WOMEN’S CITIZENSHIP:
BETWEEN BLOODLINES AND PATRIARCHAL CONDITIONING
IN POSTCOLONIAL ALGERIA

by

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Abstract

My thesis maps a genealogy of patriarchal structures that underpin Algerian history, culture, and institutions between the war of independence and the 1991-2001 civil war. More specifically, I contextualize the ways in which patriarchal lineages and origin stories—and thus the symbolic and structural promises of the family—underpin political struggle. In mapping these symbolic lineages found at work in the promise of independence, and the ways in which they underpin political struggle, I demonstrate how the war of independence reified and redefined familial and patriarchal kinships within political and social structures. I suggest that historical and social conditionings found at work at these different historical moments have legitimated, to a certain extent, the domination over women and a normalization of violence against them. My thesis examines social and political discourses at four central moments in Algerian history. Firstly, in the constructions of the Algerian nation-state post independence in 1962; secondly, in the Islamic Renaissance of the 1980s and the creation of the Family Code; and in a third moment, I draw connections between the Family Code, violent political clashes of 1990s and the civil war that ensued. Finally, I analyze laws and discourses created after the civil war and the resistance movements that have continuously contested power and oppression throughout these different periods.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

You say that suffering is useless. But you are wrong. It makes you scream. It warns against the insensible. It warns against disorder. It warns against the fracture of the world.

—Assia Djebar

The deep Revolution, the true one, precisely because it changes man and renews society, has reached an advanced stage. This oxygen which creates and shapes a new humanity—this, too, is the Algerian Revolution.

—Frantz Fanon

In the first quote above, Algerian author Assia Djebar resonates the pain, the screams and agony of Algerian women that remind us how suffering and violence fractures the world. Yet her insights also indirectly call attention to the ways in which disorder and insensible suffering have come to be ordinary—viewed as useless protests against violence. In similar ways, gendered violence reminds us of legacies of historical, social and ideological processes that fracture the world yet also come to be normalized. Gendered violence and its normalization in Algerian society have taken many forms at the domestic, social, institutional, and political levels. As seen in much of the feminist scholarship on the subject, we can trace a continuum of violence that tends to culminate during time of war and political instability. Throughout Algerian history, women’s bodies have been used as a means of power, control, and subordination, to remind us of the interlocking symbolic and structural hierarchies at play between colonizer and colonized, citizen and non-citizen, men and women. Yet, great women of the decolonization movements such as Kahina, Djamila Bouhired, Hassiba Ben Bouali, and contemporary feminist activists such
as Fadhila Chitour, Cherifa Bouatta and many more have continually fought for their rights and fought against colonization and various patriarchal oppressions. Today, the battle continues.

My thesis maps a genealogy of patriarchal structures that underpin Algerian history, culture, and institutions in order to better situate the broader environment(s) that led to, and were expressed in the (1991-2001) civil war. More specifically, in contextualizing the ways in which patriarchal lineages and origin stories—and thus the symbolic and structural promises of the family—underpin political struggle, I suggest here that historical and social conditionings have legitimated, to a certain extent, the domination over women and a normalization of violence against them. My thesis will analyze social and political discourses at four central moments in Algerian history. Firstly, I will question the constructions of the Algerian nation-state post independence in 1962; secondly, I will address the Islamic Renaissance of the 1980s and the creation of the Family Code; thirdly, I will draw connections between the Family Code, the violent political clashes of 1990s and the civil war that ensued. Finally, I will analyze laws and discourses created after the civil war and the resistance movements that have continuously contested power and oppression throughout these different periods.

In terms of my conceptual and contextual efforts, it is important to note here how I am situating my thesis in relation to broader debates on the nation, Islam, and Islamophobia. In describing the Islamic Renaissance, and what has since been described as Islamic fundamentalist terrorism during the civil war—officially from 1991-2001—I will be discussing laws, social and political actions that are specific to Algeria. I wish, however, to entangle my thinking with the


2 Different historians have set the beginning of the Civil War between 1991 (when in December, the FIS won the first part of legislative elections) and 1992 (when the HECC declares a state of Emergency for 12 months on February 9th). Similarly, the “end” of the civil war is as ambiguous. Although Amnesties were
Orientalist discourses employed in the “War on Terror” and their instrumentalisation in the service of a variety of political agendas that took place soon after the Islamic Renaissance. A conscious effort needs to be exercised against an overgeneralization of the Algerian experience to all North African, Middle Eastern, or Arab countries, especially given the latest developments of Arab Springs in Tunisia and Egypt. Although the three countries seem to have followed similar trajectories in terms of civilian uprisings, followed by the rise to power of Islamic parties, my analysis will discuss cultural and historical specificities in an Algerian context. As eloquently stated by Fanon, “We have taken the Algerian example to clarify our discourse, not to glorify our own people, but quite simply to demonstrate the important part their struggle has played in achieving consciousness.”

The Algerian example, and the Algerian struggles explored in this thesis, indeed happened before the U.S led “war on terror” and the subsequent chain of Islamophobic rhetoric and Western interventionism in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. The particular historical angle I offer here becomes important because of the ways in which national and international entities have dealt with the 1992 Algerian coup. Indeed, international powers had condemned the 1992 military coup, and countries such as France and England notably provided political asylum to several Islamic leaders that, for some, had publically called for violence. Islamic fundamentalism has since been criminalized in the West, and highlighted as a generic signifier to single the Muslim other, in his irrational, morally inferior, and barbaric masculinity and passive, victimized, and submissive femininity. I would like to move away from these views that characterize all Muslims as fundamentalists, and fundamentalism as terrorism—views that tend to cross all sorts

provided in 2002 and 2005 to guerrilla members in exchange for a complete cessation of hostilities, assassinations continued (at a smaller scale) for several years after.

4 References to such articles can be found in the FIS led newspaper Al Anssar
of national boundaries. Although some extreme forms of Islamic fundamentalism did take place in Algeria and during the civil war, and resulted in extreme forms of violence, one cannot ignore the historical and cultural differences between these countries, and the different outcomes stemming from their specific histories and struggles. As stated by Kandiyoti, more rigorous forms of institutional analysis that transcend the categories of religion versus secularism, Western vs. non-Western, modern vs. traditional, need to be employed, while the task of disentangling religion and politics in discussions on gender equality must focus on actors, interests and practices rather than universalized notions of the Middle East or North Africa.⁶

1.1.1 Literature Review

The boundaries of women’s rights both imagined and real, are tightly linked to the relationship between citizenship rights and gender formations as articulated through discourses of culture, society, and religion. Feminist scholarship has maintained the socially constructed nature of both gender and nation, and the perpetuation of hegemonic social powers constructed around the two in relation to religion and patriarchy.⁷ Additionally, feminist analyses also draw attention to the intersection of gender, international relations and the military, the militarization of women during war, and women’s citizenship in a globalized world.⁸ Women’s citizenship in the Algerian

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context, have brought significant advances to the theorization of gendered state productions and reproductions.  

Through symbolic systems of regulation of both men and women’s bodies, membership to the state has historically been mediated through birthrights and kinship. Extensive laws within each country dictate adhesion or exclusion of populations, as citizens and non-citizens, nationals and foreign-nationals, negotiating their rights within the boundaries of these imagined identities. Abu-Laban founds her volume “Gendering the Nation-State” on major feminist works that show how socially constructed notions of both masculinity and femininity play out in relation to national and state processes. Throughout her volume, she and fellow contributors uncover the ways in which the nation-state is variously encoded by gendered assumptions, which in turn produces gendered outcomes; the authors offer specific examinations the ways in which gender and state processes are and are not linked to gender and citizenship. In attending to such differences between gender relations to the state, and state relations to gender, Abu-Laban argues that feminist accounts have shown that nations are complex and internally differentiated. Accordingly, these concepts have had two main complications in past scholarship. Firstly, nation building has had different processes throughout the world, and different outcomes for women depending on their specific contexts. An overgeneralization of western experiences, however,  


10 Yasmeen Abu-Laban. Gendering the Nation-state: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives. (Vancouver: UBC, 2008)

11 Ibid (2008); 5
were set as points of reference, and applied to the rest of the world without taking into account historical and colonial contexts and legacies. Feminist scholarship that took this history as axiomatic, generally tended to dismiss the salience of the nation and of nationalism for women and feminists of color.\textsuperscript{13} Secondly, nation, nationalism and citizenship have generally been assumed as masculine, and were universalized as such; while womanhood—in relation to nationhood—succumbed to symbolic ideals of \textit{mother-nation} and \textit{mother-land}. Indeed, constructions of imagined gendered nations largely exacerbates gender roles in identifying countries, nations, or states as “mother-nations”; or, to use Cynthia Enloe’s formulation, the nation is constructed as “womenandchildren,” and is the cause, point of departure, and point of return for men in war.\textsuperscript{14}

In Arabic, the words for “nation, to nationalize” and “to be or become mother”—\textit{ummah}—are derived from the same root \textit{Umm} “mother, source, origin, essence.” Because it is in relation to the woman/mother that the symbol of honour and nation are crystallized, it has been argued that it is through the figure woman that the group manifests its power, property and land.\textsuperscript{15} Effectively, Suad Joseph notes that “women bear the burden of being mothers of the nation—a duty that gets ideologically defined to suit official priorities—as well as those who reproduce the boundaries of ethnic/national groups, who transmit the culture and who are the privileged signifiers of national difference.”\textsuperscript{16} To this effect, Jill Vickers, argues for gendering the hyphen in “nation-state” by accounting for women’s experiences and their participation in national

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid: 12
\textsuperscript{16} Joseph, Suad. \textit{Gender and citizenship in the Middle East}. (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2000): 77
movements. She maintains that nationhood is not simply a dimension of identity politics; nor is nationalism just another social movement. Rather, she insists, “because nationalism and nationhood are central in creating and restructuring modern nation-states, exploring their gendered aspects can help explain women’s current relation with—or alienation from—political institutions and state politics.”

In terms of national citizenship however, these concepts vary and are based on “the rights and obligations of citizens in relation to the state.” Citizenship is also a “cultural process of subjectification,” or of subject-making, Aihwa Ong explicates. These subjects are classified within social/legal hierarchies specific to each nation—identified as minorities or majorities—and can generally be differentiated in terms of gender, race, religion, class. Although citizenship is understood to be neutral, citizenship-rights are often governed by these differences and consequently defined (and limited) to one’s status in relation to nation. The masculinization of citizenship in the Middle East and North Africa, as maintained by Joseph, has disempowered and empowered women and men differently in some ways and similarly in others. This gendered exceptionalism was attributed in much of the western feminist scholarship to division between private and public domains. Women (and the family) are located in the private domain—which is not seen as politically relevant—while the battlefield, the state and (later) the market have been constituted as the public realms where citizenship is performed.

Characteristics of citizens include fighting, governing, buying and selling property, and eventually working for wages, and

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18 Ibid, 25


20 Joseph, Suad. Gender and citizenship in the Middle East. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000): 4

have all been viewed as masculine, as have been the social locations where these activities are undertaken. Women’s historical exclusion from these arenas has consequently impacted their invisibility and erasure as active participants in political and social processes. According to feminist scholarship, this fracture has led to the subordination of women in both public and private spheres, while giving rise to patriarchal conditioning and control.

In her work on gender and citizenship, Joseph examines the specificities of kin contracts and women’s citizenship in the Middle East while highlighting the conceptual limits of linking family and politics with discourses of citizenship. Joseph, in fact, rejects western constructions of citizenship and nationhood/statehood as tightly centered on the public and private divides. She maintains that in the Middle East, “kin/the family as idea and institution does occupy a central terrain in the political and legal landscape and significantly mediates women’s relationship to the state and to the laws and practices of citizenship.” As such, the kin contract is organized around the “notion that all citizens belong to families prior to membership in the state and that families claim the primary and primordial loyalties of citizens. Indeed, the kin contract presumes that males and females are engaged in complex webs of rights and responsibilities to and for each other.” These responsibilities however are deeply gendered and perpetuate through state laws ideals of “citizen subjects” in regulations of familial relationships in marriage, divorce and inheritance. In Algerian family law, for example men and women are bound to strict obligations and regulations to each other, as well as to their families. In Articles 36 and 37 of the Family Code, the husband is required to “Provide for the maintenance of the wife to the extent of his

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22 Alison Jagger. Arenas of Citizenship. 92
24 Joseph, Suad. Gender and citizenship in the Middle East. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000): 28
25 Joseph 147
26 Joseph: 147
possibilities unless it appears that she has abandoned the matrimonial home, and to act fairly
toward his wife(s) if he has more than one.” According to Article 37, the wife has the right to
“Visit her parents, and to receive them in her husband’s house according to customs and
traditions, and to dispose freely of her property.” To this, the wife is according to law “required to
obey her husband; oblige him with the respect owed to his position as head of the household;
breastfeed his children if she is able to do so, and raise them; and respect her husband’s parents
and other relatives.” As head of the family, the man’s responsibilities are located in the public
sphere, through which he provides economically for the family, while the woman’s
responsibilities are located in the private sphere, where as mother she is required to breastfeed
and raise her children.

Indeed, the contradictory workings of the Family Code and the Algerian constitution
complicate how gendered citizenship is applied to Algerian women. While obligations and
regulations are equally set, constitutionally, for both men and women, the Family Code
naturalizes discourses of gendered hierarchies and maintains the boundaries between public and
private spheres. Put differently, the family-kinship system is tied to a legal mechanism (the
Family Code) that denies women citizenship across both private and public realms while the state
constitution offers broader citizenship rights. Where the status of being a female citizen in
Algeria is divorced from the practice of being a citizen, citizenship remains abstract and carries
no obligation for the state to protect it or for women to exercise it.27 Key provisions of the
Family Code include that women: never attain majority status; that their guardianship is passed
from the father to the husband (or to other male family members when the father is deceased);
that authority over marriage and divorce must be given through the male guardian; and that legal

27 Lazrag, Marnia. "Citizenship and Gender in Algeria." In Gender and citizenship in the Middle East.
(Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000): 60
guardianship over children can only be transmitted to the mother if the father is deceased. As such, the Family Code denies them personhood, independence, and majority rights. These laws, however, are in complete opposition with the Constitution, which grants equality before the law “without any distinction or discrimination that may exist because of birth, race, opinion or gender being personal or social.” These discrepancies within the law are most apparent when a woman, who is legally considered a minor, commits a crime. According to Article 261 of the Penal Code, a woman found guilty of murder is condemned to death, at the same grade as a man would, and similarly would suffer the same punishment as men—one to two years in prison—in cases of adultery, according to Article 339 of the Penal Code. Consequently, Joseph has argued that:

The meshing of the patriarchy, connectivity, relational rights and responsibilities, and the kin contract in the practice of citizenship in many Middle Eastern and North African countries means that the relationship between the citizen and the state are mediated through kin, relationships, and communities, despite the existence of constitutionally and legislatively given formal rights.

Women’s rights in Algeria are therefore mediated through their relationships to the family, and men in particular. Her individual subjecthood as a citizen or a citizen-subject is shadowed by her relationship to the family. It is within these embedded constructs of kinship—and thus the family—that I would like to ground my thesis, and investigate the patriarchal underpinnings in Algerian society that have facilitated gendered hierarchization and masculinist discourses of citizenship.

31 Joseph, Suad. Gender and citizenship in the Middle East. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000): 147
1.1.2 Methods and Methodologies

My thesis uses an intersectional analysis of Algerian state formation since its independence in 1962, and addresses constructions of a gendered nation-state through social, legal and political discourses. My methodology is threefold and includes an historical analysis of patriarchy, family, and gender, a Fanonian reading of gendered violence, and a discourse analysis of media texts. Firstly, through a historical analysis of postcolonial Algeria, and drawing on feminist and other social theories of the nation, I identify specific expressions of gendered violence in cultural, social and political discourses which will help understand the mechanisms of nation building, and its connections to new masculinised and militarized subjectivities. In examining, at a macro-historical level, the interlocking mechanisms that condition, produce, and reproduce gendered hierarchization and subjectifications, I map the conditions of their naturalization in social discourse. It is important to note however, that my contextualization of Algerian state formation is not meant to provide a detailed linear history; rather, I draw attention to different moments and narratives through which patriarchy, the family, and the nation overlap and therefore shed light on their gendered workings in the postcolonial nation-state. Similarly, while a nexus of debates around the causes of the Algerian civil war have pointed to and focussed on several years of corruption, economic hardship and political instability, I do not engage in a political analysis that would attempt to appoint individual or communal responsibility to the conditions that led the country to a civil war. Instead, I trace and connect various historical moments that have exacerbated these conditions and have, specifically, facilitated and culminated in violence against women.

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Secondly, through a Fanonian lens, I seek to understand theoretically based complexities of violent acts in the period of, and leading to, the civil war (1991-2001). I analyze violence because of its symbolic meaning at an individual and communal level. According to Fanon, violence in its practice is totalizing, “at the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitudes. Violence hoists the people up to the level of the leader.”

In other words, and as emphasized by Mbembe in his analysis of the historical conditions through which Fanon developed his conceptualization of violence: “violence is both a political and clinical concept. It is, in Fanon’s opus, as much the clinical manifestation of a political ‘disease’ as an act of (re)symbolization, which allows for the possibility of reciprocity and hence for relative equality in the face of the supreme arbiter which is death.”

Similarly, I would argue that throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, Algerian women have experienced violence that has been totalizing in its practice. It was enacted through political and social discourses, and deployed in domestic, public and institutional fields. These three sites are intrinsically tied to patriarchal powers, and a continuum of violence present in strata of their lives. These tactics of terror and violence are reminiscent of what Fanon described as “the politics of hatred”: the continual aggression, contempt, interminable rituals of humiliation and murders that became the everyday behaviour of the settler vis-à-vis the native.

By investigating the rhetoric of violence used to portray and narrate gender violence, I uncover the inherent connections that are made and exist between gendered violence and its normalization.

Thirdly, through a discourse analysis of newspaper articles and political comic strips, I examine the ways in which central themes considered in previous chapters, such as masculinist creation myths, patriarchal-military structures, and violence against women are/have been...
perceived, depicted and narrated in print media. Thereupon, I will consider how culture, tradition, and the law inform and are informed by masculinised nationalism and militarized national identities. Accordingly, and drawing on Baxter, I argue that the specific locus of language can act as a site for the construction and contestation of social meanings, highlighting language as the common factor in analyses of power, and the construction of identities. In fact, as Baxter maintains, “language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our senses of selves, and our subjectivities are constructed”. Concurrently, Naples argues that discourse analyses explore what can be said and what can be heard within different arenas. Journalists and editors participate in the production of knowledge, as well as illustrate, reflect, perform and perpetuate social constructions of gender hierarchies found at work in cultural/religious discourses.

1.1.3 Thesis Outline

In the first chapter, “National and Gendered Postcolonial Contexts: An Algerian Experience,” I analyze state formation since the country’s 1962 independence, and examine the ways in which questions of nationalism and citizenship are constructed through gendered narratives. In mapping symbolic and structural lineages found at work in the mythologies of war, and tracing the concepts “fathers of the nation” and “fathers of the country” that were created in the years following 1962, I demonstrate how the war of independence reified and redefined familial and patriarchal kinships within various social and political structures. With this, I put in parallel the

37 Ibid, 23
institutionalization of these gendered hierarchies by highlighting Family Laws that have specifically established women as eternal minors in the eyes of the law and that have set them, as Algerian Feminists argue, in a state of “non-citizenship.” I conclude by attesting that a combination of these political structures and gendered constructs inform and are informed by patriarchal conditionings that legitimate, to a certain extent, domination over women and the normalization of violence against them.

Chapter Two, “The Escalation of Gendered Violence, (Un)Narratives and Patriarchal Exceptionalism,” draws on analyses of violence and investigates the ways in which it was enacted during the Algerian civil war. I map a genealogy of violence and show that while discourses of violence during the décennie noire were seemingly all encompassing, the employments and deployments of violence were explicitly gendered. In paying specific attention to how narratives of violence become implicitly and explicitly tied to gendered state formation, I uncover the employment of rumour as not simply unverifiable data within the context of the war, but rather a combination of memory, government discourse, empirical information, and disciplinary apparatus that dominates social relations. Additionally, I map the naturalization of masculine hegemony within juridical applications, and resistance movements that aimed at resisting these political and discursive practices by (re)centring women’s experiences.

Finally, in the third chapter, “Algérie Mon Humour: Media, Culture and Political Discourse,” I analyze the types of rhetoric employed in newspaper articles and comic strips between 1991 and 2013. I draw on a historical contextualization of the progression and liberalization of the press to analyze the ways in which creation myths, patriarchal-military structures, and violence against women are depicted and narrated. I deploy press coverage as a microcosm of Algerian society to consider to what degree culture, tradition, and the law inform, and are informed by national identity and patriarchy. Through this, I examine the fluctuations in
discourse, and the ways in which different political and social climates have influenced media discourses.

I conclude with a retrospection of the different social, cultural, legal and political mechanisms that have reified patriarchal powers and gendered hierarchies. As well, I examine the ways in which they intersect to create patriarchal exceptionalism and perpetuate the erasure of women’s citizenship. Finally, I offer initial steps to undertake for the recognition of women as full subjects and citizens within the nation-state.
Chapter 2

Nation and Gendered Postcolonial Contexts:
An Algerian Experience

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks outlined in my introduction, and using an intersectional methodology, this chapter will contextualize Algerian state formation since its independence in 1962, addressing questions of gender and the state, nationalism, and citizenship in postcolonial contexts. Reflective of ongoing debates in gender representations, biopolitics and identity politics I hypothesize that the masculinization of the Algerian state asserted and gained legitimacy, both nationally and internationally, in response to the symbolic emasculation brought on by colonization. My discussion in this chapter is informed by three overlapping themes, which, together, demonstrate how the family—as a patriarchal structure, a legal framework, and an ideology—provides a historical, conceptual and experiential setting through which acts of gendered violence occur and can be analyzed. First, I draw on Frantz Fanon’s work to analyze the conflation of nationalism and national consciousness in relation to the construction of the postcolonial Algerian nation; I couple this with a discussion of the splintering social conditions of violence that haunt these sociohistorical contexts. Strong connections can be drawn between discourses of nation and forms violence used during the War of Independence and the civil war. With the aim of disrupting critical analyses that hold a blind spot when it comes to gender through constructions of nation, nationalism and citizenship, I wish to challenge the assumption of universalized citizenship as an undifferentiated category. More specifically, I think about the ways in which gender violence is necessary to understanding citizenship even as it is excised from citizenship narratives. Second and related, I attend to the Islamic Renaissance, and the Algerian civil war, during which over 200,000 Algerians were killed, and thousands of women
and girls were kidnapped, mutilated, raped, and forced into sexual slavery. These two points will allow me to, third, address and analyze the Algerian political structure as seen in the Constitution, the Family Code, and the failed attempt to create an Islamic state on the eve of the country’s first democratic election. It is worth repeating here that my contextualization of Algerian state formation is not meant to provide a detailed linear history; instead my research draws attention to different moments and narratives through which patriarchy, the family, and the nation overlap and therefore shed light on the gendered workings of the postcolonial nation-state. I will therefore explore such questions as: How do socially constructed notions of gender influence state formation and national processes? How is the state affected by symbolic attachments to family and patriarchy? And, finally, how do these notions play out in gendered relations of power and oppression within the state?

This chapter will also map symbolic and structural patriarchal lineages found at work in the promise of independence, and the ways in which they underpin political struggle. Just as concepts of “father of the nation” and “fathers of the country” endorsed and exemplified in the succession of presidents in the postcolonial era through the Family Code and subsequent laws, I also demonstrate how the War of Independence reified and redefined familial and patriarchal kinships within political and social structures. As maintained by Suad Joseph, the family, as an idea and institution, occupies a central terrain in the political and legal landscape in Middle Eastern and North African countries. Kin based patriarchy has, she writes, “been transported into political, economic, social, and religious dynamics, weaving threads through all domains of Middle Eastern societies; producing porosity in movement of practices, relationships, and resources; and constructing social idioms and moralities that rationalize the connectivity of the
Algerian society is hence organized in such a way that it reproduces symbolic familial hierarchies and relations. In official meetings and other representational texts (court proceedings, ministerial and legislative assemblies, academic presentations, television shows) women are introduced with the prefix “ukht” (sister), while men, when introduced by women are given the prefix “akh” (brother). Following similar idioms, governmental ministries were referred to, for several years, as families: “the Family of Education,” “the Family of Health,” and so on, publicly institutionalizing the family as point of departure and an administrative body outside of the “private sphere.” Furthermore, within the law, certain sexual offenses such as “indecent acts,” incest (defined as sexual intercourse between two ‘prohibited persons’), adultery and sexual harassment fall under the category of “Crimes against the Family and Morality.” Such discourses denote that these crimes, generally committed against women and girls (in the social imaginary at least), are not punishable because they are perpetrated against the person, but rather because they are an affront to the honour of the family (and more importantly to its patriarch).

Embedded in the national construct of kinship—and thus the family—patriarchy has indeed facilitated gendered hierarchization and “masculinist discourses of citizenship.” I suggest that these political structures and gendered constructs inform and are informed by patriarchal

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40 For example: Article 341 bis. of the Algerian Penal Code defines sexual harassment as “anyone who abuses the authority conferred by their function or profession, giving orders to others, making threats, imposing constraints or exercising pressures in order to obtain sexual favors.” Sexual harassment was introduced into law for the first time in 2006, under the sections of “crimes against the family and good mores” of the Penal Code. It is however absent from sections on “crimes and offenses against the person,” and “Labor Code” (Code du Travail) in which all other laws pertaining to labor and work conditions are discussed. Here, although the crime is committed in the work environment, outside of the family, the offense is presented as an affront against family rather than against the person. Subjecthood and status of victim (of the said assault/crime) is rendered invisible, while the family’s is highlighted. As mentioned later in the chapter in matters of rape, there is a “confusion of victimization” between the “real victim” and their family.
conditionings that legitimate, to a certain extent, domination over women and the normalization of violence against women. This power exercised over women is prolonged, as we shall see, by education, the legal system and public institutions, causing them to juridically live in a state of exception (Agamben, 1995), or in what Algerian feminists have described as “women’s non-citizenship status” (Bennoune 2001; Iamarene, 2000; Lazrag 2000).

2.1.1 Gender-Nation: Constructions of Masculinities/Constructions of State

*Nation* can be defined as a group of people that “come together” under the myth of a common identity, origin and history, laying claim to a defined territory, borders and borderlines, and as such are characterized in opposition and contrast to other nations. Indeed, nation is a *limited imagined community.*

*National identity* is emphasized as a constructed concept, subject to continuous processes of articulation and re-articulation. While often imagined otherwise, the nation does not depend on the existence of any objective linguistic or cultural differentiation, but rather on the subjective experience of difference in relation to others.

Similar to nation are dependent on historical contexts. Ivkovic notes that during war, it is temporarily in the frontline that borderlines of the “motherland” are either corrected or drawn, while in times of peace, the border is internal(ized): it is from *within* that the subject holds its limitations. These definitions become significantly important in postcolonial countries, where states that have been formerly colonized and have been tied to colonial logics, have had to redefine their national identity, legal systems, and territorial ties and thus, in many ways, produce new citizenships *vis-à-vis* their colonial past. Within this context, the invocation of *nation* necessarily calls upon its connection to notions of nationhood, nationalism, and national citizenship.

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41 Term borrowed from Joseph, Suad. *Gender and citizenship in the Middle East.* Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000. (6)
42 Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*
Algeria was a French colony from 1830 to 1962. Entitled “Algérie Française” (French Algeria), the country was considered a full part of France, although its indigenous population answered to different laws. European settlers in Algeria were bestowed the name of “French of Algeria” (algériens français), while Muslim and Jewish indigenous populations were given French citizenship while, at the same time, legislatively deemed non-citizens. More specifically indigenous communities were deprived of all citizenship rights, and given the epithets native, Muslim, or indigène in colonial administration, thus reinforcing a status quo between citizens and non-citizens. These rights were stratified by colonialism, putting French colonizers on top and indigenous Algerians at the bottom. In comparison to Tunisia and Morocco—who were French protectorates—Algeria was considered a French department. The difference is that protectorates were relegated by state sovereignty (local powers could reign but not rule) while departments were subjected to more comprehensive political, social and economic dominance by colonial powers. Considered non-citizens, the indigénes signified the absence of rights and liberties granted by the French Constitution to all of its citizens. As noted by Stam and Shohat, the French Revolution falsely represented their laws as ideals of liberté, égalité, fraternité: “The canonical triad liberty, equality, and fraternity was undercut by nos ancetres les Gaulois of colonial history books, (…) which taught that ‘our ancestors had blue eyes and blond hair’ (2005, 305). This colonial constitutional history was highlighted and administered in the Code de l’Indigénat, which extended to Algeria and the rest of the French colonies. The Code de l’Indigénat established a distinct colonial order by creating a list of exceptional laws and infractions that, by definition, could only applied to natives. Violations were punishable by imprisonment and large monetary fines, and could be levied for any ‘disrespectful’ act or ‘abuse’ vis-à-vis an agent of the

45 In 1870, Jewish citizens are recognized French citizenship by the Crémieux Decree.
authority (even if the agent was acting outside their administrative role). In addition, as subjects of the French rule, the *indigène* did not have the rights to vote, own property, create associations, or initiate political parties.

These colonial codes and practices can be identified as “laws of exception” (*Homo Sacer*) in that they only negatively affected indigenous populations and, through them, the colonizer conveyed its power and ensured that all aspirations for revolt or rebellion were undermined. Drawing on Agamben, “states of exception” are the sanctioned and disregarded of the limits of juridical and political powers in times of crisis.\(^{47}\) With this, and following Jasbir Puar, “laws of exception” reify two discourses of inclusion and exclusion. First, they produce colonial powers as exceptional nation-states, valorizing/naturalizing their excellence and singularity, while rendering the occupied/colonized peoples as the ultimate site of violation and non-citizenship. Second, in the state of exception, “the exception insidiously becomes the rule, and the exceptional is normalized as a regulatory frame; the exceptional is the excellence that exceeds the parameters of proper subjecthood, and by doing so, redefines these parameters to then normativize and render visible (yet transparent) its own excellence or singularity.”\(^{48}\) The links and fissures between citizenry and non-citizenry, in the Algerian case, emphasize how the rules and states of exception actively remind indigenous populations that they are in a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994): the rights, comfort and identity of the French people are above theirs, and Algerians are, as a people, the property of the French. The production of colonial space, in which the line between colonizer and colonized is violently drawn, demands that the indigenous mimic (or at least appear to mimic) the legal scripts of colonial powers thus inhabiting a liminal space of “citizen/subject”


that can neither belong nor be free. Violence, torture and mass murders are the norms through which the French defend themselves thus legitimizing the denial of basic human rights and self-determination. As stated by Andrea Smith, these colonial laws are set not only to destroy a people, but to destroy their sense of being a people.\(^{49}\)

Struggling through the systematic violence and torture of indigenous populations, the displacement of over 2 million people into war camps, and a bloody eight year war (the Algerian War of Independence, 1954-1962, also referred to as the war of liberation) that took the lives of over a million and a half people (out of a population of 9 million), Algeria gained its independence in 1962. The country was led for over twenty-five years by a single ruling party: The Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN). Constituted primarily of members of the revolutionary militia that fought for independence, the FLN maintained its military, economic, and social power over the country. In his ground breaking book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Frantz Fanon talks about a national middle-class taking over at the end of the colonial regime; he did not foresee that instead of a bourgeoisie ruling class, a politico-military singular ruling party would emerge.\(^{50}\) The FLN established itself as a unique political elite that dictated political, social and economic laws. The State, rather than the nation and its people, became the private owner of public goods (gas, oil, and other natural resources)—even though economic laws between the 1960s and 1970s defined the country as socialist and the resources were said to be nationalized and “to the benefit of the peoples.”

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\(^{50}\) Term borrowed from Frantz Fanon. *Wretched of the Earth* (1961)
2.1.2 Mythology of War and the Founding Fathers

All presidents of post-independence Algeria, until the present—over 50 years later—were active members in the war of liberation. The first and second presidents, Ahmhed Ben Bella (1963-1965) and Houari Boumédiène (1965-1978), were part of the “Founding Fathers” of the ALN (Armée de Libération Nationale). The third president Chadli Bendjedid, simply referred by his first name “Chadli,” a colonel in the War of Independence, took power after the death of Boumédiène, and was appointed by the military to govern the country from 1979 to 1992. As noted by Moussaoui, Chadli possessed similar rank as colonel Boumédiène, and was said to be “the most influential man” of the regime due to his ranks in the National Popular Army of Liberation (APLN).51 The following presidents—Mohammed Boudiaf (1992) who was a “founding father” of the FLN, Colonel Ali Kafi (1992-1994), General Liamine Zeroual (1995-1997) and Abdelaziz Bouteflika (1999-2014)—were all acclaimed members of militias that fought for independence from the French.52 Algeria’s postcolonial state had indeed assumed a patriarchal lineage glorifying the blood that was shed for the country and independence (Moussaoui 2006). Although characterized by political inexperience and lack of political unity, the militaristic leadership dominated as the new political class. Part of this leadership depended on re-centering and celebrating the war of liberation in order to legitimate power and control over the country.

The military’s self-erected power as a masculine national code and masculinized identity can be interpreted in two ways. First and on a symbolic level, it rejects the “parent (France)/child

52 Internal conflicts between Mohammed Boudiaf and the Boumédiène regime forced the former into exile in Morocco where he stayed for 27 years. He was asked to return to preside over the High Council of State following the annulment of the 1992 elections. He was murdered on live TV a few months later by a partisan of the Islamist Party.
(Algeria)” and related “emasculaton” narratives and metaphors that permeate colonial discourses and experiences (Fanon, 1963; Bhabha, 1987; Said, 1979). Here, the Algerian political-military, and thus hegemonic manhood, are situated as “worthy” opponents to colonial practitioners and their attendant political, geographic, economic, and social logics. With this, militant masculinities become glorified, commonplace, and normalized in the national imaginary. Melissa Harris-Perry, in fact, argues that exalted citizens are typically represented, in monuments, by males of the military who served their country, voluntarily, during a time of war.53 In Algeria, throughout post-independence, national monuments, plaques, cemeteries, and street signs are named after combatants. Makam Al Shahid (Memorial of the Martyr), for example, is one of most important monuments overlooking the capital Algiers. Erected in 1982, Makam Al Shahid is an effigy to those who died for the country’s independence. Such representations reinforce an imaginary of a militarized united front against the colonizing/French other, despite ethnic, political and religious differences among the Algerian population. Gender, though, importantly underpins this kind of memorialization: women, who actively participated in the nationalist struggle, were offered equal rights in the nation’s first Constitution of 1963.54 The Minister of Justice declared in 1963: “The Algerian woman has, because of her effective contribution to the struggle for national liberation, earned her right to the city. The role of women is no longer a matter of debate.”55 While male citizenship was natural, women’s was earned. Put differently, women’s citizenship was earned through her participation in the war for independence symbolically upholding and undercutting the production of a naturalized masculine state.

54 It is important to note that the right to vote was gained by Algerian men and women at the same time at the independence. As discussed earlier, because of the Indigenous Code indigenous Algerians were denied the right to vote.
Secondly, the military’s masculinist power can also be read through new economic and social relationships that were developed through and after the war—which led to a redistribution of power and wealth. By joining the anti-colonial militias, argues Martinez, the new power holders, of humble origin, obtained the best chances of acquiring wealth and prestige. The gendered glorification of men’s sacrifice for the country and the consequential political power post-independence was rarely questioned. In fact, one of the only ways one could have their power delegitimized was either being called a harki, a son of a harki, or to be given a woman’s name. Harki was the name given to Algerian loyalists who served in the French military during the colonization. During the civil war, such insults were exchanged between Islamist Emirs (Mohamed Said, Hassan Hattab) and superior officers of the military (Larbi Belkheir, Khaled Nezzar, Mohamed Lamari). Culturally, this ultimate insult represents a lack of honour and manhood. As for the alternative, because Chadli and Bouteflika’s activism and commitment to independence during the war of liberation could not be questioned—their names were part of the written history—they were often ridiculed by being given women’s names. In the midst of recurring penuries and during the riots of 1988, slogans stated “Ma brina la zebda walla felfell/Lakin Brina raïs fhel” (We don’t want either butter or pepper/We want a smart leader [also referring to respectful manhood]), or “Boumédiène, ardjaâ’ linal/Hlima wellat tehkoum fina!” (Boumédiène come back to us, Halima [Chadli’s wife] is dominating us). During anti-fundamentalist demonstrations, slogans addressing President Liamine Zeroual called “Ya Zerwal mat-habbatch es’serwal” (Dear Zeroual, don’t bring down your pants). This metaphor directly insults the president’s honour and virility by denoting ostensible (homo)sexual proclivities and

57 Emir was the name given to paramilitary leaders of the FIS, ALN, ALN, GSPC; Moussaoui, Abderrahmane. De la violence en Algérie: les lois du chaos. (Arles: Actes sud, 2006)
also urging him not to be fooled and taken advantage of by fundamentalist groups. Conversely, because Abdelaziz Bouteflika was not married, slogans heard in football matches and demonstrations stated “Bouteflika, ya Attika/atta el visa wa illa lika’” (Bouteflika, oh Attika [woman’s name rhyming with his own last name]/ Give us Visas and let us go!). These kinds of slogans show how ideals of redjila (manhood), as it is understood alongside and after the War of Independence, are central to the political landscape and frame of the Algerian political imaginary.

These processes provide a lens through which we can understand how constructions of the state affect and are deeply affected by constructions of masculinity and femininity. Mass culture in the public domain, argues Nancy Caro Hollander, comes to represent what Michel Foucault called the “discourse of domination”: the universalization of ideologies that legitimize male-dominant and female-subordinate social relations.59 Hisham Sharabi characterizes these political reflexes as “neopatriarchal.”60 A central psychosocial feature of neopatriarchal societies, he argues, is the dominance of the Father figure (patriarch), the center around which the national as well as the natural family are organized.61 Neopatriarchy in an Algerian context can be seen as an effort to restore Arab/Islamic identity that was tarnished by 130 years of colonialism. The political body, like the domestic one, is organized by gendered hierarchies that mark who belongs and who does not belong in arenas of power and social control. In her analysis of state formation in kin-based societies, Charrad argues that in Maghribi societies, the concept of asabiyya (esprit of clan) mattered greatly for the history of any group. She explains that asabiyya was conceptualized as the center-strength of its “unifying structural cohesion” based on ties among

61 Ibid., 42
agnates, or male kin in the paternal line.” Add to this Ivekovic’s insights, which maintain that in states modeled on familial relationships, the “father(s) of the nation” is/are used to depoliticize the relationship between the sexes. Ivekovic insists that “this means that the difference between the sexes is informed by, and binds together the different levels of institutions, top to bottom, even if they are crossed by other subordinations (class, ethnicity, religion). The subordination of women in the nation is given as a model of inequality, in an attempt to legitimize through a general consensus all other discriminations.” The systematization of male kinship in Algeria—articulated in the symbolic glorification of militarized masculinities, the cultural importance of asabiyya in gendered hierarchies, and the patriarchal “origin myth” of post-independence—reifies gendered inequalities, and the erasure of women within political systems. Indeed, by reinforcing the hierarchical nature of citizenship, these historical constructs remand women to secondary citizenship status in the political realm, and as eternal minor in the domestic realm.

The “Founding Fathers” of the war, understood through the above gendered articulations of familial state organization, come to represent the patriarchs of the country who are then posited as its natural leaders. With this, the population is inscribed as subordinated kin and becomes subjected to his power. President Boumediène insisted in a 1974 speech to the National Union of Algerian Women (UNFA, hereafter) that: “We must not forget that we are a Muslim and Arab people, which must be a crucial factor to consider when we talk about the Family Code.” Here Boumediène reminded feminist groups that religion and Arabness are fundamental to national and cultural identities and that patriarchal powers are central and must be linked to family, its structure, and the laws that surround it. It is important to note, however, that the time and place

62 Maghribi is a derivative of Maghreb, which refers to those countries consisting of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. Charrad, M. States and women's rights: the making of postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001):23
chosen by the President here are essential. Firstly, in terms of place, Boumédiène gave his speech in front of members of the UNFA—a branch of the FLN consisting primarily of *anciennes moudjahidates* (women veterans)—which was one of the first official feminist/women’s organizations in the country since independence. Although their demands mostly focused around women’s literacy and health care, they had always been vehemently opposed to stricter regulations in family law. In his speech to the UNFA, President Boumediéne addressed their 1966 concerns, in which they had forewarned that: “We must fight against… erroneous interpretations of Islam, traditional family structures… [and help] put in place family structures adapted to the modern world, and a Family Code that conforms to our Algerian and Muslim personalities as well as to the demands of the modern world.” Here, the UNFA was encouraging law-makers to take into consideration the consistently changing and evolving nature of society, and adapting these changes to Arab and Islamic identities—especially as understood in laws pertaining to women.

Second, in terms of the timing of Boumédiène’s 1974 speech, an ordinance was passed on July 5th, 1973, abrogating all colonial legislations pertaining to family law, such as marriage and divorce, and was to be put in effect in 1975. As we will see later in the chapter, several unsuccessful attempts were made between 1963 and 1984 to promulgate the Family Code, and in retrospect, we can consider Boumediéne’s words to the UNFA as forewarning future directions.

Similar discourses to Boumediéne’s 1974 speech (tactics) reifying religious and cultural identities were employed by the Islamist Party (the Islamist Salvation Front or FIS) in the late 1980s when Algeria moved to a multi-party system. *Algerianité*, Islam, and the War of Independence were key concepts they used in their quest to power, and central to the “imagined

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64 Houari Boumédiène. *Discours du President Boumédiène*, Volume 8, Algiers: Ministry of Information and culture (1966-79) : 145
community” they wanted to (re)create through an Islamic Renaissance. Key leaders of the Islamist Salvation Front, Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj, used their own lineages (Madani as a *moudjahid* and Benhadj as son of a *shahid*) to prove their associations with the “Founding Fathers” and the war of liberation.66 I have included a rather long excerpt of a press conference from June 18th, 1991, to show the ways in which Ali Benhadj linked religion and bloodlines and sought to legitimate the political endeavours of the FIS and the taking of arms against the government after the *coup d’état*:

“The Quran says “To those who believe, I commend you to fast/ For your faith and for justice, codes have been written for you,/ and for politics, it is war,” which can only be done with weapons./ And this government tells us no, and wants to ban weapons. They want to take away weapons from the people, so that they are the only ones with, and they can impose their own laws./ We entered politics because we wanted a peaceful social fight./ But this can only be done if they don't hit us, if they don't violate our rights, because if they violate our rights, I won't wait for Chadli or Nezzar to tell me not to use weapons./ You hit me! And you're the aggressor, and you create laws that call me a “hors la loi” (out-law)? Yes, I am a “hors la loi”, but I am not an “hors-Quran” (outside the Quran)./ 

You are the ones who are outside of laws of the Quran, and outside of the laws of the Prophet (peace be upon him)! Yes, I am an out-law. And they want us not to have weapons- I will take weapons, and I will take the *Kalach* (Kalashnikov). They want to scare us? /

God said in the Quran: “guard your belongings and your weapons, because they will come for you in the night.” God said in the Quran: “take your belongings, and take your weapons!” I will not give up God's words, and follow those of people./ Words of God before all. Islam takes arms when it is attacked. It is our right to defend ourselves. I will take arms like my father did. (*Shows old black and white picture of his father in the maquis and points to his Kalashnikov*). You see, here is my father with his Kalach. If

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66 Person who has died in the name of *jihad*, or in the name of the country’s independence
they block the road, we will take arms, even if I have to bring them from Tataouine, I will not get them from France.” ⁶⁷

Ali Benhadj starts this excerpt with quotes from the Quran and its principles of faith and justice. His choice of starting with the Quran is significant because its messages cannot (culturally) be contested (as opposed to teachings and practices from the prophet, for example that come from human interpretations). Here, the Quran represents God’s direct words and commands, which have to be followed. In Benhadj’s words, justice can only be found through religion, which provides the codes to live by; this is a justice that can lead to a faith-filled life in accordance with Islam. The government, he continues, violates those basic rights, and fighting back against it becomes condoned: “they want to take away weapons from the people, so that they are the only ones with, and they can impose their own laws.” Ali Benhadj makes it clear that laws and codes dictated by religion, rather than those of people, are to be followed: “words of God before all.” To him, it is okay to step outside of these institutional laws, to be an “hors la loi,” as long as he is not stepping outside of God’s laws. Finally, he equates—as though one entity—his struggle and Islam, and implies that those who attack the FIS and the movement of “Islamic Renaissance” are attacking religion itself. Here, the “purity” of his work becomes an act of self-defence, and like his father who came before him, he is ready to take the kalash to defend the nation: “Islam takes arms when it is attacked. It is our right to defend ourselves.” The rhetoric of the ‘Founding Fathers’ and the legitimacy of the moudjahidin’s struggle is employed to valorize bloodlines and the taking of arms while reinscribing Islam and the Islamic Renaissance as the dominant power.

⁶⁷ All translations of the press conference are mine, unless otherwise noted. This Press conference was taped a few hours before the arrest of Ali Benhadj and Abassi Madani. It can be found in its entirety in a documentary by Malik Ait-Aoudia and Severine Labat. Algerie 1988-2000: Autopsie d’une tragedie” (2003): Note that Tataouine refers to a town in Tunisia and is used to refer to far away places. Historically however, Tataouine had a prison camp during colonization where combatants were sent.
Ali Benhadj, in many ways, allows us to think about the knotted connections between family, bloodlines, religion, military, and masculinity. It is useful to situate gendered scripts of femininity alongside this understanding of masculinity and power precisely because women were necessary to colonial and postcolonial struggles to make the nation, just as patriarchal articulations of citizenship undermined their contributions. Fanon’s insights on the veil, and his discussion of how attachments to pre-colonial culture worked, are therefore worth highlighting. In *Algeria Unveiled*, he describes the ways in which cultural representations (notably women’s traditional garb, the *haïk*) became a site of contestation in colonial relations and the basis of orientalist discourses and biases. The veil, “on account of which the occupation forces were to mobilize their most powerful and most varied resources, and in the course of which the colonized were to display a surprising force of inertia,” had become the tool through which the French sought to conquer the country, and its people. 68 Colonization, according to Fanon, was only possible through the rejection, alienation and destruction of indigenous traditions and cultural values. Under the pretence of a *mission civilisatrice*, the veil—and those related to it through culture, religion or family (mother, wife, sister)—were constantly shamed and degraded. Fanon points to explicitly gendered doctrines from colonial administration that indeed advocated the destruction of Algerian structures of society and their capacity for resistance through a conquering of the country’s women. 69 Additionally, he discusses several instances where the veil signified a colonial struggle—one aimed to undermine pre-colonial cultural practices: workers were humiliated by their employers for “veiling their wives”; French teachers in schools severely condemned Algerian women’s “fate” to Indigenous children; intellectuals, doctors and lawyers were ridiculed for “keeping their wives in a state of semi-slavery.” 70

69 Ibid; 164
70 Ibid; 167
The French desire to unveil women—which points to over 130 years of dehumanizing physical and discursive violence—uncovers a whole set of complex gendered processes. After the war of liberation, the colonized sought to neutralize hierarchal power relations with the colonizer, by reconnecting with customs, traditions and beliefs that were previously denied. The irony of such fervent dismissal of the veil was a paradoxical attachment to it from much of the Algerian population, and its employment as a tactic of resistance and war. Culture became marked with Islamic revivalism; culture became, too, an object of what Fanon described as “passionate attachment.” He illustrates this process as:

… Living it [culture] as a defence mechanism, a symbol of purity, of salvation, the de-cultured individual leaves the impression that the mediation takes vengeance by substantializing itself (…). The culture put into capsule, which has vegetated since the foreign domination, is revalorized. It is not reconceived, grasped anew, dynamized from within. It is shouted. And this headlong, unstructured, verbal revalorization conceals paradoxical attitudes.

This critique is important because it reveals the multiple realities of colonial hierarchies. Culture, tradition, and by association religion, become intrinsically connected to nationalism and national identity, as well as the creation of a postcolonial subjecthood. In order to reject colonial narratives that consider History as starting with the French invasion of the country, the colonized turn towards a “mythical past” that they embrace as symbol of truth and salvation. The “true self” which is rooted in the past, symbolizes a deliverance from colonial supremacy and is equated with freedom. Echoing the famous 1936 quote by Ben Badis, founder of the Algerian Association of Ulema (Theological and Religious Scholars), who stated “Islam is my religion, Arabic my

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language and Algeria my country,” the Islamist movement similarly revalorized—perhaps even “shouted” (as described by Fanon)—pre-colonial identities of religion, language and nation to (re)unite a country seemingly disconnected from its past.73 These identities, which were, as described by Fanon, “put into capsule, and had vegetated since the foreign domination,” inspired paradoxical attitudes from various parties of the political and social spectrum.74 Women’s organizations in particular—wary of literal interpretations of the religion and traditional familial structures, especially as understood in the Sharia—advocated for laws compatible with the contemporary needs of women and their families.75

Fanon’s work on culture and the quote above in particular, illustrates the legacies of colonialism and their connection to the Islamization of the law and public institutions that were inscribed in the Islamic Renaissance of the late 1970s and early 1980s. I would like to reiterate two aforementioned examples that evidence my points: firstly, recall the 1976 speech by Houari Boumediéne, where the President stated that religion and Arabness were fundamental to Algerian national and cultural identity; and, secondly, recall the 1991 speech by Ali Benhadj, in which he confronts the political status quo by turning toward religion and its teachings to find truth and justice. These cultural and religious frames, centered on bloodlines and patriarchal powers, are used to perpetuate and indeed reify gendered hierarchies and link these hierarchies to both political and familial structures. Paradoxically complicit here, was the double instrumentalisation of women’s bodies through the veil by the French and the Algerians. In colonial discourse, the veil was employed in a narrative of modernity and deliverance from indigenous men, patriarchy and barbarism; in postcolonial narratives, the veil was employed as a deliverance from

colonialism, and associated with nationalist ideals, cultural identity and religious liberation. The employment of the veil within nationalist rhetoric is in fact reminiscent of Iranian slogans of the 1979 revolution that stated: “My sister, your veil is more assertive than my blood.” These two metaphors—“blood” and “veil”—signify, according to Moallem, the reconstruction of a hegemonic masculinity and an emphasized femininity in a community of brothers and sisters, who militarize their bodies in an effort to counteract colonial powers. The veil shows the representative workings of colonial and decolonial paradoxes as they challenge, as well as reify, gender norms. Veiling/unveiling are therefore linked to masculinist reifications of culture and religious scripts; the veil is also employed as both a site of agency and resistance as it emphasizes difference vis-à-vis the western gaze in a cultural sense, but also erases women’s presence in public sphere from a religious one.

One can trace the patriarchal underpinnings within and across struggles for independence and postcolonial state formations. While the role of women is hinted at in the above historical contexts and the political visions of the FLN and the FIS, the gendered workings of the military, nation, family and kinship interlock to normalize a masculinist state-vision. Just as colonialism shaped citizenship and non-citizenship, as noted in the first section of this chapter, the fight for a postcolonial identity also unfolded to normalize gendered citizenships and state-belongings. Thus, as the different moments described above indicate, a range of tactics—claims to bloodlines, culture, religion, location—reify masculinity precisely because they revolve around and depend on narratives that crystallize Founding Fathers and war. The Family Code discussed above and

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77 Moallem, Minoo. Between warrior brother and veiled sister Islamic fundamentalism and the politics of patriarchy in Iran. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 145
elaborated below, then, works in tandem with these processes to set the stage for a rearticulation of masculinity that overlaps with imagined communities and the nation-state.

2.1.3 The Family Code

After several drafts, and cancelled attempts, a set of Shari’a inspired laws were instituted in the Family Code of 1984, reinforcing, by law, patriarchal powers in the family. The Moudjahidate—female veterans of the war of liberation—vehemently opposed drafts brought forward by the government, notably opposing sections pertaining to polygamy and repudiation. Charrad notes that the “family law was held hostage to the political tensions generated by factionalism. The adoption of a family law in effect became one of the thorniest policy issues in the new state.”78

With the implementation of the Family Code, Algerian women never attained majority status and were/are categorized as legal minors for the entirety of their lives. Several feminist organizations, including Moudjahidates, organized national campaigns condemning such laws, and highlighting the fact that they had not “fought in the war for nothing.”79 On March 8th, 1990, a demonstration bringing together between 10,000 and 15,000 women was organized to abrogate the Family Code on International Women’s Day. At the same time, it is notable that despite their incredible sacrifices, and although women “acceded to the ranks of subjects of history,” the revolution and fight for independence was cast in terms of male exploits.80 However, as Marnia Lazreg argues, women’s participation in Algeria’s anticolonial struggle must be separated from their legal condition in the post-independence era. Resisting the idea that women were, as Peter Knauss  

78 Charrad, M., States and women’s rights: the making of postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001): 183
80 Ibid; 180
suggests, “duped” by men during the liberation war, Lazreg maintains that “given the context of colonial rule…women’s participation in the movement was a rational response to an otherwise irrational historical situation.” Indeed, as seen in much of the postcolonial feminist scholarship, women’s concerns aligned with that of men during colonization—as colonization itself, or more aptly the struggle against colonization—seemed more pressing than their own gendered situation.

It is important to underscore here that historically, Islamic family laws were not new to Algerian culture. Personal status codes inspired from Maliki interpretations of Shari’a law had been used in the Maghreb since the Arab’s invasion of the region in the middle of the seventh century by the Umayyad Arab Dynasty. Charrad maintains that a sequence of foreign conquests led to a weakly centralized political system and a highly segmented form of social organization during the precolonial era. Laws therefore varied according to region and tribe; laws, as well, mirrored the degree of political fragmentation in the country. French colonials in Algeria, too, were committed to the “modernization and liberation” of women (through unveiling tactics) yet paradoxically also preserved Islamic family laws. The French had pledged, as early as 1830, to respect customary laws applied in codes of personal status and family law. A major aspect of the colonial policy in Algeria was to institute French courts that had the responsibility to apply Islamic family law as defined by the Shari’a. The French, Charrad writes, “gave Muslim Algerians the choice between going either to Islamic judges (qadis) or to French courts that applied Shari’a law. French law regulated all penal cases and civil matters other than the family

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82 cf. Cynthia Enloe, 1990
84 Convention of July 5th, 1830 passed between Dey Hussein Pacha and Comte de Bourmont
for everyone in Algeria.”

In 1959, three years before the independence, some laws pertaining to family were changed. These changes included: suppressing matrimonial guardianship for women; bringing the legal age for marriage to twenty-one for all Algerians; the required registration of all marriages, divorces and repudiations by a qadi or a judge became compulsory.

These laws remained largely unchanged until 1984.

Between 1962 and 1984 the country witnessed a gridlock of political forces on the issue of family law, and all attempts at changing it in 1963, 1966, 1970, 1973, and 1981, failed. It was, however, in the 1984 Family Code that the most extreme interpretations of Shari’a law were administered and utilized—and it was these interpretations that Algerian women and feminists vehemently fought against. Ruling against the country’s Constitution that stated equality between men and women, the Family Code established women as “eternal minors” in need of a male guardianship found in their father, brother or, in some cases, their son. Thenceforth, polygamy, the unquestioned repudiation by the husband, the impossibility for a woman to marry without a legal guardian, a woman’s obedience towards her husband and his family, and inequality between genders in inheritance became the grounds against which many women in Algeria fought against.

2.1.4 The 1990s: Struggles for Power and Gendered Outcomes

In the 1970s and 1980s a number of factors—the demographic explosion of the 1970s and 1980s, the 1986 oil price slump, growing unemployment, rising prices and housing shortage—led to riots in Algiers and its surrounding cities in October 1988. On October 5th, 1988, and on the eve of President Chadli’s national speech on the new economic reforms and austerity measures, 20,000 protestors, most of them young men, took over the streets of Algiers and neighbouring cities for

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almost a week. Said Chikhi had indeed argued that the unemployed and youth were social outcasts in Algeria. With 75% of the country under 20, the youth had become socially and culturally marginalized through the deeply hierarchical structures of governance that had been in place since the early 1970s. After the historic demonstrations of October 1988, general discontent forced President Chadli Bendjedid to resign in 1992. These riots were to be a turning point in Algerian politics and the biggest crisis the regime had faced since independence:

In a rather surprising twist, the riots proved to be the beginning of a far-reaching liberalization process (…) President Chadli announced shortly after the crackdown that radical reforms were not only necessary, but that they were already being drawn up. A new Constitution was drafted, and took effect in February 1989. Its most significant provision was the introduction of multi-party politics. The FLN ceased to be the only legal party and Algerians were permitted to form new political movements and apply for legal recognition.

Changes in the Constitution included the removal of references to the FLN as Algeria’s only political party and, with this, the removal of socialism as its unitary economic and political system; an Islamic High Council was also enacted and institutionalized. The country experienced, for the first time since its independence, unprecedented political freedoms. For three years, over 50 new political parties were formed, and democratic legislative elections were held. Free press and privately owned newspapers were established. After the overwhelming victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in 1990s municipal elections, leading with 853 out of 1539

87 Ibid. p.193-195
communes in the country, its political leader Abbassi Madani called for a general strike and demanded the resignation of the government. The FLN, anticipating their destabilization, cancelled the elections. The military staged a coup d’état: The cancellation of elections in 1991-1992 was a strategy used by the FLN, backed by the French government, to stop the FIS from coming to power.

The interruption of presidential elections, heightened by the arrest of two main FIS leaders Ali Benhadj and Abbassi Madani and the dissolution of the FIS, caused violent backlashes all around the country. Fuelled by a generalized dissatisfaction with political governance, corruption, restricted freedoms, deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, food and housing shortages, Algerian youth—and young men in particular—were pushed towards a violent opposition to the government and its systems of power. Martinez in fact maintains that these socioeconomic conditions produced a dynamic of violence whose roots are to be sought in a war-oriented imaginaire in which violence is a form of accumulation of wealth and prestige. I would complicate this notion further by indeed arguing that war-oriented imaginaire is tightly linked to masculinist power, and can be read through economic and political relationships that were developed through and after the war of independence. The gendered glorification of violence and the consequential power that ensues is, for many, unquestionable. It is therefore under such a hostile political climate that a more extremist wing of the Islamist groups rose to power. While several violent incidents by fundamentalist armed groups and individuals had in fact been recorded since the beginning of the 1980s, the beginning of the 1990s was dawn to the first wave.

91 See A. Djeghloul, Le Multipartisme a L’Algérienne (Casbah Ed., 1990)
92 Ali Benhadj and Abbassi Madani were arrested for “conspiracy against the security of the state.”
of systemic assassinations and gendered violences. Public intellectuals, members of security forces (police and military), artists, journalists, and government officials, were all targeted. The juridical void left by Chadli Bendjedid’s resignation, and the dissolution of the National Assembly (APN), resulted in the creation of a “High Council of State” (HEC). Announcing the impossibility of a ‘fair’ electoral process, the HEC appointed Mohammed Boudiaf to lead the country after twenty-eight years in exile; The HEC also stated a national state of emergency. It is important to note that in addition to Boudiaf being one of the “Founding Fathers” of the country, other significant members of the government appointed by the HEC at the time were also members of the paramilitary and the liberation war—including General Khaled Nezzar (Minister

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94 In November 2nd 1982, for example, demonstrations were organized by ‘Islamist students’ protesting mixed student residencies. This led to violent clashes between the “Islamist students” and “Progressive students.” That day, a young male student was killed by a sword: a few weeks later, FIS leader, Abassi Madani organized a rally in support of the alleged murderers. After this event, which brought thousands of militants out to the streets, Madani filed a 14 points petition addressed the leaders of the country, asking for the “purification” of the state bodies and its people who are “hostile to Islam.” These points included the rejection of “women’s appointments and other ‘hostile elements’ in judiciary bodies and the police;” and “the imposed gender mixing in our institutions (…) which have become alarming signs of ‘moral decline’ and civilization” (Iamarene, 145). On December 30th, 1989 sports were forbidden for women at the University of Tiaret, central Algeria. A female judoka athlete was beaten and expelled by a group of extremist militants in the gym where she trained. On February 1st, 1990 female students in the “2000 bed Student Residency” were assaulted, while the university center for girls in Dergana, Bordj el Bahri saw itself imposed a 6pm curfew for women after individuals wearing “beards and gandouras”, carrying weapons and hatchets forced them to reintegrate their residences. Similar demonstrations of force were seen on March 19th of the same year, when groups also wearing beards and gandouras assaulted couples at the gate of campuses around the country, “purifying” the streets of “indecency.” April 3rd, female students going for a walk on a Ramadan evening event at a cultural center in Ouled Yaich are attacked, while Zoubida, a woman wearing the hijab, is whipped for being out at night. In fact, several fatwas were issued throughout the 1980s and 1990s condoning violence, and published in the Al-Ansar official newspaper of the FIS. Again, in 1991, the newspaper El Watan quoted a ten page booklet documents circulating in the city of Constantine, in which were collected newspaper clippings, fatwas, and verses from the Quran. Women workers were accused of being “instruments of Satan.” These fatwas stated: “A woman is not authorized to work unless she is widowed, divorced, or an orphan. A married woman who also works will be accused of sexual perversity,” followed by “proof” with articles on the rape of a young girl (because her mother was at work), and “high rates” of adultery in working mothers. See: Dalila Iamarene. La Violence Islamiste Contre les Femmes. (120-121 and 145). Note that the “gandoura (men’s traditional garb) and beard will later become symbols of belonging to the FIS and the clothes “Islamist fundamentalists” were recognized at fake-checkpoints (faux-barrages).

of Defence), Ali Haroun (Minister of Human Rights), Ali Kafi (President of the National Organization of Moudjahidine). On June 29th 1992, however, six months after his appointment, President Mohammed Boudiaf was assassinated on live television; this was what I believe to be the catalyst trigger to the civil war’s most extreme acts of violence. Unrest and turmoil of the 1990s incited gendered violences that operated through political practices seeking to repair or reframe a masculinity that had been subject to marginalization and disenfranchisement. Unsettled and threatened gendered scripts, then, produced the conditions through which masculinity and femininity were (re)produced; the political landscape asserted and maintained different kinds of gendered codes and expectations through violence.

Under the patronage of the Islamic Brotherhood, the FIS’s iterations of promised stability and statehood based on militarized (Islamic) masculinity pressed thousands of disenfranchised youth to join jamaat (armed groups) for the struggle. Their calls to jihad and the creation of an Islamic state reaffirmed patriarchal family narratives that were central to the tenets of a constructed “national identity” of Algérianité and Islamic culture. Under the imagined community of an “umma islamïya” (Islamic Nation) thousands of men joined fundamentalist groups such as the AIS (Armée Islamique du Salut), the GIA (Groupe Islamique Armé) and later the GSPC (Salafist Group for the Predication and Combat).96 In joining an Islamist group, one joins the jihad. The jihad (from the root jahd: resistance in the name of religion/God) is mainly recognized as a man’s venture. Moussaoui describes these groups as “supra-communal” groups, challenging and at the same time reproducing traditional familial structures.97 Although the organization is understood as a brotherhood, each group is led by an emir (defined as prince but meaning group

96 To this day, no official number has been established as to how many men and women joined the fundamentalist groups. However, during the 2000 and 2002 amnesties, over 10 000 men surrendered according to an official report of Human Rights Watch http://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k/Mena-01.htm.
leader), while those ranked under the *emir* are called *ikhwa* (brothers). Some women joined these groups, but in relatively small numbers. Women were mainly wives to the *emir* or servants to the other men. Thousands of other women however, as discussed below, were kidnapped, and forced into sexual slavery through *zawdj al mut’aa* (marriages of pleasure).

The organizational structure of the armed groups in Algeria reproduces core patriarchal and familial structures in which the father (where all knowledge and power lies) heads over the rest of the family. Women (mother and sisters) are attached to the private sphere from which they serve the men of the family. The authority of the *emir* comes to those who have either fought in international wars (notably in Afghanistan) or gained status through local “exploits” (through eliminating police, military, or notable personalities). To be part of an armed group is to indeed be part of a brotherhood, and to be given the possibility to climb the ranks. By offering that any man—no matter what his background is—can become an *emir* Islamist groups crystallized the possibility, often for marginalized youth, of social promotion and a masculinized power within the political hierarchy. Not unlike the war of liberation, where “simple men” became national heroes, the promise of Islamic brotherhood military factions offered the hope that being part of armed groups would result in recognition and power. Thus, men who might otherwise be read as coming from very differential backgrounds had the opportunity to climb the political latter. To give just a few examples: Hassan Hattab, *emir* and founder of the GSPC was a mechanic; successor Nabil Sahraoui, son of a farmer was an engineer; while Antar Zouabri, leader of the GIA, was a sheet metal worker. All these men were from lower to middle class families and held

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98 Parallels between the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Algeria’s can be drawn: See: L. Gardet, *La Cité Musulmane: Vie Sociale et Politique*, Paris, Librairie philosophique, 1976, p.25

99 *Zawdj al mut’aa*, is literally translated as “marriage of pleasure,” wherein thousands of women were forced to marry their rapists through a union contract—the marriage of pleasure made it “admissible” for the rapist to have sexual relations with a woman during a fixed period. Recognized as a Shiite practice, it was prohibited in the Sunni tradition, until the Algerian civil war.
high school and bachelor degrees. With religion and tradition at its base, new masculine ideals of piety, religiosity and hierarchal power were erected from the status of *emir*.

Differential political and social landscapes have emerged, from colonization to the War of Independence and to postcolonial struggles after the War of Independence. These differential contexts have produced cyclical patterns of masculinity, contingent on cultural representation and the articulation of patriarchal power. Members of armed militias during the French war disrupted colonial narratives through the creation of empowered (masculinized) subjects who fought for the country’s independence. Later, these groups came to represent a legitimate political elite, which inscribed the Founding Fathers as natural leaders for the country. National identity, blood-lines, and family became central to the understanding of “imagined community,” Algérianité, and national identity. Islamist groups appropriated similar power dynamics in the 1990s and not only challenged the existing status quo but created new patriarchal powers in which disenfranchised youth could rival their predecessors. These underlying histories provided the conditions through which femininity and womanhood were necessary to understanding masculinity, and where normalized violence was necessary to the assertion of power and the seeming stabilization of the state. Due to the conjuncture of the above factors, the people became the stage on which violence was enacted—which I turn to in Chapter Three.
Chapter 3

The Escalation of Gendered Violence, (Un)Narratives, and Patriarchal Exceptionalism

The shifting and unsettled political climate of Algeria, as noted in earlier discussions, led to different types of violence just as it produced the conditions for different patriarchal formations. This chapter will focus on an analysis of the ways in which violence was enacted, paying specific attention to how the practice of narrating violence is implicitly and explicitly tied to gendered state formation. In uncovering statistics that specify acts of violence, and coupling this with “rumours of” violence and legal codes (the Family Code and related legislation around marriage, divorce and inheritance), I argue that while the discourse of violence was seemingly all encompassing due to the depth of conflict—anyone/everyone was a target—acts and practices and descriptions of violence were gendered. Additionally, I address the juridical applications of these gendered norms and gendered hierarchies, while analyzing how they have been employed in a way to naturalize masculine hegemony. I contend that this naturalization is at the root of inherent connections that exist between gendered violence and its normalization. From this point of view, the resistance movement’s aim was/is to resist political and discursive practices—constructed through a masculinist nation-state—by centering women’s experiences so as to reconceptualise citizenship and citizenship rights.

In the 1990s violence first began against members of security forces, police, and government employees, as well as their families. During this decade, several thousands of police officers and military personnel were killed. Next were explicit threats and targeted assassinations of journalists, artists, feminists, foreigners, intellectuals, and other professionals who had shown opposition to the FIS ideologies. This dark period was described by Bennoune as the country’s
“culturicide decade,” in which the systematic killings of intellectuals attempted to stamp out the “North African nation’s culture and to wipe out those who shaped it.”

Djilali Liabes, Minister of Universities and Scientific Research, was murdered in front of his house in 1993. In the same year, Mahfoud Boucebsi, president of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Tahar Djaout, famous journalist, novelist and poet, were assassinated a few months apart. Djaout had published an article a few days before his murder in which he had stated: “Silence is death. And you, if you talk, you die, if you don’t talk, you die, then speak up and die.”

Soon, those who spoke up and those who did not speak up were targeted. The message carried alongside the violence and murder of these targets was momentous: No politicians, security forces, intellectuals nor artists were spared; one’s place in the social or political hierarchy did not guarantee life. Mohamed Boukobza, sociologist, Cheb Hasni, singer, Nabila Djahnine, feminist activist, Matoub Louanes, singer and Berberist activist, Salah Chouaki, school inspector and education reformer, Abdelkader Alloula, playwright were all assassinated, creating a large void in the cultural and artistic productions of that decade. In 1995 twenty-two journalists and other media workers were killed in the first ten months of the year, bringing the total slain since 1993 to fifty, and making Algeria the most dangerous place in the world to practice journalism.

Civilians were also targeted all around the country through bomb attacks, fake checkpoints (faux-barrage), arbitrary assassinations, and kidnappings. The 1996 Human Rights Watch report thus stated:

Precise data on how many persons have been killed, by whom and why they were targeted is notoriously elusive, due to strict censorship, the hazards of investigating the violence, and the fact that responsibility for most killings goes unclaimed. To complicate

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100 http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/karima-bennoune/algeria-twenty-years-on-words-do-not-die
matters further, the sources of warnings and claims of responsibility cannot always be authenticated. Unofficial estimates place the numbers killed between 1992 and 1995 between 30,000 and 50,000. Often, killings were carried out in such a way as to maximize suffering and to terrorize others. The victims' bodies were often mutilated and dumped in public places.\(^{103}\)

Although the precise number of massacres has not officially been calculated, I have come across at least 30 massacres between 1994 and 2004.\(^{104}\) Some of the bloodiest ones include the massacre of Bentalha (500 deaths); the massacre of Haouch Khemisti (52 deaths); the massacre of Rais (300-500 deaths); the massacre Tibhirine (7 French monks killed); the massacre of Beni-Messous (over 50 deaths); the massacres of Benachour (100 deaths); the massacres of the Relizane region (400 deaths).\(^{105}\) These massacres were particularly violent and men, women, and children were murdered and mutilated with knives, hatchets, and swords. Bennoune, in her article *S.O.S Algeria: Women’s Human Rights Under Siege*, cites some examples of the escalation of atrocities against women: “Derouche Mimouna, a 28 year old mother is decapitated in front of her family in January of 1994; two sisters, aged 12 and 15 are kidnapped and raped in a forest near their house; a 37 year old working woman killed in front of her children and her decapitated head left on the street; the bodies of two young sisters Saida, 15 and Zoulkha, 21 found side by side on the side of the road, gang raped, their fingernails and toe nails have been removed, and, as a final horror, their throats have been cut.”\(^{106}\) In many ways death became secondary to the atrocities, humiliations, and dishonour that the bodies endured before or after death (for example, a cut off penis would be put in a man’s mouth or a woman’s vagina would be mutilated and shaved). As


Moussaoui explains, “The violence becomes an obstacle to the heroic come back of the deceased into their family. Moreover, a clear message to those who survive is transmitted. A message of power, cruelty and vehemence, raising the question…: Who are the real victims? Is it to those who died, or to those who are left behind, in a constant state of fear and psychosis?”

The escalated violence could be read as generalized—women, men, and children across all social strata experienced these atrocities. The military presence, too, was at its height. In Algiers, tanks took over the city, with checkpoints at large intersections, highways and main roads, while military personnel, faces covered and holding guns, would drive around in jeeps and perform body and bag checks. Dr. Farida Lahreche Nouar described the stages of violence through describing the injuries of the victims she received at the Forensic Medicine Services in east Algiers:

1991: victims primarily have firearm injuries. 1992: They are victims of explosions, bombs, firearms and “arme blanche” (bladed weapons). 1993: Emergence of slaughtered and mutilated bodies. 1994: Beheaded bodies, very important ante-mortem injuries, heads found hung on poles, placed on cars, on the road. 1995: Emergence of dismembered bodies, mutilations, limbs and heads often found in different places.

The escalation of violence in Algeria did consequently not only reflect the aggressive political climate between the government and fundamentalist groups, but also revealed the paradoxical ways in which such atrocities uncover seemingly undifferentiated acts of brutality as explicitly

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gendered. Communities across social and cultural groups were openly targeted while their sexed bodies were violated based on masculinity and femininity.

3.1.1 Rumour, Fear and Narrative

At this time, public media, which was largely controlled by the government until the 1989-1990 changes in the Constitution, was used as an instrument of propaganda and political indoctrination. Stories and accounts of violence perpetrated during the civil war often fluctuated with the “politics of the moment.”

In 1994, for example, after the appointment of President Liamine Zeroual—and after not showing violence via public media for several months—the media resumed showing images of violence perpetrated by Islamist groups. During this time and vis-à-vis media outlets, images of decapitated bodies and civilian casualties were circulated and with this, the government indicated the extent to which violence was perpetrated by fundamentalist groups; at the same time, they also showed government’s response to this violence by showing shots of men arrested by the military and images of the bodies of presumed terrorists laying on the ground, with weapons, bombs and hatchets surrounding them.

For much of the 1990s the government, who often kept silent about terrorist attacks, used the media to convey statements of denial (démentis) about various allegations including murders, violence, and bomb attacks. Rumour came to play a pivotal role in social relations and the everyday lives of people. Conversations about what might have happened, or what might happen, filled in the gaps and the silences left by the media and government yet also, paradoxically, served as unverifiable information. With this in mind, much of the information about violence that circulated outside the media were anecdotes and rumours—narratives that were amplified by some and romanticized by others. When the massacres began in the 1990s, rumours of the

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110 Ibid, 60-67
savagery and brutality forced a general feeling of psychosis and paranoia. Although no precise numbers have been given, Reporters Without Borders have maintained that the civil war had pushed over a million people to be displaced and another 500 000 people to exile.\footnote{Reporters Sans Frontières Algérie, le livre noir. (Paris: Éd. la Découverte, 1997): 248. I, however, use these numbers with caution. No national or international study has been done on the subject, and these numbers seem to be rough estimates.} So while the rumour is not provable in terms of exact data, it did unfold alongside the everyday experiences of Algerians. The paradoxes of violent state formation emerge again as the rumour—what might be—served to discipline the population and provide a way to narrate unseeable victimhood.\footnote{Reporters Sans Frontières Algérie, le livre noir. (Paris: Éd. la Découverte, 1997): 248. I, however, use these numbers with caution. No national or international study has been done on the subject, and these numbers seem to be rough estimates.}

Through rumour many victims are rendered invisible because the details of the violent events are unverifiable, while the perpetrator is continuously constructed as an overarching villain. The “terrorists” or ikhwa (brothers) were described as men wearing gandouras or kamis (traditional garb, respectively North African and Middle Eastern), with long beards (sometimes dyed with hanna), kohl in their eyes, and chewing camphor, which supposedly prevented them from bleeding when shot. These particularities folded into each other to produce a rumoured—what might be—an identifiably marked aggressor. The victims, on the other hand remained nameless, voiceless, and unseen. Their stories—also of what might be—nevertheless haunted and impacted upon the everyday life of people.

Rumours thus operated as a means to terrorize populations as they generated a climate of instability and fear. There were, for example, rumours of women being violently assaulted on beaches and streets, having acid thrown at their legs or face for not being dressed modestly or for not wearing the hijab. As a consequence, not only were women afraid to go out or go to the beach, but when they did, they were often encouraged and sometimes even pressed by their families to conform. In the same way, movement was significantly restricted in certain places and
on certain days. In the beginning of the 1990s, Tuesdays were rumoured to be the “assassination day” for intellectuals, activists, and journalists, and massacres were said to increase during the month of Ramadan. Markets, parks, main roads, universities, or cultural events were often avoided because of rumours of bomb attacks. We can therefore see rumour as a means of gendered disciplinary control that reproduces and perpetuates a desired behaviour (including dress) and a set of underlying regulations. These regulations can be temporal or spatial, limiting or prohibiting access to the city/streets/work from certain people. Surveillance becomes part of this disciplinary apparatus that dominates social relations vis-à-vis the self and others. As noted later in the chapter, these regulatory practices, when pertaining to women, were generally reinforced by men: “they are strangers in the street, family members, teachers, religious leaders—who perpetuate norms that dictate how women can dress “properly,” which public places they are allowed to enter, males they are allowed to talk to, and inevitably translating to strict regulation on their sexuality as well.”

When rumours of children and babies being part of the casualties started, horror reached its peak. Although the killings were allegedly committed in the name of religion, and for a “greater good,” prior to the rumours involving children and babies, the violence seemingly transcended gender specifications; this is to say it was normalized to the extent that adults specifically were targeted and the violence was said to occur alongside speculations about political affiliations, religious beliefs, and work relationships. Thus, while the violence enacted was certainly gendered—ranging from enforced behavioural codes to bodily harm based on the sexed bodies—discussions about the reasons why one might get assassinated were not animated.

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112 The intent of my analysis on rumour (as deployed in this particular section) is not to discredit the veracity, or discount the stories of those who lived these experiences, but rather to analyze their impacts on those who hear them and, too, demonstrate that rumours are not untruths but lived, as well.

113 Iamarene, Dalila. "Violence Islamiste Contre les Femmes." Revue NAQD N.22/23 (Fall / Winter 2006): 115
by gender. Nevertheless these kinds of speculations lost their (irrational) logic when infants and children were targeted:

*Kalu* (they said) that some babies were burned, baked in ovens, cut in pieces, thrown against walls. *Smaana* (we heard) pregnant women were said to have been eviscerated, and their foetuses extracted, then mutilated. *Kalu* that mutilations and decapitations were carried out in front of children and families. *Smaana* a woman was forced to eat the foetus she was carrying.”

I am therefore suggesting that rumour has a psychological toll on those who live through and with the trauma without seeing the violence occur. The *unseen* leaves a large void for the imagination to fill. Most massacres were carried out outside of city centers, but after the 1997 massacre of Sidi Youcef, a town less than ten kilometres away from Algiers, rumours of massacres happening closer to the capital were revived leading to neighbourhood-watches all around the city.

Rumours of women and girls being kidnapped and used as sexual slaves pushed hundreds of small town families to migrate and/or send their daughters to large cities. While little was said about what happened to those who were kidnapped, one recurring rumour was that fathers and brothers consistently repudiated women survivors. These accounts operated as a way to, first, discourage women from escaping if kidnapped and second, to suggest that the guilt was rested upon them rather than the perpetrators. Furthermore, one of the biggest rumours raised by the civil war was that of the “Qui tue qui?” (Who kills who?). Although detailing the ways in which blame was debated during this time is beyond the scope of my thesis, it is important to note that the question of who is responsible—the government or the terrorists—was a site of contestation and that much of the focus of debate centered on who was responsible for the kidnappings and

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114 These are a collections of rumours I remember hearing while growing up in Algeria. Although they are part of these unverifiable events, such stories circulated on school grounds, family reunions, and everyday talks.
assassinations of intellectuals, and later in civilian massacres. Importantly and for example, two books by exiled ex-military Habib Souadia, in La Sale Guerre (2001) and Yous Nesrallah’ Qui a tué à Bentalha effectively blame the Algerian military for the Bentalha and Raïs massacres, using rumours of men either wearing military uniforms (presumably pretending to be from the military) attacking civilians, or men wearing fake beards and gandouras (presumably pretending to be terrorists) as proof of involvement. Nonetheless, what one can glean is a pattern wherein narratives of violence and unseen atrocities—rumoured and not—together, calcify behaviour and uphold gendered scripts.

In discussing the disciplining of the body and using the example of temporal elaborations of a marching troop, Foucault maintains that a marching troop has a collective obligatory rhythm: …imposed from the outside; it is a ‘programme’; it assures the elaboration of the act itself; it controls its development and its stages from the inside. We have passed from a form of the injunction that measured or punctuated gestures to a web that constrains them or sustains them throughout their entire succession. A sort of anatomo-chronological schema of behaviour is defined. The act is broken down into its elements; the position of the body, limbs, articulation is defined; to each movement are assigned a direction, an aptitude, duration; their order of succession is prescribed.¹¹⁵

Rumour, and the fear of the rumour becoming one’s own experience, is a programme: reality disciplines the body into acting, walking, performing as conditioned. The examples above, gathered from a variety of sources, thus demonstrate how the ongoing gendered violence in Algeria must be understood through entwining narratives—not simply verifiable data but rather a combination of memory, rumour, media and government text, academic sources, and the

empirical information—which, together, produce programmes of behaviour and various responses to the gendered underpinnings of state formation.

3.1.2 Gendered Violence

Referred to as the décennie noire (black decennial), the Algerian civil war was marked by an acute escalation in violence against women, starting with segregationist speeches in the late 1980s, and leading to targeted rapes and assassinations in the late 1990s. Islamist groups, giving a green light to use different forms of violence against men, women, and children, issued several fetwas. In fact, in March of 1994 the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) issued a statement classifying all unveiled women who appeared in public as potential military targets. In public warnings, flyers, and newspaper articles women were threatened with messages like: “O you woman who wears the jilbab (full robes), May you be blessed by God. O you who wears the hijab, May you be blessed by God. O you who expose yourself, the gun is for you.” Related, public violence and humiliations specifically targeting women—acid thrown at women, aggressions in city centers—spread fear in women and concern from their families. In April 1990, in Bou Saada for example, five widows and their children living “alone” were assaulted. In the same year, in Bordj el Kiffan, a mother and her daughter also living “alone,” were threatened and harassed, violently attacked; the daughter was raped. On February 28th, 1994, Katia Bengana, a 17 year old high school student was killed in Meftah for having refused to wear the hijab. March 30th, 1994, two high school students in the city of Boudouaou, Razika Meloudjmi and Naima

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116 Ali Benhadji, El Munqid n#25
119 In Algerian culture, women living without a male guardian father/brother are considered to be living “alone.”
Karali, were killed in front of their school. On September 27th, 1997 eleven teachers were assassinated on their way to school in the city of Bel Abbés. Indeed, thousands of women from around the country, of all ages and economic backgrounds, were killed. A special report published by the feminist organization RACHDA entitled *Femmes Contre l’Oubli* (Women against Forgetting) on March 8th, 1996, lists thousands of women who fell victim to fundamentalist assassinations; RACHDA declared the districts of Algiers, Boumerdés, and Blida as the most affected by terrorism.120

The systematic use of rape as a weapon of war was not recorded by the Algerian media until 1994. By the time the first cases of “viols collectifs” (gang rapes) were documented, news outlets were already talking about “zawdj el- mut’aa” or “marriages of pleasure” (I discuss marriages of pleasure in more detail below). On September 7, 1994, the newspaper *Le Matin* published the story of a father in the region of Tiaret, central Algeria, whose daughter was taken for a “marriage he will never attend.”121 On November 2nd, 1994, *El Watan* published an article entitled “Le Martyre de Kheira” (“Kheira’s Martyrdom”) covering the story of a young woman who was taken and gang-raped for several days by a terrorist group. In it, Kheira tells her story: “Of course she had heard about these women kidnapped and sequestered by the intégristes (fundamentalists) for months at the time, for the ‘sexual instincts’ of these supposed ‘fighters of God.’ Of course she knew that some of these women were later mutilated and decapitated. But no, never, never this young girl, with such shy demeanour, who quickly started to wear the veil after the appearance of the first fundamentalist groups, would have imagined what was in store for her.”122 In the article, Kheira explains that one night, a group of terrorists entered her home,

120 These incidents of violence are taken from: Iamarene, Dalila. *La violence islamiste contre les femmes*. 
122 Ibid. 19-25
and under threats of death, her father was forced to let her go with them. She recalls: “For twenty minutes I could hear the man scream, and then they convinced my father to let me go to the mountain with them to ‘help with the cleaning and cooking,’ they had said.” After being gang-raped for several days, Kheira was “let go” by her abductors, and brought back to her family. When she came back, explains one of her friends, “Her father greeted her with complete indifference. For him, Kheira was no longer his daughter, but the matter by which shame was brought. He did not even object when she asked if she could go live with her aunt in Algiers. He only asked her not to file a complaint with the police. ‘I don’t want them to come back to kill me,’ he said.”

I cite and recall Kheira’s story to refer to what Algerian women’s organizations have described as “social death.” Social death here suggests the state of isolation and exclusion women survivors experience once they are freed. They are sometimes repudiated (cast away) from their families, as a way to deflect and/or hide the source of shame and dishonour. Although repudiation was originally a cultural and religious practice used primarily by the husband (as a way to divorce the wife) it also started appearing in cases of pre-marital sex and rapes. Because it is in the woman that the honour of the family is crystallized, to “sully her honour” is to bring dishonour to the whole family. According to Moussaoui, in Arabic and North African culture, a woman that has sexual relations before marriage (with or without consent) becomes lham khnâz (rotting meat), because after the fact, she is “doomed” to stay unmarried. The person who causes this “social crime” commits khsara (ravage, damage, or waste). Indeed, a woman that is not a virgin cannot get married since by law, the husband can divorce her if he suspects she was not a virgin at the time of marriage. Therefore, when considering the ways in which rape operates in

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123 Ibid; 21
124 Ibid; 25
the context of war, the woman is not the only victim in the eyes of the family; she is the “damaged good” the parents will “have to keep,” and a burden and daily reminder of the shame brought upon the entire family. Through rape, she, but especially the males in her family (father, brothers, sons), are insulted and put to shame. Therefore, explains Moussaoui, there is “confusion of victimization” among some who are victims of, and affected by rape, through which the patriarch (and other male members of the family) are also considered victims of the affront.\textsuperscript{126}

Notably, this understanding of rape was institutionalized within the law, and rape can be found under the section of “crimes and offenses against the \textit{family and morality}.”\textsuperscript{127} Rape is consequently not perpetrated against a person but against a whole family and the larger community.\textsuperscript{128} In fact, some families had reported their daughters, wives, mothers and other family members being raped in front of their family (especially male) as a means of punishment and greater suffering \textit{to the family}.\textsuperscript{129} As a consequence, outside of cases of “zawdj al mut’aa”/marriages of pleasure, some women were forcibly married to their rapists as a way to protect their families from stigma. Thus, through the legal framework of marriage, rape was sanctioned and the \textit{khsar}” (damage) to the family was lessened.

3.1.3 Marriages of Pleasure and Rape

Traditionally, Algerian marriages are primarily a religious endeavour consisting of two parts. First, the religious marriage called the \textit{Fatiha} is a celebration punctuated by traditional formulas and religious prayers, during which requests and consent are given by all parties (bride, groom, and their parents). An \textit{imam} (religious leader), the bride, groom, two witnesses, and the bride’s legal guardian meet in one of the parental houses and discuss the conditions of the union

\textsuperscript{127} See article (336 al 2) of Penal Code
as well as the dowry. Afterwards, the prayer of the Fatiha (opening in Arabic) is pronounced to bless and institutionalize the union. Hereafter, the marriage is official, and recognized by the community and in the religion. Secondly, there is a legal or civil marriage, which for most, is only a technicality. The family and community do not publically recognize civil marriages without the initial marriage by Fatiha. In fact, many couples that are legally married will not “consummate their marriage” or be allowed to move in together until the religious ceremony is performed.\textsuperscript{130}

Zawdj al mut’aa (marriage of pleasure) is a different process and was inspired from Shiite beliefs. It was first introduced in university-student milieus in the late 1980s. Indeed, it was originally used as a way for young men and women to have consensual (sexual) relationships within the boundaries of religion, as the marriage of pleasure was a “fixed-term” commitment that did not result in an official civil marriage. In the beginning of the 1990s, however, a special fetwa was introduced in recluse villages and applied to zawdj al mut’aa. This fetwa legalized rape during “times of war” by proclaiming that combatants were allowed to take ghanima (spoils of war) and sabiya (human spoil of war). The sabiyas were primarily women and girls, used as servants who cooked and cleaned for the men in militia groups, and were also used as sexual slaves. Under this religious formula, a short-term marital contract of a few hours (at most) was set between a man and a woman during which sexual relations were “permitted.” Indeed, this particular type of marriage requires the consent of the father (given by will or by force) and is therefore rendered “legitimate.” Contrary to civil marriages and/or marriage by Fatiha, where both the woman’s and her guardian’s consent are required, zawdj al mata’a does not require the

woman’s approval. In most cases in fact, the father’s consent (if any) was given under threat of violence and death. As Kheddar explains, many rumours and media covered stories described what happened to families who refused to give their daughters away to terrorists. They often spoke of burned houses, beheaded bodies, killings of entire families, and so on.131

Kheddar further describes the rituals around these “marriages,” through testimonies collected during her work as president of the organization Djazaïrouna (for families of victims of terrorism): “I will cite two cases of women who had to testify to members of our organization, who included testimonies of their own, but that of other victims they had known as well. Some of them were not able to escape death, and were often dismemberment following pregnancies.”132

Amel, one of the survivors Kheddar discussed, was kidnapped after the assassination of male family members (although no details were given, it is presumed that it was her father and brother(s)), and kept by her kidnappers’ family. The testimony continues that “He wanted to prevent her from going through the known ritual: Women and girls are first raped by the emir, and then given to the other members of the group (between 5 and 50) to routinely undergo the same fate. If they survive, they are later given to other groups.”133 Similarly, Hoda, another survivor whose testimony was collected by the Réseau Wassila, was kidnapped by her fiancé and brought to a haouch (small house, often in cement and zinc, in a secluded mountainous area). In the house, she found two other women with which she lived for several months.134 She explains: “They worked silently. The men were next door. We never saw them. We were always in the kitchen. We made large portions of food all day, and did their laundry. We were not allowed to

132 Ibid (38)
133 Ibid(38)
speak or ask questions. We worked relentlessly all day. We were not allowed to leave the kitchen. We even slept there. At night, he forced me to have sexual relations with him. He would threaten me with a gun—he threatened to kill me and my parents. I did not care about my life. I worried about my parents. Every time he raped me, he took me by force. He would say: “You are not a moudjahida, us, we are moudjahidines, we want Islam and the well being of our country.”

I chose the above two accounts because they portray only a fraction of the horror many women such as Amel and Hoda experienced. In addition to being physically and psychologically scarred by such horrific conditions, they also are robbed of their humanity, and persuaded against imagining or performing a “heroic comeback” to their families and communities. Several other testimonies signalled that some women survivors were covered in toxic products, which made it hard for their families to recognize them. In many ways, abductors produce a narrative that dehumanizes and subjects these women to the abductors’ power through physical and psychological atrocities, humiliations, and dishonour (as it is culturally understood). Add to this that the women are not allowed to talk or ask questions; they are reminded that they are not moudjahidates, that no one will “sing to their glory,” or welcome their return. Hoda, after her liberation stated: “I lost my life, I lost my virginity, my youth, everything. I want for everyone to know what happened. I am “not” anymore [Algerian expression meaning to lose the self, to live without a soul].” From this perspective, we can see how rape is a weapon of war employed against victims, their families and ultimately the community at large. The analysis of various contemporary conflicts—including those of Bosnia, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—have shown similar dynamics in the use of rape: the symbolic significance of the body, the exploitation of the body, and the explicit violence against an honoured female sexuality works

136 Ibid.; 64

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to discipline, terrorize, and reaffirm domination. The Algerian Ministry of Interior, in a special report from August 5th, 1998, stated: “2084 women survivors of rape by Islamist fundamentalists were found throughout the country, and 319 were still unaccounted for.” These numbers, of course, must be considered with caution given the socio-cultural consequences of one’s “coming out” as a rape survivor, the stigma brought upon to the victim and their families and, ultimately, the “social death” resulting from publicly sharing the experience. Many will choose not to divulge their experiences to their families, police, or governmental institutions. This social stigma must be coupled with, furthermore, the legal vacuum at the end of the civil war, and the unwillingness of authorities to prosecute perpetrators, which made it impossible for victims to pursue any legal action.

In July 1999, supported by a national referendum, the government passed a Civil Concord treaty with the AIS Armée Islamiste du Salut, granting legal exemptions to all of its members if they surrendered themselves to the authorities. With a vast majority of the electoral body (96.8%) voting in favour of reconciliation, it is important to note that the details of such law did not involve the input of the populations, non-governmental agencies or political parties from the opposition. The referendum—without any further information about the ways in which peace and reconciliation would be acquired—simply asked: “Are you ‘for’ or ‘against’ the President’s initiative to establish peace and civil concord?” For Evans and Phillips, the wording was deliberately vague so that the president would not to be constrained by language. He wanted

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137 Iamarene, Dalila. "Violence Islamiste Contre les Femmes." Revue NAQD N.22/23 (Fall/Winter 2006) : 137
138 According to official results published by media outlets, 85% of the electoral body voted. 96.8% of which voted in favour of the national referendum.
139 Important opposition against the law came from the organizations Djazairouna (our Algeria), organization of families of victims of terrorism, the National Committee Against Forgetting, RAFD (Algerian coalition of democratic women), the National Association of Families of the Missing, political parties such as the FFS
a wide range of options in order to manoeuvre in his negotiations with armed groups. While large numbers of Algerians were very aware of this ambiguity, they were also desperate for any glimmer of hope.\textsuperscript{141} Echoing an uncomfortable complicity between the French government and the FLN in the \textit{Evian Accords} forty years earlier, where both Algerian and French combatants were amnestied of all crimes committed during the war, these laws prevented a great deal of research and investigation into misconduct and criminality.\textsuperscript{142} There were, as well, other important laws explicitly gestured to in the treaty that banned any individual or group from discussing the civil war. These provisions, popularly called “amnesia laws,” were intended to efface a decennial of violence, silence all criticism of the army and its conduct during the war, and erase the government’s decisions regarding the war. Seriously restricting freedom of speech, the government made it a criminal offense (punishable by 3 months to 5 years in prison, and up to 500,000 DA of fines) for individuals to express—by speech, writing, research or any other method—views which could ‘weaken the state,’ or ‘undermine the reputation’ of ‘those who served it with dignity,’ or sought to ‘tarnish’ the image of Algeria internationally.”\textsuperscript{143}

Through censorship, intimidating journalists, and controlling access to paper and printing, the government attempted to tightly circumscribe any discussion of the atrocities that occurred in 1990s.\textsuperscript{144} Furthermore, in the “Charters for Peace and Reconciliation” of 2002, and again of 2005, the government called for further exemptions and “clemency.” All legal proceedings (past and present) were cancelled and complete rehabilitation was granted—through the reinstitution of lost employment and financial help—to those “implicated in terrorism/terrorist

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid; 263
\textsuperscript{142} Formalizing the end of colonization and the French/Algerian war, and signed in 1962 between the French government and the FLN, the \textit{Accords d’Evian} recognized Algeria’s sovereignty. See also: Ranjana Khana. \textit{Algeria Cuts: Women & Representation: 1830 to the Present.} (2008): 7
\textsuperscript{143} Article 46 of the “Chart for peace and reconciliation” (2006): 7 \url{http://www.joradp.dz/FTP/joradp-francais/2006/F2006011.pdf}
acts” and their families.”\(^{145}\) Paradoxically, these exemptions were to exclude members who were involved in violent acts against civilians.\(^{146}\) Here, the government tried to draw a distinction between members of terrorist groups who partook in non-violent activities, and those who were involved in massacres, rapes, assassinations and bomb attacks. To this day however, no investigations, prosecutions, or legal proceedings have been undertaken against any perpetrators of terrorist acts during the “black decennial.” Armed groups were granted implicit amnesty as government agents (police and military) involved in torture, extrajudicial assassinations, abuse, and the disappearance of individuals suspected of supporting Islamist groups during the war.\(^{147}\) In the face of a normalizing processes of indiscriminate and gendered violence, the government sought to, once again, reaffirm its (patriarchal) power by manipulating the law and the constitution, attempting to absolve itself from any responsibility for human rights violations and, consequently, attempting to erase Algeria’s recent past. Reifying patriarchal dominance, after the civil war, the government symbolically represented itself as the paternal/moral figure to its “child” population, implicitly exercising control over who to forgive and when to forget.


\(^{146}\) Ordinance n° 06-01 of 28 Moharram 1427 corresponding to 27 February 2006 for the implementation of the Charter for peace and reconciliation: http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/commissions/Algeria-Charter_ordinance06-02.pdf

\(^{147}\) Although the Algerian government has officially recognized its involvement in only 7000 disappearances, local NGO’s including the “Collectif des familles des disparus en Algérie” have documented at least 15 000 individuals missing. For further information, consult http://www.algerie-disparus.org/cfda1/
3.1.4 Contestations and Resistance

Far from providing victims and their families with truth, justice and reparations promised in the “National Concord,” amnesty measures further entrenched a climate of blanket impunity and normalized violence against civilians, and women in particular. Non-Governmental Organizations from around the country—including but not limited to the Collectif for the Families of the Missing, Djazairouna, the Organization of Families of Victims of Terrorism, the National Committee against Forgetting, Tharwa Fatma Nsoumer, RAFD (Algerian Coalition of Democratic Women), the Réseau Wassila—vehemently opposed the amnesty and rehabilitation laws put in place by the government. As stated by Réseau Wassila, “certain cases cannot be ignored because doing so would violate the victims’ humanity a second time. Victims who were tortured, mutilated, and raped are still not recognized as victims. Not a single criminal has publicly recognized his acts or expressed shame and regret.”

Echoing a lack of consent from the people who were predominantly victimized by the war, many organizations protest to this day, silently in front of the Parliament (Palais du Gouvernement) every Sunday morning, holding up pictures of family members they lost during the war, and holding signs that read: “[President] Bouteflika, we will haunt your Sundays until we get justice.”

In the course of the past thirty years, women’s and human rights organizations have constantly resisted the status quo, the Family Code, fundamentalism, and the gendered violence that occurred during the black decennial. The UNFA (National Union of Algerian Women), created in 1965, was of the first women’s associations created post-independence. As noted

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150 Tlemcani, Salima. "Nous reviendrons tous les dimanches." El Watan (Algiers), March 13, 2006
151 Three women’s organizations were created between 1934 and 1947: The women’s section of the Algerian People’s Party (PPA), the Union of Algerian Women, and the Association of Muslim Women in Algeria. It is important to note however, that freedom of association was not granted by the constitution
above, the UNFA was a branch of the FLN and was comprised primarily of women veterans. Their demands focused on equality, literacy and health care. When a draft of the Family Code was leaked to women’s organizations in 1981, several individuals organized protest against the draft, including UNFA members and celebrated *moudjahidates* such as Djamila Bouhired, Meriem Enmihoub and Zohra Drif Bitat. Organizing highly visible demonstrations and protests in Algiers and its surrounding areas, “the women dared to do what had never been done before—confront the state and its single party openly and publicly.”152

United for the abrogation of the Family Code, several feminist and women’s associations organized the largest protests since the independence. On March 8th 1990, and defying growing fundamentalist violence, between 10,000 and 15,000 women took to the streets of Algiers to protest the Family Code. Paradoxically, after a call by Abassi Madani to oppose “violence against Islam,” 10,000 women wearing white demonstrated on April 20th of the same year to defend Islamic ideals of femininity and voice their opposing views from previous demonstrations. In fact, after 1989, several Islamist women’s organizations were also born in the capital and its surrounding areas. Bouatta cites two main organizations: *El Islah Wal Irshad* (Reform and Guidance) and the National Association for the ‘Defence of Oppressed Women’—whose axes mainly focused on charity work and the promotion of education and Islam and both of which have separated their philosophies from other feminist organizations.153

For the next two years, the second and third national protests, initiated by women’s associations were organized, and while the Family Code was still a burning subject, in the face of

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152 Charrad, M. *States and women’s rights: the making of postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001): 196
the increased violence and the state of emergency, women’s organizations were forced to put their fight for equality in relation to the code itself on the back burner.\textsuperscript{154} Much of the activism previously initiated in the late 1980s died off in the face of threats against social activists, intellectuals, and feminists. Although its members received several death threats, RA FD (Rassemblement Algérien des Femmes Democrates) was one of the organizations that remained active during the ‘black decennial’ and persisted in organizing cultural events and public demonstrations against fundamentalist Islamism and violence. On March 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1993, RA FD organized a mock trial against terrorism and a play about the issues of institutional violence in the Family Code. In 1999, the organization instituted an annual prize for resistance awarded to activists, victims, survivors, and their families. Prizes were, for example, offered posthumously to: Katia Bengana, a 16 year old high school student who was murdered for refusing to wear the hijab to school; to the young women workers of an electronics factory in Sidi Bel Abbes who were the targets of a terrorist attack; to Yemma Zahra (Mother Zahra), whose son was killed by fundamentalists, and who decided to take arms and fight back; and to the families of eleven female teachers murdered in 1997 on their way to school in the city of Bel Abbes.\textsuperscript{155} Furthermore, after the “National Reconciliation” law was passed forbidding researchers, journalists, and public figures to discuss the civil war, several organizations such as \textit{Réseau Wassila} and \textit{Djazairouna} started collecting testimonies from survivors, victims and their families thus archiving and documenting the atrocities lived during the civil war and the ways in which public institutions handled their cases.


\textsuperscript{154} As part of the campaign for the legislative vote of 1991, women’s organizations called for the abrogation of sections 53 of the Penal Code and amendment of Article 54 of electoral law, deviating women’s vote, and giving permission for a male guardian (husband, father, brother, son) to vote in their name.
Resistance to violence and discrimination also happened on other scales. On March 8th, 1994, for example, a group of teachers from the city of Blida published a letter to the Minister of Education in the newspaper *Le Matin* to raise awareness about the conditions in which they were forced to work while also denouncing the unsafe space that schools and universities had become. The letter described threats and physical attacks, as well as assaults against female students and the total impunity in which all of this was done.\(^{156}\) Louisa Ait Hamou, a feminist activist, and president of the *Réseau Wassila* noted that during the 1990s, and in spite of flyers and posters threatening women with death if they didn’t wear the hijab, “some women refused to wear it.” She continues:

…others, who lived in dangerous areas used stratagems: For instance, they wore what was humorously called *Le foulard decapotable* (convertible scarf), which women would pull down and up whenever necessary. In the same way, when teachers and students were asked to resume school in 1994, many of them still went, but used plastic bags to carry their books instead of schoolbags.\(^{157}\)

The productions and reproductions of patriarchal exceptionalism as national narrative have pushed women to resist epistemic, social and juridical violence. They have done this in a variety of ways, ranging from linking critique to creative text (plays) to more public claims on space (activist protest and *foulard decaptable*). They have also honoured the lost—naming names, publicly and posthumously honouring resistance. These resistances are done within and against systemic and normalized violence. The erasure of women’s citizenship rights in the aftermath of the decolonization movement sheds light on consequences of the gendered workings

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\(^{155}\) Louisa Ait-Hamou. *Women’s Struggle against Muslim Fundamentalism in Algeria: Strategies or a Lesson for Survival?* WLUML Publications (December, 2004): 121

\(^{156}\) Dalila Iamarene. *La violence Islamiste contre les femmes.* NAQD (2006): 130
of postcolonial nation-states. As argued by Bakan, “citizenship exists on a spectrum involving a pool of rights that are variously offered, denied, or challenged. The terms and conditions of citizenship rights and responsibilities are the product of active and ongoing negotiations.”

Similarly, although equality is stated in the Constitution, women’s citizenship rights in Algeria have been part of ongoing battles, in which constructed Arab and Islamic identities in the Family Code were employed (and deployed) as part of the national narrative, obstructing women to rise as equals. Effectively, the Family Code has set the stage to a systematization of condoned gendered violence, leading to the indubitable repetition of such violence in the aftermath of the “National Concord.”

In unveiling the various ways in which patriarchal discourses inform military, nation, family and kinship, I have shown the interlocking ways in which the nation-state has normalized a masculinist state-vision. I have drawn a genealogy of violence and have shown that while discourses of violence during the décennie noire were seemingly all encompassing—due to the national scale at which the conflict was happening—employments and deployments of violence were explicitly gendered. Embedding instability and fear, narratives of violence rooted in rumour and the unseen, came to play a critical role in disciplining the body into acting and performing as conditioned. Women, whose bodies were particularly surveilled, were the targets of exceptionally violent acts, precisely because of what they symbolically represent in society. It is in women that the honour of the family, and the community at large, rests. Honour, confusions of victimization, and social death all come to haunt women in/of the Algerian civil war. I have also detailed several frames through which to understand the relationship between the patriarchal underpinnings of Algerian history post-independence and the employment of gendered violence, the discursive

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formation of masculinities as hierarchal powers, and the ways in which they have been reinscribed in the different layers of Islamist groups.

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Chapter 4

Algérie Mon Humour: Media, Culture and Political Discourse

The title of this chapter “Algérie mon humour” is borrowed from Algerian caricaturist Ali Dilem (Casbah Editions, 2011). Using lyrics from the infamous 1991 song Algérie mon Amour (Algeria my love), sang by several Algerian artists to critique the growing violence in the country, Dilem makes a pun, exchanging words amour (love) with humour.\(^{159}\) While the country is often called “Bled Mickey” (Mickey Mouse’s country) by young Algerians (see below), Dilem’s title choice reveals the profound disillusionment—and choice to humour—the embedded political and social corruptions that fester the country. The title furthermore suggests that people are not duped by the constant lies, political rhetoric and corruption; rather, they know they are being infantilized and prefer to humour the powers at play. To complement this point and further introduce this chapter, I turn to the work of caricaturist Le Hic and his political comic strips. On November 2\(^{\text{nd}}\), 2013, Le Hic published a strip entitled “Presidential Elections 2014: Yasmina Khadra announces his candidature.”\(^{160}\) In his drawing, a series of colourful cartoon characters including Bart Simpson, a Smurf, Sponge Bob, Mickey Mouse, a clown, et cetera, happily raise both their hands and present their candidature to the presidential election. Here, Le Hic humours the elections on two levels.

\(^{159}\) Released in 1991, the song Algérie mon Amour brought together several Algerian singers and artists from across the country to sing in Arabic, French and Tamazight in response to the wave of targeted assassinations several artists and journalists had fallen victims of.

Firstly, Yasmina Khadra’s candidature is compared to that of a cartoon character, as he is ridiculed for his lack of experience and knowledge of politics. He is also mocked for not knowing that only a particular type of person can become president. As explained in Chapter 1, a military class that has controlled presidential elections since the country’s independence dominates political leadership in Algeria. The procession of “founding fathers” that have led and headed the government, an assumption of patriarchal lineages—glorifying blood that was shed for the country—dictates who is worthy of the position and who is not. Although Yasmina Khadra was a military officer for several years (after independence), and although his father was a member of the Army of National Liberation (ALN), he is not deemed worthy enough to be a president. Secondly, presidential elections in the country are often understood as a staged performance for international audiences. While several political parties represented by various candidates come forth, it is always (unofficially) established that the FLN party will win. Furthermore, while election participation rates are generally very low, official results are also known to be inflated. In the 2009 presidential elections for example, President Bouteflika won his

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161 Pen name for Mohammed Moulessehoul, Yasmina Khadra is an internationally celebrated author that only revealed his identity in 2001, at the “end” of the civil war.
third mandate with over 90% of votes, and a 74% participation rate.\footnote{162} Opposition leaders disputed this victory because of systematic irregularities and fraud occurring throughout the country, and claimed that the actual turnout was closer to 18%.\footnote{163} Presidential or legislative elections are therefore seen as more of a farce, than an actual democratic process, which consequently explains the notion of what Algerian youth have described as \textit{Bled Mickey}.

In this chapter, I work through these kinds of complex media texts in order to uncover how such narratives support and depart from my earlier discussions of gender and nation. I analyze the ways in which the post-independence “founding fathers” creation myth, nation, patriarchal-military structures, and gendered violence, are depicted and narrated in print media. Until the 1990s changes in the Constitution, only publically owned (read government-owned) newspapers were allowed to be published in the country. These newspapers included two FLN led publications \textit{El Moudjahid} published in French, and \textit{El Chaab} published in Arabic. Following the historical 1989 demonstrations, a push towards a liberalization/privatization of print media ensued. Today, the written press counts over 50 titles published in Arabic, French and Tamazight.\footnote{164} While francophone newspapers maintained a readership monopoly until the mid 1990s, growing efforts to institute Arabic as the national language in public institutions, schools, and television has significantly increased Arabic readership and attendant news sources. Presently, Arabic language newspapers such as \textit{Echououk} publish over 800,000 copies, while \textit{El Khabar} and \textit{Ennahar} publish at 470,000 and 350,000 copies.\footnote{165} Francophone newspapers, on the

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{163} Ibid;
\footnote{164} Tamazight is the indigenous language spoken by Berbers in Algeria and North Africa.
\footnote{165} Taïb Belmadi. \textit{Algérie: Boom de la presse arabophone}. Jeune Afrique. 28/09/2009 http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAIA2542p047-049.xml1/}

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other hand, publish at much lower rates: *Le Quotidien d’Oran* (160 000), *El Watan* (150 000) and Liberté (115 000).\(^{166}\)

A discourse analysis of selected newspaper articles and political comic strips will allow me to position media coverage as a microcosm of Algerian society, and to consider the ways in which culture, tradition, and the law inform, and are informed by nationalism and national identity. In view of the fact that all Algerian television networks and radio stations are owned by the government—and are therefore scripted by political endeavours that favour a government perspective—I opt to analyze privately owned newspapers. These privately owned sources tend to provide a more nuanced perspective on politics, society and public opinion.\(^{167}\) To this end, I chose a select number of news items including political comic strips, special reports and news articles in newspapers *El Watan*, *Liberté* and *El Moudjahid* between 1991 and 2013. I have only chosen these francophone newspapers because of accessibility, and because they are the most widely read newspapers in Algeria. Indeed, while francophone newspapers chosen above have been publishing online since 2003 and include archival resources going all the way to 1991, Arabic newspapers have only started publishing online in the last five years.\(^{168}\) This time frame—aptly beginning with the 1991 Islamic Renaissance—will allow me to examine the fluctuations in discourse and the ways in which different political and social climates have influenced media discourses. While the media has often been seen as an instrument of political legitimization and indoctrination, and as largely controlled by a totalitarian government that exercises great power

\(^{166}\) Ibid; 7

\(^{167}\) In the last two to three years, 3 new privately owned Algerian television networks were launched, but government has not officially recognized them. As such, they can only be viewed through Satellite, and are produced in other countries.

\(^{168}\) I will try to resist the dichotomous distinction between the two types of media that label one kind as being liberal and modernist (francophone press), and the second as traditionalist and Islamist. My aim is not to legitimize their objectivity, but rather to use newspaper coverage as microcosms of Algerian society to analyze their discourses, and consider their influences on public opinion and national identity.
over its organization and rhetoric, it nonetheless possesses pockets of resistance that I choose to
illuminate and examine.\textsuperscript{169}

4.1.1 Newspapers, Media and the Law: A Historical Contextualization

Media provides a series of arenas in which cultural, social and political subjects are represented
through textual and visual discourses. Media narrative reflects as well as constructs social
realities and lived experiences. Academic analyses have emphasized the role of media,
specifically how it constructs specific versions of reality and how it influences audiences and
shapes their world-views.\textsuperscript{170} Media discourses in the Algerian context, however, are largely
disciplined by policies and laws that are enforced by the media and shape the ways in which news
articles are represented to the public (and discussed among media recipients). As such, journalism
is not conceived as a profession based on the principle of providing information to the public and
expressing different perspectives and ideas; rather, it is used as a means of propaganda, an
instrument of state control, and a weapon in the struggle against perceived internal and external
enemies.\textsuperscript{171} Media has historically been used in Algeria as a political tool in legislative and
presidential elections/campaigns and to convey news coverage that focuses on the leading
governmental party (FLN). During the 2009 presidential elections, for example, a Special Report
by the “Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights” declared that President Bouteflika
had had a monopoly of news coverage in both privately and publically owned press: “He alone
had close to 30 % of the newscast space, whereas his primary opponent, Labour Party’s candidate

\textsuperscript{169} Mellor, Noha. \textit{Arab media: globalization and emerging media industries}. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press,
2011: 12
\textsuperscript{170} Willems, Wendy. “Comic Strips and “the Crisis”: Postcolonial Laughter and Coping with Everyday Life
in Zimbabwe.” \textit{Popular Communication} (April 2011): 129
\textsuperscript{171} Gafaiti, Hafid. “Power, Censorship, and the Press: The Case of Postcolonial Algeria”. \textit{Research in
African Literatures} (1990):52
Louiza Hanoune, did not exceed 10.37 %. Conversely, the space for all other candidates combined ranged between 08.05 % and 09.30 %.”

Since the 1988 riots, by and large, the government has controlled images and articles circulated in newspapers and television. Journalists were and are bound to strict rules determined by both the Penal Code and the Code of Information, which dictate rights and responsibilities in terms of readership and accountability to the government. To this end, several information laws have been put in place since the beginning of the 1990s to define the limits of the press and what journalists should not write about—rather than laws that define what they should write about, as exemplified in other North African and Middle Eastern countries. Directly pointing to journalists, these laws include Article 144 of the Penal Code which states that it “is punishable by two months to two years of imprisonment, and a fine of 1,000 to 500,000 DA, whoever intends to harm or disrespect magistrates, officers, captains, or law enforcement agents in the exercise of their function, through writing or drawing made public.” Article 144 bis continues that whoever offends the President of the Republic, “through outrageous, abusive or defamatory expression byway or writing, drawing or through any other form of speech or image, or whatever electronic medium, is punishable by a fine of 50,000 to 250,000 DA.” Vaguely worded, and subject to the individual interpretation of the guilty journalist, editor, and/or prosecutor, this law significantly restricts the freedom of press and obstructs any attempt to criticise or denounce the government, its laws, or the ways in which the laws are read and applied by public officials.

The Arabic press was the first to suffer from the effects of these laws. The FIS (Front de Liberation Nationale) led newspaper *Al-Ansar* was an early target of the legislation and was prohibited in 1992. Other Arabic newspapers that published editorials that were *read as* supporting the FIS rhetoric were censored next. Francophone newspapers—which had supported the interruption of presidential elections in 1991—were less impacted by this first wave of bans, but quickly became its primary victims. The newspaper *El Watan* for instance was suspended five times since its creation in 1990, while its directing editor was condemned to a cumulative sentence of seven years in prison for allowing the publication of articles officially denouncing corruption, censorship and criticizing public officials. Following the January and December 1993 suspensions, in fact, the Ministry of Communication created for a period of two years—before being discontinued—a “Reading Committee” (read: *censorship committee*) that monitored and systematically censored all information published in newspapers relative to security conditions “not officially confirmed by the government.”

In addition to using large monetary fines, judicial harassment, physical intimidation, and permit suspensions to censor journalists, editors and newspapers at large, the government also owned, until 2000, the only printing and distribution company in the country. Instead of using legal prosecutions, it also used its power over the printing company to censor newspapers. In

178 In January 1993, *El Watan* was suspended for 15 days after publishing an article on the assassination of five police officers in the mid-west of the country, and again in December of the same year for publishing an article relating to the purchase of helicopters by the government, who was going to start a violent offensive against terrorist groups in the maquis. *El Watan* was officially prosecuted for publishing “subconsciously favourable terminology that can be considered favourable to the ideology and propaganda of the enemy.” For further information, consult: [http://www.elwatan.com/archives/article.php?id_sans_version=93460](http://www.elwatan.com/archives/article.php?id_sans_version=93460) Nabila Amir. *Les moments difficiles: Le journal El Watan a été suspendu a cinq reprises. El Watan, 07/10/2010*
September, 1998 newspapers *El Watan, La Tribune, Le Soir d'Algérie* and *Le Matin* (all privately owned) were suspended for a period of one month after the publication of documents involving suspicions of fraud of the former advisor to President Zeroual. A few hours after the publication of these articles, the four newspapers were given a 48-hour ultimatum to settle the entirety of their debt to the state-owned printing company SIMPRAL. However, the ultimatum was communicated on a Wednesday afternoon, a day before the weekend (Thursday, Friday) when all banks are closed. *El Khabar, Le Quotidien d'Oran* and *Liberté* newspapers denounced this ultimatum and also halted their publication in solidarity for the duration of the suspension. Specific journalists were and are also continuously targeted for their articles or comic strips, such as Ali Dilem, aforementioned caricaturist, who has been sentenced since 1995 to a cumulative nine years in prison for his drawings of various Algerian Presidents and public officials. Articles 144 and 144 bis of the Penal Code are in fact humorously called the *Dilem Laws*.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter 2, there were, as well, other important laws explicitly gestured to in the Penal Code that banned any individual or group—and especially journalists—from discussing the civil war following the 2000, 2002 and 2005 Charters for Peace and National Reconciliation. Similar to other Information Laws, discussing the *décennie noire* is a criminal offense, punishable by imprisonment and large monetary fines. Vague stipulations of this law include any writing which could ‘weaken the state,’ or ‘undermine the reputation’ of ‘those who served it with dignity,’ or sought to ‘tarnish’ the image of Algeria internationally when discussing the civil war.” These provisions were the latest restrictions to freedom of press and freedom of expression. It is also important to understand these restrictions in relation to those imposed during

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180 Ibid;
the décennie noire, when in as much as over one hundred journalists were assassinated, and several others are still missing. Some who had received death threats, such as Mohamed Issami, were forced to live for years in seclusion. Others, such as caricaturists Dilem and Slim, were forced to seek refuge in France and Belgium. Therefore, although Algeria underwent a liberalization of its print media, strict regulations, censorship, and threats of violence and death remain, continually preventing independent journalistic examinations of and inquiries into the socio-political conditions in the country.

4.1.2 Political Satire in Dilem and Le Hic: Humour as Resistance

Political comic strips have come to play a pivotal role in newspapers today, exposing governance failures, commenting on restrictions to freedom of expression, and denouncing fraud and corruption. Through the layering of subtle hints, bilingual innuendos, double entendres, and satire they are able to use humour and open interpretation as a form of protection. While scholars in Cultural Studies have analyzed comics—primarily from a western perspective—as ideological texts which offer a particular framing of reality, Willems complicates this view by arguing that laughter in postcolonial contexts adopts a self-reflexive mode through which those subject to power mock their own powerlessness and lack of agency in the face of a system that they perceive as immutable. Moussaoui further argues that derision can be read as a means to entertain the illusion of triumph over the repetitive humiliations the Algerian population has endured; this counteracts the portrayal of the self as the helpless victim. Even though the political and social systems represented in the political cartoon may be understood as immutable

and inevitable, the reader is very much conscious of these processes, and given agency through
humour and their reading practices. Through the work of the cartoonist, the reader is
consequently not portrayed as a passive victim of political power, but rather an active participant
of ambiguous processes, forced to “pause and ask some thought provoking questions about their
role in the continued entrenchment of the repressive regime.”

One of Algeria’s most famous caricaturists/cartoonist is award winning Ali Dilem, who
has been publishing his work for the last two decades in the newspapers El-Manchar and Le
Matin; since 1996 he has been publishing in Liberté. Employing popular (folk) jokes, puns,
wordplay, and representations that resonate with Algerian culture, his drawings are easily
recognizable by the often-exaggerated noses of his characters, and the discernable cultural details
within his visual narratives. To contextualize the cultural and social symbolisms found at work in
his opus, I examine four main characters: the ordinary male Algerian; the ordinary (veiled)
female Algerian and/or her more liberated/younger (unveiled) counterpart; the president; the
colonel/military. The ordinary male citizen, the first of these characters, is portrayed as a man in
simple clothes (often to the colors of the country’s flag: red, green and white), and a recognizable
fez-hat (representing traditional male garb). Often present in all walks of life, in both private and
public spheres, he is the mundane representative of Algerian society. The ordinary Algerian
woman, the second of these characters and on the other hand, is depicted wearing the haik and a

182 Willems, Wendy. “Comic Strips and “the Crisis”: Postcolonial laughter and Coping with Everyday Life
in Zimbabwe.” Popular Communication (April 2011): 126
184 Willems, Wendy. “Comic Strips and “the Crisis”: Postcolonial laughter and Coping with Everyday Life
in Zimbabwe.” Popular Communication (April 2011): 135
185 El Manchar (literally translated as “hand-saw” and means The Critic) was a francophone newspaper
published biweekly between 1990 and 1995, and focused solely on political satire and comic strips. The
newspaper (first called Bled Mickey) joined caricaturists such as Haroun, Kurzas, Maz, Slim, Dilem...
After several suspensions during the early 1990s, it finally was cancelled in 1995 after the assassinations
of several of its members such as Said Mekbel, Brahim Guerroui, and Durbane.
Although neither the haik, djâr nor the red fez are worn by Algerian women and men today, these depictions remain symbolic in Dilem’s narrative of North African/Algerian culture. Some variations will however occur when, for example, younger men are depicted wearing a red cap instead of the fez, or women are depicted inside a house or celebrating International Women’s Day. Here, they will be dressed accordingly, in a colourful dress, with a scarf around their curly black hair, or in a swimsuit at the beach. His change in women’s representation during International Women’s Day assumes that only younger generations of women, those depicted as not wearing the traditional haik—and therefore assumed to be more progressive—would celebrate such an event. It is, as well, important to note that representations of women will only appear in Dilem’s cartoons when gendered topics are addressed—generally around Women’s Day or when discussing domestic violence and violence against women. When other topics—the economy, employment, citizenship, immigration, for example—are discussed the preferred representation will be the “ordinary Algerian man.” On July 2nd, 2005 for example, he published a special comic strip (below) in solidarity with women’s struggle against the Family Code, in which he asked: “When will we revoke the Family Code?”

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186 Haik is a traditional garment worn by North African/Maghrebi women. It is a white rectangular cloth that covers the body. The djâr on the other hand is a triangular embroidered lace that covers their mouth and nose.

187 Traditionally, the haik was only worn when leaving the house. In the private sphere, women generally wear house dresses or ‘djebbas’ as represented in Dilem’s work.
In this strip, Dilem illustrates an ordinary Algerian woman, wearing the haik and the djâr, imprisoned behind the jail that is the Family Code. Angrily, she holds the bars of the prison, as though she was ready to break free. Symbolizing the struggle that the Family Code is to women, and by association the nation’s systematic denial of women’s subjecthood, Dilem draws vivid imagery to show the institutionalization and normalization of violence exercised against women, who find themselves behind the bars of cultural and religious laws.

Women are also, however, ridiculed in their struggle, as demonstrated in a March 8th, 2009, strip (below). Here Dilem depicted the celebration of International Women’s Day. Entitled “Women celebrate March 8th,” a woman is portrayed throwing tampons on the ground. When a man, standing behind her, asks what she was doing, she answers: “I am throwing firecrackers!” Here, we can read the parody of a woman, depicted as a liberated (sans-hijab), who celebrates without really understanding an international commemoration of women’s struggle. In this illustration an important historical day of violence and struggle is reduced to a simple toss of tampons in the street, linking the perpetual ideas of menstruation and women’s activism. The struggle, and fight against an oppressive system is rendered invisible, and subject to derision and mockery.
Le Hic, on the other hand, caricaturist of newspapers *Le Matin*, then *El Watan* since 2009 offers a more nuanced perspective of Algerian women’s struggle (below). On the same day as the Ali Dilem’s “firecracker” cartoon, Le Hic published a strip entitled “Algerian women’s emancipation: a daily struggle,” to which the four women depicted respond to this call for emancipation with: “that leaves traces.” Here, the four women represented are victims of physical violence, shown through bruises, blood, and broken bones. Two of the women are unveiled, and portrayed in colourful outfits, while the two others are portrayed as wearing a black chador, and the traditional *haik*. Here, I believe that Le Hic shows the similarities of experiences in Algerian women’s lives, no matter their backgrounds, age or status.
The depiction of the normalization of violence found at work in this caricature must be linked to laws pertaining to domestic violence in Algeria. Although it is criminalized in both the Penal and Family Codes, Algerian law states that a judge can only prosecute the perpetrator of a domestic abuse case if the victim can produce a legal ITT certificate (Total Incapacity of Work Certificate) officially stating that the assault to which she was victim of resulted in an incapacity of work greater than 10 days. Through this language, women can only take legal action against their aggressor if the consequences of the attack are deemed severe enough to incapacitate her for more than 10 days. Otherwise, the aggression is deemed acceptable and normalized. Conversely, any violence against a father, a mother or a “legitimate ascendant,” even without ITT is, according to the Penal Code, punishable by 5 to 10 years in prison. The language used in these two legal texts shows a hierarchy within the family. Parents and ascendants are legally protected against any type of violence, no matter the constructed gravity of the act, while violence against a spouse, usually the wife, is only punishable if it results in an infirmity or incapacity for a period exceeding ten days. This erasure of subjecthood can be found in the rest of the legal opus, as all violence that occurs against women—being in the domestic or public spheres—are grouped in Title II of the Penal Code under the name of “Crimes and offenses against the family and morality.” These crimes, which include children’s neglect, rape, incest and sexual harassment in the workplace or in the street, operate on at least two levels. First, the grammar of these laws reifies the position of women as perpetual minors, as crimes perpetrated against them and children are cast within the same category. Secondly, their subjecthood is moreover erased, as crimes are not punishable because they are perpetrated against the person, but rather because they are an affront to the honour of the family. In privileging such a categorization, women are

188 Article 264 of the Penal Code: Violence that results in a total inability to work more than 10 days will be punished by 1 to 5 years of prison.
189 Penal Code: Article 267
dehumanized and deprived of their personhood. Therefore, we can see how Le Hic’s depiction of a normalization/generalization of violence against women can resonate in the personal experiences of men and women in Algerian society.

A third character that is often represented in Dilem’s caricatures is President Bouteflika, who has been leading the country since 1999. He is depicted as a particularly short character, in blue or grey suits, and wearing a small braid, at the end of which we can see a small pink or red polka-dotted bow. The bow can be read as a symbol of Bouteflika’s rumoured homosexuality; although Dilem never addresses the bow in any unambiguous terms, it is present in all of his drawings of the President. The subtle message and ambiguity of this symbol gives the reader the power to interpret it at will, while also offering protection for the caricaturist who could be heavily sanctioned (both financially and legally) if he portrayed the president’s (homo)sexuality in an obvious manner. Willem argues that political cartooning can be described as the sketched version of rumour. Political rumour and cartooning “are ways of cushioning the hardness of the stifling official discourse that monopolise the public sphere, often claiming to be the sole bearer of truth.”

While rumour can be used, as seen in Chapter 2, as a means of disciplinary apparatus that dominates social relations vis-à-vis the self and others, it can also be employed as a way to challenge the status quo, within a field that is itself largely regulated by governmental laws and regulations. This underlines the paradoxical power resistance satirists and cartoonists employ in their drawings to narrate their own truths, in an otherwise restrictive and restricted profession. Following Mbembe in fact we might ask what a true narrative is, if not the narrative believed true and so regarded by the person narrating it, hearing it or accepting it? The question of truth, he answers, is effectively “resolved by the reader, not only through the mimetic and allegorical

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relation as such, but also through the direct relation of familiarity and plausibility that exists between what is narrated and everyday experience.”

The fourth character of the *Colonel*—representing the overarching military and its power over the country—is depicted as an overweight man (showing prosperity and affluence), dressed in a green uniform, and adorned with several military insignias, symbolizing strength and dominance. On his jacket are scull shaped buttons that denote responsibility for deaths and/or assassinations (although, like the bow-tie, the skull buttons are never commented on). When represented next to the president, the character of the *Colonel* is always centralized within the strip, and depicted as especially big in comparison with the character of the president, showing the power struggle at play in politics between the military and president elect. The reification of military power within these representations illustrates the centrality of the war of independence within political hegemonies and in the social imaginary.

As seen in this 1999 caricature of Dilem (above) entitled “Boutef addresses the people,” we can see the structural hierarchies drawn between the military, the president and the people. Although it is the president that is going to address the people, the image centers on a framed picture of the

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Colonel, drawn on top of the podium. The character of president Bouteflika is peripheral to the image, and appears to be trying to get the population’s attention by singing “here the people, here…Nice people” as though he was calling, and trying to appease, an animal. To draw its attention, he holds an animal bowl in which is written “People.” Here, Dilem’s representations and innuendos seem to work at several levels. Firstly, the caricaturist shows that although Bouteflika wears “the crown” of the president, the power truly lies between the hands of the overarching military, represented in the image of the Colonel. Also, because the image centers on the photograph, it appears as though the people also know where the power of the military, and tend to look at it when they are being addressed. Finally, in order to deflect the attention away from the photograph and to himself, Bouteflika offers a nominal offering of food to the people, which is literally insulting and insignificant given the fact that it is given in an animal bowl. By offering the people food, he wants to prove that he is the one who really is in power. In this image, the power of the militarized political class is reified by ridiculing the president.

In his analysis of political cartoons in Cameroon, Mbembe maintains that the effectiveness of political comic strips is less productive as a form of resistance. He argues that the very act of making the autocrat visible in cartoons, in fact, reproduces their power. Similarly, although the Colonel and President Bouteflika are both demystified and humanized by being ridiculed and parodied in the above caricatures, their power within society is reproduced, and reified. These constructions of power cannot be analyzed without considering the underlying histories which provided the conditions through which their power—through articulations of the war of independence—were constructed as legitimate. As discussed in Chapter 1, the “Founding Fathers” of the war are constructed in the national imaginary through a narrative of militant

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masculinities and militarization. In order for this power to linger, the glorification of the war of independence has had to remain a continuous symbol of authority and control, and central to constructions of nationhood.

On December 31st, 2012 a strip entitled “Algerians get ready to celebrate a New Year” (above) was published in El Watan. In this cartoon strip, Dilem depicts an Algerian man, angrily ripping the pages of a calendar, while behind him lay a pile of pages from this same calendar, all reading the same date: 1962. Here, the character depicted by Dilem represents the ordinary Algerian man, wearing a fez-hat, and clothes to the colors of the Algerian flag: white, green and red. His anger and frustration at trying to turn the page past the country’s independence, 1962—here in fact violently ripping off—reveals the social desire for renewal and change. While political power remains between the hands of a military class that monopolizes presidential seats and the parliament, the population is depicted to be ready for the construction of a new subjecthood. Political satire can therefore be seen as a space of resistance that both opposes
and reifies powers at play in Algerian society. By demystifying politicians and military officers at the head of the country through derision and mockery, they humanize a power that can therefore be impeached. When the mystical is humanized, than it can be an equal, and its power can therefore be shattered. Similarly, political satire politicizes a reader that has tirelessly been disconnected from any political conversation, as seen through political corruption and voting fraud, and gives those subjects a powerful coping mechanism and politics enacted through reading practices and humour.

4.1.3 Mediating Culture and Statistics: The Normalization of Domestic Violence

Looking at newspaper articles of the last few years and the statistics provided by their studies, the condition of women in Algeria is alarming. The violence is everywhere: it is in the streets, at school, in universities, at work, and in the home; it takes all shapes, it is physical, psychological, sexual and institutional; it touches all women: they are mothers, wives, sisters, daughters; moreover, violence can strike at them anytime. These messages transmitted by the media produce an essentialized image of women, characterized as perpetual sufferers, who must be ready to be victimized at any time, in any place, and by anyone. Men, on the other hand, who are represented by an overarching masculine villain, are often rendered invisible. While studies generally calculate specific details about the social background, education, age, and status of women, they dismiss the statistics relating to the men who commit the violence. As well, when asking the central question about the rise of violence in Algeria, according to Mouffok, studies rarely ask if violence is on the rise across the board for men, women and children, or if it this increased

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violence is measured exclusively through women’s (reported) experiences. The act of violence is disconnected from the greater social and cultural structures that create, accept and perpetuate it. To illustrate my argument I would like to analyze four newspaper articles published in 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2005, which discuss the constructed condition of women in Algerian society. Chosen at about a five year interval, the chronology used in this selection will illustrate the similitude and differences in discourses before, during and after the décennie noire. In this analysis, I will map the hierarchization of information provided by the authors, the images chosen to accompany the article, and finally the methodologies of data collection used to analyze these conditions.

The first article is titled “Battered Women: The great solitude” (with the second part of the title in bold letters), which was published in the newspaper El Moudjahid on July 2nd, 1991. At first sight, the reader is attracted by a large black and white photograph at the centre of the page: the photograph represents what is assumed to be two women, lying down side by side in a hospital room. Next to each woman, we can see oxygen tubes and an IV stand. Their faces are hidden from the gaze of the reader, and while we can almost discern the face of one of them, it is darkened by the shadows of the photograph. The article, on the other hand, starts with a bolded quote from a survivor: “... he struck me such as a monster, kicking, punching, and threatening me with a knife. He has always hit me. He is a man who gets drunk, and does drugs.” The article then goes on to describe the socioeconomic, personal and medical reasons for violence commonly found by Dr. Boudriés, working at an unnamed hospital. The motives provided by the doctor include the cohabitation of large families in often precarious conditions or the distribution of household duties, and while these are only some of the reasons, argues the journalist, “this

194 Mouffock, Ghania. « Violences et images de femmes dans la presse écrite algérienne ». Revue NAQD (Fall/Winter 2006) : 97.
voluntary violence, is but almost accidental. Inebriated, the husband hits his wife and kids because he wants the chase out his wife, or tries to get her consent to bring a second wife. He also forbids her from working or going out.” Moreover, medical reasons are added such as “psychological pathologies,” diabetes, impotence and menopause “which is often misunderstood by the men” according to the author. The article continues by stating some alarming statistics published between 1989 and 1990 by the Service of Legal Medicine (at an unknown hospital) by Pr. Mehdi, stating that in 75% of cases, the violence is committed by the husband, or other family members and 16% are committed in the public sphere. After quoting more numbers from the study, which describe weapons used, most common injuries, and the organs most often affected, the journalist continues by quoting stories of interviewed women met at the said hospital. Some of the women are as young as 21 years of age, while others, described as “old women,” are in their sixties. All of them, concludes the article, seem to be victims of their husbands, or sons’ violence.

The disconnected ideas and sentences found at work in this article layer a popular discourse and a hierarchy of information worth noting. First, the author starts with a quote from a victim, and although she is neither named nor described, we are forewarned of the aggressor’s condition. He is “a drunk, who uses drugs.” Because alcohol and drugs are frowned upon in Algerian society, this man is within the first lines of the article, already cast as an outsider, and an exception to the norm. His violence is assumed not to be symptomatic of an individual or social problem, but rather because of the illicit substances he consumes. Secondly, the motives for violence seem to all be linked to socioeconomic and precarious living situations or physical and psychological conditions, but they are never represented as an individual problem, for which the perpetrator is accountable and/or responsible for. In fact, this happens at several instances throughout the article where the author notes that his “voluntary violence is but almost
accidental,” and linked to medical conditions and his misunderstanding of menopause for example. In the interviews mentioned in the article, it is his mother who motivates his violence. Indeed, in an interview of a young 25 year old woman, the author notes that her particular situation occurred because, “in accordance with the commands of his domineering mother, who refuses at all cost his independence, and manipulates him her own way,” the husband became violent, while another adds “his mother is jealous of me, and pushes him to violence.”

Furthermore, we can observe that the “lack of education and ignorance of the law” are two reoccurring themes throughout the article of all women described. Because they are uneducated, and unaware of their rights, women are more prone, according to the author, to violence from their family members, and even strangers on the street.

Finally, I would like to note the disconnection between the picture chosen to accompany the article, and the subject of the article itself. Although the picture is familiar and portrays an environment that one may have visited or experienced, it is irrelevant to the theme of the article. In fact, even the secondary title “the great solitude” written in bold characters is not addressed, as none of the conditions that do, in fact, leave these women in a state of solitude from their families, institutions and society are discussed. By evoking domestic violence as a women’s problem, which they both cause and are victims of, this article perpetuates social constructions found at work in Algerian culture. The husband, father, son or brother are not violent, they are merely pushed to violence by the conditions they find themselves in. These conditions, being economic, medical, or social (as other women push them to be violent) are the real reasons behind violence, and they are therefore not responsible, nor accountable. Similarly, although women are central to this article, they are simultaneously rendered invisible, as they only exist within a narrative of victimhood and inevitability.

The second article, published in the newspaper *El Watan* in December, 1996, offers a different perspective on violence. Titled “Violence against women: Fear, suffering and... disillusion,” the article was published following a symposium organized by the Algiers based Legal and Psychological Call Centre for Women in Difficulty (CEJP), whose statistics the authors use as source for their article.197 Central to the page is a black and white picture of a man photographed from the side, raising his hand against (what appears to be) a woman, crouched in a near foetal position, her long black hair covering her face and neck. At the bottom of the picture, we can read: “When dealing with abuse, the reaction of women will differ from one setting to the other.” The article starts by stating, in bold letters, that: “There are hundreds of women to be beaten by a spouse, a family member, or even by an acquaintance. There are just as many who have been sequestered, repudiated, raped... and to make matters worse, many of them are unaware of their rights.” The special report goes on to quote the research provided by a call centre that had received nearly 280 calls per month in 1996. While the authors state that callers solicit assistance in cases of verbal and physical violence, sexual abuse, harassment, or even in cases of incest and repudiation, they suddenly pause to ask: “why does violence become a resort against women?” The only plausible answer, argues the author is “a lack of communication, and is a surprising situation that even occurs in lawful relationships sanctified by religion.” Even the women who call the centre, report the authors, “confess” that they suffer primarily from “the lack of understanding of their partner.” Before starting to cite particular cases with first names of victims, their age and legal status, it is admitted that their silence and lack of access to legal recourse is due to the cultural constraints found at work in “social taboos and religion, which allows the spouse to impose a mild punishment to his wife,” add the authors. The consequences of

197 Nabila Amir et Nahla Rif. « Violences contre les femmes: Peur, souffrances et...désillusion ». *El Watan*, (December 14th, 1996): 15
violence will differ from one case to another, attest the authors. They continue to explain that some women, although rarely, will try to leave their husbands and that others will stay because of their children. The article ends with the observation that women must navigate their condition half way between religion, culture and the “general disorientation of society today,” and that by instinct, “we just try to survive.”

Here, the image of the woman as a perpetual victim is perpetuated and reified. Although the conditions presented may be different from one person to the other, pursuing legal action against the abuser is not presented as a valid solution for any of the women. Furthermore, as in the first article, violence is linked to a lack of communication and misunderstanding between the woman and her aggressor, while her lack of education, ignorance of the law and social class, bind her to her husbands. The authors in fact note that out of the 280 calls received only a few women would leave their husbands as a result. The lack of legal pursuits or the reasons why women choose to stay are not contextualized within a social or legal framework, however. Firstly, according to Article 48 of the Family Code “divorce is the dissolution of marriage. It arises from the will of the husband or at the wife’s request.” While a man only needs the desire to get a divorce, it is made most difficult for women to request one, as they have to attest to at least one of the following points. First, according to Article 53, the wife is only allowed to ask for a divorce in particular conditions, including “if the husband is handicapped and his condition hinders the realization of the purpose of marriage; if the he refuses to cohabit with his wife for more than four months; or if he was convicted of an immoral crime, and is imprisoned for a time exceeding one.” These reasons are both difficult and humiliating to prove in court, especially when talking about the husband’s impotence. The woman needs to either provide an official statement

from a doctor, or have at least two witnesses that can attest to the husband’s inability to realize “the purpose of marriage.” Secondly, under Article 52 of the Family Code, in divorces where there is only one residence, the apartment or house goes automatically to the husband, while the woman is given custody of the children. Given many people’s economic dependence on at least two salaries, and the terrible housing crisis, women are left with very few options. They and their children can either be taken to live with a guardian who can host or support them (parent, brother, uncle), or they can be pushed to live in the streets. One of the only options a woman has to acquire a divorce without going through legal procedures is the *El Khal’*, which consists paying her dowry back, and *officially* renouncing her marriage. These laws and socioeconomic conditions make it extremely hard for women to leave their abusive husbands, and they are left with little to no legal protection. Therefore, while the article analyzed above offers some important ideas—statistics—about domestic violence, it does not elucidate the social, cultural, economic and legal frameworks that govern women’s options of divorce. And while it talks about some of the alternatives for married women, it does not discuss the alternatives for other women who are victims of violence in the domestic sphere when they are abused by their fathers or brothers. And that this article was published in 1996 is also significant—this was during the period of the civil war, when violence against women occurring in the street, mass rapes were taking place, as well as abuses within the home. The article does not and cannot attend to the systemic and differentiated gender violence that is occurring across scales—it can, for the most part, only situate violence against women within the context of marriage.

The third article I would like to examine was published in the newspaper *El Watan* on August 12th, 2001. Titled “Violence against women: Alarming Data,” the article focuses on figures collected by the University Hospital of Oran from February 2000 to February 2001, where
over 33,600 cases of violence were analyzed. Under the title, inscribed in bold letters, a small paragraph in italics states: “A prospective study by professors at the University Hospital of Oran state that an average of one woman every 12 minutes is assaulted in the wilaya (department) of Oran.” Under this quote, and encircled by the article is the same black and white photograph—of a man raising his hand against what appears to be a woman, crouched in a near foetal position—found in the aforementioned 1996 article, as well as the 2005 article that I will analyze below. At the bottom of the article, we can read two disconnected facts “55% of women assaulted have children, and 77% are residents of the city of Oran.” The article goes on to give the reader a list of statistics provided by the study that describe the profile of the women who often fall prey to violence, their age, legal status (single, married, divorced, separated), their education, as well as the location of the assault, and the types of weapons used against them. Notably, the article states that: “The ideal victim is between 15 and 40 years of age, single, and without any educational capital. We note that women over the age of sixty do not escape the beating of their husband or other relative. But it is the ones who are in their 30s, with a rate of 47%, that constitute the largest battalion of victims.” The authors add that the types of violence include “70% contusions, 20% open wounds, and 3% rapes, while 94% are aggressors they know, with at least 30% of which are the husband and 26% a neighbour.” Although the numbers provided by this study are disconnected and the methodology questionable, the most shocking part of the article is the close scrutiny of the researchers to the physical appearance of the women coming to the hospital for medical attention. Indeed, the author announces that, “the study points out that 95% of the women assaulted who go to their medical appointment at the hospital pay no attention to their looks. Only about 3% put on make-up and dress suitably. Even worse, 50% of the victims show a depressive state.” Finally, the article ends with the profile of the aggressor, which it maintains, has the same
background as the victims (education, social background, class), and counts 60% of children as aggressors.

This article is highly problematic at several levels. Firstly, the language used throughout the article is highly colloquial, and diminishes the gravity of the subject at hand, drawing violence as trivial, and frivolous. While speaking about violence against elderly women for example, the author uses the idiomatic term “bastonade,” which literally means “beating with a stick” and colloquially refers to “a fight between young men in the street.” This term is highly derogatory for a person who has been a victim or is a survivor of abuse and violence. Furthermore, when discussing the women who had come to the hospital to seek medical attention after being assaulted, the author talks about “the profile of the ideal victim of an attack.” More than just the problematic language used here, the article fails to mention that men, women and children can be victims of an attack no matter what their social, educational, or cultural background is, and that one cannot be profiled into an ideal victim status. Another key point is that only the victims are profiled through very invasive details including their age, education, and background as well as the types of injury they sustain and weapons used against them. In contrast, very little is said about the aggressor. The statistics provided only state that 75% of the attackers are men and 25% are women, and that 30% are the victim’s husbands, and 3% are their fathers. Later in the article, one disconnected sentence declares that 60% of attackers are children. Here, the results remain unquestioned vis-à-vis the previous information provided, and the reader is left speculating the meanings of these statistics. Finally, like in previous articles, none of the studies provided explain the methodology that was used by the researchers, nor do they provide how violence is defined within the research any guidance on how to read the information provided.

The fourth article, published in the newspaper El Watan on February 22nd, 2005, offers a more nuanced perspective, and a more thorough analysis of violence against women in
comparison with previously analyzed articles. Titled “Violence against women, a disturbing phenomenon: The brutality behind closed doors,” the article stems from a national study published March 8th, 2004 (on International Women’s Day), and piloted by the National Institute of Public Health (INSP). The report which collected data throughout the 48 wilayas (departments) of the country used three main axes to its study which include medical and legal (police) admissions, and calls to local call-centres, bringing focus on women victims of all types violence, and mapping strategies for action and prevention. Through a 9033 women sample, the study suggests that over 50% of attacks occur inside the house and touch, predominantly, women between 15 and 44 years of age. While descendants are the main assailants against women older than 55, brothers comprise of one-tenth of attackers of single women. The results also revealed “that in most cases, the physical abuse consists mainly of physical injuries, while psychological violence only represents a twentieth of all cases. The same percentage appears for sexual assault cases, where rape represents more than half of these cases.” The article goes on to explain that a majority of women are educated, half of which went to at least high school, over 31.1% are university-educated, and 19% works outside the home. The author puts forth that these numbers show that women with a certain level of education and financial independence are more likely to declare the assault, which also suggests that statistics about the greater population are still understudied. Interestingly, the article also adds that out of 2130 cases brought to justice, 72.5% were qualified as misdemeanour, and only 5.2% were qualified as criminal. The article concludes that although psychological violence only represents a small number of reported cases (less than 10%), the numbers reveal the greater problem of detecting or diagnosing psychological violence, rather than cases themselves. Furthermore, the article raises awareness about the lack of legal,

medical and psychological support and management of women victims of violence. In contrast to the previous articles, the author offers an interesting analysis of the INSP study, and provides the reader with the tools to understand this data. Furthermore, instead of simply presenting statistics of violence, the author tries to put forward concrete ways for change, including change of specific laws, better legal and psychological assistance and greater involvement from the government to support the work of non profit organizations. Prevention, she adds, is the key aspect of the study’s recommendations, which could be conveyed through education and awareness campaigns “so that victims do not accept this violence as granted, or assume that there are recourses for them. This work should also involve the society as a whole. Revisions of legislations such as the Family Code that promote violence through discriminatory articles must be abrogated.”

In analyzing these four articles from 1991 to 2005, we can see that the narrative around violence against women has generally been the same. Whilst the goal of the journalists might have been to raise awareness about the subject, they often portray a grim past, present, and future for women. As stated in the introduction, violence is portrayed as being everywhere, and can occur at anytime and by anyone, and besides, according to some of these articles, these women can even be attacked by other women, or their own children. As perpetual victims with little to no outlet they are rendered agentless, invisible, and unable to act, with a near assumption that their condition is immutable, and should therefore be accepted. In starting this analysis chronologically, I expected to see a progression in narrative: while essentialist rhetoric was expected in the early 1990s, I was hoping to see a more pragmatic development in the later years. However, I realized that in addition to the publication year of the article and its sociohistorical contexts, the choice of journalist writing the article is also important. After further research, I realized that Djamila Kourta, author of the last article (2005), is a long time member of the Algerian feminist movement and an accomplished journalist who has been writing on the subject.
since the 1980s, which would explain her more nuanced analysis of the research provided by the INSP. One might also ask how the ongoing media restrictions shape what can be offered, via the media, in terms of violence against women: are these essentialist narratives shaped by what journalists and editors can, in fact, safely publish about masculinity, religion, marriage, sex, violence, and gender? In what ways are the victimized woman and blameless patriarch recirculating familiar gendered narratives: narratives that emerge from real experiences, statistics, political structures, rumours, legal scripts, and the impermissibility of telling stories about gendered violence? How does one tell these stories publicly?

While Algeria experienced a liberalization and privatization of its media fields in the 1990s, restrictive laws and policies that govern its rhetoric still mainly control these narratives. The “founding fathers” creation myth, which informs the post-independence political hierarchies and patriarchal-military structures, remain important systems that need to be persistently discussed and challenged. While journalists do find ways to navigate the laws that surround freedom of speech, they often have to pay at their own cost, raging from monetary fines and imprisonment to death. Through humour, caricaturists question the powers at play, and through mockery and satire, humanize and demystify politicians, military officers and society at large. The reader, when given the tools, becomes an active participant in taking back its power within a political sphere it was previously alienated from. Comparatively, journalistic characterizations of violence against women remain essentialist and locate women as perpetual agentless victims, potentially and experientially violable by any man (fathers, brothers, sons, and especially husbands). The hierarchy of information provided by the authors of the different articles has shown us that although all men are cast under an overarching villain epitome, the responsibility for violence is rarely put on them. The causes for violence against women are primarily linked to alcohol and drug consumption, the victim’s poverty, lack of education, living conditions, medical
problems, or encouraged by other women. As media discourses shape public perception on many social and cultural issues, it must remain cautious of the ways in which it presents its information, and the consequences it might have on the general population. At the same time, readers must engage with these narratives not as truths, but as windows into larger structural gender scripts—which, as I show above, perhaps colour and impact upon the narratives and their attendant glimpses of resistance and practical resistance.
Conclusion

“If the mirror does attest to a real presence that is, at the same time, an untenable figure, this mirror cannot tell us what participates in the figure’s background, foreground, and perspectives—in what we might call its “magma” that is, its volume, content, and flesh (…) As such, what might be called its immediate being-in-the-world does not necessarily coincide with what the mirror shows.”

—Achille Mbembe

As attested by Achille Mbembe in this quote, it is hard to understand the context(s) of an image reflected of/by a continent or a country, without taking into consideration the processes that have participated to create the figure’s background, foreground and perspectives. Throughout my thesis, I have attempted to elucidate the different perspectives of Algerian society, by analyzing the ways in which specific expressions of gendered violence have reified patriarchal powers, as well as connected the social and historical conditions that naturalized them.

Patriarchal conditioning—and by extension gendered hierarchies—can be located in three main overlapping themes: political structure, legal frameworks and ideology. Their amalgamation was enacted and deployed in Algeria at various stages since the country’s independence. Initiated through the systematization of male kinship in political spheres, patriarchal power was articulated in the symbolic glorification of militarized masculinities, which legitimized the succession of FLN, ALN members, and military officers at the head of the country. In view of the fact that only

specific masculinities were considered legitimate to holding power, many, including women, were erased from political systems. Secondly, gendered hierarchies were institutionalized through family laws, by erasing women’s subjecthood, and categorizing violence committed against them—such as rape and sexual harassment—under “Crimes against the Family and Morality”. In other words, these crimes are not punishable because they were perpetrated against the person, but rather because they were an affront to the honour of the family (and more importantly to its patriarch). Similar discourses found in the Family Code also legalized domestic violence, making it acceptable to assault the wife, daughter or sister in cases where the ITT (Total Incapacity of Work Certificate) is lower than 10 days, and thus perpetuating the idea that violence is relatively acceptable, depending on how physically affected the victim is. To this, we can add the perpetuation of cultural, social and religious narratives in media that reified essentialist constructions of femininity and masculinity through images of victimized, uneducated and poor women, and blameless and violent men. A combination of these laws and their systemization across various social, political, and legal strata have therefore established women as what Algerian feminists have called “non-citizens.”

Finally, violence as a weapon of war was deployed against women during the civil war as a means of humiliation and dishonour against not only the person, but the family and community at large. The dynamics of rape in particular, and the symbolic significance of women’s body, its exploitation and explicit violence were employed to discipline, terrorize and reaffirm patriarchal domination. Women—whose bodies were explicitly surveilled during the décennie noire—were targeted in exceptionally violent ways, precisely because of what they represented in society. It is in women that the honour of the family, and the community at large, rests. Honour, confusions of victimization, and social death all came to haunt women in/of the Algerian civil war. Inherent connections therefore exist between patriarchal conditioning, the erasure of women’s
subjecthood, and the normalization of violence. Cumulatively, they created the social and cultural environments that allow violence against women to be condoned in public and private spheres. As Algerian society is organized in such a way that it reproduces familial hierarchies and relations, it is reasonable to expect that similar productions will be replicated at a greater scale. In other words, if violence within the family is normalized, it is bound to also be reproduced within society.

These processes however have not been monolithic. Resistance and contestation movements have continually challenged the status quo. Feminist and human rights activists continue to fight state-laws and policies such as the Family Code and the National Concord and demand recognition, justice and reparation. Today, despite the social contradictions and laws maintained in the Family Code, women have acquired significant presence within Algerian society. They represent more than 60% of graduates in universities; they are a majority in fields of education, administration and health, and constitute 40% of lawyers, 30% of judges, and less than 7.5% of the National Assembly. With this, I believe that women’s citizenship needs to be more than just a status, but rather a practice that recognizes them as whole subjects within social and political systems. Henceforth, a complete abrogation of the Family Code is indispensable, as well as the constitutional guarantee that citizens must remain equal before the law no matter their gender, race, or class. Finally, crimes such as sexual harassment, rape, incest, domestic and conjugal violence must be recognized as crimes against the person, and entered as such in the Penal Code.

Works Cited


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