Bastardy and Irreverence:
The Injuries of Kinship in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia

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Abstract: Dismissing generic and instrumentalized portrayals of angry Arab youth in regional and international discourse, this article interrogates ethnographically the agonistic dimensions of generational relations in post-revolutionary Tunisia. It draws on encounters between older and younger left militants and explores the tropes and tone of young militant narratives in order to demonstrate that the revolution opened up a space for the drastic renegotiation of patriarchy in both generational and gendered terms. The article connects with earlier anthropological work on generational irreverence across the Maghrib and revisits its insights into the mutual constitution of kinship and politics through testing such insights within the affordances of a post-revolutionary space. It argues that bastardy and irreverence become the position and attitude that allow young Tunisian militants to separate themselves from the patriarchal myths of personal and national alliance. Their assault on perceptions of Tunisian social reality provides a corrective to ritualistic depictions of revolution in the region and beyond.

Keywords: Revolution, Kinship, Generation, Gender, Bastardy, Irreverence, Genealogy, Intimacy.

From the first row of a theatre hall at the "April 9th" Campus at the University of Tunis, lights still dimmed moments after the screening of a documentary film that recounts the prolonged imprisonment and torture of left militants during the presidency of Habib Bourguiba (1956-1987), the surviving members of the group stood up to face the audience and jumpstart discussion. With sober gazes but body language and voices that evinced their determination to speak not as victims but as political actors, they took turns praising the film while adding their own biographical details. One of the veteran militants highlighted that both film and its screening partake in a broader project of public testimony and discussion so that "history is written anew and that this experience can be transmitted to our youth." When asked by one of the students to assess the legacy of President Bourguiba, a veteran responded: "He was a hard father, but we disobeyed him because we were free men. I encourage all the youth here to disobey!"

At first glance, this occasion can be understood as a localized process of transitional justice and an opportunity to educate a supposedly nascent democratic public on the silenced parts of the country's history. Yet as

seen from the perspective of young left militants in attendance, both the film-screening and the statements quoted above were offensive. Having participated in underground resistance before 2011, having endured police ferocity and the social exclusions that ensued from their confrontations with President Zin al-Abidinne Ben Ali's illiberal state (1987-2011), and having suffered the losses of friends and comrades during the popular uprisings, these young militants were not receptive to a lecture on dissent and disobedience delivered by veterans. They articulated their vexation in terms that merit careful consideration. During the discussion, Hamza, a young militant I had befriended and accompanied on various civil society initiatives, fidgeted in his seat and exhaled in exasperation. As the veteran militants positioned themselves as the icons of opposition and revolution across Tunisian history, Hamza mumbled: "To hell with Bourguiba's sons! I'd rather be a bastard."

In post-revolutionary Tunisia, the disjuncture between older and younger militants undercut a plethora of occasions aimed at consolidating and operationalizing shared legacies of political thought and praxis notwithstanding the orientation of these legacies (among which trade unionism, left, religious, or feminist militantism). More often than not, older and younger activists did not frequent the same forums for discussion and organization. On the few occasions they did, one could not miss a pattern in the unfolding of the organized event: an older generation of political dissenters would take centre stage after years of legal persecution, economic marginalization, and silence. Their stories and opinions sought, either covertly or overtly, recognition of their historical contribution in prefiguring the Tunisian revolution of 2011 and the political transition towards democracy ever since. It was not uncommon for such requests to be rebutted by younger voices who objected on both ideological and experiential grounds the generational hierarchy that such testimonies and declarations implicitly set into place. On a panel on pan-Mediterranean alter-globalization action organized during the World Social Forum held in Tunis in March 2015, young activist Nadia articulated this objection forcefully: "This is the time to be irreverent to the old generation, even to left militants. I am so sick of listening about their imprisonment and torture. Let's talk of something else!"

On what grounds do Hamza and Nadia sever their ties with these veterans despite their seemingly shared political commitments? The register of classificatory patriarchal kinship deployed by both the older militants (the disobedient sons of Bourguiba) and younger ones (the bastard son) provides an entry point to this quandary. The public expression of irreverence towards these older militants addresses normative understandings of relations within

the home, which have also regulated social and political interactions. Such understandings allocate younger members of the family to a position of apprenticeship and an attitude of deference towards the older patriarch. This article explores the denaturalisation of kinship by younger militants and their search for reconfiguring the injuries of patriarchal kinship, construing it as both a statement of alliance and affiliation, and an idiom for citizenship. The emphasis on vexation, denunciation, and irreverence does not claim to represent the entirety of Tunisian experiences of either generation or revolution. Rather, it aims to complicate reductive and neutralized understandings of the Tunisian "people," a obscurantist term for those interested to see how diverse Tunisians grapple with momentous socio-cultural and political change. Extending Sian Lazar's call to engage in a "kinship anthropology of politics" as "the imbrication of kinship language, political ideology, local political practice, and collective sociability,"[1] I propose a kinship anthropology of the Tunisian revolution. My aim is to interrogate how the revolution affected and reconfigured kinship while showing how kinship expands our very understandings of the revolution – its spaces, temporalities, repertoires, and affects. The article draws on a legacy of penetrating insights on kinship and politics in the Maghrib. It also aims at re-situating and, by consequence, revisiting these insights in a society that has experienced what it unequivocally calls a *thawra* (revolution). By doing the above, the article complicates recent anthropological theorizations of revolutions that assign ritualistic features to revolutions.

A Kinship Anthropology of Revolution

Reflecting on the first year of the revolution that overthrew the 23-year-long dictatorship of the RCD party (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique) headed by President Zine al-Abidinne Ben Ali, Jocelyne Dakhlia alerted us to the ongoing and necessary negotiations that the revolution engendered among the social fabric. While such negotiations have intersected the procedural set up of republican electoral democracy, they have also by far exceeded it:

> "We are all faced with an intimate revolution […]. The end of the dictatorship inaugurated debates on a number of frictions that were previously swept under the carpet, repressed to such a degree that we had almost forgotten them or had come to only approach through insinuation and innuendo (my translation)."[2]

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1. Sian Lazar, "A 'Kinship Anthropology of Politics'? Interest, the Collective Self, and Kinship in Argentine Unions," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 24, 2 (2018): 257.

2. Jocelyne Dakhlia, "L'an 1 de la Révolution tunisienne ou les résurgences d'un passé qui divise Jocelyne Dakhlia," *Nachaz/Dissonances*, July 3rd 2012, http://nachaz.org/lan-i-de-la-revolution-tunisienne-ou-les-resurgences-dun-passe-qui-divise-jocelyne-dakhlia/.

Adopting a similar approach, Malika Zeghal distinguished between, on the one hand, general consensus over the drastic recalibration of institutional politics and, on the other, vivid disagreements over the meaning of citizenship, freedom, and good life among the Tunisian citizenry. Zeghal argues that while the revolution invited cohesion premised on the vision that "the future was reconfigurable," democratic transition summoned the Tunisian public to confront its diverse fissures.[3] These sharp observations on Tunisian society converge with the recent anthropology of revolutions, where the MENA region features prominently, which has deployed Victor Turner's theorization of ritual as a social drama unfolding in the tripartite scheme of separation, liminality, and re-aggregation to discuss both macropolitical change and the ambiguities of contemporary political experience.[4] The above lines of inquiry have seen in the Arab Revolutions of 2011 the momentary forging of "a people" (*al-shaʿb*) and the subsequent mutation of this people through the re-emergence of hierarchies and antagonisms. While astute and productive, these analyses have not interrogated the dynamics of antagonism and division into many areas of social life that deserve our attention, and by consequence have not adequately complicated either the presumed linearity or the singularity of the meaning of the revolution among Tunisian citizens.

Notwithstanding their substantial insights, these synergetic lines of inquiry have inadvertently contributed to a series of misrecognitions of Tunisian society: first, scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on the fissures between 'secularism' and 'Islamism' at the expense of exploring the strains within these socio-political projects, strains that emanated out of the differentiating experiences of gender, generation, and class.[5] Second, the scholarship that connected the discussion of institutional politics with questions of interaction and interiority primarily addressed gender by centering on the question of women's bodily integrity as metaphor for the social order.[6] Third, insofar as

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3. Zeghal, Malika, "Competing Ways of Life: Islamism, Secularism, and Public Order in the Tunisian Transition," *Constellations* 20, 2 (2013): 254-74.

4. For anthropological analyses of the Arab Revolutions, see Bjørn Thomassen, "Notes Towards an Anthropology of Political Revolutions," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, 3 (2012): 679-706; Walter Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters: An Ethnography of the Egyptian Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2019). For an analysis of ritual as social drama see Victor, Turner. *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Cornell University Press, 1974). For a political science overview of the Tunisian Revolution, see Sami Zemni, "From Revolution to Tunisianité: Who is the Tunisian People? Creating Hegemony through Compromise," Middle East Law and Governance 8, 2-3 (2016): 131-50.

5. Jessica Winegar develops this critique in her analysis of the Egyptian Revolution. See Jessica Winegar, "The Privilege of Revolution: Gender, Class, Space, and Affect in Egypt," *American Ethnologist* 39, 1 (2012): 67-70.

6. For analyses of the entanglement of libidinal desire and state or global security politics, see Abir Kréfa, "Les rapports de genre au cœur de la revolution" *Pouvoirs* 1 (2016): 119-36; Paul Amar, "Middle

generation featured in socio-political analysis, it did so through an ideal-type lens: it projected a generic portrayal of economically disenfranchised and politically frustrated youth turning against an equally nonspecific parental generation construed as economically subservient and politically defeated.[7] My ethnographic interrogation of the negotiation of revolution among Tunisian citizens since 2013 brought me close to modes of deliberation, types of affect, and practical choices that point to kinship as a fecund though turbulent terrain through which citizens test the potentialities and affordances of their post-revolutionary present.[8]

While this article cannot do justice to the imbrication of kinship and state politics in Tunisia, the following points may help contextualize these denunciations of patriarchal genealogy in left militantism. Despite modernist European claims to disaggregate the individual from the bonds of filiation, kinship through descent (parent-child) remains the basis for the organization of citizenship rights and provisions in the vast majority of late modern nation-states.[9] Tunisia's new constitution ratified in January 2013 preserves this generative principle through article 7 "the family is the nucleus of society and the state shall protect it."[10] This organisational nucleus aligns with the country's Personal Status Code established a few months after Tunisian's Independence from France in 1956, which, albeit transformative of certain aspects of family law, remains bound to the principles of patrilineal agnatic decent.[11] The first post-Independence sovereign government aligned the language of kinship

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East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of 'Men in Crisis,' Industries of Gender in Revolution," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 7, 3 (2011): 36-70; Valentine M. Moghadam, "What is Democracy? Promises and Perils of the Arab Spring," *Current Sociology* 61, 4 (2013): 393-408.

7. Besides the fact that the iconic figures of the Islamist, the woman, and the youth have inadvertently aligned themselves with the interventionist projects of both international democracy promotion and anti-terrorism securitization, they have perpetuated an elliptic understanding of social relations during a momentous time for Tunisian society. For a more detailed discussion see Mayssoun Sukarieh, "From Terrorists to Revolutionaries: The Emergence of 'Youth' in the Arab World and the Discourse of Globalization," *Interface* 4, 2 (2012): 424-37. For a study of this phenomenon inTunisia see Charis Boutieri, "The Democratic Grotesque: Dissensus and Masquerade in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia," (In Preparation)

8. This paper is part of a larger research project that traces the interaction of agonistic politics and democracy promotion in post-revolutionary Tunisia. Embedded in the landscape of civic education from 2013 to 2016, the project sheds light on the intersection of social practices, cultural histories, and regulatory mechanisms that constitute the terrain of the negotiation of revolution and democracy.

9. Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "Notes on Gridlock: Genealogy, Intimacy, Sexuality," *Public Culture* 14, 1 (2002): 217.

10. The significance of this codification is noted by Alyssa Miller, "Kin-Work in a Time of Jihad: Sustaining Bonds of Filiation and Care for Tunisian Foreign Combatants," *Cultural Anthropology* 33, 4 (2018): 600.

11. Despite modifications, family law still draws in part on principles of jurisprudence derived from the Qu'ran and the Sunna. See Mounira Charrad. *States and Women's Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco* (California: University of California Press, 2001).

with techniques of paternalistic governance in both the official portrayals of the Tunisian state and its description of Tunisian society. Nouri Gana points to paternalism as the scaffold of the cult of personality of the first President Habib Bourguiba, who projected himself as the founder of the Tunisian nation and hence the procreator of all Tunisians.[12] Paternalism continued to support state governance during the presidency of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, evidence of which is his family's control of economic activity in the country.[13] Given how fundamental it has been in the official organization and signification of collective Tunisian life, it is no surprise that kinship would be at the centre of citizens' renegotiation of authority in the post-revolutionary period.

The anthropology of the Maghrib has produced rich interrogations of the intersection of agnatic descent and political subjectivity. While informed by a number of studies that address this intersection in ways that honour both its complexity and its unpredictability, this article draws more heavily on Abdellah Hammoudi's study of lived authoritarianism in Morocco, a study whose precise focus is to map the terrain of intimate relations where "abstract principles of legitimation are vested with an emotional impact sufficient to foster action."[14] The fluidity of the patriarchal model as it travels across a range of social relations and the weight Hammoudi places on the Abrahamic Sacrifice as a dramatization of subordination allow me to discuss what it means to be revolutionary inside the patriarchal family when this family is both the principal social unit and the nucleus of political organization with the nation-state. At the same time, this article adapts Hammoudi's model to discuss young militant efforts to reconfigure intimacy, understood as a range of experiences of care, obligation, and libidinal desire that may not align with the genealogical grid.[15]

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12. For further elaboration of this point see Michel Camau and Vincent Geisser. *Habib Bourguiba; La trace et l'héritage* (Paris: Karthala Editions, 2004); Nouri Gana, "Sons of a Beach; The Politics of Bastardy in the Cinema of Nouri Bouzid," *Cultural Politics* 13, 2 (2017): 177-93.

13. For further elaboration of this point see Béatrice Hibou. *La force de l'obéissance: Économie politique de la répression en Tunisie* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006). An analysis of Tunisia's paternalistic economy despite rapid neoliberalization can also be found in a World Bank report. See Rijkers, Bob, Caroline Freund, and Antonio Nucifora, *All in the Family: State Capture in Tunisia*. Journal of Development Economics, Elsevier, vol. 124(C), pages 41-59. (March 1, 2014). World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 6810, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2415016. The World Bank, 2014.

14. Abdellah Hammoudi. *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 2.

15. For a recent anthropological analysis of intimacy in region see Asli Zengin and Sertaç Sehlikoglu, "Everyday Intimacies of the Middle East," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 12, 2 (2016): 139-42.

Bastardy

Hamza, the young militant who claimed bastardy at the beginning of the article, grew up in the impoverished interior town of Siliana, studied in the southeast industrialized city of Sfax, and currently lived in Tunis pursuing his activism for the protection of the agricultural labor force. He supported himself through bartending and seasonal work. His deep-set eyes, lean figure, worn out jeans and long ponytail flagged his distance from urban bourgeois expectations of appearance as evidence of both status and self-care. In the time we spent together, he smoked way more than he ate and it was never clear whether he had stable accommodation as he would always spend the night at a friend's house. After participating in the demonstrations that overthrew Ben Ali's regime in 2011, Hamza threw himself into forging connections with people in the region who were working on promoting a left vision of political participation and of egalitarianism guaranteed not just through rights but also through material redistribution. Yet his militantism dates well before 2011, back when he joined the Tunisian Workers' party (*ḥizb al-'ummāl*):

> "I joined the workers' party at the age of 14 and formed a cell with three more students at school to circulate fliers and organize meetings. It was all clandestine. When the *mudīr* (principal) caught on to what we were doing, the slapped me hard in the face, expelled me from school (I was finally reinstated after pressure from the student body), and he gave me to the police. I was interrogated. These were our educators!"

Hamza had a biting critique of the perverse dynamics of Tunisian social life during his adolescence inside what he called "Ben Ali's prison state." He summarized it as follows:

> "The most terrible thing was that people would look at you everywhere, lean to hear in your private conversations, watch you everywhere you went!"

He repeatedly mentioned being disgusted with the way every citizen of that state had turned into an enforcer of social order, from the owner of the café eavesdropping on clients, to bus drivers who would report on passenger conversations, to teachers who rummaged through the students' rucksacks in search of political leaflets. Given these perverse exchanges with his fellow townsmen, I wondered how Hamza interacted with the people of Siliana after the 2011 revolution:

> "I have become unforgiving and I insult them to their face. None of these people have apologized for what they did to us back then. In fact,

some have tried to defend their position with the line that the Ben Ali era was much safer and that they were right to be protecting that state. I call them pieces of shit. I know that some were coerced, others were threatened, and that there were those who volunteered the information. In any case, they are either cowards (*jabān*) or traitors (*khāʾin*)."

Hamza narrated how he felt silenced from every adult in this life, including the elder members of his party. He criticized the party for asking high school students to distribute fliers and the party's journal knowing that the prison sentence if arrested was 5 years. He left the party after the following incident. In January 2009, leftists and human rights activists organized a march in support of Gaza on Mohammed V avenue in Tunis. While the march was taking place, there was a strike in the Tunisia's mining basin in Rdhaif, Gafsa. Some of the youth who joined the march decided to sing slogans that were not about Gaza but about the mining strikes. While the state tolerated the former, it was sure to try to silence the latter. Hamza was shocked to see that on this occasion older militants rushed to muffle the young protesters:

"They called us parasites for injecting the march with other messages and for asking for trouble from the authorities! From that point onwards, I have been in a permanent state of revolt against power, that of my teacher, my principal, the party elders."

I asked Hamza if his own parents were sources of political inspiration. He shrugged his shoulders in disappointment and responded that no, they were not at all political:

"My father is a teacher of French, I guess he was critical in some ways, but he was always vague about it. When the time came to go to the streets, he did not budge from this chair and warned me against demonstrating myself. Like hell I would obey him. I jumped out of my bedroom window. My mother does not work. When people ask me about her, I tell them she is *chômeuse* (unemployed) because nobody pays for her services. She thinks that she is serving her family but essentially the state exploits her, society exploits her, and my father exploits her. I try not to go back home."

When recounting his life at home, Hamza communicated a sense of entrapment in the routine experience of filial obedience:

"I would be woken up at 6am every day by my dad trying to switch the engine of his very old car. This sound landed on me like a whip, reminding me that I lived under his roof and had to abide by his schedule.

As I didn't have a job, I would help my mother with her daily shopping chores, which bored me to death. I did not want to eat their food or sleep under the same roof."

Hamza's denunciation of the authority of elders, be it his educators, political leaders, or parents is consistent with his distancing from the veteran militants at the film screening through the declaration of bastardy. Their explicit affiliation with President Bourguiba, the political leader who sanctioned their torture and prison sentences, is so vexing to Hamza that he claims the unaffiliated position of the bastard. This is an especially marginal position in a society legally intolerant of non-marital sex and offspring born out of wedlock. If the veteran militants used the idiom of kinship to emphasize their socio-cultural affinity with a secular and modernizing leader, Hamza's bastardy is an attempt to break frame with this normative portrayal of Tunisian society. The enactment of this break involves a refusal of commensality, of cohabitation, and of intimacy with his parents, practices that usually maintain if not essentially define kin ties.[16] His appropriation of the social status of bastardy is a conscious performance of severing the patriarchal genealogical grid that corners him into the position of an obedient son, student, and young party member. A bastard is still genealogically connected through the mother, but a mother equally tarnished by the stigma of patriarchal law, and hence in similar need of deliverance. Tellingly, Hamza presents his mother as both material and sexually enslaved to a scalar patriarchal domination: "The state exploits her, society exploits her, and my father exploits her." In his powerful analysis of the opus of Tunisian cinematographer Nouri Bouzid, Nouri Gana positions bastardy at the centre of Tunisia's history through the act of colonial rape and through forms of promiscuous sexual activity that create a space for dissenting thought and praxis.[17] For Nouri Bouzid, as for Nouri Gana, dissent does not only emanate out of a structural exclusion, but actually springs from an attitude of irreverence towards both the material and symbolic pillars of Tunisian society. Among these are the patriarchal family and the drama of the Abrahamic sacrifice as the central principle of collective belonging. In what follows, I explore irreverence directed at this instance of patriarchal domination, the sacrifice.

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16. See Janet Carsten. *After Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Susan McKinnon, and Fenella Cannell, eds., *Vital Relations: Modernity and the Persistent Life of Kinship* (New Mexico: SAR Press, 2013); Marshall Sahlins, *What Kinship Is-and is Not* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

17. Gana, "Sons of a Beach," 177. Gana argues that assuming the condition of bastardy constitutes the opportunity for the reinvention of the Tunisian public out of the shackles of its various patriarchs.

Irreverence

Nadia, the young woman who spoke up at the World Social Forum and one of the most visible figures in the alter-globalization movement in Tunisia, gave me an equally audacious position against patriarchal kinship and the socio-political schemata of legitimation that it engenders. Our first conversation in a café-bar frequented by young Tunisian activists in the capital was interrupted by a number of phone calls she received in relation to her work and a series of people who entered the café, all of whom knew her by her first name. It took me a few weeks to realize that the café was her office space. Nadia had founded an association that supported communal initiatives for reviving local economies in a self-sufficient way that circumvented foreign donors and national funding bodies. Before meeting her at the World Social Forum in 2015, Nadia came to my attention through YouTube, where she uploaded a number of presentations of the association she headed. Confident, assertive, and articulate, Nadia appeared to me as a real force of nature both on screen and in person. Her narrative of how she came to be an activist was the following:

> "I grew up in a conservative neighbourhood in the suburbs of the capital and I can honestly say I never fitted in. My tomboy appearance and my fuck-off attitude were anathema to my parents. Both of them insulted me regularly and locked me up as a punishment. I wanted to kill myself. When I went to university, I got involved in a small social campaign to raise funds for a sick fellow student. I found that I was very good at it. You see, 'invention created by necessity' was my life motto. This is the attitude I brought to my activism."

In a parallel move to Hamza, Nadia posits the escape of repressive familial relations as transformative praxis. Preceding the political transformation brought about by the revolution and the period of democratic transition, Nadia sought to engage the politics of home and university through ruse and manoeuvring. As her personal experiences of rupture had preceded the revolution, I presumed that Nadia's activism flourished during the citywide protests of December 2010 and January 2011. She corrected me:

> "During that time, I secretly worked at a radio station. It was there that I first heard of the self-immolation of this boy from Sidi Bouzid. To tell you the truth, I don't buy any of the official story. Apparently, he killed himself because this female official slapped him in the face. But I wonder, what did he do to her first? I would not be surprised if the true story is that he offended her or even groped her, and she retaliated. In any

case, my father locked me at home during the entire period of protests. I could not physically participate in anything, though I could feel the energy and was encouraged by it."

Hence during the much-publicized events of 2011, Nadia forcibly remained at home. Yet she eventually managed to escape home, and for good. Two years after the revolution, Nadia fled her home never to return or seek contact with her parents. Her friends, whom she called "a protective net," gave her shelter and helped her keep her whereabouts secret from her family.

Nadia's candid description of her relationship to the patriarchal home as one of alienation and humiliation is intensified by the fact that Nadia engages in a public narration in the space of the café. By bringing the intimate everyday violence of her household into the public domain, she blurs the lines between conventional and unconventional spaces of experiencing intimacy. More drastically than Hamza, Nadia forfeits the alliances of her family network and forges others by relying on her friends for temporary roof and emotional support after her escape. Anthropologists have repeatedly pointed to practices of "fictive" kinship that may not align with the axes of genealogy.[18] Living away from the parental home and with peers, constructing a daily routine in public space such as cafés where activists exchanged ideas and organized initiatives over drinks or food, allows for intimacy and alliance based on the sharedness of worldviews. This intimacy and alliances are theoretically devoid of the hierarchy of age and the determinism of blood ties, relying instead on a "mutuality of being."[19] Shifting from genealogy to care and love as the main modes of connecting, Nadia separated kinship from social standing.

Even more arresting is her interpretation of the inauguration of the revolution. Nadia is aware that care and love have not escaped the spheres of governance especially given their absorption by nationalist ideology.[20] Mohammed Bouazizi has been adopted by a range of political positions – the marginalized interior regions have claimed him as their native, the unemployed youth have seen in him a metonym for their condition, and the post-revolutionary governments of 2011, 2013, and 2014 have referred to him as the sacrificial victim that set in motion Tunisia's transition to democracy. Yet it is in contestation of this sacrificial discourse that Nadia reinterprets

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18. I borrow the term "fictive" kinship from Jenny B. White, *Money Makes us Relatives: Women's Labor in Urban Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 99.

19. Sahlins, *What Kinship Is – and is Not*, 2.

20. Povinelli, "Notes on the Gridlock," 232. In her study of the families of Tunisian foreign combatants in Syria, Alyssa Miller shows how Tunisia's post-revolutionary entry into the global War on Terror hinged on engaging citizens as parents to monitor their own children out of love for their well-being and that of the nation. Miller, "Kin-Work."

young Mohammed Bouazizi's act as the unfortunate result of his injured masculinity. The irreverence Nadia displays towards the by now foundational myth of the regional revolutions is a *coup de force* against the metonymization of the revolution in the icon of the enraged young man. Instead, she raises the question of the libidinal aspects of desire and destruction that prompted the sacrificial act.[21]

In her interpretation, the Abrahamic trope is dealt a fatal blow as Nadia refuses to glorify Bouazizi as the sacrificial son of the Tunisian nation who occasions the renewal of such nation through the very patriarchal structure that has ensured social and political oppression. Connecting through care and creating spaces of intimacy with unclassified and self-generated 'kin' becomes a conscious, targeted effort to re-signify the social fabric. This experiential overturning has implications for scholarship; in a region that is overdetermined by the language of tribal affiliation and the religious codification of social relations, the genealogical grid has dominated discussions of social relations at the expense of looking at the exceptions, the dissenting positions, and the reconfigurations of the social through other forms of intimacy. Hamza and Nadia indicate the range of experiences in the post-revolutionary landscape that redraw existing lines of social belonging.

Kinship and Revolution

How does the Tunisian revolution and the affordances of a post-revolutionary present articulate with shifts in kinship relations? The two activists of this article structure their sociality in contestation of patriarchal norms and through enduring the intimate ruptures with parental figures. As evident from their personal chronologies, the political revolution of 2011 constitutes the backdrop to their individual transformations; yet there is no neat correlation between the intimate and the institutional neither in temporal nor experiential terms. Their narratives expose the inadequacy of the generic glorification of revolutionary youth through the ideal-type male revolutionary occupying the public sphere at the same time as they destabilize the equally reductive portrayals of disillusioned and disenfranchised youth that have become the faceless targets of state securitization. Their interaction with their own parents and older generations at large, in which they include the left militants who opened this chapter, are illustrative of the imbrication of kinship and revolution in the lives of Tunisian citizens. In what follows, I return to bastardy and irreverence as the position and attitude respectively that allow

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21. It is worth noting that Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation came under scrutiny by diverse members of the Tunisian public. See Joel Rozen, "Civics Lesson: Ambivalence, Contestation, and Curricular Change in Tunisia," *Ethnos* 80, 5 (2015): 605-29.

them to disaggregate genealogy from social and political affiliation. Bastardy and irreverence target sacrifice as the trope that best enables patriarchal domination and therefore rework the revolution not as sacrificial ritual, but as a breach in perceptions of social reality.

Before I do, I need to clarify that my analysis of the imbrication of kinship and politics does not amount to subsuming institutional transformation into kinship through psychologizing the political, that is viewing revolutionary subjectivity or praxis solely or mainly as the symptom of the tyranny of genealogical filiation. I do however suggest that we bring the intimate domain into analyses of politics by seeing how people experience exceptional change via the mediation of relational and emotional frames. This position allows us to both credit these young militants with lucid and consequential political positions on the institutional level and explore the challenges of their interaction with a parental generation that they see beholden to socio-cultural attitudes that they perceive as threatening. This difficult negotiation cannot be neutralized as a generically understood generational conflict: long-term political repression from colonialism, to nationalism, and the neoliberal autocracies of the recent present, the ways this political repression regulated material distribution and social inclusion, the strict codification of patrilineal descent in the Qur'an through the principles of contract and of inheritance, the historical particularities of enacted nationalism in the Tunisian context, and the global circulation of ideas of intimate and public fulfilment constitute some of the constantly shifting terrains of Tunisian deliberations on social relations.

The anthropology of the Maghrib has engaged with kinship in ways that have often escaped the genealogical determinations of kinship studies elsewhere.[22] In his work on the negotiation of roles and relationships in the Moroccan town of Sefrou, Larry Rosen moved away from kinship "as a vehicle through which the social, economic, political, and religious life of individuals and groups are organized into a functioning whole," a direction that he argued straightjackets kinship as an "expression of that deeper logic through which all cultural artifacts may be organized."[23] He instead sought to illuminate the dynamic character of the negotiation of kin ties with other bonds such as "patronage, friendship, or political alliance."[24] The underlying principle behind his theory of practice codified as "bargaining for reality" depends

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22. For a critique, see Povinelli "Notes on the Gridlock."
23. Lawrence Rosen, *Bargaining for Reality: The Construction of Social Relations in a Muslim Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 70.
24. Ibid., 71.

on understanding kinship as the act of relating that draws on "malleable, instrumental, and situationally applicable qualities."[25] This positioning of the individual vis à vis kinship relations is important as it allows us to recast the determinations of tribal affiliation and religious adherence through the prism of negotiation. Indeed, what Hamza and Nadia do is confidently re-negotiate the parameters of Tunisian social reality after the experience of revolution, yet their actions are more overtly irreverent than the cases raised by Rosen. Dale Eickelman's analysis of the carnivalesque feast of the students at the al-Qarawayyin religious institution and Abdellah Hammoudi's and Paul Silverstein's studies of rural masquerades in the south of Morocco explored more vexing transgressions of generational boundaries, as well as ethnic, racial, and gendered ones.[26] The ephemeral character of these transgressions and the fact that they happened behind masks limit the social ramifications of what can otherwise be seen as a direct assault to patriarchal hierarchy. Interestingly, even though anger and resentment underpin a number of studies of politicized kinship in the Maghrib, among which Vincent Crapanzano's in-depth exploration of the genealogical consequences of the *ḥarki* experience in Algeria, one rarely comes across overt deviations from patrilineal lineage and its emotional landscapes or testimonies of the search for alternative avenues to alliance and intimacy.[27]

Abdellah Hammoudi's interrogation of the relationship of individuals to their chief "be it political chief, their father, the masters who introduce them to the arts and knowledge, or their superiors in a bureaucratic setting" offered students of the Maghrib a systematic analysis of the practical unfolding of the legitimation of hierarchy through a conceptual horizon that stretches from sexual intimacy to political subjugation. In *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism*, Hammoudi theorised the relationship that develops between Sufi sheikh and his disciple as the model of forging individual authority through an experience of hardship, sacrifice, and humiliation. The twofold dynamic of this model, namely the co-existence of patient submission with the anticipation of access to power, engenders a subject who both endures violence from the master and enacts violence on younger disciples and women. While neither ambivalence nor

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25. Ibid.

26. Dale F. Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a Twentieth-Century Notable*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Paul Silverstein, "Masquerade Politics: Race, Islam and the Scale of Amazigh Activism in Southeastern Morocco," *Nations and Nationalism* 17, 1 (2011): 65-84; Abdellah Hammoudi, *La victime et ses masques: Essai sur le sacrifice et la mascarade au Maghreb* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1988).

27. See Vincent Crapanzano, "De la colère à l'indignation: Le cas des Harkis," *Anthropologie et sociétés* 32, 3 (2008): 121-38.

insubordination are rare in this cycle of apprenticeship, the disciple remains locked in the relationship through the promise of inversion and replacement of the master. Hammoudi encouraged us to see the Sufi sheikh in a prismatic way, the name itself designating "anyone who claims some pre-eminence, whether he be a master in exoteric and esoteric sciences, master artisan, tribal chief, neighborhood chief, father in law (for a married woman), older person or elder."[28] Hammoudi explicitly placed the master and disciple relationship in an analogical frame to the home: "the way a disciple relates to his master is not radically difference from the way a son relates to his father."[29] The feast of sacrifice (*'īd al-aḍḥā*), reaffirms the unity of the religious community around the Abrahamic sacrifice through the metonymical slaughtering of a lamb in the intimate realm of the patriarchal home. The Abrahamic sacrifice is yet another sublimation of the son's subordination to the intentions of the father that "establishes and binds the household and the (local and universal) community of the faithful under male authority."[30] Hammoudi carefully historicized the annexation and amplification of these scaled relationships by the modernized authoritarian monarchy.

On an institutional level, one could identify elements of Hammoudi's portrayal of subordination not only in authoritarian Tunisia, but also in the post-revolutionary period. According to many of its critics, the democratizing operation after 2011 has consisted in creating possibilities of turn-taking through procedural arrangements while maintaining principles of patriarchal authority in the act of representation.[31] The first democratically elected president Béji Caid Essebsi was a high ranking official in the Ministry of Interior, instrument of the police state, during Habib Bourguiba's Presidency. He assumed the Presidency at the age of 88 campaigning in explicitly paternalistic terms that foregrounded his status as an elder of the Tunisian nation and, as such, the guarantor of continuity and unity. The Essebsi-headed parliament hesitated to ratify and eventually suspended the law for the "Immunization of the Revolution," the law that would ban former members of President Ben Ali's RC-led state from political office. The same parliament ratified the law of "Economic Reconciliation" preventing the judiciary from persecuting pre-revolutionary political elites on the charges of financial

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28. Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple*, 4-8.
29. Ibid., 139.
30. Ibid., 140.
31. Nadia Marzouki and Hamza Meddeb, "The Struggle for Meanings and Power in Tunisia after the Revolution," *Middle East Law and Governance* 8, 2-3 (2016): 119-30; Corinna Mullin and Brahim Rouabah, "Discourses of Power and State Formation: The State of Emergency from Protectorate to Post-uprising Tunisia," *Middle East Law and Governance* 8, 2-3 (2016): 151-78.

embezzlement. Notwithstanding these continuities, in the various social forums where people deliberated over the meaning of revolution and democracy there was both opposition to and reversal of paternalism on the grounds that it underwrites state calls to patriotic, security-oriented consensus that contradict the very aims of both revolution and democracy. Young militants like Hamza and Nadia continue to oust their elders (be it older politicians, veteran militants, teachers, and parents) as centres for the distribution of power and objects of deference. Importantly, and in contradistinction to Hammoudi's Sufi disciple, their ousting does not implicate them in a circular pattern of replacing one type of leader (old patriarch) with another type (young militant). It entails the more drastic undoing of naturalized principles of legitimization of authority.

Even though, as Sami Zemni notices, procedural politics in post-revolutionary Tunisia has followed a course of normalization of the exercise of power, Tunisian citizens broke frame with the "established spaces of politics" and pursued "different forms of autonomous political subjectivation."[32] The absence of attention to these spaces of negotiation that entangle the revolution with democracy and politics tout court in plural and innovative ways is enigmatic. John Borneman expressed the same aporia around the silencing of Syrian women's decision-making roles during the revolution, the civil war, and mass displacement, roles that he designated as evidence of breaking frame from established principles of representation in society as in politics.[33] In both cases, the ubiquity of political science in conversations of the Arab revolutions, which has focused on the public sphere alone, has amounted to a generalized reticence to consider kinship as an organizing framework of affiliation and alliance that imbues political forms with socio-cultural legitimacy.[34] Hammoudi's and Borneman's critiques of patriarchal kinship called for the recognition of the female role in genealogical filiation, the silencing of which ensures a mode of social reproduction that is unidirectional both in terms of rights distributions and in terms of modelling care and intimacy. A public declaration of bastardy is in fact one of these game-changing gestures of bringing genealogy back to the mother, not least a mother who is herself un-affiliated in patrilineal terms.[35] It is through bastardy that the un-bound son and daughter are able to announce

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32. Zemni, "From Revolution to Tunisianité," 138.

33. John Borneman, "Opposition and Group Formation: Authoritarianism Yesterday and Today," In *The State We're In: Reflecting on Democracy's Troubles*, eds Joanna Cook, Nicholas Long, and Henrietta Moore (London: Berghahn Books 2016).

34. Borneman, "Opposition and Group Formation," 109.

35. It is no coincidence that one of the most contentious decisions of the post-revolutionary Parliament was to consider, in 2018 and 2019, the legalization of equal inheritance among the sexes in direct modification of the Personal Status Code.

their separation from the patriarchal myths of personal and national alliance. However, the narratives of the Tunisian militants go further than Hammoudi and Borneman in rhetorically attacking and practically relativizing through alternative lifestyles the centrality of the genealogical grid. I suggest that we pay attention to how their intimate experiences unsettle the misleading centrality of the patriarchal family in Maghribi societies, product as much of official manipulation as of the shortage of attention on intimacy grids by scholarship on colonial and postcolonial societies.

Finally, in their reluctance to tame the agonistic negotiations of social relations that the revolution enabled, militants like Hamza and Nadia unsettle a view of the revolution as ritual. Theories of ritual, religious and political, imagine a stage of re-aggregation that "however much it transforms the status quo entails a closing down on agonistic interactions." Yet it is precisely these agonistic interactions that the militants in question consciously push to the forefront. They claim that the experiential temporalities of liminality, schism, and change shift in and out of alignment with the timeline of political transition. They also fragment, pluralize, and deepen the meaning and ramifications of revolution across the Tunisian citizenry, suggesting that the residual linearity of anthropological theorizations of revolutions stands on shaky ground. In sum, the injuries of kinship explored above constitute an important domain through which to argue that the revolution establishes a breach in perceptions of social reality that exceed and develop beyond the phase of political re-aggregation. Thus, kinship and revolution become mutually constitutive and open to the unpredictability of social life always experienced in a scalar mode.

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منعطفات اللامشروعية وغصب الشباب: جروح القرابة في تونس ما بعد الثورة

ملخص: في إطار محاولة استبعاد الصور والمتمثلات النوعية العامة المسخرة كأداة من قبل الشباب العربي الغاضب في الخطاب الإقليمي والدولي، يسعى هذا المقال إلى الاستفسار من الناحية الإثنوغرافية عن الأبعاد المناهضة للعلاقات بين الأجيال في تونس ما بعد الثورة. وقد تم الاعتماد في ذلك بالأساس على نتائج القاءات بين المناضلين اليساريين الأكبر سنًّا والشباب لاستكشاف مجازات روايات الشباب المتشدد ونبرتها، لإثبات أن الثورة فتحت مساحة لإعادة التفاوض الجذري على النظام الأبوي من منظور الأجيال والجنس. ويتصل المقال بالأعمال الأنثروبولوجية السابقة حول اللامبالاة بين الأجيال عبر بلدان المغارب، ويعيد النظر في أفكاره حول الدستور المتبادل للقرابة والسياسة من خلال اختبار مثل هذه الأفكار في إطار إمكانيات فضاء ما بعد الثورة. وتجادل هذه الورقة بأن المشاكسة عن طريق اللغو وسلوك نهج عدم الاحترام أصبحا يمثلان الموقفين اللذين يسمحان للمناضلين التونسيين الشباب بفصل أنفسهم عن الأساطير الأبوية للتحالف الشخصي والوطني. وتوفر جرأتهم على اقتحام تصورات الواقع الاجتماعي التونسي فرصة تصحيحية للمتمثلات الطقوسية ذات الصلة بالثورة في المنطقة وخارجها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الثورة، القرابة، الجيل، الجنس، النذل، اللامبالاة، الأنساب، العلاقة الحميمة.

Bastardie et irrévérence: Les blessures de la parenté dans la Tunisie post-révolutionnaire

Résumé: Rejetant les représentations génériques et instrumentalisées de la jeunesse arabe en colère dans le discours régional et international, cet article interroge ethnographiquement les dimensions agonistiques des relations générationnelles dans la Tunisie post-révolutionnaire. Il s'appuie sur des rencontres entre militants de gauche plus âgés et plus jeunes et explore les tropes et le ton des jeunes récits militants afin de démontrer que la révolution a ouvert un espace pour la renégociation drastique du patriarcat en termes à la fois générationnels et genrés. L'article se connecte avec des travaux anthropologiques antérieurs sur l'irrévérence générationnelle à travers le Maghreb et revisite ses idées sur la constitution mutuelle de la parenté et de la politique en testant de telles idées dans les conditions d'un espace post-révolutionnaire. Il soutient que la bastardie et l'irrévérence deviennent la position et l'attitude qui permettent aux jeunes militants tunisiens de se séparer des mythes patriarcaux de l'alliance personnelle et nationale. Leur assaut contre les perceptions de la réalité sociale tunisienne apporte un correctif aux représentations rituelles de la révolution dans la région et au-delà.

Mots-clés: Révolution, parenté, génération, genre, bastardie, irrévérence, généalogie, intimité.