

## Deconstructing Colonial Discourse: Kamel Daoud's Literary Politics of Subversion in Meursault Contre-Enquête (the Meursault's Investigation)

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### Abstract:

Algerian post-colonial literature has emerged as a powerful instrument for challenging and reshaping the prevailing colonial narrative. This literature aims to amplify the voices of the marginalized, reclaim the right to expose the devastating aftermath of colonialism, and unmask decades of oppression, cruelty, and devastation. Through the practice of counter-discourse, authors rewrite existing works or breathe life into peripheral characters from literary canons to confront and dismantle the inequalities perpetuated by colonial power structures. In this article, we delve into the captivating world of Meursault Contre-Enquête (the Meursault's Investigation) by Kamel Daoud, where the protagonist, Haroun, embarks on a transformative mission to restore the name and identity of the "Arab." By critically analysing Camus' the Stranger alongside Daoud's the Meursault's Investigation, this study investigates the strategies employed by Daoud to deconstruct and reinterpret Camus' dominant colonial discourse. Through the skilful appropriation of the colonizer's language, Daoud dedicates himself to reviving the memory and identity of the Arab-Algerians who have fallen victim to colonialist literature and the French colonizer.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial Algerian Novel, Counter-discourse, Appropriation, Abrogation, Albert Camus, Kamel Daoud



### I. Introduction

Colonialism, characterized by the dominance of a superior nation over a subordinate one in cultural, economic, and political spheres, has left an indelible mark on the history of the Third World countries. Its far-reaching implications reverberated through the annals of time, as colonizers imposed their language, religion, culture, and worldviews upon the subjugated

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societies. The very discourse perpetuated by the conquerors lauded the presumed superiority of their race, culture, and civilization while systematically disparaging the indigenous cultural fabric as "barbaric." This hegemonic narrative, rooted in an imperialistic mind-set, sought to repress and delegitimize the manifestations of native culture, branding them as uncivilized.

In response to this imperial dominance and the grandeur claimed by the colonizers, postcolonial authors emerged with a formidable purpose—to reclaim, restore, and reinterpret their native traditions and identities. The literary realm became a battleground for countering the prevailing hegemony, where authors wielded their words to challenge the colonial discourse's stranglehold. These authors embarked on a journey to not only celebrate the pre-colonial civilizations but to also highlight the distinctive histories, identities, and cultures inherent to the conquered nations.

This article delves into the transformative power of postcolonial literature, focusing its lens on Kamel Daoud's masterwork, *Meursault Contre-Enquête* (the Meursault's Investigation). Against the backdrop of colonialist domination and its insidious legacy, Daoud's narrative stands as a testament to the resilience of marginalized voices. By engaging in a politicized art of revision, Daoud dismantles and reconfigures the dominant colonial narratives, offering a profound critique of the very foundations upon which the imperial discourse was built. Through an intricate exploration of Daoud's strategies, we unveil the intricate web of counter-discourse that aims to restore agency to the silenced, reshape historical narratives, and challenge the deeply entrenched power structures that have perpetuated the colonial legacy.

As we navigate the nuances of Daoud's literary endeavour, we delve deeper into the intricate interplay between language, identity, and resistance, shedding light on the multifaceted process of deconstructing hegemonic ideologies. By traversing the landscape of *Meursault Contre-Enquête*, we embark on a captivating intellectual journey that underscores the vital role of postcolonial literature in shaping a more equitable and inclusive narrative landscape—one where the voices once suppressed find resonance and where the process of reconfiguring dominant narratives emerges as a transformative act of liberation.

Edward W. Said, Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, among others, have employed Foucault's notion of discourse as a technique of power and dominance to examine colonialism as a discourse, or signifying system. These critics propose a variety of strategies for rereading and subverting the colonial discourse, which has

marginalized, repressed, and silenced colonial subjects. Fanon's writings have also been instrumental in the development of postcolonial discourse theory. He has emphasized the colonial discourse's ability to disarm opposition, but he has also acknowledged its power as a "demystifying force and as the launching-pad for a new oppositional stance aimed at the liberation of the colonized from this disabling position through the construction of new liberating narratives" (Bill Ashcroft G. G., 2002, p. 125)

In "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," Edward Said argues:

Despite its bitterness and brutality, the entire purpose of Fanon's writing is to compel the European metropolis to consider its history 'along' with the history of colonies emerging from the harsh lethargy and misused immobility of imperial dominance..." (Gates, 1991, p. 458)

In alignment with Said's assertions, Fanon's chief objective was to instigate Europe's critical re-evaluation of the legitimacy of its imperial enterprise and the deeply ingrained, historically imposed perspective on colonized societies. Edward Said further expounds upon the genesis of the perception of the Orient as Europe's cultural antithesis. He articulately describes the Orient as a realm of enigmatic allure, with exotic inhabitants, evocative memories, and captivating landscapes that have intrigued European imaginations since time immemorial (Said, 1977., p. 1). Moreover, he convincingly contends that European cultural identity derives strength and distinctiveness from its juxtaposition with the Orient, functioning as an "alter ego" or a latent alterity (Said, 1977., p. 3).

Said posits that Orientalism, as expounded upon in his works, is emblematic of Europe's conceptual toolkit for asserting dominion over the East. However, he also acknowledges that this discourse remains resolutely Eurocentric, unjustly excluding the Orient from meaningful participation or representation. The basis of his critique of Orientalism as a discourse lies in Fanon's notion of binarism, wherein the "self" is privileged over the "Other" in a hierarchical schema. This fundamental opposition engenders a persistent state of tension, which, in turn, has facilitated the West's astute deployment of an array of discursive strategies to cultivate the idea of the Orient as the quintessential Other within both Western and Eastern consciousness.

## II. Going Against the Grain

Postcolonial Literature is a rewriting endeavour involving a canonical counter-discourse. In this sense, Ashcroft et al. define it as: "A type of resistance, of reclaiming one's ownership of oneself by rejecting the

hegemony and undermining the tropes of orientalism, thus disjuncturing colonial discourse" (Bill Ashcroft G. G., 1995, p. 35). As a result, postcolonial literature seeks to provide a voice to the voiceless and to regain the right to expose colonialism's horrific consequences and years of oppression, isolation, and brutality. The "Silent Other" is rehabilitated, and the Westerns' fabricated lie is undermined. In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Boehmer writes, "Rather from merely being the writing that "came after" Empire, postcolonial literature is that which critically scrutinizes the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives." (Boehmer, 1994, p. 199). It is a writing that aims to challenge colonialism's underlying assumptions and modify prevailing meanings.

*Abrogation* and *Appropriation* are two prevalent tactics for writing back to the colonizer. Abrogation is the process of rejecting and refusing to adopt western language and culture. In contrast, "appropriation" favours accommodation over outright rejection of the colonial past. It involves combining two languages and two cultures to create a feeling of place. (Bill Ashcroft G. G., 2002, p. 39).

As an illustrative instance, postcolonial authors have responded to colonial works by employing the very language of the colonizer, notably French, despite it being historically perceived as the language of the oppressor. As a result, a significant proportion of postcolonial literary productions deliberately employ the terminology and linguistic tools that were once wielded by the colonizers. This strategic use of colonizer's language serves as a powerful means to assert agency and convey an urgent desire to reshape historical narratives and rectify the historical records that have long been dominated by colonial perspectives.

Algeria's historical trajectory is deeply intertwined with the pervasive impact of French colonialism, characterized by a complex interplay of servitude, dominance, and violence. In his seminal work titled "Colonial Mythologies: Algeria in the French Imagination, the Myths Justifying the Conquest," Lahouari Addi sheds light on three prevailing myths that have underscored the French conquest. The first myth revolves around the perceived moral superiority of Christianity over Islam, fostering a narrative that legitimized colonial subjugation. The second myth involves the fabrication of racial diversity, strategically employed to justify and perpetuate colonial control (Addi, 2009).

Delving into the insights presented by Addi, his article starkly reveals the underlying reality that lay beneath the surface of 132 years of

comprehensive social, political, economic, and cultural dominance. France, driven by notions of "national prestige, civilizing mission, and France's grandeur," subjected an entire population to repressive measures for over a century (Addi, 2009). This discourse lays bare the deep-seated justifications that were employed to exert control and exploit Algeria, highlighting the profound ramifications of a colonial system that left an indelible impact on the nation's history and collective memory.

The French colonial administration employed a multifaceted array of strategies in their concerted effort to eradicate Algerian culture. One such method was the imposition of assimilationist policies, a systematic approach encompassing the enforcement of French academic standards and the deliberate negation of Algerian cultural identity through language, curriculum, and pedagogical methods. In this context, it is of paramount importance to underscore the pivotal role of language as a formidable tool of oppression. Indeed, the colonizers strategically harnessed secular educational institutions, bureaucratic mechanisms, and other "ideological state apparatuses," as expounded by Althusser, to consolidate their dominion (Althusser, 1971, p. 141).

The consequences of this calculated strategy reverberated widely: Algerian language and cultural expressions were systematically stifled, and a new breed of colonial subjects emerged, their identities inexorably entwined with the lifestyle of their colonizers. This orchestrated suppression, coupled with the ensuing cultural trauma, engendered the emergence of a nascent Algerian literature that resolutely responded to the spurious narratives and foundational myths propagated by the colonial "civilizing mission."

Algerian authors, acutely aware of the nuanced dynamics, adopted a linguistic approach aimed at achieving comprehension by their oppressors. The eloquent words of Kateb Yacine resonate powerfully in this context: "I speak French and write in French to let the French know that I am not French" (Kateb, 1994, p. 11). For him, the French language in Algeria served as a weapon of subversion, an ironic "war booty" that he skilfully wielded. His seminal work of 1956, "Nedjma," stands as a testament to an era characterized by an intellectual awakening, driven by an imperative to articulate and communicate the anguish inflicted by what Frantz Fanon aptly described as the oppressive forces of "Negation" and "containment."

Mouloud Feraoun expresses his passion for writing: " Je crois que c'est surtout ce désir de faire connaître notre réalité qui m'a poussé à écrire" (Déjeux 1980, 118). (I believe that the urge to reveal our truth was the driving force behind my writing.) Thus, the motivation behind Feraoun's writing is to

communicate the compassion of his fellow countrymen. In addition, Feraoun admits in *La Littérature Algérienne* that one of the reasons he creates books is to address the biased and deceptive portrayal of the indigenous population by Europeans. To demonstrate his point, Feraoun uses the case of the Algerians, as described by Marcel Moussy: "les Algériens de Moussy, qu'on ne peut imaginer plus authentiques et plus proches de nous, nous coudoient continuellement sans nous voir, c'est que ni Moussy ni Camus ni presque tous les autres n'ont pu venir jusqu'à nous pour suffisamment nous connaître" (Feraoun, L'anniversaire, 1972, p. 55). (the Algerians of Moussy, whom one cannot conceive of being more genuine and nearer to us, elbow us continuously without seeing us; neither Moussy, Camus, nor practically any of the others could come to us to know us adequately).

In order to accomplish the same goal, Kamel Daoud corrects the text of an eminent author: *the Stranger* by Albert Camus.

### III.Literature Review

The initiation of our inquiry prompts a comprehensive exploration of the critical perspectives surrounding the literary works of Albert Camus. Edward Said, in his seminal work "Culture and Imperialism," asserts that Camus assumes a significant role within the intricate backdrop of France's tumultuous decolonization era in the twentieth century. Said characterizes Camus as a figure entrenched in the context of late-stage imperialism, an era marred by the unsettling colonial struggles of the time. Notably, Camus not only endured the apex of the empire's influence but endures as a figure emblematic of universalist literary stature, his origins tracing back to a colonial past that has faded into obscurity (Said, 1977., p. 172).

Furthermore, Said brings to the forefront Conor Cruise O'Brien's perceptive evaluation of Camus. O'Brien discerns Camus's passionate European identity as rooted in his birth on the periphery of Europe. O'Brien boldly asserts that Camus, surpassing even the esteemed Joseph Conrad, stands as a quintessential embodiment of Western "awareness" and "conscience" in relation to the non-Western world (Said, 1977., p. 173). According to O'Brien, Camus's unique vantage point and nuanced sensibility contribute to his profound insights into the complex interplay between Western and non-Western spheres. \*

However, Said's analysis introduces a thought-provoking caveat. He posits that this very consciousness, when perceived through a non-European lens, might inadvertently evoke notions of Western supremacy. The intricate complexities of Western awareness, as elucidated by Camus and others, can potentially be misconstrued as expressions of cultural dominance within the

non-European realm (Said, 1977., p. 173). Continuing along the same lines of thought, Said posits that,

The Western colonialism that O'Brien and Conrad are at such pains to describe is first a penetration beyond the European frontier ... and second, it is specific not to an ahistorical "Western consciousness ... in relation to the non-Western world" ... but to a laboriously constructed relationship in which France and Britain called themselves "the West" vis-à-vis subservient, lesser peoples in a largely underdeveloped and inert "non-Western world." (Said, 1977., p. 174)

O'Brien contends that Camus's critical stance towards French policy during the Algerian War can be attributed to his personal background of being born and raised in French Algeria. This connection to the land and its people likely played a significant role in shaping Camus's perspectives and inspiring his critique of the colonial authorities' actions. This aspect of O'Brien's claim finds widespread agreement and is deemed plausible given Camus's intimate ties to the region. However, where O'Brien's argument encounters greater resistance is in his elevation of Camus's concerns to the realm of "Western Consciousness." While Camus indeed possessed a unique perspective as an individual straddling the cultural boundaries between Europe and North Africa, it is more challenging to subscribe to the notion that his insights represent a comprehensive embodiment of a collective Western consciousness.

Kamel Daoud's novel, "Meursault Contre-Enquête" (The Meursault Investigation) published in 2013, has faced a myriad of criticisms, particularly due to the author's deliberate engagement with the works of notable authors such as Albert Camus. The novel is described as a "contrepoin" (counterpoint) to Camus's oeuvre (Daoud, 2013, p. 11). In other words, it serves as a thought-provoking contrast and rejoinder to Camus's literary contributions.

According to Christiane Chaulet Achour, Daoud's work offers elaborate insights into themes and subjects that remain unaddressed in Camus's text. She keenly observes:

L'extension -- qui donne le roman même de Daoud-- comble les non-dits sur cette « affaire algérienne » et réancrer le récit dans la terre d'Algérie, laissée de côté par de nombreuses études de l'oeuvre. Kamel Daoud rejoint des interprétations universitaires qui ont expliqué ainsi l'escamotage de l'Arabe sur la p[l]age (Achour, 2015, p. 4).



Christiane Chaulet Achour asserts that Daoud's narrative transcends the confines of being a mere response to Camus' "The Stranger." Instead, it extends an invitation for introspection within the context of contemporary Algeria (4). In essence, characterizing Daoud's novel as solely a reiteration of Camus' work oversimplifies the intricacies of the narrative and diminishes the profound interplay between the author's literary composition and the complex sociopolitical landscape of contemporary Algeria.

#### **IV. Colonialist Paradigms in Albert Camus' "The Stranger"**

Narrated by Meursault, an Algerian-French man, the story unfolds as he attends his mother's funeral with an air of indifference. Subsequently, he inexplicably shoots a young man referred to as "the Arab" at the beach. The trial finds Meursault guilty of murder, not due to his act of shooting an innocent Arab, which was often overlooked in the colonial context, but rather because the District Attorney accuses him of lacking sufficient love and mourning for his deceased mother.

To grasp the colonialist dimension of Camus' work, a thorough examination of both the historical backdrop of the novel and the author's political beliefs becomes imperative. The intricate interplay of these factors contributes to the nuanced portrayal of colonialism embedded within the narrative.

Albert Camus, a French national, was born in Algeria, and this dual identity had a significant impact on his views regarding the issue of Algerian independence. Camus opposed Algerian independence because he feared that it would result in his own exile and the expulsion of all settlers from Algeria. He stated:

En ce qui concerne l'Algérie, l'Indépendance nationale est une formule purement passionnelle. Il n'y a jamais eu encore de nation Algérienne. Les Juifs, les Turcs, les Grecs, les Italiens, les Berbères, auraient autant de droit à réclamer la direction de cette nation virtuelle. Actuellement, les Arabes ne forment pas à eux seuls toute l'Algérie. L'importance et l'ancienneté du peuplement français, en particulier, suffisent à créer un problème qui ne peut se comparer à rien dans l'histoire. Les Français d'Algérie sont, eux aussi, et au sens fort du terme, des indigènes. Il faut ajouter qu'une Algérie purement arabe ne pourrait accéder à l'indépendance économique sans laquelle l'indépendance politique n'est qu'un leurre. (Said, 1977., p. 179)

(As far as Algeria is concerned, national independence is a formula driven by nothing other than passion. There has never yet been an



Algerian nation. The Jews, Turks, Greeks, Italians, or Berbers would be as entitled to claim the leadership of this potential nation. As things stand, the Arabs alone do not comprise the whole of Algeria. The size and duration of the French settlement, in particular, are enough to create a problem that cannot be compared to anything else in history. The French of Algeria are also natives, in the strong sense of the word. Moreover, a purely Arab Algeria could not achieve that economic independence without which political independence is nothing but an illusion).

His stance can be understood in the context of his deep attachment to both France and Algeria. As an Algerian-born Frenchman, Camus felt a sense of belonging to both cultures, which made the question of independence a complex and personal matter for him. He worried that the independence movement would lead to a rupture in his identity and force him to choose between his two homes. Additionally, Camus expressed concerns about the potential violence and upheaval that could accompany the process of decolonization. He feared that the struggle for independence might escalate into a bitter conflict, causing immense suffering for both Algerians and the French settlers.

To fully grasp the imperialistic perspective embedded in the novel "The Stranger," one must delve into its historical context. Written in 1942, the novel emerged during a period marked by significant social uprisings and incidents that underscored the enduring and violent resistance of Algerian nationalism against French colonial rule. The indigenous population was no longer perceived merely as a "pacified, decimated Muslim people" but rather as a formidable threat to colonial dominance and authority (Said, 1977., p. 181). The presence of colonial rhetoric within the novel is intricately intertwined with its historical backdrop and the author's own political inclinations.

According to Promod K. Nayar, colonial discourse operates by masking power relations between races, cultures, and nations, presenting these relationships as natural, scientific, and objective. This discourse perpetuates stereotypes rooted in European prejudices, beliefs, and myths (Promod, 2012, p. 3). With this analytical framework in mind, I will proceed to examine "The Stranger" to discern the presence of such qualities within its narrative.

In "The Stranger," Meursault portrays Arabs with glances of menace, apathy, and quiet demeanour. He describes observing some Arabs lazily leaning against the tobacconist's window, closely observing "us" (Camus,

1946, p. 32). The portrayal of Arabs as docile and uninteresting, almost blending into the environment, suggests a perception of them as passive and inconsequential. Meursault's behaviour also reflects a tendency to create a protective barrier between his group and the Arabs, evoking an underlying desire for dominance over the indigenous population.

Camus employs distinct portrayals of indigenous women as opposed to indigenous men in his narrative. These women are depicted as peculiar rather than openly hostile, characterized by details such as the presence of "brightly coloured scarves over their heads" (Camus, 1946, p. 6). The term "Moorish" is employed to describe one of these women instead of the term "Arab," a linguistic choice that potentially veers into the realm of exoticization often associated with the "Orient Stereotype." This characterization is further accentuated by the woman's role as the mistress of a colonizer, thereby aligning with Davis' proposition that the "exotic" is often alluring while the "alien" is portrayed as menacing and perilous (Davis, 2011, p. 228)

The climax is reached during Meursault's detention and trial, where the complete absence and disregard for the Arab characters become apparent. Throughout the narrative, Arabs are entirely ignored, and at the trial, no representation is made for the murdered, nameless Arab man, shifting all focus to the *piets-noirs* community. This aspect of the plot underscores a Eurocentric viewpoint, reinforcing the colonialist perspective prevalent in the novel.

The process of "othering" Arabs begins from the moment Meursault encounters them. He describes the Arabs as "lazing against the tobacconist's window" and discreetly staring at "us" in a manner that differentiates them from the European colonizers (Camus, 1946, p. 32). This dehumanization continues as Meursault likens the Arabs to lizards when they suddenly disappear from his sight (Camus, 1946, p. 37). Throughout the narrative, Arabs are consistently portrayed as a hostile ethnic group in opposition to the Europeans.

Michael Azar highlights the absence of any chance for reconciliation or communication between European Algerians and Arabs in "The Stranger," depicting their relationship as one of all-out conflict (Azar, 2010, p. 4). Meursault's murder of an Arab on the beach would typically warrant condemnation, yet the focus of the trial shifts to his perceived failure to mourn his mother's passing (Camus, 1946, p. 32). In contrast, the deceased Arab remains voiceless and nameless, silenced not only by Meursault's

description of him as an "Arab" but also by a legal system that dismisses his life while attempting to convict Meursault for a seemingly lesser offense.

Conor Cruise O'Brian contends that this absurd denial of proper treatment for a European by a colonial court perpetuates the colonial myth, effectively endorsing the notion of European superiority (O'Brian, 1970, p. 23). Such portrayal reinforces the power dynamics inherent in the colonial setting, where Arab lives are disregarded, and the European presence is prioritized, perpetuating the hierarchies of colonial dominance.

In "The Stranger," Arabs are depicted as either passive and docile individuals or as threatening and dangerous figures engaged in destructive behaviour. This portrayal aligns with Edward Said's notion that undue attention to Arabs holds a "negative value" within the colonial context, perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing the Eurocentric perspective (Said, 1977., p. 286).

Said's analysis suggests that Camus' novels and short stories also serve as reflections of the traditions, dialects, and discursive strategies employed during France's conquest of Algeria (Said, 1977., p. 184). Meursault's statement, "my small thrill of joy when we entered the first brightly lit streets of Algiers" (Camus, 1946, p. 28), bears resemblance to the French or imperialist preoccupation with property ownership. This subtle expression hints at a colonial mindset that prioritizes the comfort and familiarity of the colonizers over the lived experiences and struggles of the indigenous population.

While "The Stranger" has been categorized as absurdist, adopting a postcolonial perspective reveals how the absurdist mood employed in the novel may serve to distract readers from the true humanistic issue at hand - the death of an Arab man. The absurdity and detachment woven into the narrative may inadvertently overshadow the gravity and significance of this loss of life, further underscoring the devaluation of the colonized and their experiences.

#### **V. Kamel Daoud's *the Meursault Investigation*: Redeeming the Silenced Other**

In his literary work, Kamel Daoud endeavours to present the reader with a distinctive and alternative perspective. The narrative unfolds through the voice of Haroun, the younger brother of Meursault's victim, who experienced the tragic incident at the tender age of seven. As an elderly resident of twenty-first-century Algeria, Haroun offers an account of the murder that deviates from the cosmological explanations presented in the original text. Through this reimagined approach, Daoud reframes the

significance of the murder, placing a greater emphasis on its historical context. Consequently, the act of restitution assumes new layers of meaning and significance within the narrative.

Daoud adeptly employs the language of the former colonizer to craft a compelling counter-narrative. By appropriating the colonizer's language, he artfully subverts traditional power dynamics and effectively reclaims agency for the silenced voices within the colonial discourse. This strategic manipulation of language allows Daoud to construct a successful counter-narrative that not only challenges prevailing assumptions but also offers a fresh and insightful interpretation of the events surrounding Meursault's crime and its aftermath.

The choice of the title "Meursault, Counter-Investigation" serves as a suggestive declaration of opposition. It immediately signals to the reader the author's intention to challenge and discredit the colonial discourse put forth by the French author, while simultaneously shedding light on the historical realities of colonialism that Albert Camus' "The Stranger" left obscured. Daoud's literary work, through the voice of the protagonist, takes on the task of unravelling the truths hidden in the shadows of the colonial narrative. For instance, when Haroun, the narrator, asserts, "I had to take hold of the clock that records all the hours of my life and turn the hands back until they showed the exact time when Musa was murdered: Zoujj, two o'clock in the afternoon. 'Around 2:00 a.m., I murdered the Frenchman,'" Daoud skillfully exposes the distorted perspectives present in the colonial discourse. By revisiting the past and reconstructing the events, the author challenges the prevailing narrative and, in doing so, opens up new avenues for understanding the complexities of colonialism and its impact on the lives of those involved.

According to Gayatri Spivak, the act of reading a literary work through its gaps and silences can unveil concealed messages and bring to light repressed characters. Kamel Daoud's mission in "Meursault Contre-Enquête" is precisely to identify and give voice to the oppressed Arab character through Haroun, the victim's younger brother. Daoud explains the absence of the Arab in the original narrative, stating that the perpetrator, Meursault, was such a compelling storyteller that he managed to make people forget the crime committed against the Arab. Haroun's intention is to rectify this erasure by speaking on behalf of the deceased man, ensuring that he is no longer relegated to the role of an "other."

*Othering* is a critical process that transforms Haroun's sibling into an anonymous figure, deprived even of a name. As elucidated by Spivak, othering denotes a "hierarchical, unequal relationship" between colonial

discourse and the colonized, subaltern subjects. Haroun highlights this process when he refers to "the Arabs" as vague, incongruous spectres with no language except the sound of a flute. This erasure of individual identity and relegation to an indistinct group perpetuates the hierarchical power dynamics of the colonial context, where the colonized are subjugated and their agency undermined.

Haroun takes it upon himself to provide the deceased with a voice and, importantly, a name: "I want to tell you the story that Moussa was never able to tell you." The act of restoring his specific name becomes a catalyst for his rebirth, signifying a symbolic reclamation of individuality and humanization. Haroun goes on to offer a vivid and detailed description of his brother, Moussa, presenting him as more than just a generic Arab stereotype.

Through this portrayal, Moussa emerges as a distinct individual with a rich cultural heritage and a sense of belonging. He is referred to as Ouled el-assasse (son of the watchman), affirming his identity and familial lineage. This emphasis on Moussa's individuality counters the dehumanizing narrative that often prevails in colonial discourse, where colonized individuals are reduced to mere "ordinary bit players."

Haroun's recollection that nobody sought his brother's name after independence sheds light on a significant aspect of colonial and post-colonial history - the erasure of individual identities and histories. This collective amnesia perpetuates the silence surrounding the lives and experiences of countless individuals like Moussa who have been forgotten and overlooked by the dominant colonial and post-colonial narratives.

By emphasizing that Moussa has died ceaselessly for seventy years, long after his funeral, Haroun underscores the enduring impact of colonial violence and oppression on the lives of the colonized. The neglect and disappearance of his body symbolize the ongoing erasure and neglect of the countless victims of colonialism.

#### **VI. Abrogation and Appropriation in the Meursault Investigation**

The French colonial enterprise effectively employed education as a strategic means to erode native cultures and languages, replacing them with the dominant French culture and language (Corcoran, 2007, p. 5). Language, being a potent tool of oppression, played a pivotal role in the genesis of postcolonial literature—a process that involved reclaiming language's power and writing's symbolic authority from the dominant European civilization. As Ashcroft et al. assert in their conception of postcolonial writing, it entails appropriating the language of the colonizer and recasting it within a discourse tailored to the colonized context (Bill Ashcroft G. G., 2002, p. 38). By

employing the colonizer's language, this approach represents a form of resistance and militancy, challenging the linguistic imperial power and hegemony of the centre while amplifying the long-overlooked linguistic diversity of the colonized region. This critical engagement with colonial language and power lies at the heart of postcolonial discourse. The ensuing question, therefore, is which language shall be harnessed to achieve this transformative objective?

During the pre-independence era, numerous Algerian authors adopted the French language as a means to express and confront the distorted truth perpetuated by colonialism. In this context, Mouloud Mammeri emphasizes:

Nous avons voulu faire comprendre aux Européens ce qu'est l'Afrique sentie de l'intérieure [...] nous sommes condamnés à nous faire connaître, à faire connaître notre pays à ceux qui portent des jugements erronés sur l'Afrique. Donc nous sommes obligés d'écrire... pour les étrangers, pour vous Européens ! (Mammeri, 1968, pp. 35-36)

Mammeri acknowledges the inherent challenge faced by Algerian writers, who find themselves in a position where they must make their country and culture known to foreigners, particularly Europeans, who often hold preconceived notions and stereotypes about Africa. By writing in the language of the colonizer, these authors aim to bridge the gap and communicate their reality directly to the European audience.

As discussed earlier, "Appropriation" and "Abrogation" are two crucial and interdependent strategies in the process of reconstructing identity and coming to terms with the colonial past. According to Ashcroft et al., "Abrogation" represents a pivotal step in the decolonization of language, entailing the rejection and removal of imperialist influences, while "Appropriation" complements this process by reinterpreting and redefining the language and its meanings to establish a new cultural and linguistic identity.

Haroun, the protagonist in the novel, exemplifies this interplay between "Appropriation" and "Abrogation" as he seeks to craft his own unique language and narrative. He draws upon the history of his country after its independence, symbolized by the act of removing stones from the old colonial houses and repurposing them to build his own home. In this metaphor, the discarded elements represent the rejection of the colonial legacy, and the creation of his own space symbolizes the emergence of a new, authentic identity.

By reclaiming the words and expressions of the murderer, Haroun asserts his agency over the colonial past and appropriates them for his own purposes. This process of linguistic appropriation allows him to reshape the narrative and provide an alternative perspective that challenges the dominant colonial discourse.

Through this act of linguistic appropriation, Haroun defies Camus' false premise and subverts the colonial use of French for oppressive purposes. Instead, he uses the language as a tool to communicate the ideas and perspectives of the colonial individuals, especially those silenced and marginalized within the colonial context. In this way, Haroun reclaims agency over the language, transforming it into a means of expression and empowerment for the colonized.

By challenging the colonial narrative and speaking from the perspective of the silenced other, Haroun exemplifies the power of language in reshaping and reclaiming historical truths. His linguistic endeavour becomes a form of resistance, dismantling the colonial discourse and shedding light on the lived experiences of those who have long been overshadowed by the dominant colonial perspective.

Ashcroft et al. argue that "abrogation" plays a pivotal role in the decolonization of language, implying the replacement of the old colonial language with a newly established indigenous one. However, they caution that without the complementary process of "appropriation," the effects of "abrogation" may be limited to merely reversing assumptions of privilege without fully challenging the dominant hegemonic discourse (Bill Ashcroft G. G., 2002, p. 38). In essence, "appropriation" is a critical postcolonial literary strategy that subverts the linguistic coding of the dominant language. This subversion is achieved through the use of vernacular language, which allows postcolonial writers to challenge and reshape the prevailing colonial narratives.

Throughout Kamel Daoud's text, "Meursault, Counter-Investigation," the strategy of "appropriation" is evident in the deliberate subversion of the French language, which historically served as the language of the colonizer. Daoud's skilful use of vernacular language enables his protagonist, Haroun, to continue the unfinished sentences of his deceased brother and offer an alternative narrative to Albert Camus' original story. By appropriating the colonizer's language, Haroun challenges the assumptions of privilege and authority associated with it, thus reclaiming agency and enabling the silenced voices of the colonized to be heard.



The appropriation of the colonists' language serves as a means to accentuate cultural distinctions and delineate the local foreign centre from the metropolitan foreign centre, a strategy employed across various postcolonial literatures. In the book "The Empire Writes Back," the authors discuss six techniques utilized by postcolonial writers to portray this divide: code switching, vernacular translation, glossing, untranslated words, interlanguage, and syntactic fusion. These techniques enable writers to navigate the complexities of cultural hybridity and resistance, presenting a nuanced representation of the postcolonial experience while simultaneously challenging the dominance of the colonial language.

Indeed, untranslated words are a prevalent technique in Kamel Daoud's literary works, serving as a call for active engagement and participation in the culture they represent. Terms such as "Huma," "bled," "ouled el assasse," "gaouri," and "chahid" seamlessly integrate Algerian cultural identity into the dominant language, asserting the richness and complexity of the Algerian experience. From the outset, Daoud showcases his profound understanding of language and expresses his determination to seek justice for his brother's death by utilizing the very language that has historically been associated with the colonizers. Through this strategic use of untranslated words, Daoud empowers his characters and the readers alike to challenge the dominant discourse and reclaim agency over their cultural heritage.

## VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, Kamel Daoud's "Meursault, Counter-Investigation" serves as a powerful example of postcolonial literature's capacity to question and reshape prevailing colonial narratives. Through the strategic use of appropriation and subversion, Daoud confronts the colonialist discourse embedded in Albert Camus's "The Stranger" and presents an alternative perspective that amplifies the voices of the silenced and marginalized.

By appropriating the language of the colonizer, Daoud challenges the distorted portrayal of the colonized and unveils the intricacies of cultural identities. The protagonist, Haroun, becomes a vehicle for confronting the colonial legacy and reclaiming the identity of the deceased Arab, named Moussa, whose existence had been suppressed in the original narrative. Furthermore, Daoud's deconstruction of the notion of superior and inferior cultures underscores the interconnectedness of colonizer and colonized, reshaping the power dynamics and illuminating the shared elements of cultural formation.

*Meursault, Counter-Investigation* urges readers to critically engage with the historical and socio-political complexities of colonialism and postcolonial realities. The work prompts a deeper understanding of the colonial experience and the impact of colonial discourse on the marginalized.

In its skilful use of appropriation and subversion, "Meursault, Counter-Investigation" serves as a potent testament to the transformative potential of postcolonial literature. It challenges dominant narratives, re-evaluates historical truths, and advocates for the recognition of silenced voices in the discourse of power.

Overall, Daoud's work stands as a compelling testament to the enduring relevance of postcolonial literature in reshaping our comprehension of history, culture, and identity. It calls for a reimagining of a more inclusive and equitable future, demonstrating how literature can play a pivotal role in fostering dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation in the aftermath of colonialism.

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