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*SPIRAL OF SILENCE*, by Elvira Sánchez-Blake, translated from Spanish by Lorena Terando with a foreword by Debra A. Castillo. Evanston, IL: Curbstone Books / Northwestern University Press, 2019. 176 pp. \$18.95 paper; \$18.95 ebook.

*Spiral of Silence*, written by Colombian-born journalist, writer, and scholar Elvira Sánchez-Blake and translated by Lorena Terando, is a fictional narrative based on testimonies of Colombian women whose lives are entwined in various ways with the decades-long armed conflict in Colombia. The idea for the novel, *Espiral de silencios* (2009), originated from the testimonial of María Isabel Giraldo, whom the author met when she began compiling women's testimonies for her book *Patria se escribe con sangre* (2000; *Homeland is written in blood*). Sánchez-Blake was born in Colombia, where she worked as a journalist and was part of the press team for two former presidents during the 1980s. She has lived in the United States for over twenty-five years, where she has combined journalism with literary writing and scholarly research. Most of her publications revolve around the role of women in Colombian history and society. **[End Page 465]**

*Spiral of Silence* unfolds as a multigenerational narrative, with the peace negotiations in Colombia in the 1980s as a backdrop. It is structured in two parts, each of which comprises several brief chapters told through the voices of women protagonists: María Teresa—based on Giraldo—a young woman in love with a guerrilla fighter; upper-class Norma, the wife of an army general; and Amparo, a young woman who lives in a rural area and is at the crossroads—of the conflict. The narrative opens with three poems in the voice of each of these women, in which they interpellate the reader, setting the stage for the ethical complexities of the intertwined stories to come.

At the beginning of the first part, fifteen-year-old María Teresa goes to prison, where she delivers a son who is taken away from her. In prison, she meets women from various social classes, backgrounds, and political affiliations, some of whom, like the protagonists, are involuntarily involved in the Colombian war and conflict and are directly affected by its workings and consequences.

The narrative voice is intimate and the stories include references to the armed conflict, historical locations, key figures, and events such as the siege of the Palacio de Justicia, the Supreme Court of Colombia, in 1985, as well as elements of Colombian everyday life, such as telenovelas, songs, and other bits of popular culture. Amidst the stories emerges a poignant narrative not only of strength and solidarity but also of pain and injustice, of the will to continue living in the face of a war that, to this day, is ongoing.

One strength of this translation of *Spiral of Silence* is the inclusion of paratextual elements, including a foreword, a translator's introduction, an author's postscript, a one-page glossary of names that were not translated in the novel, and a short timeline for the period between 1946 and 2004, which integrates major relevant historical events with moments in the novel. Debra A. Castillo's foreword recounts the genesis of the project that led to Sánchez-Blake's work on women in Colombia and eventually to *Spiral of Silence* and also contextualizes the book and its significance in light of recent attempts to reach peace and reconciliation in Colombia. In her two-page introduction, translator Lorena Terando articulates her commitment to rendering women's voices as part of writing the history and memory of war in Colombia; she also translated *My Life as a Revolutionary: Reflections of a Colombian Guerrillera* (2005) by María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo. Terando describes her translation strategy as one of creating "a text that flows well in English, while at the same time showcasing its undeniable Colombianness," which she accomplishes, among other means, by rendering the novel's orality and retaining Colombian Spanish expressions. **[End Page 466]**