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Do You Hear in the Mountains... and Other Stories by Maïssa Bey (review)

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Ellen M. Thorington, Karen Robertson, Christine Reno, Theresa Coletti, A. E. B. Coldiron, Roberta L. Krueger, Lori J. Walters, and Nadia Margolis.

Professor Tarnowski's edited volume offers a treasure trove of step-by-step narratives and reflections for instructors interested in implementing a seminar on Christine de Pizan, her life and works. The essays offered by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Susan J. Dudash, A. E. B. Coldiron, and Roberta L. Krueger are especially valuable for their insights into teaching Christine de Pizan's lesser-known works both from proto-feminist and historical perspectives, in keeping with the original argument for a more interdisciplinary approach to Christine de Pizan's works. Along these lines, Mark Aussems and David Joseph Wristley guide both student and reader through Christine's world through the use of digitized letters and maps from the same period while proposing methods for the creation of exhibits.

Due to the volume's very nature of presenting approaches to an enlarged canon, it has an understandably uneven organization of the authors' contributions. On one hand, a discussion of newly-available works merits a book in itself; on the other, it is a necessity to understand the authors' selection of certain texts for their seminars. Thus, the organization of the volume might have benefitted from a thematic division as stated in the "Instructor's Library," since each essay more or less emphasizes the relevance of the primary and secondary source material on the lesson or seminar. Nonetheless, *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Christine de Pizan* is a welcome addition not only to the overall study of Christine de Pizan's writings but moreover to pedagogy in the literary, historical, and cultural classroom.

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Creative Works:

Bey, Maïssa. *Do You Hear in the Mountains... and Other Stories*. Trans. Erin Lamm. U of Virginia P, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-8139-4028-1. \$65 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-8139-4029-8. \$25 (paper).

Maïssa Bey is the author of several essays, novels, poems, and short stories, some of which have been adapted to theatre. Her writing, like that of fellow Algerian women Assia Djebar, Malika Mokaddem and Leïla Sebbar, is marked by women's experiences and the historical and political French-Algerian context. Bey's 2002 novella *Do You Hear in the Mountains*, and the 2004 collection of eleven short stories, *Under the Jasmine at Night*, appear together in this volume, which is part of the CARAF Books series of the University of Virginia Press.

In *Do You Hear in the Mountains*, Bey speaks the unspoken in order to access the truth and confront French-Algerian taboos that are passed down from generation to generation. Dedicated to her father who "will never be able to read these lines" (3) and to her sons, the story is a critique of violence and a reflection on guilt and responsibility.

The story takes place in France aboard a train to Marseille, a strategic point on the Mediterranean and home to many Algerian immigrants and *pied-noirs* who fled Algeria when it gained Independence. The strained dialogue that drives the

plot transpires among three travelers—an Algerian woman of a certain age, a Frenchman in his sixties, and a young French woman—and establishes the connections between three generations of French-Algerians and between the past, present, and future.

The Algerian woman, who is also the narrator, fled the Algerian Civil War of the 1990s and sought refuge in France. The Frenchman was a military doctor stationed in Algeria during the War of Independence in the village where the Algerian woman was born and where her father worked before being tortured, killed, and thrown into a mass grave. Finally, we come full circle with Marie, the granddaughter of a *pied-noir* who wishes to know more about the past.

“Arabs, I’m sure!” (16). This accusation uttered by a first-class passenger who believes the three are responsible for attempted theft is the catalyst for the conversation that follows. The passengers face a dilemma: to speak or remain silent, to question the past or not. Initially, the Algerian woman is uncomfortable and reluctant to converse about her homeland. She is tired of other people’s sympathy or nostalgia when they learn she is from Algeria. “That’s what they always say about Algeria: ‘what a beautiful country!’ . . . She has heard this sentence everywhere, for such a long time, said in a tone of regret during the first few years that followed Independence but now tinged with commiseration” (21). Bey comments on war—those involved on both sides, how one justifies one’s own involvement, and how one deals with the aftermath—and as a result, she humanizes both the French and Algerian experiences. She asserts that while one can ignore the violence at first, one cannot entirely block it out. Bey urges us to speak the truth so that we refute false narratives and seek reconciliation instead.

In *Under the Jasmine at Night*, Bey addresses the difficulty of defining women’s identity amid the social and cultural realities in Algeria. The stories examine education, immigration, marriage, violence, and motherhood. For example, “In Good Faith upon my Honor,” the collection’s third story, is about the desire for freedom and the need to express oneself; however, when the protagonist learns her husband will take a new wife, her fear and anger soon dissipate with the sound of her daughter’s cries. By remembering all the Algerian women who came before her and suffered similar fates, she is able to regain her strength and power for her daughter’s future.

Bey’s writing is effective because of how she communicates, specifically her ability to describe the challenges of the feminine condition. This is a beautiful and careful translation by Erin Lamm who captures the subtlety and intentionality of Bey’s language including euphemisms and ellipses, all while paying great attention to uniquely Algerian references, expressions, and vocabulary, and providing notes for the terms that remain in Arabic.

These are stories for today even though fifty-seven years have passed since Algerian Independence and eighteen since the end of the Black Decade. Bey reveals how trauma lives on long after “the events,” and can limit us through fear and silence. Despite deep divisions in society with relation to race, religion, ethnicity, and the inequality women continue to face, Bey encourages us to voice those repressed feelings and memories because it provides catharsis.

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