

## GENERAL SECTION

### 1

## Urban Space in Kamel Daoud's Novel '*Meursault Contre-Enquête*'

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### Abstract

What is a city like in Algeria and how is it represented in contemporary Algerian literature? This paper aims to focus on space in an Algerian novelist Kamel Daoud's Novel 'Meursault Contre-Enquête' (2013) which is akin to human invasion and control of natural space. Cities in Algeria were regularly conquered and raped, and after independence, urbanization attracted migration from rural areas. The city changes and the environment evolves monstrously. Slums develop in great densities around big cities. Squalor and dirt epitomize the failure of government policies, and the unnamed narrator in the novel feels the implications of the failure on both the urban and the natural tissue of the city. As if aware of the Anthropocene as a new epoch and a human turn in (his)tory, he protests against the human condition in postcolonial Algeria. In *Meursault Contre-Enquête*, a woman is vulnerable and weak as a response to the cognitive and human understanding and relating to the environment. Both male and female body is violated and despised. In the novel, the female body represents both nature and Algeria. Right from the beginning, the narrator's brother, Moussa, seems to hate his mother for some obscure reason. However, if the French are not allowed to violate the natural order of the Arabs, the latter's sense of patriarchy considers the city as a woman. Both are neglected in historical and socio-cultural imbrications. In fact, as a product of the Anthropocene, the French created two cities, the upper world, and the inferior world following Persephone's myth. The Arabs in general and Women in particular live in Hades, an unnatural world. Patriarchy is reversed when the son commands his mother.

*Keywords:* Anthropocene, city, crime, Kamel Daoud, patriarchy, women.

## Introduction

If scientists first coined the term Anthropocene, it has nevertheless reached the world of literature through many writers. Postcolonial literature has also contributed to denouncing man's destruction of nature and landscape by both the colonizer and the former colonized. Kamel Daoud's novel *Meursault Contre-Enquête* (2014) might be a good reference where both voices fuse in an aesthetic ambiguity. The Anthropocene has provoked significant destruction of nature and the city, history and culture and at last man. If the Anthropocene involves the human domination of the globe, it certainly englobes the colonial domination of vulnerable regions of the world.

Indeed, *Meursault contre-enquete* is the story told by an individual in a bar, but very often, the reader has the impression that the narrator is not only a victim of his nocturnal drinks but psychological problems that he has been dragging since his childhood. The novel tells, therefore, the story of an investigation into a crime committed in 1942 and whose facts are reported in a novel, *The Stranger* (1942), by Albert Camus. In his novel, the criminal is imprisoned only by his indifference and nonchalant attitude at the burial of his mother. The investigation conducted by Haroun and his mother offers us new perspectives on the crimes of the Arabs. He is no longer an anonymous Moorish, but it is Moussa, Haroun's brother. Haroun takes revenge by killing a Frenchman one day after independence. If the novel reveals the suffering of Algerians during colonialism, it remains that he denounces fanaticism and its ideology in this independent Algeria, an opportunity for Haroun to conduct his investigation of his identity.

## The City after Darwin OR the Destruction of the city

Natural selection is not only about the fittest but it is also about the superior and the inferior, the powerful and the vulnerable. The direction of the selection is well-known. The whole environment, imagination, and culture are going to be affected. Natural selection seems parallel to Nietzsche's will to power, annihilating the 'other', his dreams and his environment.

The destruction stretched to the city. The image of the mother is often that of the city, is a shadow. The city of Oran, which has always

received foreigners, seems a perfect example of the prostitute. 'C'est une ville qui a les jambes écartées en direction de la mer,' (12), or 'J'aime l'endroit, mais parfois j'y devine les effluves d'un sexe de femme, géant et épuisé.' (12)

What is shocking in the novel is that the city of Oran looks like Algiers in its filth. The narrator does not recognize himself anymore. After centuries of destruction, the imagination has been infected and the post-colonial narrator sees only filth in the city. Nothing has changed, at least in the imagination. The city has been destroyed twice, by the colonizer and by its own 'children' during independence. 'Oui, Alger, dans ma mémoire, est une créature sale, corrompue, voleuse d'hommes, traîtresse et sombre.' (15) The reference to his brother is clearly there, but the author wants to describe the city in the consciousness of the Arab:

Regarde un peu autour de toi, ici, à Oran ou ailleurs, on dirait que les gens en veulent à la ville et qu'ils y viennent pour saccager une sorte de pays étranger. La ville est un butin, les gens la considèrent comme une vieille catin, on l'insulte, on la maltraite, on lui jette des ordures à la gueule et on la compare sans cesse à la bourgade saine et pure qu'elle était autrefois, mais on ne peut plus la quitter, car c'est la seule issue vers la mer et l'endroit le plus éloigné du désert. (16)

[Take a look around you, here, in Oran or elsewhere, it seems that people are mad at the city and that they come there to devastate some kind of foreign country. The city is a booty, people consider it an old whore, we insult it, we mistreat it, we throw garbage in its mouth and we constantly compare it to the healthy and pure town that it once was, but we can no longer leave it, because it is the only way out to the sea and the furthest place from the desert. (16)]

The city is considered, in fact, as a prostitute we love but despise at the same time. The city in Daoud's novel makes us think ipso facto of the city of Europeans before independence but the city-war booty after independence, it is in this treacherous, prostitute mother that identity is hidden. It is precisely in the labyrinths of this new dirty and corrupt city that the search for this identity will begin.

### **Destruction of history**

Any city does not live out of history. The falsification of history: a way to maintain colonial power, and the French excelled in the profusion lies about Algerian history and their Crimes. : 'La raison de

cette omission ? Le premier savait raconter, au point qu'il a réussi à faire oublier son crime, alors que le second 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' (07)

### **Tyranny of the father**

Anthropogenic transformations to the Algerian man speeded up at the beginning of the 20th Century. The historical destruction of Algeria provoked unprecedented changes in man's thinking, mentality, and culture 'Human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of nature and are pushing the Earth as a whole into planetary *terra incognita*.' (Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen and John R. McNeill in Clark 01) This perfectly suits what French colonialism performed in Algeria during 132 years i.e. from 1830 to 1962. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century was a century of Industrialization and colonialism as well. It is not innocent that the Anthropocene finds its origins in industrialization. The mighty hands of destruction polluted landscape, culture and aesthetics. It has certainly significantly modified the environment, urban cities and the traditions of people. Anthropocene may have a face of alienation despite its recent adoption by the humanities. This is certainly valid at least in the postcolonial Algerian literature.

### **Haroun the ambiguous new Algerian character**

Kamel Daoud uses ambiguity as a literary aesthetic device to create chaos in understanding, multiple voices, and fluid interpretations, but his ambiguity is also connecting bridges between the elements of intertextuality, historical viewpoints, and fiction in his novel *Meursault Contre-Enquête* (2014). The latter novel is interknitted with Camus's *The Stranger* (1942).

If Freud's Oedipus complex belongs to the Western tradition, what is the status of the postcolonial Oedipus complex in Daoud's novel? Kamel Daoud is an interesting instance of the ramifications of post-coloniality and postmodernism. From Lyotard's metanarrative to personal biography, in his quest for 'truth', how does an Algerian author express his will to Self-assertion, identity and, to use Julian Barnes's expression, 'pure story'?

Haroun's anxiety personality and identity disorders are precisely the result of a reaction to a postcolonial dogma and a protective vision of identity at the same time. Haroun confirms 'Il y a de l'angoisse de bâtard dans cette histoire, non ?' (11)

The Oedipus complex culminates in the tyranny of the father. Despite the latter's absence some time after Haroun's birth during the 30's, the protagonist has nothing but to imagine him. 'C'est pourquoi je me l'imagine toujours sombre, caché dans un manteau ou une djellaba noire, recroquevillé dans un coin mal éclairé, muet et sans réponse pour moi' (11). 'un manteau' or 'djellaba' creates this scepticism towards history and unreliability of both the French colonial and Algerian metanarrative of history. 'Cela a duré presque dix ans, cette histoire. Je le sais parce que je connais les deux textes par cœur.' (63) History is confined to some linguistic construct, a text, or two texts (deux textes).

History and metaphysics are a mere 'parole', linguistic creations to soothe the ego of a nation or a community, a people, but no one can check the veracity of their narratives. Consequently, fiction and metafiction are the sole substitutes, and personal interpretations are the only valid appropriation of history and even metaphysics. Each individual can interpret any history according to his understanding. Knowledge becomes relative

'Mon histoire te convient-elle ? C'est tout ce que je peux t'offrir. C'est ma parole, à prendre ou à laisser. Je suis le frère de Moussa ou le frère de personne. Juste un mythomane que tu as rencontré pour remplir tes cahiers... C'est ton choix, l'ami. C'est comme la biographie de Dieu. Ha, ha ! Personne ne l'a jamais rencontré, pas même Moussa, et personne ne sait si son histoire est vraie ou pas.' (75)

'Does my story suit you? That's all I can give you. It's my word, take it or leave it. I am Moussa's brother or nobody's brother. Just a mythomaniac you met to fill your notebooks ... It's your choice, friend. It's like the biography of God. Ha ha! No one has ever met him, not even Moussa, and no one knows whether his story is true or not.' (75)

Chasing the father from the narrative universe dismisses the metaphysical realm as well.

'Je suis le seul à payer des factures d'électricité et à être mangé par les vers à la fin. Donc, ouste ! Du coup, je déteste les religions et la soumission. A-t-on idée de courir après un père qui n'a jamais posé son

pied sur terre et qui n'a jamais eu à connaître la faim ou l'effort de gagner sa vie ?' (38)

'I'm the only one paying electric bills and getting eaten by the worms at the end of it. So, ouste! Suddenly, I hate religion and submission. Do you have any idea of running after a father who has never set foot on earth and who has never had to know hunger or the effort to make a living?' (38)

History is often recorded and reported by the mother. It sits between myth and memory, lost in the realm of fiction and legends. Identity seems to slide between improbable events and stories, fantasies, or perhaps even conscious lies.

Faithful to the Oedipal rebellion, Haroun tries to subtract himself from his complex of inferiority. A crime against a crime, he was dreaming of committing one. Writing a novel becomes a crime '*Ah, tu sais, moi qui pourtant ne me suis jamais soucie d'écrire un livre, je rêve d'en commettre un. Juste un !*'(53) 'Ah, you know, I who never bothered to write a book yet, I dream of doing one. Just one!' (53) He commits a 'perfect crime' towards the end of the novel, like Meursault, using Baudrillard's term, just after independence. From this perfect crime, Baudrillard will say

The artist, too, is always close to committing the perfect crime: saying nothing. But he turns away from it, and his work is the trace of that criminal imperfection. The artist is, in Michaux's words, the one who, with all his might, resists the fundamental drive not to leave traces (Baudrillard, P.C., 06)

The dissolution of the ego is the consequence of fear and anxiety in the development process of the Oedipus complex. Oedipus, who is always in quest for the mother in the outer world, does not have a strong consciousness of identity and reality. Consequently, Haroun attempts to free himself from the strong hold of his spiritual father's influence '*C'est d'ailleurs pour cette raison que j'ai appris à parler cette langue et à l'écrire; pour parler à la place d'un mort, continuer un peu ses phrases.*' (07) That's why I learned to speak and write this language; to speak for a dead person, continue his sentences a bit.' (07)

Aware of cultural, artistic and literary challenges, Daoud's narrator asks, '*Comment dire ça à l'humanité quand tu ne sais pas écrire de livres ?*' (12) How do you say that to humanity when you can't write books? '(12) Haroun seems to confirm the novel's

belonging to Western epistemology, to the colonizer. The narrator denounces the fact that the novel of which he speaks ignores the other and does not even mention the name of the assassinated Arab.

'Le succès de ce livre est encore intact, à en croire ton enthousiasme, mais je te le répète, je pense qu'il s'agit d'une terrible arnaque. Après l'Indépendance, plus je lisais les livres de ton héros, plus j'avais l'impression d'écraser mon visage sur la vitre d'une salle de fête où ni ma mère ni moi n'étions conviés. Tout s'est passé sans nous.' (37)

"The success of this book is still intact if you believe your enthusiasm, but I repeat, I think this is a terrible scam. After Independence, the more I read your hero's books, the more I felt like I was crushing my face on the glass of a party hall where neither my mother nor I were invited. It all happened without us. '(37)

Daoud uses metafiction as a hybrid technique to approach the representation of reality. Therefore, the inception of this vision of the outer world starts from the form/body since identity and form seem to take a single hybrid body. Identity determines the form that shapes the novel, the language, the register and the conception of the world.

Metafiction, according to Patricia Waugh, introduces a conflict between voices, characters and the demurge writer. Daoud's novel opens with the murder of a character, the same individual reported in Camus's novel *The Stranger* (1942). In the chaos of comings and goings to Camus's *The Stranger*, of which the author adapts entire passages, the confusion of words and polysemy seems to create another murder. It is the author of our novel who is the murderer. The narrator incriminates him. It is no longer Camus's novel but Daoud's novel. He is '*l'écrivain tueur*' (50) the killer writer '(50), *'ton écrivain, semblait m'avoir volé ... mon portrait, et même les détails de ma vie et les souvenirs de mon interrogatoire !'*(69) 'Your writer seemed to have stolen from me ... my portrait, and even details of my life and memories of my interrogation!' (69) He is confused with the murderer in the novel of Camus because the layers of narration become one in Daoud's novel '*Ton écrivain meurtrier s'est trompé, mon frère et son compagnon n'avaient pas du tout l'intention de les tuer, lui ou son ami barbeau.*'(35) "Your murderous writer was wrong, my brother and his mate had no intention of killing him or his friend Barbeau at all." (35)

Daoud uses a few other hybrid techniques of oral tradition coupled with metafiction in order to convince, persuade and play on the emotions of the reader. ‘Cela fait des années que je t’attends et si je ne peux pas écrire mon livre, je peux au moins te le raconter, non ?’(09) “I’ve been waiting for you for years and if I can’t write my book I can at least tell you about it, right?” (09) To tell a story does not seem to bring back the truth even though it is a crime. But this crime does not seem real, except for appearances according to Baudrillard. ‘Were it not for appearances, the world would be a perfect crime, that is, a crime without a criminal, without a victim and without a motive. And the truth would forever have withdrawn from it and its secret would never be revealed, for want of any clues [traces] being left behind.’ Baudrillard, PC, 06)

From the beginning, we have the impression that it is an individual in a bar who tells a story to a student. It would seem that Camus’s novel and the narrator’s story become one and overlap until the narrator uses masks according to his desires defying the author and confesses in complete freedom ‘*Je pouvais passer de vie à trépas et de l’au-delà au soleil en changeant seulement de prénom: moi Haroun, Moussa, Meursault ou Joseph. Selon les envies, presque.*’ (56) ‘I could go from life to death and beyond in the sun by just changing my first name: me Haroun, Moussa, Meursault or Joseph. Almost as you wish. ‘(56) When he speaks of the ‘book’, the narrator deliberately creates confusion and we no longer know whether the referent is his novel or that of Camus. ‘*Moi, je connais ce livre par cœur, je peux te le réciter en entier comme le Coran.*’ (09) “I know this book by heart, I can recite it to you in full like the Koran.” (09)

Metafiction, therefore, introduces intertextuality but at the same time confesses a technique to exhume an emotion and a consciousness of the narrator by involving his reader. It is also another challenging gaze on history and a rebellion against the stifling ‘presence’ of the father.

### **Metafiction, hybridity and truth**

For Patricia Waugh, ‘[T]he lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction. The two processes are

held together in a formal tension which breaks down the distinctions between 'creation' and 'criticism' and merges them into the concepts of 'interpretation' and 'deconstruction.' (Waugh, 06). Daoud uses the technique to shed light on his story and his conception of Algerian history.

The colonizer's position seems to be reinforced by his identity but above all by his 'superiority' over the colonized. The latter dreams of imitating the literary production of the colonizer. This inability of the colonized to detach himself from his ex-colonizer drives him towards mimicry. It becomes a manner to express, similarly, a meaning. Haroun, the protagonist, travels from layers of narration in a way that overlaps the novelist's position this time, understands his role and seems to accept his status as a victimized former colonized without seemingly apparent resistance. Yet, mimesis helps him to develop his own identity.

The colonizer's discourse seems to radicalize the polarity between the superior West and the inferior East that Edward Said undertook in his *Orientalism* (1978), and Bhabha seems to find in Said's work a support for his discourse of hybridity rather than polarity. The novel, according to Bhabha, is precisely a tool that marks Western superiority. However, ironically it also marks the resistance of the colonized. Daoud also seems to reinforce the idea by showing that the criminal wanted to confirm, unconsciously perhaps, that the European is superior to the Arab, who remains unnamed in Camus's novel. It is only by giving him a life, an identity, a family, and a name, Moussa, that Daoud rejects this superiority. Haroun knows it bitterly because

[a]près l'Indépendance, plus je lisais les livres de ton héros, plus j'avais l'impression d'écraser mon visage sur la vitre d'une salle de fête où ni ma mère ni moi n'étions conviés. Tout s'est passé sans nous.' (37)

[A]fter Independence, the more I read your hero's books, the more I felt like I was crushing my face on the glass of a party hall where neither my mother nor I were invited. It all happened without us. '(37)

Although Haroun seems to want a compromise, a negotiation, a rejection of polarity and difference through aesthetic devices such as hybridity, the Europeans seem to deny and repudiate it. Haroun has nothing left but anger to show the attitude of Camus's hero. This

anger is aesthetically carried out. Metafiction is the only way to rebel against the father, to assert his will to life and his will to annihilate the metanarrative of the Europeans. Mimicry helps to erect a new world although impurely similar to the original, an artefact. *‘[c]’est simple : cette histoire devrait donc être réécrite, dans la même langue, mais de droite à gauche.’* (09) *‘[It]’ is simple, so this story should be rewritten, in the same language, but from right to left. “(09)*

History, just like fiction in general and a novel in particular, is a linguistic construct. Kamel Daoud seems aware of it in his quest for truth.

*‘Le meurtrier est devenu célèbre et son histoire est trop bien écrite pour que j’aie dans l’idée 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. Les mots du meurtrier et ses expressions sont mon bien vacant.’* (07)

*“The murderer has become famous and his story is too well written for me to imitate him. It was his language. That’s why I’m going to do what we did in this country after its independence: take the stones one by one from the old settlers’ houses and make them my own house, my language. The murderer’s words and expressions are my vacant property.’* (07)

Writing history coincides with fiction while the author gives his metaphorical opinion on major events of his country. It is the opinion of an elderly man gazing at his past. History turns out to be not a matter of logic causality, but the product of emotions and memories, past events that resist veracity especially when narrated by an old heavy drinker

*‘Ça s’appelle comment, une histoire qui regroupe autour d’une table un serveur kabyle à carrure de géant, un sourd-muet apparemment tuberculeux, un jeune universitaire à l’œil sceptique et un vieux buveur de vin qui n’a aucune preuve de ce qu’il avance ?’* (71)

*‘How is it called, a story that brings together a Kabyle waiter around a table giant-build, a deaf-mute apparently tuberculous, a young scholar with the skeptical eye and an old wine drinker who has no proof of what he’s saying?’* (71)

If history shrinks into family past events or a simple biography, in this case, the narrator complies with the rules of interpretation.

Haroun is aware of it, and his articulation of history is one simple drop of consciousness in this vast realm of meaning. It has taken Haroun years to realize that he cannot resolve the mystery of history, the crime, and his brother's murder. Old age seems to be the knowledge pot to collect all moments of history, and yet it is not enough to understand anything

'Pardonne au vieillard que je suis devenu. C'est d'ailleurs un grand mystère.

Aujourd'hui, je suis si vieux que je me dis souvent, les nuits où les étoiles sont nombreuses à scintiller dans le ciel, qu'il y a nécessairement quelque chose à découvrir quand on vit aussi longtemps. Autant d'efforts à vivre ! Il faut qu'au bout, nécessairement, il y ait une sorte de révélation essentielle. Cela me choque, cette disproportion entre mon insignifiance et la vastitude du monde. Je me dis souvent qu'il doit y avoir quelque chose, quand même, au milieu, entre ma banalité et l'univers !' (72)

'Forgive the old man I have become. It's a great mystery. Today I'm so old that I often tell myself on nights when the stars are many twinkling in the sky, that there is necessarily something to discover when you live that long. So many efforts to live! At the end of the day, necessarily, there is some sort of essential revelation. It shocks me, this disproportion between my insignificance and the vastness of the world. I often tell myself that there must be something, though, in the middle, between my banality and the universe! "' (72)

This opinion is not always of his construct as the influence of the spiritual father, Camus in this case, is omnipresent. The same dialectical relation existing in the Oedipus complex seems to regulate the hate-admiration feelings. This ambivalent feeling towards the father creates the ambiguities and the chaotic entanglements of the narrative. Haroun the protagonist and the narrator shapes hi(s)-story with a variety of techniques pertaining to metafiction. According to Patricia Waugh, some of these are

'dehumanization of character, parodic doubles, obtrusive proper names..., self-reflexive images ..., critical discussions of the story within the story..., continuous undermining of specific fictional conventions..., use of popular genres ..., and explicit parody of previous texts whether literary or non-literary.' (Waugh, 22)

In her major book, *Metafiction* (2001), Patricia Waugh defines the concept as a self-conscious writing about fiction and its relation to reality. Exploring the theory of fiction and their construction, 'such

writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text.’ (Waugh, 02)

Metafiction intrudes as a game and a play and displays the narrator’s self-reflexivity. It is twofold in our novel. It is consciousness of the narrative mode and the intertextual dialogue between Daoud and Camus’s novels. On the one hand, it sounds like an oral story told orally by a man in a bar to whoever wants to listen to him. He is an old man who brings pieces of memory, assumptions, and facts based on family and personal events in a chaotic nonlinear sequencing. On the other hand, the ludic principle does not seem to offer that much importance to the ideas that history puts forth. Metafiction tries to set Haroun the protagonist on a personal, empiric experience of past events, and very often introspective enquiries about ‘truth(s)’ and the self, history and the present. The quest for ‘truth’ about the crime is intermingled, but which truth since there are varieties of truths. This incredulity towards metanarratives is simplified into a ‘vulgar’ crime committed in both novels, but apparently, Haroun incriminates his mother *‘J’en veux à ma mère, je lui en veux. C’est elle qui a commis ce crime en vérité.’* (50) However, of this crime, he confesses that *‘M’ma avait mille et un récits et la vérité m’importait peu à cet âge.’*(13) “I blame my mother, I blame her. It was she who committed this crime in truth. “(50) However, of this crime, he confesses that” *M’ma had a thousand and one tales and I didn’t care much about the truth at that age. “(13)* Each seems to have his interpretation of a past event, but ultimately even Haroun has his own *‘La vérité est que l’Indépendance n’a fait que pousser les uns et les autres à échanger leurs rôles.’*(11) “The truth is, Independence only pushed each other to switch roles.” (11) The reader himself can create several interpretations of the novel depending on the perspective. It is an investigation of a crime, an unsuccessful love story, and an existentialist interpretation of life in postcolonial Algeria. The list may go on. It sounds as if there is no ‘truth’ at all, and the narrator witnesses a succession of truth collapses. The only truth that remains is his and his conception of it, hi(s)story and the world around him.

It is important then to claim that the role of metafiction is pinning identity to narrative and fiction. The personal self-reflexivity and self-consciousness appear to be elements of self-identity. Waugh

puts forth that 'by studying metafiction, one is, in effect, studying that which gives the novel its identity.'(05) The two cultures remain in contact, and language creates and invents the identity that depends on a back-and-forth movement between the former colonizer and the colonized's novel, therefore culture. This seems to avoid the clash of cultures. Daoud's metafiction seems to gather together a world arising from intertext and another that he would like to complement but based on justice and equilibrium. The narrator speaks of hybridity in a relational context. It can be political, cultural, and social. He calls it 'justice' or 'equilibrium'

Comprends-moi bien, je n'exprime ni tristesse ni colère. Je ne joue même pas le deuil, seulement...seulement quoi ? Je ne sais pas. 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 (09)

Don't get me wrong, I am not expressing sadness or anger. I don't even play mourning, only... just what? I do not know. I think I would like justice to be done. It might sound ridiculous at my age ... But I swear it's true. By that I mean, not the justice of the courts, but that of balances (09)

For Bhabha, colonialism should not be seen as a negative factor in the history of nations but as a period of cultural and intellectual contact. From the matrix of violence and domination is born a culture, not without continuity. Decolonization does not occur in peace and serenity. But it seems to be an endless process from which certain spasms are to be revisited and meditated. Identity, it seems, is no longer of that ideal purity that some venture to seek in the meanders of history because it flows between the cultural interactions bequeathed by the colonizer and the local culture; it is the fruit of this negotiation.

The linguistic problem in post-colonial Algeria remains one of the thorniest and its complexity is obscured between the ideology of a nascent, developing country seeking a place in the concert of the nations of the world and a language which imposes both a vision and a meaning. Haroun seems to be aware of this when he announces that '*[la] langue se boit et se parle, et un jour elle vous possède; alors, elle prend l'habitude de saisir les choses à votre place, elle s'empare de la bouche comme le fait le couple dans le baiser vorace.*' (09) '[The] tongue is drunk

and spoken, and one day it possesses you; so she gets into the habit of picking things up for you, grabbing the mouth like the couple do in the ravenous kiss. “(09) Language seems to have an erotic dimension and so does memory especially when it reveals its perfidy and inability to bring truth from the past. Identity then becomes fluid, swerving between mental representations and linguistic constructs. *‘Je suis le frère de Moussa ou le frère de personne. Juste un mythomane que tu as rencontré pour remplir tes cahiers...’* (75) ‘I am Moussa’s brother or nobody’s brother. Just a mythomaniac you met to fill your notebooks ...’ (75)

Haroun recognizes his state of neuroticism *‘J’ai une vision de névrosé, je te l’accorde.’* (62) What is troubling in the novel is the dissolution of the ego. For P. Waugh, paranoia establishes a new contact with reality and is a celebration of new forms of narration. This deconstruction of the real gives the reader a better understanding of the narrative.

Metafictional deconstruction has not only provided novelists and their readers with a better understanding of the fundamental structures of narrative; it has also offered extremely accurate models for understanding the contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems (Waugh, 09)

This is also the hell fruit of the narrator’s schizophrenia. Identity, space, the body, Haroun’s psychological condition, and the mother seem to be the references on which stands the narration in the novel. Haroun, speaking of the other, another ‘himself’ at the end of the novel is obvious. This other does not exist in the ‘real’ world, but Haroun creates individuals starting with his brother Moussa *‘J’avais des voix dans la tête. C’était peut-être Moussa qui parlait.’* (43) “I had voices in my head. Perhaps it was Moussa speaking. ‘(43) One has the impression that the characters do not exist outside the head of the narrator. Moussa is none other than Haroun. *‘Il tremblait de peur devant ma résurrection alors qu’il avait dit au monde entier que j’étais mort sur une plage d’Alger !’*(50) “He was trembling with fear at my resurrection as he told the whole world that I had died on a beach in Algiers!” (50)

The schizophrenic theme is an original technique that invites the other and immerses him in the realm of disorder and confusion as a

'legitimate' double, another self, with whom the narrator must compose to recover his identity, a hybrid identity. Hybridity is precisely erotic because it brings together antagonisms and opposites, irreconcilable and incompatible. Haroun, evoking his feminine principle, also experiences it with Meriem, a character that flows straight out of his delirium in his quest for erotic hybridity *'Pendant que nous nous regardions avec une curiosité nouvelle, inaugurée par le désir des corps, elle m'a dit : "Je suis plus brune que toi."' (70)* "As we looked at each other with new curiosity, ushered in by lust for bodies, she said to me: 'I am darker than you.'" '(70) Just like Moussa, Meriem does not seem to exist of course. Everything Haroun relates about her, the scene, the encounter and even the declaration of boneless love of words seem to be a lie, *'un board. De bout en bout. La scène est trop parfaite, j'ai tout inventé.'*(70) *'A canard. End to end. The scene is too perfect, I made it up.'* (70)

The 'word' of the schizophrenic that reports history does not seem to reflect the referent, the real, so what about history when reported through memories? *'Le mot chez moi est flou et imprécis.'* (68) *"The word for me is vague and imprecise."* (68) Haroun shows the arbitrariness of the sign when he informs us of his conception of language. It is the quest for identity that generates this movement between the real and the unreal in perfect hybridity. A slip and a slide in both worlds takes place through words. The novel becomes a field of multiple hermeneutics where history, philosophy, politics, and religion seem to coexist to create an identity and give meaning to life.

If the novel is inspired by a historical 'reality', it remains only a mere fiction. The elements of history, however, seem to produce a certain causality even if the historical fact is not integrated in its totality. Aesthetically, the graft does not seem rejected but rather accepted to create a technical innovation not only in the field of writing. Daoud's narrator rejects the murder as a whole, but the reminiscence of the texture returns to the original text, a past and a philosophy *'La vérité est que je l'ai déjà fait. À six reprises... Oui, j'y suis allé six fois, sur cette plage. Mais je n'ai jamais rien retrouvé, ni douilles ni traces de pas, ni témoins, ni sang séché sur le rocher. Rien.'* (33) *'The truth is, I already have. Six times ... Yes, I've been there six times, on this beach. But I never found anything, no cartridge cases or footprints, no witnesses, no dried blood on the rock. Nothing.'* (33) History no longer seems to

have a frontier with the unreal. Yet, it reads as a simple construction among so many others open to multiple interpretations without 'eternal verities' as stated by Waugh 'Contemporary metafictional writing is both a response and a contribution to an even more thoroughgoing sense that reality or history are provisional: no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures.' (07)

Metafiction explains this in-between between purity and impurity. Daoud's novel reads as a criticism of Camus' novel as impure but at the same time as a critique of our novel. Pure and impure is no longer recognizable, and metafiction is part of the narrative structure of fiction itself, 'metafiction becomes indistinguishable from the fiction itself.' (Krynski, 186)

Pour une fois que j'ai l'occasion de parler de cette histoire... Elle a pourtant quelque chose d'une vieille putain réduite à l'hébétude par l'excès des hommes, cette histoire. Elle ressemble à un parchemin, dispersé de par le monde, essoré, rafistolé, désormais méconnaissable, dont le texte aura été ressassé jusqu'à l'infini – et tu es pourtant là, assis à mes côtés, espérant du neuf, de l'inédit. Cette histoire ne sied pas à ta quête de pureté, je te jure. Pour éclairer ton chemin, tu devrais chercher une femme, pas un mort' (31)

For once I have a chance to talk about this story ... Yet there is something about an old whore reduced to stupor by an excess of men, in this story. It looks like a parchment, scattered around the world, wrung out, patched up, henceforth unrecognizable, the text of which will have been rehashed to infinity - and yet you are there, sitting by my side, hoping for something new, for something new. unpublished. This story does not suit your quest for purity, I swear. To light your way, you should look for a woman, not a dead man' (31)

The transformation or metamorphosis of the two narrative systems is a hybridization of two discourses, an impurity, and a third voice. The pure and the impure become indivisible because the impurity affects even the city which impurity is rather post-independence and affects all fields of activities. Daoud's narrator knows this very well. He knows that his work cannot equal the original one even in its impurity. Haroun's voice seems to echo Borges' ideas that a book is written somewhere, in another language, another culture, and that his work was precisely to criticize this invented work. 'The idea that came to Borges was to pretend that the

book he wanted to write had already been written by someone else, some unknown hypothetical author – an author in a different language, of a different culture – and that his task was to describe and review this invented book.’ (Krysinski, 190) Likewise, Haroun, also thinks that his novel was written in another language and culture. ‘*Cela a mené à une sorte de livre étrange – que j’aurais peut-être dû écrire d’ailleurs, si j’avais eu le don de ton héros.*’ (64) “It led to a weird kind of book - one that maybe I should have written somewhere else, if I had your hero’s gift.” (64)

What we retain is the intersection of metafiction, time and space. Metafiction reminds us that the project of modernity fades and that the literary text reflects a double vision: that of the colonizer whose image is reflected in the production of the colonized. The one who is disturbing the vision of the colonizer. The literary text of the colonized awakens the demons of the former colonizer and his colonial origins. ‘Because literature is so often a matter of doubling, it is for Bhabha central to the processes of his postcolonial perspective, a perspective that reimagines the West and reminds it of its repressed colonial origins.’ (Huddart 02)

### **A zombie in quest for love**

The Zombie is the product of Western colonialism. Two points need to be remembered now. Haroun is the Abel of the story, the genesis. He is the one, the Frenchman murdered. And only through love does he resurrect. In fact, after a tumultuous relationship with the mother, Haroun seems unable to create healthy love relations. Meriem is the only woman who resuscitates him ‘*Dans ma vie, la seule histoire qui ressemble un peu à une histoire d’amour est celle que j’ai vécue avec Meriem.*’ (39) “The only story in my life that looks a bit like a love affair is the one I had with Meriem.” (39) Meriem is Haroun’s only dream of a post-independence woman full of passion, fresh, young and full of dreams and ambitions. She is brave enough to stand in front of his mother’s will but then has to submit, and their relationship dilutes through time. ‘*[e]lle a cessé de m’écrire et tout s’est dilué.*’ (39) “She stopped writing to me and everything got watered down.” (39)

The metaphor of love is also a metaphor of death, life and resurrection ‘*Elle est la seule femme qui ait trouvé la patience de m’aimer et de me ramener à la vie.*’(39) “She is the only woman who has

*found the patience to love me and bring me back to life.”* (39) However, this resurrection is that of a zombie. Haroun is marginal in his own society after independence, walks like a ghost, ‘J’ai vécu comme une sorte de fantôme observant les vivants s’agiter dans un bocal.’ (72) “*I lived like a kind of ghost watching the living move around in a jar.*” (72) This marginality is the product of the ‘unfit’ in post-colonial independent Algeria. There is some sort of nostalgia for a certain culture, an ambivalent feeling towards what the colonizer erected in terms of culture and civilization on the one hand, and the inability of his people to remain on the same path of modernity on the other hand. Language stands for this lost culture ‘Le pays est d’ailleurs jonché de mots qui n’appartiennent plus à personne et qu’on aperçoit sur les devantures des vieux magasins, dans les livres jaunis, sur des visages, ou transformés par l’étrange créole que fabrique la décolonisation.’ (07) ‘*The country is littered with words that no longer belong to anyone and that can be seen on the fronts of old shops, in yellowed books, on faces, or transformed by the strange Creole that decolonization produces.*’ (07)

It is yet important to mention Baudrillard here since he argues that modernity is the fatality that the whites want to impose on the world. But the logic of modernity is that the white wants to impose it on the whole world, that the fatum of the whites should be that of the race of Cain, and that no one should escape this homogenization, this mystification of the species. In opposition to the metaphor of ‘cannibalism’ developed by Baudrillard, Daoud’s narrator seems aware that he is not a ‘writer’. ‘Le meurtrier est devenu célèbre et son histoire est trop bien écrite pour que j’aie dans l’idée de l’imiter. C’était sa langue à lui.’ (07) ‘*The murderer has become famous and his story is too well written for me to imitate him. It was his language.*’ (07)

On the other hand, conscious and aware of his state of zombie ‘[c]ette histoire, c’est un cadavre qui l’a écrite, pas un écrivain’ (08), “[T] his story, it was written by a corpse, not a writer” (08), he still cannot admit his status as a dying-reviving creature, a zombie, and thus embodies the famous solemn Mass of Recife, Brazil, in the sixteenth century, mentioned by Baudrillard, where ‘les évêques venus tout exprès du Portugal pour célébrer leur conversion passive, sont dévorés par les Indiens – par excès d’amour évangélique.’ (Baudrillard, 03) ‘*The bishops who came expressly from Portugal to celebrate their passive conversion, are devoured*

by the Indians - out of an excess of evangelical love. '(Baudrillard, 03) This excess of fatherly love distorts, if not history, space and art, their vision.

The fear of imitating the father, which is peculiar to the Oedipus complex, reveals this ambivalent feeling. Indeed, the father '[Il] écrit si bien que ses mots paraissent des pierres taillées par l'exactitude même'(07), or 'Il semble utiliser l'art du poème pour parler d'un coup de feu !'(07) "[He] writes so well that his words sound like stones cut by exactitude itself" (07), or "He seems to use the art of the poem to speak with a shot!" (07) However, now, Haroun seems incapable of recreating a story, but he dreams of it 'Ah, tu sais, moi qui pourtant ne me suis jamais soucie d'écrire un livre, je rêve d'en commettre un.'(53) Ah, you know, I who never bothered to write a book yet, I dream of doing one. '(53) Writing bears connotations with violence. It is probably an act of cannibalism. He has learned the language to defend his deceased brother Moussa. It is perhaps clear and legitimate to believe that Daoud thinks he does not have the same gift as his literary father 'j'aurais peut-être dû écrire d'ailleurs, si j'avais eu le don de ton héros.'(64) "Maybe I should have written elsewhere, if I had your hero's gift." (64) But he knows he does not have the means 'J'aurais été bien inspiré d'écrire tout ce que j'avais inventé alors, mais je n'en avais pas les moyens.'(64) "I would have been inspired to write everything I made up then, but I couldn't afford it." (64) As an artist-zombie, Haroun, the narrator, digests all the cultural and aesthetic innovations without, it seems, being aware of his cannibalistic condition, or even realizing, as Frantz Fanon points out, that '[u]n homme qui possède le langage possède par contrecoup le monde exprimé et impliqué par ce langage ... il y a dans la possession du langage une extraordinaire puissance.' (Fanon, 14) '[A] man who possesses language, in turn, possesses the world expressed and implied by that language ... there is an extraordinary power in the possession of language. '(Fanon, 14) The narrator himself confesses that the language of the colonizer becomes his after independence 'Les mots du meurtrier et ses expressions sont mon bien vacant.' (07) *The murderer's words and expressions are my vacant property.* '(07)

From the textual tapestry of the novel to his brother's body, identity seems fluid and unable to find stability. Crime, violence and death engulf the narrator in an almost schizophrenic quest for

identity. Thus, he keeps looking for his national identity while wondering about his brother's body or perhaps his

Dans le tas, personne ne s'est demandé quelle était la nationalité de Moussa. On le désignait comme l'Arabe, même chez les Arabes. C'est une nationalité, "Arabe", dis-moi? Il est où, ce pays que tous proclament comme leur ventre, leurs entrailles, mais qui ne se trouve nulle part? (72)

In the crowd, no one wondered what Moussa's nationality was. He was referred to as the Arab, even among the Arabs. It's a nationality, "Arab", tell me? Where is it, this country that everyone proclaims as their belly, their entrails, but which is nowhere to be found? (72)

Yet, the verb is not enough to live or even survive. Haroun enshrines the end of all ideals through metafiction after the collapse of his love '*Ces dernières lignes m'avaient bouleversé. Un chef-d'œuvre, l'ami. Un miroir tendu à mon âme et à ce que j'allais devenir dans ce pays, entre Allah et l'ennui.*' (69) "*These last lines had upset me. A masterpiece, friend. A mirror held out to my soul and to what would become of me in this country, between Allah and boredom.*" (69) In fact, for Haroun, love seems the only ground for genuine identity. This is where Waugh goes when she states that 'When there is explicitly no fixed point of origin or reference, then digression becomes progression, and identity escapes.' (Waugh, 07)

## Conclusion

If colonialism is part of that big destructive power of the West, in his quest for identity, Daoud seems to re-evaluate the metanarrative of French colonialism as a civilizing institution when time was orderly, whereas, his postcolonial fiction is a disorderly set of events. Shocking, choking and transgressive, Kamel Daoud explores the issues of identity starting from the body, his brother's or probably his, to reach national identity.

The parricide mourns the spiritual father, and the novel tries to be fair to him while introducing such narrative concepts as hybridity and metafiction. If hybridity is the discourse to erase colonialism, it is also that of combining and collecting opposites. The crime in the novel seems to dissuade all forms of love. It is perhaps legitimate in this way to claim that metafiction is also a hybrid technique used to bring two lovers together, man and his past, man and woman

Our author tries, through hybridity and metafiction, to lay the foundations of differences and to erase them, to correct the identity between past and present and to present a new identity that transgresses all political and ideological taboos, socio-cultural and linguistic to move towards modernity. It is in multiplicity that unity resides.

Hybridity seems to gather from its real/unreal dichotomy all antagonisms, opposites, irreconcilables, consciousness and fantasies, lucidity and hallucination in a well-united literary tissue that allows our writer to express his visions of society, and cultural diversity where pure and impure do not seem to have a place. Hybridity precisely tends to eradicate the polarization of the ego and the other. Through metafiction, the Algerian novel seems to be an artistic response to the European novel in general and the French one in particular. It is no longer a one-way relationship, but a dialogue and a back and forth in culture and the novel world. The Algerian novel of French expression no longer seems to incriminate the French colonists. On the other hand, he paints a picture of postcolonial Algeria. He opens a new page, that of metafiction, to initiate a dialogue with the other and a dialogue through introspection.

Baudrillard introduces the fable of Borges 'the people of mirrors'. "Si on reprend la profonde parabole de Borges sur le Peuple des Miroirs, où les vaincus, relégués de l'autre côté des miroirs, sont réduits à la ressemblance, à n'être plus que l'image-reflet de leur vainqueur... Mais, dit Borges, voilà que peu à peu ils se mettent à leur ressembler de moins en moins et, un jour, ils refranchiront le miroir dans l'autre sens et mettront fin à l'hégémonie de l'Empire." (Baudrillard, *C&C*, 03) If we take Borges' profound parable on the People of Mirrors, where the vanquished, relegated to the other side of the mirrors, are reduced to resemblance, to be nothing more than the reflection image of their victor. But, says Borges, slowly they start to resemble them less and less and, one day, they will cross the mirror again in the other direction and end the hegemony of the Empire". (Baudrillard, *C&C*, 03) It is the fatum of the West, wishing to 'civilize' the whole planet by instituting its political, ideological, economic, religious, cultural and even aesthetic values, it disintegrates cultures while awaiting its own end.

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