

WOMEN AND MIGRATION(S) II



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Cover image: FIRELEI BÁEZ for Marie-Louise Coidavid, exiled, keeper of order, Anacaona, 2018. Oil on canvas. Installation view: 10th Berlin Biennale, Akademie der Künste (Hanseatenweg), Berlin, 9 June 9-September 2018. Photo: Timo Ohler. Cover design by Anna Gatti

5. Rapture

Shirin Neshat



Fig. 1 *Rapture* series, 1999. Courtesy Noirmontartproduction, Paris, Gladstone Gallery, New York.

Consistent with the visual and conceptual approach that Neshat adopted in *Turbulent* (1998), *Rapture* (1999) is another narrative that explores the topic of gender in Islamic cultures, but here it relates specifically to ideas around nature and culture. Highly stylized, the work removes its female subjects from their customary urban setting and places them in rural environments. Also designed as two projections installed facing one another, *Rapture* requires the viewer to shift his or her attention between two images in order to follow the action. What Neshat ultimately

presents is an allegorical duel between a group of white-shirted men occupying a fortress and a group of black-veiled women outside in a natural landscape. The fortress represents a typically masculine space in which individuals are confined by an endless and absurd series of walls and barriers. By way of contrast, the women are depicted first praying in the barren desert, then migrating to the seaside where they commence pushing a heavy boat and sail away, as a kind of escape to an unidentifiable destination. Whether this departure signifies an act of suicide or one of liberation, it certainly embodies an idea of courage and self-determination.