

Playing to the West only? Representations of Picasso, the gendered body, and Islamism in Kamel Daoud's *Le peintre dévorant la femme*

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis explores Algerian writer Kamel Daoud's non-fictional text, *Le peintre dévorant la femme* (2018), which has been met with acclaim in French literary circles, winning various prizes. As the text explores a variety of questions relating to religious extremism, the meaning of art, death and eroticism, and the relationship between *l'Occident - l'Orient* through the visual aid of Picasso's *année érotique* (1932), this thesis will use a postcolonial, feminist theoretical approach. It will also touch upon concepts relating to the visual, to explore how Daoud negotiates and performs his positionality in the Franco-Algerian discursive space and beyond. Central to this thesis is the notion of the hybridised public intellectual (Daoud) entering hybridised public spheres (Franco-Algerian and beyond) which undoubtedly has consequences for the plural readership existing within them. Indeed, another main concern of this thesis is to ascertain whether there is an imbalance in the text that means Daoud, subconsciously or not, speaks to particular sectors of his Western-French audience more so than his Muslim-Algerian ones. Split into three chapters; this thesis firstly aims to unpick how Daoud negotiates the relationship between aesthetics and politics in his non-fictional writing. It will attempt to show how Daoud's public move to an *essai* in 2018 can be read as facilitating a conversation with more bourgeois, and potentially more republican, French reading publics. In the second and third chapters respectively, this thesis analyses Daoud's representations of Picasso, Paris, the museum, and the gendered body in Western and Muslim societies. By doing so, it attempts to highlight how although Daoud appears to offer a 'double-edged' critique of Algeria since Independence and French neo-colonialism, his tendency to make generalisations about Islam sometimes unwittingly plays to French (and more widely, Western) Islamophobic assumptions.

Table of Contents

<i>Abbreviations</i>	5
<i>Introduction</i>	6
<i>Chapter 1 - Locating Daoud's non-fictional oeuvre in the hybridised Franco-Algerian discursive space</i>	14
Daoud: a contested public intellectual in France, Europe, Algeria, and beyond	14
Performing a hybridised positionality: Daoud in the Franco-Algerian public sphere(s)	19
'Moulding' an audience base: the significance of Daoud's move to an <i>essai</i>	28
<i>Chapter 2 – The (meta-)physical location of LPDLF and its relationship to Daoud's performativity as a writer</i>	33
A 'vehicle' of erotic transgression: how Daoud 'paints' Picasso	34
Diametrically opposed representations of Paris as othering and enlightener	40
A singular national narrative: personal memory and multiple <i>histoires</i> within the context of the museum	45
<i>Chapter 3 – Comparing how LPDLF presents sexuality and the gendered body in the West compared to Muslim North Africa</i>	55
'Ways of Seeing': Daoud reading Picasso reading Marie -Thérèse.....	55
Representing a homogenous Muslim masculinity: 'Abdellah' and his sexual <i>malaise</i>	62
(Re)imagining 'Marie-Houri': meshing representations of Western and Muslim femininity	68
<i>Conclusion</i>	75
<i>Bibliography</i>	82

Abbreviations

LPDLF – Le peintre dévorant la femme

FLN – Front de libération nationale (Algérie)

FIS – Front Islamique du Salut

Introduction

In the last 15 years, Algerian literature of French expression is generally seen to have developed from a *littérature d'urgence* in the 1990s to something more experimental to respond to the increasing absurdity of more recent Algerian history.¹ Malika Rahal has coined the term 'la génération '88' to describe writers born after Independence.² These writers often use fiction to lay bare the limitations of historically constructed social norms and to criticise 'false totalities'.³ For example, Oranais writer and journalist Kamel Daoud, on whom this thesis focuses, belongs to this generation of Algerian writers. His debut novel *Meursault, contre-enquête* (2013) achieved international acclaim, winning the Prix Goncourt du Premier Roman in 2015.⁴ In 2018, he published *Le peintre dévorant la femme, un essai* which won various literary prizes including the *Grande médaille de la francophonie* (2018).

This introduction aims to give a brief overview of Algerian history since Independence to offer some contextual background to Daoud as a contemporary Algerian writer. It will then summarise the thematic content of *LPDLF*, before analysing recent scholarship on Daoud's fictional and non-fictional work to locate this thesis in the current field of study. Next, it will outline the key research questions, followed by the methodology. Finally, it will address the main arguments of the thesis and provide a content summary of the three chapters.

To contextualise Daoud's writing as an Algerian, in the last 65 years, Algeria has experienced two violent wars. The War of Independence lasted from 1954-1962; a year short of the 30th anniversary of its end, the Civil War (1991-2000), or the *décennie noire*, engulfed the nation. The period between these wars saw a profound change in the socio-cultural landscape in Algeria. The Algerian government under Houari Boumédiène aimed to rid Algeria of its French colonial legacy and re-establish Algeria's Arab roots, through a policy of Arabisation.⁵ This involved the promotion of classical Arabic at a pedagogical and state level,

¹ Corbin Treacy, 'Writing in the Aftermath of Two Wars: Algerian Modernism and the *Génération '88*', in *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism, 1988-2015*, ed. by Patrick Crowley (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 123-39 (p.125). During the *décennie noire* of the 1990s, the term 'littérature d'urgence' or 'écriture d'urgence' was employed by publishers, critics, the press, and Algerian writers following the state's declaration of an 'état d'urgence'.

² Malika Rahal cited in *ibid.* '88 is significant because it refers to the October Riots in 1988 which saw demonstrations, riots, and popular protests against Chadli Bendjedid's regime and resulted in the death of hundreds of young protesters at the hands of the National People's Army. See James McDougall, *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.235-89.

³ Treacy, *Writing in the Aftermath*, p.126.

⁴ See Kamel Daoud, *Meursault, contre-enquête* (Alger: Barzakh, 2013).

⁵ McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, pp.263-70.

and by 1990, Arabic was the national language of Algeria.⁶ Whilst this created problems of conflicting identities in Algeria (ignoring the Berber language and culture, it increased the distinction between Arabophone and Francophone elites), the increased spread of classical Arabic allowed the influences of pan-Arabist currents to enter Algeria, such as the currents of political Islam coming from the Middle East.⁷ Here, Arabic linguistic identity was intrinsically linked with Islamic identity. From 1976, Islam was established as the state religion and the following years saw an increased politicisation and nationalisation of Islam.⁸

In opposition to the state's nationalisation and monopoly of religion, an underground Islamist movement began to emerge, criticising Boumédiène's socialism. By October 1988, Algeria saw the collapse of the single-party system headed by the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), following the Berber Spring in 1980 and the October Riots of 1988.⁹ The collapse of the FLN allowed for the legalisation and the rise of the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS), which gained electoral victories between 1990 and 1991; this party called for an Islamic Republic and rejected the Arab-Islamic-Socialist 'nation' constructed by the post-Independence FLN governments. This paved the way for the bloody civil war that would ensue with radical Islamists fighting the state. The *décennie noire* was characterised by violence, terrorism, disappearances, curfews, and censorship. Corbin Treacy argues that as historical legacies remain disputed and the wounds of the past are still visible, 'the surreal has become the banal'.¹⁰ Similarly, James McDougall maintains that 'by 2012, Algeria was neither at peace, nor was it [...] at war with itself, but [...] engaged in a slow, episodically overt struggle over its shape and that of its polity, and over the meanings of the values – nation, religion, personal morality and social justice, the inheritance of the past and the means of moving beyond – that its people generally held common.'¹¹ Civil unrest can also be seen with the *hirak*; in February 2019, weekly protests began in response to former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's plan to seek a fifth term in office.¹²

⁶ McDougall, *op. cit.*, pp.268-70

⁷ Benjamin Stora, *Algeria, 1830-2000: a short history* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.170.

⁸ Here, the nationalisation of Islam refers to the Islamically inspired socialism promoted under Boumédiène's regime that sought to make Islam *the state's religion* (to give the regime legitimacy and control over religious appointments) and *the religion of the state* (to give a sense of 'national personality'). See McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, p.261.

⁹ Stora, *Algeria*, pp.181-95. The Berber Spring in 1980 marked the period of political protest and civil activism that demanded the recognition of the Berber identity and language in Algeria.

¹⁰ Treacy, *Writing in the Aftermath*, p.125.

¹¹ McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, p.295.

¹² See Jean-Pierre Peyroulou, *Histoire de l'Algérie depuis 1988* (Paris: La découverte, 2020), pp.110-14. The Arabic term *hirak* can be translated to English as 'movement' (in terms of heterogenous, grassroots civil protests). The term has also been used in Morocco to describe similar events; however, in Algeria, the movement has taken the form of a nation-wide uprising.

The contextualisation of Daoud as an Algerian writer is essential if we are to explore *LPDLF*. The editor at Stock asked Daoud to spend a night alone in the *Musée Picasso* in Paris's third arrondissement, recording his reflections on the *Picasso 1932: année érotique* exhibition.¹³ The 28 short chapters discuss a range of issues: religious extremism; the meaning of art and representation; death and eroticism; and the relationship between *l'Occident - l'Orient*. Daoud introduces the fictitious character Abdellah, the jihadi, who acts as a contrapuntal voice to his own. However, Daoud dedicates the text 'aux femmes qui, dans le monde dit « arabe » ou ailleurs, n'ont pas droit à leur propre corps'.¹⁴ Whether through analysing Picasso's representations of his lover and muse Marie-Thérèse Walter, or, reflecting upon his own relationship to images of women growing up in Algeria, women capture a large part of Daoud's attention. As Daoud writes, 'Marie-Thérèse Walter, la femme aux mille corps de Picasso, est aussi mon histoire jamais vécue, attendue.'¹⁵ He explores how Picasso deconstructs the female form to reflect upon his own 'peur culturelle face à l'image.'¹⁶

There has been little scholarship on *LPDLF* given that, at the time of writing this thesis, there is currently only a book review by Claudia Esposito.¹⁷ Most of the scholarship deals with Daoud's choice to write in French in *Meursault, contre-enquête* (2013), arguing that it can be seen as an act of defiance against Arabisation policies in Algeria. Alice Kaplan argues that Daoud takes ownership of a language that no longer belongs to the French colonists, but rather belongs to liberty and justice.¹⁸ Likewise, Valérie K. Orlando assesses the 'mythology' of the FLN 'master narrative' that has characterised Algeria's nation-building post-Independence. She argues that by using French, Daoud questions the established definitions of the Algerian nation and asserts his support for cultural plurality.¹⁹ This thesis explores similar themes regarding the conflicted plurality of French and Algerian identity, as well as the notion of narrative construction in Daoud's writing; however, it moves away from the linguistic focus to explore the implications of Daoud's text for a French audience. In other words, it explores how

¹³ See Pablo Picasso, 'Picasso 1932', *Musée Picasso* <<https://www.museepicassoparis.fr/en/picasso-1932>> [accessed 01 October 2019].

¹⁴ Kamel Daoud, *Le peintre dévorant la femme* (Paris: Stock, 2018), p.8.

¹⁵ Daoud, *op. cit.*, p.84.

¹⁶ Daoud, *op. cit.*, p.46.

¹⁷ See Claudia Esposito, 'Le peintre dévorant la femme', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 25. 3 (2019), 1-2 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2019.159166>>.

¹⁸ Alice Kaplan, '« Meursault, Contre-Enquête » de Kamel Daoud', *Contreligne* <<http://www.contreligne.eu/2014/06/kamel-daoud-meursault-contre-enquete/>> [accessed 01 June 2020].

¹⁹ Valérie K. Orlando, 'Conversations with Camus as Foil, Foe and Fantasy in Contemporary Writing by Algerian Authors of French Expression', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 20. 5 (2015), 865-83 (p.866) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2015.1069741>>.

Daoud performs his positionality in the Franco-Algerian discursive space through his non-fictional *œuvre* and how the plural readership receives this ‘performance’.²⁰

Furthermore, Sami Alkyam applies Homi K. Bhabha’s notion of mimicry to the character of Haroun and Daoud’s overall framing of the novel. He argues that, by using French, Haroun acknowledges his position as a hybrid subject between the coloniser and the colonised. Alkyam suggests that rather than establishing his identity or producing his ‘difference’, the concept of mimicry - how he ‘subverts the hegemonic colonial French historiography’ - means that Haroun creates a kind of ‘partial presence’.²¹ Similar to Alkyam’s work, this thesis draws on Bhabha’s theories of hybridity (amongst others) to explore the relationship between text and author; however, it builds on gaps in recent literature that tend to see Daoud as purely operating within the fictional. It explores how Daoud’s non-fictional *œuvre* – specifically, his journalism in 2016 and the publication of *LPDLF* in 2018 – impacts upon the differing social and political reactions we see in France, Algeria, and beyond.

By nature of Daoud’s subject matter, this thesis also deals with the art of representation in Picasso’s paintings. There has yet to be a study into the ‘visuality’ of Daoud’s non-fictional *œuvre* in terms of how he represents concepts relating to the image in his writing. This thesis attempts to locate Daoud’s text within discussions of the visual, exploring whether Daoud reads and reproduces erotic Picasso in a way that is conducive to Western assumptions about the artist, as well as the implications this has for a French audience in particular.

Nonetheless, recent scholarship also criticises Daoud for the way that he portrays Algerian Muslims. Jane Hiddleston maintains that in *Meursault, contre-enquête*, Daoud does not make a clear enough distinction between Islam and Islamism in his criticisms of religious dogmatism.²² Similarly, Mehammed Mack argues that following a controversial article Daoud published in *Le Monde* about the alleged sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year’s Eve (2015), the ‘sexual demonisation’ of Muslims entered the European mainstream.²³ Responding to this line of criticism, we will apply it to Daoud as a ‘public intellectual’ in the contemporary European context and beyond. Engin Isin defines postcolonial intellectuals as

²⁰ For the purpose of this thesis, ‘positionality’ denotes the social and political contexts that contribute to how Daoud expresses his ‘identities’, whereas ‘position’ would suggest a fixed opinion on a certain issue.

²¹ Sami Alkyam, ‘Lost in reading: The predicament of postcolonial writing in Kamel Daoud’s *The Meursault Investigation*’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 55. 4 (2019), 459-71 (pp.467-69) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2019.1603117>>.

²² Jane Hiddleston, *Writing after Postcolonialism: Francophone North African Literature in Transition* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), p.168.

²³ Mehammed Amadeus Mack, *Sexagon: Muslims, France, and the Sexualization of National Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), p.250.

neither universal nor specific but transversal political subjects, always crossing borders and orders [...]. Traversing both fields of knowledge-power and imperial-colonial orders is their condition of possibility and modus operandi.²⁴

Whilst we know that not every writer is by default a ‘postcolonial’, or even a ‘public’, intellectual (in the sense that they actively intervene in public discussions), it appears that Daoud fits into this definition of someone who intervenes in alternative, or multiple, spheres. To explore the implications of Daoud’s positionality as a public writer/intellectual, this thesis will address the following research questions:

1. How does the continual hybridisation of the Franco-Algerian public sphere(s) and beyond contribute to Daoud’s contested positionality as a writer?
2. In terms of reception, how does the nature of the *essai* affect the political and social reactions we see in France in particular? and can we read *LPDLF* as Daoud’s attempt to reposition himself and better negotiate the relationship between aesthetics and politics in the Franco-Algerian (and wider Maghrebi) encounter?
3. What are the implications for a ‘French’ audience in how Daoud represents Picasso, the *Musée Picasso*, and Paris?
4. How does Daoud represent the museum in Western and Muslim societies? Do these representations idealise Western cultural codes?²⁵
5. How does Daoud portray the gendered body and sexuality in the West compared to Muslim Algeria? and do these representations allow for a critical reading of the gendered body cutting across the Mediterranean?
6. What are the implications of these representations in terms of Western tropes seeing the Muslim woman as ‘oppressed’ and the Muslim man as sexually ‘depraved’?

This thesis will encompass a postcolonial, feminist theoretical approach, allowing for an in-depth assessment of how textual analysis can interweave with representations in visual culture. In particular, postcolonial theory will be used to address concepts relating to the

²⁴ Engin Isin, ‘Preface: Postcolonial Intellectuals: Universal, Specific or Transversal?’, in *Postcolonial Intellectuals in Europe: Critics, Artists, Movements, and their Publics*, ed. by Sandra Ponzanesi and Andriano José Hated (London; New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), pp.xi-xiv (p.xiii). Discussions about what constitutes a public intellectual are extensive and go beyond the initial scope of this project.

²⁵ The differing concepts of a museum in France and Algeria will be discussed from p.45 onwards. Also, the use of ‘Western’ and ‘Muslim’ to describe societies and cultures can be reductive due to the homogenising nature of the terms; hence, for the purpose of this thesis they will be used with a certain amount of caution.

hybridisation of postcolonial, transnational public spheres and how it affects the ability to translate subaltern experiences (given that Daoud is an Algerian man entering in the Franco-Algerian public sphere and beyond with *LPDLF*). These ideas will be brought together with contemporary feminist critiques of Picasso's work (and the gendered body in 20th Century Western art more generally) to critically assess how Daoud presents the relationship between gender, the non-European (female) body, and representation in erotic Picasso, as well as the consequences of Daoud's reading for contemporary audiences in France, Algeria, and beyond.

A close textual analysis of *LPDLF* will provide the main analytical framework of this thesis. This method will be useful in assessing how Daoud expresses his hybridised positionality in the Franco-Algerian discursive space, as well as how he negotiates his plural readership when discussing issues relating to the gendered body, Islamism, and the West. Nonetheless, there are arguably limitations to textual analysis, especially as it is subject to the reader's positionality. As a white, British, cisgender woman recognising the considerable privilege that comes with those labels, I by no means wish to speak for, nor deny any kind of Algerian experience. This also speaks true of the potentially problematic nature of using *LPDLF* as the main focus of the thesis. Having a single text as the primary focus runs the risk of providing a limited view of how contemporary Maghrebi authors of French expression deal with issues relating to sexuality, gender, and religion.²⁶

However, this thesis focuses on Daoud because he occupies a particularly complex place in transnational academic discussions. I will situate the text in its contemporary cultural location, explaining the significance of the complex historical relationship between France and Algeria; and the particular Algerian context that has shaped Daoud's writing. Moreover, I will look at reviews of the text from international media outlets to give a wider range of analysis. The work of postcolonial theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak will be explored to support the analysis of Daoud's hybridised positionality in the Franco-Algerian discursive space and beyond. These theories have not before been applied to the concept of the plural readership Daoud finds himself within, especially with *LPDLF*. Secondary to the textual exploration of the *essai* is the visual analysis of erotic Picasso; hence the work of art critics and historians such as John Berger and Kenneth

²⁶ For example, see Leïla Slimani, *Sexe et mensonges : la vie sexuelle au Maroc* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2017); Abdellah Taïa, *Infidèles* (Paris: Seuil, 2012); Abdellah Taïa, *Une mélancolie arabe* (Paris: Seuil, 2010). For academic work on this field, see William J. Spurlin, 'Contested Borders: Cultural Translation and Queer Politics in Contemporary Francophone Writing from the Maghreb', *Research in African Literatures*, 47. 2 (2016), 104-20 <<https://doi.org/10.2979/reseafrilite.47.2.07>>; Erquicia Irati Fernández, 'La présence de la femme dans l'œuvre de Leïla Slimani', *Thélème : Revista complutense de estudios franceses*, 34. 1 (2019), 173-89 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/thel.61153>>.

Clark will be explored to give some contextual understanding to Picasso's work. In terms of a feminist reading of Picasso's work and Daoud's subsequent interpretations, I will look to scholars such as Laura Mulvey, Griselda Pollock, and Lynda Nead to unpick the concept of the 'male gaze'.

To address the research questions outlined above, Chapter One argues that Daoud is viewed as a contested public intellectual in the Franco-Algerian discursive space and beyond. This is both symptomatic of and contributes to his hybridised positionality that is in constant flux within, and across, each national 'entity'. In this way, Daoud can be viewed as occupying a liminal space in a plural readership. It argues that Daoud cannot be viewed as simply occupying an *entre-deux* position between binary notions such as: France-Algeria; colonialism-postcolonialism, Islamism-secularism; East-West. Rather, the international controversy sparked by Daoud's journalism in 2016 suggests that he intervenes in international debates in a complex way. This allows us to see Daoud's re-emergence in the Franco-Algerian discursive space with *LPDLF* as timely and significant, suggesting that Daoud uses the aesthetics of the text to 'mould' his audience base. Chapter One, therefore, argues that the publication of *LPDLF* in 2018 needs to be looked at within the context of Daoud's contested positionality in a hybridised, multi-faceted public sphere. In this way, *LPDLF* appears to represent a facilitator in a performative conversation between Daoud and the more bourgeois, potentially more republican, factions of French society.²⁷ In other words, Daoud can be read as presenting his work in a less threatening manner in the Western context, attempting to better negotiate the plural readership that characterises the Franco-Algerian encounter.²⁸

As this thesis moves from the contextual background of *LPDLF* into its analysis, Chapter Two suggests that Daoud presents and performs Picasso as a symbol of transgression from within the Western context. This means that Picasso becomes the subject, object, and to some extent, the excuse for Daoud's writing. It argues that by performing Picasso in a way that deploys Western cultural codes, Daoud cannot decentre Europe from his exploration of erotic Picasso. This continues in how Daoud represents his alterity as an Algerian man entering Paris - a typically French - space; Daoud's discomfort at being 'othered' occasionally propels him to idealise Western cultural reference points.²⁹ Additionally, through analysing how Daoud

²⁷ Terms like 'bourgeois', and 'republican' need to be employed with caution as they can act as homogenising categorisations.

²⁸ In the context of racialised stereotypes, the term 'threatening' has the potential to be problematic and to play into racist tropes.

²⁹ Using 'French' (or any other marker of nationality) to describe cultural reference points, codes, or an audience base is also potentially problematic because it can ignore the plural identities that constitute it.

tackles the concept of the museum in the West and compares it to that in Muslim countries, Chapter Two suggests that by being nostalgic for an Algerian past that had not yet been influenced by Islamist and nationalist rhetoric, Daoud presents Algeria's future as inevitably negative. This suggests that Daoud risks an imbalance because he cannot occupy multiple positionalities at once. Whilst Daoud can be seen as trying to better understand – and negotiate – the binaries that characterise representations of the Franco-Algerian encounter, an imbalance in favour of Western cultural codes is arguably more 'graspable' for a Western-orientated French audience.

Finally, Chapter Three builds on the idea of imbalance to argue that we can also see it in how Daoud presents the gendered body and sexuality in the West compared to Muslim North Africa. As Daoud reads Picasso's violent deconstruction of the female form as a transgressive homage to life that gives a woman agency, it arguably has problematic implications for contemporary audiences. Indeed, it can be argued that Daoud does not engage with feminist-inspired scholarship that locates erotic Picasso within the gendered (and racial) asymmetrical power dynamics of his time. By choosing not to engage with these feminist readings of Picasso, Daoud seems to simultaneously reinforce global heteronormative, patriarchal, and sexist tropes in art and denounce them. It also argues that although Daoud offers an insightful perspective on the idea of confronting the Other's naked body, Daoud sometimes seems to reproduce common harmful tropes about Muslim men and their sexuality. In contemporary European contexts relating to the refugee crisis and Islamophobia, this has significant implications for a French audience.³⁰ Likewise, Chapter Three argues that Daoud sometimes appears to simplify the experiences of Muslim women globally to speak for his own Algerian experience. Arguably, in the current French context in particular - where the question of *la femme voilée* is an extremely contentious issue - Daoud's generalisations legitimise narratives that suggest Muslim women need to be 'saved' from patriarchal Islam by Western modernity.³¹ Finally, the Conclusion brings these arguments together to maintain that Daoud cannot occupy multiple positionalities at once without risking an imbalance. His experience with Algerian-Islam cannot simply be transposed to the European context without significant consequences for the French audiences interpreting his writing, especially regarding Islam.

³⁰ The term 'refugee crisis' can be viewed as problematic because it has the potential to feed into dangerous racist and xenophobic anti-refugee tropes.

³¹ There is a problematic tendency to associate the term 'modernity' (especially in the Western context) with a perceived Western cultural and moral superiority.

Chapter 1 - Locating Daoud's non-fictional oeuvre in the hybridised Franco-Algerian discursive space

This chapter explores how, before the publication of *LPDLF*, Daoud became a contested public intellectual in both France and Algeria. By looking at how international media and academics received his journalism in 2016, this chapter aims to highlight how Daoud occupies a particularly complex and distinct position in French and Maghrebi public debates. Also, through analysing his move to an *essai* two years later, we discuss how the form of Daoud's text contributes to, and impacts upon, the political reactions we see in the French public sphere in particular (but also in the Maghrebi spheres and beyond). A central concept to this chapter is the notion of the 'hybridised' writer-intellectual intervening into interlinked or 'hybridised' public spheres. Both concepts are necessary to analyse the context to *and* of *LPDLF*, given that Daoud embodies the hybridised public intellectual producing creative work in the hybridised Franco-Algerian discursive space. By exploring the work of Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, this chapter aims to address the predicament that arises when Daoud – the public intellectual in a position of alterity in the French context – intervenes in the Franco-Algerian public sphere(s). It also looks at *LPDLF* within the context of Daoud's shifting performativity and explores the implications this has for his audience pool in France. Finally, it interrogates how Daoud uses the *essai* to better navigate his performance in the French public sphere in particular.

Daoud: a contested public intellectual in France, Europe, Algeria, and beyond

As mentioned in the introduction, a public writer-intellectual in the postcolonial sense can represent a figure who operates between alternative, or multiple publics. They are in constant flux moving across fields of knowledge and power precisely because they operate within (neo-)imperial borders.³² In the European context, Adriano José Habed and Sandra Ponzanesi demonstrate, however, that the combination of the terms 'postcolonial', 'intellectual' and 'Europe', 'marks the site of a problem instead of offering a working definition[...]' 'since postcoloniality designates not just the condition of the inquired object or inquiring subject, but also and foremost a *perspective* that the latter adopts in articulating her

³² Isin, *Preface: Postcolonial Intellectuals*, p.xiii.

claim to knowledge [...]'.³³ Whilst what and who constitutes a (postcolonial) public intellectual is difficult to define, it appears that Daoud works within the 'site of problem' that sees him intervening in multiple spheres affected by (neo-)colonial European histories.

Following the publication of *Meursault, contre-enquête* (2013), the radical Islamist, Abdelfatah Hamadache Ziraoui, leader of *Le front de l'éveil islamique salafiste*, issued a *fatwa* against Daoud, accusing him of waging war against the sacred values of Islam.³⁴ He called for the Algerian state to condemn Daoud to death according to Sharia law.³⁵ The literary success of the novel in France had already led to a series of French TV appearances for Daoud. Still, the *fatwa* increased Daoud's hypervisibility in the Franco-Algerian mediascapes. In France, open letters of support from intellectuals and artists such as Bernard-Henri Lévy defended Daoud. Similarly, in Algeria, there were demonstrations in support of Daoud and a petition circulated that demanded government protection against similar threats.³⁶ Although the *fatwa* was not representative of Islam, it does offer some insight into the provocative nature of Daoud's writing in terms of its negative portrayal of Islam.³⁷ Albeit less well known, this is to some extent reminiscent of the Rushdie affair where British-Indian novelist and essayist Salman Rushdie was thrown into a similar predicament after publishing *The Satanic Verses* (1989). The novel was met with controversy worldwide and ultimately led to Rushdie being issued with a *fatwa* from Iran's former spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khomeini.³⁸

In 2016, Daoud's visibility in Western academic and media circles increased again following the publication of an article in *Le Monde* which sparked controversy on both sides

³³ Andriano José Habed, and Sandra Ponzanesi, 'Introduction: Postcolonial Intellectuals, European Publics', in *Postcolonial Intellectuals in Europe: Critics, Artists, Movements, and their Publics*, ed. by Sandra Ponzanesi and Andriano José Habed (London; New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), pp.xxx-li. (p.xxxvi). Italics in original.

³⁴ This is not recognised as an official organisation anywhere, and some consider Ziraoui to be a self-proclaimed leader. See Claire Devarrieux, 'L'auteur Kamel Daoud visé par une fatwa', *Libération* <https://next.liberation.fr/livres/2014/12/17/l-auteur-kamel-daoud- vise-par-une-fatwa_1165863> [accessed 15 October 2019].

³⁵ It is important to be aware of the extreme nature of this reaction; it is by no means a representation of moderate Muslims in Algeria. For example, in 2013, it was announced that a union of imams would form a bulwark against fundamentalism in order to protect the country's traditionally moderate form of Islam from the extremist, Salafist organisation. See Africa Research Bulletin, 'Algeria: Protecting moderate Islam', *African Research Bulletin: Political, Social, and Cultural Series*, 50. 4 (2013), 19669A-69C <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-825X.2013.05062.x>>.

³⁶ Doreen Carvajal, 'An Algerian author fights back against a fatwa', *New York Times*, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/05/books/an-algerian-author-fights-back-against-a-fatwa.html>> [accessed 05 October 2019].

³⁷ It is necessary to be wary of Western media attention to the *fatwa* because there is the potential for it to feed into Islamophobic narratives that place all Algerian Muslims under this umbrella of extremity.

³⁸ Ana Cristina Mendes, 'Salman Rushdie: The Accidental Intellectual in the Mediascape', in *Postcolonial Intellectuals in Europe: Critics, Artists, Movements, and Their Publics*, ed. by Sandra Ponzanesi and Andriano José Habed (London; New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), pp.143-57 (pp.147-48).

of the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic.³⁹ The article was published in response to over a hundred women reporting robberies and sexual assaults by groups of men in Cologne on New Year's Eve in 2015. From initial reports, the general consensus in the Western press was that the attacks were allegedly orchestrated by groups of men who were 'North African or Arab in appearance'.⁴⁰ In the article, Daoud's rhetoric uses homogenising categories such as *réfugié*, *culture*, *Autre*, and *Occident* in his dissection of 'le rapport à la femme' in Islamist discourse.⁴¹ The article foreshadows much of the thematic framework of *LPDLF* and appears to reveal the close link between Daoud's journalistic writing and his lengthier non-fictional *œuvre*. He attacks the naivety of the Western political left which, he believes, fails to recognise the cultural gap that exists between the West and asylum seekers coming from the Arab-Muslim world.⁴² Daoud collapses the plurality of global Arabo-Muslim experiences into one cultural unit:

Il faut offrir l'asile au corps mais aussi convaincre l'âme de changer. L'Autre vient de ce vaste univers douloureux et affreux que sont la misère sexuelle dans le monde arabo-musulman, le rapport malade à la femme, au corps et au désir. L'accueillir n'est pas le guérir.⁴³

Daoud's language is lyrical, provocative, and by default of his position as a journalist and author, his writing style is recognisably *engagé* and reminiscent of earlier works such as *Meursault, contre-enquête*.⁴⁴ Yet, it is sometimes problematic because it allows for a slippage between Islamists, Islam, and the greater context of the Arabo-Muslim world, blurring the complex intersections of Muslim experiences globally.

Following the article, a group of academics publicly condemned Daoud for what they saw as a recycling of Islamophobic clichés harking back to Orientalist fantasies that encouraged cultural essentialism.⁴⁵ Transatlantically, the debate continued in an exchange of

³⁹ Le Monde, 'Kamel Daoud et les « fantasmes » de Cologne, retour sur une polémique', *Le Monde* <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/02/20/kamel-daoud-et-les-fantasmes-de-cologne-retour-sur-une-polemique_4868849_3232.html> [accessed 21 October 2019].

⁴⁰ BBC World, 'Cologne Sex Attacks: Women describe "terrible" assaults', *BBC World* <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35250903>> [accessed 11 March 2020].

⁴¹ Kamel Daoud, 'Cologne, lieu de fantasmes', *Le Monde* <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/01/31/cologne-lieu-de-fantasmes_4856694_3232.html> [accessed 21 October 2019]. This will be discussed further later on in the chapter.

⁴² As previously mentioned, the homogenising nature of terms like 'Arab-Muslim world' means they are potentially problematic.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Orlando, *Conversations with Camus*, p.874.

⁴⁵ Nouredine Amara, and others, 'Nuit de Cologne : « Kamel Daoud recycle les clichés orientalistes les plus

open letters between journalist and essayist Adam Shatz and Daoud. Addressing Daoud, Shatz wrote ‘c’est comme si toute l’ambiguïté [...], et que, plus que personne, tu pourrais analyser dans toute sa nuance, a disparu. Tu l’as fait de plus dans des publications lues par des lecteurs occidentaux qui peuvent trouver dans ce que tu écris la confirmation de préjugés et d’idées fixes.’ To which Daoud replied, ‘J’ai écrit poussé par la honte et la colère contre les miens et parce que je vis dans ce pays, dans cette terre. J’y ai dit ma pensée et mon analyse sur un aspect que l’on ne peut cacher sous prétexte de « charité culturelle ». Je suis écrivain et je n’écris pas des thèses d’universitaire. C’est une émotion aussi.’ Daoud finished the letter by announcing he would ‘arrête(r) le journalisme’ to focus on literature.⁴⁶

Nonetheless, journalists and public figures on both sides of the Mediterranean intervened in support of Daoud. In an impassioned article, Tunisian journalist Fawzia Zouari wrote:

Je vous défie de démontrer le contraire de ce qu’affirme Kamel Daoud, qui, lui, vit sur le terrain, observe quotidiennement un monde où les femmes doivent arriver vierges chez leurs maris et où les célibataires sont rendus fous par la misère sexuelle, subit cette loi qui ne permet ni à l’homme ni à la femme d’avoir des relations physiques hors mariage.⁴⁷

Likewise, the former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls called on people to support Daoud:

dans une époque de plus en plus indéchiffrable, gagnée par la montée des extrémismes, [...] les analyses de Kamel Daoud – et d’autres avec lui – peuvent nous être d’un grand secours. [...] l’écrivain algérien nous livre un point de vue éclairant et utile, celui d’un intellectuel, d’un romancier.⁴⁸

In terms of the politicisation of journalistic discourses in the West, Ronald N. Jacobs and Eleanor R. Townsley analyse the ‘War on Terror’ in the USA to explore the role of media

éculés »’, *Le Monde* <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/02/11/les-fantasmes-de-kamel-daoud_4863096_3232.html> [accessed 20 October 2019].

⁴⁶ *Le Monde*, *Kamel Daoud et les « fantasmes » de Cologne*.

⁴⁷ Fawzia Zouari, ‘Polémique : Pourquoi Kamel Daoud a raison’, *Jeune Afrique* <<https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/304007/societe/polemique-kamel-daoud-a-raison/>> [accessed 21 October 2019].

⁴⁸ Manuel Valls, ‘Soutenons Kamel Daoud !’, *Facebook* <<https://www.facebook.com/notes/manuel-valls/soutenons-kamel-daoud-/1002589256488085>> [accessed 20 October 2019].

commentary in contemporary civil society. They demonstrate how opinion formats have developed understandings of criticism, politics, and journalism to challenge traditional models of ‘detached’ journalism. They maintain that ‘[...] the space of media commentary calls out for closer empirical scrutiny since it is an influential and (potentially) diverse space of argument, with a clear and direct presence in political debates that, if anything, is increasing in significance.’⁴⁹

Although Daoud’s intervention offers a temporal and geographical shift away from the immediate post-9/11 American context, it helps us to see how issues intrinsically linked to Islamophobia and representations of the Other in Western discourses are politicised globally. Whilst Zouari and Valls are unanimous in their support for Daoud, they do so from markedly different lived experiences. The breadth of political and sociological intervention in this debate highlights the complex and controversial space Daoud occupies in global public discussions. Indeed, his writing has regularly drawn polarising opinions within academic and media circles in France, Algeria, and beyond. *Meursault, contre-enquête* was generally praised by the American press and scholars; however, it received some criticism accusing it of falling back on orientalist tropes rooted in colonial discourse.⁵⁰ Previously, Daoud had been accused of racism and ‘self-hatred’ following a piece he wrote after 9/11 in which he stated that ‘Arabs’ would keep ‘crashing’ so long as they were more readily associated with hijacking planes than for making them.⁵¹

During the interim period between the 2016 article and publishing *LPDLF*, however, Daoud continued to write for *Le Quotidien d’Oran* in Algeria and *Le Point* in France.⁵² His public declaration to step away from journalism can be read as a decision to distance himself from global media, given that *Le Monde* is arguably a more internationally renowned and read news source than *Le Point*. Yet, it is also significant given that *Le Point* has not treated Muslims well in the past. For example, the late editorial writer Claude Imbert said in 2003:

⁴⁹ Ronald N. Jacobs and Eleanor R. Townsley, *The Space of Opinion: Media Intellectuals and the Public Sphere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.5.

⁵⁰ See Nadia Sariahmed, ‘Daoud’s Camus fanfiction is more of the same’, *Jadaliyya* <www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/22270/daoud%E2%80%99s-camus-fanfiction-is-more-of-the-same/> [accessed 04 December 2019] & Deborah Treisman, ‘This week in fiction: Kamel Daoud’, *New Yorker* <<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/this-week-in-fiction-kamel-daoud>> [accessed 21 April 2020].

⁵¹ Adam Shatz, ‘Stranger still’, *The New York Times* <<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/05/magazine/stranger-still.html/>> [accessed 21 April 2020].

⁵² For example, see Kamel Daoud, ‘Le banc ou le banc de poissons ?’, *Le Quotidien d’Oran* <http://www.lequotidien-oran.com/index.php?news=5253838&archive_date=2017-12-03> [accessed 01 April 2020] and Daoud ‘Fin de l’esclavage confessionnel’, *Le Point* <https://www.lepoint.fr/editos-du-point/sebastien-le-fof/kamel-daoud-fin-de-l-esclavage-confessionnel-21-09-2017-2158661_1913.php> [accessed 01 April 2020].

[..] je suis un peu islamophobe. [...] je ne suis pas le seul dans ce pays à penser que l'islam - je dis bien l'islam, je ne parle même pas des islamistes - en tant que religion apporte une débilite d'archaïsmes divers, apporte une manière de considérer la femme, de déclasser régulièrement [...] la femme [..].⁵³

It would appear that Daoud has kept one foot in both the French and Algerian mediascapes, albeit in a mediated, controlled way. Moreover, Daoud's position as an international journalist by default gives him access to a much wider readership than literature, which he would arguably be aware of.⁵⁴ The publication of *LPDLF* hence marked a timely and important moment regarding Daoud's contested visibility, particularly in France. How Daoud polarises opinion in Algeria, France, and beyond suggests that the aesthetics of his impassioned analysis contribute to, and impact upon, competing political reactions we see emerging on both sides of the Mediterranean and Atlantic.

Performing a hybridised positionality: Daoud in the Franco-Algerian public sphere(s)

As mentioned above, the Franco-Algerian public sphere(s) has its own specificity that interlinks with other spheres such as the European, the Maghrebi, and the North American. Moreover, the purportedly 'national' public spheres of France and Algeria, respectively - and the dominant ideas that traverse them - also impact upon this relationship. Dominant political and cultural discourses in France, for example, largely rest upon a self-proclaimed commitment to mythological revolutionary, egalitarian, and republican notions tied to enlightenment thinking and secularism; whereas, in Algeria, the national public sphere can be understood in terms of national myth-making that conflates Islamic tradition with anti-colonial nationalism.⁵⁵

Jürgen Habermas defines the public sphere as 'a highly complex network that branches out into a multitude of overlapping international, national, regional, local, and subcultural arenas.'⁵⁶ Gerard Hauser affirms this notion:

⁵³ ACRIMED, 'Claude Imbert, islamophobe déclaré', *ACRIMED* <<https://www.acrimed.org/Claude-Imbert-islamophobe-declare#nb1>> [accessed 29 September 2020].

⁵⁴ This will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

⁵⁵ See Emmanuel Alcaraz, 'La mise en scène de la mémoire nationale : de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne au Maqam Al-Chahid d'Alger', in *Autour des morts de Guerre : Maghreb - Moyen-Orient* ed. by Raphaëlle Branche, Nadine Picaudou and Pierre Vermeren (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne 2013), pp.21-45 (pp.32-34).

⁵⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p.374.

Public opinions are imbedded in the ongoing dialogue in which classes, races, religions, genders, generations, regions, and a host of other significant other discriminators rub against each other, problematize one another's assumptions about meaning, create discursive spaces (i.e. public spheres) in which new interpretations may emerge, and lead to intersections that provide collective expressions of shared sentiments.⁵⁷

Nancy Fraser develops these ideas to move away from their potential limitations of seeing the public sphere as limited within the confines of the Westphalian nation-state. She argues that due to international media, the internet, multicultural communities, and migration, 'transnationalization' questions the concept of the public sphere because it has allowed for emerging discursive spaces that move across national borders.⁵⁸ As Richard McCallum notes, the result of this is sometimes uncomfortable because issues, rather than groups of individuals, become the focal point of these rhetorical spaces, which creates a sphere of conflicting interests.⁵⁹

Academics have looked to metaphor to describe the complex relationship between France and Algeria and how the two nations come together discursively. Étienne Balibar analyses this 'fractal composite' through the metaphor of *regards croisés*.⁶⁰ He explores the idea that Algeria as an established 'nation' was formed under the French Empire; so, the Empire cannot be separated from the Nation, even if the official and legal colonial ties have been cut with the former colony. This results in an impossible necessity to separate the two nations from one another, given that decolonisation has only allowed for the transition from the false simplicity of one nation, to the false simplicity of two. Each side is trying to free itself from the identity that imprisons it whilst recognising the otherness that has contributed to its own creation. This means that the *regards croisés* of the Franco-Algerian encounter have become interior to one another. To free themselves from this coupling, French and Algerian

⁵⁷ Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: the Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), p.110.

⁵⁸ Nancy Fraser, 'Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: on the legitimacy and efficacy of public opinion in a post Westphalian world', in *Identities, Affiliations and Allegiances*, ed. by Seyla Benhabib, Ian Shapiro, and Danilo Petranovitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 45-66 (p.54).

⁵⁹ Richard McCallum, 'Public Intellectuals and Micro-Public Spheres: a British illustration', in *New Public Spheres: Recontextualizing the Intellectual*, ed. by Peter Thijssen, and others (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), pp. 163-79 (pp.170-76).

⁶⁰ For the use of 'fractal composite', see Olivia C. Harrison, 'Beyond France-Algeria: The Algerian Novel and the Transcolonial Imagination', in *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism, 1988-2015*, ed. by Patrick Crowley (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 222-41 (p.225).

people must also disassociate from their imaginary, limited history.⁶¹ Balibar's analysis suggests that the colonial rupture is not just a fracture between France and Algeria; there is a further fracture within each of these socio-political spheres that denies, yet simultaneously maintains, the other in a cyclical relationship.

Benjamin Stora shows evidence of this concept in contemporary French and Algerian society in his discussions of the *fracture coloniale*. He maintains that the highly controversial French loi du 23 février 2005 and its promotion of 'positive' colonisation provoked intense public discussions about France's colonial legacy, or 'guerre de mémoires', particularly regarding Algeria.⁶² From 2001, local and state authorities embarked on a standardised policy, creating spaces that paid tribute to colonial memory, in an attempt to redirect the national narrative.⁶³

However, 2005 also saw the creation of postcolonial interest groups like the *Indigènes de la République*, who opposed the promotion of the colonial legacy. Nicolas Bancel argues that this highlighted the conflict between a rejection of colonial nostalgia by certain marginal groups in French society and the state's need to validate French presence in places like Algeria.⁶⁴ However, in 2018 President Emmanuel Macron admitted that the French state was responsible for the torture and death of Maurice Audin (a member of the Algerian Communist Party) in 1957 during the Algerian War of Independence. Macron's announcement marked the first time that France officially acknowledged the role it had played in the systematic torture of Algerians during the war.⁶⁵ Again, this demonstrates the extent to which there is an ongoing conflict in French society (particularly concerning the Algerian War) between wanting to expose the truths of the colonial legacy and supporting neo-imperial discourses.

Similarly, this *guerre des mémoires* has played out in Algeria. The lack of significant political gestures from France, claiming responsibility for the crimes committed during

⁶¹ Étienne Balibar, 'Algérie, France : une ou deux nations ?', *Lignes*, 1. 30 (1997), 5-22 (pp.7-15) <<https://www.cairn.info/revue-lignes0-1997-1-page-5.htm>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

⁶² Benjamin Stora, 'Entre la France et l'Algérie, le traumatisme (post)colonial des années 2000', in *Ruptures Postcoloniales: les nouveaux visages de la société française*, ed. by Nicolas Bancel, and others (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), pp.328-43 (p.332).

⁶³ This was indicative of the specific 2002-2012 configuration of right-wing governments and right-wing presidents in France.

⁶⁴ Nicolas Bancel, 'France, 2005: A postcolonial turning point', *French Cultural Studies*, 24. 32 (2013), 208-18 (pp.210-11) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957155813477794>>.

⁶⁵ See Dominique Sopo, 'Monsieur Macron, le temps de la vérité dans l'affaire Audin est venu', *Huffington Post* <https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/dominique-sopo/monsieur-macron-le-temps-de-la-verite-dans-laffaire-audin-est-venu_a_23462469/> [accessed 11 May 2020] & Kim Willsher, "'My father was tortured and murdered in Algeria. At last France has admitted it'", *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/16/algeria-france-war-macron-apology-murder-michele-audin-interview>> [accessed 11 May 2020].

colonisation and the War of Independence, sparked discussions in the public sphere about these traumatic events.⁶⁶ For example, in 2007, Algeria officially announced it would bring before the international courts of law the case of Algerians executed by the French colonial army during the conflict. Moreover, the *hirak* youth movement that began in February 2019 represents a rejection of the post-Independence *pouvoir* regime with its inherent links to the imperial conception of the ‘nation-state’.⁶⁷ Seeing the Franco-Algerian crossover in fractured, yet, interconnected terms allows for a better understanding of the intricacies to the spheres Daoud intervenes in. Although the negotiation of power between Algeria and France is unequal, taking into account the multi-faceted fracturing is essential to both countries if we are to see them as ‘imperial’ nations. Returning to Balibar’s notion of *regards croisés*, Algeria can be seen as an imperial nation because of its (neo-)colonial ties to the former coloniser France.

When applying these contexts to Daoud’s positionality, it appears that some scholars find it difficult to locate his writing, occasionally falling into binarisms. In her discussion of *Meursault, contre-enquête*, Valérie K. Orlando applies the term ‘entre-deux’ – originally used post-Independence to embody Albert Camus’s Franco-Algerian identity – to the dissonant position of Algerian authors of French expression like Daoud.⁶⁸ Her analysis repeatedly comes back to the binaries that are: French – Arabic; France – Algeria; Colonisation – Postcolonialism. To some extent, the tendency to rely on such binaries is understandable given that they underpin core discussions about the Franco-Algerian discursive space. However, Mehammed Amadeus Mack argues that in the case of the 2016 article, Daoud’s attacks on religious dogmatism in Algeria have a different meaning when relocated into the Euro-American context. He maintains that Daoud failed to recognise ‘power differentials [...] when one moves from the global south to the north’. He attributes this to a characteristic of the “‘secularist Arab select”, who find a ready audience in the Euro-American press.’ This, he argues, fails ‘to question how criticism of a religion held by the majority in one country changes meaning when transposed to a country where that religion is under the microscope.’⁶⁹ Mack highlights the complex interconnectivity of an Algerian writer intervening in global public spheres. This suggests that a dualistic approach to understanding Daoud’s positionality would be over-simplistic, especially given contemporary European contexts where the refugee crisis in Europe is subject to divisive political and public debate, and where Islam has been under

⁶⁶ Stora, *Entre la France et l’Algérie*, pp.334-35.

⁶⁷ *Le pouvoir* refers to the ruling elite in Algeria.

⁶⁸ Orlando, pp.868-81.

⁶⁹ Mehammed Amadeus Mack, ‘Kamel Daoud: sexual demonization and the secularist select’, *Jadaliyya* <<https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/33069>> [accessed 25 February 2020].

constant interrogation in the West following various Islamist terrorist attacks (such as that of November 2015 in Paris).

Considerations about the interconnectivity of French and Algerian public spheres inevitably lead to discussions about hybridity. For this thesis, ‘hybridity’ will be understood in terms of ‘hybridisation’. ‘Hybridity’ is often seen to denote a fixed location between established binaries whereas ‘hybridisation’ suggests something more fluid, that constantly redefines itself, shaped by the plural identities that constitute it.⁷⁰ Nikos Papastergiadis states: ‘[...] the concept [of hybridity] also stresses that identity is not the combination, accumulation, fusion or synthesis of various components, but an energy field of different forces.’⁷¹ This notion breaks from established binaries and represents the multiple subjectivities at play when transnational or global identities are contested on the global stage. This is reminiscent of Homi K. Bhabha’s conception of the ‘third space’. Bhabha defines the ‘third space’ by suggesting that

the importance of hybridisation is not to be able to trace the two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the “third space” which enables other positions to emerge. This “third space” displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives which are inadequately understood through received wisdom.⁷²

Bhabha highlights the process by which (neo-)imperial/colonial discourses tied to power and authority try to ‘translate’ the Other’s culture and identity as a homogenous group; however, they are unsuccessful and produce something distorted and different. The two cultures thus

⁷⁰ Hybridity questions any form of essentialised identity – notably ethnic and national – and is, therefore, part of an anti-essentialising political project. The historical roots of hybridity are inherently linked to theories of scientific racism that emerged in the nineteenth century; however, the notion has constantly underpinned organic discourses on identity and has come to evoke a sense of cultural ‘meshing’ at the crossover between origin and contact. More contemporary writers such as Édouard Glissant and Homi K. Bhabha have re-appropriated this language to re-evaluate the meaning of ‘mixture’ on political and cultural stages. As it is neither a stable nor definite concept, discussions around hybridity in postcolonial studies are extensive and go beyond the initial scope of this project. See Charles Stewart, ‘Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory’, in *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*, ed. by Charles Stewart (California: Left Coast Press, 2007), pp.1-25 (pp.3-4).

⁷¹ Nikos Papastergiadis, ‘Tracing Hybridity in Theory’, in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (London: Zed Books 2015), pp.257-81 (p.258).

⁷² Homi K. Bhabha, ‘The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha’, in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp.207-21 (p.211).

interact under the guise of transparent knowledge and the illusion that there is an equal balance of power.

The roots of Bhabha's notion can be traced to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), in which he argues that the continuation of colonial mentalities means that only Europe can articulate the 'Orient' (and Islam in particular) in order to control it. In this case, the subject is not the Orient itself; rather, it is the Orient being made known to the West in a way that renders it less fearsome. Said maintains that this leads to a process of *orientalisation*: the Orient is *orientalised* as both the location for Orientalist focus and in a way that forces Western readers to accept these representations produced by Orientalists. This process is cyclically dictated by the perceived cultural and political practices of the West through teaching, rhetoric, traditions, and societies.⁷³

Similarly, academics such as Zahia Smail Salhi address the notion of 'Occidentalism'. For her, Occidentalism encompasses the portrayal of the East-West encounter and the West from the perspective of the formerly colonised people. Occidentalists thus speak to the Occident directly or indirectly.⁷⁴ The colonial roots of Orientalism continue to impact upon how the Orient and the Occident currently regard each other. She maintains that Occidentalism cannot be seen as a simple reverse of Orientalism because this suggests that the power dynamic between the two entities is equal when in reality it is asymmetrical: 'the Orientalist *versus* Occidentalist condition is one of hegemony in which one was and still is the superior "Self" and the second was and still remains the inferior "Other".'⁷⁵ She suggests that there is a possibility that some Occidentalists work 'either totally disfigure and alienate the Orientals whom they depict or encourage a whole process of working towards the replication of these Orientalist clichés to attract the Occidental reader and tourist.'⁷⁶ She cites the literary successes of Tahar Ben Jelloun's *L'enfant de sable* (1985) and *La nuit sacrée* (1987) in France as examples of this. In both Orientalism and Occidentalism, it would seem that there is an element of performing the Other albeit in an unequal way; in other words, Salhi suggests that Occidentalism can simplify the Orient and reduce it to Occidental stereotypes.

To return to Bhabha, whilst his conception of hybridisation rejects any notion of essentialism, it is the very specificities of the Franco-Algerian encounter which highlight how political and cultural relations can neither be guaranteed (due to their variant nature within their

⁷³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), pp.57-69.

⁷⁴ Zahia Smail Salhi, *Occidentalism: Literary Representations of the Maghrebi Experience of the East-West Encounter* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p.1.

⁷⁵ Salhi, *op. cit.*, pp.1-13.

⁷⁶ Salhi, *op. cit.*, p.6.

specific temporal context), nor denied.⁷⁷ The complexity of this ever-evolving relationship and the consequences it has on a variety of lived experiences cannot be ignored. Indeed, Paul Gilroy simultaneously rejects biological determinism; yet, he also recognises the fact that racial identity creates a political space whereby a community can be built to take action and question power structures.⁷⁸

Likewise, Aijaz Ahmad argues that Bhabha's conception of hybridisation does not move beyond large conceptualisations of the transitory and the contingent. He maintains that Bhabha does not effectively reveal how historical processes and events have long-term effects on social and political changes globally. He suggests that communities cannot arise and disappear out of thin air.⁷⁹ Rather, he argues that they appear through having a consistent 'sense of place, or belonging, of some stable commitment to one's class or gender or nation.'⁸⁰ Bhabha does not seem to address how class and gender divides also dictate - and limit - access to freedom and the establishment of certain unprivileged groups within the 'third space'.

This inevitably leads to discussions around the performative nature of ethnic and cultural identity. We can apply Judith Butler's models of gender performativity to other identity constructions, such as Daoud's.⁸¹ Butler defines gender performativity as an

expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates. [...] [T]he performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. [...] [P]erformativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.⁸²

Whilst it is important not to treat issues of gender, race, nationality, and class as simple analogies, Butler's definition demonstrates how identity construction is simultaneously

⁷⁷ Robert J. Helfenbein, 'Troubling Multiculturalism: The New Work Order, Anti Anti-Essentialism, and a Cultural Studies Approach to Education', *Multicultural Perspectives*, 5. 4 (2003), 10-16 (p.11) <https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327892MCP0504_3>.

⁷⁸ Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Routledge, 2003), pp.32-36.

⁷⁹ Aijaz Ahmad, 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality', *Race & Class*, 36. 3 (1995), 1-20 (p.16) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/030639689503600301>>.

⁸⁰ Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p.14.

⁸¹ Scholars such as Dorinne Kondo have explored whether the theory of performativity can be transposed onto issues relating to race and identity construction. See Dorinne K. Kondo, *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater* (New York, London: Routledge, 1997).

⁸² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.xv.

internalised and externally reproduced. It also suggests that the performance of identity (a gendered one for Butler) can be seen as an act of agency given that the individual has some control in how they externalise their identity. If we apply this notion to Daoud's non-fictional *œuvre*, it suggests that his writing is a performance of how he internalises his positionality in the hybridised Franco-Algerian discursive space.

Indeed, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that 'real' subaltern experiences are not always readily available for translation. She highlights why it is problematic to overlook who is speaking on behalf of the subaltern. She maintains that whilst being able to 'speak up' is characteristic of an 'organic intellectual', the speaker distances themselves from the initial subaltern condition they (re-)present.⁸³ Raising questions about the concept of the 'native informant' – who claims (or is deemed) to speak for others – Spivak argues, 'when we come to the concomitant question of the consciousness of the subaltern, the notion of what the work *cannot* say becomes important. In the semiosis of the social text, elaborations of insurgency stand in the place of "the utterance". The sender – "the peasant" – is marked only as a pointer to an irretrievable consciousness.'⁸⁴ Spivak defines the native informant as a group of individuals belonging to the Indian elite and acting as 'native informants for first-world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other.'⁸⁵

However, unlike Bhabha, Spivak seems to formulate the concept of hybridity as an impossible position which leads to the alienation of the cultural 'sender' from their original, subaltern position. She seems to question the validity of the subjectivity of the colonised once they move away from this original position. In Spivak's critique of Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's work on Marxism, she suggests that the 'micrological texture of power' is not accounted for within the 'macrological' focus on the relationship between 'exploitation in economics' and 'domination in geopolitics'.⁸⁶ This critique can also be applied to Bhabha's conception of hybridisation; he perhaps overlooks the erratic minutiae within power relations to overfocus on cultural translation. Indeed, this suggests that Bhabha does not always account for the ways in which the micrological enunciations of difference will affect the external performance of those differences. Neo-colonial and neo-liberal power structures arguably

⁸³ Some parallels can be drawn with ideas in Jacques Rancière's *La nuit des prolétaires* (2015).

⁸⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Routledge 2013), pp.66-111 (p.82). Italics in original. Like Bhabha, Spivak is important as she engages with the notion of power and its unequal distribution, as well as exploring ideas around reproduction *and* reception.

⁸⁵ Spivak, *op.cit.*, p.79.

⁸⁶ Spivak, *op.cit.*, p.74.

continue to limit the creative potential of hybridised subjects in both diaspora and home culture settings; hence, the ability to translate is limited.

Applying this notion to Daoud, he is often seen as a spokesperson for Algeria and the Maghreb in France and beyond. Bhabha and Spivak help us to unpick how Daoud represents a hybridised subject entering in and performing to a hybridised public sphere, as well as the power relations essential to this process. Daoud underlines how he has come from relatively poor, rural, Algerian origins, but his social status has now changed. He now lives in a gated community in Oran, a city which Shatz describes as having ‘preserved its languorous, Mediterranean character’ in a “‘fragile experiment” with “cultural liberalization”- as the birthplace of *raï* - despite the growing skyline with hotels which ‘look as if they were imported from Dubai.’⁸⁷ This Mediterranean-facing city (both literally and metaphorically) offers a stark contrast to the lived realities of rural communities in Algeria far away from the coastline. A French reader might be able to grasp the hybridised space of Oran - perhaps culturally quite close to cities such as Marseille – more easily than Daoud’s rural origins. Following on from Spivak’s work, it is essential to question the gaps in Daoud’s rhetoric that omit the intricacies of wider Algerian lived experiences. Whilst his position is still inherently Algerian; it is just one version of the many lived experiences in Algeria.

Spivak and Bhabha remind us that the imbalance of power in relations between West and East distorts encounters with otherness, which is then mirrored in our ability to translate and occupy public spheres. In this way, Daoud can only interact in Western discourses because of his hybridised positionality, given that he needs to publish in French to be audible in the French context. Western-orientated discourses are thereby only accessible to the Other (Daoud) if the Other is perceived to be in a state of hybridisation by relinquishing their claim to their original position of subalternity, much like Spivak’s native informant. As we have seen, hybridisation in the Franco-Algerian context is not the mere convergence of the two national entities meeting in the middle; rather, it is the cause and effect of new subjectivities being re-created and redefined. This suggests that unequal negotiations of difference can create uncomfortable and contradictory reactions when a writer like Daoud intervenes in the French and Algerian public spheres. These reactions (like those in 2016) appear to encapsulate the complex implications that accrue from public translation and (mis-)interpretation of words and are representative of the ever-shifting, internalised hybridisation dependent on either national entity. Arguably, one of the problems regarding the reception of Daoud’s non-fictional work

⁸⁷ Shatz, *Stranger still*.

is how readers fail to take into account that he is often simultaneously intervening in these distinct, yet interconnected, spaces. To better understand this predicament in terms of Daoud's non-fiction, it is perhaps more appropriate to see Daoud's non-fictional and fictional *œuvre* within the confines of a plural *lectorat*. This underlines how Daoud's character in the French and Algerian public spheres is in a state of constant metamorphosis and reinterpretation that is dictated by historical, asymmetrical power dynamics.

'Moulding' an audience base: the significance of Daoud's move to an *essai*

As we have seen, the nature of the Franco-Algerian discursive space means that, to some extent, Daoud has limited control over how his writing is interpreted. Yet, Daoud cannot be completely detached from the original intention behind his work, especially within the context of non-fiction. To date, there are eight texts in the *Ma nuit au musée* series. Alina Gurdiel, editor at Editions Stock, created the series in 2018 with the aim to bring art and literature together. The author is invited to spend a night, all alone, in a museum.⁸⁸ Other writers in the series include: Leïla Slimani, Bernard Chambaz, Enki Bilal, Santiago H. Amigorena, Léonor de Récondo, Adel Abdessemed & Christophe Ono-dit-Biot, and Lydie Salvayre. Due to a partnership with the *Musée Picasso* in Paris, six of the authors have spent a night there.⁸⁹

The reaction to Daoud's *essai* has been markedly different from the criticisms he received in 2016 regarding his journalism. Following its publication, he received the *Grande médaille de la francophonie* (2018), the *Prix mondial Cino Del Duca* (2019), and the *Prix de la Revue des Deux Mondes* (2019). The success of the text suggests that Daoud is widely accepted and revered among French literary circles. Moreover, in the francophone Algerian press, articles about the *essai* were generally positive, praising his successes. In *El Watan*, Daoud's *Cino del Duca* success was described as 'une distinction soulignant l'ensemble de son œuvre, son souffle, sa puissance et puis sa dextérité littéralement cursive.'⁹⁰ Likewise, when commenting upon Daoud's *Revue des Deux Mondes* win, the same journalist wrote 'les membres du jury ont salué les réflexions à la fois philosophiques et poétiques d'un écrivain au

⁸⁸ Sylvie Tanette, 'Alina Gurdiel, une femme-orchestre dans l'édition parisienne', *RTS Culture* <<https://www.rts.ch/info/culture/livres/11157081-alina-gurdiel-une-femmeorchestre-dans-ledition-parisienne.html>> [accessed 25 January 2021].

⁸⁹ Musée Picasso, 'Ma nuit au musée', *Musée Picasso Paris* <<https://www.museepicassoparis.fr/fr/ma-nuit-au-musee>> [accessed 21 January 2021].

⁹⁰ K Smail, 'Kamel Daoud, Prix Mondial Cino Del Duca', *El Watan* <<https://www.elwatan.com/edition/culture/kamel-daoud-prix-mondial-cino-del-duca-16-05-2019>> [accessed 20 September 2020].

carrefour de deux civilisations. Ils ont également été sensibles à son engagement pour la vérité et la liberté, ainsi qu'à ses combats contre le fondamentalisme et les idéologies.'⁹¹

Furthermore, as Pnina Werbner notes 'the novel creates dialogical hybridity and reflexivity without necessarily posing a threat to a liberal social order. One has only to think of the elaborate ceremonials of publicity accompanying the launch of a new novel, its aesthetic design and set-aside spaces [...] to unmask its hidden ontology: a ritualised object hedged with taboos, a modern-day equivalent of liminal sacra, boundary-crossing pangolins or humanised cassowaries.'⁹² Whilst the novel represents a fictitious prose narrative, we can also apply this idea to the *essai*. The French word 'essai' can be translated as 'essay' in English when talking about a short book; however, it can also mean 'test', 'try', 'trial', and 'attempt'. Indeed, the publication of *LPDLF* seems to represent Daoud's attempt to distance himself from the 2016 controversy, given that it came after his self-proclaimed two-year hiatus from journalism.

Although it is impossible to know the extent of Daoud's readership in France and Algeria, the lack of polarising opinion in the Franco-Algerian mediascapes following the publication of *LPDLF* suggests that his readership pool narrowed considerably in comparison to his journalism in 2016. This is reminiscent of Jean-Paul Sartre's theorisations about who writers write for:

Il faut donc en revenir au public bourgeois. L'écrivain se vante d'avoir rompu tout commerce avec lui, mais, en refusant le déclassement par en bas, il condamne sa rupture à rester symbolique : il la joue sans relâche, il indique par son vêtement, son alimentation, son ameublement, les mœurs qu'il se donne mais il ne la fait pas. C'est la bourgeoisie qui le lit, c'est elle seule qui le nourrit et qui décide de sa gloire.⁹³

The idea that literature, or *essai* writing more specifically, brings about a closed, bourgeois readership would arguably be evident to Daoud. Firstly, Daoud is writing for a French publisher. Secondly, it can be seen in the lack of diversity among the juries for the French literary prizes. For example, the jury for the *Prix de la Revue des Deux Mondes* in 2019 was

⁹¹ K Smail, 'Littérature. Prix de la Revue des Deux Mondes 2019', *El Watan* <<https://www.elwatan.com/edition/culture/581224-25-05-2019>> [accessed 20 September 2020]. At the time of writing this thesis, it seemed as though there were no apparent negative press reviews of Daoud's text in Algeria or the Algerian diaspora.

⁹² Pnina Werbner, 'Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (London: Zed Books, 2015), pp.1-26 (p.7).

⁹³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), pp.129-30.

made up of almost exclusively white, male, conservative French journalists and academics except for a couple of white women.⁹⁴ This is significant because it appears to demonstrate the limited type of person that *LPDLF* would have initially reached in France in 2018, and which would suggest a similar audience in Algeria (albeit not in ethnic, but in class and gender terms).

The notion of Daoud occupying distinct, yet interwoven, public spheres is on-going and relevant today. He continues to write for *Le Point* and *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, and in February 2020 he co-wrote and appeared in a documentary for *France 5* entitled 'L'Algérie de Kamel Daoud'.⁹⁵ His increased visibility in France can also be seen with appearances on discussion panels for events such as the 'L'islam doit-il faire sa révolution sexuelle ?' conference organised by *Le Monde Festival* in October 2018. He was also interviewed for a podcast with *France Culture* in 2019: 'Kamel Daoud et sa rencontre avec Picasso érotique'.⁹⁶ In January 2020, Daoud once again came under fire (this time predominantly on social media) for being 'contre' the *hirak* in Algeria following the publication of an article in *Le Point* entitled 'Où en est le rêve algérien ?'.⁹⁷ This might be because he is once again on a global stage in a wider, general consciousness following the publication of *LPDLF*. However, due to the nature of social media, Daoud's journalism would be shared and disseminated to a much wider audience; hence, in this sense, Daoud would have no control over his readership.

In this way, it would seem that *LPDLF*'s publication represents Daoud's reinsertion into the grey area of public debate and space between France and Algeria within the Euro-American and Maghrebi contexts, albeit in a more covert manner. When trying to understand the relationship between aesthetics and politics for Daoud, *LPDLF* can be read as an attempt to better negotiate the hybridised Franco-Algerian discursive space in a potentially less polarising way. By reducing the readership pool and presenting his work in a less direct, or threatening manner, to some extent Daoud can better control how his work is received in the Franco-Algerian mediascape(s). This is by no means a new phenomenon: controversial Swiss theologian Tariq Ramadan explores in essays and blogs the formation of European Muslim

⁹⁴ For a full list of the members of the jury, see Smail, *Littérature*.

⁹⁵ Jean-Marc Giri, *L'Algérie de Kamel Daoud*, France TV, 16 February 2020, <<https://www.france.tv/france-5/la-case-du-siecle/1230961-l-algerie-de-kamel-daoud.html>> [accessed 20 February 2020].

⁹⁶ See Le Monde, *Kamel Daoud dénonce la condition des femmes dans le monde arabe*, Youtube, 10 October 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4FRTie_aTk> [accessed 20 September 2019] & Jean de Loisy, 'Kamel Daoud et sa rencontre avec Picasso érotique', *France Culture* <<https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/lart-est-la-matiere/kamel-daoud-et-sa-rencontre-avec-picasso-erotique-0>> [accessed 25 October 2019].

⁹⁷ See Tayeb Kennouche, 'Kamel Daoud contre-hirak-t-il ?', *El Watan* <<https://www.elwatan.com/edition/contributions/kamel-daoud-contre-hirak-t-il-28-01-2020>> [accessed 01 March 2020].

identity and has often drawn negative media attention.⁹⁸ Caroline Fourest explores what critics have named Ramadan's 'doublespeak', or his apparent tendency to say something acceptable to a French or English language audience, whilst simultaneously saying something unacceptable to a Muslim audience.⁹⁹ Although Fourest is fairly republican in outlook, her analysis of Ramadan suggests that Daoud uses the *essai* as a way of mediating his performance to the plural readership in the Franco-Algerian discursive space. In other words, Daoud uses the *essai* as a way of performing his positionality to those who will best receive it.

In conclusion, it would seem that Daoud is a contested public intellectual in both the French and Algerian mediascapes. It can be argued that these separate, yet hybridised, public spheres have been forged by historical asymmetrical power relations that continue to dictate how interactions are represented and (mis-)translated in either national entity. As previously discussed, Daoud's journalism in 2016 sparked a significant international debate about the consequences of transposing his criticisms of political Islamism in Algeria to the refugee crisis in Europe. The range of academic and political intervention in response to Daoud's *Cologne* piece in 2016, compared to the seemingly little criticism he received in response to publishing the *essai* in 2018, arguably demonstrates the way that the form of Daoud's work affects how unequal negotiations of difference and power are played out. Moreover, it suggests that the aesthetics of Daoud's analysis contribute to, and impact upon, public political reactions internationally. Whilst it can be argued that readers fail to understand how Daoud simultaneously intervenes in these particular, yet interconnected, discursive spaces, Daoud's choice to publicly withdraw from journalism and re-emerge under the form of an *essai* is significant because it suggests that Daoud attempted to 'mould' his audience. Daoud, therefore, is arguably aware of his positionality and navigates it in such a way that allows him to be visible, yet non-threatening, in the French context. This shift in Daoud's performativity can be read as an attempt to better position himself between the plural *lectorat* that characterises the Franco-Algerian encounter. It is within this context of shifting performativity and contested positionality that *LPDLF* must be analysed, less in terms of an accidental, and more in terms of a coordinated conversation with the West. In this way, it can be argued that Daoud's writing is both symptomatic of, and contributes to, the hybridisation of the French and Algerian public spheres. Hence, *LPDLF* arguably acts as a performative vehicle through which Daoud can

⁹⁸ Mack, *Sexagon*, p.3.

⁹⁹ Caroline Fourest, *Brother Tariq: the doublespeak of Tariq Ramadan* (London: Social Affairs Unit, 2008) p.267-68.

address similar themes to that of the 2016 article, in a way that speaks more favourably to a Western-orientated, French audience. Perhaps then, for this thesis, the ‘third space’ can be understood as an end goal for Daoud in how he negotiates and performs his hybridisation. It offers a conceptual relief as a way out of established binaries that dictate cultural understanding, translation, and performance. Chapter Two will build on this idea of performance to explore how Daoud performs Picasso, the *Musée Picasso*, and Paris in *LPDLF* within the context of plural readerships and how this renders his writing less threatening in the Western context.

Chapter 2 – The (meta-)physical location of *LPDLF* and its relationship to Daoud’s performativity as a writer

This chapter discusses how Daoud performs Picasso, Paris, the *Musée Picasso*, and the museum in ways that are emblematic of his hybridised positionality in the Franco-Algerian context, and beyond. This chapter explores how Daoud represents erotic Picasso as a transgressive force, arguing that he performs Picasso in a way that is more ‘graspable’ for a Western-orientated French readership. In this way, Picasso becomes the subject, object, and to some extent, the excuse for Daoud’s *essai*. This inevitably leads into wider debates about how Daoud represents the *Musée Picasso* in Paris; hence, this chapter explores how Daoud simultaneously represents Paris as a place of othering and a fascinating cultural meeting point of multiple identities and polarised oppositionalities in the Eurocentric context. Finally, this chapter looks at how Daoud draws on his memories as a child visiting museums in Algeria to explore ideas about the absurdity of nationalist and Islamist rhetoric in Algeria since Independence. By comparing the concept of the museum in French and Algerian contexts, and leaning on personal memory, Daoud undermines the singularity of the national narrative propagated by FLN governments and shows his desire to intervene in both French and Algerian public debates. Moreover, the physical location of *LPDLF* allows Daoud to perform memory in a way that he sees as transgressing established narratives in Algeria. For this chapter, ‘performativity’ is understood in terms of how identity construction is simultaneously internalised and externally reproduced. Within this framework, the subject has a certain amount of agency in how they externalise their identity.

A 'vehicle' of erotic transgression: how Daoud 'paints' Picasso

As Picasso represents one of the canons of 20th-Century Western art, how Daoud performs the artist is interesting in and of itself, given that he has confessed he is neither a specialist in art nor in Picasso.¹⁰⁰ Exploring the deconstruction and construction of the female form in Picasso's work, Daoud likens the way Picasso paints to a *chasseur* who wants to devour his prey and be devoured.¹⁰¹ He elaborates on this imagery when reflecting on the first painting in the exhibition, *Le Rêve* (figure 1):¹⁰²

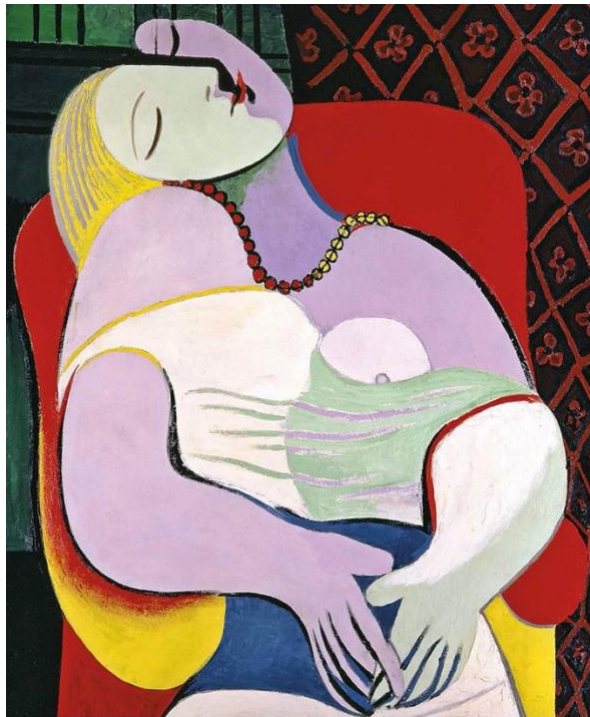


Figure 1 – Pablo Picasso, 'Le Rêve', 1932

Une femme y a ce geste très vieux de protéger son ventre. Parce qu'elle fait face à un dévoreur, au monstre désiré. Elle est à moitié endormie, car séduite, offre son cou délimité par un collier qui en trace la géographie. [...] Comment manger une femme ? Contrairement au conte, Picasso n'embrasse pas pour réveiller la femme désirée, mais pour l'endormir. J'en suis presque sûr. Il la plonge dans le rêve, la pousse dans le dos pour être son modèle, c'est-à-dire son objet.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ De Loisy, *Kamel Daoud et sa rencontre avec Picasso érotique*.

¹⁰¹ This is reminiscent of the hunting scenes of Medieval art. Only here, the hunting narrative exists in individual paintings over a sequence.

¹⁰² For the image, see Pablo Picasso, 'Le Rêve', *Musée Picasso* <<https://www.museepicassoparis.fr/en/picasso-1932>> [accessed 01 October 2019].

¹⁰³ Daoud, *LPDLF*, pp.36-37.

Daoud seems to portray Marie-Thérèse as being in a continual state of duality that relates to the essence of human composition, i.e., bones and flesh. Daoud presents her as being hunted by Picasso. For Daoud, this moment appears to be suspended outside a fixed time or place. Yet, by also suggesting the figure's body language can be interpreted in terms of 'motherly', or 'feminine' instincts Daoud seems to render this representation cyclical and continuous. Moreover, Daoud suggests that Picasso goes against traditional male-hetero norms that promote a kind of prince charming narrative, to embody something more animalistic and carnal. The – loaded – qualifier and self-referential opinion appear to remind the reader that this is Daoud's relationship to Picasso's erotic work, rather than an objective study of it. Indeed, John Berger argues that 'the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe. [...] We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice.'¹⁰⁴ He maintains that 'every image embodies a way of seeing. Yet, [...] our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing.'¹⁰⁵ It is significant that Daoud shows no images in the text as if to suggest that Picasso is the medium through which he, as an Algerian, can confront his 'peur culturelle face à l'image.'¹⁰⁶ Firstly, the reader's 'way of seeing' is distorted through Daoud looking at Picasso. Secondly, because no images are reproduced in the text and readers, must, therefore, imagine them or find them online. Hence, Daoud establishes himself in the text and appears to legitimise his 'way of seeing'.

In this way, Daoud suggests that Picasso sees corporeal reality and human instinct as the basis of (hetero-)sexual relations. This is reminiscent of Georges Bataille's *L'Érotisme* (1957) which explores eroticism within the context of *violence* and *violation*:

Que signifie l'érotisme des corps sinon une violation de l'être des partenaires ? une violation qui confine à la mort ? qui confine au meurtre ? [...] Dans le mouvement de dissolution des êtres, le partenaire masculin a en principe un rôle actif, la partie féminine est passive.¹⁰⁷

Seeing erotic Picasso in such terms is not coincidental for Daoud. In an interview with *France Culture*, Daoud discusses Bataille's similarities to Picasso and how the former explores *amour*

¹⁰⁴ John Berger and others, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972), p.8.

¹⁰⁵ Berger, *op. cit.*, p.10.

¹⁰⁶ Daoud, *LPDLF*, p.46.

¹⁰⁷ Georges Bataille, 'L'érotisme', in *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), pp. 11-270 (p.23).

and *mort*.¹⁰⁸ This suggests that Daoud sees Bataille and Picasso as transgressive to contemporary European aesthetic norms in art and thought. We can locate Picasso (and Bataille) within the Surrealist movement when looking at the *année érotique* in 1932.¹⁰⁹ Yet, Picasso's collaboration with Surrealism must be understood in terms of how it was influenced by Cubism, representing '[...] a gradual transition as his postwar Cubist style became fused with the stream-of-consciousness graphic style of automatism.'¹¹⁰ It is also important to be aware of how Picasso's Cubism in the early 20th-Century was influenced by African art such as sculpture and masks.¹¹¹ This is an extensive field of research that goes beyond the initial scope of this thesis; however, Gill Perry highlights the complex debate '[..] about the definitions of innovation and assimilation in modern art works, and the relationship between them when the artist borrows from, or is influenced by, "primitive" works.'¹¹²

Nevertheless, scholarship on erotic Picasso tends to locate it as representing a radical break from the conventions of contemporary bourgeois art. Kenneth Clark argues that Picasso first revolutionised representations of the (female) nude with *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)* (1907) (figure 2, p.37).¹¹³ Although this earlier painting precedes Picasso's later Surrealist work and falls into his Cubist years, Clark suggests that the painting represented a revolt against 19th-Century artistic doctrine that dictated 'the painter should be no more than a sensitive and well-informed camera.'¹¹⁴ Likewise, Jean Clair argues that despite being extremely homophobic and undeniably focused on maintaining the heteronomy of the sexes, 'Picasso the deformer, the mutilator, the iconoclast [...] was arguably the first to respect, and to take into account, the ineradicable difference of each human being; each woman, each of the

¹⁰⁸ De Loisy, *Kamel Daoud et sa rencontre avec Picasso érotique*.

¹⁰⁹ Surrealism was an artistic, intellectual, literary cultural movement led by poet André Breton which developed in the aftermath of the First World War in Europe. Surrealism developed out of Dadaist thought that embraced chaos and the irrational. In addition, surrealism looked to psychoanalytical concepts relating to unconscious desire. Georges Bataille was involved in Surrealist circles and edited *Documents* (a review of dissident Surrealists) which dedicated a special number to Picasso in April 1930.

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Cowling, *Picasso: Style and Meaning* (London; New York: Phaidon Press, 2002), p.457.

¹¹¹ See Natasha Staller, *A Sum of Destruction: Picasso's Cultures & the Creation of Cubism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp.316-18 and Cowling, *Picasso*, pp.180-94.

¹¹² Gill Perry, 'Primitivism and the "Modern"', in *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century*, ed. by Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gill Perry (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1993), pp.3-85 (p.3). Perry also shows how the label 'primitive' is a deeply problematic term given that it was broadly used by European societies from the 19th-Century onwards to describe cultures and peoples deemed less 'civilised', or 'other'. See Perry, p.5.

¹¹³ For the image, see Picasso, 'Les Femmes d'Alger', *MoMA* <<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79766>> [accessed 10 October 2020]. *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) portrays five nude female sex workers in a brothel on Carrer d'Avignó, a street in Barcelona. The painting began with hundreds of preparatory paintings and sketches over a sixth-month period.

¹¹⁴ Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.358.

sexes, he would refuse to insert in some overall scheme.’¹¹⁵ Robert Rosenblum views Picasso’s approach to representing the erotic as ‘genius’ in how he reinvented the human body in fantastical ways through deconstruction and reconstruction.¹¹⁶ Similarly, in her interpretation of Picasso’s reimagining of *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1955) (figure 3), Emer O’Beirne suggests that Picasso explodes the ‘potentially voyeuristic perspective of the artist/spectator’ into a multiplicity of ‘angles of erotic approach’; this allows for a ‘simultaneous representation of the full range of eroticized parts of the female body.’¹¹⁷



Figure 2 - Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger*, 1955



Figure 3 - Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (Version "O")*, 1955

¹¹⁵ Jean Clair, ‘The School of Darkness’, in *Picasso Érotique*, ed. by Jean Clair (Munich; London: Prestel, 2001), pp.14-27 (pp.22-26).

¹¹⁶ Robert Rosenblum, ‘Picasso’s Blond Muse: The Reign of Marie-Thérèse Walter’, in *Picasso and Portraiture: Representation and Transformation*, ed. by William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996), pp.336-84 (p.348).

¹¹⁷ Emer O’Beirne, ‘Veiled Vision: Assia Djebar on Delacroix, Picasso, and the Femmes d’Alger’, *Romance Studies*, 21. 1 (2003), 39-51 (p.47) <<https://doi.org/10.1179/026399003786543195>>. For the image, see Picasso, ‘Les Femmes d’Alger’, *Christie’s* <<https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/pablo-picasso-1881-1973-les-femmes-dalger-version-5895962-details.aspx>> [accessed 20 September 2020].

It would appear that Daoud adheres to the understanding of Picasso's legacy as representing a violent break from traditional Western representations of the (female) nude. He seems to confirm this:

Picasso peint le nu. Comme tout l'Occident. Sauf qu'il le fait avec l'œil du chasseur, l'œil érotique en quelque sorte : il fixe le désir et le désiré. [...] C'est sa grande révolution, son contre-Occident, son attentat contre les formes anciennes de son époque.¹¹⁸

Furthering the idea that Daoud accepts and reproduces the representation of Picasso as a symbol of transgression within the Western context, he states:

[D]ans l'immobilité de ses toiles, Picasso raconte l'histoire, tellement longue, du corps en Occident. [...] Le corps n'est pas libre dans sa représentation depuis longtemps. Il a toujours été tenu en postures selon les idéologies, réduit au portrait du visage ou contraint par la loi et le portrait. Là, dans ce musée, en 1932, il explose. [...] Même s'il se retrouve aujourd'hui banalisé, il fut une révolution de génie.¹¹⁹

It appears that Daoud uses Picasso as a 'vehicle' through which to explore a meta-physical step towards Western cultural ideologies, whether intentional or not. Indeed, this is synonymous with Daoud's writing on the West more generally. In an article for *Le Monde* (2020), Daoud states that 'L'Occident est imparfait et à parfaire, il n'est pas à détruire.'¹²⁰ He explains this by arguing that although there are issues that need to be addressed in the West such as racism, he believes that 'le vœu de changer l'Occident se retrouve contaminé, profondément, par celui de le voir mourir dans la souffrance.'¹²¹ Developing this notion, Daoud declares that

D'ailleurs, le fait même de défendre l'Occident comme espace de liberté, certes incomplète et imparfaite, est jugé blasphématoire dans cette nouvelle lutte des classes

¹¹⁸ Daoud, *LPDLF*, p.68.

¹¹⁹ Daoud, *op. cit.*, pp.167-68.

¹²⁰ Kamel Daoud, '« L'Occident est imparfait et à parfaire, il n'est pas à détruire »', *Le Monde* <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/06/22/kamel-daoud-l-occident-est-imparfait-et-a-parfaire-il-n-est-pas-a-detruire_6043684_3232.html?fbclid=IwAR36FfBYxaFicMF_vxjbpFCkVp7K6ONwRb1DchhPiYudc2BtNjHoVQC8qbQ> [accessed 18 July 2020].

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

et des races. Il est interdit de dire que l'Occident est aussi lieu vers où l'on fuit quand on veut échapper à l'injustice de son pays d'origine, à la dictature, à la guerre, à la faim, ou simplement à l'ennui.¹²²

It is through this lens that Daoud presents Picasso, as personifying Western freedom of thought and freedom to criticise. Arguably, this positive assessment of Picasso, and by extension the West, would be easily adhered to by a Western-orientated, potentially more republican, French readership. Similarly, in her exploration of Franco-Maghrebi art, Siobhán Shilton shows how artistic work connected to the Maghreb is not often considered integral to the French art scene, and by extension, to French culture and identity.¹²³ We can therefore see Picasso (rather than an Algerian artist such as Adel Abdessemed— to whom Daoud dedicates the text) as becoming the subject, object, and excuse for Daoud's text to initiate a conversation with the West.

However, the understanding of Picasso as transgressive could be viewed as problematic.¹²⁴ Emer O'Beirne argues that Assia Djebar fell into the trap of (mis)reading Delacroix's 1834 *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*, and its subsequent reworking by Delacroix and reinterpretation by Picasso in 1955 (figure 3, p.37). She argues that Djebar's 'nostalgic celebration of the role of women in the [Algerian] war of independence [...] moulds her view of Picasso's representation of the Women of Algiers during that period, and thus, it seems, elides the representation of enslavement.'¹²⁵ Writing in 1980, within the context of growing religious conservatism in Algeria under Chadli Bendejedid (concerning, in particular, the re-establishment of women's 'traditional' role in society), Djebar is nostalgic for the apparent promise of women's social liberation that their active roles in the War of Independence suggested.¹²⁶ In this way, O'Beirne reminds us in a similar way to Berger that a gaze cannot be neutral, even from within a position of 'cultural intimacy' and here, from a feminist writer in Djebar's case. This suggests that Daoud might misread Picasso in an effort to interrogate what he sees as dominant norms in Algeria relating to the gendered body and sexuality.

¹²² Ibid. Here, Daoud makes reference to the recent rise of right-wing populism and left-wing movements (for example, anti-racist) in the West. See article.

¹²³ Siobhán Shilton, *Transcultural Encounters: Gender and Genre in Franco-Maghrebi Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p.3.

¹²⁴ It also seems to rely on a heteronormative, phallogocentric version of human sexuality. It does not engage with feminist readings of Picasso, which will be explored further in the following chapter.

¹²⁵ O'Beirne, *Veiled vision*, p.48.

¹²⁶ Natalya Vince, *Our Fighting Sisters: Nation, Memory and Gender in Algeria, 1954-2012* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp.91-103.

Diametrically opposed representations of Paris as othering and enlightener

Locating the text in Picasso becomes even more significant when we take into account that it is also physically located in Paris. The first chapter, entitled ‘Paris est une pierre sacrée, blanche’, begins with an ambivalent description of Paris:

Cette ville immense est une pierre froide en hiver. Un ordonnancement du monde où la lumière jaune a le rôle d’un tissu et les ponts jouent à être des épaules ou des hanches, les immeubles sont des dos tournés. Dans les beaux quartiers, les vitrines montrent des poitrines et des corps de rêve. Toutes les affiches, géantes, exacerbent le désir. L’hiver s’annonce mais, dans le froid, les peaux sont nues sur les images, les publicités offrent des femmes qui ne cessent de sourire et de vous attendre.¹²⁷

Daoud brings the infrastructure of Paris to life as he distinguishes the corporeal shapes of the city. He elicits a sense of coldness in the temperature of the night, but also in how the city receives him; its back is turned, it is insular and closed in on itself. Yet, this feeling of physical discomfort is juxtaposed against the welcoming, warm, naked female bodies displayed on advertisements in the chic - arguably bourgeois and predominantly white - areas of Paris.

Setting Paris as a place where Daoud feels like an othered outsider is not surprising when read within the context of the troubled history that the city has with the way it has treated and continues to treat North-African immigrants, and more specifically Algerians. This can be traced back to the roots of French colonial oppression; for example, during the Algerian War of Independence on the 17th October 1961, tens of thousands of Algerian demonstrators marched in a peaceful protest through the centre of Paris against police repression and violence. The protestors were met with extreme violence from a heavily armed police force. Whilst the definitive number of dead is still unknown, it is estimated that a vast number of Algerians were murdered that night.¹²⁸ Not to mention the ‘extra’ Algerian deaths that occurred through a cycle of killings initiated by the French police from as early as September 1961.¹²⁹ Jim House and Neil MacMaster note that many Parisian bystanders were surprised to see the Algerian protestors marching in the centre of the city for two reasons: firstly, France was in the depths

¹²⁷ Daoud, *LPDLF*, p.9.

¹²⁸ Maria Flood, ‘Politics and the Police: Documenting the 17th October 1961 Massacre’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 20. 4-5 (2016), 599-606 (p.601) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17409292.2016.1218188>>.

¹²⁹ Jim House and Neil MacMaster, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.106-07.

of a colonial war that wanted to stamp out the Algerian fight for independence; hence, the ‘enemy’ was now visible on the streets of Paris; and secondly, during the War, the 180,000 Algerian migrants living in the Paris region in terrible conditions were largely in ghettoised zones in the industrial suburbs that were invisible to, and spatially separated from, the chic areas of the city centre.¹³⁰

Although the dynamics of segregation have changed since 1961, Daoud taps into this feeling of ostracisation that arises from entering the specific chic, white neighbourhoods of central Paris and the way that people have a similar reaction of surprise at seeing an ‘Arab’ man:¹³¹

J’y arrive avec un sac à dos, un taxi et dix minutes d’avance. C’est toute la terreur du déambulant « arabe » en Occident : que faire du temps en plus ? Marcher sans but n’est plus facile à l’époque des attentats. Déambuler c’est presque tuer, sinon menacer ou intriguer. Faire semblant est un art perdu ou difficile pour l’étranger. J’ai décidé de faire le tour du quartier. À l’ancienne. Alors j’ai marché dix minutes dans le jaune nocturne des éclairages. Un aller-retour dans la rue de Thorigny.¹³²

Daoud’s reference to the location of the *Musée Picasso* in Paris is significant because it is found in the famous *Marais* area of the 3rd *arrondissement*. *Le Marais* attracts many tourists as one of Paris’s oldest and ‘trendiest’ areas which has undergone considerable gentrification since the 1980s, and is now most famous for being known as Paris’s gay district; however, it is historically a predominantly Jewish area of the city.¹³³ Daoud alludes to the idea of spatial segregation between a predominantly white area of the city centre that is deemed fashionable, and the othered, Arab periphery where predominantly French citizens of North-African heritage often live. As Jean Beaman points out, the *banlieues* of Paris today are often associated with a population of predominantly North-African heritage. Daoud can be read as offering a critical commentary on how North Africans are often not considered culturally French, given

¹³⁰ House and Macmaster, *op. cit.*, p.1. It is worth noting that there were also many Algerians living in the 5th and 13th *arrondissements* at the time.

¹³¹ It is important to be aware of the problematic nature of using the term ‘Arab’ as it has the potential to be reductive and to oversimplify the experiences of people living in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as those of Middle Eastern or North African heritage in diaspora settings.

¹³² Daoud, *LPDLF*, pp.11-12.

¹³³ See Colin Giraud, ‘Les commerces gays et le processus de gentrification: l'exemple du quartier du Marais à Paris depuis le début des années 1980’, *Métropoles*, 5 (2009) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/metropoles.3858>>.

that they are excluded from what constitutes who a French person might be in the public consciousness.¹³⁴

Furthermore, Daoud's reference to 'attentats' is significant given that he is most likely referencing recent Islamist terrorist attacks in Europe, such as that of November 2015 in Paris. In this way, Daoud highlights his discomfort walking in this 'chic' area of Paris because he is an Arab with a rucksack. As he metaphorically and physically steps into a typically white, Western space, his racialised difference is perceived as threatening or dangerous. Daoud seems to encourage a typically white, metropolitan French readership to reflect on a feeling of being othered that they would not normally experience in Paris.

Nonetheless, it would appear that whilst Daoud elicits this idea of othering, he does so in a fairly positive light:

Je n'en veux pas à cette ville. Je ne suis pas de l'espèce gémissant qui en veut à l'Occident. Non, j'y viens en copiste du Moyen Âge, en voleur d'angles et de possibilités. [...] J'aime ces moments où je tâte du bout du pied les terrains d'autrui, les champs d'arts et de sens. Je l'ai fait depuis ma naissance au village, en Algérie, en lisant dans le périmètre muet d'une langue clandestine.¹³⁵

Daoud seems to suggest that the feeling of being othered – in the negative sense as an undesirable outsider - is to some extent a self-inflicted phenomenon. He does so by separating himself from those who are vocal in their dislike of the West (most likely, Islamists). Whilst, in reality, this homogenised group may constitute many cultural, national, and religious differences, Daoud appears to allude to the idea that anyone who takes issue with the West is childish or ungrateful. The use of the first-person singular is striking in how it reinforces the distinction between Daoud's Self and what he perceives to be the Other (the 'espèces' he does not want to be associated with); yet, that distinction seems also to be inherently linked to how he shapes his understanding of the West.

In fact, the tone of Daoud's language suggests that despite this sense of othering, the prospect of having access to a space deemed off-limits – or the Other to his Self – is exciting and intriguing; he likens this to the way he felt when reading French books as a child growing up in rural Algeria. This is reminiscent of Daoud's comments on André Gide's *Les Nourritures*

¹³⁴ Jean Beaman, *Citizen Outsider: Children of North African Immigrants in France* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), p.4.

¹³⁵ Daoud, *LPDLF*, pp.11-12.

Terrestres (1897) which he read and reread as a teenager. He states that ‘the book was a true revelation, spurring my revolt against any attempt by faith or politics to control my body [...]’, due to his experience ‘living in an isolated village with an illiterate family’ where there ‘lacked suitable instruments or mentors.’¹³⁶

Moreover, this positive assessment of a typically Western space taps into similar narratives in works by other Maghrebi writers of French expression, such as: Albert Memmi’s *Agar* (1955) and *Le Pharaon* (1988); Nabile Farès’ *Le Passager de l’Occident* (1971); Abdelkébir Khatibi’s *La mémoire tatouée* (1971); or Driss Chraïbi’s *Le passé simple* (1954) and *Lu, vu, entendu* (1998).¹³⁷ Najib Redouane highlights how these Maghrebi authors writing in French explore Paris with fascination, and to some extent with a sense of gratitude, as they position it as being open to the intellectual, artistic, and cultural world. He argues that for many Maghrebi authors of French expression, Paris is the ‘ville de l’exil, de la déchirure, de l’exclusion: capitale littéraire, lieu par excellence de la découverte et des dialogues fraternels, voire enrichissants, Paris est pour les Maghrébins un espace singulier sans égal en Europe, imposant et rempli de multiples visages.’¹³⁸ For example, in *La mémoire tatouée*, Moroccan literary critic Abdelkebir Khatibi writes about the reasons why he left for Paris. He writes, ‘à Paris sans autre histoire que celle d’un étudiant ombrageux, à la recherche d’une autre image des autres et de moi-même.’ Also, he evokes his search to ‘rencontrer l’Occident dans le voyage de l’identité et de la différence sauvage.’¹³⁹ Although writing in the early 1970s from a Moroccan perspective, what Khatibi evokes is very similar to Daoud. Paris becomes the location whereby they can face and interrogate their own identity as well as that of the West. It becomes the physical embodiment of a cultural meeting point offering infinite possibilities, albeit in the centered (quasi-)European space. In this way, Daoud appears to neither employ a narrative of disappointment with France, nor a sense of anger or bitterness (as seen with other intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon).

It would seem, therefore, that for Daoud, Paris embodies his relationship with the West more generally.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, by adhering to a narrative that presents Paris as an enlightening space, to a certain extent, Daoud appears to admire Western spaces and the Western cultural

¹³⁶ Kamel Daoud, ‘My mind and body were not my own until I read The Fruits of the Earth’, *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/20/andre-gide-fruits-earth-free-body-1970s-algeria>> [accessed 21 April 2020].

¹³⁷ Najib Redouane, ‘Regards maghrébins sur Paris’, *The French Review*, 73. 6 (2000), 1076-86 (pp.1078-79) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/399363>> [accessed 05 May 2020].

¹³⁸ Redouane, *op. cit.*, p.1085.

¹³⁹ Abdelkebir Khatibi, *La mémoire tatouée* (Paris: Denoël, 1971), p.113.

¹⁴⁰ Daoud is arguably aware of previous North-African authors writing about Paris. This is an extensive field of study which cannot be fully explored within the confines of this thesis.

codes that come with them.¹⁴¹ This arguably has consequences for Daoud's Western-orientated, French audience because it positions him as a trustworthy Other figure. Hence, he is more relatable, and his writing is more 'graspable' – better understood – in the contemporary French context. To some extent, this chimes with the perception of the non-Western writer in the European public sphere as representing the typical native informant, as defined by Spivak and touched upon in Chapter One.¹⁴² We arguably see this notion appear in how Daoud describes the *Musée Picasso* within the context of its function as a museum in Paris. On his arrival, he states '[l]a dame qui m'ouvre est soupçonneuse. Elle travaille au musée et n'a pas été informée de la clause de mon cambriolage optique des œuvres de son maître.'¹⁴³ Once again, we are reminded of Daoud's *altérité* as an Algerian 'breaking and entering' an arguably white, European space where he is met with suspicion. She represents a Western audience suspicious of the foreign other's intentions when looking at, or commenting upon, Picasso's work. As he will be spending the night alone with nobody there to contradict him, she is perhaps suspicious of whether Daoud, as an Algerian Other, will establish a positive dialogue with existing scholarship on Picasso or not.

Yet, in response, it appears that Daoud attempts to placate any Western suspicion, as well as reduce his own discomfort at being in a typically Western space, by likening the museum to a religious temple: '[l]e pire pour un génie, c'est son temple. Je veux dire son monument. En traversant la cour, je me souviens que je n'aime pas les reliques. Sous forme de pierres ou de visages, de folklore. On s'y sent invité à avoir une attitude ou une pensée précise. C'est trop proche de la prière pour que ce soit tolérable pour moi.'¹⁴⁴ He continues this religious metaphor by referring to the night he will spend in the museum as a 'nuit sacrée'. This indirect reference to Ben Jelloun's 1987 novel *La nuit sacrée* allows him to reflect upon the 'nuit sacrée' that the Prophet Muhammad experienced when he travelled from Mecca to Jerusalem

¹⁴¹ Other figures can be considered here but go beyond the scope of the thesis: the politicised North-African student using Paris as a freer political space during the anti-colonial struggle; the 1970s seeing many North-African students and activists in Paris due to the harsh repression of left-wing politics in Morocco and Tunisia especially; and the writings of Moroccan author Tahar Ben Jelloun in the 1970s. See Nina Wardleworth, 'The Roman Maghrébin in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring', *Contemporary French and Francophone studies*, 20. 1 (2016), 141-49 (p.142) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17409292.2016.1120562>>; Nina Sahraoui, 'Acquiring "voice" through "exit": how Moroccan emigrants became a driving force of political and socio-economic change', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 20. 4 (2015), 522-39 (pp.524-25) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2015.1065037>>; Neil MacMaster, 'The Algerian Café-Hotel: Hub of the Nationalist Underground, Paris 1926–1962', *French politics, culture and society*, 34. 2 (2016), 57-77 <<https://doi.org/10.3167/fpcs.2016.340204>>; MacMaster, *Colonial Migrants and Racism: Algerians in France, 1900-62* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

¹⁴² Spivak, *Can the subaltern speak?*, p.79.

¹⁴³ Daoud, *LPDLF*, p.13.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

in a single night, and from where he ascended into heaven: ‘Je m’imagine au ciel de Picasso, mais à Paris seulement. Peut-être le premier ou le second ciel, croisant ce peintre au regard hautain parmi les constellations qu’il agace avec ses orteils de bronzeur, ses artefacts et érections.’¹⁴⁵

As Daoud appears to move back and forth between Islamic scripture and his discomfort at being inside the museum, the *Musée Picasso* becomes a place of (erotic) worship for Daoud. This would suggest that Daoud sees the act of displaying art as transgressive to his cultural norms: ‘À l’hôtel Salé, j’ai l’impression tenace d’être dans une église.’¹⁴⁶ Yet, it would also seem to suggest that he sees art in Western cultures as to some extent occupying an unquestionable space in cultural collective thought, as religion might do in typically Muslim countries. Highlighting the potential similarities between dogmatic religion and the displaying of art in a museum, Daoud seems to suggest that an art museum in the West might hold a similar function to a Mosque in a country like Algeria.

Nonetheless, conflating generalised Western and Muslim cultural and religious practices also suggests that Daoud sees himself as operating within these multiple subjectivities, whilst simultaneously being outside of them. This alludes to the established binaries that often describe the Franco-Algerian encounter: Occident – Orient; Islam – Christianity; France – Algeria; Self – Other. Yet, it can be argued that by melding notions of Islamic religiosity to the art displayed in the *Musée Picasso*, Daoud attempts to make his experience with religion more relatable to a Western-orientated, French audience.

A singular national narrative: personal memory and multiple *histoires* within the context of the museum

The discussion around the significance of the *Musée Picasso* inevitably leads to debates about what the museum represents in Western and Muslim societies. In a chapter entitled ‘Le musée est le contraire de la tombe’, Daoud describes how he experiences the difference between the concept of the museum in the West versus that in his *culture d’origine* every time he goes ‘en voyage en Occident’ and returns home ‘au sud immédiat de la Méditerranée.’¹⁴⁷ He maintains that the museum is:

¹⁴⁵ Daoud, *op. cit.*, p.14.

¹⁴⁶ Daoud, *op. cit.*, p.105.

¹⁴⁷ Daoud, *op. cit.*, p.112.

une invention occidentale, pas orientale. C'est un peu le contraire du conte, du récit. [...] Les cultures messianiques ont les musées des présages, pas des traces, ceux des signes annonciateurs de la fin du monde, pas le souci de ses commencements multiples. [...] Dans ma géographie, ces lieux font émerger ce qu'il ne faut pas : la possibilité d'un temps avant la révélation. ¹⁴⁸

Daoud appears to make a distinction between written, 'established' histories in the Orient rooted in dogmatic religion, and transgressive histories that the museum in the Occident allows. Whilst the way that Daoud homogenises North-African populations under the umbrella of 'cultures messianiques' is problematic, Daoud seems to be referring to his personal Algerian experience more specifically to question the legitimacy of the histories presented in post-1962 Algeria:

Le rapport au réel et à la mémoire est conditionné par une fiction collective, un récit qui n'admettra jamais ces brèches qui vont constituer les « collections » et les arts ou traces anciennes dans ce monologue sur soi. Souvenirs des musées à Oran ou ailleurs, tristes, transformés en hangars avec des vitrines poussiéreuses, reclus en arrière-plan du récit fantasmé sur soi. Le musée a été pris en otage par la légende hagiographique des décolonisations et les fictions identitaires, il le sera encore plus avec le triomphe des religieux. ¹⁴⁹

By using personal memory, Daoud suggests that the Western understanding of a museum is history in Algeria. There is an element of nostalgia, not for the art galleries of the colonial period in Algeria; rather, for a past that has been erased by what Daoud sees as the failings of decolonisation and the creation of a fictitious collective Algerian identity.¹⁵⁰ Daoud uses violent language to convey the idea that multiple claims to histories in Algeria have been hijacked - or taken hostage - by nationalist and religious discourses post-Independence. Although Islam is not directly named, Daoud implies that the museum will be even more restricted when the *religieux* win.

¹⁴⁸ Daoud, *op. cit.*, pp.114-15.

¹⁴⁹ Daoud, *op. cit.*, p.113.

¹⁵⁰ However, it is important to note that today there are physical and symbolic spaces of contemporary art in Algeria, even if formal exhibitions of such work can be difficult because of direct or indirect censorship.

Indeed, Daoud joins several intellectuals from within and outside academia who address post-Independence Algeria in similar ways. Corbin Treacy argues that Boualem Sansal's dystopian novel *2084: la fin du monde* (2015) joins Michel Houellebecq's *Soumission* (2015) in a 'second, emerging genre, what we might dub the "Muslims are coming!" narrative, or perhaps more generously, the "Islamist alarm novel."' ¹⁵¹ He highlights how both texts rely on nostalgia (Gaullist France for Houellebecq, and the 'cosmopolitan secularism' of Boumediène's Algeria from 1965-1978 for Sansal) to evoke alarm and imply that any future Islamist victory could have been avoided. Treacy maintains that the alarm narrative in the two novels 'functions as the terminal data point for a line that leads from one of these past utopias, through the present, and to its gloomy destination in the future.' ¹⁵² Although Houellebecq's and Sansal's novels are fictitious and written from different perspectives, it seems that in some ways Daoud does the same; he is nostalgic for an Algerian past that had not yet been taken over by Islamist and nationalist rhetoric. This leads Daoud to a gloomy prediction of Algeria's future, given that increased Islamism will only exacerbate existing problems.

Daoud uses an autobiographical anecdote of a school trip to a museum in Oran to take this notion further:

Nous en sommes sortis déstabilisés un moment, avant de replonger dans le confort du récit national de cette époque. J'en garde, depuis, le souvenir d'un murmure dans le dos des histoires, un sentier qui contournait les versions des manuels scolaires, [...]. [...] Les traces romaines de Tipaza ne font pas partie de ce patrimoine de stèles de martyrs de la guerre d'indépendance et de mosquées que le régime nourrit de discours et d'applaudissements. [...] Le musée est pharaonique, assyrien, berbère, il est la persistance de ce que l'on a voulu effacer pour se proclamer comme ancêtre ou immortel, c'est le contraire d'un livre sacré et d'une révolution armée. ¹⁵³

Daoud suggests that, as a child, he experienced first-hand the conflict between the Algerian state's national narrative and a temptation to challenge it based on the plurality of Algerian history. Daoud evokes a 'whispering' call to dissidence which is juxtaposed against the version of the past dictated in schoolbooks. Indeed, it would appear that Daoud questions the legitimacy

¹⁵¹ Treacy, Corbin, '2084: la fin du monde', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 21. 3 (2016), 512-14 (p.512) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2016.1161265>>.

¹⁵² Treacy, *op. cit.*, p.514.

¹⁵³ Daoud, *LPDLF*, pp.116-18.

of written post-Independence history in what constitutes historical ‘truth’, and asks to what extent can state-led, written history be more truthful than claims to alternative histories existing orally or through memory. His reference to Tipaza is significant in the way that it echoes Albert Camus’s lyrical *essai* ‘Noces à Tipasa’ in *Noces* (1958).¹⁵⁴ Camus writes ‘Vivre Tipasa, témoigner et l’œuvre d’art viendra ensuite. Il y a là une liberté.’¹⁵⁵ Daoud appears to reflect this idea of personal liberation through experiencing history in its multiple forms. Daoud’s reference to historical sites in Algeria, and their respective periods of history, serves to reinforce the idea that there is more to Algeria than nationalist and Islamist rhetoric born – albeit despite itself – from French colonial rule. As we see Daoud referencing these historical sites in real-time, he seems to translate oral claims to history into written word. This is symbolic because it appears to remind the reader that they should not necessarily accept his narrative as the single, known ‘truth’ either. In this way, Daoud suggests that there cannot be a common identifiable Algerian history, and it is his personal memory that gives these histories their legitimacy.

As we have seen, Daoud enunciates his personal memory in an attempt to legitimise alternative Algerian histories forgotten within the restrictive framework of contemporary government-run museums in Algeria. He consolidates this reflection when he explains what the museum represents ‘chez les monothéistes’:¹⁵⁶

Le musée y est lieu de reliques, cheveux de Prophète, suaire de Jésus, première copie d’un livre sacré, etc. Il est la consolidation du récit originel. Dans le froid de l’hôtel Salé où Picasso a son musée à Paris, je lève la tête de mon écran, je palpe la pierre si insensible, je tourne la tête vers la statuette du hall d’entrée, ce coq saisi dans sa promenade, je remonte du regard les escaliers du centre, et je reviens vers mon inconfort.¹⁵⁷

Whilst Daoud appears to reference other religions such as Christianity, the repetition of ‘je’ suggests that Daoud conflates all monotheisms with his experience of Algerian Islam. In this

¹⁵⁴ Although we cannot be certain, some of Daoud’s readers would be able to make this link to Camus, especially if they are aware of *Meursault, contre-enquête* and pieces in his journalism that have spoken about Camus’s position in contemporary Algeria. See Kamel Daoud, ‘Rapatrier un jour les cendres de Camus ?’, *La Cause Littéraire* <<https://www.lacauselitteraire.fr/rapatrier-un-jour-les-cendres-de-camus>> [accessed 04 November 2019].

¹⁵⁵ Albert Camus, ‘Noces à Tipasa’, in *Œuvres* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2013), pp.141-46 (p. 145).

¹⁵⁶ Daoud, *LPDLF*, p.119.

¹⁵⁷ Daoud, *op. cit.*, pp.119-20.

context, he sees the museum (in Algeria) as attempting to offer physical proof of what is written in sacred texts. Hence, Daoud seems to confront his discomfort at being in a museum that celebrates a non-religious figure like Picasso. The sense of discomfort reaches its climax when Daoud views the rooster. The Gallic rooster is a well-known unofficial national symbol of France. Daoud's discomfort at being confronted with a visual reminder of the apparent Frenchness of the *Musée Picasso* is significant because it immediately throws him back into reflecting upon his childhood:

[...] aucun musée n'émerge dans mon souvenir d'enfant pour pouvoir comparer [au Musée Picasso]. En Algérie, le récit de l'histoire nationale commence par l'invasion française et par le récit de la guerre de Libération au milieu du siècle dernier. Plus haut que cette date, c'est Dieu qui s'en chargeait, avec l'histoire de son Livre et de ses révélations dans la presqu'île arabe du Hedjaz. Les racines amazigh ne sont pas reconnues pleinement, l'arabité est présentée comme une origine sacrée, totale et incontestable.¹⁵⁸

This suggests that, for Daoud, his confrontation with memories of museums in Algeria becomes most palpable, and violent, when faced with visual signifiers that contradict his own cultural codes. In this way, it would seem that Daoud enunciates the conflict between personal memory and reality in an attempt to offer multiple understandings of history that speak to present-day Algeria.

When applying Daoud's relativist rejection of singular, identifiable 'truths' to the reality of the FLN governments post-Independence, Daoud's critique, to some extent mirrors the post-1962 reality in Algeria. Emmanuel Alcaraz investigates how official versions of the past have been publicly memorialised in Algeria since 1962. He specifically looks at the *Musée national du moudjahid* in Algiers and how national memory has been fabricated and monopolised by *le pouvoir*. He argues that the museum embodies an 'islamo-populisme' that presents the Algerian people as a homogenous Arabo-Muslim population unanimous in the fight against colonialism because pluralism is seen as a symptom of division.¹⁵⁹ For example, he shows how the internal fighting between Algerians during the War of Independence is ignored, as neither the role of the *harkis* nor the fight between the FLN and the Messalists are

¹⁵⁸ Daoud, *op. cit.*, p.120. Daoud's point is debatable about the 1830 start of official history. See McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, pp.9-48.

¹⁵⁹ Emmanuel Alcaraz, *La mise en scène de la mémoire nationale*, p.34.

mentioned. Instead, the Algerian people in 1962 are presented as the ‘seul héro’ of the Independence victory.¹⁶⁰ He also suggests that ‘[l]es collections du Musée national du moudjahid sont en réalité un plaidoyer adressé au gouvernement français afin qu’il demande pardon au peuple algérien, et ceci en prenant à témoin les officiels étrangers en visite en Algérie.’¹⁶¹ This monopolisation of public memory, he argues, leaves no space for competing claims to memorialising the War of Independence. He uses the example of the museum’s sister establishment in Ifri Ouzellaguen in Kabylie, where every year opposition to the *pouvoir algérien* - most often closely associated with the Berber cultural movement – meet and participate in dissident commemorations that counter the government’s islamo-populist narrative.¹⁶²

In broader terms, Bhabha explores how local memory exposes the limitations and ‘structural blindness’ of linear, dominant national narratives (as well as challenging European colonial history). He attempts to formulate ‘the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of “the people”, “the nation” and make them the immanent subjects of a range of social and literary narrative.’¹⁶³ He demonstrates that ‘cultural movements disperse the homogenous, visual time of the horizontal society.’¹⁶⁴ He argues that local memory acts as a counter-discourse, displacing the national, existing narrative in a way that the national narrative can never really keep pace with, as it offers so many interpretations of a singular history. Peter Hallward offers an insightful analysis of Bhabha’s theory: although less focused on the notion of a national narrative, he argues that Bhabha’s work attempts to move from the pedagogical aspects of fixed, exclusive, discriminatory cultural identifications to the enunciative or performative characteristic of identity articulation.¹⁶⁵ Bhabha, therefore, situates enunciation as the expression of culture, and it is through the enunciative process that cultural difference is uncovered and recognised.¹⁶⁶ Hallward points out that Bhabha is often criticised for supposedly ‘imposing an “idealist reduction of the social to the semiotic” and of exaggerating the heuristic value of the “language metaphor”.’¹⁶⁷ He argues that Bhabha ‘equates Creative agency with the precise moment of

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Alcaraz, *op. cit.*, p.45.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.201.

¹⁶⁴ Bhabha, *op. cit.*, p.202.

¹⁶⁵ Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp.24-25.

¹⁶⁶ Any ‘difference’ will exist in relation to an established norm (and vice versa).

¹⁶⁷ Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial*, p.25.

this different enunciation as such, the moment “behind” or productive of language itself.’¹⁶⁸ In terms of the islamo-populist narrative in Algeria, the language metaphor of enunciation reveals how preconceived ideas about cultural understanding can be denied, or reinterpreted, through the utterance of new cultural meanings.

Indeed, Daoud’s performance of personal memory chimes with Alcaraz’s exploration of the monopolisation of public memory in the *Musée national du moudjahid*, and Bhabha’s theory. Both understandings represent how multiple, local memories interact at their own level of importance, exposing the limitations of the singular national narrative in post-Independence Algeria. In this way, *LPDLF* can be read as an invitation to consider other interpretations of the singular history that provide counter-discourses to the existing narrative in Algeria.¹⁶⁹ In other words, a culturally diverse society like Algeria cannot be prescribed to one ‘Histoire’; there are multiple ‘histoires’.¹⁷⁰ Daoud can be read as attempting - like other Algerian authors of French expression - ‘to argue in favour of reappropriating a synthetic history of the Algerian land, based on an all-inclusive history of the territory, rather than a necessarily exclusive history of one segment of its people.’¹⁷¹ It would seem that Daoud’s work represents the liminal performativity of *Histoire* and *histoires* in the contemporary Algerian context, as competing concepts of the Algerian nation cross over one another dialectically.

However, Daoud also offers a short challenge to Eurocentric *Histoire* in the final paragraph of ‘Le musée est le contraire du tombeau’:

Mais je m'avoue aussi une évidence : le musée est également le lieu qui fait émerger cette étrange altérité à la fois dévorée, cannibalisée et assimilée par l'Occident. C'est le

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ There have been some improvements in acknowledging pluralism in Algeria since Daoud’s childhood in the 1970s, for example, with state recognition of the Tamazigh language in 2002. See McDougall, p.327.

¹⁷⁰ See Édouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1981), p.132. Glissant distinguishes ‘Histoire’ from ‘histoires’ to emphasise the disconnection between official, Eurocentric narratives and local memory, which produces various versions of events. Through the double meaning of ‘histoire’ as history and story, he is reinforcing the importance of various ‘histoires’ to create variety and diversity against the singular ‘Histoire’. Although this theory relates to local memory within the Caribbean and specifically relates to the colonial telling of history, it can be applied to the postcolonial state in Algeria. Glissant also later develops the notion of ‘partage’ which seems to fit with this ‘all inclusive’ notion. He suggests that the world today is made up of uncertain, unpredictable, violent cultural encounters which never cease. In this way, there is a ‘shared’ cultural experience given that everything is interconnected; even smaller seemingly ‘unimportant’ events will impact upon larger, more ‘important’ events elsewhere. See J. Michael Dash, *Edouard Glissant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.175-82.

¹⁷¹ Margaret A. Majumdar, ‘Language and History in Franco-Algerian Relations’, in *Francophone Studies: Discourse and Identity*, ed. by Kamal Salhi (Exeter: Elm Bank 2000), pp.105-20 (p. 120).

temps vaincu, la civilisation vaincue, l'image qui apprivoise le sombre et l'intime, la distance (entre soi et les autres) abolie, l'origine alternative vaincue et domestiquée.¹⁷²

It would seem that Daoud criticises (neo-)imperial, (neo-)colonial thought that continues to support Western understandings of the museum. This is reminiscent of contemporary French debates about the opening of the *Musée du Quai Branly* in Paris in 2006 which displays 'indigenous' art of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas. Julia Khrebtan-Hörhager argues that the 'museum's materiality and visuality provide us with only partial and mono-cultural information about the totality of French colonization, and its out-comes for today's political and cultural relations.'¹⁷³ She maintains that the way the Other is remembered and represented is symptomatic of a French 'cultural monologue' that is founded on the creation of ethnocentric discourses in the colonial era. Hence, France can continue editing and retelling the imperialistic narrative that positions 'French culture' as superior to the 'dark, primitive Others'.¹⁷⁴

Whilst Daoud alludes to similar ideas that criticise Eurocentric narratives fostered within museums in the West, he devotes comparatively much less space to this issue than he does to the national *Histoire* in Algeria. This is perhaps for rhetorical reasons and given Daoud's 'Algerianness', it might seem natural for him to explore questions relating to Algerian identity specifically. We can also understand this as symptomatic of his hybridised positionality in the Franco-Algerian discursive space whereby he may see it as necessary to offer some form of counterbalance to his assertions. Yet, it also suggests that perhaps Daoud does not view Western conceptions of the museum to be as dangerous as those in Algeria. This becomes symbolic when we remember that Daoud addresses a particular bourgeois French readership (as discussed in Chapter One), from inside the *Musée Picasso* in Paris. Indeed, as Daoud does not seem to engage with criticisms of the museum in the Western context, he might be viewed as idealising Western conceptions of the museum. Arguably, when confronted with Daoud's representations of the museum, a Western-orientated, French audience would not have to critically confront their relationship to nationalised memory in quite the same way that Daoud ask a North-African, Algerian reader to do so. Yet, as previously mentioned, there is much to confront in terms of nationalised history within French museums like the *Quai Branly*. Scholars such as Sally Price and Herman Lebovics unpick the limited space for a successful

¹⁷² Daoud, *LPDLF*, pp.119-20.

¹⁷³ Julia Khrebtan-Hörhager, 'Musée du Quai Branly: The Heart of Darkness in la Cité de la Lumière', *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 11. 2 (2018), 315-40 (p.338) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcy006>>.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

(postcolonial) cultural dialogue around difference in the museum which, in turn, maintains a visual representation of France's (neo-)colonial paternalistic relationship towards its former colonies.¹⁷⁵

To conclude this chapter, it would seem that Daoud performs Picasso, Paris, and the Western museum, with an element of admiration. Daoud does not decentre, or 'provincialize' Europe from how he explores these themes; rather, he seems to adhere to a narrative that suggests progression and transgression are inherent to traditional Western cultural codes (often understood in terms of free enquiry and creative expression in art). Moreover, it would seem that Daoud presents this notion in diametric opposition to the irrationality of (Algerian) islamo-populist thought.¹⁷⁶ It is with this idea that Daoud appears to read Picasso, Paris and the museum in the West through a lens of transgression. This notion of transgression is diametrically opposed to Daoud's experiences of memory, history, and art as a child in Algeria. Daoud can be seen to use the Western museum as a vehicle to negotiate the absurdity of nationalist and Islamist rhetoric since Independence. As we have seen, it is significant that an Algerian man enters a Western space, both physically, and in terms of 'stepping inside' the art it produces. Daoud's metaphysical step towards Western cultural reference points (as a means by which to comment upon his own Algerian ones) suggests that he occasionally risks presenting an Algeria – and by extension, a France – that a Western-orientated, bourgeois, French readership would already recognise. In other words, it appears that Daoud's discussions about Picasso, Paris, and the museum do not allow for a critical interrogation of Western relationships to art and memory in the French context. It might be argued that as Daoud attempts to occupy multiple positionalities at once, he neglects the fact that such assertions may be problematic for other contemporary audiences. For example, how Picasso's representations of the female, (and non-European) form could be problematic if we look at more feminist-inspired readings of Picasso's work; the generalisation of North-African populations; or, that locating the text in France (and in Picasso) will inevitably make it more relatable to a Western-orientated French audience. This idea of imbalance will be explored

¹⁷⁵ See Sally Price, 'Return to the Quai Branly', *Museum Anthropology*, 33. 1 (2010), 11-21 (pp.13-14) <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1379.2010.01071.x>> and Herman Lebovics, 'The Musée du Quai Branly: Art? Artifact? Spectacle!', *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 24. 3 (2006), 96-110 (pp.100-01) <<https://doi.org/10.3167/153763706780586783>>. They attribute this to various factors such as the museum's architectural design, how it presents cultural objects as commodified spectacles for tourists, and the fact that the history of the objects on display can only be traced in the West.

¹⁷⁶ See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

further in the following chapter by focusing on how Daoud explores representations of the female form in Western and North-African discourses within the context of Islamism.

Chapter 3 – Comparing how LPDLF presents sexuality and the gendered body in the West compared to Muslim North Africa

This chapter follows on from previous discussions about Daoud's performance of Picasso to explore how Daoud presents the figure of Marie-Thérèse. Although Daoud appears to offer a progressive reading of Picasso, we argue that this reading fails to engage with more feminist-inspired critiques of Picasso's erotic work, and we explore the implications this has for contemporary audiences. This chapter also looks at how Daoud uses the imagined character Abdellah, to explore issues pertaining to Muslim masculinity. However, we suggest that by doing so, Daoud sometimes plays into certain Western - more specifically French - stereotypes about the Muslim man living in Europe. In turn, it appears that Daoud falls short in giving a more nuanced critique of toxic masculinities promoted under certain interpretations of Islam that go beyond essentialising them as inherently *Islamic*. Moreover, this chapter examines how Daoud reimagines Marie-Thérèse as Marie-Houri (a *houri* being the virgin companion of the faithful in the Muslim paradise) and places her in diametric opposition to Abdellah. This section explores how Daoud appears to idealise the West, occasionally oversimplifying its relationship to gender and sexuality by suggesting it embodies female liberty. Finally, this chapter addresses the lack of female voices in the *essai* and explores the potential limitations of directing the only female Muslim voice through Marie-Thérèse.

'Ways of Seeing': Daoud reading Picasso reading Marie -Thérèse

As discussed in the previous chapter, it appears that Daoud positions Picasso as transgressive within the aesthetics of 20th-Century Western art. However, this understanding of Picasso is arguably problematic; it relies on a dated, heteronormative, and phallogentric understanding of human sexuality and gender. In the text, Daoud only mentions Marie-Thérèse Walter by name – mostly just her first name – a handful of times. In comparison, Daoud refers to Picasso regularly by his last name only, for example:

Marie-Thérèse se tord car elle est mordue, prise par un homme, se laisse faire et se laisse manger, c'est une chair dans un palais de bouche. Peinte sous la forme d'une

pieuvre, une sorte de méduse dans certaines toiles, elle n'est pas monstrueuse mais elle est le reflet de ce désir monstrueux que Picasso semble avoir de la jeune femme.¹⁷⁷

As Siri Hustvedt notes, in the literature on erotic Picasso, 'the art historians and biographers have appropriated the artist's intimacy [...] with the women he depicts. Hence, there is a tendency to refer to them by their first names; whereas, Picasso is rarely, if ever, referred to as Pablo, infantilising the women.'¹⁷⁸ It appears that Daoud falls into a similar pattern in the act of naming Marie-Thérèse.

It would also appear that this notion extends to how Daoud replicates the distinction between an active male instigator and a passive female subject. As discussed in the previous chapter, Daoud returns to the idea that Marie-Thérèse represents a monster being hunted by Picasso. However, the reference to jellyfish, in particular, is significant given that it might be read as a play on the mythical Gorgon, Medusa (the word is the same in French). It would seem that Daoud uses mythological imagery in a way that romanticises the affair between Picasso and Marie-Thérèse in 1932. The language Daoud employs appears to further this notion:

Là, dans le cycle de 1932, l'année de la rencontre du peintre et de la jeune fille à Paris, feuilleton de la clandestinité, de l'obsession et du sexe torride et des toiles qui le racontent comme un journal – parce que désiré et anéanti –, le corps ne s'offre pas dans le repos de ses formes, mais dans l'instantanéité immersive de tous les sens mobilisés.¹⁷⁹

Daoud suggests that Picasso's erotic work is a passionate saga being presented to him in real-time. This temporal shift that locates the past in the present can be read as a way of mimicking the sense of urgent physical desire that Daoud sees underpinning Picasso's representations of Marie-Thérèse. But, as we can see, Marie-Thérèse is now just referred to as 'la jeune fille'. This development in how Daoud names Marie-Thérèse is significant because he seems to directly address this shift. He writes, 'Le prénom recule dans la mémoire, car dans la rencontre érotique on n'a plus de noms et de prénoms, juste cet ancien partage provisoire entre le « toi », le « moi ».'¹⁸⁰ It would appear that Daoud seems to justify his lack of naming Marie-Thérèse

¹⁷⁷ Daoud, *LPDLF*, p.69.

¹⁷⁸ Siri Hustvedt, *A Woman Looking at Men Looking at Women: Essays on Art, Sex, and the Mind* (London: Sceptre, 2017), p.9.

¹⁷⁹ Daoud, *LPDLF*, pp.70-71.

¹⁸⁰ Daoud, *op. cit.*, p.75.

by suggesting that the carnal, animal nature of (hetero)sexuality places both actors – male and female – as sharing an equal power dynamic. In addition, this leads into the idea that the sexual act erodes the frontiers of individual subjectivity.



Figure 4 - Picasso, *Femme au fauteuil rouge*, 1932

In Daoud's discussion of *Femme assise dans un fauteuil rouge* (figure 4), he appears to further romanticise this lack of naming:

Cette femme se dégrade ? Non. Elle se purifie, reflue vers sa forme convexe, s'arrondit, redevient sphères antiques et s'affiche comme un improbable équilibre de pierres. Il suffit qu'elle fasse un mouvement, des paupières ou des hanches, pour que tout se recompose.¹⁸¹

Daoud's use of 'femme' is most likely referring to Marie-Thérèse. Yet, the ambiguity of the term might also suggest that Daoud references a more generalised feminine experience in the West. Daoud argues that whilst the woman in the painting is the conception of an idea, this does not reduce her to anything less than her full form. Daoud suggests that the convex, rounding shapes that Picasso attributes to her allude to the idea that she constantly moves to rebalance the forces acting against her. Although she is subject to the will of multiple forces – desire, nature, and chance – she ultimately has the power to influence her own creation. In this way, there are two actors: Picasso and Marie-Thérèse. A closer reading of this passage, then,

¹⁸¹ Daoud, *op. cit.*, p.82. For the image, see Picasso, 'Picasso 1932', *Musée Picasso* <<https://www.museepicassoparis.fr/en/picasso-1932>> [accessed 01 October 2019].

might suggest that Daoud takes Picasso's deconstructed female form as a metaphor to argue that Marie-Thérèse, or the Western woman, is not devalued when represented as the conception of a male artist's idea; rather, it gives her the agency to influence the artistic and erotic encounter.

However, Laura Mulvey argues that under the patriarchy, a woman represents the 'signifier' for the male other, 'bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.'¹⁸² She maintains that the

pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, [...] she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire.¹⁸³

Although Mulvey's argument is specific to cinema, she highlights how women represented in visual art can personify the erotic object for both the creator of the piece and its spectator. In this way, women can be seen as performing the male gaze of both creator and spectator simultaneously. To bring this notion back to painting the nude, Berger argues that within the context of the male gaze 'the nude is condemned to never being naked. Nudity is a form of dress.'¹⁸⁴ He suggests, then, that a woman's presence in a painting dictates what is and is not 'allowed' within that presence.¹⁸⁵ In other words, she is not in control of her nudity as the subject (herself) is always aware of being seen by the (male) spectator; if she were 'naked', then she would be free from the patriarchal conventions of Western society. Furthermore, he develops this assertion by highlighting the difference in how women have been depicted in comparison to men historically in Western art. This is not because the feminine represents

¹⁸² Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16. 3 (1975), 6-18 (p.7) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6>>.

¹⁸³ Mulvey, *op. cit.*, p.11. Italics in original.

¹⁸⁴ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p.54.

¹⁸⁵ Berger, *op. cit.*, p.47.

something different from the masculine; rather, ‘the “ideal” spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him.’¹⁸⁶

Yet, Berger also argues that there have been a hundred or so exceptions to the tradition of the female nude in European art that can be found in depictions of ‘loved’ women:

In each case the painter’s personal vision of the particular woman he is painting is so strong that it makes no allowance for the spectator. [...] The spectator can witness their relationship – but he can do no more; he is forced to recognise himself as the outsider he is. He cannot deceive himself into believing that she is naked for him. He cannot turn her into a nude.¹⁸⁷

Lynda Nead alludes to the limitations of such assertions, arguing that Berger’s evocation assumes that there is by default a natural and good relationship between the male artist and the female model. In seeing a private relationship as operating outside the realms of power structures, Berger suggests that power can only be constituted as public.¹⁸⁸ But, we know this cannot always be true, especially given the historical context to certain artistic relationships. Indeed, Griselda Pollock highlights that encounters depicted in works like Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1911) (figure 2, p.37) are between men who have the social and economic power to occupy urban spaces at their pleasure and women who work in the same spaces selling their bodies to them (sexually and artistically).¹⁸⁹ There is, consequently, an unequal gendered power dynamic represented in depictions of women by contemporary male artists. Pollock argues that many of the canonical works revered as the foundation stones for modern art (like Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger*) often deal with sexuality through the lens of commercial exchange. This tendency normalises seeing ‘paintings of women’s bodies as the territory across which men artists claim their modernity and compete for leadership of the avant-garde [...]’. Inversely, then, we do not expect to unearth paintings by women that deal with their sexuality in depictions of the male nude. Pollock attributes this to the historical asymmetry separating a woman’s experience from a man’s in Europe in the late 19th Century.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Berger, *op. cit.*, p.64.

¹⁸⁷ Berger, *op. cit.*, p.57.

¹⁸⁸ Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), p.15.

¹⁸⁹ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.75.

¹⁹⁰ Pollock, *op. cit.*, p.76.

Similarly, Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat maintains that in Picasso's later work, he continued to reproduce gender-specific power relations of sexuality and remained largely attached to gender stereotypes, despite doing so in an ambiguous way that opened up such questions to potential reflection.¹⁹¹ She argues that whilst masculinity is not depicted (as the dominant norm it does not need to be made explicit), the masculine, heteronormative gaze exists as a construct in such paintings precisely because the male body and desire are invisible in the sexual act.¹⁹² She thus views these discourses on gender difference as presenting

masculinity - including and especially in the sexual act - in terms of the spiritual, whereas femininity is considered as representative of the material world and the body. The problem is not misogyny, but asymmetry. This asymmetry corresponds, however, to the hierarchical gender structures in our society, in which the body and sexuality are related to femaleness, whereas the mind and reason belong to the realm of masculinity.¹⁹³

Furthermore, Picasso's desire to cut ties with contemporary European art encouraged him to look to representations of the non-European (particularly, the African female) body in colonial photographic practices that were in high circulation in France at the time. Through the lens of anthropometric-style African colonial photography, Janie Cohen suggests that the radical nature of Picasso's work following *Demoiselles* can in many ways be attributed to the unequal power dynamic of the voyeur white European male colonial gaze on subjugated, colonised female bodies.¹⁹⁴ These feminist-inspired readings of Picasso show the asymmetrical balance of power; firstly, between Picasso and Marie-Thérèse (the European female body); and

¹⁹¹ Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, 'Art, Sexuality, and Gender Constructions in Western Culture', *Art in Translation*, 4. 3 (2012), 361-82 (p.367) <<https://doi.org/10.2752/175613112X13376070683397>>. This 'ambiguity' comes from the diverse configurations of the body and representations of sexuality in Picasso's work.

¹⁹² Hammer-Tugendhat, *op. cit.*, p.371.

¹⁹³ Hammer-Tugendhat, *op. cit.*, p.372.

¹⁹⁴ Janie Cohen, 'Staring Back: Anthropometric-Style African Colonial Photography and Picasso's *Demoiselles*', *Photography and Culture*, 8. 1 (2015), 59-80 (p.72) <<https://doi.org/10.2752/175145215X14244337011162>>. To explore Picasso's relationship to the colonialist world further, see Patricia Leighton, 'Colonialism, *L'art nègre*, and *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*', in *Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, ed. by Christopher Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 77-103.

secondly, between Picasso and the colonialist inspirations and stereotypes that allowed for his break from 19th-Century European art (Picasso vs the non-European Other).¹⁹⁵

In this way, the absence of named female voices in Daoud's romanticised encounter then becomes critical.¹⁹⁶ It would seem that Daoud understands erotic Picasso in the way that Berger might see one of the 'exceptions' to how the female nude has been represented in European art. In other words, Daoud suggests that the *année érotique* documents the raw passion and clandestine love in the pair's *relationship*, rather than interrogating Marie-Thérèse's actual (limited) agency. It appears that Daoud's discourse is left blind to the implications of the two-fold male gaze that is placed upon Marie-Thérèse. Also, it does not seem to deal with the asymmetrical power dynamic that allowed Picasso to produce the works. This reading falls in line with official documentation surrounding the exhibition which failed to address Picasso's problematic representations of women.¹⁹⁷ For example, Daoud (and the exhibition) offers little insight into the fact that Marie-Thérèse was just 17 when she supposedly met the already well-known Picasso, who was 45 at the time.¹⁹⁸

In terms of Daoud's engagement with work on Picasso, in 2018, *El Watan* published an article about an evening with Daoud organised by *l'Institut Français d'Oran*:

Au petit matin, à sa sortie du musée, il a expliqué qu'il tergiversait en se demandant s'il allait se contenter d'écrire ce qu'il avait réellement ressenti, ou s'il allait habiller ses impressions par toutes sortes de lectures qu'il fera par la suite ayant trait aux œuvres de Picasso : « Finalement, j'ai tranché : je me suis dit, je vais écrire le premier jet, puis ensuite, je lirai sur Picasso pour savoir si cela se recoupe ou pas ! »¹⁹⁹

It would appear that although Daoud engages with some academic work on Picasso without necessarily referring to such work directly (as discussed in Chapter Two), he arguably does not

¹⁹⁵ For further reading on the fetishisation of 'l'art nègre' amongst Paris's avant-garde of the early 20th Century, see Petrine Archer Straw, *Negrophilia: avant-garde Paris and Black culture in the 1920s* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

¹⁹⁶ This is reminiscent of the anonymous colonised we see depicted in European writing of the time (and after). For example, the unnamed Arab killed by Meursault in Camus's *L'Étranger* (1942).

¹⁹⁷ The exhibition also ran in partnership with the Tate Modern in London, for curatorial notes see Tate Modern, 'Exhibition guide: Picasso 1932', *Tate Modern*, <<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/eye-exhibition-picasso-1932-love-fame-tragedy/exhibition-guide>> [accessed 29 January 2021].

¹⁹⁸ John Richardson, 'Picasso's erotic code', *Vanity Fair* <<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2011/05/picasso-mistress-201105>> [accessed 10 October 2020].

¹⁹⁹ Akram El Kebir, 'Soirée organisée par l'institut français d'Oran : Kamel Daoud rencontre son public', *El Watan* <<https://www.elwatan.com/edition/culture/soiree-organisee-par-linstitut-francais-doran-kamel-daoud-rencontre-son-public-01-12-2018>> [accessed 01 August 2020].

engage with more contemporary feminist-inspired readings of the artist. By not engaging with this body of work - that allows for a more nuanced framing of Picasso's work in terms of its historic, asymmetrical gender and colonial location - it seems that Daoud fails to establish the grounds for a more nuanced performance of erotic Picasso that might critique sexism, misogyny, and patriarchy in the West *and* North Africa.

Representing a homogenous Muslim masculinity: 'Abdellah' and his sexual *malaise*

Questions about the absence of named female voices in the text can be further interrogated when exploring the fictional character, Abdellah the jihadi (Daoud makes it clear that Abdellah is a jihadi by referring to him as 'un esclave de Dieu' carrying out 'une guerre sainte').²⁰⁰ In the chapter 'Je vais t'appeler Abdellah', Daoud begins by reflecting on one of his long-time muses, Robinson Crusoe:

De tous les mythes de commencement, j'aime celui de la robinsonnade, mais dans sa version théologique, celle réécrite à la fin du XII^e siècle par Ibn Sina, Avicenne, et Ibn Tufayl, entre autres. On y décrit le monde nu, simultanément du corps nu d'un nouveau-né, dans la tradition morte des récits mystiques. Le personnage arrive au monde dans un île désert et se charge de prouver que la foi est innée et que la religion, au-delà du rite et des dogmes, est une nature, un élan profond et naturel de l'homme. L'homme y a vocation insulaire de philosophe autodidacte.²⁰¹

Daoud places the Robinsonade literary genre within the context of Islamic Golden Age philosophical thought. Daoud suggests that the castaway narrative can be taken as a metaphor for a version of the creation story. He paints the scene of the birth of man: a naked (presumably male) character appears on a desert island, alone without a mother or a father. With nothing but a naked world to contend with and ultimately no *Histoire*, this character comes to the philosophical conclusion that religion (at its purest form) is inherently natural to the human condition.

²⁰⁰ Daoud, *LPDLF*, pp.49-51.

²⁰¹ Daoud, *op. cit.*, p.49.

Daoud brings the Robinsonade notion back to the *Musée Picasso* and his imagined character ‘Abdellah’:

J’aime imaginer mon personnage dans ce musée, au cœur du Paris, frappé par cette condition *ex nihilo*, d’orphelin absolu, de détachement monstrueux face à la lignée de l’homme. Mon personnage s’appellera donc Abdellah, l’Esclave de Dieu, monstre né des chairs mortes des cadavres de notre époque, l’enfant d’un malheur qu’il perpétue. [...] Craignant d’y être dévoré, rejeté ou reclus, voulant dévorer, rejeter et repousser. Tentant de commencer le saccage par la curiosité avant d’en arriver à entamer sa mission : défigurer l’Occident.²⁰²

Daoud’s use of the first-person singular is significant because it sets Abdellah’s voice as a contrapuntal voice to his own.²⁰³ The use of the name Abdellah, in particular, is also suggestive. Abdellah is a French transliteration of the Arabic given name, built from the Arabic words ‘Abd’ and ‘Allah’, to mean servant of God. Daoud seems to highlight this meaning, taking it one step further by using the term ‘esclave’. Abdellah - including its variations such as Abdullah - is a common name among Muslims worldwide. This allows the reader to easily identify the character as Muslim, without Daoud having to explicitly signpost it as so. Hence, it seems that Daoud uses Abdellah as a sort of Muslim ‘Joe Bloggs’ – the hypothetical average man. The language Daoud uses to describe him is dark and violent, evidenced by Daoud’s references to the monstrous Abdellah who perpetuates a cycle of misfortune in his quest to spoil the West.

Daoud locates Abdellah in the *Musée Picasso* alongside him and makes a point of explicitly stating the Occident-Orient binary that he sets Abdellah within:

Ce personnage conclut son long malaise par une fausse solution : son mal est occidental, vient de l’Occident, à cause de l’Occident. Il transformera sa colère en une guerre sainte [...] : l’Occident sera puni de vouloir concurrencer Dieu ou de vouloir le dépasser avec ses milles machines, son Paradis à ras de terre, en vitrine, ses femmes nues et libres, sa maîtrise du ciel et de la lune, des sols et sa capacité d’imposer l’Enfer aux géographies récalcitrantes comme en Irak ou ailleurs.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Daoud, *op. cit.*, pp.49-50.

²⁰³ Claudia Esposito, *Le peintre*, p.2.

²⁰⁴ Daoud, *LPDLF*, pp.51-52.

As Daoud seems to place Abdellah – the violent Muslim man – in a space that represents a symbolic centre of the West, he provokes images of recent Islamist terrorist attacks in Paris, and elsewhere in Europe. By setting Abdellah, rather than himself, in this violent clash between ‘l’Occident’ and ‘l’Orient’, it would appear that Daoud does not want to step inside the paradigm of binary oppositions. Indeed, he furthers this notion when he suggests that the West is not to blame for Abdellah’s *malaise*.

Moreover, Daoud returns to the Robinsonade narrative to suggest that Abdellah’s *malaise* is directly linked to confronting the nudity of the West:

Mon personnage Abdellah rêvera alors de rhabiller son vis-à-vis. [...] Comme Robinson autrefois, par un chemin de réflexion étrange, il conclura au nom d’une culture ou d’un fantasme d’identité que le dénudement est un outrage, un scandale. [...] L’obligation de reconnaître un corps c’est l’obligation d’admettre en avoir un [...]. C’est la primauté du baiser sur la prière. Si Abdellah nie son corps et refuse à la femme le sien pour ne pas avoir à reconnaître le désir, c’est parce qu’il veut se confondre avec Dieu, être Dieu.²⁰⁵

Daoud locates the meeting of Robinson Crusoe and Friday in a modern-day setting. This temporal shift is significant because it allows for a role reversal between Robinson Crusoe and the native man he meets on the island and names Friday.²⁰⁶ In this imagined scenario, it is Robinson (the Western tourist and an allegory for the West) who is naked, and Friday (Abdellah) who wishes to cover him up. This inversion of what was historically once seen as scandalous to Christianity in the West, and what is now deemed unacceptable to Islamic moral codes in Muslim countries, suggests that Daoud criticises the absurdity of all dogmatic monotheisms and their historical control over the (female) body. Yet, Daoud’s reference to the enforced veiling of women in the contemporary context immediately brings the focus back to Islam. Daoud appears to suggest that the ‘sexual misery’ felt in the Muslim world is due to the effect of patriarchal Islam on the Muslim man, rather than the Muslim woman. Hence, the Muslim woman is diametrically opposed to the Muslim man, always in a position of subjugation.

²⁰⁵ Daoud, *op. cit.*, pp.89-90.

²⁰⁶ The term ‘native’ has the potential to be problematic due to its relationship with European (neo-)imperial discourses.

As global patriarchal and misogynistic norms often dictate relationships with power and subjugation, Daoud's representations have the potential to project a reductive, androcentric reading of contentious issues, such as debates around the sexually 'depraved' Muslim man and veiling in Islam. Indeed, the use of such a common Muslim name, coupled with references to Islamist extremism, arguably have the potential to feed into reductive stereotypes of the Muslim man as a terrorist, particularly in Europe. Claudia Esposito argues that Daoud almost risks political oversimplification with the fictitious character Abdellah.²⁰⁷ This would not be the first time that Daoud falls into this trap: Jane Hiddleston argues that in *Meursault, contre-enquête*, Daoud does not make a clear distinction between Islam and Islamism in his criticism of dogmatism.²⁰⁸ In this way, Daoud's Muslim man has the potential to reinforce damaging, colonial stereotypes that allude to a Western ideal (as the bringer of sexual emancipation through modernity), and reduce Algerian Muslims to a state of passivity as the 'uneducated' masses of the Other. As we have seen in the previous chapters, Daoud's writing has a tendency to lean on terms that homogenise the experiences of Muslim people globally.

We can return to the controversy surrounding Daoud's 2016 *Cologne* article in order to examine the problematic nature of representing Muslim men in such ways. Mack argues that the increase in people fleeing Middle Eastern countries for Europe in recent years has amplified the image that refugees are young, male, and Muslim (despite the reality of the many women and children who are also present).²⁰⁹ As argued by Mack, issues relating to sexuality have come to embody the new battleground in public debates about whether immigration from former French colonies is 'diluting' French identity. Sexuality has been linked to modernity, which has transformed to become synonymous with European identity. Hence, the imperative for the Muslim man in Europe to transgress 'traditional' Islamic sexual codes highlights how immigrants are expected to demonstrate their 'tolerance' and 'progressivism' (often at much higher levels than the resident population is expected to), in order to prove their commitment to assimilation.²¹⁰ Following the 'Daoud affair' in 2016, academic Jocelyne Dakhliya wrote in *Le Monde*:

²⁰⁷ Esposito, *Le peintre*, p.2.

²⁰⁸ Hiddleston, *Writing after Postcolonialism*, p.168.

²⁰⁹ Mack, *Sexagon*, p.249.

²¹⁰ Mack, *op. cit.*, pp.20-9. This is arguably even more the case for asylum seekers and refugees presented as having been granted a 'safe haven' and who, therefore, are expected to assimilate as part of an implied contract to 'pay back' the host society.

un nouveau développement risque de mettre à mal cette lecture culturaliste de la violence sexuelle. A Cologne, des femmes réfugiées portent plainte aujourd'hui contre les gardiens d'un camp de migrants qui se livrent sur elles à un harcèlement sexuel et les filment sous la douche ou en train d'allaiter. Où est la place de la culture dans ce nouvel épisode de violence faite aux femmes ? Va-t-on nous dire que leur culture musulmane les assigne à la passivité et donc rend possible un tel abus de pouvoir ? L'explication de la violence par la culture n'est-elle valable qu'avec des hommes musulmans ? [...] Qui donne une chance de s'exprimer sur ces questions aux réfugiés de Cologne ou d'ailleurs ? ²¹¹

Dakhliya argues that there was an imbalance in the reporting of the alleged sexual assaults in Cologne that focused entirely on Muslim male sexual aggression. She also suggests that few media outlets gave male refugees the space to express their voices regarding the claims. Moreover, she later interrogates the tropes underlying Daoud's claims:

Outre les clichés orientalistes de l'hypersexualité des musulmans, Kamel Daoud [...] a curieusement ressuscité et marié ensemble deux images de l'immigré maghrébin qui se répondaient au cours des années 1960 et 1970. L'image compassionnelle et quelque peu misérable de l'immigré enfermé dans « la plus haute des solitudes » (selon le titre d'une thèse de psychologie soutenue et publiée par Tahar Ben Jelloun), privé de vie affective et sexuelle, s'opposait au cliché de l'Algérien violeur issu de la guerre d'Algérie et qui a tristement marqué l'histoire française des « trente glorieuses ». ²¹²

She argues that Daoud's claims are stuck between pre-existing French representations of the Muslim man in Europe: the isolated and migrant worker of the 1970s whose experience of sexual repression led to depression, and the concept of the Algerian rapist, or sexual aggressor, that was promoted by anti-immigration forces both during the Algerian War and following decolonisation. ²¹³

²¹¹ Jocelyne Dakhliya, '« S'enfermer dans l'idée d'un choc des cultures », c'est la vraie défaite du débat', *Le Monde* <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/03/01/le-choc-des-cultures-c-est-la-vraie-defaite-du-debat_4874504_3232.html> [accessed 15 August 2020].

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ The construct of the depressed Muslim man is arguably a much less widely circulated figure than that of the sexual aggressor. It is likely that some racist discourses bring these two representations together by arguing that sexual misery generates sexual violence.

More generally, Nacira Guénif-Souilamas unpicks the stereotypes presenting Arab men in France as young, sexually unassimilated and threatening, and who are diametrically opposed to the secular Muslim, or the ‘ideal’ immigrant. She argues that they prevent ‘les identifications multiples de la modernité complexe, cette assignation consiste à construire une nature sexuée et ethnicisée, survivance d’une tradition totalisante.’²¹⁴ Whilst her analysis refers to Muslims born in Europe (who are several generations apart from their immigrant ancestors), she suggests that Muslim men, in the contemporary European context, are subject to a process of sexual racialisation that sees these colonial and neo-colonial tropes as natural to their Islamic identity.²¹⁵

Similarly, Rachida Titah argues that:

[...] les hommes d’Algérie ne sont pas pires qu’ailleurs, ils ne sont pas meilleurs non plus. Seulement, dans d’autres pays, notamment ceux à tradition démocratique, la prédominance de l’homme sur la femme n’est pas liée systématiquement à la religion. [...] La prédominance du pouvoir masculin serait donc en Algérie une coutume séculaire, préexistante à l’instauration de l’islam. Pourtant, ce pouvoir est légitimé sans les esprits des Algériens par la religion musulmane qui, à vrai dire, ne s’y est pas vraiment opposé.²¹⁶

Although Titah’s analysis focuses on Algeria in the 1990s, it is relevant given that she suggests the cause of patriarchal oppression in Islam is more likely rooted in (secular) historical gendered norms that pre-date religion. She does not deny the existence of sexual repression and gender oppression in certain interpretations of Islam; however, she does not essentialise these problems as inherently Islamic. She, therefore, suggests that Islam needs to be open to interrogation *and* reinterpretation (much like Christianity is given the space to do so today).

²¹⁴ Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, ‘La française voilée, la beurette, le garçon arabe et le musulman laïc. Les figures assignées du racisme vertueux.’, in *La république mise à nu par son immigration*, ed. by Nacira Guénif-Souilamas (Paris: La Fabrique, 2006), pp. 109-32 (p.110).

²¹⁵ This is especially pertinent in a context in which religious assignation has become increasingly noticeable: for example, men are now described as ‘Muslim’ as opposed to ‘Algerian’ or ‘of Algerian heritage’. Todd Shepard documents how the far right’s demonisation of Arab men during the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s in France shifted to focus on concerns about Islam - rather than Arab - following the 1979 Iranian Revolution: ‘the question of Islam [...] emphatically surged back into French debates, which now included references to a threatening “Islamic revolution” far more frequently than they did to any type of inspirational “Arab revolution.”’ See Todd Shepard, *Sex, France, and Arab Men, 1962-1979* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 272-74. There is also the further irony given that there are very few Shia Muslims in France or the Maghreb.

²¹⁶ Rachida Titah, *La galerie des absentes: la femme algérienne dans l’imaginaire masculin* (La Tour d’Aigues: Aube, 1996), pp. 149-50.

Returning to Daoud, it would appear that Abdellah simultaneously represents the multiple nuanced tropes of the Muslim man, especially when presented to a Western, and more specifically a French, audience. Daoud's intertextuality with the Robinsonade narrative does not seem to interrogate how the female body in Europe, and the West more generally, is also subject to control and violence by non-Muslim (white) men. This imbalance suggests that Daoud sees examples of sexual violence committed by Muslim men worldwide as linked to their relationship with Islam, rather than perhaps their positionality as men in global patriarchal structures. By appearing to adhere to French tropes that reduce the Muslim man to either the sexually unassimilated, young Arab, or, the secular Muslim, to some extent, Daoud seems to occupy Spivak's 'native informant' position. As Daoud reproduces these racialised tropes, he potentially legitimises them; he arguably knows he represents a spokesperson for the minorities he discusses in France. For the average non-Muslim, French reader, this could confirm any subconscious negative preconceptions about Muslim men they may have had.

(Re)imagining 'Marie-Houri': meshing representations of Western and Muslim femininity

Diametrically opposed to Abdellah is Marie-Houri: a reimagined Marie-Thérèse as a *hourî*. Daoud explores the apparent paradox between the pornographic treatment of female bodies by Islamist rhetoric and how he believes it denies the human right to sexuality in life:

Marie-Thérèse est peinte comme une hourî, mais avant la mort. [...] Cette féminité liée à la mort est devenue puissant dans la mythologie du radical. Curieusement, elle semble surinvestie à l'ère du YouPorn plus qu'elle ne l'a été aux temps anciens, au Moyen Âge musulman. On l'a décrit de mille et une façons dans les prêches et on détaille son anatomie jusqu'à l'hallucination. Étrange nœud du sexe, de la mort, et de la frustration. Comme si le radicalisme était un retentissant échec érotique.²¹⁷

It would seem that Daoud suggests that for radical Islamists, spiritual and sexual pleasure can only be achieved in death, after having denied corporeal reality in life. Daoud has made similar links between Islamist statements about the female body and pornography in his journalism:

²¹⁷ Daoud, *LPDLF*, p.149.

Le sexe est la plus grande misère dans le « monde d'Allah ». A tel point qu'il a donné naissance à ce porno-islamisme dont font discours les prêcheurs islamistes pour recruter leurs « fidèles » : descriptions d'un paradis plus proche du bordel que de la récompense pour gens pieux, fantasme des vierges pour les kamikazes, chasse aux corps dans les espaces publics, puritanisme des dictatures, voile et burka.²¹⁸

Apart from demonstrating the close link between Daoud's journalism and lengthier non-fictional *œuvre*, it also highlights how Daoud represents the Muslim female body as being inherently linked to questions around death and mortality in Islam. It would seem that by comparing Islamist rhetoric to pornography, Daoud attempts to unpick what he sees as the misogynistic hypocrisy of Islamist rhetoric that places restrictions upon a women's body in life but looks to sexually available women in death.

Furthermore, it is significant how Daoud meshes representations of a *hour*i and Marie-Thérèse. It appears to symbolise the cultural 'meshing' that Daoud embodies (in terms of his positionality in the Franco-Algerian discursive space). Within this context, Daoud brings Marie-Houri back into her contextual relationship to Abdellah:

[...] Les houris sont évoquées dans le Coran, mais aussi dans la tradition orthodoxe, et incarneront cette morbide sexualité d'Abdellah. [...] Picasso la [Marie-Thérèse] peint à la manière même dont Abdellah en rêve : désordonnée par la fièvre, mêlant sa chair aux objets autour d'elle, vue à travers la violence et l'impatience, mordue et pourtant jeune pour l'éternité. Marie-Houri est offerte dans l'immédiateté du désir, dans une sorte d'éternité, vierge à chaque mouvement de son corps.²¹⁹

Daoud suggests that the pictorial representations of Marie-Thérèse and the *hour*i are both products of violent, male creation. This suggests that they are subject to Abdellah's metaphorical veiling, or control. By referencing himself alongside Abdellah, Daoud suggests that the Muslim woman – as an oppressed figure as the West understands her – is created and solidified by the Muslim man; in other words, the Algerian Muslim woman is a projection of the Algerian Muslim man. In this way, Daoud seems to suggest that Muslim women are subject

²¹⁸ Daoud, *Cologne*.

²¹⁹ Daoud, *LPDLF*, p.150.

to oppression because of patriarchal Islam deliberately hiding them and, in some ways, seeing them as otherworldly.

However, it is also noteworthy that Daoud directly blurs the Qur'an with jihadist propaganda. Nerina Rustomji points out that the *houris* is referenced four times in the Qur'an (44.54, 52.20, 55.72, 56.22); in 55.72-74, there is mention of the 'pure maidens of Paradise who are claimed to be [...] untouched by men and *jinn*, beings said to be made of vapour and often seen as mischievous.²²⁰ She demonstrates that it was only in later eschatological manuals that the *houris* came to represent a sensual companion who was identified by her 'purity'. The growing identification with virginity, she argues, has been solidified by 20th-century popular Arabic eschatological pamphlets where the houris are directly referred to as 'virginal'.²²¹ It is within this context, she maintains, that contemporary jihadist groups have established a link between political violence and the idea of the *houris*, citing the alleged letter of Muhammad Atta who reminded the 9/11 hijackers to keep in mind the *houris* that awaited them. In this way, Rustomji suggests that the intense focus of jihadist discourse on the *houris* over other motivations such as social, or economic, reinforces the representation of a morbid, sexually-driven political campaign.²²² Rustomji shows that jihadist discourse on the *houris* is markedly different to how they originally came into Islamic understanding in the Qur'an; however, it would seem that Daoud conflates representations of the *houris* with those in jihadist propaganda. Whilst this may be for rhetorical purposes, it also raises the question of how well Daoud knows the Qur'an, especially given that jihadist propaganda can take for granted an ignorance of the Qur'an in those it targets.

Moreover, the question of the visible (veiled) Muslim woman being oppressed by a male superior has become a contentious issue in recent years in France, particularly in relation to debates about veiling/unveiling, human rights and how they interplay with Western feminisms.²²³ For example, in 2004, the French government banned the wearing of 'conspicuous signs' of religious affiliation in public schools. Although the new law

²²⁰ Nerina Rustomji, 'American Visions of the Houris', *The Muslim World*, 97. 1 (2007), 79-92 (pp.80-1) <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2007.00159.x>>.

²²¹ Rustomji, *op. cit.*, p.81.

²²² Rustomji, *op. cit.*, pp.85-86.

²²³ For discussions around the 'headscarf affairs' in France since 1989, see Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992); Françoise Gaspard, *Le foulard et la république* (Paris: Découverte, 1995); Nicky Jones, 'Religious Freedom in a Secular Society: The Case of the Islamic Headscarf in France', in *Freedom of Religion under Bills of Rights*, ed. by Paul Babie and Neville Rochow (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2012), pp. 216-38; Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Antoine Boulangé, 'The hijab, racism and the state', *International Journal of Socialism* <<http://isj.org.uk/the-hijab-racism-and-the-state/>> [accessed 10 October 2020].

encompassed a range of religious clothing, it was primarily aimed at Muslim girls wearing *hijabs*.²²⁴ In 2016, 30 French cities banned the bathing suit known as a ‘burkini’ from public beaches. Siobhán Shilton argues that attempts to ban the burkini represent the extent of French fears of visual signifiers of Arabo-Muslim ‘difference’ in public spaces.²²⁵ Initially, French authorities justified the ban by claiming the burkini went against republican values of *laïcité*, symbolising Islamist extremism and women’s oppression. Manuel Valls publicly supported the ban stating, ‘Marianne, le symbole de la République, elle a le sein nu parce qu’elle nourrit le peuple, elle n’est pas voilée parce qu’elle est libre. C’est ça, la République.’²²⁶ Although the ban was eventually lifted, the international press generally framed it as Islamophobic and discriminatory.²²⁷

It is also important to be aware of the fact that the hypervisibility of the veil in Western discourses detracts the attention away from contemporary patriarchal structures in the West. White French women (represented through Valls’ reference to the naked Marianne) are presented as free from sexism and misogyny in a society where equality of the sexes has been achieved. Paradoxically, however, Valls’ declaration about the idealised Marianne figure contains presuppositions that lock French femininity within the realms of motherhood and forced nudity.

In more general Western discourses, imperialistic white saviourism has normalised the image of the French colonial Self in relation to the image of the Other Muslim population in Algeria. Alia Al-Saji argues that the image of the veiled Muslim woman ‘joue un rôle constitutif et justificateur dans plusieurs narratifs patriarcaux en Occident.’²²⁸ She maintains that the French desire to unveil can be traced back to the voyeurism of the French colonial project. This notion of the French colonial Self was built on heterosexual, phallogocentric presumptions that femininity was defined by a certain scopophilic desire. Hence, contemporary French perceptions of the veil have been fostered by the colonial context that allowed French

²²⁴ Wallach, *The Politics of the Veil*, pp.1-2.

²²⁵ Siobhán Shilton, ‘Identity and “Difference” in French Art: El Seed’s Calligraphiti from Street to Web’, in *Post-Migratory Cultures in Postcolonial France*, ed. by Kathryn A. Kleppinger and Laura Reeck (Liverpool University Press, 2018), pp.239-56 (p.239).

²²⁶ Le Parisien, ‘Marianne et le sein nu : une historienne épingle Valls pour sa tirade’, *Le Parisien* <<https://www.leparisien.fr/politique/marianne-et-le-sein-nu-la-tirade-de-manuel-valls-fait-reagir-30-08-2016-6079473.php>> [accessed 18 August 2020].

²²⁷ Giulia Evolvi, ‘The veil and its materiality: Muslim women’s digital narratives about the burkini ban’, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 34. 3 (2019), 469-87 (p.469-70) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2019.1658936>>.

²²⁸ Alia Al-Saji, ‘Voiles racialisés: la femme musulmane dans les imaginaires occidentaux’, *Les Ateliers de l’Ethique*, 3. 2 (2008), 39-51 (p.40) <<https://doaj.org/article/e5077edf62d1405482cd754999d27dcf>> [accessed 05 January 2020].

subjects to travel to, live in, and most importantly, observe Algeria. The representation of the veiled female body as sexually repressed and subject to gendered oppression is therefore built by the view that wishes to see and possess the female body freely.²²⁹ This is reminiscent of Malek Alloula's *Le harem colonial* (1981) which unmasked French colonial obsessions with the veiled female Other in Algeria, or Blanchard et al.'s highly polemical *Sexe, race et colonies* (2018).²³⁰

Neil MacMaster locates this phenomenon within the context of the Algerian War of Independence. He demonstrates that for over half a century the repressive colonial apparatus systemically maintained the intellectual and material inferiority of Algerian women; however, during the War, it made a dramatic U-turn to promote an 'emancipation' policy with the aim to win over the Algerian population to the French side, and to legitimise military presence.²³¹ The drive for emancipation was rooted in a Eurocentric, assimilationist model that sought to transform the Algerian woman into her 'civilised' – Westernised – bourgeois French contemporary. Under the emancipation agenda, the veil became a central symbol to the campaign as an easily identifiable public sign of an individual's stance towards 'Islamic values, gender segregation, familiar honour and the socio-political domination of the male lineage.'²³² MacMaster argues that this agenda can be located within a long tradition of the Western 'civilising mission' in the Maghreb (and elsewhere), and foreshadowed US-led neo-imperialistic moves to 'liberate' Muslim women in Afghanistan and Iraq.²³³

In terms of how these colonial discourses have informed contemporary Western feminisms, Al-Saji demonstrates how they have normalised a patriarchal, Western definition of femininity, presenting this norm as the aspiring ideal for *all* women. This paradox means that Western woman can only consider themselves 'liberated' when placed within the binary that positions the Other (Muslim) woman as oppressed. The process of *altérisation* excludes Muslim women from feminist debates and prevents them from being understood as authentic feminist subjectivities.²³⁴ As Leïla Ahmed argues, when items of clothing have become

²²⁹ Al-Saji, *op. cit.*, p.46.

²³⁰ There is a complex debate surrounding sexualised visual material produced in colonial and neo-colonial contexts which go beyond the initial scope of this project. See Malek Alloula, *Le harem colonial : images d'un sous-érotisme* (Paris: Séguier, 2001) & Pascal Blanchard and others, *Sexe, race & colonies* (Paris: La Découverte, 2018).

²³¹ It was also a drive to undermine the socio-religious values espoused by the FLN. Women were seen as a socialising force (for example, towards children) and so they were targeted.

²³² Neil MacMaster, *Burning the Veil: The Algerian War and the 'Emancipation' of Muslim Women, 1954-62* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 2-6.

²³³ MacMaster, *op. cit.*, p.397.

²³⁴ Al-Saji, *Voiles racialisés*, p.48.

problematic for feminist struggles in the West, it has always been Western feminist women who have marked them as significant sites of struggle, and not patriarchal, colonial men as has historically been the case with Muslim women.²³⁵

Similarly, in her discussion of the ways in which global rights discourses are inadequate in assessing who needs ‘saving’ from inequality and misogyny, Lila Abu-Lughod argues:

If many outsiders blame Islam for this culture of violence, the Muslim feminists of Musawah [...] are quick to argue that the fault lies in cultures that, contrary to such arguments or those of Muslim conservatives, are actually based on *insufficient* knowledge of or *incomplete* adherence to Islam. Islam, they insist, enshrines justice, equality, human dignity, and love and compassion among humans and in the family. They can find plenty of textual evidence for this.²³⁶

She demonstrates that we need to be aware of the limits of rights discourses, given that activists and writers working to uphold them often work within particular social and political locations. This means that disenfranchised groups are, more often than not, excluded from conversations because of how their positionality intersects with a range of global and class inequalities. In other words, she maintains that the rights discourses - so commonplace in 21st-Century Western feminist discussions - have brought about a new gendered Orientalism, in which consent and choice are perhaps being fetishised and defended with the view to support the illusion of being autonomous subjects.²³⁷

It would therefore appear that Daoud oversimplifies the experiences of Muslim women globally to perhaps speak for his own Algerian experience. Yet, this oversimplification arguably reproduces widespread contemporary narratives in France that view the Muslim woman as needing to be ‘saved’ by Western modernity. Subsequently, to some extent, Daoud appears to legitimise the *altérisation* that underlines the difference between French sexually ‘liberated’ women, and oppressed Muslim women. As the only female Muslim experience in the text is projected through Marie-Thérèse, there is no space for the voice of the Muslim

²³⁵ Leïla Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp.166-7.

²³⁶ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim women need saving?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), p.192. Italics in original. Musawah (‘equality’ in Arabic) is a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family launched in 2009. It is comprised of NGOs, activists, scholars, legal practitioners, policy makers, and grassroots women and men from around the world.

²³⁷ Abu-Lughod, *op. cit.*, pp.199-218.

woman, veiled or not. Indeed, if we look at Daoud's representations of Abdellah and Marie-Thérèse/Marie-Houri side-by-side, it appears that Islam is represented as an embodiment of toxic masculinity and patriarchy, and the West as the symbol of sexual emancipation (despite Western tendencies to objectify and commodify the naked female body). Returning to the notion of imbalance, Daoud does not seem to challenge neo-colonial Western projects to save Muslim women in the same way that he criticises the treatment of sexuality and gender in Islam.

Although Daoud appears to present Marie-Thérèse as having a sense of erotic personal agency, it can be argued that Daoud fails to engage with more feminist-inspired readings of erotic Picasso. This arguably means that Daoud occasionally falls short in offering a more nuanced reading of the contextual, asymmetrical power dynamic that allowed Picasso to produce his erotic work. Within this context, Daoud's apparent generalisation of Muslim men in Europe could be interpreted as problematic if we take into account existing European stereotypes of the young, male, sexually deprived Islamist terrorist. As discussed in the previous chapter, Daoud seems to legitimise these stereotypes for a Western-orientated, French audience by way of his perceived positionality as a 'native informant', Muslim-born Algerian. He sets out the binary between the secular Muslim man who renounces the 'cultural' ties to his faith and the practising Muslim man who is stuck in a cycle of sexual depravity and violence in Europe. Arguably, this evocation is reductive in how it generalises the many masculine experiences among Muslim men living in Europe and beyond. Also, it falls short in offering a more nuanced critique of how masculinities being expressed in Islam cannot always be read as *Islamic*. As Daoud diametrically opposes Abdellah to the imagined Marie-Thérèse/Marie-Houri, he projects one strand of the female Muslim experience through a character who is Western (Marie-Thérèse). As the only female voice in the text, Daoud seems to present her as representative of the ideal heterosexual feminine experience. Therefore, the imbalance in how Daoud falls short in critiquing expressions of patriarchy in the West compared to Muslim North Africa means that we cannot view *LPDLF* as providing a critical reading of the gendered body cutting across the Mediterranean. Although it would be impossible to give an account of every gendered experience in Western and Muslim societies alike, Daoud's choice to lean towards a Western idealisation in terms of women's liberation leaves no space for the voices he claims are being silenced, such as veiled Muslim women.

Conclusion

This thesis began by examining the way in which Daoud is viewed as a contested public intellectual in the Franco-Algerian discursive sphere(s). The ongoing hybridisation of this space is, as we have seen, inherently rooted in French imperial history that continues to dictate unequal enunciations of power between the two national entities. To return to the metaphor of *regards croisés* when analysing the complex relationship between Algeria and France, Balibar highlights how it is impossible to separate the two nations from one another. The ‘fractal composite’ caused by the intersecting gazes of the two countries has led to a two-fold *fracture*: between Algeria and France, and between competing socio-political factions within each national sphere. In turn, these different factions are trying to free themselves from the identity that they perceive imprisons them, whilst recognising the otherness that has contributed to the creation of each national entity. As discussed in Chapter One, there is a tendency among scholars to see Daoud’s positionality in the Franco-Algerian discursive space simply as occupying a metaphorical binary position between France and Algeria, or *entre-deux*. However, by looking at the international debate sparked by his *Cologne* article in 2016, we have seen how Daoud intervenes in global public spheres in a complex way. The range of political and social reactions to the article in France, Algeria, and beyond is arguably symptomatic of and contributes to the hybridised ‘fractal composite’ that negotiates difference between French and Algerian public discussions and beyond. Thus, this demonstrates the main argument of this thesis that the publication of *LPDLF* in 2018 needs to be looked at within the context of Daoud’s contested positionality in a hybridised, multi-faceted public sphere.

The nature of Daoud’s meta-physical location continues to affect the way that he intervenes in public debates in France and Algeria, but also how he is seen and received by these respective publics. The intricate specificities that continue to shape the postcolonial encounter between France, Algeria, Europe, and beyond, impact upon the way in which relationships are forged, negotiated and performed across these (meta-)physical borders. The processual reading of hybridisation used in Chapter One highlights the reality that there are no stable or predicated cultures in modern national entities; rather, they are developed by imagined negotiations of politically constructed, and performed, ‘difference’. In this way, given the fluid nature of socio-political negotiation and performance, the metaphysical ‘third space’, as defined by Bhabha and discussed in Chapter One, cannot really exist because by its nature it will disappear and reappear with each new negotiation and performance of culture. Hence, for

the purpose of this thesis, the ‘third space’ can perhaps be understood as a subconscious end goal for Daoud in how he negotiates and performs his hybridisation. Academic discussions about theories of hybridity are extensive and go beyond the initial scope of this project; however, reading this concept in processual terms allows us to move beyond established binaries that dictate cultural understanding, translation, and performance.

In 2018, Daoud’s re-emergence into the Franco-Algerian discursive space can be seen as timely and significant when we assess the extent to which Daoud uses the aesthetics of the *essai* to mould his audience base. Chapters Two and Three have shown that in many ways, *LPDLF* follows on from the thematic framework of the 2016 *Cologne* article. The recognition the text received by French cultural circles in 2018 and 2019 suggests that his audience pool was reduced significantly, both in France and abroad, in relation to his journalism in 2016. With *LPDLF*, Daoud can thus be seen as presenting his work in a less threatening manner in the French context in particular. Arguably, we can view the *essai* (in the specific context of the hybridised Franco-Algerian discursive space) as a facilitator in a performative conversation between Daoud, and the more bourgeois - potentially more republican - factions of French society whose positionality is arguably more Western.²³⁸ *LPDLF* can be read as Daoud’s attempt to skilfully position himself within the context of a plural readership and suggests that Daoud uses the *essai* to embrace those sections of Western-orientated French society that do not usually find his writing polemical.

It is clear, then, that *what* Daoud writes has the potential to be inflammatory depending on *who* reads it. Daoud is by no means a stranger to criticism; although generally well-received in Algeria and France, his first novel *Meursault, contre-enquête* (2013) was criticised for how he seemed to generalise Muslim populations in Algeria. As Chapter Two explored, Daoud’s performativity as a writer is affected by the (meta-)physical location of the *essai*, and Daoud is arguably motivated to see Picasso’s work as a vehicle to support his on-going criticism of the ‘sexual misery’ in the Arab world. The latter term is already problematic, but it breaks down further when we consider that Algeria (and even less so Morocco) is not fully Arabised, although they are Islamised. Yet, it is within this context that Daoud presents and performs Picasso with a certain amount of admiration. Daoud accepts the commonly held view in academia that the artist represents a symbol of transgression from *within* the Western artistic context. As Daoud reflects on his night at the museum, Picasso becomes the subject, object,

²³⁸ Here, a ‘Western’ positionality can be understood in terms of a tendency to normalise Western social and cultural codes from a position of familiarity in comparison to those from Other cultures, perhaps deeming them to be superior.

and arguably the excuse for his writing. By adhering to a view that reinforces well-versed assumptions in the West about erotic Picasso, Daoud cannot decentre Europe from the exploration of the artist's work. If we return to Salhi's work on Occidentalism, Daoud's performance of erotic Picasso sometimes arguably risks being 'Occidentalist'; he performs Picasso in a way that is emblematic of, and contributes to, a hybridised positionality that deploys Western cultural codes.²³⁹

As Chapter Two has shown, it is not only through Daoud's performance of Picasso's *année érotique* that he places the 'superstitious', 'irrational' nature of Islamist thought in diametric opposition to values perceived to be inherently Western: freedom of thought and freedom to criticise. As he steps inside the work of one of the canons of 20th-Century Western art from a position of alterity, we can read Daoud as trying to better understand the binaries that underpin representations of the Franco-Algerian encounter: colonisation-decolonisation; secularism-Islamism; *l'Orient-l'Occident*. Daoud makes it clear that he is an outsider to the typically French spaces that are the *Musée Picasso* and Paris. Although Daoud touches on a feeling of otherness as an Algerian man entering these French spaces (both in terms of artistic representation and physical location), he does so in a way that sheds this otherness in a relatively positive light. In other words, Daoud's discomfort becomes the driving force which motivates him to see Western cultural reference points (be that Picasso or the concept of the Western museum) as a kind of solution to the 'sexual misery' of the Arab world.²⁴⁰

Similarly, whilst Daoud's personal memory of museums offers a critique of nationalist and Islamist rhetoric in Algeria, it also arguably feeds into the narrative of alarm in the French public sphere that the 'Muslims are coming!'. By being nostalgic for an Algerian past that had not yet been influenced by Islamist and nationalist rhetoric, Daoud presents Algeria's future as inevitably gloomy, given that it will be characterised by increased political Islamism. Likewise, Daoud pays significantly less attention to the problematic nature of Eurocentric, neo-colonial narratives in Western museums. The fact that this critique forms part of the text is significant because it demonstrates Daoud's awareness of the plural *lectorat* he finds himself within; yet, it also suggests that Daoud risks an imbalance in how he approaches the Franco-Algerian encounter, arguably demonstrating that one cannot occupy multiple positionalities at once. This imbalance, however, arguably speaks more to a Western, French audience than a

²³⁹ For Salhi's work, see p.24 of this thesis.

²⁴⁰ There is not enough space in this thesis to compare Daoud's representations of Paris with those of other North-African writers; however, Daoud's awareness of being an 'outsider' suggests that he recognises his work is potentially provocative in the French context; for example, with his references to 'attentats' when documenting his walk through the *Marais* as an Algerian man (see p.40).

North-African, Algerian one. An Algerian reader would have to interrogate their relationship to art, history, and memory in a way that Daoud does not ask a French reader to do so when these discussions are arguably just as significant in the French context given that Daoud is writing for a French publisher.

The idea of imbalance appears once again in how Daoud presents the gendered body and sexuality in the West compared to Muslim North Africa. As we have already mentioned, Daoud positions Picasso as transgressive within the aesthetics of 20th-Century Western art. Daoud takes Picasso's violent deconstruction of the female form as a metaphor for female agency and sexual empowerment in the West. Daoud suggests that Marie-Thérèse (and by extension, the Western woman) is not devalued when represented as the product of Picasso's ideas and desires; rather, she is given the agency to influence the erotic encounter. Throughout the *essai*, therefore, the reader is presented with an idealised Marie-Thérèse who matches Picasso in his negotiation of power in their relationship. For Daoud, there are two actors: Picasso and Marie-Thérèse. He suggests that the carnal, animal nature of (hetero)sexuality places both actors – male and female – as sharing an equal power dynamic in the erotic encounter. On the one hand, this understanding of Picasso's representations of the female form can be read as an attempt to offer a progressive reading of his erotic work. On the other hand, however, it is arguably problematic for contemporary audiences; it relies on a dated, heteronormative, and phallogentric version of human sexuality, much like the very monotheistic religions that Daoud attempts to criticise in his writing.

Chapter Three highlighted the feminist scholarship dedicated to unpicking the construction of gender and sexuality in 20th-Century Western art. More specifically, it discussed how Picasso's erotic work must be understood in terms of the asymmetrical, gendered (and racial) power dynamics that allowed him to produce it.²⁴¹ As we have already established, Daoud is motivated to read Picasso in a way that contrasts to his criticisms of political Islamism in Algeria; but, by choosing not to engage with a more feminist-inspired reading of erotic Picasso, Daoud seems to oscillate between reinforcing global heteronormative and patriarchal tropes of female subjugation in art, and denouncing them. Foucault reminds us that the mere representation of sexuality does not equate to sexual liberation; yet, Daoud seemingly lets Picasso 'off the hook'. We return to the idea that Daoud risks an imbalance as he presents an argument that the majority of French readers would most likely already adhere

²⁴¹ Yet, it seems that feminist scholarship has not yet addressed the implications of Picasso's work in relation to Muslim or Arab culture.

to: Picasso's representations of the female nude as revolutionary. Indeed, a potential area for further study might be to compare Djebbar's writings on Delacroix's *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1834 & 1849) and Picasso's revision of the works in 1955 with *LPDLF*. As Algerian writers of French expression who have tackled visual representations of women by Picasso, they would provide a natural site for comparison.

In terms of the masculine gendered body in the text, Daoud tends to fall back on well-versed, Eurocentric tropes that represent Muslim men (living in Europe in particular) as young, sexually deprived, Islamist terrorists. The contextual background to the *essai* is especially significant here if we see it within the context of contemporary French (and wider European) narratives about the refugee crisis and political violence. The imagined Abdellah sometimes offers an insightful perspective on the idea of confronting the Other's naked body *à la Robinsonnade* (especially when we remember Abdellah is a fictional character and issues concerning Western objectification of female nudity). Yet, by way of his positionality as an Algerian man raised as a Muslim, Daoud offers a sense of legitimacy in how he represents Muslim masculinity to a French audience. For this audience, in particular, legitimising certain negative stereotypes of Muslim men means that there is no room for Daoud to critique how expressions of masculinity in Islam are often essentialised in a more nuanced way.

Likewise, as Chapter Three discussed, Daoud diametrically opposes Abdellah to the idea of Marie-Houri, which has similar implications for a French audience. Occasionally, Daoud appears to oversimplify the experiences of Muslim women globally to speak for his own particular Algerian experience. In Algeria, this inevitably has different connotations; but, in the contemporary French context, where the question of *la femme voilée* is an extremely contentious issue, Daoud's representations of Muslim femininity arguably fit widespread narratives suggesting Muslim women need to be 'saved' from patriarchal Islam by Western sexual modernity. Although we are unable to fully delve into the extensive debates about the 'headscarf affairs' in France within the confines of this thesis, it appears Daoud leaves little room to interrogate the patriarchal underpinnings of Western societies that also dictate a woman's physical appearance.

Indeed, for the *Ma nuit au musée* series, Adel Abdessemed and Christophe Ono-dit-Biot (journalist at *Le point*) also wrote *Nuit espagnole* (2019) which focuses on the *Guernica* exhibition at the *Musée Picasso*. Abdessemed also produced video work *Chrysalide, ça tient à trois fils* (1999) which portrays a man unravelling a woman's woollen burqa to show her naked

body underneath.²⁴² Shilton highlights how this piece is motivated by Abdessemed's views on the chador, seeing it as a 'symbol of hatred, imposed by men; an act of violence'.²⁴³ She maintains that despite his 'explicit stance on the veil – and the title's clear association of liberation – the act performed is highly ambivalent, given that the "liberation" is being imposed [...]. Moreover, the woman, who could be of Maghrebi descent, is unveiled by a fully dressed white man.'²⁴⁴ A further area of study, therefore, would be to look at Abdessemed's work comparatively with *LPDLF* and *Nuit espagnole*, as there appear to be parallels between the artist's work and Daoud's writing.²⁴⁵

Overall, this thesis has not set out to deny Daoud's own experiences as an Algerian man born into Islam, just as it has not sought to deny contemporary interpretations of Islam that enforce patriarchal and misogynistic practices worldwide. However, this thesis has shown that Daoud's experience with various interpretations of Algerian Islam cannot simply be transposed to the European context without significant consequences for a French audience in particular. We must constantly return to the idea of positionality and how words *translate* differently to audiences depending on their socio-political, cultural, and national context. We cannot just view Daoud as a spokesperson for Algeria - and more generally Islam - simply because he is an Algerian man who has left practising his faith in the past, and the publication of *LPDLF* arguably highlights this. When Daoud takes his words out of the Algerian context and applies them to a Franco-European setting, his positionality as a (self-)hybridised subject is in constant flux between the multiple factions within the plural *lectorat*. This means that although Daoud can sometimes be seen as offering a 'double-edged' critique of Algeria since Independence and French neo-colonialism, his tendency to generalise Muslims from his own cultural context at times plays to French (and more widely, Western) Islamophobic assumptions. Events in October 2020 in France regarding the caricature controversy are just another example of the country's growing problem with Islamophobia. The image matters in Muslim culture; yet, French republicanism cannot see that it is a provocation to show these cartoons, especially in an 'official' context.

Daoud was once considered a dissident writer in Algeria, particularly following the *décennie noire* where his critical façade was key in opening up discussions around post-

²⁴² Adel Abdessemed, 'Chrysalide, ça tient à trois fils', *Adel Abdessemed* <<https://www.adelabdessemed.com/oeuvres/chrysalide-ca-tient-a-trois-fils/>> [accessed 01 October 2020].

²⁴³ Adel Abdessemed cited in Shilton, *Transcultural encounters*, p.42.

²⁴⁴ Shilton, *Transcultural encounters*, p.42

²⁴⁵ We could also explore how other *essais* in the series compare to Daoud's in the way that they tackle Picasso and present him to their readerships, given that the majority of those also use the artist and the *Musée Picasso* in Paris as their springboards.

Independence anxieties linking to Islamism and nationalism, especially with the publication of *Meursault, contre-enquête* in 2013. Nonetheless, his position as a dissident writer is perhaps shifting. The outcomes and implications of the *hirak* movement in Algeria are yet to become clear as the event continues to unfold; however, a generation of young people - particularly those on social media such as poet and political prisoner Mohamed Tadjadit - have made this political movement for freedom a cultural *moment* in Algeria's history. As Nina Wardleworth suggests, following the Arab Spring, 'the internet has [...] allowed young activists and authors to achieve a form of Pan-Arabism that previous generations of Maghrebi and Arab authors could only dream of.'²⁴⁶ The *hirak* will inevitably have ramifications for Algeria's position in the wider world and how its relationship to France is negotiated by its activists and intellectuals: postcolonial thought is being reassessed; new virtual currents opening up to the world are being embraced, and new roads for revolt and dissent have emerged.

²⁴⁶ Nina Wardleworth, *The Roman Maghrébin*, p.145.

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