

Re-reading of the Discrimination and Rejection of Arabs in Albert's Camus' *The Stranger* through Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation*

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Abstract

Algerian postcolonial literature has emerged as a powerful tool for contesting and reshaping the prevailing colonial narrative. This study delves into colonial power dynamics in Algeria by juxtaposing Albert Camus's *The Stranger* (1942) with Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation* (2013), where Daoud's novel functions as a counter-narrative to Camus's work. It delves into the previously unexplored perspectives of characters presented in *The Meursault Investigation*. Haroun, the protagonist, sets out on a journey to change things in order to recover the name and identity of the "Arab." in *The Stranger*: Firstly, it depicted Algerian historical memory and national identity, particularly as it relates to French colonial rule in Algeria. The research employs contrapuntal reading, the way of portraying imperialism and resistance by stating Meursault as imperialist and Haroun as resistance. Through a postcolonial perspective, the study contends that Daoud reinterprets the murder's significance in *The Stranger* by emphasizing its historical context. The research pointed out women's status in both stories. For instance, Marie undergone sexual oppression by Meursault whereas Meriem respected by Haroun. This study looks into how Daoud was able to break down and rethink Camus' dominant colonial writing by comparing and contrasting Camus' *The Stranger* with Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation*. Daoud uses the language of the colonizers in a clever way to bring back to life the legacy and identity of the Arab Algerians, whom imperialist French colonizers erased. The study employs the 'mirror image' which is a reversed reflection used to highlight contrasts or similarities, often to compare different perspectives or emphasize opposing themes, concept to offer a nuanced analysis of the contrasting colonial and postcolonial dynamics.

Keywords: Colonial issues, Discrimination against Arabs, Counter-Narration. Contrapuntal reading, Revenge

1. Introduction

The Novella *The Stranger* by Albert Camus opens with an Algerian-French man named Meursault, characteristic description that he does not care about his mother's funeral. When the story moves further, he kills a young man at the beach who is known as "the Arab" for no apparent reason. The jury finds Meursault guilty of murder, but not because he shot an innocent Arab, which was common in colonial times. With this statement the researcher states that killing Arab is common is example post-colonial domination of Algerians shows against Arabs. In the novel *The Stranger* District Attorney found guilty on the character Meursault not for murder but for not show enough love and grief for his mother's death. To fully understand the imperialist aspect of Camus's work, it is necessary to look closely at both the historical background of the book and the author's political views. The story paints a complex picture of colonialism through the way these factors interact with each other. The novel is situated in post-independence Algeria and, via Haroun's observations, analyses the enduring impacts of colonialism on Algerian identity, memory, and history. The characters contend with their status in a society influenced by colonial brutality and the challenges of postcolonial nation-building. Firstly, the article addresses Postcolonial issues, in particular about contrapuntal reading and counter-narration. Secondly the research article depicted sexual exploitation against women in *The Stranger* via Marie. Meursault's partner, Marie, was yet another casualty of violence against women. Meursault exhibits harsh

conduct towards her and use colloquial slang in their interactions. On contrary Meriem was respected in Daoud's *Meursault Investigation*. Thirdly, the research explored and revenge against Arab man's death. The paper also discusses the prevalence of official colonial history and the enduring mindset of colonial superiority

1.1 Objectives

To identify discrimination against Arabs in Algeria.

To explore counter-narration as a tool for uncovering hidden details in *The Stranger*.

To examine postcolonial discourse and power dynamics.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What is the significance behind the killing of 'The Arab' in *The Stranger*?
2. How does counter-narration in *The Meursault Investigation* reveal discrimination against Arabs?
3. In what ways does Kamel Daoud retell the novel from a different perspective?

2. Review of Literature

Ally's (2018) research pointed out how Camus's *The Stranger* and Kamel Daoud's *Meursault Investigation* (2013) talk to each other, the symbols and images they share, and the main event of the Arab's murder as both a psychological and colonial meeting. This is something that Kamel Daoud's 2013 book *The Meursault Investigation* does in response to Camus's work. It retells the story from the point of view of the brother of the (now-named) Arab.

Whistler's (2018) research explained in what way Daoud's *Meursault Investigation* (2013) looks at the complicated situation of people who live on the edges of different societies. It shows how important it is to learn to understand people we might normally see as our enemies.

Poteau (2019) argues that Kamel Daoud's *Meursault* uses the idea of (de)construction to take Albert Camus's *The Stranger* apart and put it back together again. Using Camus's original building blocks, Daoud makes a set of binary opposites. His literary rebuilding on an unstable canonical base eventually values diversity in the restoration of Algeria's past and the continual creation of its future. The researcher has conducted literature review in order to show his originality of findings such as counter-narration, contrapuntal reading, colonial issues, Women's status and colonial issues were discussed

3. Counter-Narration

Daoud wrote *The Meursault's Investigation* to explain the concealed colonial discourses in *The Stranger* using the concept called Counter-narration. "Grounded in critical race theory and approaches to discourse study, including narrative inquiry, life history, and autoethnography, counter-narratives have found a home in multicultural education, culturally sensitive pedagogy, and other approaches to teaching for diversity" (Miller, et.al 2000, p.269).

The Meursault Investigation (2013), authored by Algerian writer Kamel Daoud, is a novel that reinterprets the narrative of Albert Camus' renowned existentialist masterpiece, *The Stranger* (or *L'Étranger*), from an alternative viewpoint. Rather of concentrating on the French colonial protagonist, Meursault, Daoud's work highlights the brother of the unknown Arab man that Meursault murders in *The Stranger*. The novel is a notable postcolonial work, exploring issues of identity, colonialism, and memory in Algeria. The book makes significant contributions to both postcolonial theories and the study of French cultural history during the period in which the story takes place. It employs mimicry to challenge both the system of representation and the logic of those in power through the use of exaggeration and repetition. The basic concept of colonialism indicates white supremacy, "The white man wants the world; he wants it for himself. He discovers he is the predestined master of the world. He enslaves it. His relationship with the world is one of appropriation" (Fanon 2008, p.107), here in this novel, the researcher has compared French Colonial power as white supremacy and dominates the minor race like Arabs. Fanon says that decolonization is a violent Phenomenon (Fanon 2008); Daoud takes the role of decolonizing the colonial aspects in *The Stranger* (1942) with contrapuntal reading. Contrapuntal reading takes the account of both imperialism and resistance. The imperialist is depicted in *The Stranger* (1942), whereas resistance is projected with re-telling the Camus' *Stranger* with *The Meursault Investigation* (2013) by Kamal Daoud. This study utilizes counter-discourse, which involves reinterpreting traditional colonial texts from a postcolonial perspective to challenge dominant narratives. Harun, the protagonist in *The Meursault Investigation*, is the younger sibling of the unidentified Arab who was murdered on an isolated beach by Meursault, the main character of Camus's novel *The Stranger*. Through his writing, Kamel Daoud tries to give the reader a unique and different point of view. Haroun, Meursault's victim's younger brother, tells the story from his point of view. He was only seven years old when the terrible event happened. "Who was Musa? He was my brother. That's what I'm getting at. I want to tell you the story Musa was never able to tell" (Daoud 2013, p.4)

4. Sexual Exploitation

Harun was the brother of "the Arab" killed by Meursault, the antihero of Albert Camus's *The Stranger*(1942). Seventy years after that event, Harun, who has lived since childhood in the widow of his sibling's memory, refuses to let remain anonymous: "He gives name Musa to his dead brother and describes the events that led to Musa's casual murder on a sunny beach" (Daoud 2013, p.5)

In *The Stranger* (1942), the murder is driven by the anger of Meursault's acquaintance Rimon, also known as Raymond, towards an

Algerian woman whom he derogatorily labels as "a prostitute" due to her infidelity. Meursault's girlfriend, Marie, was another victim of violence against women. Meursault engages in abusive behavior towards her and uses informal language when communicating with her. In this incident, the protagonist, Meursault, assists Raymond. Marie is a central female figure who experiences abuse and objectification by Meursault, highlighting the gender dynamics at play. He desires to engage in sexual activity with her; however, he holds no intention of entering into matrimony. "Her hair was over her eyes, and she was laughing. I clambered up onto the raft beside her. The air was pleasantly warm, and, half-jokingly, I let my head sink back upon her lap. She didn't seem to mind, so I let it stay there. I had the sky full in my eyes, all blue and gold, and I could feel Marie's stomach rising and falling gently under my head". (Camus 1942, p.23).

On Contrary, in the novel *The Meursault Investigation*, Meriem, a young woman, comes to Hadjout to do research for Meursault's book and wants to talk to "the Arab family." Harun respected her. Haroun says:

After my relationship with Meriem, I became aware that women would get themselves out of my way; they'd make a detour as if they could instinctively tell I was another woman's son and not a potential companion. My appearance didn't help much, either. I'm not talking about my body; I'm talking about what a woman divines or desires in a man. (Daoud 2013, p.67).

The study draws a comparison between the characters Harun and Meursault. Harun respects the women in *The Meursault Investigation* (2013), whereas Meursault has tortured and insulted the women in *The Stranger* (1942). Harun and Mama were shocked to learn that Musa's death was written about in a book. When Harun reads the novel for the first time, he is both blown away by Meursault's literary genius and furious that he treats Musa's death as part of his philosophical explorations instead of as a serious crime. Also, Harun fell in love with Meriem right away. She is beautiful, smart, and independent. Throughout the summer, she goes to see Harun and introduces him to French writing and the background of Meursault's book. At the end of summer, Musa invites Meriem to marry him. She agrees, but she soon stops going to Hadjout, and they stop writing to each other. Since then, Harun has not been in a serious relationship with a woman.

5. Postcolonial Clashes

Radhakrishnan's (2017) research article on Daoud's *Meursault Investigation* (2013) states that, on the basis of Daoud's novel, this intervention critically rehearses and reformulates the many crises and dilemmas that constitute postcolonial theory: postcolonial asymmetry and counter-memory, the predicament of secular nationalism, decolonization of the mind, humanism and the relationship of ontology to politics, and the future of third world literature. Daoud's work, *The Meursault Investigation* (2013), is a genuine exploration of the mindset of colonialism. It exposes the divide between the ways in which colonial oppression is understood and the actual realities of those who were colonized. It emphasizes the weight that the postcolonial individual bears. "More than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism" (Ashcroft et al., 1994, p.1). The act of rewriting colonial history raises questions pertaining to identity politics, race, gender, migration, memory, and the challenges of de-territorialization and re-territorialization.

It's simple: The story we're talking about should be rewritten in the same language but from right to left. That is, starting when the Arab's body was still alive, going down the narrow streets that led to his demise, giving him a name right up until the bullet hit him. So, one reason for learning this language was to tell this story to my brother, the friend of the sun. Seems unlikely to you? You're mistaken. I had to find the response nobody wanted to give me when I needed it. (Daoud 2013, p.7).

6. Revenge

The novel extensively employs the concept of mirror image to provide a more detailed exploration of the colonial/postcolonial dichotomies. The initial sentence of the book, "Mama's still alive today," (Daoud, 2013, p.1), presents a contrasting viewpoint to Camus's work, "Mother died today." (Camus 1942, p. 1). One night, a Frenchman named Joseph, a friend of the people who lived there before, runs away from a fight in the street and hides in the courtyard. Harun and Mama wake up when they hear him come. Mama killed Joseph in the backyard. Harun and Mama then bury the body to hide any evidence of the crime. Mama thinks that the Frenchman's death is justice for Musa's murder. According to Camus, in *The Stranger*, Meursault commits homicide against an unnamed Arab at two o'clock in the afternoon due to excessive sunlight obstructing his vision but looking through the colonial Lense it is murder against Arab due to French colonialism against Arab people in Algeria. Ultimately, the research demonstrates that the circumstances surrounding Meursault's act of killing the Arab man are rooted in the underlying colonial tensions and prejudices to support this view the researcher has pointed out the counter reading of Daoud's work, *The Meursault Investigation* (2013), Harun perceives himself essentially as the doppelgänger of his brother (Arab man). "One night, Haroun crosses paths with a Frenchman skulking in the courtyard of the house he and his mother have occupied after its owners, French citizens, fled the Algerian revolution. Whereas Meursault shoots his Arab at two o'clock in the afternoon on a deserted beach under the bright sun, Haroun shoots his Frenchman in the dark at two o'clock in the morning". (Cruz 2017, p.126)

Meursault is sentenced to death not because he killed an Arab but because he did not display sufficient sorrow during his mother's funeral. Likewise, "Harun undergoes an interrogation but is subsequently released, not because he killed the Frenchman, but because he failed to do so at the appropriate time" (Daoud 2013, p.107). If Harun assassinated Joseph prior to July 5th, during the ongoing battle for independence, he could have attained the status of a revered national figure because Algeria had risen against French rule and won its freedom at the end of the revolt. Algerian army, now controls French colonized town Hadjout, so they soon figure out that Harun killed

Joseph, they call him to the town hall and arrest him for doing it outside of the official fight for freedom. A young officer scolds Harun for killing a Frenchman after the war ended and not joining the resistance army, which is what almost all young men did. Harun spends a few days in jail for this. This is the last thing that happens. Harun is a little let down because he wants to be found guilty and given a term. Harun does not try to escape from punishment because in the story *The Stranger*, Meursault was not punished for the crime, so he does not want to be away from justice, but ultimately, power decided everything, and he was released.

7. Dominance of Colonial Official History

The research highlights that there was a complete absence of the official reports submitted to any police station, as well as in the trial records about Arab man's death in the story *The Stranger*, so it indicates erasing unofficial history through the dominance of French colonial power in Algeria. According to Harun, prior to Independence, people did not rely on precise dates. He and his mother were informed solely through written material about the murder of his brother Musa, which was described as "a crime committed in a book" (Daoud 2013, p.17). The event was abrupt and erasure of denial, characterized by an extremely violent nature favoring official history. Through this evidence, the research tries to explain the Colonizer's superiority over Arabs. The crisis of identity, caused by structural imbalance, cultural imperialism, geographic displacement, political hegemony, the favoring of official history, and the psychological effects of these knowledge systems on the colonial subject, is crucial to postcolonial theories. At the beginning of his story, Harun expresses his intention to collect the stones abandoned by the colonists in the ancient houses and use them to construct his dwelling indicates his attempt to develop his unique language.

8. Conclusion

Finally, Meursault's Counter-Investigation by Kamel Daoud is a strong example of how postwar writing can question and change dominant colonial stories. Daoud challenges the colonialist rhetoric in Albert Camus's *The Stranger* by using appropriation and subversion in a planned way. He also offers a different point of view that gives a voice to those who are silent or left out. By using the language of the colonizer, Daoud questions the skewed view of the colonized and shows how complicated cultural identities are. This article explained in details about the colonial experience and how colonial rhetoric affected people who were already on the outside. It discussed counter narration which is the practice of telling a story from a different perspective to challenge dominant narratives, giving voice to marginalized or overlooked viewpoints and reshaping established discourses., contrapuntal reading which is an analysis method that examines a text from both dominant and marginalized perspectives to reveal power dynamics and hidden voices, especially in colonial contexts. and comparison of woman's status in both novels.

Furthermore, Daoud's breakdown of the idea of better and worse cultures emphasizes how colonizers and colonized are linked, changing the balance of power and shedding light on the shared aspects of cultural development. Despite the significant time gap of seventy years between the publication of Camus's work, *The Stranger*, and *The Meursault Investigation*, these two volumes mutually enhance one another. Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation* serves as a successor to Camus's *The Stranger*, offering both a wealth of historical background and profound metaphysical ideas and Mother's revenge in *The Meursault Investigation* is repay to her son's death in *The Stranger*. Meursault's Counter-Investigation encourages readers to think deeply about the complicated historical, social, and political aspects of colonialism and postwar situations. *The Meursault Investigation (2013)* is a powerful example of how postcolonial writing can change things because it so skillfully uses appropriation and rebellion. It questions the most common stories, looks at historical facts again, and pushes for the inclusion of views that have been silenced in the discussion of power. Overall, Daoud's work is a powerful example of how postcolonial writing can change the way we think about history, society, and identity. It asks us to rethink a future that is fairer and includes everyone. It shows how writing can be very important in promoting conversation, understanding, and reconciliation after colonialism.

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Author 2(Mohammed Shamsul Hoque): contributed to the literature review and the confirmation of the provided ideas.

Author 3 (U. Venkateswara): Supported for editing and revision of the paper.

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