

REDOUANE, NAJIB, éd. *Où en est la littérature 'beur'?* Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012. ISBN 978-2-296-99298-6. Pp. 369. 37,50 €.

This volume of twenty-four essays is the fifth installment of L'Harmattan's collection, "Autour des textes maghrébins" (Redouane and Yvette Benayoun-Szmidt, eds.). The essays explore not only the current state of *beur* literature, but also its origins and multiple transformations over the past twenty-five years. The authors celebrate the diverse writings of young French novelists of Maghrebi origin and work to counter those critics who dismiss this body of literature as a style-light form of social testimony. Redouane's introduction frames the collection with a short history of *beur* literature from the early 1990s and tells the story of *beur* public identity in France, starting with the 1983 *Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme*. The essays are organized chronologically and plot the genre's shifts, transitions, and emerging trends. The themes of exile, urban realism, memory, and identity—all commonly associated with *beur* and Maghrebi literatures—remain central to the works discussed, but novels are read here for their literary artistry and innovation as well. Lahsen Bougdal's study of Saïd Mohamed's fiction, Mireille Le Breton's analysis of Mohammed Razan's *Dit violent* (2006), and Aimé Avolanto's reading of Kamel Hajaji's *Fuck you New York* (2010) all describe an emergent aesthetics of protestation—what Le Breton calls the 'esthétique de l'uppercut'—to write against bourgeois literary norms, political violence, stereotypes, and Islamophobia. *Beur* literature's recent turn to geographical and cultural referents outside the traditional binaries of France-Maghreb/Paris-*bled* is the subject of essays by Jocelyne Le Ber, Nancy Honicker, and Judith Sinanga-Ohlmann. In the novels they study, intertextual genre crossings disrupt the north-south axis of cultural memory to include a wide and transcultural range of referents (including *Rocky* films, hip hop music, American television, and video games). Sinanga-Ohlmann's essay describes music in Karim Madani's *Hip Hop Connection* (2007) as a kind of transcendent cultural glue that bonds a Parisian *banlieusard* with a young Jewish man in a Brooklyn housing project, creating an unlikely affinity through music and the shared experiences of urban exclusion and racism. Humor, too, plays an important role in recent *beur* literature. Articles by Bouchra Benbella, Christina Boidard-Boisson, and Nicholas Bordage consider sarcasm, farce, and the absurd as modes of counter-discourse that palliate the frustrations and anxieties associated with life on France's social margins. Only one of the collection's essays deals at any length with a literary form other than the novel, and Redouane's decision to limit the volume to essays about male *beur* authors goes largely unexplained. Many of the contributors describe a literature eager to dispense with labels and break out of limiting categories, and yet nowhere does the volume reflect meaningfully on the paradoxical nature of its charter (presenting essays organized around a category and a label). These mild reservations notwithstanding, scholars of contemporary French, Francophone, transnational, and migratory literatures will find multiple avenues for engagement in this accessible volume.