When the Revolution Ends
Author:
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ON A SCALE FROM 1 - 10 (WITH 10 BEING THE HIGHEST SCORE) HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS BOOK?9

Cuando la revolucióntermine (Once the Revolution Ends, Turpial, 2016) is Leila Nachawati's first novel. Nachawati (b. 1978), a Spanish-Syrian human rights activist born in Galicia and based in Madrid, teaches Communications at Carlos III University, works as a Communications Officer for the Association for Progressive Communications (APC, a global network of human rights defenders), and is a team member of SyriaUntold.org, a digital archive on the Syrian civil movement and its creative and artistic content.

The book begins as the diary of Sarah –a Spanish-Syrian woman much like Nachawati herself—who is writing it as a sort of memoir of the Syrian revolution for her little daughter, and later seemingly fragments into several third-person narrations following the lives of many young Syrian people, most of which come from very different backgrounds and do not even know each other. This fragmentation, however, is only apparent, and little by little the characters start bumping into each other and influencing each other's lives from good or for evil, until the novel coalesces both into a mosaic of modern-day Syria under the Assad regime and a meditation on how people's lives intertwine in surprising ways. (The identity of the father of Sarah's daughter is one of those surprises.)

Cuando la revolución termine is a compelling read, mostly because the characters (all inspired by real people, according to the author) are well-drawn in all their complexity and their struggles. There are several, very different, very vividly presented women, and even a gay character –although his story line is not followed as fully as some of the others.

This is a political novel, and as such the dialog and Sarah's narration sometimes becomes a bit too preachy and too close to a journalistic debate. What saves the book is, again, the vividness of its characters, their very variety –at some point a young Syrian middle-class woman rediscovers the city where she has lived all her life through the dazzled eyes of an American exchange student and undergoes an epiphany in the process—and the close attention Nachawati pays to the most minute details of Syrian everyday life, from the foods to the local customs, as well as to the twist and turns of these people's lives.

The prose is clear and serviceable (if somewhat washed out and newspaper-y, in my opinion) and would lend itself very well to translation. The book is also an informed look at the world

of the millennials living in the Arab Spring, as well as the horrors that Syria has been going through during the last decade. It is, moreover, an easy, gripping read that at some point will probably become a popular movie or miniseries. For all these reasons, I highly recommend it to the American readers.

I would like to add a personal note to my recommendation. Political fiction is hardly my preferred genre, and I was not pleased when I found out that my assignment was going to be a political novel. To my surprise, however, *Cuando la revolución termine*ended up being a gratifying experience at numerous levels, and I find that, as a political novel, it achieves very well what it sets out to do. Hence the high marks I am giving it.

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