

# Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine

## *Proximal Morocco*

translated from the French by Jake Syersak

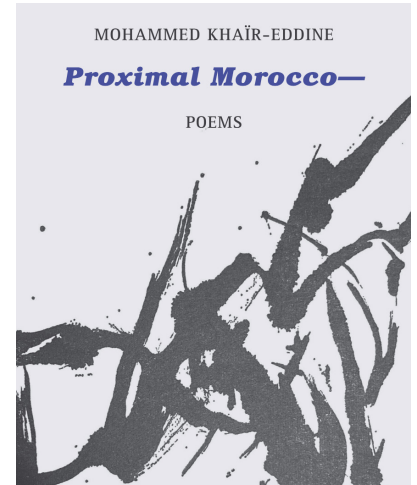
Originally published in 1975, *Proximal Morocco*— is a collection of poems by **Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine** written in fits and starts during a span of 10 years (1964-1974), during the fever pitch of his political exile from his homeland of Morocco which he fled, partly for fear of political persecution and partly to pursue a literary career in Paris. Laced with the same politically-inflected Surrealistic fervor as Aimé Césaire, the book is at once a powerful outcry to fellow artists for international solidarity of the colonized and outcast and a documentation of the pain and struggle of exile.

// Jake Syersak brings his translator’s bravura to bear on Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine’s guerrilla warfare with and against the French language. In a feat of lexical precision and alliterative cadences, a voice ‘composed in the likeness of thunder’ strives to ‘unlearn the viaticums of violence’. In rebellious screams and hallucinatory dreams, it conjures the landscapes of an Amazigh childhood to exorcise history’s assaults – colonial trauma, the tyranny of the state, the pangs of exile –, for ‘only the earth / remembers / and howls / what terror is brooding / beneath’ and ‘never once / did our ancestors offer asylum to kings.’

— OMAR BERRADA

// Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine is a poetic force, and Jake Syersak’s unrelenting, uncompromising translation brings one of his most alive books crashing into English ‘in the likeness of thunder.’ Khaïr-Eddine’s work offers not only a new perspective on Morocco, but also on how language can be used in the name of land and longing.

— EMMA RAMADAN



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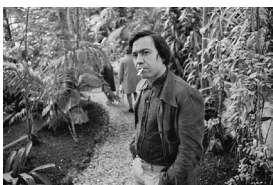
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**Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine** (1941-1995) was a Moroccan Amazigh writer and poet. His first book, *Agadir*, a novel based on his time working in the city of the same name after a devastating earthquake, was awarded the Enfants Terribles prize, founded by Jean Cocteau, and his subsequent work, including *Soleil Arachnide*, *Ce Maroc!*, *Le Deterreur*, and others earned him renown as the “Rimbaud of the Maghreb.” Before his exile in France, he co-founded Souffles, an avant-garde literary magazine committed to decolonizing the Maghreb; he also co-founded the Poésie Toute movement with Mostafa Nissabouri.



**Jake Syersak** is the author of the poetry books *Mantic Compost* and *Yield Architecture*. He is also the translator of several books by **Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine**. The recipient of a 2021 PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant, his poetry and translations have appeared in such journals as *Black Warrior Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Conjunctions*, and elsewhere. He earned his MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Arizona and a PhD in English and Creative Writing from the University of Georgia. Currently, he edits the micro-press Radioactive Cloud and lives in Seattle.

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