Re-inscribing the Body: a Study of Leïla Marouane's *Le Châtiment des hypocrites*[1]

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The writings of philosophers Michel de Certeau and Michel Foucault from the 1970s and 1980s focus on the relationship between the human body and national objectives and the human body as a tool to be manipulated for specific ends by dominant forces, such as the war machine. Certeau's idea of "laws written on bodies" dates back to twenty years ago. In *Arts de faire: L'invention du quotidien* (1980), or *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988), he discusses one's relationship to society from the perspective of shaping the body (Certeau 1988, 138).[2]

Certeau states that the printing of material in books designed to change one's thinking during the Age of Enlightenment became "violence" as it replaced superstitious irrationality with "science and politics." He then likens the text to be inscribed, the tools with which to write, and the material on which to pen one's ideas to the shaping or definition of the human body through the laws of "social discourse." In making this comparison, Certeau indicates that books and bodies are both "textual" sites. He further asserts that the written text provides a buffer zone between the lived event and its retelling, and that the retelling is a means for resisting further control and transformation. Ultimately, Certeau explains the individual's need to become a "signifier" of social law, well aware of his or her own identity, with only a cry of pleasure or pain within the body that can escape the "law of the named" (Certeau 1988, 144-45, 149).

On the other hand, Foucault explores the concept of "docile bodies" in his book, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1979).[3] For Foucault, "A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved," and the methods that "meticulously control" its movements are called "disciplines." The aim of "disciplines" is to make the body more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely, to make the body more useful as it becomes more obedient (Foucault 1979, 136-38). Unlike Certeau, Foucault does not question the feelings of the individual involved in such a hierarchical power apparatus. He describes "docile bodies" while elaborating the history of the French penal system, but his concept may be applied to the control of the human body in any sociopolitical institution (Foucault 1979, 303, 306).

These ideas found fertile ground once again at the end of the twentieth century, when the magnitude of ethnic cleansings, civil wars, refugee displacements, and religious fundamentalist acts of terror caused people to reconsider how weak governments could dangerously permit special interest groups to "work over" their citizens. In Algeria, for example, the presidential elections of 1992 were canceled because the *Front Islamique de salut* or Islamic Salvation Front Party (FIS), a religious fundamentalist party, was going to win across the board. The army stepped in to maintain order; Lamine Zeroual, a former military general, was elected President in 1994. Since Zeroual was a weak leader, the FIS was able to splinter into Armed Islamist Groups intent on maiming and killing unveiled women and others who did not support their ultra-conservative religious rhetoric (Messaoudi 1998, 153, 160). During the 1990s, violent religious extremists traumatized Algeria.

The devaluation of Algerian women is nothing new, however. Throughout history, their contributions and traumatic experiences have been repeatedly discounted or even omitted from official records. Women writers, including Danielle Amrane-Minne, Malika Mokeddem, and Assia Djebar have thus taken up the pen to set the record straight, often speaking autobiographically.[4] Leïla Marouane, or Leyla Mechentel (Geesey 1998, 8), also belongs to this group of politically motivated authors. Her fiction indicates a preoccupation with Algerian women's trauma under religious fundamentalism. As an expatriate international journalist turned writer living in France, Marouane has written a collection of short stories[5] and four novels concerning the plight of young *Algériennes* (Algerian women) during the civil unrest of the 1990s, each cast from a different perspective. *La Fille de la Casbah* [Daughter from the Casbah] (1996) focuses on the life of a young woman of Algiers who refuses an arranged marriage in order to claim her independence. The novel elaborates the consequences of Hadda's new-found freedoms, especially sexual freedom. *Ravisseur* [The Abductor] (1998) depicts the effects of a Muslim daughter's abduction by Islamic extremists and subsequent return on her entire family (Geesey 1998, 8-9). Her fourth novel, *La Jeune Fille et la mère* [The Girl and her Mother] (2005), presents a mother-daughter conflict: the mother, whose dreams of a higher education were nullified following the Algerian War, cannot understand why her teenage daughter rejects the idea of succeeding at school.

Marouane's third novel, *Le Châtiment des hypocrites* [The Hypocrites' Punishment] (2001), the subject of this study, describes the consequences of a solitary young Algerian woman's abduction and rape at the hands of armed Islamists during the 1990s. In telling Fatima Kosra's story, *Le Châtiment des hypocrites* exemplifies Foucault's notion of "docile bodies" and Certeau's concept of "laws written on bodies" as the protagonist explores her identity while seeking to become a "signifier" of social discourse as a married woman (Certeau 1988, 145). Theories on post-traumatic stress disorder as a factor in the disintegration of the self leading from sanity to madness will also bolster my analysis.

The protagonist of *Le Châtiment des hypocrites*, Fatima Kosra, is the site of conflicting ideologies. Her desire to assert her individuality contrasts with the lessons about the correct behavior for women that she has heard since childhood; moreover, it

clashes with the objectives of Algerian religious fundamentalism keen on delegating women to the private sphere. En route to work, she contemplates the best road for remaining inconspicuous because she is an unveiled 33-year-old Muslim woman driving alone. Fatima demonstrates the subliminal effects of conservative Muslim law or *shari'a*: although she has been taught that a woman should dress modestly, she pursues her independence while sensing physically how exposed her body is in Western-style dress. In her reflections, she considers herself "à visage et mollets découverts" (Marouane 2001, 13) (with her face and calves uncovered)"[6]. Her preoccupation suggests an awareness of the armed Muslim fundamentalist groups in 1990s Algeria that killed hundreds of unveiled women in order to make the point that the latter should dress in *tchador* and *hidjab*[7] when on the street and be accompanied by a male escort (Messaoudi 1998, 155-56). In short, religious fanatics violently inscribed their message about segregating the sexes using women's bodies as text.

Certeau's writing on "textual bodies" has relevance at this point. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, he says the following:

> There is no law that is not inscribed on bodies. . . From birth to mourning after death, law "takes hold of" bodies in order to make them its text. Through all sorts of initiations (in rituals, at school, etc.), it transforms them into tables of the law, into living tableaux of rules and customs, into actors in the drama organized by a social order. (Certeau 1988, 139)

Fatima's self-consciousness concerning her unveiled body and her daily search for a less visible route demonstrate that the unwritten laws of *shari'a* as well as those of the ultraconservative Islamists, namely that a single woman should be veiled and escorted when in public, influence her actions. In Certalian terms, the traditional order and ultraconservatism have been "intextuated" on Fatima's body (Certeau 1988, 140). This accounts for her nervousness while driving alone with neither *hidjab* nor chaperone. Behind her defiance of the Islamist code of behavior for single women is the realization that "clothes themselves can be regarded as instruments through which a social law [or ultraconservative religious practice, my addition] maintains its hold on bodies and its members" (Certeau 1988, 147).

When faced with her abductors, Fatima's brain refuses to direct her actions. She thinks immediately of the traditional teachings passed down by one generation of women to the next. These conventions, another set of "intextuated" practices (Certeau 1988, 148), tell Fatima to assume a modest, even supplicating posture. She must kneel, keep her eyes downcast, and implore the abductors to be merciful, since she is a fellow believer in Islam. However, the hypocrisy of her non-traditional dress prevents her from performing these gestures. As she is taken away to become her captors' so-called "nurse" in charge of bandaging the Islamists' wounds in the name of Allah (Maroune 2001, 24), Fatima loses all control of her body: her bladder and sphincter fail just before she vomits. Her reactions demonstrate that she physically rejects becoming her abductors' sex slave, by which her body will no longer belong to her, a fate that befell more than 3,000 women between 1994 and 1999, according to the Algerian Ministry of the Interior ("Maghrébines"1999, 17).[8] In this instance, two discourses confront each other: the Islamists' program of acquiring sexual pleasure with impunity while instilling fear and obedience in the population overpowers Fatima's deep-rooted understanding that she must remain a virgin until her wedding day.

Upon Fatima's release from captivity, her body bears the signs of extremist Islamic law: she has been burned, mutilated (a toe is missing from her right foot), raped, and impregnated. Moreover, she has panic attacks and an ulcer from continuous stress. Fatima, caught off guard physically at the time of her abduction, feels even more estranged from her body. She finds refuge in an overcrowded private clinic set up in the outskirts of Algiers by the government to accommodate traumatized women. There she awaits the birth of her child:

> Elle y vécut [. . .] évitant la lumière du jour et les femmes en gésine, attendant sa propre délivrance, dulcifiant ses brûlures, ingurgitant des narcotiques, couvant sa rage, ne songeant pas un instant à se montrer au reste du monde (Marouane 2001, 27)
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> [She lived there. . . avoiding daylight and the women in labor, awaiting her own deliverance, tending to her burns, ingurgitating her narcotics, nurturing her rage, not dreaming an instant of showing herself to the rest of the world.]

The above passage, through its use of the term "délivrance" (deliverance, delivery) to indicate the protagonist's great suffering as well as the future delivery of her child, emphasizes Fatima's dissociation from her body's internal changes. Although she attends to her burns, she expresses no real interest in the baby that she carries. Instead, she passes her time in brooding about her rage rather than in thinking about her own and her unborn child's physical well being. To avoid facing the wrath of her family, who would consider the loss of her virginity a great dishonor regardless of the cause, Fatima has chosen to prolong her eighteen-month disappearance. The unspoken message in the above quotation is the protagonist's realization, once again, of the discursive differences between her own and society's values: despite the horrific experiences and scars that she has suffered during her one and a half year absence as well as her need for comfort, her family's behavioral expectations of her have not altered. Her stay in an out of the way government clinic, her prescriptions for medications easing her need to discuss her violent experiences, and her family's lack of effort to find her for eighteen months indicate to Fatima that her story must remain silenced.

Fatima epitomizes the trauma survivor, in the historical sense of the word "trauma." Etymologically, the word comes from the Greek *trauma,* meaning a wound suffered by the body. With Freud's writings at the beginning of the twentieth century, the term's definition expanded to include the idea of violence inflicted on the mind, too.[9] The psyche's upset, however, does not become assimilated right away with the bodily wounding, as the unexpectedness of the traumatic event causes it to be experienced outside

of reality. Only through repeated appearances in nightmares and flashbacks can the psychic wound call attention to its presence (Caruth 1996, 3-4). In Fatima's case, her period as a sex slave becomes the subject of "le plus anxiogène de ses rêves" (Marouane 2001, 39) (the most anxiety-provoking of her dreams). She witnesses realistic, oneiric images of herself publicly enjoying a drink alone under appreciative glances from the male clientele in a bar; this pleasant scene quickly degenerates into the bloody, orgiastic mass rape of many virgins including herself by the men around her who have been transformed into Islamic terrorists. In her nightmares, Fatima is fixated on the moment when she might have escaped from her abductors and thus avoided the major upheaval in her previously uneventful life.

At this point, Fatima typifies the mental configuration of the "anomic self," the result of severe trauma: she is detached, defiant of social norms, distrustful of others, and subject to depression and anxiety (Wilson 2004, 123). Additionally, she harbors an overwhelming rage against her life circumstances. Rage may be aggravated by a specialist's indifference towards the survivor of trauma (Van der Veer and Van Waning 2004, 207-08). We can infer that Fatima does not receive the psychotherapy that she needs, since there were so few federally-funded clinics in Algeria during the time of her confinement.[10] One reason for the government's dragging its feet in the building of health facilities for its terrorized female citizens is that abortion, condemned by the Algerian Constitution of 1966 (Roudy 2002, 3), was re-condemned by the Religious High Council of the 1990s. Medical personnel feared becoming the target of the religious fundamentalists' wrath by conducting illicit medical procedures, so finding a doctor to conduct an abortion was a difficult proposition. Abortion remains illegal in Algeria to this day, except in cases in which the mother's life is in danger ("Maghrébines" 1999, 12).

Fatima's advanced pregnancy at the time of her release from captivity precludes any possibility of abortion, however. The fact that her captors let her go rather than murder her places Fatima among the "lucky" women seeking a safe place in which to give birth. Returning to their families for this event remains impossible for the vast majority since pregnancy out of wedlock regardless of circumstances brings shame to one's kinfolk. Many families declared their abducted daughters dead following their disappearance in order to escape the harsh judgment of others in their communities.[11]

In one year's time, Fatima's rehabilitation is deemed a success by the Algerian state. Her body has regained its former shape, her wounds have healed, her daughter is up for adoption, and Fatima is on prescribed medication for stress and depression, in her words, "droguée" (Marouane 2001, 27) (drugged). This brief portion of the novel calls to mind Michel Foucault's concept of "docile bodies", which states that the disciplining of bodies not only sets groups apart, but it also causes the groups to uphold the "tactics" of the larger social order (Foucault 1979, 135-69). In *Le Châtiment des hypocrites*, Fatima's confinement in a remote clinic, followed by her transformation into a medicated young woman supposedly capable of rejoining the world in a productive way, attests to the Algerian government's desire to sweep under the rug the problems concerning the 1990s atrocities towards women, rather than deal openly with misogyny and violence as historically accepted practices.[12]

Protagonist Fatima Kosra is anything but recovered from her ordeal. She is alone and enraged. What occupies her mind exclusively is planning her retaliation for having received no justice after months of captivity as a concubine for armed militants. She wants vengeance for what she has lost: chastity, happiness, the chance for a storybook marriage, her daughter, physical wholeness, and the chance to unburden herself of her story. Bearing the scars of the religious fundamentalists' exploitation of her body, Fatima rewrites this text by turning to prostitution: *she* will choose the men with whom to have sex. Disguised in wig, make-up, and a dark *djelbab* or robe-like garment, Mlle (*Mademoiselle*, or Miss) Kosra is propelled into the night by her heightened senses and her rage "à son apogée" (Marouane 2001, 28) (at its peak). Her nocturnal encounters make her feel alive. Hinting at the pathological nature of these encounters, the narrator has this to say of the protagonist and the men she chooses:

> Différents les uns des autres, elle ne les comptait plus, gloutonne, les excès ne la gavaient pas. Escapade après escapade, son imagination s'enflammait à la recherche de sensations plus abstruses lesunes que les autres (Marouane 2001, 29)
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> [Each man different from the next, she no longer counted them, a glutton, her excesses did not satisfy her hunger (for sex and vengeance). Escapade after escapade, her imagination was fueled by her pursuit of more and more abstruse sensations.]

Psychologically, Fatima's mental equilibrium has snapped. Her ego, designed to curb drives and sexual impulses according to its instinct for self-preservation (Freud 1961, 7) has become dysfunctional because of her protracted traumatic experiences. Instead of keeping mental excitation constant and pleasurable, this impaired psychological mechanism causes Fatima to forfeit the "reality principle," or being grounded in the mundane (Freud 1961, 5); she consequently seeks more and more sensory stimulation with less and less satisfaction as she follows her vengeful impulses.

To sum up, Fatima develops both a tolerance and a taste for sexual gratification; the above adjective "abstruses," [or repulsive, difficult to understand], hints at the perverse nature of her sexual encounters. The fact that Fatima studies the newspaper the day after turning her tricks increases the reader's curiosity. What the reader eventually learns is that Mlle Kosra uses her body as a weapon for revenge against the patriarchal—that is, unchecked Islamist fundamentalist—social order that has failed her. She lures her prospective victims, has sex with them, anesthetizes them, and ultimately castrates them.[13] Afterwards, even the sleazy hotel where she sleeps gives her "des frissons de survie" (Marouane 2001, 34 (shivers of survival)). It is only when she can "write" a fate similar to her own violent rapes and impregnation on the bodies of her male victims via surgical interventions that Fatima overcomes her physical and psychic numbness. Her nocturnal forays, filled with risk and danger, excite her traumatized and shattered ego.

In brief, by castrating unsuspecting strangers after sex, Fatima takes justice into her own hands, thereby redressing her own sexual violation by religious terrorists. In removing some of the organs that classify men as male and virile, she also takes away their social significance as procreator and protector of the opposite sex; for those men inclined to commit violent sex with women, she ensures that the latter will not be made pregnant against their will. She even mocks her victims' social class status as the surgical removal of men's testicles has historical connotations relating to slavery in Algeria: male slaves in the Mediterranean region who were destined to become domestic servants underwent ablation of the testicles and even complete castration so that they could supervise the harems, or women's apartments, without being able to impregnate their masters' wives (Deveau 2002, 3). Because her repressive instinct has broken down, Fatima not only consciously envisions her revenge, but she also follows through on this mental imagery with shivers of enjoyment (Freud 1965, 653-58). In other words, Fatima's daring and vengeful drives have overpowered her conscience where the content of the "*Enseignements*" (Marouane 2001, 48) (traditional teachings) resides. This code of behavior, taught to Muslim girls from childhood on, stands in opposition to Fatima's retaliatory impulses, and loses.

Fatima's outrageous acts find their explanation in psychological research concerning trauma survivors. Individuals experience a bimodal response to extreme trauma such as crime, rape, kidnapping, and natural disasters, according to psychiatrist Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk. Following the traumatic event, hyper-memory, hyper-reactivity and re-experiencing the trauma are paired with psychic numbing consisting of amnesia, avoidance, and anhedonia, or the inability to sense pleasure (Van der Kolk 1994, 2). Other symptoms include irritability, difficulty in concentrating, and "significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning" (First 1994, 210-11). Protagonist Fatima is a case in point. She does not register sexual satisfaction, but her prostitution enables her to relive her trauma with a reversed power dynamic. She decides who her victims will be and destroys their physical and, most likely, mental well-being, through castration.

Fatima's refusal to engage in daytime activities such as working and seeing friends illustrates the avoidance dimension of her life. Her physiological arousal, triggered at night, releases stress hormones that enhance the strength of the memory trace relating to her victimization at the hands of the armed Islamists. She has slipped into "'the Black Hole' in the mental life of the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder patient, "[the psychological space] that attracts all associations to it, and saps current life of its significance" (Van der Kolk 1994, 12).

Obsessed with physical retaliation for her own suffering, Fatima carries a notebook about her sexual conquests. She writes down names, dates, and the amount of money that she appropriated in order to support her aberrant lifestyle. The notebook figures as an extension of Fatima herself: in it, she can record her own feelings of helplessness as a sex slave as well as her power as a sexual predator. As the journal in which Fatima details her behavior, the notebook is both an intimate friend and a means for Fatima to ascribe continuity to her existence. In its latter role, the notebook complements the protagonist's fragmented ego by allowing her to put into words what she has not been able to verbalize in speech. Psychologists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries concur on the benefits of "scriptotherapy" as an adjunct to "talk therapy:" the very ordering of one's ideas on paper can offer a "psychological catharsis"[14] leading to a better balance between thoughts and emotions (Henke 2000, xviii-xiv).

Regarding the relationship between Fatima and her notebook, author Leïla Marouane states that the notebook is the key element around which the plot of *Le Châtiment des hypocrites* turns. She adds that Fatima "y note tous ses faits et gestes comme pour emprisonner une vie et une mémoire quelque peu absurdes . . . Il est fonctionnement lui aussi comme un double. . . C'est l'histoire d'un dédoublement annoncé" (Cheniki 2001, 3) [jots down all her deeds and actions as if to imprison her slightly absurd life and memory. (Her notebook) also functions like a double. . . It's the story of an announced psychological doubling]. Fatima presumes that her secret identity as a criminal prostitute is safe within her notebook's pages.

Fatima's close relationship with her notebook breaks down, however, when her childhood betrothed Rachid Amor reappears in Algiers. Not just the notebook, but Fatima's entire way of life for the past three years as a woman of the night must be hidden at this point. Rachid is eager to marry Fatima without really getting to know her. His actions bespeak the conservative practice of wedding his intended bride, as agreed upon years ago by their mothers. She yearns for intimacy through conversation, whereas he perceives intimacy as merely sexual. On numerous occasions, Fatima wishes to talk to him about significant moments from her earlier life, namely her abandoned car, abduction, and rape; however, Rachid expresses no interest whatsoever in her past. His attitude silences Fatima, just as the Algerian government and her family did during her prolonged disappearance. From Rachid's disinterest in her past, it can be inferred that Fatima, whose emotional need to confess is not being met, most likely harbors rage against him, as she has before with the Islamists and men buying her services as a prostitute.

Psychologists agree that the most significant contributing factors to developing chronic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder are a lack of "talk therapy" (Van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth 1996, 7) and a lack of social support (Van der Kolk 1994, 3). Fatima has had neither meaningful mental health counseling nor familial understanding, yet she makes up her mind to start a new life as Rachid's wife in Paris, France. She does not renounce her idea of one day admitting the truth about her past to her husband: she imagines that "elle se livrerait, s'épancherait, et il la vengerait" (Marouane 2001, 82) [she would deliver herself (from her lies about her past), would confide her secrets, and he (Rachid) would avenge her]. Fatima imagines her admission as the catalyst for concrete changes: she would feel unburdened and express herself freely from then on, and Rachid would retaliate physically against her captors.

The reader applauds the protagonist's efforts to proceed with her refashioned life as a new wife in the French capital all the while doubting that psychologically needy Fatima will be successful. She, on the other hand, is determined to recast herself physically and mentally into the role of Rachid's non-practicing Muslim wife. This will mean putting to rest her previous

existences as Fatima Kosra, working woman, and later, Mlle Kosra, vengeful prostitute, recorded in her notebook, by concealing these other versions of her self completely.

During the first five years of her marriage, Fatima behaves according to the new "script" that she envisions for herself as Mme Amor. She has found a job, she and Rachid are planning to move out of their apartment in his family's hotel, and they have been trying to start a family. The couple appears to have found happiness. Appearances, however, are deceiving: Book Two details the Amor marriage, thereby putting Rachid and Fatima into different contexts. He has become a devout Muslim keen on taking a second wife: this is his right as a husband whose wife has not given him an heir. Consequently, Rachid triggers Fatima's traumatic stress response. As a survivor of sexual abuse who has progressed from an anomic self engaged in criminality to a "wifely" self characterized as fragmented, unbalanced, and legally dependent on her husband, Fatima naturally fears being abandoned (Wilson 2004, 121-22). Ironically, Fatima's married name, "Amor," only approximates the French word for "love," "amour," in both sound and spelling, just as a loving marriage remains an illusion.

Feeling increasingly distant from her husband Rachid, Fatima experiences her husband's violent "love"-making as being raped once again. Her body, a text with its own memory,[15] remembers previous sexual assaults. Nor is she able to maintain a viable pregnancy, which would fulfill her own, and society's expectation that she bear children. In addition, Fatima feels like a non-person because she has no updated papers identifying her as Rachid's wife. This persistent oversight on her husband's part translates as abuse to Fatima, as she re-experiences the depersonalization associated with her captivity as a sex slave. Historically, the armed radicals who abducted women for this purpose dehumanized their victims by calling them the names of objects, such as "twisted spoon" or "rag" (Ben Mansour 2003, 233). Fatima's anxiety over her status as an undocumented foreigner threatens her "security" as Rachid's wife as well as the fantasy of the ideal marriage that she pictures in her mind.

While becoming aware of her crumbling status as wife and would-be mother, Fatima admits to harboring a tumor that castigates her verbally for her would-be wifehood and motherhood. The mass, located where her heart would be, tells her that she is "une intruse, une usurpatrice, une simulatrice, son manque de sincérité ne souffrait aucun doute" (Marouane 2001, 169) [an intruder, a usurper, and a pretender (whose) lack of sincerity proves it]. Fatima's experiences even more intense criticism from her internal voice when she learns that Rachid has disposed wordlessly of her hidden notebook. Now that her journal is gone, she makes up her mind not to become the victim of her own forgetfulness, now that her journal is gone, while her inner voice imparts that forgetfulness is made up of voluntary silences (Marouane 2001, 186-187). Confronted with the antithetical discourses of wanting to be independent and wanting to be a mother, Fatima inflicts her self-hatred onto her body via physical blows until she induces a miscarriage. She laments the absence of the written record [her notebook] of her former life as Mlle Kosra, "qui l'eût aidée à se retrouver" (Marouane 2001, 117) [which might have enabled her "to find herself" again] more than the sudden termination of her pregnancy. This new trauma pushes her fragile ego into escalated madness and criminality, as she rejects the "happy wife and future mother" discourse that has been guiding her life. In psychological terms, Fatima manifests:

> Decreased inhibitory control [that] may occur under a variety of circumstances: under the influence of drugs and alcohol, during sleep (as nightmares), with aging, *and after exposure to strong reminders of the traumatic past* [My emphasis.]. (Van der Kolk 1994, 14)

Because of her husband's interest in a religious life with a new wife, Fatima sees herself as having been nothing more than Rachid's sexual plaything. Depersonalized and lacking a regulatory mechanism for her emotions, Fatima commits a new series of criminal acts. Besides a self-induced miscarriage and the incineration of the fetus, she carries out the anesthetized rape, electrocution, and dismemberment of her husband, Rachid.

What Book Two demonstrates is that Fatima's body, like her mind, has become a site of resistance to further "intextuation" (Certeau 1988, 148). Her multiple unsuccessful attempts at maternity further indicate her inability to become a "unit of signification" (Certeau 1988, 149) as a childbearing wife. By committing double murder, Fatima expunges all traces of her existence as "Mrs. Amor" and prepares to move forward with her life. From this point on, she herself will assign her body its own "text," that of a childless widow, or perhaps a newly pregnant single mother. It is she who will have the last word on the message her body will subsequently convey, not the Islamists, the conservative teachings of the "*Enseignements*" (Marouane 2001, 48), or her own misguided ideas about the perfect marital union. Ironically, Fatima's undocumented civil status further enables her to plan and carry out her new identity. In this instance, Fatima demonstrates the notion that an individual always keeps a portion of her or his selfhood that cannot be named. This core self avoiding "intextuation" (Certeau 1988, 147-148) corresponds to Fatima's unnamed internal voice, in touch with her deepest desire for freedom.

It is through the lens of "rewriting the body" that Fatima's obscene gesture of exposing her breasts in a Paris bar can be read. That the Koran instructs Muslim women and men alike to keep their jewels (most sensitive body parts) under wraps (Surah 24: 30-31) is commonplace: Fatima consciously mocks this teaching. Her behavior also reconnects her to a happier time before her abduction and marriage, when she and a good friend would laugh together as they imagined themselves acting in such an outrageous manner far from Algeria. And lastly, Fatima's public indecency suggests that she has begun to consider herself as a sexual being once more, although in her deranged state, she demonstrates this feeling in an unacceptable manner. In terms of Certeau's writings, Mme Amor is forging a new identity, one in which her body functions as a signifier, perhaps of the sexually uninhibited woman.

In *Le Châtiment des hypocrites,* Fatima's rapes by Muslim terrorists, subsequent criminality, and preparations to reconstruct her identity anew provide an intimate look at one woman's response to having endured unspeakable acts. According to Béatrice

Didier, in *L'écriture-femme*, a text may be "feminine" through its subject matter relating to women (Didier 1981, 6-7). Certainly *Le Châtiment des hypocrites*, depicting sexual violence, pregnancy, miscarriage, and a reawakened sexuality belongs to this class of feminine texts. And yet it is not just the subject, but the telling that can be viewed as feminine. The circular narrative is a metaphor for the reproductive cycles of a woman's life. The lack of closure means that the novel defies any rigid (read "male") model of narration. Rather, the end of the novel could just as easily function as the beginning, and vice versa.

Moreover, *Le Châtiment des hypocrites* may be called feminine because of its use of language. Author Leïla Marouane commented that writing about women's suffering, "ce qui est inexprimable," (Cheniki 2001, 1) [what is inexpressible] causes one to commit violence towards one's mind and body.[16] Marouane not only breaks the historical taboo against Arab women addressing specifically feminine topics, such as miscarriage (Faqir 1998, 11), she manipulates language in a violent way. In an interview from 2001, she claims to have deliberately chosen short sentences, word plays, and a vocabulary of rage to denote the violence in *Le Châtiment des hypocrites* (Cheniki 2001, 1) even at the syntactic level.[17]

We could easily add that the narration itself, a "body" of writing, contains evidence of violence. The peritext,[18] or three-paragraph passage found on the third page of the novel, written in third person, concludes with the following sentence: "Ce jour de canicule exceptionnelle, sous le ciel parisien, barbotant dans une mare de sang, Mme Amor se remémora enfin Mlle Kosra" (Marouane 2001, 9) [This exceptionally hot day, under the Parisian sky, splashing in a puddle of blood, Mme Amor finally remembered Mlle Kosra]. This short introduction to the novel grabs our attention because of its gory imagery and its reference to two characters, one present and the other absent. We wonder from the beginning of *Le Châtiment des hypocrites* what the relationship between the two women might be.

Book One is also told in third person narration, but we understand that it is a different third person narrator from that of the peritext. Book One's narrator is a disguised first-person narrator (Fatima Amor) who begins with a chapter on how Fatima Kosra, a younger version of herself, was abducted. The rest of Book One presents Fatima's story in chronological order up to the point at which she and Rachid Amor relocate to Paris and are married. The last sentence of Book One reads as follows:

> Cinq années devant, et jusqu'à ce matin de canicule exceptionnelle sous le ciel parisien, désespérant de retrouver son cahier d'écolier, pataugeant dans une mare de sang, il lui fut doux de le pratiquer [c'est-à-dire, d'oublier sa vie avant l'arrivée de Rachid] (Marouane 2001, 92)
>
> [Five years before, and until this morning of exceptional dog-day heat under the Parisian sky, despairing of finding her student notebook [and] wading through a pool of [her own] blood, it was a good idea for her to practice forgetting her life before Rachid's arrival.].

The final sentence in the above quote clearly reconnects the end of Book One with the beginning of the *Le Châtiment des hypocrites* through its bloody imagery and its allusion to an earlier Fatima. We have the impression that the novel turns back on itself even as we continue reading towards the end.

The use of third person narration in the passage cited above is problematic, however. It suggests that Fatima Amor never identifies completely with Fatima Kosra, the person that she was before her marriage to Rachid. As a result, she never really plunges into the retelling of her violent experiences. This has consequences for the reader: we are not completely privy to the narrator's memories. Thus, we are reminded of how selective a process remembering can be, as we simultaneously reflect on the inexpressibility of madness. As literary scholar Shoshana Felman has pointed out, the reasoning behind language stands in opposition to the silence associated with madness (Felman 1985, 41-42). All the while third-person narrator Fatima Amor attempts to capture Fatima Kosra's story, there is always something slipping away from her description, something that cannot be put into words. Moreover, the Certalian notion of concealing one's most sincere truths even from oneself is also demonstrated here.

The implicit distance between Fatima Amor and the earlier version of herself calls to mind the fact that Fatima lacks a clear identity. She admits to having lost all sense of continuity by completely embracing her new life in Paris as Rachid Amor's wife without ever having revealed her past victimization. This feeling of discontinuity also exemplifies Cathy Caruth's reiteration of the Freudian idea that we are never fully conscious of what is happening to us during times of extreme duress (Caruth 1995, 16-18; Freud 1939, 84): Fatima's muddled thinking as she is abducted is a case in point. It is in our *re*-membering or piecing together of a traumatic event that we feel the true weight of our suffering for the first time (Caruth 1995, 5-6).

Book Two continues the presentation of Fatima's memories. But the past, revealing a pregnant Mme Amor, is superimposed on a more distant past belonging to a pregnant Mlle Kosra. As stated previously, the circular nature of the narration suggests the cycles of a woman's reproductive system, specifically, gestational and menstrual; the violated narration, lacking a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end, reasserts the conceit of Fatima's violated body-text and her miscarried pregnancies in particular.

In like fashion, the nineteen-page epitext closing the novel indicates a further violence performed on the narration. Fatima finally assumes a first-person narrative voice. She speaks in the *passé compose* [compound past tense], implying a connection to the present moment of speaking, and admits to her erratic behavior during the last days of her husband's life. The question of what will ultimately happen to Fatima once she has disposed of Rachid's body, however, is left unanswered. Nevertheless, she has already begun thinking about the form her new identity will take. Fatima is thus preparing herself for a rebirth: by "intextuating" (Certeau 1988, 148) her anger at being made a sexual "plaything" onto her husband's body as well as in her memory as she thinks back on her former lives (Marouane 2001, 9) ["elle se remémora Mlle Kosra"], she can move beyond the end of her marriage to

Rachid and towards the next episode in her life, whatever it may be. The very act of revisiting her painful experiences as Mlle Kosra and Mme Amor allows Fatima to re-acknowledge the painful moments as well as defuse their emotionally charged content.

Through its protagonist *Le Châtiment des hypocrites* explores the notions of violence, criminality, and renewal. Fatima Amor surpasses her victimization at the hands of religious fanatics in breaking with the conformity of "*les Enseignments*" (Marouane 2001, 48). She also manipulates justice by devising a discourse of vengeance. As a prostitute/criminal, she uses her body as a means for revenge not just against the armed Islamists in particular who abducted her to be their concubine, but against all men in general. She thereby revises the victim status that has been inscribed on her textualized body by her abusers through the re-inscription of her sexual trauma on *their* bodies. This palimpsest, however, is incomplete, because her mind also bears the imprint of her suffering: she displays the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder. For this reason, certain activities, such as her husband's forceful lovemaking, trigger an exaggerated stress response in the protagonist, causing her to progress from castrating her victims to murdering Rachid. As best she can, Fatima protects herself from further damaging "intextuation" (Certeau 1988, 140) both mentally and physically, even if the death of her husband and unborn child is the price for this freedom.

In utilizing her body to commit criminal acts, she has clearly moved beyond Certeau's concept of "intextuated bodies" and of making hers a "unit of signification" according to the predominant social discourse (Certeau 1988, 140). Fatima refuses to be further "inscribed" by what men want her to do: she already bears the scars of having lived for eighteen months as a sex slave. This mind-set contributes to the protagonist's numerous miscarriages, especially the last one. Fatima also challenges Foucault's idea of "docile," law-abiding bodies belonging to a system of power relations (Foucault 1979, 136-138). Hers is a discourse of resistance in that she lives none of her personas' lives in support of cultural and behavioral norms. Rather, her unchecked rage and faulty repressive mechanism cause her to commit atrocious acts towards others, particularly men.

Violence done to the body is more than the main theme of *Le Châtiment des hypocrites*: it is apparent in the narrative "corpus" itself, through short sentences, vocabulary indicative of rage, discontinuous chapters sharing common imagery such as a pool of blood, third-person narration where a first-person narrator would be more logica,l and an ending that could just as easily begin the novel. The narrator/protagonist's lack of emotional involvement in her crimes and her inability to describe her experiences in great detail reassert not only the issue of her madness, but the very nature of recalling painful memories. Furthermore, the violence and criminality visible in the novel's protagonist and narrative structure are cast within a feminine framework. By recounting Fatima Kosra and Fatima Amor's post-traumatic life experiences via a series of rapes, one-night sexual encounters, pregnancies, and miscarriages, *Le Châtiment des hypocrites* situates its story of atrocities inflicted on women in 1990s Algeria by armed militants well within the context of the female body. Moreover, its story, a retelling of the plight of thousands of Algerian women, enhances our understanding of that decade's history through the re-presentation and re-inscription of its trauma.

Notes:

[1]This article is based on a conference paper entitled, "Violence and Criminality in the Feminine in Leïla Marouane's *Le Châtiment des hypocrites*," that I presented at the France-Florida Research Institute 20th and 21st Century French and Francophone Studies International Colloquium: "Verbal, Visual, Virtual: New Canons for the Twenty-first Century," University of Florida at Gainesville, March 31-April 2, 2005.
[2]For the purposes of this article, I will be using *The Practice of Everyday Life*, by Michel de Certeau, translated by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988).
[3]*Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, by Michel Foucault (New York: Vintage, 1979), was originally published as *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).
[4]Danielle-Djamila Amrane-Minne's work includes three books about Algerian women's involvement in the Algerian War from 1954-1962, for example, refuting the government's message that the *Algériennes*, or Algerian women, played a minor part in Algeria's fight for independence from France (Amrane-Minne 1999, 62-77). The books are titled *Les femmes algériennes dans la guerre* (Paris: Plon, 1991), *Femmes en combat* (Algiers: Rah'ma, 1993), and *Des femmes dans la guerre d'Algérie: Entretiens* (Paris: Karthala, 1994).
Malika Mokeddem's *Les Hommes qui marchent* (1990) is a masked autobiography about her childhood during the Algerian War. Similarly, in her fictional and non-fictional writings, Assia Djebar has challenged historical facts about Algerian women and her homeland in general. In *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (Paris: Des femmes, 1980), she re-explains the significance of Delacroix's 1832 visit to a *harem*, or women's apartment, in Algiers in order to elaborate on the subjugation of women from the inception of Islam in the seventh century up to the present day.
[5] Her collection of stories, *Les Criquelins*, was published by Mille et Une Nuits Publishers in Paris in 2004.
[6]All translations of Marouane's *Le Châtiment des hypocrites* are my own.
[7] The *tchador* is a loose gown that covers a women's entire body; the *hidjab* is a scarf worn over the head and neck. Both items constitute are elements of women's modest dress. See Khalida Messaoudi, *Unbowed: an Algerian Woman Confronts Islamic Fundamentalism*, translated by Anne C. Vila (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 155-56.
[8]Since government officials tend to understate their countries' short-comings, we may presume that this figure is much higher. Today's Algeria reveals the same tendency towards ambiguity on the part of the State: in 2005, the government passed a bill into law guaranteeing penal and civil amnesty for the crimes committed during the "Décennie noire" or Black Decade, of the 1990s. Those who tortured, killed, and raped on a grand scale, however, were not to benefit from the amnesty. Payments were to be made to mothers and widows of the men killed during the 1990s, as well as to women who had been abducted into sexual slavery. As of February 2007, Algerian women interviewed spoke only of the bureaucracy delaying their financial benefits. The amnesty law of 2005 also made it a crime for anyone injured during the 1990s to speak against the State, its institutions, its agents, or its image on the international level. See Yakin Ertürk, "Fin de la mission en Algérie de la rapporteuse spéciale sur la violence à l'égard des femmes," United Nations Press Release, 1 February 2007, 2 December 2007 <http://www.hrea.org/lists2/display.php?language_id=3&id=4045>. Sexual violence against women, both within the family and outside it, remains a problem in Algeria since the police are slow to investigate such cases. Very few perpetrators are ever brought to justice. See Hajar Dehhani, "Algérie: Les violences sexuelles contre les femmes augmentent," *Aujourd'hui le Maroc* 2004, 2 December 2007 <http://www.aujourdhui.ma/international-details57465.html>.
[9]From World War I through the Vietnam War era, twentieth-century soldiers' injuries were understood to be physical: scars, amputations, and paralysis, to name just a few, marked an ex-military person visibly for life. Repaired and rehabilitated bodies breathed virtually no sign of any mental anguish that the ex-soldiers had endured. Despite Sigmund Freud's use of the term "trauma" to refer to injured bodies as well as minds in his writings of the early twentieth century, it was not until 1980 that the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), 3rd Edition (1980), recognized post-traumatic stress as a disorder. Formerly, the narrowly-focused expressions "shell shock" and "combat neurosis" designated soldiers' mental problems while the vague term "traumatic neurosis" alluded to the consequences of others' difficult life experiences (Caruth 1995, 130-31, n. 1).
Today, "trauma" may refer to any event that "produces fear, helplessness, or horror" (Modvig and Jaranson 2004, 34). Survivors of wars, famine, natural disasters, and other catastrophes are considered victimized by trauma both physically and mentally. In addition to providing material comfort for those who have experienced great losses, we concern ourselves with their mental well being as a matter of course. Psychological therapists are called in immediately following a disaster in order to speak with the survivors about their feelings. Besides "talk therapy," body image work and other types of interventions reduce one's anxiety over having felt so vulnerable in the face of crisis (Karcher 2004, 403-05).
[10]For example, following a 24-hour telethon to raise money for clinics for the victims of religious extremists, only one was built in the Algiers region ("Maghrébines" 1999) 18. Others were planned for large cities but not constructed.
[11]See Latifa Ben Mansour's *Frères musulmans, frères féroces* (Paris: Ramsay, 2002), 49-50 for more information about the Algerians' fears during the Islamist terrorism of the 1990s.
[12]Special interest groups such as SOS Women in Distress and the United Nations have attempted to aid Algerian women in difficulty. The former, headquartered in Algiers, provides food and shelter for *Algériennes* who find themselves homeless following divorce, for instance, but the number of needy women far exceeds the organization's ability to help (Messaoudi 1998, 54). The latter continues to send research teams to Algeria to observe women's perpetually inferior status and to make annual recommendations, even though the country's attitude towards its women has not changed significantly ("Maghrébines" 1999), 2.
[13]Castration in Algeria is associated with a socio-historic, humiliating practice: male slaves underwent this procedure so that they could be left in charge of a man's *harem*, or the secluded apartment in his dwelling where he kept his wives. Lacking the ability to perform sexually, these castrated males, or eunuchs, were deemed trustworthy of protecting the women's honor (Deveau 2002, 3). A literary example mentioning this arrangement is *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, or *The Arabian Nights*, in which King Shahrayar employs eunuchs to guard his harem (Bencheikh and Miquel 1991), 33-42.

[14]"Catharsis" is defined as "a psychological technique used to relieve tension and anxiety by bringing repressed fears to consciousness" and "the therapeutic result of this process. See *The American Heritage® Stedman's Medical Dictionary* 2004 (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001) 20 August 2007< http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/catharsis>.

[15]Malika Mokeddem referred to the "corps-text" in *N'zid* (Paris: Grasset, 2001), 61: it is the body's ability to recall motor skills, even if the brain has been injured.

[16]This concept is reminiscent of Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain: the Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) in which she explains that describing one's torture to someone else can only be an approximation since the vocabulary for articulating pain even to oneself is inadequate. Furthermore, someone else's body cannot "know" the pain that another individual's body has endured.

[17]As a former Algerian journalist, Leïla Marouane recognizes the importance of relating form to meaning in her writings. She has claimed that violence is too often kept hidden, although it happens every day, and that she deliberately writes the "real." She admitted to having been physically assaulted while working in her native Algeria, and added that she suffered from the experience for a long time (Cheniki 2001, 1).

[18]"Paratext" is the term that Gérard Genette used to refer to the "verbal productions" that surround and extend a written work: "precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world . . ." (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 1. He originally coined this term in 1981. See *Palimpsestes* (Paris: Seuil, 1981), 9. He further defines the "paratexts" by their position in the book: those preceding the entire novel as well as chapters of the novel are called "peritexts;" those that follow the main text of the novel are called "epitexts" (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 5.

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