

# Tattooed Memory

*Tattooed Memory (La Mémoire tatouée)* is the first novel of the great Moroccan critic and novelist, Abdelkébir Khatibi (1938-2009). Only one other novel has been translated into English (*Love In Two Languages*, 1991). Khatibi belongs to the generation following the foundational generation of writers such as Driss Chraïbi. For Khatibi's generation French colonialism is a vibrant memory – but a memory from childhood. *Tattooed Memory* is part bildungsroman, part anticolonial treatise, and part language experiment, and it takes us from earliest childhood memory (obviously a central theme) to young adulthood.

Yet it is more than all these threads of récit. It belongs to the sub-category of bildungsroman that maps intellectual and artistic trajectory. And within that tale there is the intellect's fascination with self and memory. There is the ragged and inscrutable stuff of recall, which includes elements of North African, Berber, Koranic, French and Arab culture. And then there is the self's attempt to give shape (tattoos are an example) to these scraps and to make them cohere as the soul's story.

Every page is an exacting, challenging exemplum of the tensions and possibilities of creating a text. We are present at a carefully maintained drama, two of whose actors are vocabulary and syntax. It takes a brave reader to go along on this ambivalent linguistic adventure.

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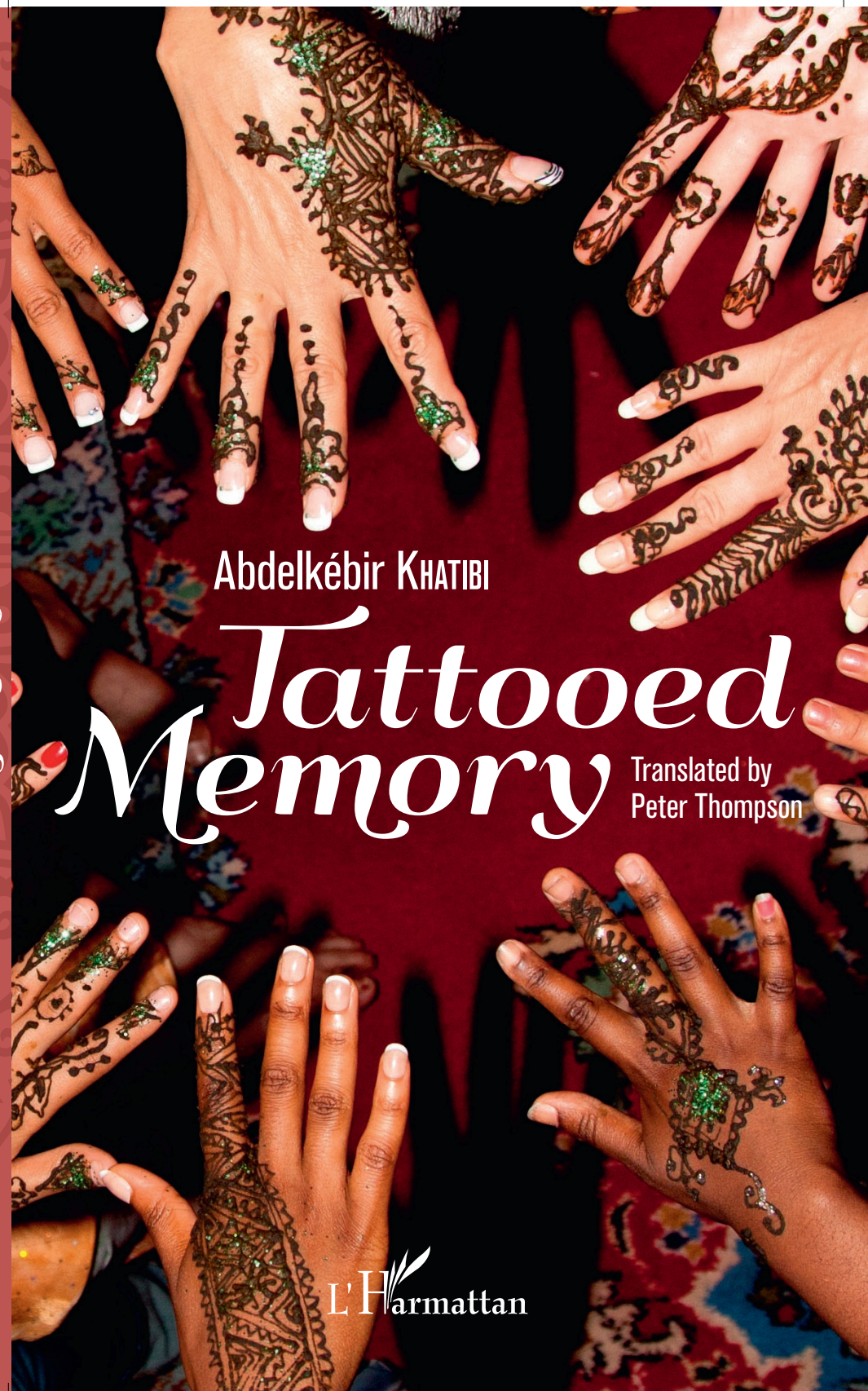
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L'Harmattan