ENGAGING Vulnerability

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CAN A PERSON BE ILLEGAL?

Refugees, Migrants and Citizenship in Europe

Jean Lassègue
The Daoud Affair

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Jean Lassègue — The Daoud Affair —

Politics, Literature, and Migration of Ideas in a Time of Crisis

Introduction

The aim of this text is to reflect on the relationship between two genres of discourse when they are alternatively used by the same writer in a time of intense political, social, and identity upheaval, as Europe is experiencing it through the migrant crisis. The two genres that will be studied are the political genre in a broad sense (press articles belong to this category) where a writer takes the floor in his or her name, and the literary genre, conceived as a form of imaginary and social endeavor where the writer is not supposed to be identified with his or her fictional characters. It is well known that the distinction between the political and the literary can become fuzzy in a time of crisis: the cases of Louis-Ferdinand Céline and Ezra Pound, whose fictional productions cannot be separated from their political commitments to fascism, spring immediately to mind. But the embarrassment such cases generate should not indulge us in a comfortable self-censorship and prevent us from recognizing a very specific political function of literature. It is this very function that will be investigated here in relation to a contemporary case: The Algerian writer Kamel Daoud who unwillingly became involved in what was eventually called the 'Daoud Affair' – an expression coined by Adam Shatz, an American literary critic and personal friend of Daoud, in an article published by *The London Review of Books* in March 2016.[1]

1. What happened?

Let us first recall some basic facts about Kamel Daoud in order to clarify the situation in which the 'Daoud Affair' took place. Kamel Daoud was born in Algeria in 1970 and has been living most of his life in Oran (Western Algeria). In 1994 he became a columnist for the francophone newspaper *Le quotidien d'Oran* before also making

his debut as a novelist. Having learned French as a boy, it is also the language he chose to write in. He became well-known nationwide for his acrimonious criticisms of the Algerian state-power in articles published in various newspapers as well as for his first novel published in Algeria in 2013, *Meursault, contre-enquête* [translated as *The Meursault Investigation*],[2] the latter being a highly original sequel to the narration of Camus' *L'Étranger* – another novel taking place in Algeria written by Camus in 1942.[3] Daoud's book was then republished in France the following year (2014) before being translated into more than twenty different languages. Until very recently, Kamel Daoud was still writing weekly pieces in French in *Le Quotidien d'Oran* in a column entitled 'Raïna Raïkoum' (in Algerian Arabic: 'Between us, between you').

So, what is the 'Daoud Affair' about? It started in January 2016 with the publication of an article by Kamel Daoud in two European newspapers in Italy[4] and Switzerland.[5] The article was then published again in the French newspaper *Le Monde* under the title 'Cologne, lieu de fantasmes' ['Cologne, a place of phantasms'].[6]

11. The article on the Cologne events by Kamel Daoud

In this article, Kamel Daoud expressed his personal opinion about the attacks that took place during New Year's eve in Cologne, i.e. mostly sexual assaults perpetrated by men of undetermined Arab origin on several hundreds of women who were out at night for this special occasion. Daoud opened by stating that it was still very difficult to know precisely what had happened in Cologne,[7] but it was certainly easy to at least guess what it would generate in the West, namely two opposite attitudes the first of which would reinforce the image of migrant-refugees as potential rapists and thieves among the European far-right, while the second would underestimate the force of the cultural upbringing the migrant-refugees were subjected to in the "world of Allah" (to quote Daoud's own phrasing), marred by sexual deprivation and patriarchal control over women's bodies. Secondly, according to Daoud, the core of the problem was cultural in nature: In the "world of Allah", women's bodies do not belong to themselves but to men and are perceived through the moralistic categories of virtue and vice whereas the modernity in the West will confront them with an entirely different set of values. In a third and last point, he suggested that granting legal papers to migrant-refugees was certainly an imperative that human rights would rightly call for, but that it would also imply another sort of duty, that of allowing enough time for migrant-refugees to acclimatize themselves to a completely novel framework of social values.

12. The collective response to Daoud's article

On February 12th 2016, a collective reaction to Daoud's article appeared in *Le Monde*, signed by nineteen social scientists – from PhD students to retired professors – mostly working in France. The general overtone was not only harsh[8] but suggested a moral condemnation of Daoud[9] as well. It would certainly be possible to dwell upon the rhetorical tricks that combined a deaf ear with slander in this response, but since this is not the direct purpose of this text, it is therefore more appropriate to focus on the three explicit charges against Daoud: 'radical essentialism', 'psychologism' and 'colonial paternalism'. By 'radical essentialism' the petitioners wanted to question the idea that the "World of Allah", as Daoud says twice in his article, would be endowed with a permanent, even eternal, nature the basis of which would be a religious one and that men would be entirely determined by their religious identity in such a world.[10] 'Psychologism', on the other hand, would imply a serious

shortfall in this case for it would tend to identify Muslim men as a group of sexual deviants deprived of moral autonomy. Bluntly put, the petitioners found the suggestion made by Daoud – that migrant-refugees would have to accept a complete change of social values in order to be welcome in the West – to be completely revolting. This was a mere repetition of the century-old order given by "colonial paternalism": supposedly deviant men should be reeducated. According to the petitioners, this paternalist and colonialist attitude had one morally inacceptable consequence in today's migrant crisis: it would put a condition to the welcoming of the refugees who would therefore be kindly requested to modify what they are supposed to be if they wanted to freely dwell in Europe.

13. A glimpse at the controversy

The two articles published in *Le Monde* triggered an outburst of heated reactions in the media throughout the world and it soon became almost impossible to keep posted due to the avalanche of texts and oral interventions that flourished in newspapers, blogs, social networks, radio and television.[11] This is the 'Daoud Affair', the very expression is reminiscent of the famous 'Rushdie affair' (even though Adam Shatz does not draw the parallel in his article bearing this title) that took place in 1988 after the publication of the novel *The Satanic Verses* during which the British writer of Indian-Muslim background was condemned to death by a fatwa pronounced in 1989 by Iranian leader imam Khomeini himself, just as Daoud was also condemned to death by a fatwa pronounced by the radical Algerian imam Abdelfetah Hamadache Zeraoui on the 16th of December 2014.[12] But as Jeanne Favret-Saada has rightly pointed out in a revised version of her book (republished in 2015)[13] on what is now called "the *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons controversy", the great difference between today's situation and the one which was prevailing in 1989 is that Salman Rushdie benefited from a unanimous support by intellectual and political circles throughout the world whereas today, mainly in the aftermath of the jihadist attack against *Charlie Hebdo* that took place in Paris on the 7th of January 2015, a significant proportion of intellectuals and rulers in the East and the West alike have raised strong objections against any satirical attitude or political stance that could be interpreted as provocative or blasphemous by the so-called "Muslim world". This rather new attitude, engaging some kind of self-limitation of the freedom of speech, has marked a strong turn in mentalities which partly explains (I shall expand on this below) why some social scientists sided so strongly against Daoud after his article on the Cologne events.

It should be noticed in particular that what was still possible to say at the beginning of the controversy became harder and harder to spell out after a few weeks. It is interesting in that respect to appraise the intellectual development of someone as close to Daoud as his friend Adam Shatz. Before the controversy started, Shatz had written in the *New York Times* dated the 1st of April 2015 one of the best pieces on Kamel Daoud I have come across. In the text Shatz goes deep into Daoud's specific work on tradition and his way to address contemporary issues[14]. However, after the controversy had started Shatz wrote a letter to Kamel Daoud that was later made public and published in French by *Le Quotidien d'Oran* on the 15th of February 2016 in which one of his last sentences was the following:

> [...] I want you to know that I am worried about you and I hope that you will give heed to your positions ... and that you will go back to the mode of expression you are, to my mind, at your best: literature.[15]

With a bit of distance, it is rather puzzling to observe how a literary critic like Shatz recommends an experienced and honored journalist, who has written journalistic pieces for more than twenty years, to return to a domain he only recently entered, that of literature. But let us put this aside for the moment.

Almost at the same time, on March 14th and 15th, Daoud published two articles. The first one, appearing in the *New York Times*, was called 'The sexual misery of the Arab World'[16] which developed the same kind of arguments as in the Cologne article. In a second one, "Lettre à un ami étranger" ['Letter to a foreign friend'],[17] written as a personal response to Shatz and published in *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, Daoud would underline how unjust and even immoral the criticisms addressed to him were, stated as they were from the West where sexual control and threats over public expression were mostly unknown, and, as a consequence of this pressure that he had been exposed to, he would make public his decision to withdraw from writing in the media and dedicate himself to literature only. One could get the impression that Daoud was silenced by those who were supposed, as Shatz had said earlier, to be on his side[18] but it turns out that Shatz himself is liable of friendly fire in this affair. A few weeks later, on April 5th,[19] in an article published on a blog of *The London Review of Books* the title of which sounded like a conclusion ("How did we end up here"), Shatz' tone was more acrimonious even if it was not directed at Daoud himself and he would give credit to the same kind of sweeping remarks the collective letter published by *Le Monde* had already stated. Here are just two quotes:

> The notion that the road to an Islamic France is being paved by tolerance and cultural relativism is an old argument, going back to the early days of Algérie Française.

This derogatory innuendo to 'Algérie Française' – reminding the colonialist slogan at the time of the Algerian war – was claimed without any bibliographical or historical reference which would help the reader make sense of it.

And:

> Like the Arab in Baldwin's time – or the Jew in an earlier era – the Muslim of today is 'always hiding something', either a terrorist plot or a plot to Islamicise France, or both. He preys on the bien pensant 'dread of being treated as an Islamophobe or being called racist.

The analogy between Arabs in contemporary France and Jews before then seemed so natural that Schatz did not even find necessary to discuss it, although the two situations are highly dissymmetrical. Shatz' article appears, as it were, as a coup de grace.

2. The political and literary fate of Meursault, contre-enquête

The value of the arguments used in this controversy would take too long to analyze and it is not what I am primarily concerned with. For now, I would rather focus on what appears at first as its most obvious consequence: the fact that Kamel Daoud decided to stop writing in the press as if he had to choose between the political and the literary discourse. And indeed, this was precisely Adam Shatz' suggestion to Daoud, as I already said.[20] In other words, Daoud should accept the divide between the political and the literary discourses. To the best of my knowledge, this is precisely what Daoud did, even if some of his articles published in the press were later published as a book.[21] But did he really? And was it really in his power to do so once his novel,

Meursault, contre-enquête, was published and vastly read? And is it really possible for the readers to take his novel as "literary only"? What sense would "literary" have in this case? My claim in the next pages will be that the controversy I just sketched above had made at least one thing clear, namely that Daoud's novel, by mixing up politics and literature in a highly original way sets up its own political and literary agenda and escapes any sectarian enrolment – contrary to the role his critics would have liked Daoud to play in the controversy. But let me first describe some of the features of the novel proper that hinge on the point I want to underline, namely the specific interplay between the political and literary genres of discourse.

21. Anonymizing Camus

As it has been rightly noticed, Daoud's leitmotiv in *Meursault, contre-enquête* is to give a name to the anonymous Arab who dies on a beach from five bullets shot almost inadvertently by Meursault, the fictional character in Camus' first novel *L'Étranger*. But the process of naming is much more complex than this. It has been less noticed[22] that the first person narrator is located in a similar constellation as in Camus' *La chute* ['The Fall'], that is, telling his story to a listening counterpart in a bar, the only access the reader has to this listener is through the first person narrator. It is therefore Camus' whole *œuvre* which is present in *Meursault, contre-enquête*, even if its title and plot are directly borrowed from Camus' most famous novel, *L'Étranger*. The implicit frame that serves as reality in Daoud's novel is therefore a work of fiction, the one set up by Camus in *L'Étranger*. Hence the very specific and complex interplay between reality and fiction in Daoud's novel. At the same time, Camus as a real author is never named as such by Daoud and it is only Camus' fictional character, Meursault, who appears in *Meursault, contre-enquête* and ends up becoming the author of a famous novel called 'The Other'[23] in which an anonymous Arab is shot down on a beach.

It should nevertheless be underlined that there is at least one major difference between the first-published Algerian edition of *Meursault, contre-enquête* and the French and English ones (and maybe other foreign editions as well, too numerous to check). In the chapter XIV of the Algerian edition,[24] the character is called *Albert* Meursault three times and his book *L'Étranger* once, thus bearing the first name of Camus himself and assuming the title of his book. In this sense, the first edition of Daoud's fiction explicitly refers to the historical author and his work, thus making the reader aware of the difference between the realm of fiction and its historical context. On the contrary, the first name of Camus is not mentioned in the French and English editions and Meursault's book is entitled *The Other* and not *L'Étranger* any longer. In the case of the foreign editions, we could say that by avoiding to identify the fictional Meursault with the real Camus while being at the same time *really* faithful to the way Camus calls his own character by his name only, Daoud strictly stays within the realm of fiction and shows how radical literature can be in its power to build its own, inner sense of reality that makes it possible to later on modify its meaning.

In the foreign editions, what Daoud does is both making a canonical text his own, as a part of his fiction, and renaming and rearranging it – thus creating some kind of ghostly presence of Camus in the novel. This twist has at least two crucial consequences.

Firstly, Camus is anonymized in Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête* just as the Arab was anonymized in Camus' *L'Étranger*. And in Daoud's novel, it means that just as Camus becomes part of the implicit frame of the novel, the use of French as the language in which

the novel is written becomes as ghostly as Camus and has not to be justified any further: it is a "bien vacant" ['an unclaimed good'] as it is noticed right at the beginning of Daoud's novel,[25] a tongue that is just part of the linguistic environment in today's Algeria, along with Algerian Arabic and Kabyle language for the oral communication and Modern Arabic, derived from Koranic or Classical Arabic, for the written one. For Daoud, French language is therefore a ghostly piece among the linguistic usages in today's Algerian linguistic environment and not exclusively the language of the colonialists the use of which is reproved as un-patriotic. Choosing French is therefore a political decision that recognizes as a fact the variety of languages in today's Algeria where French is still spoken and written along with other languages – the mostly used one being Algerian Arabic, a non-written dialect of Arabic common to the whole Maghreb region.

What is the specific use of French in this linguistic environment? Of course, from a purely theoretical point of view, any language could be used in any situation but this would put aside the way actual linguistic interactions take place among communities of speakers and the various symbolic weights languages are bequeathed with historically. In the way Daoud uses French, the form borrowed from *La chute* hinges upon a linguistic use of the pronouns 'I' and 'You' as opposed to a collective "We" which is presumably the opposite community described in *L'Étranger*, the Arabs[26]. And this is also why the narrator in Daoud's novel, in order to make a differentiated usage of the 'I' and the 'You' has to learn a language his mother doesn't know lest he would be swallowed by her[27]: French is therefore a foreign language in which the 'I' and the 'You' can become the narrator's own property.

Secondly, Meursault is the missing link between the two novels and is therefore both a fictional and a real character depending on the point of view chosen: fictional when he is thought of as the imaginary 'I' in *L'Étranger*, real through the fame the readers granted him for having killed an anonymous Arab, as it is told in *Meursault, contre-enquête*. Only in the realm of literature can fiction and reality be built in such a way that they are being intertwined together and only in this sphere is the fictional Meursault liable to be accused for real of having killed an Arab, of having discarded his name, and of having gained glory out of its narration.[28]

It is the literary act of anonymization of Camus and his replacement by his own fictional character Meursault that makes a sequel to Camus' novel a literary productive work, for it is in its very performance that a new form – i.e. Daoud's novel – can be acted out as a viable expansion of *L'Étranger*:[29]

> The murderer got famous, and his story's too well written for me to get any ideas about imitating him. He wrote in his own language. Therefore I'm going to do what was done in this country after Independence: I'm going to take the stones from the old houses the colonists left behind, remove them one by one, and build my own house, my own language."

Hence the constant interplay between the two novels in Daoud's text both at the content level, where passages from *L'Étranger* can be found word for word, and at a critical level, where Camus' style is being both praised and dismissed so that another style can emerge that is more fit to fully describe the historical and linguistic situation of today's Algeria. It would therefore be a mistake to read *Meursault, contre-enquête* as an attack directed towards Camus as a person because Camus is not a literary character and it is in the literary domain that Daoud operates.

22. Naming the characters

Once this complex interplay between reality and fiction has been settled, it becomes possible to name the different characters in Daoud's novel. The process of name giving is also complex as it implies a genealogy[30] that concerns the four main protagonists: the anonymous Arab killed on the beach, his brother who takes the floor and addresses the reader, their mother and the French colonist who is killed by the brother the day after Independence.

The novel starts with the reversed image of the famous incipit of *L'Étranger*: "Aujourd'hui maman est morte" ['Today mummy is dead'] which becomes in *Meursault, contre-enquête*: "Aujourd'hui, m'ma est encore vivante" ['Mama's still alive today']. The first one to be named is therefore the mother, even though she is only called by her Algerian Arabic nickname 'M'ma'. The mother is therefore the only character who has some kind of a name right from the beginning – and keeps it all along.

The name of the brother who was killed by Meursault is not given at first. He is described as:[31]

> a poor illiterate God created apparently for the sole purpose of taking a bullet and returning to dust – an anonymous person who didn't even have the time to be given a name.

Getting out of anonymity is the result of a process: he is first called "Zujj",[32] the word used in Algerian Arabic for the number two which in the novel refers to two o'clock, the moment when he was killed on the beach, but he is also referred to by the pair, "him and me",[33] "me" referring to the narrator. It is only later that his name "Zujj", which is dependent on the external circumstances of his death, is changed into "Musa", etymologically related to the biblical Moses, whose name in folk etymology is "the one saved from water", certainly ironical here for someone who was shot dead on a beach and then carried away by the sea. But the irony goes further: in the Islamic tradition, Musa is also described as "the one who spoke directly to God"[34] and received the law that would create a new people. It is therefore through Musa that speech is made possible – but the "Zujj" name, given first, reminds us that it is less with God than with "me", the narrator, that dialog has to be experienced first so that speech becomes possible. Maybe this was already blasphemous enough to have prompted Islamist wrath …

The speaking voice, i.e. the brother of the anonymous Arab killed by Meursault, is called "Harun" who, in the biblical tradition, corresponds to Aaron – Moses' brother, who, in the Bible, is called "the prophet" of Moses by God himself for he had to speak on his behalf because Moses couldn't speak well[35]. Harun is therefore a "prophet" for his brother Musa and he is the one who speaks about Musa's death and also about the concealing of his name in Meursault's novel as well as after Independence.[36]

The family name of the two brothers was initially just a nickname: "Uld el-assass' [in Algerian Arabic: "the son of the guardian"], which after the Independence becomes their civil name for it is by means of this name that Meriem, a young woman making research on the case, manages to track down Harun and his mother in the summer 1963. Just like the other characters, Meriem has a biblical and koranic genealogy: she is the sister of Moses who puts him as a baby in a basket on the river where Pharaoh's daughter finds him and rescues him, contrary to Musa whose body was never found and for whom was, ironically enough, recited the Islamic prayer for the drowned in Daoud's novel[37]. But by enquiring on Musa's death, she makes the remembrance of him alive and discloses the

whole case to Harun and his mother:[38] a book had been written by a writer called Meursault who then became famous and the story of the murder had therefore been told, without the two of them knowing about it.

A last character has his name transformed in *Meursault, contre-enquête*: just after the independence, a Frenchman called Joseph Larquais tries to hide lest he would be submitted to reprisal and, by accident, ends up in Harun and his mother's yard. As with the other characters, Joseph has a biblical and a koranic genealogy which is made explicit in his case:[39]

> Poor Joseph. The poor guy fell into a well and landed in our courtyard that night.

The mother convinces Harun to shoot him down, Harun obeys his mother[40] and Joseph is killed and buried under a tree. This murder is as useless as Musa's because Joseph is killed just after July 5 1962, the date of the Algerian Independence: what could have been considered as an act of resistance before the Independence is nothing but an act of murder after it, which is why Harun ends up in prison just like Meursault before him. The only reason that can be found for this murder is that the mother has decided that Joseph should die because he used to love swimming at two o'clock, at the same time as Musa was killed on the beach, at "Zujj". Therefore Joseph's murder is symmetrical to that of Musa but, contrary to him, he will only be remembered as the man who was murdered for having liked to swim freely at two o'clock.[41] In a way, by the end of the novel, the accounts are cleared and some kind of balance has been restored which was the goal of the narrator in the beginning:[42]

> I think I'd like justice to be done. That may seem ridiculous at my age … But I swear it's true. I don't mean the justice of the courts, I mean the justice that comes when *the scales are balanced*.

Now that some of the features of the novel have been described, it is time to go back to the controversy from where I started. My claim is twofold: first, it is precisely through the "justice of the courts" and not through the "balance of the scales" that many readers have read both *L'Étranger* and *Meursault, contre-enquête* and secondly, that forgetting this difference is the very reason why the whole controversy started in the first place. More specifically, what had been forgotten in the very harsh and moralistic critique against Daoud is the literary space itself in which mixing up Camus and Meursault, reality and fiction, was made possible and where different narrations can coexist and mutually nourish each other. But this memory lapse has an historical root that must be traced back to the period of Algerian independence in order to be explained. My claim is that some historical remarks can shed light on the controversy I am concerned with: Daoud's article on the Cologne events.

23. A touch of memory: Nora and Derrida on Camus' L'Étranger

In March 1961, a bit more than a year before the official declaration of independence of Algeria (5 July 1962), the French historian Pierre Nora, by then aged 29, published his first book entitled *Les Français d'Algérie*[43] ['The French of Algeria'] after two years spent as a history teacher in the "lycée" (baccalaureate school) of Oran, the very city of Camus and Daoud. The main topic of the book was the responsibility of the French "pieds-noirs" ('black feet', the nickname of the 800 000 French living in Algeria at that time) in what seemed to Nora as the now unavoidable independence of Algeria,

at that time not a mere colony run by France but actual French territory. More than the book itself, it is the recent republication of Nora's book along with a letter received by Nora dated the 27th of April 1961 and signed by Jacques Derrida,[44] his fellow-student, himself a "pied-noir", that will be the focus of my attention.

Nora's political aim with the book was to get rid once and for all of the already waning political clout of the "liberals", a left-wing current which had battled for a political solution maintaining Algeria within France by granting equal rights to the Arabs. Camus took part in the liberal movement where he had been an activist for more than twenty years before his accidental death on the 4th of January 1960. When Nora sent his book to Derrida in March 1961 the latter had been a liberal too when it was still a political option, even if, by dint of the political agenda that had evolved in a quite different direction during 1961, he was not anymore. What is interesting for our own purpose is the symbolic interpretation Nora makes of *L'Étranger* as well as Derrida's reaction to it. Nora describes *L'Étranger* this way:[45]

> *L'Étranger*: it is the very title of the only great work written in Algeria by the only great French Algerian writer. This masterpiece of Algerian literature can be seen as the true reflection of the feelings developed by the French as they are lived in Algeria. […]. For the first time with *L'Étranger*, Algerian literature takes over the psychological relationship which haunts the Europeans in Algeria without recognizing it. Camus transfigures this relationship and brings it to the level of the unconscious symbolism, the only where the Arabs appear in the psychological landscape of the French, motionless as the stranger under the sun."

Nora's anti-colonialist interpretation of *L'Étranger* is therefore a critique of Camus himself who becomes a symbol of the universal attitude of the French Algerians towards the Arabs, an attitude based on exploitation, exclusion and economic misery. This way of interpreting Camus' political stance, although he had been an activist in the liberal movement, relies on the unification of Camus with Meursault which is exemplified in Nora's influential interpretation. This interpretation consists in making no difference between the various currents within the French Algerian community and it is only possible because of the imminent perspective of Independence: the liberals having definitely lost battle, they become just like the other reactionary "pieds-noirs", a burden nobody knows exactly what to do with. Seeing Camus as a symbol of French Algerians is therefore a consequence of the upcoming Independence of Algeria and Nora was the first one, but not the last, to spell it out in his book which was published a few months before Independence.

But this wasn't Derrida's point of view even if he politely wrote in his long letter to Nora that he agreed with him on his interpretation of *L'Étranger*: to at least see it as an Algerian novel.[46] What Derrida disagreed with Nora about was when the latter threw all the French Algerians into the same pot by making them all guilty of having definitely ruined any other solution than Independence. Derrida claims:[47]

> Not that long ago, I often judged Camus the way you do, for the same reasons […]. I don't know if it is honest anymore and if some of his warnings won't appear tomorrow as elementary lucidity and basic requirements. […] In sum, you condemn Camus' moralism as well as that of the liberals. […] Fundamentally, the moralism of the liberals seems to you *immoral*. And by bringing them back to

> the past so that they can realize their historical guilt, it is a lesson of morals that you want to give them. Maybe I am wrong but I've felt, all along the book, that you were more a moralist than them.

Derrida, a French Algerian himself, tries therefore to introduce differences within the French Algerians and in doing so, gives Camus credit of having tried a fair solution that, after his death, became more and more impossible to negotiate which in turn made him appear as the advocate of *Algérie Française* in terms he would have never agreed with.[48] In doing so, Derrida was trying to go beyond "the justice of courts" to find a "balance of the scales", to use Daoud's own phrasing.

It could well be that Nora's reading of *L'Étranger* had become almost unconsciously common knowledge in its post-independence reception for one can find traces of it in other books – Edward Saïd's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) being one example among many.[49] It is therefore possible to suppose that the association between Camus and the "colonial party" was still very much part of the frames of reading when Daoud's novel was read in 2013. And this could partly explain the very aggressive reaction towards Daoud after the publication of his article on the Cologne events where he was accused of islamophobia and of colonialist paternalism: all of a sudden, Daoud's article would show in retrospect that *Meursault, contre-enquête* had not been written in the wake of Nora's interpretation of *L'Étranger*. Daoud would therefore appear as a completely different author from the anti-colonialist one that his book, interpreted against the same yardstick as Camus was interpreted by Nora, was supposed to have exemplified. On the contrary, as I have tried to show, *Meursault, contre-enquête* opens up a new way of considering the past that creates new bearings for the present. The Cologne article should first be read accordingly: instead of trying to anonymize Daoud by way of moralistic arguments coming from a bygone past, he should be recognized as the one who was able to create a new setting in which other voices could be heard and a future unveiled.

Conclusion

It is maybe possible to criticize Daoud's position about the Cologne events and the debate about what happened and what to do next is certainly still very much open for what triggered it in the first place, the migrant crisis, is still very much on its way. But one should first start by remembering the past if one wants to put moralism aside and stop seeing as a moral condemnation what Daoud says about those he considers his own people and who misbehaved so severely in Cologne.

Shatz's advice to Daoud to quit journalism is therefore a difficult one to follow, even if Daoud seems indeed to have stopped writing in the press. But Kamel Daoud is no Zujj Larquais, someone who can be silenced and symbolically put to death. Quitting journalism does not mean that literature and politics should be segregated. For if literature has any meaning it is that it teaches us a very political lesson here: that creating new forms of social interaction as Daoud does through his novel becomes only possible once the past has been cleared on equal scales.

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Emmanuel Valls, 'Soutenons Kamel Daoud !', *Facebook*, March 2, 2016, (https://www.facebook.com/notes/manuel-valls/soutenons-kamel-daoud-/1002589256488085)

Endnotes

1 Adam Shatz, 'The Daoud Affair', *The London Review of Books*, 4 March 2016 (http://www.lrb.co.uk/2016/03/04/adam-shatz/the-daoud-affair).

2 Kamel Daoud, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, Barzakh, Algiers, 2013, Actes Sud, Arles, 2014 (pagination to this edition); English translation by John Cullen, *The Meursault Investigation*, London: One World Publications, 2015.

3 The novel was published in Paris in 1942 a time Algeria was still part of French territory.

4 'Colonia. Il corpo delle donne e il desiderio di libertà di quegli uomini sradicati dalla loro terra', *La Repubblica*, 10 January 2016, (http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2016/01/10/news/colonia_molestie_capodanno_un_articolo_dello_scrittore_algerino_daoud-130973948/?ref=search)

5 'Viol et fantasmes sur "Europe"', *L'hebdo*, 14 January 2016 (http://www.hebdo.ch/hebdo/id%C3%A9es-d%C3%A9bats/detail/viol-et-fantasmes-sur-%C2%ABeurope%C2%BB)

6 'Cologne, lieu de fantasmes', *Le Monde*, February 5 2016, (http://

www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/01/31/cologne-lieu-de-fantasmes_4856694_3232.html)

7 At the time Kamel Daoud published his article in *Le Monde* (February 5 2016), little was known for sure and the list of 1049 victims, most of whom women sexually assaulted, which was later released by the German police was not established yet, nor was the identity of the attackers clearly determined, except that they were of 'Arab origin'.

8 Daoud was accused of "islamophobia" and of "recycling the most hackneyed colonialist clichés" about the so-called "world of Allah", a reference to the Muslim world the petitioners would admit when speaking of the "billion of its inhabitants" but would deny Daoud the right to use when he would denounce the sexual misery of this very world.

9 One example is the allusion that was made in the title of the last paragraph of the article: "De quoi Daoud est-il le nom ?" ["What does the name Daoud stand for?"], a direct reference to the title of the famous pamphlet written by the French philosopher Alain Badiou in 2007 *De quoi Sarkozy est-il le nom ?* [*The meaning of Sarkozy*] in which Badiou identifies Sarkozy, at that time president of the French Republic, to the Vichy regime of collaborationist France during the second world war.

10 I don't think this is what Daoud meant by "World of Allah". This evocative expression, specific to Daoud, refers more to a culture and a social atmosphere in which Islamic values play a central role more than to religious values proper. But let us keep this aside for the moment.

11 One of which was that of today's French prime minister Emmanuel Valls who gave Daoud his full support in his personal Facebook page. Emmanuel Valls, 'Soutenons Kamel Daoud !', *Facebook*, March 2, 2016, (https://www.facebook.com/notes/manuel-valls/soutenons-kamel-daoud-/1002589256488085).

12 Abdelfetah Hamadache Zeraoui has been sentenced to three months imprisonment and 50 000 Algerian Dinars (3737 Swedish kronor) by the court of Oran on March 8 2016 for having called for Daoud's murder on his Facebook page.

13 Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Comment produire une crise mondiale avec douze petits dessins*, ['How to produce a global crisis with twelve little drawings'], Paris: Les Prairies ordinaires, 2007; Paris: Fayard, 2015.

14 "Stranger still", *The New York Times*, 1 April 2015 (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/05/magazine/stranger-still.html).

15 "[…] je veux que tu saches que je m'inquiète pour toi, et j'espère que tu réfléchiras bien à tes positions … et que tu retourneras au mode d'expression qui, à mon avis, est ton meilleur genre: la littérature." (The original, maybe written in English, was not published as far as I know).

16 'The sexual misery of the Arab world', *The New York Times*, February 12 2016, (http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/14/opinion/sunday/the-sexual-misery-of-the-arab-world.html?_r=0)

17 'Lettre à un ami étranger', *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, February 15 2016, (http://www.lequotidien-oran.com/index.php?news=5224963)

18 'Cher Kamel', *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, February 15 2016, (http://www.lequotidien-oran.com/index.php?news=5225148)

19 Adam Shatz, "How did we end up here", *London Review of* Books, April 5 2016 (http://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2016/04/05/adam-shatz/how-did-we-end-up-here/)

20 'Cher Kamel', *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, February 15 2016, (http://www.lequotidien-oran.com/index.php?news=5225148)

21 Kamel Daoud, *Mes indépendances: Chroniques*, Arles: Actes Sud: 2017.

22 Alice Kaplan is an exception. Cf. Alice Kaplan, *Looking for the Outsider; Albert Camus and the Life of a Literary Classic*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016: 208.

23 Kamel Daoud, *Meursault, contre*-enquête, p. 137; English translation, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 127.

24 Kamel Daoud, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, [barkakh], Algiers, 2013, p. 171. Alice Kaplan in *Looking for the Outsider; Albert Camus and the Life of a Literary Classic*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016: 207 was the first one, to my knowledge, to notice the difference between the Algerian and the subsequent French edition. But she says that in the Algerian edition, 'Meursault' is called 'Albert Meursault' ("In the first, Algerian, edition of the novel (2013), Harun calls the man who kills his brother "Albert Meursault") – which is not exactly the case. In

the Algerian edition, Meursault is called Albert Meursault *only in this chapter*, when Meriem tells Harun and his mother

25 Kamel Daoud, *Meursault, contre*-enquête, p. 12; English translation, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 2.

26 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 11: "[…] they watched us – us, the Arabs –."; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 21: "[…] Ils nous regardaient, nous les Arabes, […]."

27 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 37: "[…] I had to learn a language other than that one. To survive. And it was the one I'm speaking at the moment." ; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 47: "Il me fallait apprendre une autre langue que celle-ci. Pour survivre. Et ce fut celle que je parle en ce moment."

28 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 57: "I told you right from the start: This story takes place somewhere in someone's head, in mine and in yours and in the head of people like you. In a sort of beyond." ; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 67: "Je te l'ai annoncé d'emblée, cette histoire se passe quelque part dans une tête, la mienne et la tienne et celle des gens qui te ressemblent. Dans une sorte d'au-delà."

29 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 1–2; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 12: "Le meurtrier est devenu célèbre et son histoire est trop bien écrite pour que j'aie envie de l'imiter. C'était sa langue à lui. C'est pourquoi je vais faire ce qu'on a fait dans ce pays après son indépendance: prendre une à une les pierres des anciennes maisons des colons et en faire une maison à moi, une langue à moi."

30 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 12: "Here in Oran you know, people are obsessed with origins"; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 22: "Tu sais ici à Oran, ils sont obsédés par les origines."

31 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 1; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 11: "[…] était un pauvre illettré que Dieu a créé uniquement, semble-t-il, pour qu'il reçoive une balle et retourne à la poussière, un anonyme qui n'a même pas eu le temps d'avoir un prénom."

32 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 3; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 13.

33 Kamel Daoud, The Meursault Investigation, p. 3; French original, Meursault, contre-enquête, p. 13.

34 Qur'an, *Surah 4*, "The Women", verse 164: " And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech."

35 Bible, *Exodus* 4:10–17: " Moses said to the Lord, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.[…] Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. 15 You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. 16 He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him."

36 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 6: "And for seventy years now, everyone has joined in to disappear the victim's body quickly and turn he place where the murder was committed into an intangible museum." ; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 15-16: "Et ensuite, pendant soixante-dix ans, tout le monde s'est mis de la partie pour faire disparaître à la hâte le corps de la victime et transformer les lieux du meurtre en un musée immatériel."

37 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 35: "Musa had been declared dead – swept away by the sea – and therefore the absurd service was performed, in accordance with Islam's provisions for the drowned. Then everyone left, except for my mother and me." ; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 45: « Moussa avait été déclaré mort et emporté par les eaux après le délai religieux de quarante jours. On accomplit donc cet office absurde, prévu par l'Islam pour les noyés, et tout le monde se dispersa, sauf ma mère et moi."

38 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 125: "A celebrated author had told the story of an Arab's death and made it an overwhelming book – "like a sun in a box" was the way she put it, I remember that. She'd been intrigued by the mystery of the Arab's identity, had decided to

conduct her investigation, and by sheer pugnacity had followed the track back to us." ; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 135: "Un auteur célèbre avait raconté la mort d'un Arabe et en avait fait un livre bouleversant – "comme un soleil dans une boîte", je me souviens de sa formule. Intriguée par l'identité de l'Arabe, elle avait décidé de mener sa propre enquête et, à force de pugnacité, avait fini par remonter notre piste."

39 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 113; French original *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 122: "Pauvre gars. Le pauvre Joseph est tombé dans un puits en atterrissant chez nous, cette nuit-là."

40 The mother's order could also be a ghostly reminiscence of the historical Camus in a very peculiar sense. When Camus received the Nobel prize in Literature in 1957, a meeting was organized with some Swedish students and a student of Arab origin asked the Algerian-born writer why he was staying silent about what was happening in Algeria at that time. Camus answered back: "Right now in Algiers, bombs are thrown into tramways. My mother can be in one of these tramways. If this is justice, I prefer my mother." The last sentence was almost immediately distorted and became "Between Justice and my mother, I prefer my mother" – a sentence for which Camus was severely criticized up to the present time, even if he never uttered it. This is exactly what Harun acts out since he chooses his mother against justice, just like what Camus *is supposed* to have said. Harun's obedience to his mother's order is therefore another variation on the theme of fiction and reality in its relationship to Camus: in Daoud's novel, it is not only the real Camus who is at stake but also the *historical* figure, its impact and the reception of what his image conveyed.

41 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 121–122: "By the way, do you know why Mama chose Joseph Larquais as a sacrificial victim – because you can say she chose him, yes you can, even though he came ot us that night? It's hardly plausible, I promise you. She explained it to me the day after the crime, while I was half-asleep between two oblivious naps. Ah well, that *roumi* had to be punished, according to Mama, because he loved to go for a swim at two in the afternoon! He'd come back tanned, lighthearted, happy and free." ; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 15–16: "Et ensuite, pendant soixante-dix ans, tout le monde s'est mis de la partie pour faire disparaître à la hâte le corps de la victime et transformer les lieux du meurtre en un musée immatériel."

42 Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, p. 6; French original, *Meursault, contre-enquête*, p. 16: "Je crois que je voudrais que justice soit faite. Cela peut paraître ridicule à mon âge … Mais je te jure que c'est vrai. J'entends par là, non la justice des tribunaux mais celle des équilibres."

43 Pierre Nora, *Les Français d'Algérie*, Paris: Julliard, 1961; reprint Paris: Bourgois, 2012, Kindle edition.

44 Jacques Derrida, "Letter to Pierre Nora" dated 27 April 1961 afterword to Pierre Nora, *Les Français d'Algérie* (Paris: Bourgois, 2012), Kindle edition.

45 Pierre Nora, *Les Français d'Algérie*, Paris: Julliard, 1961; reprint Paris: Bourgois, 2012, Kindle edition: doi 2326-2351: "*L'Étranger* : c'est le titre même du seul grand ouvrage écrit en Algérie par le seul grand écrivain français d'Algérie. ce chef-d'œuvre de la littérature algérienne peut paraître l'exact reflet du sentiment vécu de la présence française en Algérie. […]. Pour la première fois, avec *L'Étranger*, la littérature algérienne prend en charge le rapport psychologique qui hante, sans qu'ils l'avouent, les Européens d'Algérie. Mais, Français d'Algérie malgré tout, Camus transfigure ce rapport sur le plan de la symbolique inconsciente, le seul où les Arabes figurent dans la constellation psychologique des Français immobiles comme l'étranger sous le soleil."

46 Jacques Derrida, "Letter to Pierre Nora" dated 27 April 1961 afterword to Pierre Nora, *Les Français d'Algérie* (Paris: Bourgois, 2012), Kindle edition, doi: 3299.

47 Jacques Derrida, "Letter to Pierre Nora" dated 27 April 1961 afterword to Pierre Nora, *Les Français d'Algérie* (Paris: Bourgois, 2012), Kindle edition, doi 4025: "Il n'y a pas encore si longtemps, j'ai souvent jugé Camus comme tu le fais, pour les mêmes raisons […]. Je ne sais plus c'est honnête et si certaines de ses mises en garde n'apparaîtront pas demain comme celles de la lucidité et de l'exigence élémentaires. […]. En somme, tu condamnes le "moralisme" de Camus et des "libéraux". […]. Au fond le "moralisme" des libéraux (auxquels tu reproches en même

temps leur "économisme") te paraît immoral. Et en les tournant vers le passé pour les amne à prendre conscience de leur culpabilité historique, c'estune leçon de morale que tu veux leur donner. Peut-être me suis-je trompé, mais je t'ai senti, tout au long de ce livre, beaucoup plus "moraliste" qu'eux."

48. Edward Baring, "Liberalism and the Algerian War: The Case of Jacques Derrida", *Critical Enquiry*, 36-2 (2010): 244: "As their most famous representative, Camus' increasingly anachronistic claims came to stand in metonymically for the liberal position. One of France's most public intellectuals, he was available for commemorative appropriation, even more so after he died, and could no longer lend nuance or seek to qualify his position."

49. Edward Saïd, *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books (Random House), 1993.