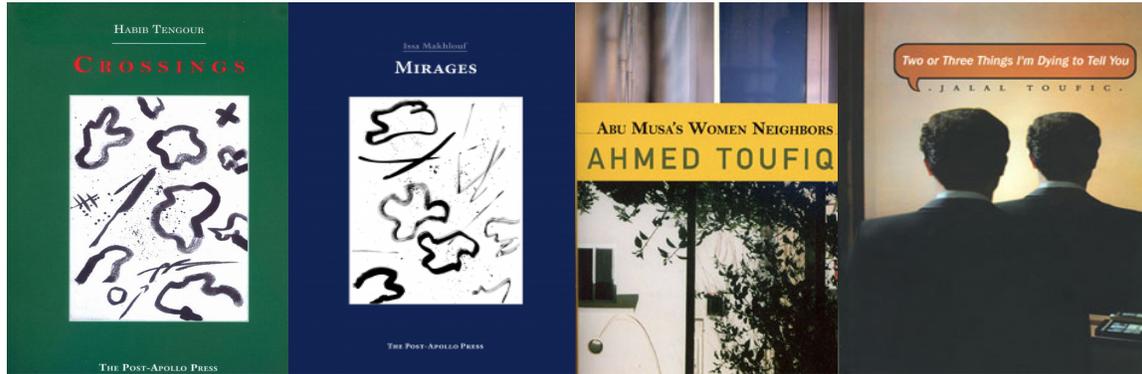


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The risks one is willing to take: Arab writing from Post-Apollo Press



Crossings, Habib Tengour

Poetry, Translated from the French by Marilyn Hacker

Post-Apollo, 2013

\$17 USD ISBN 978-0942996-80-7, 80pp

Mirages, Issa Makhlouf

Poetry, Translated from the Arabic by Alicia F. Lam

Post-Apollo, 2015

\$18 USD ISBN 978-0-942996-85-2, 128pp

Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You, Jalal Toufic

Essay/Prose, Post-Apollo, 2005

\$20 USD ISBN 978-0-942996-57-9, 150pp

Abu Musa's Women Neighbors, Ahmed Toufic

Novel, Translated from the Arabic by Roger Allen

Post-Apollo, 2006

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Supplementary Materials

Biographical Notes

Habib Tengour was born in 1947 in Mostaganem, Eastern Algeria, and raised on the Arab and Berber voices of marketplace storytellers. He has lived most of his life between Algeria and Paris, where he now lives. Trained as an anthropologist and sociologist, he has taught at universities in both countries, while emerging over the years as one of the Maghreb's most forceful and visionary contemporary Francophone voices. Himself a specialist in the literature of the Maghreb, he edited and prefaced the edition of Mohammed Dib's complete poems. His own work has been translated into German and Italian; a collection was translated into English by Pierre Joris in 2012. Author of poetry, fiction, nonfiction narratives and essays, his books include *Le Vieux de la Montagne*, *Gravité de l'ange*, *L'Arc et la cicatrice* and *L'Ancêtre cinéphile*.

Marilyn Hacker is the author of more than twenty five books of poetry, essays and translations from the French. She lives in Paris.

Issa Makhlouf is a Lebanese writer and poet living in Paris. He holds a Doctorate in Cultural and Social Anthropology from the Sorbonne University. He was special adviser for social and cultural affairs at the United Nations, New York (the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, 2006-2007). At present, he is the News Director of the Radio Orient News Division in Paris. He has translated many literary texts into Arabic from both French and Spanish. His work has been translated into French, English, Spanish, German, Italian, Greek and Japanese.

Alicia F. Lam is Venezuelan-born biologist currently residing in New York City.

Jalal Toufic is a thinker and a mortal to death. He was born in 1962 in Beirut or Baghdad and died before dying in 1989 in Evanston, Illinois. He is the author of *Distracted* (1991; 2nd ed., 2003), *Vampires: An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (1993; 2nd ed., 2003), *Over-Sensitivity* (1996; 2nd ed., 2009), *Forthcoming* (2000), *Undying Love, or Love Dies* (2002), *'Áshûrâ': This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (2005), *Undeserving Lebanon* (2007), *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* (2009), *Graziella: The Corrected Edition* (2009), *What Is the Sum of Recurrently?* (2010), and *The Portrait of the Pubescent Girl: A Rite of Non-Passage* (2011). Many of his books, most of which were published by Forthcoming Books, are available for download as PDF files at his website: www.jalaltoufic.com.

Moroccan novelist and historian **Ahmed Toufiq** worked as a professor of history in the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences in Rabat (1970-1989). He was later appointed director of the Institute of African Studies at the Mohammed V University. In 1995 he became director of the National Library of Morocco. His many novels, including *Jarat Abi Musa*, *Shajarat Hinna' Wa Qamar* (*A Tree of Henna and a Moon*) and *Al Sayl*, are well-known in the Islamic world.

Roger Allen is a professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania and is the author of an *Introduction to Arabic Literature* (2000) and *The Arabic Novel* (1994).

Short Descriptions

Praise for *Crossings*

Beginning with the astonishing prologue poem, “Conversation with Mohammed Dib,” followed by four long, spectacular poems, each a small book in itself, Habib Tengour’s *Crossings* takes us through various, lavishly depicted, geographical, political, historical, spiritual, moral, and aesthetic spaces that we’ve never been in before. “My tribe that cannot be worn down continues,” the poet says. His tribe being—in Ezra Pound’s phrase describing poets—“the antennae of the race.” *Crossings* is an amazing book by a brilliant poet, amazingly and brilliantly translated by Marilyn Hacker, who is at her characteristic best, which is the best.

—Lawrence Joseph

Praise for *Abu Musa’s Women Neighbors*

In fourteenth-century Morocco, Shamah works as a servant in the house of Chief Judge Ibn al-Hafid. She is a favorite of the judge’s senior wife, Al-Tahirah, who takes the beautiful young woman under her wing. Thus, Shamah becomes quite accomplished in many things, such as household management, literary and legal matters, and politesse. Those skills, along with her physical beauty, garner her a surprise marriage proposal from Supreme Judge Abu Salim al Jawra’i. The wedding is arranged posthaste, and before she knows what hit her, the former servant girl is herself ordering servants around in a fine home, surrounded by beautiful things. Conditions of her life change rapidly, and before very long, Shamah, widowed by al-Jawra-i, falls in love with the handsome Andalusian mosaic craftsman ‘Ali Sancho. They are married and move into the city’s Oil Hostelry, where Shamah feels an inexplicable bond with their neighbor, the reclusive mystic Abu Musa. It is there that corruptive power, insatiable greed, and religion clash with mysticism in Toufiq’s fascinating novel.

—Donna Chavez, Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved.

Abu Musa’s Women Neighbors is an unforgettable book. Just as Abu Musa, its silent protagonist, steps out of the story in the last paragraph only to live on, in the physical site of his burial as in the spiritual life of the city, Toufiq’s moving text is animated by the echo of lives and events that live on, as if narrated from the perspective of another world. Sidi Musa’s sanctuary stands today overlooking the ocean, a site of healing in the midst of a poor urban sprawl; the retelling of this 14th Century tale spills out into the present, summons us.

Ahmed Toufiq’s first literary work (followed by three more, in Arabic), *Abu Musa’s Women Neighbors* reinvents the genre of hagiographic and mystical tales in the contemporary form of an Arabic novel. At the threshold of history and fiction (the author is also a historian), it pushes the limits of both, towards an artistic creation which is at once a vivid restitution of life, and a journey into the intricacies of the human soul, the passions and abuses of power and government, the enigma of destiny. As we follow the

vicissitudes of Shamah, her unfolding life and fate within the fate of the Moroccan city of Salé, its people and rulers, its fortunes and ruin, its losses, we encounter the inspiration, the tones, and the style of traditional storytelling, a poetic, religious and historical tradition that eludes assimilation into Euro-American terms. Yet, unlike other contemporary reinvestments of vernacular and mystical themes in Maghribi literature, this text is not addressed to a European or a nostalgic gaze. Ahmed Toufiq writes for his fellow citizens, his “neighbors”. And yet his way of telling the story, and his exploration of the turns of history and the meanders of the human soul, make this work accessible and involving for an international public. Thanks to this artful translation, American readers have now access to this passionate tale, a beautiful invitation to Arabic literature and Islamic culture.

—Stefania Pandolfo, University of California, Berkeley

Praise for *Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You*

Resurrection through simulation—an end time fantasy in real time. The graves open... The dead walk... Toufiq is a sort of poststructuralist spiritualist, a critical medium for the peculiar specters that haunt the society of the spectacle.

—Ben Lerner for *First Intensity*, #21, 2006

Jalal Toufic is an amazing writer. He documents the moves of consciousness in a way that leads the reader ever deeper, from impasse to illusion to new impasse—turning the trap of ‘what can’t be named’ into a true paradise.

—Richard Foreman

Reviews

“The poetry’s wit surges throughout, but it is carried on by its precision (Tengour’s and Hacker’s) and its ordinary moments of beauty,” says M. Lynx Qualey in *The Ridiculous Beauty of One of Habib Tengour’s Crossings at Arabic Literature* (in English),

<https://arablit.org/2013/09/22/the-ridiculous-beauty-of-one-of-habib-tengours-crossings/>

“Ivy Writers – Marilyn Hacker and Habib Tengour, Lucy Binnersley,” *Paris Lit Up*,

<http://parislitup.com/ivy-writer-marilyn-hacker-and-habib-tengour/>

Tengour “touches upon several themes in these prose poems, some of which are the connections between travel and absence and the use of violence and beauty to question nature, its creatures and mysteries,” says Angele Ellis in “Dreaming at the Crossroads of Cultures: Mirages” at *Al Jadid*,

<http://www.aljadid.com/content/dreaming-crossroads-cultures-mirages>

Links

Excerpt from *Crossings at Words Without Borders*,

<http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/crossing>

“Marilyn Hacker’s Translation Habib Tengour’s *Crossings* Longlisted for 2014 NTA,” *Oye! Times*,

<http://www.oyetimes.com/lifestyle/books/68443-marilyn-hacker-s-translation-habib-tengour-s-crossings-longlisted-for-2014-nta>

“Habib Tengour: 'Maghrebien Surrealism [Essay & Manifesto]” at *Jacket2*,

<https://jacket2.org/commentary/habib-tengour-maghrebien-surrealism-essay-manifesto>

Official website of the writer Issa Makhlouf

<http://www.issamakhlouf.fr/contact/autour-de-mirages/>

Issa Makhlouf pour « Lettre aux deux sœurs » et « Mirages »

<https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/ca-rime-quoi/issa-makhlouf-pour-lettre-aux-deux-soeurs-et-mirages>

Jalal Toufic discusses letters, laconic writing, and paraphrasing in “An Interview with Jalal Toufic, Aaron Kunin” at *Rain Taxi*, <http://www.raintaxi.com/an-interview-with-jalal-toufic/>

What is the Sum of Recurrently? Jalal Toufic at *e-flux*, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/19/75761/what-is-the-sum-of-recurrently/>

“Lebanese artist, filmmaker, and writer Jalal Toufic who, when citing his origins, references being the “son of an Iraqi father and a Palestinian mother,” is a key actor at the core of a group of Beirut artists and intellectuals making critical work about political and cultural life in Lebanon,” “Introducing the series: ‘Translation is Impossible. Let’s do it!’” at *Six Degrees*, New Museum, <http://www.newmuseum.org/blog/view/introducing-the-series-translation-is-impossible-let-s-do-it>

HOMEWORKS IV, Sfeir-Semler Gallery

<http://www.sfeir-semler.com/beirut/exhibitions-beirut/2008/2008-05-31-homeworks-iv.html>

“Should I have two profiles then, as a writer and as a video artist?” asks Jalal Toufic in “Profile,” <http://www.jalaltoufic.com/profile.htm>

“One of the decisive highlights of my time spent in the Buffalo Poetics Program was hearing Leslie Scalapino deliver a paper entitled ‘Fiction and the Present Without Basis,’ ostensibly a response to the scholarly journal *symploke* about the future of narrative. The editors asked ‘Does fiction continuing the tradition of modernist innovation have any reality for emergent political groups and cultures?’ and ‘Can the novel establish itself in the present of global capitalism without abandoning its formal distinctness?’ Scalapino curiously responded by taking Jalal Toufic as her subject, locating in his conceptual interweavings ‘the “destruction” of action and experience as a basis of writing,’” says Michael Cross in his Introduction to Jalal Toufic at *The Disinhibitor*, <http://disinhibitor.blogspot.com/2012/07/introduction-to-jalal-toufic.html>

Relevant News

“In Lebanon, gay activism is fueling a new conversation about democracy and civil rights,” *The Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/05/20/in-lebanon-gay-activism-is-fueling-a-new-conversation-about-democracy-and-civil-rights/?utm_term=.f66d4f8065a2

“Beirut Activists Launch Heritage Watch Day to Defend Threatened Historical Sites,” *Global Voices*, <https://globalvoices.org/2017/05/17/beirut-activists-launch-heritage-watch-day-to-defend-threatened-historical-sites/#>

“All-pink Silent Room creates quiet sanctuary beside a Beirut highway,” *Dezeen*, <https://www.dezeen.com/2017/05/27/nathalie-harb-silent-room-quiet-sanctuary-highway-beirut-design-week-pavilion/>

“Africa: Sub-Saharan Africans Trade Europe for Morocco,” *AllAfrica*, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201705240684.html>

“What's behind Morocco's street protests?,” *Al Jazeera*,
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2017/05/morocco-street-protests-170519194032194.html>

“Morocco, Nigeria take forward ambitious gas pipeline project,” *Business Standard*,
http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/morocco-nigeria-take-forward-ambitious-gas-pipeline-project-117052401652_1.html

“Morocco phosphate ship held in Panama over Western Sahara challenge: officials,” *Reuters*,
<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-westernsahara-morocco-idUSKCN18E2YA>

“As oil prices languish, signs emerge of Algeria changing its energy ways,” *Reuters*,
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-algeria-energy-analysis-idUSKBN18K1IJ>

“Algeria votes amid expected low turnout,” *Al Jazeera*,
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/05/algeria-voter-turnout-expected-legislative-poll-170503064333032.html>

Discussion Questions

- Pull some favorite quotes from the four texts. What do they have in common? Where do they diverge?
- Discuss the roles colors play in the four texts. What are the similarities and differences between them? Do the nuances of colors correspond to the tone and mood of the writing, and if so, how so? How do the colors inform your experience of the text?
- What roles do physical experiences--vertigo, legs that are entwined, eyes that are blindfolded, etc.--play in *Crossings*?
- What role does silence or quiet play in *Crossings*? How do the various rhythms of the text work with the volumes of sound in the book?
- There are recurring themes of death in the four texts. What are they telling us? What role does the afterlife play in these texts?
- Globalization and political economy are significant topics in these four texts, whether directly through trade or less directly through film and image. How do these transnational economies address and wield power? What else do they do in these books?
- What do the figures of “this particular Tartar” and “this particular thief” in *Crossings* and *Mirages*, respectively, tell the reader?
- What is the significance of water in *Mirages*?
- Come up with some interview questions for Jalal Toufic. Ask him them. What does he say?
- Jalal Toufic says, “I believe writers collaborate with each other and with artists and filmmakers and video makers in an untimely manner — at least I do.” Begin a collaboration with Toufic. Finish it.
- What is the role of drought in relation to wealth in *Abu Musa’s Women Neighbors*? Does “Bread could simply not be bought, even for a whole cluster of gold jewelry” remind you of anything?

- How does the figure of foraging Abu Musa affect the city of Salé? If Abu Musa wrote a poem, how might it go?

