

6-1-2001

Rachid Boudjedra's Representations of Terrorism: Le vainqueur de coupe and La Vie à l'endroit

Lynne D. Rogers

Bir Zeit University-Palestine, University of Connecticut-Avery Point

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/sttcl>



Part of the [French and Francophone Literature Commons](#), and the [Modern Literature Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Rogers, Lynne D. (2001) "Rachid Boudjedra's Representations of Terrorism: Le vainqueur de coupe and La Vie à l'endroit," *Studies in 20th Century Literature*: Vol. 25: Iss. 2, Article 9. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1513>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in 20th Century Literature* by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

Rachid Boudjedra's Representations of Terrorism: *Le vainqueur de coupe* and *La Vie à l'endroit*

Abstract

Contemporary fiction either idealizes or demonizes the terrorist as a cultural figure of collective values. In his two contemporary novels, *Le vainqueur de coupe* and *La vie à l'endroit*, Rachid Boudjedra, an Algerian novelist, renders two very distinct narratives although both center around terrorist activity and a major sporting event. The first novel is a sympathetic portrait of a young Algerian who gives up his studies to become part of L'Organization. Sentenced to life imprisonment, the young man becomes an international hero. *Le vainqueur de coupe* offers an explanation for understanding terrorism. In the second novel, *La Vie à l'endroit*, written sixteen years later, Boudjedra describes the horrors of living under a reign of terrorism for a man similar to himself and his lover, an European doctor. The striking discrepancy in the posture taken towards terrorism in the two novels reveals the need for a closer look at the social complexities and human ethics involved in today's violence and the romanticization of the terrorist as a literary hero. While the first novel makes a compassionate plea for humanizing the terrorist, the second novel witnesses the deadly aftermath of political self-righteousness rooted in past victimization.

Keywords

Rachid Boudjedra, terrorism, fiction, contemporary fiction, collective values, Algerian literature, *Le vainqueur de coupe*, *La vie à l'endroit*, violence

Rachid Boudjedra's Representations of Terrorism:
Le vainqueur de coupe and *La Vie à l'endroit*

Lynne D. Rogers
Bir Zeit University-Palestine,
University of Connecticut-Avery Point

When examining the trends of literary representations of terrorism in the contemporary novel, one can begin to address the question of how literature helps to create or to deconstruct the myth of the terrorist as a cultural figure of moral consensus. In fiction, the terrorist character is either demonized as in popular culture and the more recent Algerian literature or given heroic status to reflect collective values of resistance. Don DeLillo remarks that "Novelists used to alter the inner life of culture. Now terrorists do" (qtd. in Smith C1). Terrorist experts disagree on both the history of terrorism and on who qualifies as a terrorist.¹ David Long, in *The Anatomy of Terrorism*, explains that "The tendency to respond to terrorist acts according to personal, political, and ideological affinities has given rise to the cliché: One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" (10). However, terrorist experts do agree that terrorism is violence committed in the hopes of a political change. In a technologically advanced age, the primitive means of terrorism has become a channel of international and internal communication for the disenfranchised or non-state entities. The terrorist's goal is to inspire sympathy and fear, a combination reminiscent of the catharsis of Greek tragedy, as a political catalyst.

In *Inside Terrorism*, Bruce Hoffman defines terrorism "as the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence in the pursuit of political change" (43). Hoffman continues: "Ter-

rorism is designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little. Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to attain the leverage, influence, and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either a local or an international scale" (44). For the international community, the sight of the bloodshed of civilians reminds the world at large of other civilian victims. For the internal community of the perpetrator, terrorism publicly proclaims the struggle's vitality. By creating an atmosphere of fear, terrorism spotlights the vulnerability of the existing political order. Annamarie Oliverio writes that "The attacks make the government appear inept and unable to protect the people, which causes anxiety and divisiveness among them" (*The State of Terror* 16).

Yet the debatable political gains of terrorist activity generally are refuted or minimized by historians and political scientists. Consequently, the sole value of terrorism becomes communication, as illustrated by the integral role of the media. In his study *The Making of Terrorism*, Michael Wiewiorka defines terrorism as follows: "More than being a sharp break between those who use it and those whom it targets, it is also primarily a relationship between its perpetrators and some collective identity—i.e. the people, class, or nation it claims to be representing—that has been rendered unrealistic or artificial" (xi). His study charts the descent into terrorist activity as a process of inversion. The terrorist becomes both emblematic of the group's values and simultaneously disenfranchised from the group. As either hero or villain, the fictional terrorist, like the real terrorist, is an isolated individual epitomizing complex collective values.

Rachid Boudjedra's *Le vainqueur de coupe* (*The Champion*) and *La vie à l'endroit* (*Life Inside*) reflect two trends in the literary approaches to terrorism, one positive and one negative. Politics are a prominent and consistent element of Boudjedra's work. In an interview with Hafid Gafaïti, Boudjedra, a contemporary Algerian novelist and essayist, explains:

Il y a un sens politique qui circule dans mes livres, j'ai toujours essayé de prendre le contre-pied de l'analogique, du stéréotypique, de la banalité. Par exemple, je pense à ce mythe des ancêtres

glorieux, dans la littérature algérienne. En ce qui me concerne, j'ai tenté de renverser ce mythe. Et j'ai fait le contraire: c'est à dire que j'ai dénoncé les ancêtres comme des gens qui ont failli quelque part. C'est aussi faire de la littérature. C'est renverser le mythe, renverser le signifiant et bouleverser les signifiés.

There is a political sense throughout my work. I have always tried to oppose analogy, stereotyping, banality. For example, I am thinking of the myths of the glorious ancestors in Algerian literature. In that which concerns me, I have tried to reverse this myth. And I have made it the opposite: that is to say that I have denounced the ancestors as men who have failed in some way. This also creates literature. It overturns the myth, it overturns the signified, and mixes up the signifiers. (19)

In these two novels, the author debunks two contemporary myths. In the first novel, *Le vainqueur de coupe*, published in 1981, Boudjedra attacks the myth perpetuated by France to justify colonialism via the young Algerian villager who resorts to terrorism. In the second novel, *La vie à l'endroit*, published 16 years later in 1997, Boudjedra censures the myth of self-righteous morality used to justify terrorism against innocent civilians. Boudjedra's realistic portrayal of the young terrorist Stalin in *Le vainqueur de coupe* humanizes the impulse toward terrorism while the later novel details the tragedy of daily life under the threat of terrorism. The movement from sympathy for to condemnation of terrorism in the two novels intellectually dismantles the myth of political violence that targets civilians as a justifiable reaction to victimization. Although the two novels express conflicting positions toward terrorism, both novels center around terrorist activity in conjunction with a sporting event, thus establishing a common metaphor of sports for history.

In his *Lettres algériennes (Algerian Letters, 1995)*, Boudjedra, himself a Marxist, has ultimately characterized sports as an opiate for the developing nations and as a benevolent form of social expression.² In "Lettre 7," he observes that politics benefit from sports. He writes:

Tous les pouvoirs politiques ont encouragé certains sports qui bénéficient de l'engouement des masses, d'une façon pas toujours

innocente. Cela permet de dévier les jeunes vers une passion qui reste, en somme, futile. Dans les pays du Tiers Monde, cela est devenu flagrant: le football est le vrai opium des peuples. Un dérivatif à la misère. Un chloroforme de la conscience humaine.

All the political powers have encouraged certain sports which feed the infatuation of the masses in a manner not always innocent. This directs the young towards a passion that ultimately remains empty. In the Third World this trend has become flagrant, soccer is the true opium of the people. A distraction from their misery. A chloroform to their human conscience. (33)

The spectacle and the temporary reprieve from poverty offered by sporting events make the stadium concurrently an escape from politics and a setting for an emotional political indoctrination.³ The narrator of *Le vainqueur de coupe* echoes Boudjedra's sentiments in his description of the crowd in the stadium seated around the protagonist:

Il est assis dans cette foule merveilleuse et fraternelle, misérable et agressive, vulgaire dans tous les cas de figure, époumonée, hystérique et, en fin de compte, solitaire, dérisoire et pitoyable, parmi tous ces gens oublieux des journées de travail fastidieux, de la routine, de la fatigue, du mépris et de l'exploitation, oublieux de la brisure qui se fait à l'intérieur d'eux-mêmes. . . .

He is seated in this marvelous and brotherly crowd, miserable and aggressive, vulgar in every sense, hoarse from shouting, hysterical and yet, in the end, alone, ridiculous, and pitiable, among all the men who have forgotten the days of fastidious work, of routine, of fatigue, of distrust and exploitation, forgetful of their internal rupture.... (56)

Like the terrorist (and the artist), the members of the crowd are alienated from themselves and remain part of the larger group. The bitter description of the crowd depicts both the positive and negative social attributes of a large sporting event. In another letter, Boudjedra takes a more benign attitude towards sports, which he develops in *La vie à l'endroit*. In "Lettre 27," Boudjedra discusses his own sports idolatry and the social mobility as well as the racial equality promised by sports: "Tout ce métissage par le sport me rassure sur le bon sens de l'humanité. Car c'est là

dans le sport que les barrières raciales ou religieuses peuvent le plus facilement sauter” ‘All of this mixing up by sports reassures me of the good sense of humanity. Because it is in sports that one is able to jump the racial and religious barriers with the most ease’ (*Lettres algériennes* 116). In this later letter, the communal ritual of sports is emphasized. Like literature, sports is political violence which can be beneficial for society.

In a 1987 interview, Boudjedra asserts that both literature and sports are based on violence:

Toute écriture est ludique, mais le ludique n'est pas quelque chose de mou. Tout le monde sait que le jeu est basé profondément sur la violence. Que ce soit dans le sport ou dans une partie d'échecs, la violence est terrifiante. Cette manière de définir l'écriture comme un excès et comme une contre-sociologie me satisfait pleinement.

All writing is ludic, but the ludic is not something weak. Everyone knows that play is profoundly based on violence. Either in sports or in a game of chess, violence is terrifying. This manner of defining literature as an excess and as against sociology satisfies me completely. (Gafaïti 26)

Drawing on Roland Barthes and Picasso, Boudjedra defines literature and art as the creative play of signs that has the power to dislodge established perceptions. He writes:

L'artiste qui crée toujours à partir de données humaines, historiques et politiques réelles a tendance à les déformer, les refaire, voire les exagérer pour être crédible! C'est certes là un paradoxe mais sur lequel se fonde l'humain pour consolider à l'instar des enfants une réalité mouvante, instable, insaisissable et donc incompréhensible.

The artist who always creates from the givens of humanity, history, and the political reality has the tendency to deform them, to remake them, even to exaggerate them to make them credible. This is certainly a paradox, but humanity uses it, following the example of children, to consolidate moving, unstable, unknowable, and thus incomprehensible reality. (*Lettres algériennes* 64)

Without actual physical violence, the verbal transgression of literature can result in change in perception of power, if not a subsequent change in the existing order.

Literature, myth, and sports are intertwined as socially and morally productive outlets for aggressive impulses that can also promote violence outside the stadium. Samuel Weber, in his article "Wartime," parallels the community's sense of affinity elicited by sports and war:

For war, like sports, creates the semblance of mobilization: of a community coming together, of an "us" against them, a "home team" against "visitors" who are also "invaders." The spectacle of war, filtered through the television screen, allows for the kind of collective identification that scenes of individual or civil violence rarely permit. (102)

From contrasting perspectives, the two novels explore the mobilization process of an individual political victim with a sporting event acting as catalyst. In "The Worker Sport Movement in France," William Murray observes: "The concept of sport as military preparation is probably as old as sport, celebrated in phrases like 'the playing fields of Eton' and worshipped in many of the sporting metaphors that were to accompany young men to their death in World War I" (30). In both novels, the communities are drawn towards the athletes for their national or political affiliation as well as their physical prowess. Each novel's protagonist symbolizes the larger community's vacillatory temperament towards terrorism. The pride of winning a game mirrors the pride in fighting for justice in the first novel, whereas in the later novel, the ecstasy of winning becomes the small ecstasy of everyday life in a world fraught with terrorism. In *Le vainqueur de coupe*, terrorist assassination is portrayed as an understandable violent reaction, a minor response to the monumental collective victimization of colonization. The narrative rhythm of time fluctuation creates a game-like suspense throughout the terrorist's mission and a subsequent trial engaging the reader as he or she reassembles the plot in an effort to understand the events and the terrorists' motivation.

The protagonist of *Le vainqueur de coupe*, written in 1991, exemplifies the humanized terrorist of contemporary literature rather than the popular demonic terrorist stereotype. Despite the final cruelty of his behavior, this type of terrorist is portrayed as a Renaissance figure who could unquestionably have succeeded in many other ways, yet hears the imperative of military resistance. Hoffman distinguishes the terrorist from the self-serving criminal or political extremist. He characterizes the terrorist as follows:

Fundamentally an *altruist*, he believes that he is serving a "good" cause designed to achieve a greater good for a wider constituency—whether real or imagined—which the terrorist and his group purport to represent. . . . The terrorist is fundamentally a *violent intellectual*, prepared to use and indeed committed to using force in the attainment of his goals.(43)

Other terrorist experts support Hoffman's characterization of the terrorist. David Long writes: "Curiously enough, a predilection to violence does not appear to be a dominant aspect of terrorist personalities" (19). In her feminist study of terrorism, Robin Morgan's profile of today's terrorist also identifies the terrorist as an educated young male who is:

Mobile due to a period of upheaval, inflamed by the situation, and possessed by the suffering of his people. He is idealistic, brave, and self-disciplined, yet can find no way out of guilt, grief, and impotence until he encounters his mentor/leader/god. He is then ready to follow a road of self-abnegation. . . . He is aware of the risks, but his obsession to save or avenge his cause, together with a love for his tragic fate, seals his doom. He takes up the gun. (67)

Boudjedra's early narrative draws a realistic portrait of a young, handsome, heterosexual male with a relatively healthy psychological make-up who has the discipline to execute a small operation, the assassination of a "traitor," the morality to desire justice, the intellectual capacity to question the principles of colonialism and to reject the religious fundamentalism often associated with terrorist activity. Finally, his Algerian family background and his Western education place him simultaneously within both the European and Arab traditions. The fictional hu-

manized terrorist is generally an educated and caring young man willing to sacrifice his own life as well as the civilian lives of others in the public arena for the idealized values of a victimized political group.⁴ This romantic and compassionate character type reflects the collective values of a historically oppressed society that has been either ignored or forgotten by the world at large. As a desperate reaction to the global failure to protect the disenfranchised, the isolated incidents of terrorist activity serve to reassert and to reaffirm the validity of their continued struggle.

Boudjedra's protagonist is known to the reader only by his nom de guerre, Stalin. The omission of his family name gives priority to his identity as a terrorist while his detailed biography explains his choice of a terrorist identity. His family history echoes the changing allegiances of history and places the reader on the spectator's bench. When the protagonist was nine, his father was killed fighting for France and his body was never returned to Algeria, leaving the uncertain family to grieve for an absent corpse. The historical irony is not lost on his mother, who remains at home and fears the death sentence for her terrorist son:

Elle avait déjà passé la médaille, dont avait été décoré son mari à titre posthume, au cou des vaches successives qu'elle avait élevées, en guise de cloche et s'apprêtait en attendant le verdict si un jour quelqu'un commetait l'erreur de commémorer l'acte de son fils en lui envoyant le revers de la médaille de son époux, à en faire autant et de même!

She had already passed the medal given to her husband after his death, from one cow's neck to another's, as she had raised them, in place of a cowbell, and she was prepared, as she awaited the verdict, should someone someday make the mistake of commemorating her son's act by sending the reverse of her husband's medal, to do the same with that one! (83)

Left to die alone at home, the mother loses her husband fighting for France and then loses her sons fighting against France. In a final twist of fate, the French government, by imposing a life sentence, eventually spares her younger son from the death sentence previously faced by his older brother and uncle. His older brother, remembered as a heroic role model, leaves medical school to fight

with the Communists. His choice predicates immediate military action over future healing. As a commandant, the brother is captured, tortured, and killed.⁵ His uncle, who is the only surviving older male family member, makes sporadic visits to the home, bearing chocolates and naturally impresses the young male child. His proud shouts of "Vive Staline!" and his undercover name of Stalin motivate the young protagonist to adopt the name "Stalin" without any further political conception of the name's significance (114). For him, the name is only associated with his loved and admired uncle, a common father figure of North African fiction dealing with terrorism.⁶

Adelwahab Meddeb, a Tunisian writer, in his essay "L'interruption généalogique," which addresses the problem of violence in Algeria, notes, as others before him, the prevalence of the identity question in contemporary Maghreb literature. The orphan, a marginal figure within Islam, has become a metaphor for colonized North Africa. Meddeb urges a new perspective towards the past which examines the complicated double lineage rather than reduce the choice to an either/or dichotomy. He concludes: "Tel eût peut être le dense programme de l'orphelin maghrébin s'il voulait non pas souder son interruption généalogique par quelque liant miraculeux, mais retisser les fils déliés d'une au moins double généalogie aux ramifications multiples" 'Such might have been the dense task of the Magreb orphan, if he did not wish to bind together his interrupted genealogy by some miraculous binder, but to reconnect an untied genealogy, with ramifications' (207). In the novel, the young protagonist fails to meet Meddeb's challenge for the Arab intellectual and remains caught in the dichotomy of two cultures. Instead of relishing the complexities of his identity, he makes a simple, semi-educated choice for one side, Algerian-Arab, even though he has the intellectual abilities to succeed within both cultures. His rejection of his faith, the absence of an older living male relative, and his European education and residence place him on the margin of the Algerian community until his terrorist activity transforms him into a local hero. Even then, he remains a mythic outsider, an isolated symbol of resistance, in a foreign prison.

Stalin has attended European schools where he developed a taste for soccer, had a favorable history with European women, and earned a scholarship to continue his studies based on his mathematical brilliance. All of these admirable capabilities are shunted aside to follow in the footsteps of his brother and uncle as he drops out of school to search for the Organization in Paris. The young man who dismisses his education and religion never questions the obligation to follow the male heritage of sacrifice for one's cause. Rather than mourn his uncle's death, Stalin rejoices in his gift: "ce fameux jour où on le félicitera parce qu'il venait de perdre son vieil oncle. Il s'était donné les moyens de faire ce qu'il avait accompli et de l'assumer jusqu'à l'extrême responsabilité au-delà de laquelle il n'y a plus rien: la mort!" "that great day when they will congratulate him because he has lost his old uncle. He had given himself the means to achieve his accomplishment and to assume the extreme responsibility beyond which there is nothing else: death!" (116)

Overriding the horror inspired by the dead brother's wounded corpse, the romance of the uncle's clandestine life, and the assumed morality of the brother's and uncle's mission, Stalin assumes his place within the legend of the armed struggle. He does not follow his father's fight with or for France, yet he feels he is restoring his father's dignity by repeating his father's, brother's and uncle's military aggression. He is neither a Communist, nor a supporter of France, nor an Islamist. His sole motivation is a public revenge of the dead. In *The Warrior's Honor, Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, Michael Ignatieff observes that "Revenge keeps faith between generations; the violence it engenders is a ritual form of respect for the community's dead—therein lies its legitimacy" (188). Family, history, and the narrative legitimize Stalin's act of murder and provide him with a male identity. Yet Stalin knows he must be separated from his mother if he is to become a terrorist. He thinks to himself that "il n'aurait jamais pu devenir un terroriste en restant à proximité de sa mère qui avait déjà perdu son mari à la guerre et son frère au maquis" 'he would never be able to become a terrorist if he stayed close to his mother who had already lost her husband to the war and his brother

mother suggests Stalin's moral ambivalence towards violence. Yet his emotional loss caused by his separation from his mother is filled by the Organization. When he arrives in Paris, he easily contacts the Organization, which is only known as such, through an old university friend from Algeria. Boudjedra's structuring of the Organization as a series of small secretive groups realistically reproduces the secretive hierarchy of terrorist organizations. C.J. M. Drake, in *Terrorists' Target Selection*, observes that:

Terrorist groups tend to start off as informal groups, but if they survive for long they often develop a form of hierarchy. However, due to the requirements of clandestinity, decisions are often taken at the operational level by relatively small, introspective groups within the overall structure. Theories in group behavior suggest that such groups will tend to follow an authoritative leader and will display high degrees of conformity to group decisions. (174)

Even though Stalin knows only those members belonging to his small terrorist cell and only knows them by their adopted names, he quickly realizes that the orders for activity filtered down from the unknown leaders with unknown resources (137). Despite the secrecy, joining the Organization gives him a sense of belonging and Stalin is no longer a cultural orphan: "Il avait l'histoire de son côté" 'He had history on his side' (141). His history refers to both his family and national heritage. Like the favored child, he is repeatedly told that he was hand-picked for this operation: "Nous t'avons choisi parce que tu es trop beau" 'We have chosen you because you are too beautiful' (24). With his good looks, his intelligence, and humble beginnings, Stalin becomes the Algerian poster boy for the Organization's fight against France. Stalin's feelings of fraternity for the organization are mirrored in the team playing on the field and the fans' adulation.

The sporting event captures the element of chance and the emotional loyalty as well as the discipline and skill needed to win at either athletics or to carry out to completion a terrorist mission. Stalin receives the murder weapon and victim's photo when another "player" disappears. The organization chooses the stadium as the setting for the assassination for its visibility. While the entire country is watching Algerian players win the game for

Toulouse, Stalin adopts the aggression of an individual invader. He shoots the token Muslim, who is dressed in his indigenous costume, and makes a show of praying while mingling with the French elite. In *Le vainqueur de coupe* the murder is effective; Stalin validates the Organization and he becomes a hero with a multitude of support from French leftists and professionals, from fellow immigrants, and from the villagers back home. Within the logic of terrorism, the public murder communicates the strength of the Organization “pour savoir qu’on ne peut pas échapper à l’Organisation, même lorsqu’on a le privilège d’être reçu dans les cabinets ministériels, invité à la table des seigneurs de l’alfa et du vignoble, assis à côté du président de la République . . .” ‘to let it be known that no one is able to escape the power of the Organization, not even those who are received by cabinet ministers, invited to dine with the lords of the farms and vineyards, who sit next to the President of the Republic . . .’ (100). The implied threat extends to exiled and indigenous Algerians as well as the international community. While the terrorist act testifies to the arm of the Organization, Stalin’s inner thoughts and emotional reactions to his deed break the demonic one-dimensional stereotype of the “crazed fundamentalist terrorist.”

Before Stalin pulls the trigger on his intended victim, he is flooded with memories of the daily hardships induced by colonialism and the premature death of his father. Stalin’s recollections of the everyday ramifications of political and economic oppression serve not only to motivate the young hero to persevere but also to justify the murder within a violent context wider than present-day Paris. His memories become a humanistic explanation and, for the reader, the nebulous barrier between understanding and condoning blurs. Furthermore, his innocent memories of village life overshadow his killing an unarmed man, an alleged traitor/collaborator, portraying Stalin, at worse, as a misguided villager in the big European city. Unlike Boudjedra’s later terrorists, he is conscientious in his task and does not want to hurt any innocent bystanders. He is even willing to give up on the mission when his victim, Bachagha, leaves the stadium to pray.

As in a game, the events turn in one moment when Bachagha returns. *Le Bachagha vient à lui. Avance. Marche de l’inexorable.*

Les choses s'accélérent comme dans un film pris de panique" 'Bachaga comes towards him. Advances. The march of the inexorable. Events accelerate like in a film seized by panic' (234). Stalin has not only history but fortune on his side as well. The actual moments of the murder take on the appearance of a "film" serving to separate Stalin from any cold-blooded inhumanity that the reader might attribute to him.

After his deed, the small-time terrorists' heroic status is further enhanced for the reader by the public reaction and his captor's reception of him. Everyone involved grows to admire him even if they do not share his ideology. Initially the police chief's treatment of him is determined by his outside support and the desire to gather intelligence. Gradually, the young man's calm pride in the face of the police's shaken nerves and incompetence elicits their respect. Stalin claims to act alone and does not confess any detail that would compromise the Organization. Even the judge who suspects him of lying is taken by his steadfast commitment to the Organization. The judge suspects another story behind Stalin's rhetoric. The judge thinks to himself: "Ce tract banal à phraséologie commune et stéréotypée de tous les révolutionnaires du monde. Mon surnom. Voilà tout ce qui le préoccupe alors que, pendant qu'il radote, l'Organisation continue à opérer" 'That banal tract with the common stereotyped phrasing of all revolutionaries around the world. My code name. That's all that concerns him and while he rambles on, the Organization continues to operate' (192). The judge eventually spares Stalin's life on the testimony of his polite and civilized behavior by the saleswoman who sells him a postcard of an Etruscan athlete during the game's halftime. Instead of being frightened by her close contact with a terrorist, the woman, who has lost a son to the war, is struck by his civilized sensibilities (176). Stalin's guilt is never in question. His trial serves only to reveal his bravery, sensitivity, and loyalty.

The reader is touched by his sympathetic behavior in prison. Stalin develops a private compassion for his victim. Surrounded by his birds and his single postcard, the prisoner dreams of political transcendence. In the dream, he not only makes friends with his victim, he subsequently sees his victim as a double to his be-

loved uncle. He dreams Bachagha visits him in prison and confronts him with his murder. After a brief conversation in which Stalin notes the resemblance between Bachagha and his uncle, Bachagha forgives Stalin: "Et l'autre, quelque peu rassuré, quelque peu amadoué, perdant l'acidité dont il avait peint son visage avec une mine quelque peu lippue, paternaliste, quelque peu chiffonnée, paterne" 'and the other, somewhat reassured, somewhat pacified, losing the acidity with which he had painted his face by means of an appearance with paternal thick lips and fatherly wrinkles' (236). He is the only character in the novel who even considers his victim, and he is rewarded with this peaceful paternal vision of closure. The novel's sole criticism of Stalin is voiced by a prison guard from the Antilles, who is disappointed at Stalin's harsh dismissal of his friend's show of fear at his death sentence. The prison guard angrily accuses Stalin of being proud, yet Stalin insistently replies: "C'est pas une affaire d'orgueil mais de dignité" 'It is not an affair of pride but of dignity' (208). Although Stalin's attitude toward Slimane may reveal a character weakness, juxtaposed with his truce with Bachagha, his changing emotional alliances show a magnanimity rooted in human nobility rather than shallow political camaraderie. Having already understood Stalin's motivation, his behavior at the trial and in prison validate his status as a public hero for the reader. However, in an ominous conclusion anticipating today's havoc in Algeria, Stalin replaces the athletic hero as a model for the younger village boys. Unfortunately, his successful mission is followed by his compatriot's blowing up a hotel by handing a child a bouquet of flowers. Foreshadowing the indiscriminate horror in the later novel, *La vie à l'endroit*, the members of the Organization fall from killing traitors and attempting to establish justice to murdering little girls. The setting and plot of *Le vainqueur de coupe* illustrate the proximity between sports and political violence. Boudjedra sounds a warning concerning the facility of a transition from sports to fascism. In "Lettre 7" he writes:

En France, ça commence à devenir très dangereux, le foot! Lui qui peut générer une esthétique du mouvement, commence à générer du fascisme et de la xénophobie avec certains groupes de supporters. Les gens ont la vengeance, la violence et la haine font froid

dans le dos. Des politicards sans envergure, des petits malins de la brocante, des groupuscules de nazillons xénophobes et agressifs ont compris les différents avantages qu'ils pouvaient tirer du football.

In France, soccer has begun to become very dangerous! What might generate an aesthetic movement, has begun to generate xenophobic fascism, with certain groups of French supporters whose vulgarity, violence and hate chill one's bones. Helpless politicians, small-time connivers, and aggressive and xenophobic Nazi cells have well understood the different advantages that they can derive from soccer. (34)

Sports correspond to political violence in the capability to elicit man's base or higher instincts. In a process that mirrors the transition from sports to fascism, revolutionary activities whose primary aim is sympathy, revenge, and communication inescapably deteriorate into massive indiscriminate violence. The Algerian historian Benjamin Stora traces the current wave of terrorism to the romanticization of the armed struggle of the Algerian fight for independence; violence introduced by the colonizers was taken as a weapon against the colonizers and subsequently became a common form of civil strife. The former success of violence valorizes and institutionalizes the technique as a means of establishing and maintaining power as well as a social force which solidifies the sense of community while radically dividing the community. While the narrative humanizes the terrorist and begins to offer an explanation for his actions, the novel also contributes to the literary romanticization of the contemporary terrorist. The violence of *Le vainqueur de coupe* escalates to a larger incident in the French hotel and the novel ends on a note of continuation without specifying a direction. Later, *La vie à l'endroit* must confront the aftermath of the unconfined violence begun in the first novel. The number of victims dramatically increases in the second novel, and the sympathetic perspective shifts from the young terrorist to the innocent civilian victims of the current wave of terrorism in Algeria.

In *La vie à l'endroit* Boudjedra utilizes the same plot elements of *Le vainqueur de coupe* to condemn terrorism, which is no longer a political means of resistance to France as a colonizer but is now

an uncontrollable civil tragedy. In *La Vie à l'endroit*, Boudjedra identifies the Organization as the F.L.N., the National Liberation Front, which fought against France for Algeria's independence. Yet if the reader reads the novels in the sequence that they were written, can easily identify the Organization not as the F.L.N., but as the Muslim Radicals. The Organization is recognized as the Intégristes by their tactics of indiscriminate cruelty and by the recurring motif of thinly veiled disguises. Read in sequence, the two novels reaffirm Benjamin Stora's observation that the current terrorism in Algeria grew out of the romanticization of the armed struggle. In *FIS de la haine* Boudjedra considers the causes of the widespread terrorism in Algeria today and writes that:

Ceux qui s'étonnent de la dégradation de la situation en Algérie ignorant ou feignent d'ignorer la que terreur intégriste s'est installée dans ce pays au début des années quatre-vingt. Dès 1981, des maquis ont été organisés dans la région d'Alger; les rues et les mosquées avaient été investies d'une façon insidieuse par les prêcheurs intégristes; les écoles avaient été noyautées par les fondamentalistes. Le phénomène n'est donc pas né d'hier. A cette époque ont commencé à être proférées les premières intimidations, les menaces et les condamnations à mort contre les intellectuels et les artistes. Aujourd'hui l'intégrisme est passé à l'acte d'une façon plus intensive et plus barbare, après une longue période de gestation, d'organisation et de préparation militaire.

Those who are astonished at the degradation of the situation in Algeria are ignorant of or feign ignorance of the terror instituted by the Integristes beginning in this country in the 60's. From 1981, rings have been organized in the region of Algiers, the streets and the mosques have been invested in an insidious fashion by the Integriste preachers; the schools have been infiltrated by the fundamentalists. This phenomenon was not born yesterday. This epoch began with the first utterances of intimidation, threats, and death sentences against the intellectuals and artists. Today the Integristes have begun to take action in a more intensive and barbaric manner, after a long period of gestation, of organization and military preparation. (125)

The year Boudjedra published *Le vainqueur de la coupe*, 1981, ushered in the Intégristes, who have wrought havoc in contemporary Algeria. Since then, over 100,000 civilians have been killed

that an additional 1,000 people have been killed since the truce was signed by the military and the insurgents in January 2000. While *FIS de la haine* is a nonfiction essay that examines the political, historical, and social factors that have contributed to the creation of the terrorist phenomena in Algeria, *La vie à l'endroit* recreates the terror felt by the civilians.

The novel shares a frightening proximity to the author's life in Algeria, and depicts the emotional and moral chaos of violence on a daily clandestine life and the psychological health of two lovers, Flo, a French female doctor, and Rac, an Algerian male photographer who, like Boudjedra, has been targeted for death. Sentenced to death by the Intégristes in 1983, Boudjedra confesses to living a semiclandestine life and sleeping with a gun (*Lettres Algériennes* 116). In the novel, Rac carries a gun and cyanide to protect himself against the threat of torture. Like Boudjedra, Rac also sports a disguise that fools no one while offering only a fragile guise of protection and stripping him of his previous identity.

The novel contains several shifts from and similarities to the first novel. Sports with its star athletes, the looming presence of the uncle, birds with behavior patterns that mimic society's activity, and the postcard/photographs as a means of understanding are prominent motifs in both. The admirable characteristics of social consciousness and discipline previously attributed to the terrorist Stalin in *Le vainqueur de coupe* are now attributed to the civilian victims. Both novels develop around an assassination. Unlike the victim in *Le vainqueur de coupe*, who was a collaborator with the French, the victim in *La vie à l'endroit* is Yamaha, an illiterate popular sports hero, who has the individual courage to defy the terrorists. The change in the assassination target reflects the pronounced change in the attitude towards terrorism and the extensive escalation of terrorist activity in Algeria. *La vie à l'endroit* highlights the positive social value of sports. The people's support of Yamaha, both as an athletic hero and a rebel against the terrorism, lends the community a sense of affinity and hope.

Rac, the middle-aged protagonist of *La vie à l'endroit*, is not involved in the assassination. His age and distance from the as-

sassination suggest a more mature attitude toward and a weariness of political violence. Like the young Stalin, in the face of death, Rac is flooded with memories through which he tries to understand how the past leads to the mournful present. For the reader, Stalin's memories lend an understanding to his participation in terrorism while Rac's memories are a curative attempt to psychoanalyze himself. His memories joined with those of his French lover become a microcosm of Algerian society. In *FIS de la haine*, Boudjedra writes:

La société algérienne a besoin d'une sorte de psychanalyse sociale qui aille jusqu'au bout d'elle-même, vérifie ses paramètres, corrige ses hypocrisies, développe sa rationalité, en un mot émerge du chaos mental pour mieux maîtriser le monde du soi et le monde de l'autre. Il n'y pas mille chemins pour cela mais un seul; dire et se dire la vérité, en finir avec les faux-semblants, les faux-fuyants, les mutismes névrotiques.

Algerian society needs a sort of thoroughgoing social psychoanalysis, verifying its parameters, correcting its hypocrisies, developing its rationality, in a word, emerging out of the mental chaos to better bring under control the world of itself and the world of the other. There are not a thousand ways for this but one way; to say and to say to oneself the truth, and to end false appearances, false evasions, and neurotic muteness.
 (69)

Rac and Flo attempt to take the steps recommended by Boudjedra for his country's survival. The temporal fluctuation involves the reader in their efforts, yet unlike the first novel, neither the protagonists nor the reader is able to arrive at a comforting conclusion that reaffirms a political position. Rac, like a player in a losing game, knows that "Il est temps de remettre la vie à l'endroit" 'It is time to correctly reset life' (31), and he courageously struggles to find the way without resorting to violence.

Another striking alteration in the second novel concerns the terrorist. The current terrorists are no longer even remotely compassionate, nor are they portrayed as individuals; instead, the faceless Intégristes are drugged sadists with thinly veiled affiliations to either religious or civil powermongers. In the transitional fo-

acters, Rac and Flo, replicate what Ignatieff identifies as the new subject, a civilian who is the victim of circumstances. In our modern century, Ignatieff writes:

Genocide and famine create a new subject—the pure victim of social identity and thus bereft of the specific moral audience that would in normal times be there to hear his cry. The family, the tribe, the faith, the nation no longer exist as a moral audience for these people. If they are to be saved at all, they must put their faith in that most fearful of dependency relations: the charity of strangers. (20)

Like some misplaced and sterile Adam and Eve, Rac and Flo are left isolated and stranded. Through their biographical flashbacks, the family and political social constructions of both the French woman and the Algerian photographer are revealed as racist and dysfunctional. Rac does begin a protection unit of men. Still, his efforts do not play an integral role in the plot, nor do they alleviate his turmoil. Neither character's success in the world of the other nor their national identity offers any solace of refuge. Violence, the motor of political change in *Le vainqueur de coupe*, now causes the remains of civil society in *La vie à l'endroit* to collapse.

In the novel's examination of historical complicities, the social disintegration manifests itself in both the European and Arab family structures. Suffering from the "l'interruption généalogique" noted by Adelwahab Meddeb, both Rac and Flo suffer identity problems due to their paternal negligence. Again the family units remain fatherless, but through individual negligence rather than through historical events. Flo's father abandons her mother because of his political aspirations. During one of their discussions about their families in order to discover the source of evil, Rac sympathetically points out their similarities:

Mais Rac savait par son expression qu'elle aimait cela—car elle souffrait, comme lui, d'une sorte de perte d'identité due à l'abandon du père. Ce père instituteur emporté par son héroïsme, devenu après la Libération un sénateur arrogant et prétentieux, mesquin et cruel envers la mère de Flo, abandonnée, flouée, et trompée.

But Rac knew by her expression that she loved this—because she suffered, like him, a sort of loss of identity from being abandoned by her father. The father who became a politician because of his heroics, became after the Liberation, an arrogant and pretentious senator, miserable and cruel towards Flo's mother, who was abandoned, lost and wronged. (197)

As a young activist, Flo breaks with her father over his political inconsistencies. She cannot understand how a man who was with the French resistance against Germany can support the French presence in Algeria (76). Rac's father is absent out of personal irresponsibility. He is not mysteriously absorbed into a foreign war; rather he abandons his family to womanize and gamble his way throughout Europe. Rac's ambivalence manifests itself in his emotional reaction towards his father and in his own political posture. During a conversation with his malevolent uncle, who continually reminds Rac of his father's indiscretion, the narrator describes Rac's feelings:

Rac avait toujours haï ce père qui avait passé sa vie à bourlinguer autour du monde, à papillonner autour des femmes et à faire du commerce comme on joue au poker. Mais il éprouvait pour lui une sorte de fascination, au point qu'après sa mort, il s'était mis à visiter les villes où le patriarche était passé.

Rac had always hated his father, who had spent his life bumming around the world, flitting around women and doing business like a poker player. But he also held a fascination for him, to the point that after his death, he began to visit the cities where his father had traveled. (58)

Unlike Stalin, Rac is deprived of a positive older male role model throughout his life. Like Stalin, Rac loses his brother to the resistance yet he does not consider emulating his brother. Instead, he sees through the fundamentalist rhetoric the doctrine of hate. The benevolent older males of *Le vainqueur de coupe*, who were attempting to combat injustice, are now presented as implicated in Algeria's chaos in *La vie à l'endroit*.

Boudjedra's bitter narrative of the insidious family unit repetitively draws attention to Rac and Flo's two evil uncles, who

Le vainqueur de coupe, was a stranger known only through his photograph and reputation. In *La vie à l'endroit*, the collaborators not only walk around freely, Boudjedra locates them within the French and Algerian families. For Boudjedra, everyone shares responsibility for the Intrégristes. He writes that:

Nous sommes tous responsables de ce monstre. Non seulement nous l'avons enfanté mais nous l'avons nourri avec notre laisser-aller, avons exagéré sa force et son impact sur et dans la société. Tout le monde est responsable de cette chose là: le pouvoir, les intellectuels et le peuple, aussi.

We are all responsible for this monster. Not only have we given birth to it, we have nourished it with our 'let it go' attitude, we have exaggerated its force and its impact on and in our society. The whole world is responsible for its power, the intellectuals as well as the people. (*FIS de la haine* 49)

The shared responsibility surfaces in destructive family relationships. Changes in the character's relationship to the collaborator complicate the previous binary structure of colonizer/colonized, oppressed/oppressor. The psychological damage caused by the uncles exposes a history of collusion and infection which extends outside the nuclear family.

Flo has two uncles: an absent uncle who loves the Maghreb and a more prominent distasteful uncle who lives with her, her mother, and her grandmother. At one point, ambiguous towards her uncle, Flo comes to hate him when he refuses to teach her Latin: "Quelques années plus tard quand Flo lui demanda de lui apprendre le latin qu'il maîtrisait parfaitement, Gustave refusa brutalement. Elle ne le lui pardonna jamais et sa compassion envers lui se transforma en aversion définitive" 'Several years later when Flo asked him to teach her Latin, which he had mastered perfectly, Gustave refused brutally. She never forgave him and her compassion for him transformed into a definitive aversion' (53). By refusing to teach her Latin, the uncle pushes Flo out of the Western tradition into the Maghreb. Flo has two uncles, and she follows the path of her second uncle, Jeanne-la-terrible, who spoke perfect Arabic. Flo's uncles represent two French atti-

tudes toward Algeria. While one dismisses the Arab world, the other is sympathetic but ineffective.

Unlike Stalin's uncle, who was with the resistance, Rac's uncle is a collaborator. Rac finds him both sinister and pathetic. Despite his uncle's constant insults, Rac does not turn completely against him. When he leaves him on the street talking to himself he turns back and sees him: "L'oncle cloué au beau milieu du trottoir avait l'air piteux de quelqu'un qui se sent abandonné, ignoré, méprisé, effrayant de solitude, falot et flottant dans ses vieux habits râpés et trop grands pour lui" 'Then the uncle stuck in the middle of the street had a piteous air of someone who felt abandoned, ignored, mistrusted, frightened by his solitude, dull and lost in his old threadbare clothes which were too big for him' (143). Rac's attitude towards his uncle echoes his ambivalence towards his father. In Rac's mind, the two uncle figures fuse together: "Pour lui, son oncle était le sosie de Gustave, l'oncle de Flo, qu'elle détestait" 'For him, his uncle was the other self of Gustave, Flo's uncle, whom she hated' (50). The entire paternal structure on either side of the ocean is exposed as a decayed poison and the maternal figures fail to provide an alternative space of emotional reassurance.

Unlike other Maghrebian novels dealing with colonialism, and *Le vainqueur de coupe* in particular, the maternal figures in *La vie à l'endroit* are no longer holding together the nostalgic homestead with their saintly perseverance. Both the European and Arab mothers are browbeaten into submission and ineffectiveness by their respective families. The oppressive metaphor of family malady surfaces in both the male and the female relatives. Deserted by her successful husband, Flo's mother moves in with her mother, who blames her for the death of her father in the war. The narrator describes Flo's mother:

la mère de Flo vivant dans une perpétuelle mélancolie. Une perpétuelle déception du monde. Se laissant écraser par Jeanne, sa terrible mère qui ne cessait de lui répéter qu'elle lui avait toujours porté malheur, malchance et guigne. Qu'elle était coupable de la mort de son mari englouti dans les boues de Verdun en 1917.

Flo's mother lived in a perpetual melancholy. A perpetual disappointment by the world. She let herself be overshadowed by Jeanne, her terrible mother, who never stopped repeating that she had always brought unhappiness, bad luck and misfortune with her. That she was responsible for the death of her husband, lost in the mud of Verdun in 1917. (112)

Despite the blatant lack of logic in the accusation, a family member rather than an outsider or the war is now held responsible for the death, augmenting the psychological damage. Flo, who chooses the profession of healing, comes from a family of wounds. Not entirely innocent herself, Flo eventually breaks with her mother after transferring her paternal hatred onto her mother (198). She does not find an excuse for her mother and instead adds to the poor woman's burden. Boudjedra's portrayal of civilian cruelty is rooted in the European family, and is tempered by his empathetic portrayal of Flo. Ultimately the outcome of her family is positive: "Elle éprouvait en effet une sorte de colère, d'orgueil et de pitié pour l'humanité en général qu'elle transformait en une abnégation et un don de soi admirables" 'In effect, she felt a sort of anger, of pride, and of pity for humanity in general which she transformed into selflessness and an admirable giving of herself' (198). The sliver of hope in this depressing novel lies in the small gestures of human courage. Rac also manages to transcend the cruelty of his family.

Rac's mother is livelier than Flo's mother, yet plays a smaller role than Stalin's mother. However, like Stalin's mother, she also retires to her bed with diabetes on the death of her older son, yet she never recovers. The two scenes of the elder brother, a medical student who leaves the university to join the resistance, are almost identical, word for word.⁷ Ironically, in these twin scenes which both occur in June 1956, the vast differences between the two novels come forth. The scene of the return of the dead brother in *Le vainqueur de coupe* is described here:

C'est ainsi qu'un jour de juin 56, on avait ramené le corps de son frère aîné . . . Inoubliable blessure. . . Cicatrice profonde . . . Le cercueil se balançait à une grue du port. Son père jubilait . . . Retour de l'enfant prodigue . . . qui avait enfreint l'interdiction ancestrale de traverser la mer. Il voulait simplement faire des

études de médecine . . . on le prit en flagrant délit d'aide à l'organisation . . . Il opérât dans une cave et couturait les plaies des militants. Arrêté. Torturé. Tué. Son corps mis dans le plomb du cercueil. . . .

It was one day in June 1956. that his older brother's body was returned...unforgettably wounded...profound scar...the coffin swinging from the port's crane. His father jubilant...The return of the prodigal child.... who had broken the ancestral taboo and crossed the sea. He only wanted to study medicine...he was caught red-handed helping the Organization...He was operating in a celler and stitching the wounds of the militants. Arrested. Tortured. Killed. His body thrown into the leaden coffin . . . (39)

The scene in *La vie à l'endroit* is exactly the same, except that Boudjedra writes "faire des études. Devenu médecin" '...to study. Became a doctor'. In *Le vainqueur de coupe* the coffin of Stalin's brother "resta à se balancer au bout de la grue, au dessus du port comme pour narguer les flics et les douaniers . . ." 'hung swinging from the end of the crane, over the port as if to taunt the cops and customs officials' (39). In *La vie à l'endroit*, the insulted crowd is enlarged: the coffin "resta à se balancer au bout de la grue, au-dessus du port comme pour narguer le patriarche, les flics, les douaniers et tous les conformistes dont il avait défrayé la chronique" 'hung swinging from the end of the crane, over the port, as if to taunt to the patriarch, the cops, the custom officials and the conformists whom he had put in the news' (114). Despite the striking similarities of the two scenes, the bitterness is underscored in the second scene. Not only is the mother's reaction longer-lasting, the crowd of offenders is larger, and the associations inspired by the funeral for the respective protagonists are highly diverse. Stalin's thoughts of his strong mother and the Organization are supportive. Rac's thoughts focus on unpleasant sensations, the hysterical and hateful Koran readings, and finally his mother's prolonged retirement. The adaptations in these two similar scenes illustrate the degeneration of the domestic and political milieu. The latter protagonist has no one or nothing positive to assuage his grief.

The demise of family role models and the subsequent loss of protection lead to a realignment of team boundaries. Yamaha, the

<https://newprairiepress.org/stcl/vol25/iss2/9>
DOI: 10.4148/2334-4415.1513

assassinated sports hero, becomes the adopted maternal and paternal figure for Rac. In his shivering and tormented nightmares, Yamaha comes to cover Rac with his burnoose (169). Before his death, Yamaha attains through an athletic victory the status previously held by Stalin. When the funeral of the dead Yamaha merges with the funeral of his older brother, the mythic stranger is transformed into kin by another potential victim. Yamaha's death has more meaning than his brother's death. While his brother's death may have revealed the hypocrisy of the community, Yamaha's death now communicates the weakness of the terrorists and the strength of the country's good will. Flo remarks:

L'inutile assassinat de Yamaha est une quintessence de l'acte désespéré et suicidaire. Un aveu d'échec et l'impuissance. L'intégrisme est d'autant plus perdant qu'il s'enfonce dans une pratique démentielle de l'horreur. Des types comme Yamaha renversent le cours des choses, le sens dévoyé et perverti de l'histoire, sans même le faire exprès.

The useless assassination of Yamaha is the quintessence of a suicidal and desperate act. An admission of defeat and impotence. The Integristes are all the more lost in that they sink into a demented practice of horror. Types like Yamaha upset the course of things, corrupt meanings and perverted history, without even meaning to. (128)

The terrorist action communicates the final weakness of the Organization instead of the struggle's continuity, and the medium of the message becomes the victim rather than the perpetrator. The athlete becomes a murder victim because he, like Bachagda, defies the terrorists: "On l'a tué parce qu'il a donné un coup de pouce à l'histoire . . . parce qu'il a brisé le cercle de la peur . . ." "He was killed because he gave a finishing kick to history, because he broke the circle of fear . . ." (83). The traitor becomes the heroic martyr who moves the entire country to celebrate history and to grieve his death. Yamaha not only wins the game for Algeria, he strips terrorism of its romantic justification rooted in the self-righteousness of victimization.

In both novels, the main characters attend a sports event with a gun in their pocket and a personal political agenda, which ends

in death. One distinction in *La Vie à l'endroit* is the spectators' public, stubborn, and courageous impulse to continue a normal daily life. This indigenous crowd has no need of any political reminders or history lessons. With Yamaha's assassination, Boudjedra moves the reader's sympathy from the perpetrator towards the victim-hero and exposes the miscarriage of violence under the guise of resistance. Group support now is elicited by the non-combative athlete with "des yeux de vainqueur" 'the eyes of a champion' (135). Policemen, the shebbab, women of all ages, and even the reclusive narrator break curfew to join in the streets to recognize Yamaha's victory for an Algerian team. The stadium/temple becomes the locale to defy terrorism, a pagan ritual to confront fear with a celebratory dance in the rain. The victim of the terrorist attack who is politically innocent offers the community a momentary "respite" after condemning himself to death. Both shooting victims punished for their defiance are made an example for the internal and external community. The source of Stalin's and Yamaha's resulting mythic statures stems from radically inverted values of communal accord.

The soul searching of both Rac and Stalin centers around memories, photos, and postcards. Stalin buys a postcard to send his mother but soon realizes its inappropriateness. Later, in prison, he stares at the picture and is able to draw a timeless and international connection between himself and the athlete. Stalin's postcard of an Etruscan athlete allows him to escape his penal isolation and place himself in a larger temporal context. Rac has postcards sent from his father, family photos, the photos he takes of Yamaha, and the stolen pictures of the victims of massacres. His futile search for visual clues for understanding duplicates the reader's quest to understand. In front of his adolescent nightmares captured in the postcards and photos, he can only diagnose the family weaknesses; the past offers no simple solutions to the present or the future. Rac's memories are not excuses for retaliation. He revisits the deaths of his youth and is not moved to revenge. In contrast, the loss of Yamaha, a stranger, almost prompts Rac to suicide. Rac mourns the loss of a mythic hero who shared his values and hopes.

He has Flo steal the photos of the decapitated and violated massacre victims from the hospital. Stalin, as a terrorist, took care not to shoot Bachagha while he was praying. Under the banner of religion and politics, the Muslim fundamentalists take assassinations to another level of cruelty. Boudjedra writes: "Le FIS ne tue pas seulement. Il égorge les innocents. Il décapite ses adversaires. Il mutile les cadavres. Il viole les femmes. Il brûle les écoles. Personne n'échappe à sa folie meurtrière et mortifères" 'The FIS do not only kill. They slit the throats of the innocent. They decapitate their enemies. They mutilate the dead bodies. They rape the women. They burn the schools. No one is able to escape their murderous and deadly insanity' (*FIS de la haine* 115). Like Stalin, before he kills Bachagda, Rac does not know whether to urinate or vomit when viewing the photographic evidence of the massacres. His physical confusion reflects his intellectual and emotional confusion. Torn apart by an attempted desire to take punitive action, he strives to cultivate an emotional distance that would allow him to be unaffected by the required change in his personality, which would in turn allow him to react violently. Simultaneously he refuses to find refuge in the banal. Rather than harden himself, Rac maintains his sensitivity to the horror and restrains his *laissez faire* attitude of depression through his obsession with these pictures. Stalin found comfort in his postcard in prison, yet Rac uses the photographs to remind himself that he is trapped by fear and brutality. His life is reduced to subjecting himself to looking at these pictures, vomiting, and living another day. Rac heroically struggles to sustain his minimal existence and safeguard his own wounded humanity in a prison without walls, all the more frightening. Both Rac and Flo are caught in an inescapable hell: "L'anxiété s'était nichée au plus profond de leurs entrailles et le doute les submergeait parfois. L'inquiétude s'installait alors malgré leur courage et leur rage, malgré leur conviction et leur choix inébranlables" 'Anxiety cut into their deepest guts and sometimes doubt overcame them. Worry took root within them, despite their courage and their rage, despite their conviction and their unshakable choice' (126). Their fear denies them the peaceful sleep of Stalin.

The marked contrast between the two novels captures the metamorphosis of terrorist activity as an act of political revolt into the revolting violence of widespread terrorism. While *Le vainqueur de coupe* exposes the underbelly of colonization, and leads to a human understanding of the terrorist, the novel perpetuates the myths of justice, nationalism, and the armed struggle. As Michael Wiervorka advises, "As long as the myth exists, the armed struggle will continue to manifest itself" (195). While the first novel suggests an understanding of terrorism, the second novel presents a weary world, where innocence has been murdered and the understanding offered by the first novel is no longer applicable. As the situation becomes more complicated, the simple human ethic becomes more pronounced. *La vie à l'endroit* painfully begins to dismantle the terrorist myth illuminating the harsh ramifications of political self-righteousness and, like Rac's photographs, leaves only the perverted evidence behind.

Notes

1. Even though Douglas S. Derrer observes that only ten percent of the terrorist activity today against the United States comes out of the Middle East, he writes "Terrorism emerged from the cradle of colonization in the Middle East" with the Jewish zealots who fought Roman oppression with assassinations (84). He observes that "This early terrorist endeavor contains all the elements of modern agitational terrorism: oppressors and oppressed, a rebellious group assaulting symbolic targets to create a climate for revolution, and more government repression followed by guerilla attacks that lead to civil war" (84). However, Bruce Hoffman draws attention to a different historical period: "The word 'terrorism' was first popularized during the French Revolution. In contrast to its contemporary usage, at that time, terrorism had a decidedly positive connotation" (15).

2. In an interview, Boudjedra remembers his attraction to Marxism:

J'ai découvert le marxisme à dix-sept ans et j'ai tout de suite adhéré à cette idéologie parce que j'ai été un enfant rebelle. Rebelle à tout un contexte sociologique caractérisé essentiellement par les relations féodales qui existaient à l'intérieur de ma famille.

L'hypocrisie, le mensonge, le nondit et l'exploitation y régnaient d'une façon révoltante. Donc, très tôt, le marxisme m'a semblé comme une philosophie, une vision du monde qui s'opposait à cette féodalité familiale.

At seventeen, I discovered Marxism and I adhered to this ideology at once because I was a rebellious youth. Rebellious against everything in the sociological context characterized essentially by feudal relationships which existed within my family. Hypocrisy, lies, the unspoken, and exploitation ruled there in a revolting fashion. Thus, very quickly, Marxism appeared to me as a philosophy, a vision of the world which was opposed to this feudal family. (27)

He further explains the significance of being a Marxist in Algeria:

Etre marxiste, aujourd'hui, en Algérie, c'est être pour le progrès réel. Pour l'égalité des sexes, des chances et contre l'exploitation humaine. C'est aussi être pour la défense esthétique du monde. Etre marxiste, c'est une façon originale d'appréhender le réel, par rapport à une idéologie dominante floue, tiraillée par le capitalisme et tentée par le socialisme.

To be a Marxist today in Algeria is to be for real progress. For sexual equality, for opportunities, and against the exploitation of human beings. It is also to be for an aesthetic defense of the world. To be Marxist is an original way of understanding the real, in the face of the dominant blurred ideology, vexed by capitalism and tempted by socialism. (30)

3. For French Marxist Louis Althusser, sports and sporting events are activities that instill and reinforce nationalism and chauvinism. Sports are utilized by the state as part of the "Ideological State Apparatus" as opposed to the "Repressive State Apparatus" which utilizes force to impose doctrine ("Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" 154). Yet James Riordan points out that sports have been a means of revolution as well as a means of social control. In *The Story of Worker Sport*, he writes that between World War I and World War II "Sport played a paramount role in the struggle against capitalist nationalism and militarism that pervaded the so-called 'politically neutral' bourgeois sport organizations and, through them, corrupted young working people" (vii).

4. There is an overwhelming number of studies on the "terrorist personality." In *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism*, Robin Morgan draws on several of these studies. It is primarily of someone

male, young, of 'good' family, educated and cultured and skilled, showing precocity and accomplishment, uprooted and experientially mobile due to a period of upheaval, inflamed by the situation, and possessed by the suffering of his people" (67). However, the current situation in Algeria questions the previously drawn conclusions on the terrorist personality.

5. The constant and powerful threat of torture replaces the fear of death in both novels.

6. A terrorist protagonist similar to Stalin can also be seen in *Gloire des Sables* and *La rage aux tripes suivi de Rage et sang pour une grande bataille* by the Tunisian novelist, Mustaph Tlili.

7. There are other notable similarities between the two texts as well as with other novels by Boudjedra. Both Stalin and Rac are awarded scholarships based on their mathematical gifts and both have an adverse relationship with a French teacher whom they later win over when they visit her, carrying flowers. My point is not to stress the similarities but to utilize the similarities to chart the transition from sympathy to condemnation.

Works Cited

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation." *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971. 127-86.

Boudjedra, Rachid. *FIS de la haine*. Paris: Denoël, 1992.

—. *Lettres algériennes*. Paris: Grasset, 1995.

—. *Le vainqueur de coupe*. Paris: Denoël, 1981.

—. *La Vie à l'endroit*. Paris: Grasset, 1997.

Derrer, Douglas S. *We Are All the Target: A Handbook of Terrorism Avoidance and Hostage Survival*. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1992.

Drake, C.J.M. *Terrorists' Target Selection*. London: MacMillan Press, 1998.

- Gafaiti, Hafid. *Boudjedra ou la passion de la modernité*. Paris: Denoël, 1987.
- Hoffman, Bruce. *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1998.
- Ignatieff, Michael. *The Warrior's Honor, Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998.
- Long, David E. *The Anatomy of Terrorism*. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1990.
- Meddeb, Abdelwahab. "L'interruption généalogique." *Les Violences en Algérie*. Paris: Odile Jacob, 1998. 190-207.
- Morgan, Robin. *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism*. New York: Norton, 1988.
- Murray, William. "The Worker Sport Movement in France" *The Story of Worker Sport*, eds. Arnd Krüger and James Riordan. Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1996. 27-42.
- Oliverio, Anna Maris. *The State of Terror*. Albany, New York: State U of New York P, 1998.
- Smith, Roberta. "Art in Review." *New York Times* 12 September 1997: C1.
- Stora, Benjamin. "Algérie: absence et surabondance de mémoire." *Les Violences en Algérie*. Paris: Odile Jacob, 1998. 142-76.
- Tlili, Mustapha. *Gloire des sables*. Paris: Gallimard, 1982.
- . *La rage au tripes suivi de Rage et sang pour une grande bataille*. Paris: Gallimard, 1995.
- Weber, Samuel. "Wartime." *Violence, Identity, and Self-Determination*. Ed. Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997. 80-105.
- Wieviorka, Michel. *The Making of Terrorism*. Trans. David Gordon White. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.