

Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe as well.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

The charge that Camus evades history is so familiar that we are likely to accept it as self-evident; after all, there is little focus on Arab or Berber characters in his fiction, and little sign of the growing militancy that will lead to the Algerian war. Although there is no necessary connection between these two propositions, this first claim has become a cornerstone of the second, upon which psychologizing arguments have been constructed that depict Camus as an isolated figure, out of touch and suffering from a vague colonial malaise. This leaves him unwilling to confront those facts of history that would demonstrate him to be a stranger in the land of his birth: that he and his kind are on the verge of extinction. Such is the “logic” of history, retrospectively defined.

Ironically, the proponents of such arguments rarely display more than a superficial interest in Algerian history themselves. Instead, a highly abstract and generic “colonialism” substitutes for concrete analysis of a particular historical context. Edward Said, for example, accuses Camus of ignoring history (211) while himself decontextualizing it, as in his bald statement that Arabic was declared a foreign language on March 8, 1938 (217). One might ask to which Arabic Said is referring; if his reference is to the dialectal Arabic of Algeria, the declaration appears to make no sense.¹ Said’s statement is entirely divorced from the historical context during the 1930s of the growing Islamic movement called Salafism, which attempted to impose Egyptian Arabic on the population (one fifth of whom were Berbers, whose first language was not Arabic in any case). The decree concerned the closure of unauthorized private schools run by those Ulemas who intro-

duced these new Salafist doctrines to Algeria (Ageron 339, 347), but Said's isolated snippets of information bypass the social context, thus distorting the complexities and contradictory currents of historical processes. Said's point is political and not historical, as is confirmed by his apparent assumption that the people of Oran were mainly Arabs when Camus wrote *The Plague* (217). As Jean Sarocchi has remarked, the majority of commentators seem entirely unaware that the central part of Oran was almost exclusively European (1995: 150); 75 percent of the total population was of European origin, as was also the case in the Algiers of Camus's childhood—facts of which Conor Cruise O'Brien seems likewise unaware.

Although O'Brien observed that European criticism was ethnocentric (10), he becomes, ironically, the illustration of his own point when he is surprised by the existence of a district in Oran called the "negro village," and queries whether there were any black people there at all (89 n.8). He might have been enlightened by knowledge of the trans-Saharan slave trade, but history is not his concern. O'Brien was writing forty years ago, and his ignorance of the Algerian social context is perhaps more understandable. Said's curiously dated comments in *Culture and Imperialism* were first published in 1993, five years *after* the rioting in Algiers that was a precursor to the bloody civil war of the 1990s. He, nevertheless, blocks off this inconvenient knowledge in favor of an Algerian of his own invention who will tell him what he wants to hear—that 1962 was the "triumphant inauguration of a new phase" (212). The Algerian writer Assia Djebar, on the other hand, speaks of the return of the Janissaries of pre-colonial times, electing their new dey in secret (1999: 177), while Gilbert Meynier likewise compares the power structure of independent Algeria to a new form of *beylikate*.² As he demonstrates: "The FLN was never a revolutionary party—neither of the avant-garde nor the élite. It bore the essential mark of militarisation" (684). Without an extraordinary degree of indifference to the fate of *real* Algerians, it is difficult to view as a triumph the installation in 1962 of a one-party state with

military backing but no democratic mandate. There is little to learn from such specious arguments (although, for some of us, much to unlearn).

Well over 70 percent of the indigenous population lived in the rural areas under colonialism, whereas the majority of French Algerians were urban, and it has never seemed surprising to me that Camus wrote about those who peopled his daily life, segregated as it was. (The same might be said of Djébar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, whose narrator understandably describes a childhood where French Algerians remain mostly shadowy figures.) Camus's relationships with individual Algerians appear to have resulted from his political activities as a young communist and as a journalist for *Alger Républicain* during the 1930s rather than from purely social interactions—a factor that relates as much to cultural and religious taboos as to colonial divisions. There are no shared memories of childhood friendships. His early piece of youthful writing, “The Moorish House” (1933), is permeated by an underlying atmosphere of hostility emanating from an unknown community from which the young narrator is excluded, despite his claims to the contrary. This is confirmed in Camus's last, unfinished work, *The First Man*, which describes this gulf between the two communities; in the evenings Jacques Cormery's aunt bolts the doors and windows of her isolated farm against that “constant danger no one spoke of,” a gesture reciprocated in the town by:

[T]his people, alluring yet disturbing, near and separate, you were around them all day long, and sometimes friendship was born, or camaraderie, and at evening they still withdrew to their closed houses, where you never entered, barricaded also with their women you never saw . . . , and they were so numerous in the neighbourhoods where they were concentrated . . . they caused an invisible menace that you could scent on the air some evenings on the streets when a fight would break out between a Frenchman and an Arab. (*FM*, 217, t.a.: *PH*, 257-58)

Friendships might be born, but there are few shared social spaces or activities where they might flourish. In the countryside, where hostilities are at their height, friendships based on long familiarity might be glimpsed, as in the relationship between Veillard and Tamzal, whose son disappeared after being taken away by the army, accused of supplying the FLN. Asked whether he *had* supported them, “What can you expect, it’s war,” replies Veillard (*FM*, 142; *PH*, 170). Through shared activity and experience are such relationships forged—as is likewise intimated in “The Adulterous Woman” (1957), where the soldiers of that border region physically resemble the Arabs of the town by virtue of a shared geography and way of life. Such glimpses are rare and fleeting, while the acknowledgement of mutual collective suspicions underlying social relations overshadows *The First Man*. Since his days as a young communist, Camus had condemned colonialism; in 1958 he had written that “The time of colonialism is over, it is necessary only to know this and draw the consequences” (*E*, 898). The appendix to *The First Man* draws these consequences: “Title: The Nomads. Begins with a move and ends with the evacuation from Algerian land” (*FM*, 232; *PH*, 282). Jean Sarocchi bleakly observes: “To have lived for nothing: this will be a crucial theme of *The First Man*” (2009: 269). The novel is no attempted political intervention, as some commentators have suggested, but an acceptance of the coming exile. “They passed unknown across this land. But *my* role is that through my book their shadow will still remain after their passage over this land” (*OC4*, 948).

In an apparent reflection of Camus’s own experience, Jacques Cormery’s now fractured friendship with Saddok in *The First Man* grew out of past political alliances. Saddok’s political development since the days of their youth has led him to embrace terrorism and the Arabo-Islamic ideology espoused by the FLN (*PH*, 314). The two men discuss his imminent marriage to a woman he does not know, and when asked why he consents to a tradition he himself considers cruel, Saddok replies:

Because my people are identified with this tradition, they have nothing else, they are locked into it, and to part with that tradition is to part with them. That is why I will go into that room tomorrow, and I will strip a stranger of her clothes, and I will rape her to the sound of gunshots. (*FM*, 250, t.a.: *PH*, 313)

One might contrast to these words Assia Djebar's female narrator in *L'Amour, la fantasia*, who rejects this custom as barbaric (124); or compare Amar Ouzegane, Camus's comrade from the Communist Party, who later approved cutting off the noses of those who smoked during Ramadan (Margerrison, 2010). As far as I am aware, the above quotation is the sole instance in all of Camus's work where the inequality of Muslim women is raised. The conversation with Saddok is the most telling criticism in Camus's literary writings, striking at one of the religion's greatest sources of inequality and potential division, but the unfinished nature of the draft makes it impossible to know how this might have developed.

Until the 1950s Camus's public comments on Islam are not only very rare, they are also noncommittal. This restraint is (at least initially) the product not only of his secularism but of ignorance, for as a young reporter at *Alger Républicain* his support in 1939 for the Ulema leader Tayeb el Okbi, accused of involvement in the murder of an established religious figure, does him little credit. Camus appears indifferent to the religious conflicts of which this trial was an important symbol. During the 1950s, though, this position appears to change, and privately Camus increasingly saw Islam as the most significant source of cultural division. According to Jean Daniel, Camus regarded Algerian society as being composed not of plural communities but of "Muslims and the others" (Daniel 15). In certain respects, this opinion is supported by the findings of modern historians, who record that in the eyes of most grassroots Muslim activists this same distinction applied; Islam was "the nation" and there was no other (Meynier 91-93; Harbi, 1975, 67-68; 1996, 66). However, just as Muslim activists do not rep-

resent the entire population, it would be a mistake to believe that Camus saw cultural divisions in such crude terms. He was well aware that Islam in Algeria did not speak with one voice, as his later literary writings show. If one might adopt Daniel's term "Muslims" as a category, this was no monolithic entity; on the contrary, forms of religious worship and religious belief were diverse and often contested. In this sense, Islam in Algeria contained its own sets of internal "others," as did the European community.

During the early 1950s, Camus was also thinking more deeply about Islamic history in North Africa. In December 1952, he paid his first visit to the Algerian south, a journey that inspired many of the short stories in his 1957 collection, *Exile and the Kingdom*. In 1954 he began writing the second of these stories, "The Renegade," which was based on his visit to Ghardaïa, one of the walled cities of the Mozab onto which his fictional town, Taghâsa, was transposed. He was also reading Eugène Fromentin's account of his travels, *Un Été dans le Sahara* (1857), and expressed the intention of reading *Le Grand Désert* by Eugène Daumas (C3 93). This book, published in 1848 (the year France outlawed slavery in its colonial possessions), foregrounds the continuing trans-Saharan slave trade, first established after the Arab conquest of North Africa in the seventh century. As I have shown elsewhere, the Taghâsa of Camus's "The Renegade" was not the product of the author's imagination, as is generally supposed, but a real historical location lying on the central Saharan slave route from Timbuktu (2008, 244-245: 2010).³

Its rulers were a Berber tribe called the Messufa, and (climate change permitting) this salt mine existed for centuries until its destruction in the late sixteenth century. The comment in "The Renegade" that "each slab of salt that is cut out is worth one man" (EK 36, ta: TRN 1584) is not immediately obvious unless one understands that because there was no salt in the sub-Saharan regions this had a very high value and was crucially important as a means of exchange in the purchase of slaves. Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau views the salt of Toghaza as one important factor in the commercial take-off of the Islamic empire before

the twelfth century (543-44). Still in the nineteenth century, Arab traders were exchanging salt for African slaves (Daumas, 139), who were then exported across the desert to the great slave markets of the East. Although the term “surreal” is frequently applied to this story, the reference to Taghâsa roots it in the real—with its buildings made from salt and its generations of unknown African slaves who, over the course of almost a millenium, were worked to death in the mine. Centuries later, Camus alone traces the shadow of their passage over this Earth.

The Berber Mozabites of Ghardaïa were descended from the Ibadites, who had virtually monopolised this slave trade after the eighth century. Known as the “puritans of the desert” in contemporary Algeria, they had withdrawn from the “faithless” wider society in the eleventh century, retiring into their walled desert cities where all outsiders (Arabs, Jews and others) were forbidden to live. The depiction of Taghâsa as a closed society hostile to outsiders seems partly inspired by this example, but this description might also apply to the growing Salafist movement intent on the “purification” of Islam through a return to the supposed original purity of the times of Muhammad and his companions, the *Salaf* of the seventh century. These literalist Ulemas are often called the first nationalists, but their principal targets were traditional, mystical forms of Islam, which they condemned as pagan and corrupted by contact with the West. As Ageron observes, these “gendarmes of the Faith” were intransigent missionaries whose actions destroyed or impoverished popular forms of the religion (347-48). Followers of El Okbi, the particularly uncompromising Wahhabi leader in Algiers, regularly disrupted funerals because they disapproved of the custom of chanting verses from the Qur’ân, thus arrogating to themselves the authority to determine correct practice (Christelow 261-62). The fictional Taghâsans:

[G]ive orders, they strike, they say that they are a single people, that their god is the true god, and that one must obey. They are my lords, they know no pity and, like lords, they want to be alone, to advance alone, to rule alone. (*EK* 36, t.a.: *TRN* 1584)

This insistence on being a “single people” recalls, in particular, the Salafists’ stance towards the Berbers (the original inhabitants of Algeria), who were redefined as Arabs: equally, those claiming a specific Berber identity were successively “purged” from the nationalist movements.

Like Algerian democrats such as Aziz Kessous or Ferhat Abbas, Camus had once imagined a secular, pluralist Algeria (an “Algerian Algeria”) in which those of all faiths and none might live in equality. As late as July 1955, Camus briefly revives an argument first made in 1937, writing in *L’Express* of the Mediterranean as that space where a fusion of East and West is possible (*E*, 1875), but it seems unlikely that he believed this⁴—especially as by 1954 he was already writing “The Renegade,” which silently voices the death of such hopes. This death of hope is expressed, I suggest, in the traumatized slave’s faith in the invincibility of his masters and their religion of conquest:

O my masters, they will then conquer the soldiers, they’ll conquer the world and love, they’ll spread over the deserts, cross the seas, fill the light of Europe with their black veils . . . , sow their salt on the continent, all vegetation, all youth will be extinguished, and mute crowds with shackled feet will plod beside me in the desert of the world under the cruel sun of the true faith, I’ll no longer be alone. (*EK*, 47, t.a.: *TRN*, 1592)

This is no harmonious fusion of East and West. Instead, here is announced a new theme in Camus’s fictional writings; the theme not simply of defeat but of an apocalyptic ending, the death of the West. It is not my wish to impose a single meaning on Camus’s work, which may be interpreted on many levels, and it is important to remember that the Cold War was also at its height. Indeed, it is in response to this in the late 1940s that Camus is first beset by fears of a coming conflict threatening the West. Communism is also targeted in “The Renegade” as one form of messianic faith rooted in Christian doctrines. This is the subject of Camus’s brief explanation of “The Renegade,” that it concerned

the communist intellectual who ends up adoring “the religion of evil” to expiate his own feelings of guilt (Grenier 197). Equally, these comments on religion might be taken literally, especially as in this same conversation he stated that he had *wanted* the story’s meaning to be “hidden.” My aim is not to deny alternative interpretations, but to follow that thread arising from the recognition that Toghaza was no fictional town, and that in basing this strange story on the real, Camus begins in North African history itself. This is the fundamental *fact* of “The Renegade,” which cannot be ignored.

In 1947, Camus’s “Short Guide to Towns Without a Past” had spoken of the beauty of Algeria’s young people:

[T]he Arabs, of course, and then the others. The French of Algeria are a bastard race, made up of unforeseen mixtures. Spaniards and Alsations, Italians, Maltese, Jews and Greeks have come together there. As in America this brutal interbreeding has had happy results. (*SEN*, 133)

But, as has often been pointed out, Camus refers specifically here to “the others”: The “Arabs, of course” are not included in this melting pot. What of the “Arabs” in 1947? In 1937, when the young Camus was first speaking of the Mediterranean as the meeting place of East and West, the Ulema leader, Ben Badis, was insisting that the Algerians were a “single people,” a Muslim people of Arab heritage: “Whoever tries to assimilate it is attempting the impossible” (Merad 365). These are the doctrines that took root amongst the nationalists, despite their looming “Berber crisis” of 1949, when some objected to the movement’s increasingly Islamic rhetoric as well as the use of the term “Arab,” arguing in vain for a secular and “Algerian” Algeria. On the political level in 1947, despite the extension of the vote to Muslim women, the hopes of Algerian democrats were dashed as the French Fourth Republic gained a reputation for electoral fraud.

Is a new Mediterranean culture possible, Camus had asked in 1937, on the eve of the second World War. In 1957, he asks the question again

in *Exile and the Kingdom* with greater seriousness and knowledge. The previous year he had complained that according to the FLN, unless the French Algerians converted to Islam they would be considered foreigners in an independent Algeria (Grenier 182). In other words, they would be considered *dhimmi*, occupying a traditionally inferior position, their personal status protected as “people of the Book,” but with no political rights. This is indeed what happened to non-Muslims after 1962 (Meynier 92, 256, 257). What, therefore, might the notion of cultural fusion mean, especially in the context of a rapidly growing demographic imbalance between these cultures? In 1830, the indigenous population had numbered between two and three million: by the late 1950s, it was approaching nine million. This demographic explosion, to which Camus refers in his 1958 *Actuelles III: Chronique Algérienne, 1939-1958* (E, 897-1018), was sometimes called “the revenge of the cradle,” but it continued unabated after independence, with all the social and economic problems this entailed.

I have suggested that “The Renegade” contains a hidden critique of the Salafist, pan-Islamic trend in 1950s Algeria—“hidden” in the sense that Camus had declared this as his wish with regard to the story’s meaning, and because, as far as I am aware, he did not reveal the significance of Toghaza as a historical site. The religious militancy of the Taghâsans is not, however, the only allusion to Islam here. The story’s protagonist was a European trainee priest who had travelled to Taghâsa against the advice of his teachers in order to convert its inhabitants to Catholicism. Ironically, despite his wish to preach the Word, after his arrival he never speaks again—initially because of his terror, subsequently because his tongue is cut out. He is received in silence, then imprisoned in the House of the Fetish. When the door of his cell eventually is opened, he is confronted by the Sorcerer:

[W]ith his raffia hair, his chest covered with a breastplate of pearls, his legs bare under a straw skirt, wearing a mask of reeds and wire with two square openings for the eyes. He was followed by musicians and women wearing

heavy motley gowns that revealed nothing of their bodies. They danced . . . , and finally the Sorcerer opened the little door behind me . . . , I turned around and saw the Fetish, his double axe-head, his iron nose twisted like a snake. (*EK* 38: *TRN* 1585-586)

After his brutal ritual consecration to the Fetish, he is subsequently forced to witness, with his face turned to the wall, nightly scenes of violence and bestiality. But the slave's dedication to his new god, the Fetish, is completely confirmed only after his tongue has been cut out, when finally "I surrendered to him and approved his maleficent order, I adored in him the evil principle of the world" (*EK* 43).

Although these descriptions seem out of place here, they represent an extreme version of precisely those charges leveled by the Salafists against the traditional diversity of Islam; that such forms of worship were animist, polytheistic, idolatrous, the "survivals of a distant pagan past" (Merad 144). However, the insistence on a distant pagan past entirely overlooks the legacy of slavery in North Africa. I earlier noted O'Brien's perplexity at the "negro village" in Oran. It was in these quarters that the relatively few descendants of African slaves often had lived (Dermenghem, 285-86),⁵ while black "colonies" of slave descendants also were to be found in the south. Over the centuries, a number of black religious associations developed, which, while professing Islam, understandably retained elements of their own religious practices. At the same time, these practices found a reflection in pre-Islamic beliefs within the wider population, with which they became assimilated (260). Thus, I suggest, this view of Islam as multifaceted lies at the center of Taghâsa itself. Although this particular allusion is elusive precisely because it requires specific knowledge of the social and historical context, the final story of *Exile and the Kingdom* lends further weight to the proposition that Camus is examining such forms of cultural "fusion" in this collection. In "The Growing Stone," the protagonist, D'Arrast, encounters a similar example of a syncretic religion, with a similar historical background of slavery, in the form of the Afro-

Brazilian *macumba* ceremony—a fusion of traditional African and Catholic beliefs.⁶

Particularly as one overarching theme of “The Renegade” concerns forms of enslavement (ideological and literal), one might conclude that the depiction of Taghâsa delivers a particularly severe verdict on Islam. The story seems to allude to both elements of the contemporary religious conflict in Algeria, but, rather than being opposed, they are indistinguishable, each integral to the whole. Thus an enduring conflict at the heart of the religion is established (especially as the Mozabites originally were a product of Islam’s first split after the death of Muhammad). The insistence on “purity” and the rejection of the (Islamic) Other characterizes the Mozabites and the Salafists alike, while slavery and conquest are the very means by which such so-called impurities are introduced. In his journalism, Camus had spoken of the Ulemas as being engaged in a “rational” reform of the religion; there is no reason to suppose he believes that here, or in his 1958 introduction to his *Actuelles III: Chronique Algérienne, 1939-1958*, in which he condemned Egyptian pan-Islam and dreams of an Islamic empire (E 901, 979). The Salafists identified the West as a source of corruption, but the same might be said of Africa, for here is presented an entirely different example of “cultural fusion,” which the Salafists thoroughly condemned but which their earlier historical counterparts, the Mozabites, had helped to create. As Sarocchi (1988) has pointed out, the general theme of *Exile and the Kingdom* concerns confrontations with Otherness—the Other with whom there is no common ground, no shared values, who is inassimilable. In “The Renegade,” Camus seems to be suggesting that the inassimilable Other Culture also is at war with its own internal Others.

I have here focused specifically on Islam as *the* central thread that runs through “The Renegade,” and this has led me to bypass (but not to contest) alternative emphases on Christianity or left-wing politics: after all, in one of his lives the protagonist *is* a trainee priest, and Camus frequently equated Marxism with Christianity. I have chosen to focus

on the protagonist's other life as a slave because, as I noted earlier, by placing his story in a real historical location, Camus clearly situates it in Islamic history itself. This is, I believe, the starting point for interpretation, which necessitates a different reading. Unlike Said or O'Brien, I would insist that knowledge of the social and historical context is indispensable to this story in particular, of which Roger Quilliot, the first editor of the *Pléiade* edition of Camus's work, said "Mysterious to read, 'The Renegade' remains so after critical study" (*TRN* 2043).

In his *Carnets* of 1951, Camus had cited Louis Guilloux: "In the end, one does not write in order to speak, but in order *not to speak*" (*C2* 291). This, I believe, was Camus's intention in "The Renegade." The entire story takes the form of an internal monologue delivered by a slave whose tongue has been cut out—who is *unable* to speak. Only the final line deviates from this narrative form, as the voice of the narrator tells us with heavy irony that "A handful of salt fills the mouth of the garrulous slave" (*EK* 49; *TRN* 1593). He is hardly garrulous: he *never speaks*. Yet, the impression persists that in some way something has changed, as is reinforced by the comments of this story's editor in the new *Pléiade* edition of Camus's work: "the character seems finally to realise his mistake before being definitively reduced to silence by the Sorcerer, who puts a handful of salt in his mouth . . ." (*OC4* 1347). Salt, the very *taste* of slavery, provides the most bitterly ironic confirmation that nothing whatsoever has changed; it *does not matter* whether he changes his mind (who cares what a slave thinks about—dreams about?), whether he is alive or dead (there are always replacements), even whether he has killed a priest (French policy will not be swayed by the death of one mere priest). From the day of his arrival in Taghâsa, the slave has no further impact on history or life. Indeed, I believe that this entire monologue is presented as irrelevant. During the 1950s, with the outbreak of war and the fall into silence of Algerian democrats (because, fearful of FLN reprisals, they are *afraid* of death), Camus, with the taste of salt already in his own mouth, writes this story in order *not* to speak.

His condemnation of the colonial system in Algeria always had been based on secular principles, but the increasing Islamic rhetoric of the FLN, who used religion both as a means of control and as a means of establishing an Arabo-Islamic national identity in an otherwise diverse population with little understanding of the notion of “nation,” brought into sharp relief the religious dimension of the conflict, which was based precisely on the distinction between “Muslims and the others.” (Jews, who were amongst the oldest inhabitants, were included in this category of “others.”) Camus is often referred to as an “assimilationist” without due regard to the meaning of this term. *Exile and the Kingdom* is the closest he comes to expressing a judgement on this subject. His depictions of already existing forms of cultural “fusion” in “The Renegade” (and “The Growing Stone”) do not suggest, I think, an optimistic prognosis for the future of cultural assimilation in Algeria.

The pessimism of *Exile and the Kingdom* is not, however, Camus’s final word on this subject, even though *The First Man* was cut short by his untimely death. Taken as a whole, the drafts and notes of this unwritten novel suggest that the proposition that the French Algerians had “lived for nothing” is far less significant than the glimpses of other, major themes that have permeated Camus’s literary writings. Camus was above all a creative writer whose most haunting work is driven not by logical argument but by those “obscure forces of the soul” that leave him feeling that it is not he but his pen that writes, tapping into those underground sources of inspiration of which he speaks in *The First Man*. I began this chapter with a quotation from Nietzsche, who has accompanied Camus from the first days of his literary career. To say “Yes” to one joy, Nietzsche suggests, entails the acceptance of *all* woe as well—of life in all its light and shade. As he sits in his prison cell during what are probably the last days of his life, Meursault, the protagonist of *The Stranger*, is asked what life he imagines after his death: “A life in which I can remember this life” (*TO* 117; *TRN* 1210). This is the life he has been remembering and reliving, every moment of it in

his prison cell, since those first words: “Today Maman died.” And so Camus, in the last years of French Algeria, follows his first protagonist’s lead and remembers his life, and the lives of those first immigrants, the “conquerors” struggling to survive, fighting against illness, poverty and death. The autobiographical component of *The First Man* is necessary to the acceptance of the fact that the life into which we are all born has changed beyond recognition by the time we leave it. Like all those other empires in history, the West will die and others—other races, other cultures—will claim the soil we once called our own. Reflecting that constant preoccupation with history that pervades Camus’s work, the novel resituates that single life of the author himself—of no greater value than that of the Toghazan slave—into the greater cycles of history and time. Yes, the Algeria Camus knew is on the verge of extinction, but *The First Man* is no work of mourning for what will be lost. The autobiographical focus illustrates an affirmation and a choice—of *this* life, this history, with all of its joys and woes. They did not live for nothing precisely because they *lived*, leaving their shadow across this earth. I suggest that like Meursault, and like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, Camus finally chooses the earth:

I shall return with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent—not to a new life, or a better life, or a similar life: I shall return eternally to this identical and self-same life, in the greatest things and in the smallest. (Nietzsche 237-38)

Notes

1. As Said cites no evidence, it is difficult to evaluate this particular claim, especially as I can find no reference to it either in the historical research cited in this chapter, or in any other contemporary history. Ageron’s discussion of this decree does not mention it. Although Said recommends that Camus’s assumptions about Algeria should be tested against histories written by Algerians after independence (212), after 1962 this discipline was strictly censored and reduced to the repetition of official discourse (Margerrison, 2010).

2. The political structure of the Ottoman Empire in Algeria, based on the theoretic-

cal authority of the *dey* of Algiers, was divided into *beyliks*, each ruled over by a *bey* and backed by military power.

3. As is to be expected, the name of this town has been transcribed in a number of ways over the centuries, but the predominant spelling today seems to be “Teghaza.”

4. Although the (Greek) Mediterranean has a significant mythological role in his work, I think it very doubtful that Camus ever seriously believed in such a “fusion.” At the time of his speech at the “Maison de la culture” (*E*, 1321-327) the twenty-three-year-old Camus was still a member of the Communist Party, for whom the threat of fascism had become paramount—as is illustrated by Camus’s rejection of the notion of a “Latin” West, associated with Charles Maurras. For an insightful assessment of Camus’s speech, see Jean Sarocchi’s “La Méditerranée est un songe, monsieur” (2005), and for an overview of this subject and its ideological predecessors, see Dunwoodie (2007).

5. It would be very surprising if Camus knew nothing of such matters, and neither is there reason to suppose that Camus was not familiar with this book by Dermenghem, whose work was recommended to him by Jean Grenier. Camus cites one of Dermenghem’s books in *L’Homme révolté* (*E*, 596).

6. Although his discussion of religion is confined to Christianity, David H. Walker (1998) provides an excellent discussion of “The Growing Stone” and the symbolic significance of the stone itself. His edition of *L’Exil et le royaume* likewise provides a clear introduction to the stories as a whole (1981).

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Abbreviations used

- E*: *Essais*. Ed. Roger Quilliot and Louis Faucon. Paris: Gallimard, 1965.
- TRN*: *Théâtre, Récits, Nouvelles*. Preface by Jean Grenier, ed. Roger Quilliot Paris: Gallimard, 1962.
- C2*: *Albert Camus: Carnets II 1942-1951*. Paris: Gallimard, 1964.
- C3*: *Albert Camus: Carnets III 1951-1959*. Paris: Gallimard, 1989.
- PH*: *Le Premier homme*. Cahiers Albert Camus 7. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.
- OC4*: *Albert Camus: Œuvres complètes IV 1957-1959*. Ed. Raymond Gay-Crosier, et al, Paris: Gallimard, 2008.
- TO*: *The Outsider*. Trans. Stuart Gilbert. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1964.
- EK*: *Exile and the Kingdom*. Trans. Justin O’Brien. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1962.
- FM*: *The First Man*. Trans. David Hapgood. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1995.
- SEN*: *Selected Essays and Notebooks*. Ed. and trans. Philip Thody. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1979.