a *medium*' (p. 264)—a 'scribe' (p. 265), in the magical sense of the term.

Rounding out the collection are Khalid Lyamlahy and Jane Hiddleston's own essays. In a remarkable reading of the Moroccan carpet as 'an intricate web of representations, images and meaning' (p. 279) that 'allows for a circulation of signs' (p. 280)—in other words, an 'intersemiotic surface' (p. 283)—Lyamlahy convincingly shows how Khatibi uses the carpet as an artefact that rehabilitates 'religious practice, feminine agency and narrative techniques' (p. 280), as a figure for his own writerly processes, and as a continuation of 'his broader project of decolonizing Moroccan

culture and promoting its popular forms' (p. 281). One of the most fecund concepts mobilised by Lyamlahy in this essay is the alingual (p. 285) as a trigger for a wide range of nonverbal 'sensorial experiences' wherein 'the intersemiotic gives way to synesthesia' (p. 286). The pursuit of sensorial or sensical loss or disequilibrium in Khatibi is given fantastic panache in Hiddleston's closing essay, in which she argues for 'the open-ended and allusive effects of the interaction between different kinds of signs' (p. 307), and 'art as a play on forms transforming themselves and reflecting back on themselves' (p. 308). She engages a rich corpus of material that goes from the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus (pp. 309–310) to 'non-iconic forms of representation' (p. 315), which amounts to 'not so much a strategy for practical decolonization as a world view of a completely different order' (p. 320), and a 'deconstructive view of aesthetic creation' that is intimately 'associated with a form of Islamic thought' (p. 322).

But all ain't hunky-dory in KhatibiLand. Sawada concludes his essay by lamenting that 'Khatibi's vision of the world remains very close to that of the West', such that 'the Maghreb—this other West—meets Japan—this other East, the Far East' (p. 231) in what, to me, amounts to a missed connection on the New York subway craigslist. And missed connections there are aplenty in Khatibi. For a critic so thoroughly obsessed with *inter-* and *trans-*, his notion of *aimance*, for instance, maintains an unflinching gender binary that is reflected even at the level of systematic structural partitions and sequestrations between *hommes* and *femmes* in his *aimance* sequences. There is plenty to be thought and unthought here, and while Hiddleston points to the term's usage in Derrida (p. 312), it remains to be seen whether *aimance* as a transhistorical, intertextual, psychological, and philosophical concept can be usefully discussed in the context of queer theory. But Khatibi, I, hopeless, fear, is irremediably straight.

One dimension to Khatibi, on the other hand, that this volume finally brings to light is his oblique attachment to Sufism. Rice (p. 72), Combe (p. 215), Sawada (pp. 227, 229), McNeece (pp. 273–276), and Hiddleston (p. 310) all evoke mysticism's many allures for Khatibi, but it is Rim Feriani, Jasmina Bolfek-Radovani, and Debra Kelly's essay that—beyond Khatibi's overarching and unrelenting attachment to Islamic art in all its manifestations—most fully unearths the role of mystical traditions in his literary production. The authors artfully abstract a certain pointillist aesthetic in Khatibi, a kind of 'writing in points' (p. 243) that places him within a strong Sufi tradition (p. 246), largely indebted to Ibn 'Arabī and the concept of the mystical vision. They focus on *La Mémoire tatouée* (1971) and 'Khatibi's own practice of deciphering signs' to draw out the particular 'ways in which the meaning of visions "migrates" from the Sufi Islamic heritage' (p. 248), and how they 'repose on an intersection between rationalist and Sufi mystical discourses' (p. 260).

Hiddleston and Lyamlahy's book is positioned to be of immense interest to students and scholars of postcolonialism who are invested in the complex intersections of politics, literature, language, and identity, both within and beyond the francosphere. One of the book's most precious contributions to (francophone) postcolonialism is how it points to fecund crossovers with adjacent fields of scholarship, and gestures toward potentially trailblazing interventions. And so I close with these comments on gender, sexuality, theology, and mysticism because they represent a vast, underexplored nexus of inquiry in Khatibi criticism. As Hiddleston and Lyamlahy insist in their introduction, Khatibi has always sought the theoretical dignity of popular expressions of culture (p. 7), and, as I said above, creative and speculative criticism in literary and cultural studies must be the future of our field. The next chapter in Maghreb studies may very well just be engrained in the instigative 'disciplinary eclecticism' (p. 26), 'disregard for cultural frontiers' (p. 27), 'unearth[ing] of] local forms of eclecticism' (Talbayev, p. 90), 'culture of eclectic pleasures' (Belhabib, p. 114), and 'eclectic reading practices that underpin the progressive *bricolage*' (Forsdick, p. 182) of *Khatibi-Pop!*

yasser elhariry  
DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

## ***Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies***

Contributions on any topic related to Francophone Postcolonial Studies are invited for inclusion in future issues. Authors should submit electronically two copies of their article, 4,000–8,000 words maximum, in English or French to a member of the editorial team. Articles should conform in presentation to the guidelines in the *MIRA Stylebook*, providing references in footnotes, rather than the author-date system. All articles submitted to the *BFPS* will be refereed by two scholars of international reputation, drawn from the advisory and editorial boards. To facilitate the anonymity of the refereeing process, authors are asked that their manuscript (other than the title page) contains no clue as to their identity. Book reviews (between 600 and 1000 words in length) and conference reports (500 words max.) should also be sent to the editorial team.

**The deadline for the receipt of articles to be included in the autumn issue is 1 August 2021.**

Editorial Team

Editor: Sarah Arens

E-mail: saraharens9@gmail.com

Book Reviews Editor: Jemima Paine

E-mail: jemima.paine@liverpool.ac.uk

Advisory Board

Patrick Crowley

Charles Forsdick

Pierre-Philippe Fraiture

Nicki Hitchcott

David Murphy

The SFPS logo, designed by Caomhán Ó Scolaí, is based on a Téké mask from the Upper Sanga region (Congo-Brazzaville).

### **SFPS Membership**

#### **Membership of the Society includes:**

- Subscription to *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* (published by Liverpool University Press), and the biannual electronic *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*;
- Reduced rates on the purchase of back copies of ASCALF/SFPS publications;
- A complimentary copy of new titles appearing in the SFPS critical studies series;
- Admission to the annual SFPS conference (and other SFPS-sponsored events) at reduced rates;
- Electronic mailings on conferences, study days and publications of interest to SFPS members;
- Access to SFPS grants for conference/colloquia organization is available to SFPS members;
- To join SFPS and renew your membership, please download the membership form, which lists membership rates for the current year: <http://www.sfps.ac.uk/>.