



Celine Piser
University of California, Davis

SILENT MULTILINGUALISM: LANGUAGE POLITICS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Abstract

This article analyzes multilingual literature as an expression of Francophone Mediterranean identity, focusing in particular on twentieth-century and contemporary models that call into question traditional formulations of French national identity based in theories of shared memory and history. Drawing on the colonial roots of Mediterranean identity as imagined by Albert Camus and Gabriel Audisio, this study reads multilingual literature by Abdelkebir Khatibi and Assia Djébar to explore how the concept of Mediterranean identity has been reclaimed and mobilized to serve a culturally and linguistically hybrid population. Although Khatibi and Djébar write in French, their work engages critically with other languages through both context and content, exposing the inadequacy of postcolonial monolingual expression. By redefining “Francophone” as multilingual, these authors redraw the Mediterranean region as an alternative linguistic space that can better reflect the legacy of colonialism and immigration that influences Francophone literature and culture.

Keywords:

Algerian literature ♦ postcolonial literature ♦ Audisio ♦ Khatibi ♦ Djébar ♦ Mediterraneanism ♦ Camus

In an effort to address contemporary demographics, certain political and literary debates about immigration in France resituate French national identity in the transnational scope of the Mediterranean. The concept of a Francophone Mediterranean identity was particularly useful to nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics arguing for the reconfiguration of the Mediterranean as a transnational colonial space. Yet recent Francophone fiction revisits this trope in a new way. These contemporary narratives call into question traditional formulations

of French national identity, based in theories of shared memory and history, by exploring more productive forms of French transnationalism that move beyond Orientalist and colonial constructions. By redefining “Francophone” as multilingual, authors such as Abdelkebir Khatibi and Assia Djebar refute the linguistic and cultural boundaries imposed by nationalism while engaging critically with the French colonial mythology of Mediterranean identity, thereby rewriting the future of the Francophone Mediterranean.

This article will trace language politics in Mediterranean literature from colonial to postcolonial authors, focusing on the colonial-era elision of Arabic and how this has been addressed through silent multilingualism in contemporary texts. This study aims to analyze the Mediterranean region as a loosely joined transnational space, focusing on Algeria as a case study of that region. Algeria functions as a window into the North African Mediterranean due both to its multicultural composition and its colonial history, interrelated elements of Algeria’s identity. Edwige Talbayev’s description of Algeria’s colonial demographics underscores its ability to represent the Mediterranean region:

Since the onset of French colonization, successive waves of immigrants from the northern Mediterranean had settled in French North Africa. Maltese, Corsicans, Catalans, Provençal French, Spaniards and Italians, for instance, constituted a non-negligible part of the early colonizers of French Algeria. It was not until 1896 that Algerian-born Europeans outnumbered foreign-born immigrants, which made Algeria a land of immigration par excellence. (Talbayev 2007: 363)

This “land of immigration,” home to a mix of Mediterranean Europeans, Arabs, and Berbers, gave birth to a political, sociological, and literary imaginary that claimed to represent a “Mediterranean” identity, a movement known as “Mediterraneanism.”¹

Critics have referred to the Mediterranean region as a geographic, ecological, nautical, and economic entity, but the term “Mediterraneanism” mobilizes the region as a cultural unit, suggesting that there is an inherent value in discussing the region’s many cultures and languages as a united front, or even as a metaphor for cultural hybridity.² In his introduction to *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, W.V. Harris defines Mediterraneanism as “the doctrine that

¹ See Madeleine Dobie for a summary of the history of francophone Mediterraneanism.

² To track the contemporary discussion on this topic, see Horden and Purcell 2000, Horden and Kinoshita 2014, and Harris 2005 (especially Harris 1–42, Herzfeld 45–63 and Abulafia 64–93). Abulafia in particular focuses on how “Mediterranean” can operate as a metaphor for diverse cultures in contact, and considers other regions, such as the Sahara and Japan, as possible “Mediterraneans.”

there are distinctive characteristics which the cultures of the Mediterranean have, or have had, in common” (Harris 2005: 38). He acknowledges that the Mediterranean is both united and unique with regard to its climate, and therefore agricultural production, trade, and consumption; its history on political, economic, and cultural frontiers (as characterized by historian Fernand Braudel)³; and its warfare. However, Harris suggests that claims of cultural unity are more contentious; he regards “with the greatest suspicion” suggestions of cultural continuity across time periods (27–8). He concludes that the theory of Mediterraneanism is “related both to a quasi-Orientalist desire to assert cultural superiority [...] and to touristic nostalgia” (38), and thus, for the ancient Mediterranean, claims of cultural unity are dubious. Michael Herzfeld, in his essay “Practical Mediterraneanism” in the same volume, admits that the term has been modeled on Said’s Orientalism and, like that term, has often served imperialist interests. However, whereas in the past, Herzfeld has criticized Mediterraneanism for a lack of theoretical rigor in its straddling of the divide between “global comparativism and ethnographic precision” (48), its persistence as a theoretical model has led him to further investigate the value of grouping people under a “Mediterranean consciousness” (51). Instead of seeing Mediterraneanism as an essentializing discourse, he finds value in it as a “programme of active political engagement” (51) in which cultural unity is a source of resistance against postcolonial cultural hierarchies. It is this definition of Mediterraneanism that drives the present study, which seeks to determine how Mediterranean identity operates as cultural and political resistance in the Francophone Mediterranean.

The colonial roots of Francophone Mediterranean identity are often traced to Albert Camus and Gabriel Audisio, early-20th-century Francophone authors and major figures in the *École d’Alger*, an intellectual group begun in 1930s Algeria. However, Mediterranean identity, in some form, appears much earlier in French historiography. One critic finds that the French government used the Mediterranean as a key actor in 16th-century policy, when François I signed a treaty with the Ottoman Empire in order to strengthen France against the threat of the surrounding Austrian Empire (Daguzan 388). Later, we see what Philip Dine calls “the French colonial myth of a Pan-Mediterranean civilization” develop from the onset of France’s occupation of Algeria, appearing in the work of the Saint-Simonians in the 1830s. The proponents of this myth, in an attempt to legitimize European control over the Mediterranean,

³ Fernand Braudel, author of the seminal text *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, had professional roots in Algeria, where he taught high school while developing his intellectual interest in the Mediterranean world. This experience encouraged the perception of “cultural proximity” between Marseille and Algiers that fueled his theories of the Mediterranean world (Dobie 391).

argue that Algeria's true roots lie in a Latin culture that predates Arab presence in the region. Later, right-wing authors Louis Bertrand and Charles Maurras mobilized the myth of Latinity in their anti-Semitic, exclusionary view of Mediterranean identity.⁴ Camus and Audisio, however, propose a theory of the Mediterranean that contrasts in important ways with Bertrand's and Maurras's. Instead of seeing Euro-Mediterranean roots in Latin culture, they trace it to Grecian and (for Audisio) Semitic influence; but more significantly, their view is more inclusive and progressive, honoring the benefits of cultures in contact in a way that is completely absent from previous ideologies of Mediterranean identity. This study, therefore, sees Camus as a key point of departure for later Mediterraneanism because, along with Audisio, he is the first to promote the idea of the region as a space of cultural unity.

Camus's and Audisio's theories were particularly revolutionary when seen against the contemporary political colonial climate. Algerian nationalist Messali Hadj said in a 1936 statement to the Popular Front government that the Mediterranean was a "natural border" between France and Algeria: "Algeria is clearly in North Africa; France clearly in Europe" (qtd. in Dunwoodie 33). By presenting the sea as an impenetrable boundary, he argued for Algerian independence, but also against the region's multiculturalism. Others saw the same sea as the site of imperial expansion; Louis Bertrand, in 1924, wrote, "On the shores of the Mediterranean, a renovated France will be free to pursue her destiny which is, and can only be, the permanence and the continuity of French culture" (qtd. in Dunwoodie 156).

Audisio, however, read Mediterraneanism in opposition to colonial or nationalist practices. Where colonial settlements imposed cultural limits by drawing boundaries between settlers and natives, the *École d'Alger* focused on blurring these borders. Audisio writes of "la beauté des races mêlées" ("the beauty of mixed races"); he identifies "le mélange et la bâtardise" ("mixing and bastardization") as the "vérité rayonnante" ("shining truth") of Mediterranean youth (Audisio *Sel* 18)—essentially arguing *for* miscegenation. He traces icons of the Mediterranean to foreign influence, such as the eucalyptus tree, "sans quoi le paysage algérien ne serait pas ce qu'il est" ("without which the Algerian countryside would not be what it is", 20), which comes from Australia, brought by French colonization. He locates Mediterranean

⁴ Louis Bertrand, an early European Algerian writer (1866–1941) and member of the *Algérieniste* school, developed the concept of a Latin Africa (*Afrique latine*) as a historical and cultural justification for France's involvement in Algeria. His work displaces the "Arab invasion" of North Africa, focusing instead on contemporary colonization as a continuation of the Roman occupation of the region in the ancient world. See "Louis Bertrand and the Building of *l'Afrique latine*" in Seth Graebner's *History's Place: Nostalgia and the City in French Algerian Literature* (Lexington Books, 2007) for a study of Bertrand's foundational ideology.

authenticity in this cultural heterogeneity, and—going a step further than those who came before him—imagines that “une constitution méditerranéenne, dans son premier article, proclamerait les droits des races et leur égalité” (“a Mediterranean constitution, in its first article, would proclaim the rights of races and their equality”, 119). Like Bertrand, Audisio saw the region as a vast territory united by the sea. But in direct contrast to Bertrand and Maurras, he saw the Mediterranean “as a non-nationalistic homeland, one that brings together the members of a mixed ‘race’ in a loose, fraternal community” (Foxlee 115). The sea is both mother and father—it is “a mother to all her children” (“*maternelle à tous les siens*”) and “my fatherland (“*patrie*”)” (qtd. in Foxlee 116). These “children” are a diverse bunch; as a “citoyen de [la] Méditerranée” (“citizen of the Mediterranean”), Audisio’s “concitoyens” (“fellow-citizens”) are “tous les peuples de la mer, y compris les Juifs, les Arabes, les Berbères et les Noirs” (“all the peoples of the sea, including Jews, Arabs, Berbers and Blacks”, Audisio *Sel* 119). Audisio is unique in citing Semitism (specifically mystical Judaism) as disrupting the historical authority of Greco-Latin culture (Talbayev 366).

Yet despite Audisio’s emphasis on the fusion of East and West and his desire to transcend Latinity’s racist discourse, his vision of Mediterraneanism was ultimately rooted in a colonial worldview. Peter Dunwoodie, in *Writing French Algeria*, accuses Audisio of “failing to integrate the Islamic elements of the Mediterranean, and [of] seeing the latter as a playground without acknowledging that it is grounded in colonial mapping and control;” his characters thus “displace (rather than challenge) the political and cultural issues” at play in the region (Dunwoodie 180). We see this displacement in Audisio’s emphasis on the interchangeability of cultures and religions. He describes “les églises chrétiennes [qui] se superposent aux autels païens, et Christ à Baâl” (“Christian churches that are superimposed onto pagan altars, and Christ onto Baal”, Audisio *Sel* 31); he admires “l’église Lavigerie; elle est construite en style de mosquée [...] sur l’emplacement d’un sanctuaire phénicien” (“the Lavigerie Church; it is built in the style of a mosque, on the site of a Phoenician sanctuary”, 30). While these observations create a palimpsest of religious influences, they do not value the individual contributions; the church, for example, bears no sign of its Phoenician ancestry. Although Audisio gestures towards acknowledging Arab presence, he does not succeed in actually incorporating the Muslim world into his theoretical framework. His work instead dissociates Islam from the region by romanticizing the Arab conquest and presenting Muslim civilization as “unadulterated” and “free of any intermingling with the native populations of North Africa” (Talbayev 2007: 367). He claims that “ici tout est pur” (“here all is pure”), from the people to the countryside (Audisio *Jeunesse* 171). His statements locating Muslim culture in

nature verge on the hyperbolic, reminiscent of the discourse of noble savages: “les pays musulmans ont les plus beaux enfants du ciel ... Eux seuls sont l’expression toute simple de la nature” (“Muslim countries have the most beautiful children in the heavens ... They alone are the simplest expression of nature”, Audisio *Sel* 127, 129). By romanticizing the purity of Muslim culture, Audisio denies it equal status in theories of the region’s diversity.

Building on Audisio’s ideas, Camus brought the concept of Mediterranean humanism to the public, beginning with his lecture on “la nouvelle culture méditerranéenne” (“the new Mediterranean culture”) at the 1937 inauguration of the Algerian “Maison de la Culture.” Although Camus’s primary concern in the lecture seems to be the assertion of his political stance against Italian and German fascism, his talk is frequently lauded as his first articulation of Algeria as a meeting place for East and West. In Camus’s stereotyping of German versus Italian fascists—the latter being, thanks to their Mediterranean identity, “affable[s] et gai[s]” (“affable and gay”, Foxlee 42) despite their fascism—he characterizes Mediterranean culture as exhibiting a laid-back attitude in opposition to the conservative spirit of Central and Eastern European countries (like Germany). While his characterization of the Mediterranean echoes Audisio’s focus on the romanticized purity of ancient culture, his emphasis on the contrast with fascism is typical of French thinkers of his time, concerned with the new political developments in Europe.⁵ Although, in this oppositional rhetoric, Camus groups the Mediterranean countries together, he warns against seeing this unity as nationalistic. He calls upon his listeners to “rejet[er] le principe d’un nationalisme méditerranéen” (“reject the principle of a Mediterranean nationalism”, Foxlee 40) because he equates nationalism with an inflated sense of superiority. However, he calls the Mediterranean “un pays vivant” (“a living country”), so he clearly sees the region as geographically and politically united, even while rejecting nationalist sentiment.

Camus’s proposed unity is predicated not on the region as a singular entity, but as a composite of disparate cultural influences. He focuses on the area as a “[b]assin international traversé par

⁵ In “For and against the Mediterranean,” Madeleine Dobie contextualizes Camus’s use of Mediterraneanism to contrast fascism with humanism in relation to the emerging politics of the time: “Several factors contributed to the prominence of the Mediterranean in the intellectual life of the period. The rise of fascism in Germany and Italy produced anxieties about control of the Mediterranean basin that played out in the sphere of culture. French thinkers distanced themselves from the precepts of German and Italian nationalism, espousing instead a cosmopolitan discourse of liberal humanism.” (Dobie 390)

Dobie traces Braudel’s seminal text, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1949), to these intellectual and political concerns.

tous les courants” (“international basin crossed by every current”); “un des seuls pays où l’Orient et l’Occident cohabitent” (“one of the only regions where East and West live together”, Foxlee 44). Unfortunately, this description paints a picture of multicultural symbiosis that glosses over the political divisions inherent in colonial society. “Cohabit” suggests contact, but not intermingling, and “East” and “West” are still placed in opposition.⁶ The Mediterranean’s identity as a meeting place for East and West is a crucial part of both Camus’s philosophy and, as we will see, more contemporary iterations of Mediterranean identity. Yet even if Camus acknowledges the benefit of the Orient’s influence on the Occident, he remains essentially ignorant of Arab civilization and thus of the particulars of its influence. Although in his talk he states that “à ce confluent il n’y a pas de différence entre la façon dont vit un Espagnol ou un Italien des quais d’Alger, et les Arabes qui les entourent” (“at this meeting-point there is no difference between the way of life of a Spaniard or Italian on the Algiers waterfront and the Arabs who surround them”, 44–5), in the colonial context this is patently wrong, and this statement only underscores Camus’s inability to see the oppressive force of colonialism. Moreover, Camus never learned Arabic, and there is little evidence that he knew much about Islam (274). Any positive remarks about the intermixing of East and West are tempered both by this ignorance and by other remarks that show he sees an “unbridgeable gulf” between French and Algerian cultures (281).

If Camus—either consciously or unconsciously—excludes Arabs from his vision of the Mediterranean, what is the goal of his humanistic discourse? Some critics see his appeal as an attempt, working within the confines of colonialist discourse, “to cement the unity of the European community in the face of the majority Muslim population” (Foxlee 59). Camus points to the connection between the region’s Romance languages as an example of cultural unity; yet by making this argument in a primarily Arabic-speaking country, he has led most critics of his lecture to refer to this as an excellent example of his Eurocentric colonial mentality.⁷ It is indeed difficult to overlook Camus’s positive engagement with colonialism in a 1930s lecture on unified Mediterranean identity. However, in a book-length study of the lecture, Neil Foxlee argues that this critique ignores the “main thrust” (62) of Camus’s argument.

⁶ Camus was not the first French author to see the area as a cultural crossroads. Paul Valéry mentions the East-West debate in his 1919 essay “The Crisis of the Mind,” but he focuses instead on the East as a threat to Europe’s cultural supremacy. Similarly, Maurras and Bertrand’s Mediterraneanism rejects both Jewish and Arab influence.

⁷ See Apter 1997, Dunwoodie 1998, Lorcin 2002, and Cruise O’Brien 1970.

By excluding Arabs from their syncretic vision of the Mediterranean, and presenting the region as a crossroads, both Camus and Audisio fall short of presenting a theory of true cultural fusion or hybridity. Yet perhaps we can only accuse Camus of being a product of his time; critics acknowledge that although he takes France's possession of Algeria for granted, his commitment to Muslim civil rights makes him "among the most progressive European Algerian voices of his time" (Foxlee 219). His inaugural lecture was published in the first issue of the Maison de la Culture's monthly magazine, alongside translations of Arabic poetry; we can read this as a move toward considering both European and Arab cultural contributions in the same aesthetic and political framework (210).

It is important to recognize that Camus and his contemporaries were still committed to mobilizing the Mediterranean for the purposes of political unification and the disruption of traditional colonial binaries, if not cultural hybridity. They were fighting against the polarizing division of colonizer versus colonized that plagued colonial life. By focusing on the Mediterranean as a culturally productive space, they radically shifted the discursive space of Algeria away from being solely defined as a periphery to France's metropole. Talbayev argues that their failure to condemn colonialism should not blind us to what they accomplished for colonial discourse; she writes that:

By redefining the northern Mediterranean, which had been discursively configured as Christian and exclusively European by restrictive colonial ideologies, the movement's endeavours resulted in a genuine disruption of the rationale of hierarchical segregation in the colonial space, albeit on the discursive level only. (2007: 362)

We can see this disruptive cultural reconfiguration in Audisio's multilingual edition of the tales of picaresque mixed-race hero Cagayous, originally published by Auguste Robinet (pseudonym Musette) at the end of the nineteenth century. Audisio saw Cagayous as emblematic of Mediterranean identity; he calls him "la création la plus originale de ce terroir" ("the most original creation of this land," Audisio *Jeunesse* 113). Audisio's 1931 anthology for Gallimard features a glossary of Cagayous's *pataouète* dialect. The dialect itself is internally multilingual, composed of words in French, Catalan, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, and Kabyle. This stands in opposition to other members of the *École d'Alger*, who wrote exclusively in French and favored assimilation.⁸ Audisio recognized language as an essential

⁸ See, for example, Jules Roy, who detailed colonial life in Algeria in his six-volume novel cycle *Les Chevaux du soleil*, or Emmanuel Roblès, a fiercely anticolonial writer whose work focused notably on issues of class and race but not language.

component of a new Mediterranean identity, and thus saw *pataouète* as an emblem of cultural fusion and collective identity. In her book on the lingua franca, the non-standardized oral hybrid contact language of the early modern Mediterranean, Jocelyne Dakhlia refers to Cagayous's *pataouète* in opposition to "sabir," the 19th-century evolution of lingua franca. Dakhlia notes Audisio's insistence that *pataouète* is not "sabir," which Audisio calls "petit-nègre," a French-based pidgin language. Instead, Cagayous's hybrid tongue is distinctly Mediterranean, a mix of western Mediterranean dialects and Arabic (Dakhlia 464). Although Dakhlia claims that "sabir" favors the Arabic aspect of lingua franca whereas *pataouète* privileges the Romance languages, Audisio emphasizes *pataouète*'s ability to encompass all Mediterranean languages as a reflection of the area's cultural hybridity. In *Writing French Algeria*, Peter Dunwoodie claims that for Audisio, "valorizing local language amounted to valorizing the nascent cultural traits *in themselves*, from the position of the colonial insider, instead of in relation to metropolitan France" (253). Unfortunately, in his 1957 text *Algérie méditerranée: feux vivants (Mediterranean Algeria: living lights)*, Audisio acknowledged that his hopes of linguistic intermixing had not been realized; few Europeans spoke Arab or Berber dialects, and those Muslims who spoke French did so only as part of the colonial project.

Although the *École d'Alger* writers' attempts at Mediterranean unity never broke out of the colonial structure, Audisio's focus on language as identity carved a path for postcolonial authors, who grapple with the question of cultures in contact in a new way. Instead of focusing on the potentially impossible goal of cultural unity, they read Mediterranean identity as a space of diversity. Even in the postcolonial context, when we refer to a single Mediterranean entity in order to discuss, for example, the cultural hybridity born of colonialism, we risk forcing unity on a politically, culturally, linguistically, and religiously heterogeneous zone. How can we talk about the Mediterranean region, or Mediterranean identity, without falling into this trap? Contemporary authors promote heterogeneity and discontinuity, thus valorizing the diverse alterity of the disparate elements of the region even while speaking of a trans-Mediterranean cultural space, through the construction of structurally and linguistically disjointed narratives.

In attempting to build a theoretical framework to discuss the Mediterranean, Audisio and Camus emphasize certain unique aspects of the region. They focus on the region as a space of cultural contact, with varying degrees of cultural hybridity or fusion; their argument rests as much on multiculturalism as multilingualism. Yet as we have seen, the absence of both Arabic culture and language is conspicuous in their writing, indicative of their inability to

break free from a colonial discourse that excludes the colonized. Contemporary authors, writing in response to this colonial legacy, mobilize the historic silencing of Arabic by mimicking, yet foregrounding, its absence. This article focuses on authors whose nontraditional approaches to multilingualism engage productively with both the Mediterranean region and the theoretical framework of Mediterraneanism that sees the region as a metaphor for postcolonial cultural hybridity and political resistance. These authors emphasize not just the region's linguistic hybridity but also the unbalanced power dynamic of the postcolonial era. Perhaps more so than other linguistically and culturally diverse regions, the Mediterranean has been and continues to be fertile ground for cultural, literary, and political revolt. Its hybridity is not born solely of immigration, but represents consecutive centuries of imperial conquest—a painful legacy that is only now being addressed. (France, for example, did not recognize the Algerian War as such until 1999, 37 years after Algerian independence.)⁹ By using nontraditional forms of literary expression to represent the cultural hybridity of the region, postcolonial authors address the inadequacy of language(s) to convey Mediterranean identity. In defining Mediterraneanism, these authors go beyond simply equating the term with postcolonialism; their focus on intimate relationships reminds readers of the complex transnational interplay between communal and individual identity inherent to the region. Thus their focus on linguistic plurality—and the languages elided within their texts—is an attempt to address the specific identity politics of the contemporary Mediterranean, while at the same time reworking the colonial concept of Mediterraneanism to distance it from its origins in essentializing discourse and promote its potential as a theoretical framework for subversive expression.

This article thus takes a closer look at multilingualism as one expression of heterogeneous Mediterranean identity by focusing on two contemporary authors, Abdelkebir Khatibi (1938–2009) and Assia Djébar (1936–2015), whose work explicitly addresses questions of identity and language in the Mediterranean context. Although both Khatibi and Djébar write in French, their writing emphasizes the absence of Arabic in texts that take place in Algeria and feature Arabic-speaking characters. Yet what appears to be self-conscious monolingualism is actually an unusual approach to multilingual expression; we can read it as a response to the omission of Arabic in colonial Mediterranean texts. Through an emphasis on what is unspoken—either the unspeakable (*l'indicible*) in Khatibi's work or silence in Djébar's—both authors show how the absence of the other language conjures its presence, while reminding us

⁹ Until 1999, the war was called a civil uprising, and it was not until 2012 that France officially recognized the 1961 massacre of Algerians at a rally for independence in Paris.

of the language politics that engender the multilingual crisis. Moreover, by emphasizing the multilingualism inherent in the postcolonial Mediterranean, they call into question the linguistic parameters of Francophone literature.

Khatibi, a Moroccan critic and novelist, engages directly with the question of plural linguistic identity in a creative text, *Amour bilingue* (*Love in Two Languages*, 1983), and a critical essay, entitled “Bilinguisme et littérature” (“Bilingualism and Literature,” in *Maghreb pluriel*, 1983). In his fiction, Khatibi explores Arabic-French bilingualism within the confines of an amorous relationship between a North African man and a French woman; in his criticism, he reads bilingualism as an irreconcilable struggle between incompatible languages. In both texts, multilingual existence presents more problems than the literary approach can solve. But by reading the texts together, we can see how Khatibi’s analysis is both a response to earlier attempts at articulating Mediterranean identity and a possible roadmap for ways to define the Mediterranean region in the future.

In “Bilinguisme et littérature,” Khatibi traces the origins of bilingualism and plurilingualism in the North African region to pre-colonial roots, citing the diglossia of standard and vernacular Arabic, regional languages, and the influence of both Spanish and French (Khatibi *Maghreb* 179). Furthermore, he contends that French is inherently polyglot, stating, “La langue française n’est pas la langue française: elle est plus ou moins toutes langues internes et externes qui la font et la défont” (“The French language is not the French language: it is more or less all internal and external languages that make it up and break it apart”, 188). Perhaps this is why Khatibi’s signature text on multilingualism, *Amour bilingue*, is actually only written in one language—French (aside from references to Arabic words, and Arabic calligraphy on the cover). Critics, such as Thomas Beebee, have seen this linguistic move as “homogenizing” the multiple languages at work under the text’s surface, but Khatibi only does so while making the reader aware of the linguistic power dynamics at every moment of the reading experience (See Beebee 1994: 65).

Amour bilingue, the story of an Arab man and his French lover, takes as its point of departure the premise that true bilingual expression is impossible. The preface—labeled “epigraph”—negates itself, first summarizing the relationship to follow—“Il partit, revint, repartit. Il décida de partir définitivement” (“He left, he came back, he left again. He decided to leave for good”)]—then concluding prematurely, “Le récit devrait s’arrêter ici, le livre se fermer sur lui-même” (Khatibi *Amour* 9) (“The story should stop here, the book close upon itself”, Khatibi *Love* 3). If we read the failed relationship, as the narrator posits, as the protagonist of the

story, the obstacle to both the narration and the success of the relationship is linguistic and cultural bilingualism. Khatibi claims that the bilingual text lies “aux marges de l’intraduisible” (“on the margins of the untranslatable”, Khatibi *Maghreb* 183); how do we successfully narrate, to a monolingual audience, a polylingual situation? For Khatibi, translation is not the process of language switching, but is instead an internal process, occurring (or failing) within a single language; he contends that every language “désire [...] être singulière, irréductible, rigoureusement autre” (“wants to be [...] singular, irreducible, and absolutely other”)—in other words, languages resist translation (186). Yet at the same time, North African Francophone literature “est un récit de traduction” (“is a tale of translation”)—not a translation itself, but a story that “*parle en langues*” (“*speaks in tongues*”, 186). Even when a narrative is written in French, it is expressing more than just French—it somehow encompasses all the languages that French has subsumed (historically and politically), all the languages that are denied expression. The only way to give equal weight to all participating languages (especially when they don’t share a common alphabet) would be the rather acrobatic accomplishment of writing simultaneously with multiple hands, in multiple languages, to produce a text that would be nothing more than “perpétuelle traduction” (“perpetual translation”, 205)—much like the “interlinear Scriptures” that Walter Benjamin idealizes as the “prototype [...] of all translation” (Benjamin 82).

This imperfect, and perhaps entirely unrealistic, solution echoes in *Amour bilingue*’s constant references to the “*indicible*”—the unspeakable, inexpressible, or unsayable. The closer the bilingual narrator becomes to his French lover, the more “elle l’appel[le] vers l’indicible” (Khatibi *Amour* 23) (“she call[s] him toward the *indicible*”, Khatibi *Love* 16)—the meeting of two languages and two cultures that cannot be articulated. The inexpressible is born not just of the chance romantic relationship, but also of a need that stems from a monolingual existence that is arguably not truly monolingual because of its geographic and political postcolonial situation. The narrator describes himself as “malade de [s]a langue maternelle” (“suffering [from] the sickness of [his] mother tongue”), a sickness that leads him to discover the “souffrance de l’indicible” (Khatibi *Amour* 58) (“suffering of the unsayable”, Khatibi *Love* 49) in his lover. Both the narrator and his lover suffer from a linguistic affliction born of their transnational identities; neither the mother tongue nor the foreign language allows for true communication. He writes that he needs another language—“la tienne étrangère en moi—pour se raconter son inadaptation au monde” (Khatibi *Amour* 54) (“your language, foreign in me—to tell himself the tale of how unadapted he was to the world”, Khatibi *Love* 46). He needs to internalize his lover’s language, even to speak to himself. This linguistic penetration

is more explicitly articulated elsewhere. He writes of being sodomized by a two-tongued phallus, describing it as being “violé [...] par sa langue étrangère” (“violated by the foreign tongue”). The experience brings him both pain, from the rape, and pleasure, from being “pénétré par la jouissance de la langue” (Khatibi *Amour* 55) (“penetrated by the tongue’s orgasm”, Khatibi *Love* 47). Despite the violence of this scene, it underscores both the necessity of the coupling—in other words, of bilingualism—and the power of language itself.

Khatibi’s bilingualism, or *bi-langue* (literally, two-tongue), is not simply bilingual expression, but more specifically the rift caused by competing systems of expression. The narrator’s illiterate mother nurtures the bilingual spirit by marking it “de symboles, d’emblèmes oubliés, qui émergeaient çà et là quand sa pensée se retrouvait” (Khatibi *Amour* 51) (“with symbols, with forgotten emblems, which emerged at random when his mind discovered them”, Khatibi *Love* 43). His mother’s superstitions, which exist only on the level of oral expression, thus compete with both classical Arabic and French, which exist for the narrator as written languages—one marked by its elegant calligraphy, the other by its academic roots. Rather than contributing to a cohesive multilingualism, his mother’s influence is disruptive. Indeed, the narrator reads all bilingual expression as essentially bifurcating; he states that the bilingual “divides” (Khatibi *Love* 98) rather than brings together. He thus discourages reading the bilingual relationship as cohesive. He describes how when he spoke Arabic, his lover “se sentait exclue, rejetée hors de toute entente absolue” [felt left out, rejected from any absolute understanding]; he “lui devenai[t] incommunicable” (“became incommunicable for her”). But instead of reading this as an obstacle to their relationship, he argues that “elle désirait cet incommunicable” (“she desired this incommunicability”); in a moment that seems to reveal his latent frustration with her monolingualism, he asks, “sinon comment comprendre la méconnaissance de ma langue maternelle ?” (Khatibi *Amour* 72) (How else can her ignorance of my mother tongue be understood?”, Khatibi *Love* 62–63). The lover, therefore, unlike the narrator, through her native command of the politically dominant (shared) language, possesses the ability to reject the bilingual.

The narrator, speaking both French and Arabic, is forced into a bilingual existence in his relationship with his French lover. In their love, he finds what he calls a “langue commune” (“common language”) distinct from bilingualism; he says he loves “en elle deux femmes, celle qui vivait dans leur langue commune, et l’autre, cette autre qu’il habitait dans la bi-langue” (Khatibi *Amour* 26) (“two women in [his lover], the one who inhabited their common language and another as well, the one who inhabited the *bi-langue*”, Khatibi *Love* 20). Where the *bi-langue* is a bilingualism divided on language lines, the common language is, according

to the narrator, common ground. Their love gives birth to an ideal multilingual being that, standing outside of national allegiances, can be labeled “trans-Mediterranean.” However, it soon becomes apparent that this “common language” does not belong equally to both lovers—it is French, the lover’s mother tongue, not the narrator’s. Khatibi’s premise of the sexual relationship as a cultural fusion now echoes the criticism aimed at Camus—can one language speak for transcultural identity?

Faced with the imperfect solution to what is ultimately a failed relationship, Khatibi returns to translation as a metaphor for transcultural communication. Speaking retrospectively, the narrator says, “Ce qui semblait nous unir était une extraordinaire traduction. [...] [J]’étais moi-même transposé, transplanté dans ma parole maternelle en un simulacre si fantasque qu’elle ne pouvait concevoir, à son tour, que comme une grande fiction, la narration de l’innommable en elle” (Khatibi *Amour* 71) (“An extraordinary translation seemed to unite us [...] [I]n my own language I myself was transposed, transplanted into a sham so fantastic that she could only conceive of my telling of the unnameable in her as an enormous fiction”, (Khatibi *Love* 62). This unification is violent, unilateral (he is being transposed, but she remains comfortably in French) and produces a “sham” or “enormous fiction.” The relationship is doomed by the power dynamics of its languages. Khatibi’s text, moreover, shares in this “sham”—written in French, it hides a latent Arabic that comes through only in moments of the narrator’s frustration, when he struggles, for example, with the different connotations of one word in different languages. Yet it is this very struggle that permeates *Amour bilingue*, and that allows the text, although written in French, to remind the reader, at every moment, of the underlying Arabic text, and of the *indicible*—the inexpressible—that is at the heart of the bilingual relationship.

In an essay entitled “Diglossia,” Khatibi claims that when he writes in French, his “entire effort consists of separating [himself] from [his] native language” (Khatibi “Diglossia” 158). Bilingualism, however, “is the space between two exteriorities”—the meeting of the self and the foreign. Where the fictional relationship in *Amour bilingue* fails, the text itself succeeds, by using French to narrate the inexpressibility of bilingual existence, while (as Khatibi notes in “Bilinguisme et littérature”) calling our attention to French’s inherent heterogeneity. Khatibi’s project thus enforces a view of Mediterraneanism that is not a reconciliation of disparate entities, but a hybrid being that strives to combine elements without prioritizing one or subsuming the other, while still working in French. In doing so, he confronts the power struggle inherent both in his predecessors’ work and in the postcolonial situation. That Khatibi’s Mediterraneanism still hosts linguistic and cultural binaries attests to the limits of

the Mediterranean trope in his work and draws attention to the initial, irresolvable, problem of the *bi-langue*; Mediterraneanism, here, is thus not just the destabilization of binaries but the privileging of the *indicible*, a subversive echo of the colonial silence of Arabic.

Like Khatibi, Assia Djébar has written extensively about her own language use as an author. Born to a Berber-speaking family in Algeria, she grew up speaking dialectical Arabic, but wrote in French, a reflection of her formal education. Critics have referred to the “uneasy representation of the Arabic language” in Djébar’s work (Hiddleston 29).¹⁰ Indeed, explicit use of Arabic is nearly absent from her work; what is present, instead, is an overt acknowledgement of that language’s absence. In his manifesto *Pour une littérature monde*, Michel Le Bris argues that Francophone writing *must* be “multiple, diverse, colorée, multipolaire et non pas uniforme”) (“multiple, diverse, colored, multipolar and not uniform”), Le Bris 41) in order to explore the true linguistic geography of the transnational Francophone world. This statement ignores the troubled political contexts of language contact, denying the linguistic power dynamics at play in the postcolonial world by advocating a facile view of Francophonie. By omitting Arabic and other non-French languages from her narrative, Djébar is not giving French autonomy over Francophone literature; nor is she following in Camus’s footsteps, conveniently ignoring Arabic due to a lack of expertise. Instead, I argue that Djébar, like Khatibi, is using French to develop an alternative form of multilingualism, one that moves beyond code-switching to address the colonial silencing of Arabic.

Although Djébar initially rejected Camus’s colonialist politics, when his posthumous autobiographical novel *Le Premier Homme* (*The First Man*) was published in 1994, she felt a new affinity for the linguistic and existential crises in his work. Indeed, her 2003 novel *La*

¹⁰ *L’Amour, la fantasia* (*Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, 1985), one of Djébar’s most well-known novels, overtly grapples with the political implications of writing in French about Arabic- and Berber-speaking Algerians. In one example, the narrator examines the problem of first-person expression for Arab women, noting the emphasis on the collective rather than the individual voice in Arabic: “Jamais le ‘je’ de la première personne ne sera utilisé”; “Comment dire ‘je’, puisque ce serait dédaigner les formules-couvertures qui maintiennent le trajet individuel dans la résignation collective?” (Djébar *Amour* 176; 177) (“The ‘I’ of the first person will never be used”; “How could she say ‘I’, since that would be to scorn the blanket-formulae which ensure that each individual journeys through life in a collective resignation?”), Djébar *Fantasia* 154; 156)]. Yet although Djébar points to Arabic’s inadequacy, she does not find an easy solution in French, which she calls a “langue marâtre” (“stepmother tongue”, 240). The various sections of *L’Amour* point to the obstacles of speaking for marginalized subjects. This present study focuses on Djébar’s later work, which theorizes not just the problems of multilingual, marginalized expression, but also the echoes of Arabic’s *silencing* in French texts.

Disparition de la langue française (*The Disappearance of the French Language*) seems to be a response to *Le Premier Homme*. Her homage is not an embrace of Camus's politics, but rather a nod to their shared relationship to the French language. Although both authors write in French, it is, in a sense, neither of their mother tongues; Djébar was raised in a Berber-speaking family and Camus's mother was partially deaf and mute. Djébar's protagonist in *La Disparition*, Berkane (a middle-aged Algerian man recently repatriated after two decades in France), sees French as a language actualized and made personal through its literary use: Berkane claims, "En écrivant mes souvenirs de jeunesse [...] le français devient ma langue de mémoire" ("In writing the memories of my youth [...] French becomes my language of memory", Djébar *Disparition* 251). Drawing on the intimate sphere of memory, the phrase "language of memory" calls attention to its identity as a (possibly inadequate) substitute for "mother tongue." Thus both texts foreground linguistic absence in their representation of one side of the colonial divide; one critic argues that *La Disparition* speaks for Algerians in the same way that *Le Premier Homme* speaks for pied-noirs (Puleio 69). Djébar, in writing of Camus and Eugène Fromentin, emphasizes this linguistic absence as her connection to the colonial-era authors:

Je suis tentée de les appeler pour ma part « frères », mes frères en langue en tout cas, tant leur approche me semble coalescence, non certes avec les tumultes noirs de notre passé plus ancien, mais avec l'éblouissement de la lumière renouvelée : l'un et l'autre, l'« absent » et l'« étranger ». (Djébar *Ces voix* 218)

I am tempted to call them my "brothers," brothers in language anyway, so much does their approach seem to me to be coalescence, not, of course, with the dark tumults of our ancient past, but with the dazzling of renewed light: both "absent" and "foreign."
(translation mine)

French is absent and foreign for these writers, though there is an obvious difference in its political weight for a colonial pied-noir and a postcolonial Algerian. For the protagonist of *La Disparition*, Berkane, Camus exists in a parallel but separate world. At "le Grand Lycée" ("the high school"), he thinks of the adolescent Camus and traces his possible journey there, but this fantasized Camus stops short of entering into Berkane's space, "la porte de ma Casbah où sans doute il est rarement entré" ("the door of my Casbah where he surely rarely entered", Djébar *Disparition* 92). Berkane also accuses Camus and his colonial contemporaries of "effraction" ("breaking and entering"); he calls their Algeria a "colonie française, mais ma terre quand même, sur laquelle Camus a posé son regard fertile" ("French colony, but still my land, on which Camus cast his fertile glance", 93). Between Camus's

ignorance of Berkane's space and visual violation of the land, it is hard to understand the embrace in Djébar's fraternal connection. However, Djébar equates Camus's lack of mother tongue with the weight of her own culture's silencing of women. For her, his mother's "mutisme [...est] aussi blanc, aussi lourd que le voile des femmes de ma famille" ("muteness [... is] as white, as heavy as the veil of the women in my family", Djébar *Ces voix* 219). This linguistic silencing, whether due to a mother's silence or an occupier's foreign tongue, is an absence made present by the both authors' use of French.

In a collection of essays entitled *Ces voix qui m'assiègent: --en marge de ma francophonie* (*These Voices That Besiege Me: On the Margins of My Francophonie*, 1999), Djébar discusses her place in French literature. She notes that, like most authors, she is often asked the banal question, "Pourquoi écrivez-vous ?" [Why do you write?]. Yet in her case, this question is followed by a second: "Pourquoi écrivez-vous en français ?" ("Why do you write in French?"). She writes that the juxtaposition of these two questions is surely "pour rappeler que vous venez d'ailleurs" ("to remind you that you come from elsewhere", Djébar *Ces voix* 7). By writing in French, Djébar stakes her claim to the language as an artistic and political tool for the Francophone world. Making a homophonic link between "marge" and "marche" ("margins" and "step"), she argues that writing from the margins is a political step. Indeed, language is, she writes, "le seul bien que peut revendiquer l'écrivain" ("the only good the writer can claim", 7). By turning language into a commodity, Djébar makes French, and its accompanying political and cultural capital, available for anyone writing, as she is, from the margins.

Writing in French, Djébar is working from within to transform the language to accommodate non-Francophone voices. Just as Khatibi makes French "see double," as Réda Bensmaïa notes, by writing other voices into French, Djébar uses French to represent what cannot be expressed in other languages. This suggests that Djébar's multilingualism is contained within her French expression and, indeed, she writes that "chez nous, toute femme a quatre langues" ("for us, every woman has four languages", 13). The first is the ancestral Berber language; the second is the Arabic of religious study and dialect; the third is French, the legacy of colonialism; and the fourth is the nonverbal language of the body. The encounter of these four voices is present in her work even in what appears to be monolingual expression. Critics have noted the risk Djébar takes in making language her subject; writing in French about the value of Berber and dialectical Arabic was politically significant in Algeria after 1962—and even more so later, after the rise of radical Islamists, especially for a woman (Combe 282).

But what I want to focus on here is Djébar's own assertion that her language, as a representation of Algerian female expression, contains these four voices—most notably the fourth, nonverbal one. In answer to the question Djébar often fields—Why do you write in French?—she responds, “*j’écris à force de me taire ! Ce qui voudrait dire ici que je ne sais vraiment pas si je suis, disons, une francophone voice*” (“*I write by silencing myself! Which would mean here that I don’t know if I’m really, let’s say, a ‘francophone voice’*”, 25)—with the last phrase, “francophone voice,” written in English. Djébar is doing two things in this response. First of all, she is suggesting that her writing expresses silence, which, traditionally, is outside the realm of linguistic expression. Secondly, she is calling into question the definition of “francophone.” If a text is not entirely in French, is it still Francophone? What if the competing language is silence, or absence? What if the author’s mother tongue is not French? Moreover, by writing “francophone voice” in English, Djébar is drawing attention to the designation of that category as externally delineated by extra-Mediterranean (Anglophone) powers.

Unpacking her own claim that she writes “by silencing herself,” Djébar states that her writing is “dans une langue, au départ, non choisie, dans un écrit français qui a éloigné de fait l’écrit arabe de la langue maternelle ; cela aboutit, pour moi, non pas à ma voix déposée sur papier, plutôt à une lutte intérieure avec son silence” (“in a language, from the start, not chosen; in a written French that is far from the Arabic writing of my mother tongue. This results, for me, not in my voice placed on paper, but rather in an internal struggle with its silence”, 28). By writing in French, Djébar is using the language to express its contrast with and distance from her mother tongue; in this sense, her use of the language also expresses her struggle with her other languages, and with their absence. She writes that the Arabic and Berber sounds of her childhood are present in her early novels as a “‘non-dit,’ une sorte de blanc” (“‘unspoken thing,’ a sort of blank”, 37)—in other words, a silence, reminiscent of Khatibi’s *indicible* and Camus and Audisio’s omission of Arabic. Yet where Khatibi’s *indicible* is a violent lack of expression, Djébar’s silence is communication through absence. By representing other languages as well as their silencing, French becomes a tool of a unique form of multilingual expression.

Djébar explores French’s multilingual potential in two stories from the 1997 volume *Oran, langue morte (Oran, Dead Language)*. In “La Femme en morceaux” (“The Woman in Pieces”), the Scheherazade-like Atyka is a French instructor in Algeria. Unlike her parents, who were forced to study French in colonial schools, Atyka has chosen and embraced French. In response to her parents’ surprise at her decision, she says, “*Je serai professeur de français :*

mais vous verrez, avec des élèves vraiment bilingues, le français me servira pour aller et venir, dans tous les espaces, autant que dans plusieurs langues!” (“I will be a French instructor—but you’ll see, with students who are truly bilingual, French will let me come and go, in all spaces, as well as in many languages!”), Djébar Oran, *langue morte* 168). For Atyka, French’s cultural capital is the ticket between linguistic, geographic, cultural, and political spaces. But the language plays a curious role in Atyka’s murder at the story’s end.

Atyka is coming to the end of her penultimate day of storytelling when five men burst into her classroom—four imposing uniformed soldiers or policemen and a fifth hunchbacked diminutive man with a dagger, echoing the classic villain of Atyka’s story. She interrupts her French narration to address them *in Arabic*, asking who they are and what they want. The officers in turn respond *in French* that they are investigating Atyka for telling the students obscene stories. Djébar notes that the armed man “parl[e] un si bon français” (“speaks such good French”) but the hunchback, compared to “un danseur ou un fou” (“a dancer or crazy man”), speaks in “un arabe dialectal de la ville” (“the dialectal Arabic of the town”, 209). In the midst of the crazy man’s vulgar speech, he switches to French to indicate Atyka, calling her “la professeur” (“the professor”); Djébar notes: “il dit ce mot en un français déformé” (“he said this word in deformed French”, 209).

This exchange reveals a complex linguistic interplay. Djébar portrays French as the language of authority; despite the fact that Atyka and the officers are Arabs in Algeria, and that Atyka initiates conversation in Arabic, the officers use French to formalize their proceedings. The crazy man is the outlier: a throwback to the fantastical, exoticized times of Atyka’s stories, he speaks in dialectal Arabic, uses a dagger instead of a gun, and prompts the students to connect him to the story’s villain. By switching to French to indicate Atyka, he is mocking her position; yet Djébar problematizes this move by labeling his French “deformed,” calling attention to the incorrect feminization of the profession—“*la professeur*.” By underscoring the fact that French only allows for “professeur” to be masculine, Djébar shows how the Algerian authority uses this to undermine Atyka’s position of power as a woman. After Atyka’s murder, her head continues to talk, until she has finished narrating her story; French remains her final language of expression.

What does it mean that Atyka can ultimately only express herself in French? The answer lies in a second story in the same volume, “Annie et Fatima” (“Annie and Fatima”), about Annie, a white French woman who marries a Berber man, who then kidnaps their infant daughter, Fatima, and returns to Algeria. Annie is initially seduced by “la douceur, avec une rudesse

étrange” (“the rough sweetness”) of her future husband’s mother tongue, but this same language becomes a barrier to her reunion with her daughter. Annie learns Berber to communicate with Fatima; the narrator remarks that while we often speak of a “‘langue maternelle’ perdue et à réacquérir” (“‘mother tongue’ that is lost and to be reacquired”), here, it is “«la langue de la fille»! Une langue non plus de l’origine, mais de son avenir” (“the daughter tongue! Not the language of her origins but of her future”, 228). But when Annie and Fatima do meet, they speak in French; Fatima’s French is scholarly and, the narrator claims, “emprunté” (“borrowed”)—it is not a language she can claim as her own. When Fatima introduces herself, Annie realizes that her pronunciation of her name is “pas tout à fait comme ce mot vivait depuis si longtemps dans le cœur de la visiteuse : le *i*, pas un *i* français, entre le *é* et le *i*” (“not exactly how this word (Fatima’s name) had lived for so long in the heart of the visitor: the *i*, not a French *i*, between the *é* and the *i*”, 229–230). Annie cannot correctly pronounce her own daughter’s name, and never gets the opportunity to communicate with her daughter in her daughter’s native language—her daughter’s mother tongue is not her mother’s tongue.

While preparing to meet Fatima, Annie writes her a message of love in Berber; she memorizes it for their meeting but Fatima’s French precludes any conversation in Berber. She ends up sending the message as a letter in the story’s future—the message itself never appears in Djébar’s story. The absence of this Berber text is conspicuous. By subverting the concept of the mother tongue while omitting that language from the text, Djébar is demonstrating the role of French in eliding other languages but also—and more importantly—French’s ability to still represent, and speak for, these languages. Thus marginalized languages can use French’s authority to assert their own legitimacy in the Francophone world.

Djébar remarks that by representing marginalized cultures, her writing becomes “her” French; writing is thus a solution to the problem of owning a foreign tongue. She argues that in the Maghreb, all French is multilingual—whether the speaker is coming from a “pied noir” or other European perspective, or writing against a native Arabic or Berber ear (Djébar *Ces voix* 29). Whereas some may see language as a method of communication, she sees it as a method of “transformation”; a single written language—French, in this case—can represent multiple cultural voices (42). In a similar way, Khatibi’s text confronts the *indicible*; the impossible relationship of *Amour bilingue* forces French to acknowledge the languages it is eliding, making the textual object the solution to the problem it presents. However, although Khatibi and Djébar both point to French’s internal polyglossia as a key feature of Mediterranean multilingualism, Khatibi fixates on the irreparable rift of postcolonial linguistic expression,

stopping short of seeing in French the potential for the articulation of new forms of identity. Whereas Khatibi's *indicible* is characterized by violence and failure, Djébar's silence is a productive space for marginalized voices.

In conclusion, I would like to tie this contemporary work on multilingual French in the Maghreb back to the analytical concept of Mediterraneanism. Sharon Kinoshita argues that the Mediterranean has become a "heuristic device for remapping traditional disciplinary divides" (Kinoshita 602). Thinking about Djébar's writing through this framework allows us to apply her strategies more broadly, and at the same time, to root them in a historical tradition of thinking across national and linguistic boundaries. Just as Camus and Audisio saw the origins of Mediterraneanism in Grecian culture (in contrast to the Latinity of Bertrand and Maurras), Djébar traces the region's cultural fusion to what she deems as the "first major western novel," *The Golden Ass*, written in Latin by Apuleius who, Djébar writes, was "un Africain qu'on dirait aujourd'hui algérien" ("an African whom we would now call Algerian") because of his birthplace; she thus concludes that this is also "le premier roman de la littérature algérienne" ("the first novel of Algerian literature", Djébar *Ces voix* 54). Apuleius's Latin was not simply borrowed, but adopted and adapted; she claims that the language "se forge, se déforme, se trahit et s'invente pour devenir langue créatrice chez nos ancêtres" ("forges, deforms, betrays, and invents itself in order to become the language of creation for our ancestors", 55). Djébar thus shows how Apuleius and Latin, both classically Western, are actually North African—essentially rewriting the genealogy of Algerian culture as well as Latin literary history. She traces this literary tradition, begun with Apuleius, through Arabic- and Berber-language poets, then directly to Camus and to more contemporary Algerian authors such as Kateb Yacine. For Djébar, this shows the inherently polyglot nature of Algerian literature, legitimizing her own contribution as a "Francophone voice"; but also, by including Camus as a key figure, she problematizes the notion of literary nationalism.

Djébar's new literary history is at once a multilingual template for Algerian literature and culture, and a step, like Camus's and those before him, in the historiography of the Mediterranean as a cultural, linguistic, and political crossroads. Khatibi's and Djébar's unusual approaches to multilingualism emphasize the importance of recognizing the pervasive heteroglossia, silence, and monolingualism that underscore linguistic conflict in Mediterranean expression. Acknowledging these moments of rupture as nontraditional yet productive forms of multilingualism allows for us to theorize a more complex model of linguistic integrity that embraces the instability of identities based in, and defined by, the Mediterranean region.

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