

Armenian Genocide of 1915 looms as a dark backdrop. Abramian tells her sweeping story simply and forcefully, although the reader at times wishes for more amplification, more background.

*The Immigrant's Daughter* similarly deals with the specter of genocide. Born in Cairo, Egypt, to immigrant Armenian parents, the author bases her story on the diaries she kept during her years growing up in Cairo. Again, the sheer force of an independent, bright young woman having to fight for education becomes a central theme of the work. "What do girls need an education for?" her father says. Some of the most intriguing scenes deal with the aftermath of World War II and the influx of refugees from the newly established state of Israel, a time when political and cultural change directly informed one's daily life. The author eventually worked for the World Health Organization of the United Nations and gives us small glimpses of her life in places like the Congo and Lebanon. She came to America in 1967 and began to achieve her goals as an educated woman. Like Abramian's memoirs, this autobiography gives us a look at women in a rigid patriarchal society. My only reservation is the use, here and there, of clichéd language—"jump on the bandwagon" and graduating "with flying colors," as well as an occasional use of pop-psychology terminology, as evidenced in the subtitle ("the right to self-actualization"). Minor points, truly, in an otherwise satisfying book.

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**16-2-0127**

Birnbaum, Phyllis. *Glory in a Line: A Life of Foujita—the Artist Caught Between East and West*. New York: Faber & Faber, 2006. 330 pp. ISBN 0-571-21179-8, \$27.50.

Birnbaum offers a unique and fascinating biography of the Japanese artist Foujita. Foujita (or Fujita Tsuguharu as he is known in Japan) was a very complex individual and is still considered to be a controversial figure years after his death. Rejecting the Japanese art world, Foujita moved to Paris to be a Western-style artist and became part of the Montparnasse art scene of the 1920s. In Paris he met the leading figures of the art world—Picasso, Rivera, and Modigliani—and gained fame not only for his nude females and cat paintings, but also for his unique brushstrokes and the white paint he used. He married a few times, lost his money, traveled the world, and moved back to Japan shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War. He was a leading figure of Japanese war art during World War II, but moved to the United States and eventually back to France.

At times it seems that the author loses sight of Foujita, so she inserts her own research, travel, observations, and interviews with people who knew or are researching him. This is a bit distracting, but it does help to balance out Foujita's multifaceted character, because many times Foujita wrote or told people one thing and did the opposite. Recommended.

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**16-2-0128**

Deen, Hanifa. *The Crescent and the Pen: The Strange Journey of Taslima Nasreen*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood/Praeger, 2006.

288 pp. ISBN 0-275-99167-9, \$49.95.

It may be all true, but whether it is called a personal narrative or detective history, Deen's work seems to be more of a personal slander against Taslima Nasreen, who cannot return to her homeland because of some poorly made choices within the context of her society. Nasreen started her career in the medical field and then began to write strident prose that condemned the society of Bangladesh for its human rights abuses against women. These writings have inspired people to issue a fatwá against her (*fatwá* are not necessarily bad, according to the author) and ban her books.

Deen's book is a self-described exposé of the mythology of Nasreen, which the author states is extensively researched, in situ. It may have been extensively researched, and the author uses big poetic words to prove unnecessarily her obvious command of the English language, but the author's scholarly ability comes into question with a factual mistake. In a passage indicating the reality of a peaceful march called a riot by American and European media, she calls the American Consulate of Calcutta the American Embassy.

*The Crescent and the Pen* is a story of a complicated woman and the complicated events surrounding her departure from Bangladesh. The book is further complicated by writing that is not engaging, poorly edited, and at times a childish diatribe in purple prose. This book should be selected with caution for university and research libraries that already have an extensive collection of books in Muslim women's studies and the writings of Taslima Nasreen, so the "truth" from many sources is readily available.

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**16-2-0129**

Filipović, Zlata and Challenger, Melanie, eds. *Stolen Voices: Young People's War Diaries from World War I to Iraq*. New York: Penguin, 2007. 292 pp. ISBN-13 978-0-14-303871-9, \$14.00 (pb).

This new anthology of children's wartime diaries takes the reader on a journey through the minds of 14 young people whose lives are ravaged by conflict. Raw and uncensored candor runs through the heart of each entry. An enlightening and provocative book about the effects of war, it illuminates conflict far beyond the dry pages of history texts. Most of all, it shines light on what editor Filipović, herself a young diarist in wartime, explains in her introduction: "Wars do happen to people like us."

The diaries cover everything from the cruel details of war to more mundane and heart-wrenching happenings: the death of a kitten, the foods served at a long-awaited meal, the unexpected kindness of a stranger. Perhaps the most disturbing thing all the diaries share is a phenomenon that editor Challenger terms "the amputation of imagination." Indoctrination is often clear, especially in the separate but parallel diaries of two girls on opposite ends of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The anthology must be read both to keep alive the memory of those who died too young and to grieve with those who were forced to grow up too fast.

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