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*Commitment in James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
(1916) and Kamel Daoud's Meursault, Contre-enquête (2013)*

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Contents

Contents.....	i
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
I-Introduction.....	1
Review of Literature.....	3
Issue and Working Hypothesis.....	5
Methodological Outline.....	5
Endnotes.....	7
II-Methods and Materials.....	9
1-Methods.....	9
Sartre’s Theory of Commitment.....	9
2-Materials.....	12
Summary of <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>	12
Summary of <i>Meursault, Contre-enquête</i>	13
Endnotes.....	15
III-Results.....	16

IV-Discussion.....	18
Chapter One: Historical Background of Ireland and Algeria.....	18
Historical Background of Ireland.....	18
Historical Background of Algeria.....	24
Endnotes.....	35
Chapter Two: Commitment in the Two Novels.....	39
Commitment in <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>	39
Commitment in <i>Meursault, Contre-enquête</i>	50
Endnotes.....	58
V-Conclusion.....	63
Bibliography.....	65

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Dedication

I dedicate this modest dissertation to all my family, friends and classmates.

And to all teachers and students of the Department of English UMMTO.

Abstract

*This research paper studies James Joyce's **A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man** (1916) and Kamel Daoud's **Meursault, Contre-enquête** (2013). The purpose of this dissertation is to discuss the aspects of commitment of the two writers through their respective novels and therefore to establish a link between their ideas and positions through a comparative study. The main focus of this work is on the authors' denunciation of religious oppression and domination in their home countries. Furthermore, this analysis will shed light upon some historical events that characterized Ireland and Algeria which evidently impacted the writers into the production of their works. To achieve this goal, this work will be based on Sartre's theory of Commitment developed in his book *What is Literature?* (1948). Despite the differences between the two writers' social, cultural and religious backgrounds there exist many similarities between them. Joyce and Daoud are both good examples of committed writers and their novels reflect the notion of literary commitment.*

I-Introduction:

The writer is considered to be the mirror of his own society. In this sense, many writers commit themselves through their writings to the quest for truth and reality. In fact, commitment to truth is inherent in the act of good writing. Committed writers are conscious and aware of the world around them and their literature is a result of their attitude towards it. They believe that to write is to reveal a certain problematic in order to change it. Therefore, unlike the compromised writers, who avoid the truthful portrayal of reality, committed writers give themselves a mission and use their writings as an instrument for furthering and spreading the cause they believe in and express spontaneously their different opinions and positions. For this reason, the committed writer is considered to be responsible in guiding his readers' minds and opening their eyes to what surrounds them. Hence, their act is considered to be a sort of commitment.¹

The issue of commitment is very central to literature because it interferes and interacts with every aspect of life such as culture, politics and religion. It involves the writer's attempt to reflect through his work a picture of the human condition without losing sight of the individual. Thus, commitment strongly opposes the expression of 'Art for art's sake' because it is not a literature for entertainment and aesthetics sake, but rather a literature which deals with serious matters. The online Oxford learners' Dictionary defines the term as: "The state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, etc or an engagement or obligation that restricts freedom of action".²

Commitment against religion is one of the common themes tackled by the writers James Joyce and Kamel Daoud in their respective works *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916)* and *Meursault, Contre-enquête (2013)*.

James Joyce in his autobiographical novel conveys his denouncement of the church and clergy. Through the main character, Stephen Dedalus, he rejects religious life and expresses his opposition to the dominance of the Catholic Church over life in Ireland. In August 1904, at about the same time as he began writing *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce wrote in his letter to Nora Barnacle:

Six years ago I left the Catholic Church, hating it most fervently. I found it impossible for me to remain in it on account of the impulses of my nature. I made secret war upon it when I was a student and declined to accept the positions it offered me. By doing this I made myself a beggar but I retained my pride.³

Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, Contre-enquête* which is the retelling of Albert Camus's novel *L'étranger* (1942) from an Algerian perspective, is not only a profound meditation on Algerian identity and the disastrous effects of colonialism in Algeria, but also a direct resentment towards the religious ideology of the Algerian society. In one of his interviews, Daoud says: "J'ai une allergie profonde aux rites, aux dogmes, aux religions quand elles se traduisent en système de valeurs sociales"⁴. Harun, the story teller, criticizes and refuses to submit to the Islamic religion and expresses impudently his hatred towards religion and its followers.

Therefore, our aim in this research paper is to study the commitment against religion in both James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, Contre-enquête*; an aspect that cannot be ignored or go unnoticed when we read the two novels. We intend to uncover and show the rebellion of the two writers and their ways of refusing the dominant religions in their home countries.

Review of Literature

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, Contre-enquête* have received a large amount of criticism from different critics using different perspectives and viewpoints.

To start with James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Ferhi Samir and Bouteldja Riche in their work entitled "Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916): A post colonial Analysis" published in *Arab World English Journal for Translations & Literary Studies* claim that: "*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* attempts to find the means by which to free both the artist and modern consciousness from all ideological strictures in all its form, national, political, religious or gender"⁵. This means that in the novel, Stephen Dedalus is a person who is stuck by the Irish nets of family, church and country, and he is in a permanent struggle against all these constraints to construct his identity, achieve his artistic ambition and eventually free himself.

In her thesis entitled "The Theme of Exile in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996) Lamia Gudouari wrote: "Since the very first pages of Joyce's *A Portrait* [...] the greater themes and motivating forces that came to shape Stephen's final destination were presented in a microcosmic world"⁶. In other words, the first several pages of the novel provide a brief introduction of the central themes that *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* will deal with, such as the role of family, religion, and nationalism in the formation of Stephen's identity.

Tamara Marček, in his Master thesis, under the title "Alienation and Re-establishment of identity in British Modernist novels" says: "[...] complex in its structure, this novel offers a detailed look on mental, physical and spiritual development of Stephen Dedalus, a young man growing under the twentieth century society's rule"⁷. Tamara describes the book as a

panoramic novel which uncovers all the different views and aspects of Stephen's development within his society.

In his dissertation, "Joyce's Attitude towards Religion in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man", César Sagrista claims that: "Joyce presents the Catholic Church as an imperfect system that, instead of making Stephen's life more harmonious, is the causer of quarrels and unfair punishment"⁸, he adds: "Joyce gives us some reasons why someone should reject a religious system such as Catholic Irish Church"⁹. One may understand from this quote that the aim of Joyce is to show and make people aware of the negative side of the church which affects badly the life of people.

Kamel Daoud's novel, *Meursault, Contre-enquête* received a great interest especially after the book was translated into English by John Cullen in 2015 under the title *The Meursault Investigation*. Azadeh Moaveni writes in *The Financial Times* "*The Meursault Investigation* is perhaps the most important novel to emerge out of the Middle East in recent memory, and its concerns could not be more immediate"¹⁰. Moaveni praises Daoud's novel and stresses its uniqueness and importance among other literary works and points out the valuable issues the book discusses.

Another article written by Michiko Kakutani entitled "Kamel Daoud interrogates Camus in *The Meursault Investigation*", published in *The New York Times* claims that the novel pushes the reader not only to reevaluate Camus's novel but also to meditate on the history of Algeria on the time of colonialism and even after it. She says "It provides the architecture for an intricately layered tale that not only makes us reassess Camus's novel but also nudges us into a contemplation of Algeria's history and current religious politics; colonialism and post-colonialism [...]"¹¹.

Last but not least, Alice Kaplan's review in the weekly magazine, *The Nation* points out the sensitive situation that the novel reflects. She says "Daoud turns the novel into an aesthetic platform for his particular sense of the Algerian absurd: the tyranny of official religion and an asphyxiating national history"¹². The critic claims that the country is stuck between the oppression and the dominance of the Islamic religion from one side and the brutal colonial experience from another side.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

From the above review of the literature about Joyce's and Daoud's novels, one can notice that they have received a large amount of criticism, and many studies have dealt with the two selected novels: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Meursault, Contre-enquête* separately. Hence, to the best of our knowledge, no work has been conducted so far to study the two writers under discussion together with the perspective of uncovering their commitment and protest. Therefore, our main concern in this dissertation is to reveal Joyce's and Daoud's commitment against religion through their novels, in one sole comparative study. The work will also try to shed light upon some historical events that took place in both authors' countries and which influenced them for producing their novels.

To achieve our task, we intend to rely on Jean-Paul Sartre's theory about commitment. He is considered to be one of the most committed writers of his time. In his essay 'WHAT IS LITERATURE?' (1948), Sartre exposes his theory by answering three main questions: what is writing? Why do we write? For whom does one write?

Methodological Outline

In this research paper we have made use of the IMRAD method. Thus, our work is composed of five sections; The first section is devoted to general introduction where we

introduce the issue of commitment and mention the two literary works, we also review some previous critics that have been written on Joyce's *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, Contre-enquête*, we have then raised the issue and the working hypothesis which is the study gap that we aim to fulfill and the methodology. The second section includes methods and materials; it consists of Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of commitment on which our work is based, in addition to the summaries of the two primary sources. The third section consists of the results and the findings of our research paper. The fourth section is dedicated to the discussion and the analysis of the two literary works; it will be divided into two chapters, the first chapter revolves the historical backgrounds of the two writers' texts, while the second one discusses the secular commitment of the authors within their novels. The last section is a general conclusion of our work as a summary of the whole work and a restatement of our main findings.

Endnotes:

¹ Stewart, Gaither. "Literature: Compromise and Commitment" Southern Cross Review. Rome, September 2002 available on: <https://southerncrossreview.org/20/stewartessay.htm>

² <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/commitment>

³ Ellmann, Richard. Selected letters by James Joyce. London: faber and faber 1975. p25-26

⁴ Kamel, Daoud (2018, 29 October). Kamel Daoud « Il est difficile de s'exprimer sur l'islam quand on est coincé entre islamistes et islamophobe » interviewed by (Virginie Larousse). Le Monde Des Religions. Retrieved from http://www.lemondedesreligions.fr/une/kamel-daoud-il-est-difficile-de-s-exprimer-sur-l-islam-quand-on-est-coince-entre-islamistes-et-islamophobes-29-10-2018-7562_115.php

⁵ Ferhi S, Bouteldja R. "Joyce's Dubliners (1914) and A Portrait of the artist as a Young Man (1916): A Post Colonial Study. AWEJ for Translation & Literary Studies. 2018, p105

⁶ Gudouari, Lalia "The theme of exile in James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Frank McCourt's Angela's Ashes", M'hamed Bougara University Boumerdes, 2012, p59

⁷ Tamara, Marcek. "Alienation, Isolation and Re-establishment of Identity in British Modernist Novels", University of J.J. Strossmayer in Osijek, 2016, p13

⁸ Sagrista, César. "Joyce's Attitude towards Religion in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man", University of Chile, 2005, p35

⁹ Ibid, p35

¹⁰ Moaveni, Azadeh. "The Meursault Investigation, by Kamel Daoud" Financial Times. London, July 10, 2015.

¹¹ Kakutani, Michiko. “Review: Kamel Daoud Interrogates Camus in *The Meursault Investigation*” New York Book Review. New York, May 28, 2015.

¹² Keplan, Alice. “Camus Redux” The Nation. New York, February 23, 2015.

II-Method and Materials

1/Method

Summary of Sartre's theory of Commitment

This part of our research examines the theory of commitment elaborated by Jean-Paul Sartre, in his work *What Is Literature?* (1948).

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) is a French philosopher, essayist, novelist and playwright known for his existentialism. He is one of the icons of committed literature of the twentieth century. Sartre introduced his theory of commitment in his essay *What Is Literature?* By answering three main questions: What is writing? why write? For whom does one write?

Starting with **What is Writing?** Sartre in this section distinguishes writing from other forms of arts such as music and painting. He says: "There is no such parallelism [between a literary theory and music]. Here as everywhere, it is not only the form which differentiates, but the matter as well. And it is one thing to work with colour and sound, and another to express oneself by means of words"¹. The works of the painter or the musician are interpreted and perceived differently from one person to another; whereas, Sartre claims that a writer uses language and words with deliberation and therefore can guide his reader to grasp his attention. He says "the empire of sign is prose"².

In addition, he distinguishes between prose and poetry; he considers poetry the same as music and painting because, though a poet uses words, he does not use them in the same way as used by prose writer, Sartre says: "[The poet] has chosen the poetic attitude which considers words as things not as signs"³, whereas the prose writer is a man who "makes use of words"⁴. In fact, what matters more is the aim of writing or the ideas and not the style or the beauty of the language.

Sartre believes that the mission of the prose writer is to be committed in his works by speaking about subjects and themes which he aims to change. He says “By speaking I reveal the situation by my very intention of changing it”⁵. He adds: “The committed writer knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can reveal only by planning to change”⁶. In short, a writer must devote his artistic creation to denounce and outspoke the social, cultural, religious and political issues of his environment.

The second question Sartre asks is: **Why Write?** According to him, the motive of literary creation is the need to know how much we are related to our world. He says: “one of the chief motives of artistic creation is certainly the need that we are essential in relation to the world”⁷. In addition, Sartre emphasizes the relationship of the writer with his readers as well as his environment. He says:

It is not true that one writes for oneself. That would be the worst blow [...] The creative act is an incomplete and abstract moment in the production of a work. If the author existed alone he would be able to write as much as he liked; the work as object would never see the light of day and he would either have to put down his pen or despair. But the operation of writing implies that of reading as its dialectical correlative and these two connected acts necessitate two distant agents [...] There is no art except from and by others.⁸

Sartre declares that the author and the reader are interconnected. In fact, literature is a means of communication between the writer and the reader. He explains this relationship as: “Reading is a pact of generosity between author and reader. Each one trusts the other; each one counts on the other, demands of the other as much as he demands of himself. Their relationship is based on generosity, trust and confidence, in other words their relationship is complementary”⁹.

He continues his answer by proclaiming that literature should not be ‘art for Art’s sake’. One writes in response to a specific oppression or conflict, he waits for positiveness and change in his society. And he calls the reader to grasp meaning from what he reads. He writes: “The reader must be able to make a certain aesthetic withdrawal.”¹⁰

Finally, one can conclude that the main idea for Sartre is freedom. Freedom of writing is essential for any writer to be able to write about the real world around him. In addition, Sartre sticks also to the role of the reader and his freedom to interpret and relate the author's text to his own circumstances and environment. He says: "[...] the writer, a free man addressing free men, has only one subject freedom."¹¹

The last question Sartre answers in his essay is **For Whom Does One Write?** For him the aim of the writer is to write for the whole world; "[The author] writes for the universal reader, and we have seen, in effect, that the exigency of the reader is, a rule, addressed to all men"¹². He adds that the writer must address the people who belong to his time and culture, since they share the same causes and issues. He claims "[...] the writer is speaking to his contemporaries and brothers of his class and race [...]"¹³. Thus, for Sartre, the role of art is meditation whose aim is to establish communication between a current event and the people. As a matter of fact, once a person becomes a writer he can never avoid the norms of his surroundings because "the milieu produces the writer"¹⁴. Sartre describes the writer saying that "[He] is, par excellence, a mediator and his commitment is to meditation"¹⁵.

In sum, it is obvious that the mission of the committed writer is to change society in a positive way by rendering people aware, conscious and convinced to act and therefore to change.

2/Materials

Summary of James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce deals with the life of the novel protagonist Stephen Dedalus who lives in Ireland. The novel is divided into five chapters; each one reflects a specific period of Stephen's development in his life, from childhood to maturity.

As a child, Stephen grew up in a middle class family, where he had been raised under Catholic doctrines. Later, Stephen joins the religious school of Clongowes Wood College. In the beginning, he feels lonely and unable to adapt himself to the strict environment at school, but soon he gets used to it and mixes with his peers. He is glad each time he visits his family. However, at home he usually witnesses tensions and disputes among his family members about the political and religious issues of his country.

Later on, Stephen's father, Simon Dedalus, faces a financial deficit and sinks into debt. Stephen now realizes that he cannot go back to Clongowes because of the hard financial situation of his family. Therefore, he moves to Dublin where he attends Belvedere College, a religious school.

Throughout the years, Stephen loses faith in the Catholic Church and starts to lead a sinful life. One day at school, he attends the five days of retreat which consists of hearing sermons, worshipping and confessions. Stephen is terrified as he hears the sermons about sin, hell, and doomsday and starts to feel guilty and regret for all the sins he committed in his life. As a result he decides to renew his faith in God. Stephen now devotes his life to Christianity and starts to attend mass; his excitement pushes the director of his school to ask him integrate priesthood. However, after considering the offer, Stephen finds how the life as a priest would

be difficult and incompatible with his artistic ambitions. One day, while he was walking in the beach he meets a beautiful young girl and in a sudden epiphany he realizes that beauty and love should not be a source of shame, and therefore he decides to live as he wishes away from religious life.

At the end of the novel, Stephen moves to university where he develops his artistic ideas and becomes aware of the world around him. Now that he knows what he wants, he wishes to flee Ireland and escape the restrictions of his family, religion and nation and live independent and most importantly to achieve his dream of becoming an artist.

Summary of Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, Contre-enquête*

The novel is narrated from the perspective of Harun, an elderly Algerian man. His brother, Mousa, was murdered by a Frenchman, when Algeria was still a French colony. The murderer, Meursault, wrote a novel about his experiences in Algeria, in which he names Mousa briefly as "the Arab". Meursault corresponds to the protagonist of Albert Camus' novel *L'Étranger* (1942), and Harun's narrative is a response to that book.

Harun is telling his story to a young interlocutor at a bar in Oran over the course of several nights. Harun grew up in a poor neighborhood of Algiers. His father had abandoned the family years before which left Mousa to work at the port to support the family. When Musa died, Harun was only 7 years old. Soon after Mousa's death, Harun and his mother live in hard conditions and decide to leave Algiers; his mother improves the poverty by getting a job as a housekeeper to a family of French settlers. After independence, the French family flees the country and therefore they claim the house as their own property.

Harun's mother conducts an investigation into the circumstances of Mousa's death, but it is useless. One night on July 05th 1962, Harun kills a French man called Joseph Larquais as

a revenge to his brother's death. Later on, Harun is caught and arrested, but he is finally released after spending some days in jail.

A year later, Harun meets a young woman 'Meriem', who is conducting a research on Meursault's novel and who gives him the book written by the murderer Meursault, in which the death of his brother Mousa is recorded, and eventually he reads it. Meanwhile, Harun falls in love with Meriem and asks her for marriage, but she ends up leaving him.

Harun finishes his story in the present day; although he is old, he doesn't have a wife or family, he lives alone in his apartment. He deplores Algeria's growing religious conservatism; he says it contrasts with the hypocrisy of their actual lives. Harun's rejection of religion makes him an outcast in the neighbourhood, but it allows him to feel free. He once gets in a fight with an Imam trying to convert him. He thinks that he has access to a sphere of truth that religious people do not have.

Endnotes:

¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul, what is literature. Translated by Bernard Frechtman, 1949, New York: Philosophical library, p7-8

² Ibid, p11

³ Ibid, p12

⁴ Ibid, p19

⁵ Ibid, p22

⁶ Ibid, p23

⁷ Ibid, p39

⁸ Ibid, p42- 43

⁹ Ibid, p55

¹⁰ Ibid, p49

¹¹ Ibid, p64

¹² Ibid, p67

¹³ Ibid, p68

¹⁴ Ibid, p74

¹⁵ Ibid, p76

III-Results

From our reading and studying of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, Contre-enquête*, we came to the conclusion that despite the differences between the authors' social, historical and religious backgrounds, there exist many similarities between the two writers' outlooks, aims and themes that are reflected in their novels. Therefore, this allowed us to bring these two works under the light of a comparative study.

In the first chapter of this research paper, we have tried to shed light upon some major historical, political and religious events that shaped the two writers' countries, Ireland and Algeria. We noticed that both countries went through similar experiences especially in terms of religious domination. In fact, the situation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Ireland is very similar to that of the second half of the twentieth and early twenty first centuries in Algeria. At that time the two countries were characterized by strict religious conservatism. Religious education shaped every aspect of life and people were oppressed and stuck under the tyranny of religion. Moreover, the political sphere is marked by the influence and interference of religious ideologies and morality.

In the second chapter, we have developed the two authors' aspects of commitment against religious dominance and brought together their ideas under the framework of a comparative study. The analysis shows that both writers committed themselves and expressed their criticism and denunciation of religious fanaticism through their novels. Both Joyce and Daoud consider religion as an impediment which hinders progress and prevent people from advance and being free. Their works denounce religious oppression and tyranny. Obviously, the aim of the two writers is to make people conscious about the situation around them and

therefore cause them to change for better. In short, they are in favour of freedom of choice and democracy and individuality.

The Irish writer James Joyce and the Algerian writer Kamel Daoud are both good examples of committed writers. Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Daoud's *Meursault, Contre-enquête* (2013) reflect the notion of literary commitment.

IV-Discussion:

Chapter One: Historical Background of Ireland and Algeria:

In this chapter we intend to shed light upon some major events that characterized Ireland and Algeria, focusing on the religious side of the two countries. Our aim is to show the tyranny of religion in Ireland and Algeria and how it affected both countries and their people. The reason for Joyce's and Daoud's rebellion against religion is due to the hypocrisy and corruption of the religious authorities and institutions in both countries, in addition to the religious interferences in the political issues and its oppression on people's daily lives.

Section One: Historical background of Ireland

Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was set in the context of the late 1880 to the early 1900's in Dublin. It was published in *The Egoist* (1914) in a serial form and as a book in 1916. During this period; many significant events took place in Ireland especially in politics. The island at that time was under the colonization of the British Empire.

Historically speaking, British colonialism over Ireland goes back to the time of Henry II when he invaded the island on October 17th, 1171. Since that time, England started to gain some influence over this region¹. However, it is not considered as a direct involvement because it was only with the English Reformation. In 1534 that Britain succeeded to fully control Ireland when Henry VIII declared himself head of the Church of England². In 1541 he took the title of 'king of Ireland' and therefore he asserted his dominance over Ireland and established a protestant church in catholic Ireland³.

From 1603 onward, the English government encouraged Protestants from England and Scotland to establish colonies in Ireland. Therefore, by the arrival of thousands of settlers to the island, religion became a distinguishing feature between people. The new religion,

Protestantism, was for the intellectuals, the landlords, the ruling class and everyone who holds an important position in Ireland; whereas Catholicism was left for the masses. Since that time the Irish have started to rebel against their oppressors.⁴

In the Irish case, political independence coincided with religious independence. By the late nineteenth century, Catholicism was successfully conjoined with Irish nationalism and identity. As Gaelic Ireland increasingly lost its viability under the rule of the British and receded to the Western concerns at the island, the Irish masses needed some common bond upon which they could cling or create their national identity. Catholicism served this function perfectly because it united Irish majority in their devotion to the same faith. The Catholic Church played an important role in motivating Catholics to resist British rule and seek their own separate political destiny. Therefore, loyalty to the catholic faith became a symbol of Irish opposition and resistance to English rule.⁵

As a result the Irish society became viewed as one of the most religious of the catholic nations. The dominance of the church was really apparent that the Irish people were defined according to their beliefs. In his book *Catholic Ethic and Global Capitalism*, Bryan Fields says: “while the rest of Western Europe became secularized, religious affiliation remained a strong social maker for the Irish”⁶.

Early twentieth century Ireland was instable. Among the instabilities that affected the Irish was the domination of the Roman Catholic Church. The faithfulness of Irish Catholics to their religious heritage has historically provided the church with tremendous institutional power in society. Church interfered in all the aspects of the land: family, education, culture and even politics were all under the control of the church.⁷

The Irish family was largely dominated by the catholic beliefs. For instance, the Catholic Church demands that children of mixed marriages are to be brought up as Catholics, a matter

that caused division of the family members. On the social side, the daily life of the Irish was dominated by religion which modelled their behaviour. On the cultural side, literature and other artistic works were influenced by this form of Christianity. On the political side, the laws passed during that period bore the signature of the church.

The Irish Educational system of the 19th and 20th centuries has been characterized by the domination of religion. In fact, the school of Ireland was a place where religious thoughts were transmitted in the hope of saving the religious ancestral heritage. The state has to give common education that should be a religious one. The aim is to root firmly religious morality in the mind of the Irish youth. Therefore, in this period clergymen took possession of the Irish educational institutions.

In the late nineteenth century, Catholics took power and had an influence on politics. The Irish clergy caused the downfall of one of the most significant figures of Irish nationalists, Charles Parnell (1846-1891). The church's interference in his personal life had a direct influence on the political issues of the land.

Charles Parnell was an Irish nationalist politician who served as a parliamentary leader. He was born into a powerful Anglo-Irish protestant family, and Catholics used to support him even though he was protestant. Parnell believed strongly in Irish nationalism, he aimed to realize the Irish hope of home rule and self-governance. He was loyal to Ireland and his own dream was to see Ireland an independent country. Unfortunately, his relationship with Catherine O'Shea, a wife of his fellow member of the Irish parliament, caused him a loss of leadership and power after being betrayed and denounced by the Roman Catholic Church. Parnell was at the height of his power at the end of 1889 when Captain William O'Shea asked for a divorce from his wife Catherine citing Parnell as a correspondent in the case.⁸

On November 30, 1890, Thomas W. Croke, the Archbishop of Cashel, sent a telegram to Justin McCarthy calling for Parnell to resign. “In God’s name let him retire quietly and with good grace from the leadership”⁹, the archbishop telegraphed. If Parnell did not quit, Croke warned, the alliance with the Liberal Party would disintegrate and the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) would be seriously damaged. The same day 26 priests in Cork called on Parnell to step down, and the Bishop of Cork, Thomas Alphonsus O’Callaghan, delivered a personal statement denouncing him. “In consequence of recent proceedings,” he said, “I have lost all confidence in him”⁹.

The next day, 73 members of the IPP began six days of meetings in London to discuss the leadership issue. While this was being debated in London, the four Irish Catholic archbishops —Michael Logue of Armagh, William Walsh of Dublin, Thomas Croke of Cashel, and John McEvilly of Tuam — condemned Parnell as unfit to lead the IPP. We cannot regard Mr Parnell in any light than as a man convicted of one of the greatest offences known to religion and society”¹⁰, proclaimed the archbishops. There was an election before the end of the month in Kilkenny to decide on Parnell’s leadership. His supporters were initially confident of success, but the anti-Parnells won a decisive victory with over 64% of the vote.¹¹

Parnell blamed the Catholic bishops for his defeat. He denounced Archbishop Croke in Limerick on January 10, 1891. “It is not open to the Irish bishops to claim they had interfered on the question of morality, because they were too late”¹², said Parnell. They had not spoken out for two weeks after the divorce case, and when they did speak out it was clearly “a question of politics”, he insisted.¹³

Parnell is celebrated as “the uncrowned king of Ireland”, the best organiser of a political party up to that time and one of the best figures in parliamentary history. Many believe that Home

Rule could have been achieved without bloodshed, if he had not been brought down by personal circumstances.¹⁴

Ireland's longstanding history as the repressed subject of a colonizing power produced a nation characterized by an imperialist culture and lacking a distinct identity. However, the Irish people had never ceased their struggle and quest for an Irish culture and identity; many Irish intellectuals became aware of Britain's colonial discourse which aims to: Anglicisation, assimilation and colonization of the Irish minds. As a reaction, they dived into their lost heritage, Gaelic culture and Catholicism, and adopted it as the basis of a new national cultural identity.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there started in Ireland a new period referred to as 'The Irish Renaissance', a cultural, artistic and linguistic revival which came as a result of Irish people searching for their own culture and identity, one that is distinctly different from what was imposed on them through the English invasion.

Along with the political nationalist movement which sought for Home Rule and independence, the Irish Renaissance was a cultural movement that aimed to celebrate and honour Ireland as an independent nation through not the acts of violence and bloodshed but art and literature. Therefore, organisations such as the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (1876), the National Literary Society (1892), the Gaelic League (1893), and the Irish National Theatre Society (1902) were established to reconstruct an Irish national unity.¹⁵ These revivalist organisations also had the effect of making people more aware of their "Irishness".

English language had become the official and literary language of Ireland. The growth in the use of English, the language of the ruling class, and the fact that the use of Gaelic was forbidden in schools threatened the Gaelic language with decline, and by that time, Gaelic

was spoken by less than 25% of the population. Therefore, a number of organisations were formed to stop this decline and revive native culture.¹⁶

In 1892 Douglas Hyde, a Celtic scholar and cultural nationalist, delivered a lecture on *The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland*, a precursor to the founding of the Gaelic League. He called to embrace things authentically Irish, he feared most “nation of imitations...alive only to second-hand assimilation”¹⁷. In 1893, Douglas Hyde founded the Gaelic League to preserve and revive the Irish language. The aim of the Gaelic revival movement was to preserve Irish as the national language of Ireland and spread its use as a spoken language, study and publish existing Gaelic literature, cultivate a modern literature in Irish, fight against the erosion of the Irish culture, language and traditional Irish sports and music; it also sought to reintroduce the language back to schools.¹⁸

The Gaelic League started to organise language classes, not just in Dublin but throughout the country. It published tracts and initiated debates and lectures. By 1903 the League had 600 branches and through its influence the language was introduced to 1300 national schools. Hyde believed emphatically that the League should be totally free of politics and open to people of all shades of political and religious opinion who wished to see the survival and revival of the Irish language. He resigned his presidency of the League in 1915 protesting against a shift towards a more militant outlook.¹⁹

The movement developed into a vigorous literary force centred mainly on drama and theatre. The poet and playwright William Butler Yeats, known as the father of the Irish Revival, wished to reconstruct Irish culture and identity and give it a new life by relying on Ireland’s ancient history and roots. In order to realize his hopes, Yeats gathered Irish writers and dramatists and encouraged them to honour and celebrate their motherland. Therefore, a circle of Irish literary figures came together in order to revive Irish literature and culture.

Yeats helped create institutions that would support and expand Ireland's cultural framework. In 1904, Yeats with playwright and folklorist Lady Gregory founded in Dublin the Abbey theatre, one of Europe's earliest national theatres. The Abbey Theatre was established with the hopes of presenting Ireland as a civilized nation with a rich culture; they aimed to remove the negative depiction of the Irish people in English literature, liberate Irish literature from the English influence and prove that their culture was by no means inferior to theirs²⁰. In the "Manifesto for the Irish Literary Theatre", Yeats, Gregory and Martyn claim: "We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism"²¹.

Yeats and Lady Gregory insisted on the production of the poetic dramas characterized by the use of Gaelic mythology, folklore, mysticism, legends, music, heroes and heroines. The literary figures tried to reflect their own views about the natural beauty of Ireland and praised the peasantry life and dignity of the Irish people²². Many plays were performed on the stage giving rise and success to many playwrights such as: John Millington Synge, who wrote plays of great beauty and power in a stylized peasant dialect, Sean O'Casey, G.B. Shaw, George William Russell, and Lennox Robinson, etc.

Theatre then became a major source of promoting and shaping Irish identity. Arthur Griffith writes: "We look to the Irish National Theatre primarily as a means of generating the country. The theatre is a powerful agent in the building up of a nation. When it is in foreign and hostile hands it is a deadly danger to the country. When it is controlled by friendly hands and native it is bulwark and a protection."²³

Historical Background of Algeria

In order to understand the origins of political Islam and the trends of the Islamic movements and their contributions to rule and dominate the political sphere, it is necessary to refer to some important historical stations in the formation of this map, especially after the

independence of Algeria. However, the beginning of the emergence of the Islamic trend in Algeria dates back to the period of the French colonization during which Algeria was colonized for more than one hundred years.

The beginning of the twentieth century was an important turning point in the history of Algeria and its struggle against the French occupation. This period represented a new age for the Algerians, both in terms of the French policy adopted in Algeria and the situation of the Algerians in various fields. This stage witnessed the birth or re-birth of the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Algerian nation; Algeria knew the Renaissance which was the nucleus of the emergence of intellectual awareness and political parties. Therefore, a new type of resistance has appeared after being convinced that the unorganized armed struggle and simple military means of the 19th century was not enough in the process of resistance against the colonizer²⁴.

The new type of resistance consisted in the creation of different organizations, movements, and cultural clubs that shaped the currents of the national movement, each one with its own representatives, principles, and objectives. The Algerian national movement has known a Salafist religious reform group, founded in the 1930s under the name of the “Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars”. The creation of this trend is considered to be the beginning of the Islamic trend in Algeria and therefore, the forerunner of all the extremist political Islam movements that emerged in post-independence Algeria.

This movement was mainly concerned with the religious, social and cultural aspects of the Algerians without interfering in the political matters. Ben Badis declared that the association is a religious and charity one that seeks to serve religion and society and does not interfere in politics or engage in it²⁵. Therefore, the association sought to educate the young Algerians, fight innovations and superstitions, revive the Arab and Islamic culture, preserve

the Algerian identity with its cultural, religious and historical values and resist the occupation policy that aimed at eliminating it²⁶. In order to achieve its purpose, more than 200 schools were opened; dozens of mosques, clubs and associations were established, in addition to the reliance on the press to spread its ideas²⁷.

The Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars opposed assimilation with the French, but did not support independence, instead supporting linguistic nationalism and loyalty to France. Ben Badis says:

Nous avons cherché dans l'histoire et dans le présent et nous avons constaté que la nation algérienne musulmane s'est formée et existe, comme se sont formées toutes les nations de la terre. Cette nation a son histoire illustrée par les plus hauts faits ; elle a son unité religieuse et linguistique ; elle a sa culture, ses traditions et ses caractéristiques, bonnes ou mauvaises comme c'est le cas de toute nation sur terre. Nous disons ensuite que cette nation algérienne n'est pas la France, ne peut être la France et ne veut pas être la France. Il est impossible qu'elle soit la France, même si elle veut l'assimilation. Elle a son territoire déterminé qui est l'Algérie avec ses limites actuelles.²⁸

In a debate with Dr. Ammar Talbi in the Dialogue forum, Hamid Al-Ayashi, a political analyst, claims that the association did not support the Algerian revolution and the idea of independence was not presented clearly compared to Massali El Hajj, Al-Basayer newspaper did not publish the statement of the first of November and did not name in two full years the Mujahideen and the martyrs by these names and replaced them with the words of “armed individuals”. Bashir Ibrahimy stayed in Cairo and Pakistan until late 1959, and there is no proof that he blessed the revolution or supported the quest for liberation. He added that Ben Badis had never spoken of a country that was fundamentally victorious from France; he was rather proposing the idea that Algeria remains under the French framework, but refused to abandon the Islamic religion²⁹. However, the association joined the ranks of the National Liberation Front (FLN) after the successful attacks of Zirout Youcef.

Since 1963 until the political opening of 1989, the association knew a long period of stagnation due to the suspension of its reform and educational activities. However, The

Association's impact on the political scene contributed in the emergence of Al Qiyam in the mid-1960s (many of its members were from the association) which presented itself as the inheritor of Ibn Badis and his movement. This movement was the precursor to the Islamic Salvation Front.³⁰

Regime in Algeria has not stopped by a long series of concessions since independence from paving the way for political Islam, which in turn produced barbaric terrorism.

Following Algeria's independence on July 5, 1962, the National Front of Liberation (FLN) seized control of the country, and Algeria was constituted as a one-party state and adopted the socialist approach. The FLN became its only legal and ruling party during the presidency of Ahmed Ben Bella (1962-1965) and Houari Boumediene (1965-1978). This period was characterized by the absence of any intellectual and political dialogue within the national group, administrative corruption, social oppression, poverty, unemployment, absence of social justice, the spread of bribery, bureaucracy, absence of freedom of speech and demonstration...etc³¹.

Under these circumstances, the extremist Islamic currents have taken advantage and started to infiltrate the state and society with the ultimate aim of gaining the sympathy and support of the popular masses and to defeat the established regime and rule the country. The Islamic movements started their plans under the guise of charities, relief actions and the establishment of associations such as 'Islamic values Association' and even by turning mosques into political platforms. Later on, the Islamic work reached also universities where many lectures were taking place. In the 1970s, some secret Islamic movements emerged among university students; Mahfoud Nahnah and his companions led a secret organization called 'Almohads' with a group of students and professors. At the end of the 1970s, the public appearance of Muslim Brotherhood in Algerian universities began within the context of the

so-called 'The Islamic awakening'. By this time the Islamic trends have gained public attention and the trust and support of the Algerians.³²

As a result of the harsh conditions of the Algerian people, the wrong policies and misguided choices of governance under the one ruling party (FLN), the Algerian citizens lost confidence on the rulers and therefore started to revolt against their rulers aside with the Islamists. The popular uprising on October 5, 1988 was a major event, which led to a great change in the official policies. The movement pushed the system under the presidency of Chadli Bendjedid to submit to the demands and vindications of the people. President Bendjedid, called for a reevaluation of the political experience and the need for political and economic change in the country. Therefore, the retreat from socialism began, and the political reforms included first and foremost the change of the Constitution, which in its article 40 allowed political and party pluralism in Algeria for the first time since the independence of the country. This encouraged the freedom of opinion and expression and the independence of the press.³³

The political openness brought by the new reforms led, for the first time, to the creation of many political parties. The Islamic movements, in their turn, came to the fore of political life as an organized political force that had the financial and human resources to the pursuit of power; various Islamic parties emerged, such as: Society for Peace Movement, Renaissance Movement, and National Reform Movement. However, the most prominent and triumphant of all was the Islamic Salvation Front, which was a unique phenomenon in Algeria between the movements of political Islam³⁴.

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) is a former Algerian political party, established on February 18, 1989 after the constitutional amendment and the introduction of the political pluralism. The Algerian government officially recognized the Islamic Salvation Front on

September 6, 1989, and was then headed by Abbasi Madani and his deputy Ali Belhadj. The aim of this party was to establish a theocracy in Algeria to be the first Islamic country in North Africa³⁵. The FIS is a fundamentalist Islamic movement that calls for a return to Islam as the only way to reform and save Algeria from its social, economic, intellectual and cultural colonization, and to preserve the personality of the Algerian Muslim people. Ali Belhadj, has been quoted as saying, “When we are in power there will be no more elections because God will be ruling”³⁶.

In an interview with Daniel Pipes and Patrick Clawson, Anwar Haddam, a president of the Parliamentary Delegation Abroad of the FIS, says:

[...] Since 1962, we have not really been independent. We had military independence, but nothing more [...] Now we want back our own identity, and that's our right [...] The problem is that there are some people [...] who think that they have to stay within the Western ideological and civilizational sphere, who think that France should remain in Algeria [...] the FIS rejects this assimilationist approach [...] It aims at the preservation of the cultural and the historical traditions of the Algerian society [...] We, in Islam, we have our own values, we are opposed strongly to those who would like to impose Western values onto us.³⁷

The opinions of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, from Ibn Badis to Brahim, are the intellectual roots of the Salvation Front in terms of reference to the Qur'an and Sunnah and the approach of the Salaf, as well as the writings of Hasan Al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and other intellectual bases of the Islamic Renaissance adopted by the Front³⁸. Anwar Haddam says:

People in the West started with the idea that economic growth requires the separation of church and state. Some people are trying now to apply this idea to Muslim life too, and to separate religion from the state. But we consider Islam a way of life and so we do not accept it being separated from the state.³⁹

On June 12, 1990, The Islamic Front knew the first municipal council elections. The result was an overwhelming victory for the FIS at the expense of several parties, including the FLN.

It received over 953 communes out of the 1539 and 32 wilayas (provinces) out of 48. Thus, it obtained 54% of the votes cast.⁴⁰

The speech adopted by the Islamic Front had the great impact on gaining the confidence of the Algerian citizens who yearned for a new life, focusing on establishing an Islamic system based on the desired justice and guaranteeing people a decent life and aspirations for freedom of expression and the fight against the social pests that have accumulated their losses since the establishment of the young Algerian state. The Algerian people then, look to the Front as an appropriate alternative capable of confronting the corruption of power and reforming the situation.

The electoral victory, provided the Front a control of many local governments, led to the imposing of the veil on female municipal employees, pressuring of liquor stores, video shops and other establishments perceived as non-Islamic to close, segregation of bathing areas by gender, elimination of the French language and culture. Educationally, the party was committed to continue the Arabization of the educational system by shifting the language of instruction in more institutions from French to Arabic. Economically, it urged the establishment of Islamic banking. Socially, it suggested that women should be given a financial incentive to stay at home rather than working outside, thus introducing sexual segregation.

The ruling party in Algeria, FLN, began to feel the threat of the front to its presence in the government and therefore began to put obstacles in the way of the Front's progress. At that time, there were many disturbances such as the demonstrations and strikes led by the FIS. Later on, the party leaders Madani and Belhadj and many others were arrested on charges of conspiracy to the security of the state. The events continued to take a more severe and bloody course after a gambling incident on November 21st, 1991, in which a border military barrack was attacked, several soldiers were killed and many weapons and ammunition were stolen.

The operation was attributed to activists of the Islamic Salvation army, which denied responsibility for the incident.

Despite the arrest of the leaders of the Front, the popularity of the Islamic Front remained at its highest levels, as reflected in the overwhelming results achieved in the legislative elections held on 26 December 1991 and won by an overwhelming majority of 82% of the seats in parliament with 188 seats out of 231, while the ruling party won only 16 seats. This made the front reach a decision-making center⁴¹.

Taking note of the prevailing situation, the army decided on 11 January 1992 to push President Chadli Bendjedid to resign, and interrupt the electoral process. Therefore the municipalities held by the FIS are dissolved and its activists imprisoned or sent to camps established in the southern Sahara. The Front was dissolved by the Algerian army on March 4, 1992. The FIS then engages in terrorist activities against the Algerian State and the civilians who supported it, through its armed wing the AIS (Islamic Salvation Army) and GIA (Armed Islamic group): The bombing of the headquarters of Riad Al-Fath, the placing of a bomb at the headquarters of Algerian television, the placement of conventional bombs at the US embassy in Algeria, hundreds of bombs in police stations and the national constabulary, the attack on security forces barracks and stations, the assassination of the Minister of Defense and Labor...etc⁴²

The country entered in bloody fights for more than a decade in a spiral of violence and counter-violence between the Army forces and the Islamic groups which left hundreds of thousands of victims. In 1997, the main founder and leader of FIS Abbassi Madani was released and put under house arrest, officially he had to call the active terrorist groups to lay down their arms. A few months after his release from prison, a compromising letter was discovered, in which he called on the GIA and AIS to continue their jihad (struggle) until the

establishment of an Islamist state. It was on the basis of this evidence that he was again imprisoned. Events continued to worsen until the end of the 1990s, when the situation began to calm under the presidency of Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

Abdelaziz Bouteflika was chosen by the Algerian army as a president to ensure the return to peace after a long and terrible civil war known as the "black decade" and which had left more than 150,000 dead, thousands missing, one million internally displaced, tens of thousands of exiles and more than \$ 20 billion in damage. His major achievement was the law on "civil concord" following the order of February 25, 1995 initiated by the former president Liamine Zeroual and which was adopted by the parliament on July 8, 1999 then massively approved by more than 90% of voters by referendum on September 16, 1999.

The purpose of the law was to end the Algerian Civil War, and its most important element was its establishment of a system of clemency for Islamist fighters, reintegrate into the life those who had shown their willingness to renounce armed violence and to amnesty those who had been involved in networks of support for terrorist groups during the national tragedy of the Black Decade. The Civil Concord Law represented the conclusion of a three year negotiation process that began in 1997 when direct talks between the Algerian army and the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) resulted in a ceasefire. The success of this law was made evident in the return of thousands of Islamist fighters and the eventual complete dissolution of the AIS in January 2000.⁴³

The year 2005 was marked in Algeria by the organization of a referendum, decided by the President Bouteflika aimed at restoring national reconciliation and ending violence by turning the page of terrorism. The proposed "Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation" is part of the pursuit of the law on "Civil Concord". As a result, 6,000 Islamists surrendered, and returned to their homes, 2.200 prisoners accused of terrorist acts have been released and

many of the Islamist leaders in exile returned home. However, only an armed group that was then dissenting from the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) rejected the offer of amnesty proposed by the Algerian government and declared that they will continue to operate in the country.⁴⁴

Despite its failure to seize power, the Islamic Front of Salvation (FIS) seems to have given birth to neo-Islamism within the regime. Religious parties are still approved by law and participate in the institutional political field. Presently, Algeria still has many active Islamist political parties such as: Islamic Renaissance Movement (MNR), Movement for National Reform (MRN), Movement of the Society for Peace (MSP), Ennahdha Movement (MN), and the National Reform Movement (MNR).

Abdallah Djaballah was among the first activists to spread Islamism in its political form. After studying Islamic sciences in Saudi Arabia, he returned to Algeria where he created many movements. In the parliamentary elections of 2002, his movement (MNR) became the most important Islamist party in the National Assembly. Following the 2002 legislative elections, MNR became the third largest political force in the country and the largest Islamist group with 43 seats. Djaballah ran in the presidential elections in 2004, coming in third position with 5% of the votes.⁴⁵

Since its creation in 1990, the Islamist party MSP has participated in various government coalitions. In 2004, it integrated with two political parties of the parliamentary majority (FLN, and the National Democratic Rally (RND) under what is called “Presidential Alliance”. The latter was created in order to support the president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in his ruling. The MNR, in its turn, undertook electoral alliances in the field with the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) and the Workers' Party. By entering the Algerian political

scene, the MSP and the MRN have been able to work with political actors outside the Islamist movement, share power and thus acquired new resources and new visibilities.⁴⁶

The MSP and the MNR insist mainly on the principle of the Islamisation of society through institutional and legislative work. Their political agenda is rather vague, instead of precisely defining a political program that would be specific to them; these parties prefer to present themselves as defenders of Islamic virtue by insisting on the defense of morality. For instance, the representatives of the MSP opposed strongly the revision of the family code which aims at giving more legal freedoms for women in family matters; they also denounced what is called the evangelization of Kabylia and remained vague on the rights of religious minorities. They also protested against the abolition of teaching Islam in schools, they have managed to prohibit in Algeria the broadcast of the Lebanese TV show “Star Academiya” on the basis that this show is depraved. In 2004, the MNR proposed and passed a law prohibiting the importation of alcohol into Algeria. This "moralizing" approach appears in the words of this MNR activist: “Notre parti est la cible de ceux qui veulent imposer un projet de société importé à l’Algérie et qui veulent l’occidentalisation de la nation. Notre projet de société est démocratique. L’Islam et le nationalisme en sont les deux principaux piliers.”⁴⁷

Despite their legal status, Islamist parties are still being attacked by supporters of secularism.

Redha Malek explains:

Moi, je suis contre la légalisation de ces partis. Si leur discours semble moins violent, ce n'est que de la pure tactique... Les islamistes sont des gens qui utilisent le double langage... Moi, je suis pour l'application de la constitution qui dit qu'il est interdit d'utiliser la religion à des fins politiques. Pourquoi n'est-elle pas appliquée? Parce que l'Etat est faible. Pour moi, l'existence de ces partis constitue l'expression même de la crise.⁴⁸

From this quote, we conclude that Bouteflika’s reign has given some power and much influence to islamist ideas. The latter seem to circulate on the level of Algerian deep society that has been dramatically transformed.

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Chapter Two: Commitment against Religion

In this chapter we analyse the aspects of commitment of the writers James Joyce and Kamel Daoud against religion in their novels *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Meursault, Contre-enquête*. In the first section we discuss Joyce's refusal of the Catholic Church whereas the second one is devoted to Daoud's criticism of the Islamist ideology. This analysis will be conducted in reference to Sartre's theory of commitment.

The religious conflicts between Christian sects of Catholicism and Protestantism, and the harsh morality of the Church of Ireland pushed Joyce to react and rebel against the Roman Catholic Church. Concerning Daoud, he expresses his religious resentment towards the Islamic religion and its ideologies and the pervasive conservatism of the Algerian society.

Section One: Commitment against Religion in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Catholicism in Ireland controlled almost every feature of people's lives in different fields. Thus it exhausted the Irish people by fanatic interferences. In this context Akca Katherine says: "The Roman Catholic Church continued to be a potent force in Joyce's native Ireland throughout and beyond the nineteenth century, not only in terms of doctrinal and spiritual guidance it provided but also because of the influence it exerted upon the cultural and political life of the country¹". As a matter of fact, this pushed a lot of people, notably the intellectuals into reaction. In his book *Madness and Civilization*, Michael Foucault states that oppression, wherever it comes from, paves the way to a revolt²

Sartre claims that "The nineteenth century literature had just disengaged itself from religious ideology and refused to serve bourgeois ideology. Thus, it set itself up as a being, in principle, independent of any sort of ideology"³, in this perspective, James Joyce, one of the prominent literary figures of that period, denounced the Catholic oppression on the Irish

society. He suggested that Ireland suffered from a double colonization; on the one hand, they were victims of Britain, and on the other hand they were victims of the Roman Catholic Church. And he shows in his *Portrait* that the subordination of Ireland to Rome, that is Catholicism, is worse than its subordination towards the British system.

One of the main reasons behind Joyce's exile is the Catholic Church; he considered that the only way to get rid of the religious tyranny was immigration. Joyce left Ireland to live free away from the chains of the Church of his home country. Living abroad, he dedicated his writings to denounce and criticize the imposed Irish constraints mainly of the church. According to Richard Ellmann, Joyce wrote to Nora Barnacle: "Now I make open war upon it [Christianity] by what I write and say and do"⁴.

Anyone who came across Joyce's literary works would certainly have noticed his rejection of religion. This is mainly reflected in his autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; his commitment is very obvious throughout the narrative. For Sartre "Writing is a certain way of wanting freedom"⁵. Therefore, by using Stephen Dedalus as his mouthpiece, Joyce attacks the Catholic Church for the dominance, oppression and corruption it exerted upon the Irish and calls people to embrace their freedom.

Religion is very central to the life of Joyce/Stephen since his childhood. He was surrounded and influenced by religion everywhere. However, he started to question existence, god and religion since an early age.

Instead of studying, he meditates on himself and his position in the cosmos; He examines his own address written in his geography textbook, beginning with himself and listing his school, city, county, and so on in ascending order, ending in 'The Universe'. He asks "What was after the universe? Nothing. But was there anything round the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began? It could not be a wall; but there could

be a thin line there all round everything”⁶. Stephen stuck on that question and concluded that it was big to think about everything and everywhere; for his answers he turns to God, “It was very big to think about everything and everywhere. Only God could do that. He tried to think what a big thought that must be; but he could only think of God”⁷

Then, he starts thinking about God, wondering whether the different names for God in different languages refer to the same being, he concludes that the names of God are in fact all the same being just like his name is Stephen:

God was God’s name just as his name was Stephen. *Dieu* was the French for God and that was God’s name too; and when any one prayed to God and said *Dieu* then God knew at once that it was a French person that was praying. But, though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understand what all the people who prayed said in their different languages, still God remained always the same God and God’s real name was God⁸

However, his questions do not stop here. At school he wonders about the possibility of Father Arnall to commit a sin and where he can do the confession. He writes:

Was that a sin for Father Arnall to be in a wax or was he allowed to get into a wax when the boys were idle because that made them study better or was he only letting on to be in a wax? It was because he was allowed, because a priest would know what a sin was and would not do it. But if he did it one time by mistake what would he do to go to confession? Perhaps he would go to confession to the minister. And if the minister did it he would go to the rector: and the rector to the provincial: and the provincial to the general of the Jesuits. That was called the order [...]⁹

Young Stephen did not understand what God’s and religion’s role were in the world. Spending some time with his uncle Charles, Stephen wonders why his uncle prays so often, he wanted to know if he prays for God to save his soul and have a peaceful death or he asks God for having a fortune. Joyce writes:

On the way home uncle Charles would often pay a visit to the chapel and, as the font was above Stephen’s reach, the old man would dip his hand and then sprinkle the water briskly about Stephen’s clothes and on the floor of the porch. While he prayed he knelt on his red handkerchief and read above his breath

from a thumb blackened prayer book wherein catchwords were printed at the foot of every page. Stephen knelt at his side respecting, though he did not share, his piety. He often wondered what his granduncle prayed so seriously. Perhaps he prayed for the souls in purgatory or for the grace of a happy death or perhaps he prayed that God might send him back a part of the big fortune he had squandered in Cork¹⁰

Through that reflection we can see that Stephen is able, since childhood, to question God and His characteristics, religion and its nature and the church and its rules, to set up later his own system of beliefs.

From the first chapter of the novel we can see the beginning of a rebellion against religion. As a little child, Stephen starts to perceive negatively the religious laws. His first negative experience occurred when he expressed his desire to marry his neighbour Eileen Vance, who is a Protestant. The whole family turned against him and blamed him; his mother orders him to apologize because it is a great sin in Catholicism to marry a non-Catholic, his aunt Dante threatens him and tells him that if he does not withdraw these words “the eagles will come and pull out his eyes”¹¹. Stephen is frightened and turns these threatening words into a song in his mind, “Pull out his eyes/ Apologize/ Apologize/ Pull out his eyes”¹². Stephen does not completely understand his crime since he is still a little boy and with this event he started identifying religion as authority which must be obeyed by all means. However, the negative reaction of his Catholic family led him finally to the development of his own negative attitude towards religion.

In fact, reference to Greek mythology is very common within Joyce’s narrative. Dante’s threatening word “eagle” makes us think about the way Zeus punished Prometheus for his sin. Prometheus a Greek hero, known for his intelligence, and who is credited with the creation of man from clay, defies the gods by stealing fire and giving it to humanity, an act that enabled progress and civilization and intellectualism. Zeus, king of the Olympian Gods, sentenced

him to eternal torment for his transgression. The immortal Prometheus was bound to a rock, where each day an eagle, an emblem of Zeus, was sent to feed on his liver, which would then grow back overnight to be eaten again the next day.¹³

Dante is the typical representation of the Catholic Church, Stephen sees his aunt as “colder, sterner, more aloof figure. She is authoritarian and cruel like the church...and his relationship to her is one of obedience, fear and passive defiance”¹⁴. Metaphorically speaking, the name “Dante” is very symbolic to her character within the novel, a catholic name which refers to religious punishment. One may think of Dante Alighieri the famous Italian writer and the author of the Divine Comedy, a 14th century epic poem in which he is the main character. It gives a picture of the realms of Dante’s afterlife, it splits into three parts: Inferno (hell), Purgatorio (purgatory) and Paradiso (paradise). Dante embarks on a spiritual journey through the nine circles of Hell and witnesses the punishments of sinners who have rejected spiritual values. Inferno contains a deep meaning, which is a critique of the corruption of the Catholic Church.¹⁵

One of the most important scenes in the novel is that of the Christmas dinner discussion where Joyce denounces the interference of the church in political matters and the preaching of politics from the altar. This is illustrated in the novel:

“We go to the house of God, Mr. Casey said, in all humility to pray to our Maker and not to hear election addresses. It is religion, Dante said again. They are right. They must direct their flocks. And preach politics from the altar, is it? Asked Mr. Dedalus. Certainly, said Dante. It is a question of public morality. A priest would not be a priest if he did not tell his flocks what is right and what is wrong”¹⁶

In the quotation above, Joyce questions the role of the church and calls for the separation of religion from political issues, “Let them leave politics alone”¹⁷. Mr. Dedalus and Mr. Casey feel that religion is keeping Ireland from progress and independence, while Dante thinks that religion should take precedence in all aspects of the country.

During this time, the Catholic Church has withdrawn its support to Parnell and condemned him because of his adultery. Joyce denounces the Catholic Church for ruining their Irish political leader and also he rejects the church's attitude towards sexual morality. This is reflected when he says: "No God for Ireland! [...] We have too much God in Ireland. Away with God"¹⁸. However, as a catholic, Dante feels that it is their duty to follow orders from their priests and bishops without questioning them, even when those orders might be opposing the Irish nationalists, "The bishops and priests of Ireland have spoken, said Dante, and they must be obeyed"¹⁹, she adds "They were always right! God and morality and religion come first... God and religion before the world!"²⁰

The position of aunt Dante was that of an authoritarian, aggressive individual; harsh in stating her opinion towards Parnell even after his death: "He was no longer worthy to lead. He was a public sinner"²¹ she adds "A traitor, an adulterer! The priests were right to abandon him. The priests were always the true friends of Ireland"²². She added in a more aggressive tone: "Devil out of hell! We won! We crushed him to death! Fiend!"²³

Through this scene, James Joyce not only denounces the interference of the church in politics causing the failure of Irish Nationalist Movement for reaching Home Rule but he also points out the power of religion and its dangerous effects in splitting the country into 'Pro-Parnell and Anti-Parnell'. Furthermore into causing serious quarrels even within members of the same family.

Later on, when Stephen was an adult student, conscious and aware of the issues of his country, he expresses his empathy and support to Parnell and blames those who ruined and turned against him. Joyce writes in his Portrait: "No honourable and sincere man, said Stephen, has given up to you his life and his youth and his affections from the days of Tone to

Parnell, but you sold him to the enemy or failed him in need or reviled him and left him for another. And you invite me to be one of you. I'd see you damned first.”²⁴

The plot moves to Stephen's departure to Clongowes, a Jesuit boarding school, where Stephen is exposed to more religious content. Joyce explores the idea of undeserved punishment and the cruelty of the priests when Stephen is painfully punished by father Dolan, the prefect of studies. Joyce describes the scene as:

A hot burning stinging tingling blow like the loud crack of a broken stick made his trembling hand crumple together like a leaf in the fire: and at the sound and the pain scalding tears were driven into his eyes. His whole body was shaking with fright, his arm was shaking and his crumpled burning livid hand shook like a loose leaf in the air.²⁵

The beating is not only humiliating and unfair, but it also represents Stephen's first bitter experience of injustice. Stephen thinks “it was unfair and cruel because the doctor had told him not to read without glasses. And Father Arnall had said that he need not study till the new glasses came”²⁶. Here, Joyce questions the morality and the Jesuits catholic method of discipline, as he is a servant of the catholic faith, father Dolan ought to be decent and merciful towards the boys, not harsh and cruel but he rather beats Stephen with a pandybat on each of his palms. Furthermore, father Arnall did not interfere to defend the boy and stop that injustice and the rector considered the whole incident as a joke.

This event shows the hypocrisy of the Jesuit teachers and proves that religious authority can be unfair and cruel. Joyce writes: “The prefect of studies was a priest but that was cruel and unfair. And his white grey face and the nocoloured eyes behind the steel rimmed spectacles were cruel looking because he had steadied the hand first with his firm soft fingers and that was to hit it better and louder”²⁷. Within the same context, César Sagrista G. in his work writes:

This chapter also explores the frequently arbitrary nature of crime and punishment. The fact that the boys in Stephen's class at Clongowes know that they will all be punished for the transgressions of the two caught "smuggling" indicates that they are accustomed to unfair retribution. Furthermore, none of the instances of wrongdoing mentioned so far in the novel have been crimes of malice: neither Stephen when he wishes to marry Eileen, nor the boys caught in homosexual activity, nor Parnell caught in a relationship with another woman, demonstrates any overt ill will toward others. None of them robs, kills, or wishes harm directly upon another, yet they are all punished more severely than they deserve.²⁸

According to Sartre "The writer has chosen to reveal the world and particularly to reveal man to other man"²⁹, Joyce reveals the priests' way of educating the boys at school and shows to the world their brutality. He reflects this idea in writing: "Father Dolan will be in every day to see if any boy, any lazy idle little loafer wants flogging. Every day. Every day"³⁰. Stephen and his classmates are represented as victims of the harsh treatment and the bad behavior they receive from their priests. They are even addressed by bad names 'lazy idle loafers, schemers'. The atmosphere at school is characterized by fear and dread. "The door opened quietly and closed; the prefect of studies. A quick whisper ran through the class. There was an instant of dead silence and then the loud crack of pandy bat on the last desk Stephen's heart leapt up in fear"³¹. The majority of the boys were terrified there; one can notice the repetition of words such as fear, silence, pain and agony. For the priests fear was the only teacher which could lead them to a certain goal which was absolute obedience and discipline.

One can notice that fear is the weapon of the church to maintain its doctrine and to imprison its servants within its walls. The priest never offers a reason to believe in God but focuses on the consequences of a sinful life. In fact, the power of Father Arnell's sermon is not morality but intimidation and frightening, it seeks to frighten and terrify the boys. This is well illustrated in the Portrait: "Last and crowning torture of all the tortures of that awful

place is the eternity of hell. Eternity! O, dread and dire word. Eternity! What mind of man can understand it? And remember, it is an eternity of pain.”³²

Fear becomes unbearable when Stephen listens to Father Arnell’s sermon about hell, he experiences a crisis of conscience, “The preacher’s knife had probed deeply into his disclosed conscience³³”. Therefore the notions of guilt, terror and fear of punishment indoctrinated into him, Joyce shows that when writing: “His soul seemed to sigh³⁴”, “He vomited profusely in agony³⁵”, “A wasting breath of humiliation blew bleakly over his soul³⁶”, “His blood began to murmur in his veins³⁷”

In fact, Joyce in chapter three provides the reader with his explicit critique of the church. He is stressing on the limitation, the oppressive and alienating aspects of a religious life and he portrays the clerical mechanism as coercive and reductive. He considers the Catholic Church as an obstacle which hinders his development and that of his country. He presents it as an inappropriate system which calls people to live in a limited freedom with no clear personality, or imagination. This is reflected in this quotation: “And remember, my dear boys, that we have been sent into this world for one thing and for one thing alone: to do God’s holy will and to save our immortal souls. All else is worthless.”³⁸, he adds: “Banish from your minds all worldly thoughts and think only of the last things, death, judgment, hell and heaven.”³⁹

Priests as they were depicted in *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* were people who trouble and disturb the Irish minds ceaselessly. Joyce typifies the priests as being pests that must be excluded from society. They were invading people with their maxims and creating a world based on trivialities. As a result, the Irish people became largely unthinking group and cursed by their priests.

Joyce reveals the negative attitude and the narrow vision of the priests towards literature and arts in general. They try to diminish the value of literature in the boys' eyes. Stephen had heard some boys asking the priest whether Victor Hugo is the greatest French writer; The priest had answered that: "Victor Hugo had never written half so well when he had turned against the church as he had written when he was a catholic"⁴⁰, and he declared to them that some French critics considered Victor Hugo as a great writer but he had not as pure a French style as Louis Veuillot. For them even literature had to be submitted according to their catholic dogma.

Through this, we can say that religion is viewed literally as being a factor which persecuted the creativity and vivacity dwelling in the inner side of man.

Joyce actively attacks the idea of collective identity wanting people to find their own rather than submitting to institutions, "you are right to go your way. Leave me to go mine"⁴¹. He rejects the Catholic Church because it stole from him his freedom and individuality. Church was the thing which deprived people from being creative, inventive and innovative. The idea of being part of a community of priests does not fit him, and becoming a priest limits his freedom. He strives to free himself from the constraints of the church and instead of being a real priest; he chooses to be a priest of art.

Speaking about women in *A Portrait*, Mrs Dedalus, and Emma Cleary, might be the two most important women in Stephen's life, one being his mother and the other his subject adoration. Despite the lack of their description and appearance in the novel, Joyce's depiction of these two female characters conveys a significant meaning and symbolism.

It is remarkable that the character Mrs Dedalus is almost absent in the novel, she is not giving much intervention and interaction; this can be seen in the Christmas dinner when she remains silent and neutral during the dispute about Parnell. In fact, Stephen's mother symbolizes the

old Ireland, Mrs. Dedalus reflects a perfect example of conservative women, and she is a submissive and obedient wife who gave birth for many children and shows great devotion for Catholicism. Therefore, she represents both the traditional Irish woman and society. Emma Cleary, in her turn, stands for future Ireland, a young beautiful girl that Stephen loves and dreams about. However, Emma gives up on Stephen, the young intellectual artist, and kisses a priest. This can be interpreted as the willingness of religious people to seize power in Ireland and the possibility of being dominated by religion in the future.

Sartre claims that “There is no explaining things away by reference to a fixed and given human nature. In other words, there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom”⁴², in this context Joyce writes in his Portrait:

Look here Cranely, he said. You have asked me what I should do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it calls itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use. Silence, exile and cunning⁴³

Stephen dissociates himself from Ireland that he describes as “the sow that eats her farrow”⁴⁴ and concludes that he can only realize his dream of an artist abroad. He says “when the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets”⁴⁵

In his letter to Lady Gregory, Joyce writes “...though I seem to have been driven out of my country here as a misbeliever, I have found no man yet with a faith like mine”⁴⁶

To conclude, it is essential to say a word about Joyce’s choice to name his main character “Stephen Dedalus”. First, Stephen shares his first name with the first Christian martyr St. Stephen who gave his personal defense for his faith in Christ and therefore, he was stoned to death. One of the possible connections that can be drawn between St. Stephen and

Joyce's character is that even Stephen, the artist, becomes a martyr for his freedom and artistic ambitions. Ireland with its constraints tries to crush down his spirit and prevent him from reaching his dream. However, Stephen fights for his dream and defends his individuality and freedom.

The surname Dedalus links Stephen to the mythical Greek hero, Daedalus. In Greek myth, Daedalus was an architect, and craftsman. By request of King Minos, Daedalus built a labyrinth on Crete to contain a monster called the Minotaur, half bull and half man. Later on, a hero called Theseus solved the labyrinth and killed the Minotaur. King Minos was infuriated and therefore, he confined Daedalus and his son Icarus in this labyrinth. The latter was so complex that even its creator could not find his way out. Instead, Daedalus fashioned wings of wax and feathers so that they could escape.

From the beginning, Stephen is caught in a maze just like Deadalus and seeks a way out of his restraints. In Stephen's case, these are family, country and religion. Thus, like the mythical Daedalus, Stephen tries to find the means of escaping from his restricted environment which was like a prison to him.

The myth's pattern of flight and fall also gives shape to the novel. Each chapter ends with an attempted flight, leading into a partial failure or fall at the beginning of the next chapter. The last chapter ends with the most ambitious attempt, to fly away from home, religion, and nation to a self-imposed artistic exile: "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."⁴⁷

Section two: Commitment against Religion in Meursault, Contre-enquête

Kamel Daoud, one of the most committed writers of his country, is publicly known for his harsh criticism of religions in general and Islam in particular. His writings are full of

religious resentment; his debut novel *Meursault, Contre-enquête* reflects his commitment against religion. Right after the publication of the book, Daoud received death threats. A Fatwa was issued by an Imam, a radical Islamist preacher in Algeria, who leads an obscure Salafist group, the Islamic Awakening Front, labelling Daoud an apostate and an enemy of religion. He called on the Algerian state to impose a public execution of Daoud for the war he is leading against God and the prophet.

The story of the novel takes place within an increasingly religious society of the twentieth century Algeria. Haroun, the protagonist, often criticizes religion which makes him a pariah and outcast in his conservative Muslim community. As the novel progresses, Daoud/Haroun will make a series of increasingly acerbic criticism of religion.

Daoud questions the attitude of Islam towards alcohol and denounces the oppression that society exerts upon wine producers and sellers. He writes: “L’autre jour, un producteur de vin me racontait ses misères. Impossible de trouver des ouvriers, l’activité est considérée comme *haram*. Même les banques du pays s’y mettent et refusent de lui accorder des crédits”⁴⁸. Daoud says that it is becoming harder for wine producers to run their business, they don’t receive any help from banks, and laborers won’t work for them just because it is religiously forbidden. This makes us think about Sartre’s idea about the lack of freedom when he says: “The writer knows that he speaks for freedoms which are swallowed up, masked, and unavailable.”⁴⁹

Daoud wonders why people cannot drink wine on earth, when it is supposed to be flowing profusely in paradise. He writes:

Je me suis toujours demandé: pourquoi ce rapport compliqué avec le vin? Pourquoi diabolise-t-on ce breuvage quand il est censé couler à profusion au paradis ? Pourquoi est-il interdit ici-bas, et promis là-haut. Conduite en état d’ivresse. Peut-être Dieu ne veut-il pas que l’humanité boive pendent qu’elle conduit l’univers à sa place et tient le volant des cieux⁵⁰

He adds “Ici les meilleurs alcools, on les offre après la mort, mon frère, fais vite, dans quelques années, le seul bar encore ouvert le sera au paradis, après la fin du monde.”⁵¹

Daoud is referring to increasing religious strictness, as conservative Muslims usually abstain from alcohol and make it illicit. He does not particularly object to religion here, but he doesn't want it to shape his entire society.

Daoud expresses his loathing of Fridays, the imam and the mosque. The latter, being a religious place, is supposed to bring him close to God, but it rather prevents him from this, “D'ailleurs c'est le vendredi que je n'aime pas. C'est un jour que je passe souvent sur le balcon de mon appartement à regarder la rue, les gens, et la mosquée. Elle est si imposante que j'ai l'impression qu'elle empêche de voir Dieu”⁵². He adds : “Je la regarde souvent depuis ma fenêtre et j'en déteste l'architecture, son gros doigt pointé vers le ciel, son béton encore béant. J'en déteste aussi l'imam qui regarde ses ouailles comme s'il était l'intendant d'un royaume.”⁵³

Harun's environment does not differ from that of Stephen in terms of religion. Harun is profoundly offended by the dominance of religion in Algeria. One of his neighbors reads the Quran loudly all night on weekends. No one can tell him to stop, because he is doing it in the name of God, “Personne n'ose lui dire d'arrêter car c'est Dieu qu'il fait hurler”⁵⁴. Daoud describes Quran as a dispute between heaven and a creature. He says: “On dirait qu'il joue tour à tour le rôle de tortionnaire et celui de victime. J'ai toujours cette impression quand j'écoute réciter le Coran. J'ai le sentiment qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un livre mais d'une dispute entre un ciel et une créature !”⁵⁵

Daoud declares that religion is a personal matter. He doesn't know if he believes in God, but he is the only one who knows about his personal condition and thus no one else has the right to judge him. This is shown in the following passage:

La religion pour moi est un transport collectif que je ne prends pas. J'aime aller vers ce Dieu, à pied s'il le faut, mais pas en voyage organisé. Je déteste les vendredis

depuis l'Indépendance, je crois. Est-ce que je suis croyant ? J'ai réglé la question du ciel par une évidence : parmi tous ceux qui bavardent sur ma condition – cohortes d'anges, des dieux, de diables ou de livres -, j'ai su, très jeune, que j'étais le seul à connaître la douleur, l'obligation de la mort, du travail et de la maladie. Je suis le seul à payer des factures d'électricité et à être mangé par les vers à la fin. Donc, ouste ! Du coup, je déteste les religions et la soumission. A-t-on idée de courir après un père qui n'a jamais posé son pied sur terre et qui n'a jamais eu à connaître la faim ou l'effort de gagner sa vie ?⁵⁶

For Daoud, religion is like a public transportation that he never uses. He wants to travel towards God, but not as part of an organized trip. He is the only one who understands his life and struggles to survive and certainly doesn't want to run after a father who has never set foot on earth.

Like Joyce who chooses the holy day of Christmas to tackle the political and religious issues of his country, Daoud, as well, is very critical in mentioning Friday, sacred for the Muslims since it is the day that corresponds to the great prayer. He says that Friday is the day closest to death. People wear pajamas in the streets, as though religious faith encourages laziness and carelessness in everyday life. He describes it as follows:

Nous sommes vendredi. C'est la journée la plus proche de la mort dans mon calendrier. Les gens se travestissent, cèdent au ridicule de l'accoutrement, déambulent dans la rue encore en pyjama ou Presque alors qu'il est midi, traînent en pantoufles comme s'ils étaient dispensés, ce jour-là, des exigences de la civilité. La foi, chez nous, flatte d'intimes paresse, autorise un spectaculaire laisser-aller chaque vendredi, comme si les homes allaient vers Dieu tout chiffonnés, tout négligés⁵⁷

Daoud describes the atmosphere of Friday as a state of paralysis and stagnation, he says: "As-tu remarqué que les vendredis, généralement, le ciel ressemble aux voiles affaissées d'un bateau, les magasins ferment et que, vers midi, l'univers entier est frappé de désertation."⁵⁸

Harun dislikes the prayer hour, especially when he hears the imam's voice through the loudspeakers and sees people walking down the street with to the mosque. For him, it underlines the essential hypocrisy of the devout. "C'est l'heure de la prière que je déteste le plus... La voix de l'imam qui vocifère à travers le haut-parleur, le tapis de prière roulé sous

l'aisselle, les minarets tonitrueux, la mosquée à l'architecture criarde et cette hâte hypocrite des fidèles vers l'eau et la mauvaise foi, les ablutions et la recitation"⁵⁹

Harun says that Friday is the day God decided to run away and never come back. The absence of God is clear in the absent look on people's faces. He says:

Le vendredi? Ce n'est pas un jour où Dieu s'est reposé, c'est un jour où il a décidé de fuir et de ne plus jamais revenir. Je le sais à ce son creux qui persiste après la prière des hommes, à leurs visages collés contre la vitre de la supplication. Et à leurs teints de gens qui répondent à la peur de l'absurde par le zèle⁶⁰

Instead of being a day sacred to God, Harun sees Friday as a day devoted to dogma, which to him is opposed to the idea of the divine. It is important to note that Harun does not negate the presence of a God; he just doesn't think one can access the divine through conventional religious rituals. Rather than something reflecting a natural or divine order, Haroun sees religion as an obstacle to that order. He later states that he hates all religions and submission because they falsify the weight of the world. He declares: "J'ai en horreur les religions. Toutes! Car elles faussent le poids du monde"⁶¹.

Sartre claims that "To write is to make an appeal to the reader"⁶². Therefore, Daoud reveals his optimism and calls people to enjoy the world and value their power and dignity that religion stole from them. Sometimes, Harun wants to break through the wall which separates him from his neighbour and tell him to stop praying, accept the world, open his eyes and see his own dignity. We may quote this passage as an illustration:

J'ai parfois envie de crever le mur qui me sépare de mon voisin, de le prendre par le cou et de lui hurler d'arrêter sa récitation de pleurnichard, d'assumer le monde, d'ouvrir les yeux sur sa propre force et sa dignité et d'arrêter de courir derrière un père qui a fugué vers les cieux et qui ne reviendra jamais.⁶³

The second half of the twentieth century in Algeria is comparable to the late nineteenth century in Ireland in terms of religious education. As we have seen Stephen, as a child, was threatened for his desire to marry a Protestant girl. Young girls in Algeria were not allowed to

go out without covering their bodies. Daoud denounces this oppression over children who are not yet conscious about the world around them. He says: “Regarde un peu le groupe qui passe, là-bas, et la gamine avec son voile sur la tête alors qu’elle ne sait même pas encore ce qu’est un corps, ce qu’est le désir. Que veux-tu faire avec des gens pareil? Hein?”⁶⁴

Daoud points out to the intolerance and negative attitude of the Muslim society, towards unreligious people, which is characterized by intolerance, hostility and enmity. He writes “Ils voudraient me faire payer”⁶⁵, “D’autres [voisins] murmurent des insultes sur mon passage”⁶⁶, “Il y a des siècles, on m’aurait peut-être brûlé vif...”⁶⁷. However, he feels pity for his neighbors, who believe that God has spoken to just one man and then disappeared forever. He says: “Comment peut-on croire que Dieu a parlé à un seul homme et que celui-ci s’est tu à jamais?”⁶⁸

In a passage, Harun refers to the Quran as “their book” distancing himself from Islam and the people around him, who practice the religion. He describes the book contents as redundancies, repetitions, lamentations, threats and daydreams. He writes: “Je feuillette parfois leur livre à eux, Le Livre, et j’y retrouve d’étranges redondances, des répétitions, des jérémiades, des menaces et des reveries qui me donnent l’impression d’écouter le soliloque d’un vieux gardien de nuit, *assasse*.”⁶⁹

Daoud/Harun defends the right to individual thought and calls people to ask questions about the divine, rather than accepting the dogmatic answers provided by formal religion which prevents people from embracing their own lives and being truly free. Like Stephen who questions religion, Harun considers religion as a question rather than an answer. This is illustrated in the novel:

Je suis parfois tenté d’y grimper, là où s’accrochent les haut-parleurs...et d’y vociférer ma plus grande collection d’invectives et de sacrilèges. En lisant tous les détails de mon impiété. Crier que je ne prie pas, que je ne fais pas mes ablutions, que je ne jeune pas, que je n’irai jamais en pèlerinage et que je bois du vin – et tant qu’à faire, l’air

qui le rend meilleur. Hurler que je suis libre et que Dieu est une question, pas une réponse, et que je veux le rencontrer seul comme à ma naissance ou à ma mort.⁷⁰

Just like Stephen who refuses his mother's desire to make his easter duty, Harun rejects the imam who tries to make him pray. Daoud writes: "Un jour, l'imam a essayé de me parler de Dieu en me disant que j'étais vieux et que je devais au moins prier comme les autres, mais je me suis avancé vers lui et j'ai tenté de lui expliquer qu'il me restait si peu de temps que je ne voulais pas le perdre avec Dieu"⁷¹. Like Stephen who describes the priests as ghosts, Daoud describes the imam like a dead man. He says "Il n'était même pas sûr d'être en vie puisqu'il vivait comme un mort"⁷².

As we have seen, Stephen rejected priesthood in favor of his artistic ambitions when he saw a beautiful girl in the beach. Harun explicitly contrasts religious dogma with lived experience, he thinks that love and passion are worthy, valuable and more profound than the dogmatic certainties of religion. Harun says about the imam "Aucune de ses certitudes ne valait un cheveu de la femme que j'ai aimée."⁷³

Harun feels that by rejecting religious dogma he accesses higher truths to which religious people remain blind. Daoud writes: "Moi, j'avais l'air d'avoir les mains vides, mais j'étais sûr de moi, sûr de tout, sûr de ma vie et de cette mort qui allait venir...J'avais eu raison, j'avais encore raison, j'aurai toujours raison."⁷⁴

Stephen became skeptical about the reliability of Catholicism and the nature of Jesus. Harun, by the end of the novel, questions the biography of God and compares it to the story he told, claiming that one can believe it or deny it. He says: "C'est ma parole, à prendre ou à laisser...C'est ton choix, l'ami. C'est comme la biographie de Dieu. Ha, ha ! Personne ne l'a jamais rencontré, pas même Moussa, et personne ne sait si son histoire est vraie ou pas."⁷⁵

For Sartre “A writer must write for a public which has the freedom of changing everything”⁷⁶. Relying on this quote, one can say that the main motif behind Daoud’s and Joyce’s commitment is their hope to influence their readers by causing a change in them and therefore to push them towards their freedom.

Endnotes :

¹ Akca Katherine. Religion and Identity in James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Kafka university,2008, p51

² Foucault, Michael. Madness and Civilization.Routledge, 2001, p190

³ Sartre J.P.What is Literature. Translated by Frechtman, Bernard. New York: philosophical library. 1949, p121

⁴ Richard, Ellmann.Selected letters by James Joyce. London: faber and faber 1975. p26

⁵ Frechtman, Bernard, p65

⁶ Joyce, James. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, UK: Penguin Popular Classics. 1916, p17

⁷ Ibid, p17

⁸ Ibid, p17-18

⁹ Ibid, p54

¹⁰ Ibid, p69

¹¹ Ibid, p8

¹² Ibid, p8

¹³ <https://www.ancient.eu/Prometheus/>

¹⁴ <https://web.lsj.org/literature/essays/james-joyce>

¹⁵ <https://www.enotes.com/topics/dantes-inferno>

¹⁶ Joyce, James. *A Portrait*, p35

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p36

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p44

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p35

²⁰ *Ibid*, p43

²¹ *Ibid*, p36

²² *Ibid*, p43

²³ *Ibid*, p44

²⁴ *Ibid*, p231

²⁵ *Ibid*, p57

²⁶ *Ibid*, p58

²⁷ *Ibid*, p59

²⁸ Sagrista, César. “Joyce’s Attitude towards Religion in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*”, University of Chile, 2005, p21

²⁹ Sartre, J.P. *What is Literature*, p24

³⁰ Joyce, James. *A Portrait*, p58

³¹ *Ibid*, p54

³² *Ibid*, p149

³³ *Ibid*, p130

³⁴ Ibid, p155

³⁵ Ibid, p157

³⁶ Ibid, p160

³⁷ Ibid, p162

³⁸ Ibid, p124

³⁹ Ibid, p125

⁴⁰ Ibid, p178

⁴¹ Ibid, p226

⁴² <http://academic.udayton.edu/michaelbarnes/E-Rel103/Readings/sartre.htm>

⁴³ Joyce, A Portrait, p281

⁴⁴ Ibid, 231

⁴⁵ Ibid, p231

⁴⁶ Selected letters of James Joyce, ed. Stuart Gilbert. New York: The Viking press. 1957, p268

⁴⁷ Joyce, A Portrait, p288

⁴⁸ Daoud, Kamel. Meursault, Contre-enquête. Barzakh 2013, p73

⁴⁹ Sartre, J.P. What is Literature, p67

⁵⁰ Daoud, Kamel. Meursault, Contre-enquête. Barzakh 2013, p73-74

⁵¹ Ibid, p17

⁵² Ibid, p91

⁵³ Ibid, p187

⁵⁴ Ibid, p93

⁵⁵ Ibid, p93

⁵⁶ Ibid, p93-94

⁵⁷ Ibid, p96

⁵⁸ Ibid, p99

⁵⁹ Ibid, p97

⁶⁰ Ibid, p97

⁶¹ Ibid, p97

⁶² Sartre, what is literature, p46

⁶³ Daoud, Kamel.Meursault, p97-98

⁶⁴ Ibid, p98

⁶⁵ Ibid, p98

⁶⁶ Ibid, p99

⁶⁷ Ibid, p99

⁶⁸ Ibid, p99

⁶⁹ Ibid, p99

⁷⁰ Ibid, p187

⁷¹ Ibid, p188

⁷² Ibid, p189

⁷³ Ibid, p189

⁷⁴ Ibid, p189

⁷⁵ Ibid, p191

⁷⁶ Sartre . What is Literature, p159

V-Conclusion:

Religion, as one of the most powerful institutions shaping people's minds, has dominated every aspect of life in Ireland and Algeria and interfered in every matter of people's lives; a thing which caused people to live under unfavorable circumstances characterized by oppression, paralysis and lack of freedom. Therefore many intellectuals notably writers committed themselves against the religious authorities and ideologies through their literary works.

Throughout this research paper, we attempted to analyse the aspects of commitment in James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation*. We tried to focus upon one common cause shared by the two writers which consists of their confrontation of the religious tyranny in their home countries, under the framework of Sartre's theory of commitment.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland was characterized by the strong presence of religion in all fields, social life, education, politics were all under the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church. Catholicism was strongly associated with the Irish identity and became a symbol of nationalism. Joyce as one of the intellectuals of his era, rejects the constraints of his country mainly the Church and committed his writings to denounce the corruption of church and the damage it caused to Irish people and to the nation in general.

The context of Algeria does not differ from that of Ireland concerning the religious tyranny and oppression. The second half of the twentieth century knew an increasing conservatism of the Algerian Muslim community characterized by the fanatic ideologies of the Islam religion. This situation pushed the writer Kamel Daoud to react and criticize the narrowness, bigotry and restrictiveness of his society.

The two committed writers depicted the negative aspects of religion at the level of the individual and society. They expressed along their novels their direct resentment and refusal of religion, portraying it as an obstacle towards the well being of people and their countries. Joyce and Daoud emphasized the notion of freedom and individuality calling people away from the chains of religion.

Unfortunately, the scope of our research does not allow us to tackle all the aspects that link Joyce and Daoud/ Ireland and Algeria and certainly, still many other interpretations are possible to join these two novels. We hope that we have at least succeeded to uncover some commonalities between the two authors. Finally, we would like to recommend to other students to study the two novels under different perspectives and theories.

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