

REDOUANE, NAJIB. *Le legs du père*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016. ISBN 978-2-343-09610-0. Pp. 230.

In this rather long letter, Redouane's protagonist remains nameless throughout the entire novel, but the hatred of her father is so palpable that almost every sentence of the book is filled with rage, vengeance, despair, humiliation, madness, and self-loathing. She is a twenty-eight-year-old novelist, born in a northern France *HLM* of backward and brutal Maghrébin parents. Writing (and reading) have become her only escape from the incessant violence around her as she reaches adulthood. The conflict of her desire to be considered French, and to never admit her northern African origins, fills the novel from cover to cover. It is both topical and relevant. As she flies back from her father's unspecified country, knowing full well he shall never read this letter, she uses the notebook she has received from a French man living in the "bled," whom she hopefully has manipulated and seduced sufficiently to allow her to return, to assist her in taking up a teaching position in, of all places, her father's nation! We are privy to her constant malaise, knowing she and her sisters were their father's "graines inutiles" (24), being female: "Tu as fait de moi une plaie vivante" (13). Every male of her father's clan needs to pay. She commits every personal outrage she can to ruin his honor, and hers in so doing. She has no remorse and no affect. As a beaten, abused youth, she has neither matured nor developed: she remains the unwanted offspring, unable to connect with humanity. In turn, she abuses hospitality and impedes most possibilities of improvement of her condition. Who is she? "J'indique que je suis indignée d'être prise pour étrangère dans mon propre pays" (106). Will she ever find peace? Written well in an easy-to-read style, the novel weighs on the reader. It is difficult to imagine such sustained hate and abhorrence. Alternating between the *épistolaire* narrative and the seductive attempt (and the failed tries to communicate normally in between), the novel shows us how timely the plight of maladjusted immigrants and their families can be. A fascinating read, illuminating but disheartening. We do not like the protagonist, but we feel for her.

Alliance Française de Santa Rosa (CA)

Davida Brautman