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Hannah Feldman. *From a Nation Torn: Decolonizing Art and Representation in France, 1945-1962.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. xvi + 317 pp. $99.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-5356-0; $27.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-5371-3.

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Hannah Feldmanâs *From a Nation Torn* critically addresses mainstream art-historical approaches to French modernism and the cultural context that shaped its production and reception. Specifically, Feldman contests the dominant appellation âpostwarâ as describing the history of France from the late 1940s into the 1960s. The visual culture of this period, argues Feldman, should instead be considered âart-*during*-war,â given Franceâs uninterrupted involvement in imperial wars in Southeast Asia and North Africa between the conclusion of WWII and Algerian independence in 1962. Focusing on the Algerian War of Independence (1954-62), Feldman analyzes the complex interactions between political philosophies, public culture, and visual production during the âdecades of decolonization,â highlighting the ways in which the dissolution of Franceâs colonial empire impacted the development of arts and aesthetic theory within French national borders. In so doing, she seeks not only to reimagine the history of French modernism as âtransnational, influenced and rooted in the experience of the colonies as well as the metropole,â but to position âart objects and the visualities they engender as primary sites of theorization and analysis, rather than as secondary or tertiary epiphenomenaâ in the broader context of modern French history (pp. 8,15).

This framework of inquiry supports Feldmanâs tightly woven dialogue between official national culture, contemporary art practices, and photographic representations of political events. She begins with a nuanced and fascinating historical analysis of AndrÃ© Malraux, the first French minister of cultural affairs, who served this role for a decade beginning in 1959. This analysis, which spans two chapters, addresses Malrauxâs early interest in the âpsychology of artâ and its later impact on his urban planning policies. Feldman here underscores Malrauxâs belief in art as a âuniversalâ phenomenon, the primary value of which was the nebulously defined âstyleâ rather than anything culturally or historically specific, and the ways in which such a belief, âinstead of serving a public, would come to limit and proscribe itâ (p. 40). She connects this exaltation of style and its attendant negation of historical specificity to Franceâs contemporary need to redirect its national identity, suggesting that a ânew focus on culture was meant to obscure recent imperial failings while protecting itself against their implicationsâ (p. 43). Furthermore, she cites its influence on architectural preservationism and urban planning under Malraux, which restored and rebuilt areas of Paris in a way that âdrew upon the imperial habits of colonial urbanisms equally rendered as styleâ (p. 62). In-

deed, a primary contribution of this work is its proposal of new and compelling parallels between contemporary architectures in France and in the colonies; here, Feldman stays true to her conception of transnational modernism in suggesting that currents of influence flowed both ways.

Concluding her discussion of Malraux, Feldman extends her inquiry into conceptions of urbanism to address the works of Isidore Isou and Raymond Hains. In her discussion of Isou, she reconsiders the limitations of Lettrism, the artistic movement of which he was a founding member and in which he was active during the âdecades of decolonization.â She argues that Lettrism is the âaural and visual fabrication of a supposedly universal cultureâ that ultimately works to âobscure alterity,â and is thus bound by the same kinds of humanist universalisms seen in Malrauxâs conceptions of art and architecture (p. 204). Conversely, Feldman sees the dÃ©collages of Raymond Hains as explicitly historically and politically grounded in French resistance to the war in Algeria. Here, however, Feldman criticizes the dominant scholarly tendency to âaccuse Hains of having missed an opportunity to pronounce a grander, more articulate and politically acute critique in the name of the marginalizedâ (p. 155). Instead, she locates the workâs success precisely in its ambiguity, which acknowledges the impossibilities of representation inherent in both the spaces of the art world and in modern electoral politics.

Feldmanâs penultimate chapter discusses the events of October 17, 1961, when thousands of Algerians took to the streets of Paris in a demonstration orchestrated by the FLN that was subsequently and violently quelled by the police. Feldmanâs account focuses mainly on the photographic representation of this event, focusing on the ways in which this widespread protest constituted a radical move by Algerians in France to reclaim and assert their citizenship rights in the context of urban public space. In her discussion of this demonstration, Feldman distances herself from the vast majority of scholarship on the subject, which has largely argued that photographs of the events did not circulate in mainstream French media. Using a contemporary issue of the news magazine *Paris Match* as a primary case study, Feldman argues that images of the demonstration, while certainly circumscribed by the police, did appear in mainstream publications. These images fall into two genres: one that âsituates the protestors in plenitude within the spaces of the cityâ and another which depicts âcatastrophe or horror,â including dead bodies and evidence of police brutality (p. 192). Though the status of the subject in each genre is radically different, Feldman argues, they equally ârepresent the incursion of these subjects â¦ into the visual field and their repurposing of the circuits of capitalist consumer visuality in favor of a decolonizing visibility.â Carrying her critique into the present moment, Feldman remarks that the images circulating in recent texts on the subject of the demonstration emphasize police brutality to the detriment of Algerian agency. This is not to say that she denies the reality of such violence; on the contrary, she reconsiders the gruesome repression of these protests as inextricable from questions of visibility in and exclusion from civic space, plotting another fruitful coordinate in her eloquent discussion of Parisian urbanism and cultural belonging. Compellingly, she argues that âthe eclipse of images of the marchersâ confirmation of their âright to the cityâ in favor of their victimization encourages the sense that the most important aspect of the demonstration remains its suppression, thus continuing to pace the question of history and its narrative out of the hands of those Algerians who protestedâ (p. 193).

In conclusion, Feldman shifts her attention to a contemporary film, Michael Hanekeâs *CachÃ©* (*Hidden,* 2005), in which a Parisian intellectual comes to understand that his life is under surveillance by an Algerian French man who had been orphaned during the 1961 demonstration. The film evokes these events only by their absence, and according to Feldman encourages the viewer to consider âthe history of the imperial and colonial representations that motivates â¦ willful blindness and which a history of aesthetic favoritism enablesâ (p. 208). She thus returns to her essential project, which she has successfully accomplished over the course of this book: making visible the intersections between universalizing aesthetic principles, French imperialistic representation, and the collective memory of a fraught period in French history.

Overall, Feldmanâs work represents a powerful synthesis of historical and theoretical methodologies that truly exemplifies responsible interdisciplinary scholarship. Drawing from fields of social history, philosophy, spatial and postcolonial theories, as well as from art history, Feldman offers a promising glimpse at future studies of European modernism, which will necessarily engage such a spectrum in order to grapple with similar histories of overlooked alterities. Ultimately, this work represents an important step towards the project of decolonizing art, described in Feldmanâs own words as âlearning to see in plain sight what is already thereâ (p. 219).

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