Review of *Témoignages fictionnels au féminin : Une réécriture des blancs de la guerre civile algérienne*, by Névine El Nossery. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012. ISBN 978-90-420-3592-8. Pp. 235. €50/$65.

The official recorded version of History cannot encompass all of the stories and experiences of those who lived through the events. Whether willful or unintentional, blanks in the official record, argues Névine El Nossery, are particularly conspicuous in improperly accounting for the stories of those who bore direct witness to the violence of the Algerian "Black Decade" of the 1990s.

El Nossery notes that the scope of the unspeakable violence perpetuated against women accounts for one of the largest areas of neglect in the record. The women writers whom she studies—Assia Djebar, Latifa Ben Mansour, Leïla Marouane, and Malika Mokeddem—have all taken up the pen to fill in those gaps and give voice to the silenced through "fictionalized" accounts of "real" stories. The need for quotation marks here reflects El Nossery's main contention that the line between historical fact and fiction is indeed blurry under the best of circumstances when one is at least attempting to find the "truth." When writers, artists, teachers, and other intellectuals were deliberately targeted, threatened, and often killed during this period, whose "truth" found its way into the pages in the record books becomes all the more equivocal. Indeed, argues El Nossery, the final version is at best incomplete, and at worst willfully expunged of the truth of the horror suffered by women in greater proportion. The fictions created by these women writers can be seen, therefore, as containing "truth" that the official record fails to acknowledge since these accounts fictionalize the real lived experiences of so many silenced women.

For those unfamiliar with Algeria, El Nossery provides a helpful introductory section that gives a sweeping historical, political, and religious overview from the country's origins to the present day. She helps the reader understand the various interpretations of the Koran and the rise of fundamentalist or "intégriste" groups in Algeria during and after the War of Independence, groups responsible for much of the violence in the 1990s. Women's (inferior) place in society based on the various interpretations of Islam is examined. It is in this context that one can appreciate the credibility of El Nossery's argument: the women writers who provide a "fictionalized" view of History do so in order to resist the falsification of Algerian national History by those who denied women their basic humanity during these violent years and their place in the record books afterwards. These writers took up the pen often at great personal risk, and thus their stories have added truth-value. El Nossery provides information on the steep rise in the number of books written by

Algerian women in the 1990s, further evidence that the need to bear witness to the truth through writing intensified.

El Nossery gives biographical information on each of the authors, a helpful tool for those who might be new to the topic and to these particular writers. In the chapter on Djebar, one can see the evolution in the author's writing and the added urgency caused by the assassinations of several of Djebar's friends. Unlike officially sanctioned historical texts, Djebar's works, including *Le blanc de l'Algérie* and *Oran, langue morte*, were not written in retrospect, but bear witness to events during the time in which they were lived by the author and her country, adding authenticity to fictionalized accounts. El Nossery argues that the main theme is that death will not be final: the voices of the silenced will be heard. El Nossery views Mokeddem's texts as revolving around the theme of wandering, a symbol for woman's refusal to be confined and marginalized. This is evident especially in Mokeddem's *Les hommes qui marchent* and *La nuit de la lézarde*. Marouane, explains El Nossery, is viewed by the Algerian press as "la plus rebelle des écrivaines arabes" (138). One of her main points of focus is rape, a horrific crime and a tool of male dominance that is most often overlooked, and in fact, blamed on the dishonored and shamed woman of the patriarchal culture. In addition to the study of Marouane's work in this chapter, El Nossery catalogues many other women writers who treat the subject of rape. Finally, El Nossery examines Ben Mansour's use of writing as a form of therapy for those suffering from trauma, such as the women in her stories and in real life.

El Nossery's book speaks to a dual audience. Her overview and careful study of each author provides an excellent introduction for those new to the topic. However, scholars who are more familiar with the topic will find an erudite analysis of the authors and ample support of the main thesis in this book.

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