

Introduction

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We are pleased to offer *Phoebe's* first issue to focus on women and gender in the Maghreb, an effort which is part of our continuing commitment to maintain a global reach on these issues. One of the aspects that many of the articles included in this issue share is the search for women's agency, the "creation" of spaces from which Maghrebian women can speak. Denise Filios and Monia Hejaiej provide a comparative examination between two versions of "Sabra," with a specific focus "on the articulation of gender within the two performances" through the analysis of a modern Tunisian tale and the European medieval version. Valerie Orlando explores how "gendered spaces, the madness of war and violence" are used in postcolonial Algeria for women to create a sense of self by establishing their own realities.

The essays on the works of Assia Djebar, Shelly Auster's and Agnes Peysson-Zeiss's explore the Algerian writer's attempt at reconstructing women's voices, bringing to the forefront their historical legacies. These legacies are connected to women witnessing conquest and colonization by the French in the nineteenth century, as well as their participation in the war to liberate Algeria from that very colonizer in the mid-twentieth century. Djebar's goal, according to Peysson-Zeiss, is to re-inscribe "this hidden feminine history" from the perspective of a third space. Auster, on the other hand, focuses on the act of enunciating, Djebar's attempt to provide a space from which Algerian women can speak. Pamela Pears looks closely at Mechakra's *La grotte éclatée*, arguing that the protagonist, the woman 'warrior,' needs to be an orphan who invents her own people and country because the Algerian War ultimately was not transformative of gender boundaries.

With a different focus on the very questions presented in the articles above, Jimia Boutouba explores cinema as an alternative means through which to construct history; her film choice is Moufida Tlatli's "The Silences of the Palace." Among the questions that she seeks to address are those primarily concerned with using film as a way in which to create a new form of expression through which women's voices can be heard. The two essays in French examine other aspects of women finding voice in the Maghreb. Nadira Barkallil traces the role of the state—colonial and post-independent—in the reconstruction of Morocco's gender system. Her political economy of gender emphasizes the greater influence of literacy and education over wage labor and capitalist relations of production in reconfiguring the system. Deborah Hess details the clash of gender codes among Maghrebian women in France—western, Berber and muslim—in Ben Jelloun's *With Eyes Downcast*.

We hope that these essays will invite some readers to become better acquainted with recent work and new approaches to feminist and literary studies through the work of these exciting writers, both established and emerging scholars.