

Leila Sebbar Parle Mon Fils, Parle à ta Mère

Leila Sebbar, born in Algeria of a French mother and an Algerian father, resides in France. She has done sociological research on North African immigrants and has published essays, short stories and novels. She is a contributor to *La Quinzaine Littéraire* and *Sans Frontiere* and has also written for *les Temps Modernes* and *Sorcieres*.

Among her noteworthy novels are: *Little Girls are killed*, *Fatima or the Algerian Women of the Square*, *Sherazade*, *The Green Chinese of Africa*, all published by Stock. Most of her works are written in a direct realist style. They explore with psychological and sociological knowledge and sensitivity the details of the lives of North African immigrants, particularly women, in France.

Speak my Son, Speak to your Mother is a love story between a mother and her eldest son who do not speak the same language. The son has returned to his native home in one of the French suburbs without warning. The mother is alone in the kitchen. She carries the narrative while preparing coffee and mint tea. She also serves him honey and almond cookies.

The book is in French, but the mother, we are told, speaks in her native Arabic mixing French words here and there. She speaks incessantly of the house, of the father who we are eventually told is in "the asylum," of the daughters, of the son, of his faraway trips, his life, French women, the woman who would make a good wife for him, religion, Islam. She speaks of radio, television, of the Beurs' walk for equality ... of his cousin who would make a good match, the beautiful cousin with eyes "like the sea." She asks him to remember that he has a soul.

The novel, written in the style of an interviewed monologue, is interesting from a sociological and anthropological point of view. From a literary one, however, it lacks the dimensions of creative imagination.

Evelyne Accad

* Beurs is the slang name given to the children of North African Immigrants in France.

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