

**Evading Orientalism? Re-evaluating Edward Said's Postcolonial
Theoretical Positions and Discourses**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another university for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

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SUMMARY

This thesis proposes to examine the efficacy of Edward Said's counter theories, positions and narratives. As one of the most prominent and instrumental figures in postcolonial studies and criticism, he has argued extensively for postcolonial opposition and resistance in the form of alternative positions and narratives. I will argue that his emancipatory, resistant discourses are themselves marked by limitations and paradoxes. In the first four chapters, I will evaluate Said's arguments concerning identification, exile, intellectualism and discourse. I aim to review his theoretical framework for each of these arguments through an extensive literature review of his work; including books articles and interviews. Thereafter, I will examine the consistency of each of his arguments and the practical implication it has on Said's wider contributions to postcolonial theory. In the final two chapters, I will analyse Said's explicitly autobiographical discursive output in his biography, *After the Last Sky*, and his autobiography, *Out of Place*. I aim to examine how Said deals with the practicalities of producing representative and autobiographical discourses in the light of his extensive engagement with counter-oppressive discourses, and to assess whether he was able to produce such a model himself. As my thesis focuses exclusively on Said and his critical, theoretical and discursive output, my research will examine his work in order to produce a comprehensive analytical assessment of his theories and narratives. The thesis aims to combine Said's positional, theoretical and discursive positions and evaluate them in tandem in order to produce a comprehensive and representative evaluation and analysis of his work. My argument is that Said's efforts to respond to Orientalism, colonialism and imperialism are only partly able to evade the reproduction of Western dominant positions and subordinating narratives because they are

themselves initiated from within the metropolitan centre. Although Said's postcolonial arguments are characterized by a firm motivation to decolonize prevailing power structures and the monopolization of knowledge associated with Orientalism and imperialism, a dilemma arises from the immersion of his discourses and arguments in Western theories and locations. This dialectic of emancipatory alternative and metropolitan privilege becomes problematic in Said's postcolonial positions and narratives, despite him being adamant that it was possible to formulate new methodologies beyond any complicity with authorities and establishments. I will therefore argue that Said might have found it impossible to circumvent the necessarily limited capacity of his methodologies, positions and narratives to move beyond many of the problematic frameworks of Western canon and paradigms.

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Introduction

This thesis re-evaluates the effectiveness of Edward Said's arguments about orientalist discourses and the counter-discursive alternatives he suggests. It sets out to examine Said's postcolonial project through analysing his theoretical positions alongside his biographical and autobiographical narratives. Said is the author of *Orientalism* and one of the leading figures in postcolonial studies; my aim is to examine the persuasiveness of his work in offering non-compromised models for oppositional arguments and narratives. In particular, I am interested in challenging the perception within postcolonial theory that resistant and emancipatory theorizations and discourses are impervious to the controlling and oppressive implications typically associated with Orientalism and colonialism. I also investigate the effects of initiating postcolonial responses from the Western metropolis, and how that might complicate these resistant interventions.

The thesis will also examine Said's critiques of Orientalism, with particular concentration on *Orientalism* itself. This will include analysing the conceptual practicalities of his critiques of Orientalism, and how Said's own arguments concerning identity, location, intellectuality and discourse might emphasize his critiques, or possibly align and intersect with positions and narratives he considers Orientalist. Thus, my thesis is, in part, a comparative study of Said's arguments concerning Orientalism and his own emancipatory counter positions and discourses. My analysis will endeavour to read his arguments and narratives through the proposed methodologies he had applied when critiquing Orientalism. Such examination will critically revisit his assumptions concerning Orientalism, as well as his broader postcolonial arguments, positions and discourses.

Focus of the Thesis

Edward Said (1935–2003) was one of the leading figures in postcolonial theory. He has been heralded by Robert Young as the 'founder' of postcolonial studies, and a major

contributor to its theories.¹ With an extensive oeuvre, Edward Said has produced an immense body of theoretical assertions, analytical insights and personal narratives; he is one of the most prolific postcolonial writers. This thesis focuses entirely on Said's own work, both theoretical and autobiographical. Although numerous theoretical frameworks are evoked in each chapter, the majority of the texts analysed and discussed consist of Said's books, articles and interviews. Special attention is directed towards *Orientalism*, and its implications on Said's arguments and Postcolonial theories in general. This is equally accompanied with the analysis of numerous positions and arguments which Said has presented in his extensive critical, cultural and personal production.

Rationale and Contribution of the Thesis

Extensive work has been directed at analysing and examining Said's work. My own approach focuses on reading Said not only as a postcolonial theorist, but as a postcolonial theorist writing from a Western centre. I extensively examine the enabling nature of his position and whether it contributes effectively towards empowering his postcolonial narratives and arguments, or indeed if it compromises his alternatives. As Said is one of the main critics of oriental, colonial and imperial authority and essentialisms, I delineate the contours of his own counter-positions, arguments and theories initiated from within the West itself, and how they succeed, or indeed fail, in their efforts to espouse practical alternatives to orientalist influences and essentialisms. I then examine Said's own discursive biographical and autobiographical writings and analyse their implementation in the context of Said's own theoretical and positional framework. I believe that the combination of evaluating Said's theoretical work alongside his personal and political commitments to Palestine offers novel opportunities for analysing and critiquing his oeuvre. The outcome of this analysis provides valuable insights not only in regards to understanding and critiquing Said's work, but also in re-evaluating and expanding the boundaries of imperialist and orientalist effects. It also provides important illustrations of

¹Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), p.385.

the limits and practicalities of postcolonial positions and narratives initiated from Western metropolises.

The temporal and spatial nature of my analysis of Said's critical and personal positions and narratives also assists in reframing his critical position in postcolonial theory. Approaching Said and his work as an Oriental speaking from the West while speaking to the East and West, over a career which spanned for decades, presents new and elucidating perspectives on his work and arguments. My aim was to dislodge Said from a static postcolonial critical and academic position towards resituating his discourses and critiques in a more practically and discursively analyzable location. The goal is to refute postcolonial temporal and spatial misconceptions that formerly colonized subjects, or postcolonial theorists are not susceptible to delinquencies typically associated with Orientalists.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The body of the thesis is divided into six chapters. These chapters present a comprehensive and wide-ranging reading of Said's theories and discourses. The first chapter examines his arguments concerning identity and the attainment of postcolonial selfhood. The second chapter concentrates on methodologies of exile as alternative configurations of emancipatory space. The third chapter examines Said's delineations of postcolonial intellectualism and scholarship. The fourth chapter explores the parameters of his discursive positions. The fifth and sixth chapters present an analysis of his biography and autobiography. What I have tried to achieve through this examination is to present a rationale for an extensive analysis of Said's work which covers many aspects of his oeuvre. These chapters are consecutively concerned with self, place, vocation, narrative, and finally an analysis of the practical implementation of his positional and discursive methodologies. As these positions and narratives are epistemologically distinct and diverse, each chapter is provided with its own extensive introduction which expands on the interdisciplinary methodology used.

The thesis mainly relies on Said's own theorizations of Orientalism when analysing his work. A foundational text for postcolonial theory, as Robert Young asserts, *Orientalism*

is essential in any postcolonialist analysis. I invert orientalist theories to redirect them at Said's theories and narratives. The logic for such a radical move is to provide valuable insights not only into his positions and narratives, but also into Orientalism as a theoretical critique itself. Said provides an elaborate definition of Orientalism:

[a] Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. [b] Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'. [c] Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient [...] It also tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.²

What I want to emphasize with regard to these definitions is their generalized register. Orientalism is defined by Said as an all-encompassing paradigm which includes any work done in the West concerning the East. Despite his assertion that Orientalism is contaminated with 'hegemony', control and essentialism, these outcomes are not necessarily vital in designating Orientalism to its Western perpetrators.³ He is more concerned with how orientalists emphasize an epistemological differentiation between 'us' and 'them', and how they approach the orient with considerable authority and domination. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin argue, the continuity of such authoritative domination, binary differentiation and the monopoly over knowledge are essential in Said's theories on Orientalism, as such 'practice remains pertinent to the operation of imperial power in whatever form it adopts'.⁴ I reapply Said's theories in *Orientalism* as a methodology for analysing his work. My examination of his theories,

²Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Modern Classics, Reprinted with a new preface (London: Penguin Books, 2003), pp.2–3.

³Said, *Orientalism*, p.7.

⁴Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), p.154.

positions and discourses largely depends on Said's own postcolonial discursive analytical strategies, such as 'colonial discourse analysis' and 'contrapuntalism'.

Colonialism, imperialism and Orientalism are all essential in situating Said, his theories and his narratives. 'Colonialism and imperialism' are not abstractions for Said, as they formed lived experiences during the earlier part of his life. As he lived in Palestine, Egypt and Lebanon till his permanent immigration to the United States of America in 1951, he witnessed first-hand the immense effects of colonial rule and oppression.⁵ He deliberately defines himself as an 'oriental writing back to Orientalists' in order to dismantle their power apparatuses.⁶ Said defines the two terms as follows:

Imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory.⁷

The effects of 'dominating metropolitan' centres are approached here from two perspectives. Firstly, from Said's position as a former colonial subject and postcolonial theorist. And secondly, from the perspective of his location within the Western centres he is opposing. As Said himself concedes, he is greatly immersed within such 'dominating' metropolises: 'Most of my education, and certainly all of my basic intellectual formation, are Western; in what I have read, in what I write about, even in what I do politically.'⁸ Therefore, along with applying his analytical methodologies, I also consider his intellectual and personal status both as postcolonial subject and as diasporic scholar writing within the West.

Said's positions and narratives are presented as postcolonial 'alternatives', and his work is guided by a clear vision for a 'post-imperial' and postcolonial 'alternative' formulations beyond the colonized or formerly colonized 'politics of blame' and colonial 'politics of confrontation and hostility'.⁹ His main methodology for his alternative comes in

⁵Edward W. Said and Gauri Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), p.16.

⁶Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.38.

⁷Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.8.

⁸Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p.60.

⁹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp.19–20.

the form of a refashioned humanism as a substitute location for postcolonial counter-arguments and discourses:

The task of the humanist is not just to occupy a position or place, nor simply to belong somewhere, but rather to be both insider and outsider to the circulating ideas and values that are at issue in our society or someone else's society or the society of the other.¹⁰

Said explains that his aim is to 'fashion' humanism beyond the rubrics of the 'Eurocentric' model which participated in colonial and imperial abuses against Orientals. Rather than providing a counter-centrist alternative, he suggests a 'cosmopolitan' form of humanism which supplies a de-centred form of human interactions beyond 'totalizing and essentializing' parameters.¹¹ Hence, Said's theories are based on the possibility of alternative methodologies which might counter and replace existing modes of dominance and essentialism perpetrated by imperialists. His work repeatedly accentuates the possibility of postcolonial alternatives able to evade and replace existing methodologies:

At its best, the culture of opposition and resistance suggests a theoretical alternative and a practical method for re-conceiving human experience in non-imperialist terms.¹²

These 'non-imperialist' resistant positions, theories and discourses form an integral part of my analysis of Said's work. As the positions, theories and discourses discussed in this thesis are presented as alternatives to colonial and imperial opposites, I comparatively analyse his propositions against those he considers inadequately and oppressively essentialist.

Because my thesis proposes a postcolonial analysis of one of the most prominent figures in postcolonialism, it is essential to clearly define the parameters of this term. As Patrick Williams and Peter Childs concur, postcolonialism 'refers to a period coming after the end of colonialism'.¹³ This definition sets the temporal boundaries for postcolonialism, as it would mean that all of Said's work is defined as postcolonialist in its timeframe and

¹⁰Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Columbia Themes in Philosophy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p.76.

¹¹Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p.10.

¹²Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.333.

¹³Peter Childs and R. J. Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (Harlow: Longman, Pearson Education, 2006), p.1.

subject matter. While defining the temporal borders of postcolonialism is essential, it is equally important to emphasize the effects of colonization on nations and societies:

Postcolonial theory may be defined as the branch of contemporary theory that investigates, and develops propositions about the cultural and political impact of European conquest upon colonized societies and the nature of those societies' responses'.¹⁴

Postcolonialism, then, engages in examining the effects of colonialism on colonized peoples and societies as well as the 'responses' devised by the formerly colonized to provide dissimilar counter-positions and discourses. Postcolonialism also describes the experiences and conditions of formerly colonized individuals and societies. It encompasses their oppositional and emancipatory responses to colonial and imperial aggression, whether discursive or theoretical. But more broadly, it describes the whole period which came after colonialism.

Said's project might be described as a form of 'decolonization' aimed at restructuring postcolonial strategies to oppose and provide alternatives to imperialist and colonialist impositions. That Said is reinstating himself as anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist is essential for understanding and reading his work. As Neil Lazarus asserts, the 'attempt to "unthink Eurocentrism"' is lodged as a foundational aspiration of postcolonialist scholarship'.¹⁵ Said's aim was to reformulate postcolonialist alternatives to colonial and imperial methods of knowing and narrating. His decolonization is therefore aimed at regaining authority through deconstructing and critiquing dominant impositions:

Decolonization is the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms. This includes dismantling the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonialist power and that remain even after political independence is achieved.¹⁶

Although Said actively participates in these decolonizing 'processes', I aim to investigate his own position within Western centres (the United States of America and Columbia University) as he initiates his counter-arguments and discourses. The inverted dialectic of

¹⁴Bill Ashcroft, 'Future Thinking: Postcolonial Utopianism', in *The Future of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Chantal Zabus (New York: Routledge, 2015), p.235.

¹⁵Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.126.

¹⁶Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p.56.

centre and periphery is evoked to highlight this centrist position within the West. Decolonising from within becomes an intrinsic feature of Said's work which necessitates analysis.

Basing my evaluation on 'postcolonial discourse analysis', which Said participated in theorizing, I scrutinize his paradoxical impasse as he initiates his counter-discourses and positions from within the imperial centres he adamantly critiques. The paradoxical impasse is found in his reliance on a Western imperial centre and a powerful academic institution to initiate his critiques of similar power structures and imperial apparatuses. I also investigate and analyse the validity of his alternatives as responses which are enabled and empowered through his privileged position within Western institutions and power apparatuses. This is done through utilizing postcolonial analysis as a mechanism for demonstrating the difficulties and practicalities of postcolonial initiatives predominantly based on Western intellectual and cultural conventions and practices. These analyses provide valuable insights into the possibility of utilizing postcolonial theories to scrutinize oppositional and resistant positions and narratives based and enabled in the West. This approach might be logically connected to R. Radhakrishnan's 'derivativeness' theory. He describes how Said's postcoloniality is 'problematized' by his spatial and over-dependence on Western theories. Said's colonial subject position is largely 'compromised' by his location with the privilege of the 'metropolitan West'.¹⁷

Critiquing 'metropolitan' impositions and discourses was a vital part of Said's work, especially in *Orientalism*. The metropolis itself may be used 'binaristically in colonial discourse to refer to the "centre" in relation to a colonial periphery'.¹⁸ Yet, in Said's situation, his position was problematized by his location and empowerment within Western centres, particularly as he addresses and represents subordinated peripheries. The problematics of his position are shared by many academics, as they are unable to completely move beyond the realms of governmental, institutional and societal positions and influences. Differentiating between different kinds and levels of implication was, problematically, necessary. As Sumit Chakrabarti observes, this does 'problematize

¹⁷R. Radhakrishnan, *A Said Dictionary* (Chichester, West Sussex ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp.87–88.

¹⁸Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p.123.

resistance' and postcolonial responses, but it also espouses the possibilities for new postcolonial structures that are situated beyond locatedness.¹⁹ Consequently, Said moves from the confines of imperialist metropolitanism towards the fashioned empowerment of postcolonial cosmopolitanism. Although such positionality does not guarantee freedom from any association with Western power structures or centric methodologies, it does offer the possibility of redefining the boundaries between centre and periphery. Fernando Muller asserts that cosmopolitanism provides a humanistic space for non-coercive interaction between individuals:

Said connects his cosmopolitan humanism with a form of theoretical realism, implying that the reality or essence of the normative dimension that lies behind the concept of 'humanity' can be made visible.²⁰

This, however, does not exempt Said from the privileges provided by his metropolitan location. Said's aim is to delineate new parameters in place of rigid and subordinate colonial and imperial binaries. Through Aijaz Ahmad's arguments concerning Said's 'ambivalent cosmopolitan location', I propose a new approach which takes into consideration the imbalanced power relations within postcolonial discourses.²¹

I finally bring into my analysis Lisa Lau's and Sadik Jalal Al-Azm's theories concerning the possibilities of postcolonialist Orientalisms. Al-Azm presents an imposing rereading and extension of Said's theories on Orientalism. He argues that 'ontological Orientalism' initiated from the West towards the Orient is an obvious subordinating reconfiguration based on constructed binaries and a monopoly over knowledge. But he also argues that such Orientalism might be natively produced by the colonized with similar effect: 'ontological Orientalism in reverse is, in the end, no less reactionary, mystifying, ahistorical and anti-human than Ontological Orientalism proper'.²² Very similar to Al-

¹⁹SumitChakrabarti, *The Impact of the Postcolonial Theories of Edward Said, GayatriSpivak, and HomiBhabha on Western Thought: The Third-World Intellectual in the First-World Academy* (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), p.165.

²⁰Fernando Suárez Müller, 'Towards a Synthesis of Humanisms in a Cosmopolitan Age: The Late Philosophy of Edward Said', *Literature and Theology*, 28.4 (2014), 476–90 (pp.481–82) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/litthe/frt044>>.

²¹Aijaz Ahmad, 'Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Cosmopolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27.30 (1992), PE98–116 (p.98).

²²Sadik Jalal Al-Azm, 'Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse', in *Orientalism: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p.237.

Azm's arguments is Lisa Lau's theory concerning 're-orientalism'. Unlike Al-Azm, Lau presents her extensions on Said's Orientalism theories as being initiated from the West itself by 'Orientals'. She explains that due to large swathes of diasporic communities in the West, the process of Orientalism was problematized. Through 're-orientalism', non-Western and non-colonial individuals were utilizing power apparatuses and positionalities to reinstate their arguments and discourses. The disjuncture appears when these 'Orientals' begin to represent and essentialize the Orient and its people based on their designation as postcolonial Orientals, rather than their positionality as Westerners.²³ My analysis takes into consideration the possibility of 'reversed Orientalism' and 're-orientalism'. Through my examination of Said's theoretical positions and discourses, I apply and test the validity of Al-Azm's and Lau's theories, and also consider whether Said himself has actually been affected by traces of orientalist power and essentialisms.

The aim of revisiting and analysing *Orientalism* and its implications is not only concerned with examining Said's positions and discourses, although that itself is an integral and extensive part of my thesis. Along with analysing the practicalities of Said's critiques of Orientalists, I also scrutinize the actualities of his own postcolonial alternative conceptualizations. Through such an approach, I propose an innovative and extensive reframing of Orientalist susceptibility. As Said renegotiates personal and public boundaries of authority, power, theorization and emancipation; new paradigms for reconfiguring Orientalism within postcolonialism emerge.

Thesis Outline and Structure

Chapter One: presents Said's redefinitions of his postcolonial identitarian theorizations. He provides a re-conceptualization of identity through a strategy he calls affiliation. The chapter begins with an introduction which situates identity within the frameworks of postcolonial studies, evoking Stuart Hall's theories. The first section of the chapter concentrates on Said's delineations of his concept of affiliative identity, while the second section is concerned with his reconfiguration of filiative relations within his proposition for

²³ Lisa Lau, 'Re-Orientalism: The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Orientals', *Mod. Asian Stud.*, 43.2 (2009), 571–90 (pp.572–74) <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X07003058>>.

identitarian individual choice. The final section explains Said's reconstruction of postcolonial identities and whether they do provide a viable alternative for fixed or superimposed forms of identification.

Chapter Two: exile is presented by Said as an emancipatory location able to counter all forms of positional stagnation and domination. This chapter presents his exilic chosen locatedness as a methodology that provides individuals with the possibility of reconstructing their own forms of 'out-of-placeness'. I examine the possibility that his exilic proposition risks becoming a rigid position in itself. The chapter begins with an introduction to the concept of exile followed by Said's personalized elaboration of his notion of postcolonial exile as metaphorical rather than tragically fateful. The subsequent section discusses the rationale he presents for constructing his exilic strategy. The chapter concludes with Said's practical utilization of exile, and the ramifications of its application.

Chapter Three: begins by contextualizing Said's dependence on Antonio Gramsci's and Julien Benda's theories on intellectuality. The chapter concentrates on the conditions of Said's intellectual alternatives. He presents universality, amateurism and independence as the main conditions for his intellectual reclamation. I examine how these conditions are complicated by Said's subjective and relative approach towards conceptualizing postcolonial intellectualism.

Chapter Four: discourse is presented by Said as a means through which both emancipation and subordination can be administered. I discuss the implications of his extensive reliance on Michel Foucault's theories on discourse and power implication. Said presents alternative theorizations which are able to sidestep powerful and distorting paradigms associated with narratives. He reconfigures the parameters of truth, knowledge and objectivity within the theoretical framework of postcolonial discursivity. He also calls for the conditioned reconstruction of discursive interpretation and representation. Although he aimed to achieve emancipatory renditions of discursive forms, his alternatives are complicated by their epistemological contradictions.

Chapter Five: examines Said's *After the Last Sky* as an example of a Palestinian postcolonial biography. I argue that this biography exemplifies the practical deficiencies of

postcolonial portrayals as they become susceptible to essentialism, influence and control. The chapter begins with a brief history of Palestine, followed by an examination of the implications of Said's Western location and intended audience. As I analyse his collective portrayals of Palestinian narratives and histories, the Palestinian masses, and women's situation within the region, I examine the possibility of non-colonialist regressions and essentialisms inadvertently being perpetrated by postcolonial writers.

Chapter Six: examines postcolonial autobiography as a decolonizing project for opposition and resistance. I begin by theorizing the 'performative' and 'retrospective' nature of autobiographical texts as enabling methodologies for reconstructing the past. Through such methodology, the postcolonial autobiographer is able to reclaim authority and reinstate his/her postcoloniality. I first present the theoretical framework for autobiographical narratives, followed by an analysis of Said's challenge to parental authority and colonial schools. The final section is concerned with his depictions of Egypt and its population, and how they show signs of reorientalizing subordination.

My **conclusion** presents the research findings and limitations, and suggests possible areas for future exploration.

Chapter One

Redefining Identities: Edward Said's Affiliative Refashioning

1-1 Introduction

One of the leading figures in postcolonial theory and studies, Said has constantly been occupied with questions concerning decolonization and resistance to colonialism and imperialism. Having been born and lived through occupation and colonization within Palestine and Egypt before his emigration to the United States in 1951, Said wrote on issues concerning emancipation and postcolonial resistance to the oppression and essentialisms being perpetrated by colonial domination. He was a prolific writer and author whose proposed counter-positions were varied and numerous. In this chapter I concentrate on one of his counter-colonial positions, his re-conceptualization of identity and belonging as forms of postcolonial resistance and opposition. Through a strategy he calls affiliation, Said introduces a new methodology for framing and utilizing identitarian positions. I analyse his strategy and examine the practicality and limits of his proposed affiliative methodology and whether it does indeed offer a viable alternative. I also examine the possibility that his own affiliative alternatives might have replicated some of the reductive positions he initially set out to counter. My argument is that although his affiliative methodology is original and provides many possibilities for postcolonial emancipation, it is severely hindered by its contradictory exemptions and the limitations of its proposed alternatives. In the first section of this chapter, I discuss Said's definition of affiliation and how he envisages its application. The second section analyses how Said reconfigures his affiliative approach post-1990 through broadening its usage, and how such extensions become paradoxical in his overarching affiliative argument. And in the third section, I examine Said's new proposal for redefining the concept of identity and how it might expound identitarian emancipation. But before discussing the contours of his affiliative theorization, I present the following contextualization of some key terms as a basis for my coming analysis and discussion.

As this chapter is predominantly concerned with Said's reconfiguration of postcolonial identity as a counter-position, I will begin by defining this term. Identity itself may be defined from two perspectives, individual and collective. These forms of identity are intertwined, since individuals and communities share the same space of identification, whether ethnic, cultural, linguistic or political. Collective identities are in fact constructed through an amalgam of corresponding or closely related individual identities which then form a coherent society or community. As Francis Deng asserts, 'identity is the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture'.²⁴ Identity is consequently a concept which may be obtained by individuals as well as groups. Collective identifications are formed when a group of individuals align with certain ethnic, cultural or religious characteristics. Individuals could, for instance, form a collective ethnic identity through claiming to have the same ethnic or racial origin. As William Bloom argues, collective or 'national identity comes about when individuals share the same identifications with other individuals within the same community or geographical location'.²⁵ Identity is thus how human beings define themselves individually and collectively, and, in the process, define others as opposites. Along with forming collectives based on communal identifications, establishing any form of identity requires differentiation from opposite positions and identities. Hence, when an individual or group assert their own identity they are simultaneously assigning identities to others through defining them as not belonging to their distinct forms of identification. For instance, when a group in the United States identifies as being Native American, they are also affirming their differentiated position and identity from African Americans, Caucasian Americans and other ethnic groups. Although such identitarian assertions are based to some extent on individual choice, they are also highly dependent on collective pressures, impositions or even oppression.

Within the context of postcolonial theory, Stuart Hall presents a nuanced approach to redefining postcolonial identity. While he concedes that identity is an essential component of postcolonial emancipatory and resistance efforts, he insists that conventional views of

²⁴Francis M. Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in Sudan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings, 1995), p.1.

²⁵William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identities and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.52.

identity reduce it to fixed and stable positions which necessitate binaries. As the definitions above indicate, identity has often been viewed as being characterized by permanence and stability. The postcolonial subject becomes confined within specific parameters that are usually presented as the only feasible form of identification. In 'Ethnicity: Identity and Difference', Hall questions the practicality of rigid individual or collective identities within the framework of postcolonial resistant narratives and positions:

Identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space, or an unresolved question in that space, between a number of intersecting discourses. [... Until recently, we have incorrectly thought that identity is] a kind of fixed point of thought and being, a ground of action [...] the logic of something like a 'true self.' [... But] Identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the other to oneself.²⁶

Hall insists that postcolonialism has instigated the age of 'post identity', in which the individual moves from linear and imposed identities towards a 'processes of identification' through which the postcolonial subject is able to reconstruct his or her own identitarian positional preferences through choice.²⁷ The theory of 'post identity' does not in any way reject the necessity of the concept of identity itself; rather it is envisaged as a composite of various influences and elements which defy fixity and essentialism. Hall's main argument in this article is that identities, as allocated positions, are not accurate denominations of individual identifications, and that the processes of formulating such identities should be entirely dependent upon the efforts of individuals rather than being imposed by lineage or collective pressures. This in turn enables individuals to move beyond ethnic and nationalistic binaries in defining their own identities, according to Hall. Viewed as choice-based identification rather than inherited or imposed fixity, identity becomes susceptible to Said's own conceptualization of identification which is entirely dependent upon individualized refashioning of belonging, attachment and selfhood.

Aligning with Stuart Hall's postcolonial identitarian opposition, Edward Said himself views identity as a crucial basis for his counter-positions and arguments against colonialism

²⁶Stuart Hall, 'Ethnicity: Identity and Difference', in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. by Geoff Eley, Ronald GrigorSuny, and Lawrence Freedman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.339–51 (p.339).

²⁷Hall, 'Ethnicity: Identity and Difference', p.400.

and imperialism. As Bill Ashcroft corroborates, Said, like many other postcolonial theorists, utilizes identification as a 'site of resistance' and empowerment for the postcolonial subject.²⁸ Being able to reinstate one's own belonging and selfhood beyond the essentialist obligations of colonial and imperial oppression was fundamental in his theorization of postcolonial oppositionality. Yet basing resistance and counter-arguments on identitarian positions is not a novel strategy within postcolonial resistance literature. Much of, if not all, anti-colonial resistance was based on the nationalist, cultural and religious commonality of colonized peoples. Said's originality, nonetheless, is apparent in his extension of Hall's theory, that identity has become essentialist in its overdependence upon linear and ethnic moulding of belonging as well as through homogenous communal impositions. Said argues that, at times, identitarian resistance to imperialism and colonialism was based on overtly nationalistic and ethnic binaries. He gives examples of formerly colonized nations, as is the case in the Arab world, where all anti-colonial efforts were based on either ethnic or religious identification as defence against what was perceived as European, Christian colonial advances. Said insists that such identitarian resistance mirrored 'imperialist terms' of identification which were wholly dependent on ethnic, cultural and religious binaries of 'us' and 'them'.²⁹ He also contends that nationalist and ethnic resistance to colonialism and imperialism ignores the homogenous variations of peoples and their origins through framing counter-identities as all-encompassing essentialisms. This, he argues, echoes British colonialism in Egypt, for instance, which was based on the notion of differentiating the European, Christian English from the Arab Muslim population of Egypt so as to define themselves and their Egyptian counterparts. And within the same context of binaries comes an equally essentialist resistance to occupation in the form of a fixed Egyptian and Arab identity which ignores the diversity of human societies and their members. Said, therefore, was critical of the fact that postcolonial resistance to colonialism and imperialism has 'often' been produced in the realms of 'nativism'.³⁰ He argues that nationalist nativism, although evidently successful in resisting colonial rule, was in itself a reflection of the monocratic nature of colonial binaries of

²⁸Bill Ashcroft and D. P. S. Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, Routledge Critical Thinkers, 2nd ed., rev. (London: New York: Routledge, 2009), p.110.

²⁹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.333.

³⁰Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.332.

othering, which sometimes succeeded and prevented the native population from forming their own individual identities through confining them to predisposed homogenous identities:

Much but by no means all the resistance to imperialism was conducted in the broad context of nationalism. 'Nationalism' is a word that still signifies all sorts of undifferentiated things, but it serves me quite adequately to identify the mobilizing force that coalesced into resistance against an alien and occupying empire on the part of peoples possessing a common history, religion, and language. Yet for all its success—indeed because of its success—in ridding many territories of colonial overlords, nationalism has remained a deeply problematic enterprise [...] which replicated the old colonial structures in new terms.³¹

Said is critical of restrictive nationalistic and ethnic forms of opposition which are based on inaccurate or partial forms of identification imposed upon individuals. Invoking Hall's notions of 'identification', Said formulates a new methodology called 'affiliation' in order to construct original postcolonial approaches towards formulating counter-identitarian positions. His affiliative methodology aims to produce identitarian formulations which Said argues accentuate individual choice rather than collective ethnic, nationalistic or even societal impositions. His affiliative methodology is therefore not only a form of resistance to colonial and imperialist oppression, but is also an alternative to postcolonial responses which have tended to emulate essentialist identities produced by colonialism, Orientalism and imperialism.

1-2 Said's Affiliation as Alternative Strategy

In order to construct alternative identities, Said utilizes a strategy he calls affiliation. Said presents his affiliative positions as methodologies aimed at countering dominant narratives and discourses imposed through colonialism and imperialism. He also aims to offer an alternative to dominations and subordinations equally found in many postcolonial resistant positions. I here analyse Said's implementation of his affiliative identification strategy as an apparatus for creating postcolonial forms of selfhood and belonging. My objective is to

³¹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.269.

investigate Said's affiliative alternative and whether it is indeed capable of offsetting dominant and monopolizing positions and narratives. I also examine the extent to which Said's theories of affiliation are able to provide a workable methodology able to avoid the essentialist and authoritarian production of knowledge and narratives which he critiques in orientalist and colonial discourses.

I will begin my discussion by contextualizing Said's definition of affiliation. In his 1983 book *The World, the Text and the Critic* Said presented a very clear and effectively elaborated explanation for a newly devised theory he called 'affiliation'. His aim was to challenge the over-dependence on filiations in forming postcolonial identities. Said believed that the reliance on filiations resembled a retreat into essentialist and 'failed' identitarian politics. What his own alternative affiliations offered was a move towards a 'new system' of relationships based on individual and intellectual authority rather than linear genealogical imposition.³² Said insisted that his new methodology would eventually allow the individual, the intellectual and the critic to resituate themselves in a cultural and political position of their choosing, rather than being enclosed within filial fixed locations based on origin. This position speaks to Said's scepticism concerning all collective identifications such as those connected to familial connections, ethnicity and nationalism. Additionally, within his general scepticism towards filial and collective connections, his affiliative argument crucially includes postcolonial resistant positions and narratives which were equally dependent on linear and genealogical fundamentals. Said claims that both colonial and postcolonial narratives and arguments tend to be over-dependent on portraying identities as ethnic and nationalistic fixed ensembles which are then imposed on members of their respective communities and societies. He, on the other hand, believes that identities are more inclined to be diverse and fragmented and cannot be accommodated under such collective essentialisms. Said defines filiation and affiliation in the following passage, in which he also explains his preference for affiliations:

Thus if a filial relationship was held together by natural bonds and natural forms of authority—involving obedience, fear, love, respect, and instinctual conflict—the new affiliative relationship changes these bonds into what

³²Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp.19–20.

seem to be transpersonal forms—such as guild consciousness, consensus, collegiality, professional respect, class, and the hegemony of a dominant culture. The filiative scheme belongs to the realms of nature and of ‘life,’ whereas affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society.³³

Said differentiates between the two terms, with filiation being connected to natural human bonds, while affiliation is associated with cultural and societal forms of relationship. Said, of course, favours affiliative relationships as they are not restrictively fixed, as is the case with ethnic and genealogical filiations. Affiliative flexibility offers individuals the leniency of being able to move between different positions and identifications. An example of affiliative relations’ flexibility is found in political and cultural identifications, where the individual chooses to associate with different political and cultural positions rather than being framed within predetermined parameters. Said’s preference for affiliative relations places much emphasis on non-natural forms of association which, in principle at least, offer relative autonomy for individuals in forming their identity.

It is notable that Said presents his predilection for affiliative bonds in a cautious manner; he indicates that it also might be compromised through the ‘hegemony of a dominant culture’. Although Said differentiates between filiative and affiliative bonds, he does affirm his understanding of the fact that affiliations can become no less reductive and essentialist within certain contexts. He explains that affiliation might present a different kind of non-genealogical authority which is equally dominant when applied without consideration for how social and political groups might produce their own hegemonies or assimilate their members. Said gives examples of political and cultural affiliations which have become exclusive to an extent that has transformed them into filiative positions. He presents the example of social classes which, although not connected directly to lineage and ethnicity, have become as fixed as any genealogical form of belonging. Despite the possible resemblance to filiation, Said insists that affiliations offer the individual another crucial discrepancy which helps overcome this setback and signals another difference between filiation and affiliation, specifically individual intention. He defines filiative bonds as being enforced through ‘birth [and] nationality’, while affiliative connections are created through ‘social and political conviction, economic and historical circumstances, voluntary effort and

³³Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp.19–20.

willed deliberation'.³⁴ Said is arguing that it is precisely because affiliative ties are constructed through individual rational choice and personal circumstances, rather than submission to familial and national inclinations, that they are preferable. The individual is therefore able to fashion his/her own identity and position through these optional affiliations, a choice not available to permanent filiative relationships, despite the fact that these choices are still curtailed by the historic, economic and social circumstances.

I believe that Said's cautious approach towards affiliations is indicative of how his affiliative strategies might be ideally approached and understood. The conception that affiliative relations could become as stable and hegemonic as filiative ties is problematic within Said's theorization of his affiliative alternative because they illuminate the limitations of his alternatives and how they represent a dissimilar substitute to filial relations. This is further complicated by Said's claims that affiliation offers individuals the relative choice to construct their own affiliative position and identity. If affiliative relations can indeed transform into filiations, this would call into question his proposition that affiliations are alternatives which offer the individual an optional choice to construct his or her identity. I argue that the combination of Said's cautious approach towards affiliation with his claims that it is based, among other factors, on 'voluntary effort' indicates that affiliation is actually a methodological apparatus rather than being a binary positional opposite to filiation. The difference would be that rather than advocating affiliative relations as a preferred position, what he is actually calling for is to adopt his affiliative methodology in the formation of identities. Said chooses to utilize affiliation as a useful method of attachment and detachment to different positions rather than accepting it as a cultural and societal location which resembles an opposite to filiations. It is a critical tool that requires the individual to keep reflecting and thinking about her or his positionality and refashioning it, rather than simply accepting what has been 'inherited' or imposed. Said, for instance, explicitly warns that scholars and intellectuals could easily form their own communities or guilds of exclusion and specialization which echo natural hegemonic filiations, thus proving that 'affiliation can easily become a system of thought no less orthodox and dominant than culture itself'.³⁵ He is therefore alert to the susceptibility of

³⁴Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp.24–25.

³⁵Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p.20.

affiliation to becoming a set ideology, and hence insists on the need for vigilance and self-reflexivity as a necessary dimension of his delineation of affiliation as a methodology. He would come to present his own interpretation of these affiliative positions in order to circumvent his deep wariness towards all forms of fixed belonging and essentialist identitarian positions, whether natural, societal or institutional. The implication is that the individual, and the postcolonial subject in particular, are distanced from certain forms of constraining belonging and situatedness towards an aspirational chosen identification largely influenced by individual preference. I believe that it is within this affiliative counter-methodology that it is possible to distinguish Said's alternative postcolonial positions and identities.

Based on the above analysis, I argue that Said's affiliations, although based on affiliative relationships, are in fact utilized as an identitarian construction apparatus rather than specific alignments with affiliatively formed relationships. Individuals use them to construct their own political, cultural and intellectual identities, which are predominantly based on affiliative connections and relationships. This argument is reinforced by Said's own admission that even affiliative positions can become hegemonic. And this is exactly what Matthew Abraham understood from Said's definition. Abraham explains that filial ties are not included in Said's affiliations due to their apparent fixity, and that the proposed identities are based completely on non-filial bonds:

Filiative loyalties, those we owe to nation, family, and species, cannot be broken; they are facts of birth. Affiliative loyalties, those that arise by virtue of profession and temporary alliances, replace filiative relationships; in this sense, one can refashion an identity through relations unrelated to birth, relations that can be invented and fashioned according to time and circumstance. It is this individual effort, in Said's estimation, that exists between the filiative and the affiliative.³⁶

Abraham presents a number of arguments in this passage. He reaffirms Said's rejection of rigid forms of filial connection, along with his preference for affiliative relationships. Yet the most significant point Abraham raises concerns refashioning and inventing identities based on affiliations. He maintains that Said is calling for the formulation of individual identities based on non-filial connections which are dependent on individual choice and

³⁶Matthew Abraham, 'Edward Said: Criticism and Society at the Limits', *JAC*, 25.2 (2005), 397–406 (p.400).

will. And although Abraham is persuasive in his affirmation of the fixity of natural ties, and his estimation that affiliative connections do offer possibilities for fashioning identities, it is his indication of how individuals are able to invent and construct identities that is vital. For if Said's postulation was that natural connections could never be disposed of, and that individuals, to an extent, are able to connect to their cultural, political and professional positions, then it would be questionable to consider this argument an original or novel approach to these relations. Individuals have always been able to construct their non-filial positions and connections to a certain extent. My own estimation would be that the significance of Said's affiliative methodology lies in his wariness of the tendency to portray identities as being exclusively or predominantly based on ethnic or nationalistic ties, and also his cautiousness towards affiliative connections which can be imposed collectively upon the individual and thus become no less overbearing. What Said introduces is not only a preference for affiliations over filiations, but an innovative system through which the postcolonial subject can fashion identity by means of affiliative relations.

A factor which complicates Said's affiliative strategy is the possibility of these affiliations becoming hegemonic and restrictive, as he himself acknowledges in his cautious definition of the term. Although he is adamant that his affiliations are able to circumvent affiliative hegemonies, he presents very little detail on how this might be accomplished. In *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Said gives examples of how affiliative cultural and political bonds might become no less subordinating than ultra-nationalistic filiations. These examples include political dictatorships and dogmatic societies where individual affiliations are limited or stifled. He presents Saddam Hussein's Iraq as an example where it was potentially impossible to venture beyond the political or even social parameters allocated by the government. He also uses Iranian theocracy as an example, where social and cultural divergence might not be practically available for many individuals under the strict and ultra-religious post-1979 regime. This might explain Said's cautious approach towards affiliation, as Abdirahman Hussein elucidates. Hussein argues that Said's 'subtle endorsement' of affiliation alludes to the fact that affiliative ties are open to individual fashioning and hybrid formation but only 'theoretically and in principle'.³⁷ Hussein insists

³⁷Abdirahman A. Hussein, *Edward Said: Criticism and Society* (London: New York: Verso, 2004), p.169.

that whilst affiliative bonds are more susceptible to choice and human will, in practice these options are curtailed through external limitations and pressures.

Yet to argue that Said's affiliative approach is only able to refashion alternative identities within open and democratic societies where free choice is already available would impose great restrictions on his affiliative approach, especially given that it has mainly been presented as an alternative postcolonial strategy for resistance. A good example to consider would be the occupied territories in Palestine. It might be understandably difficult for any Palestinian to freely affiliate with any given political or cultural position under the current circumstances of occupation and repression, a situation which Said himself acknowledged. However, the fact that certain contexts and situations prevent the full implementation of his affiliative methodology does not entirely diminish its usefulness and practicality. Said's affiliations do offer an empowering individual alternative; albeit, still limited in its capacity to overcome certain forms of institutional and social authority. The manifestation of such limitations is addressed in the following examples.

Some examples of how Said practically implements his affiliative methodology are needed. These affiliations of course would be predominantly connected to non-filial forms of connection such as political, religious, cultural and institutional relations. Said's own political affiliations offer a very illuminating illustration of how affiliations are employed. As one of the most prominent Palestinian political activists in the West, it is no surprise that his political affiliations are evident. *The Question of Palestine*, *Peace and its Discontents* and *The Politics of Dispossession* are only a few of his overtly political books and articles concerning Palestine. His political connection with Palestine is clearly governed by his affiliative responses, however, rather than being based on national and ethnic association. His membership of the PNC (the Palestinian National Council, which rules on all Palestinian legislation) is an illustration of such a position. He joined the council in 1977, maintaining however a very critical and dismissive approach towards Palestinian political parties and especially towards Yasser Arafat, then president of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the de facto leader of Palestine. Said finally severed his relation with the PNC after more than a decade over his protestation of the handling of the peace negotiations between Palestine and Israel. His relations with Arafat and the Palestinian

authorities are also exemplary of his fluctuating position. In *The Politics of Dispossession*, and under the title ‘Solidly Behind Arafat’, an article which was published in 1983, Said appears to enthusiastically back Arafat and the Palestinian leadership in their struggle towards independence. In fact, Said insists on portraying the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and their cause. Yet by 1987 and with the advent of the Palestinian intifada (uprising) against Israel, his support for Palestinian political parties wavered until it totally diminished with the commencement of the Palestinian-Israeli peace processes in 1991. His later publications, such as *Peace and its Discontents* and *The End of the Peace Process*, are almost entirely characterized by his disaffiliation with the Palestinian national parties and their political leaders. This is despite his own admission that he had become one of the most prominent spokespersons for Palestinians in the West in general and in the United States in particular.

These instances are not invoked as illustrations of political inconsistency, neither am I insinuating that Said is a political opportunist. In the volatile and shifting political landscape of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is understandable that opinions and positions will undergo great modifications. I am, however, highlighting the huge margins of political manoeuvre allowed by Said’s affiliations. I believe that his connection with the PLO and the PNC are both great examples of his affiliative methodology at work. Through such affiliation, he was able to simultaneously affiliate and disaffiliate with certain factions within the Palestinian political movement. Let me present the following illuminating example. In 1991 Said wrote the following about the PLO:

But the PLO, which represents all Palestinians whether we like it or not, like all nationalist movements has its orthodoxy, its official line, and I have sometimes been very uncomfortable with that, at the same time, obviously, I support it.³⁸

I believe that this quotation reveals Said’s affiliative methodology in its fullest manifestation. For while he acknowledges all the faults and negativities associated with the PLO’s ‘nationalist orthodoxy’, he nevertheless concedes that it has practical and political benefits for the Palestinian cause and people. This is of course regardless of the fact that

³⁸Edward W. Said and David Barsamian, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1994), pp.49–50.

this stance contradicts his own cynicism towards some ethnic and national forms of communal belonging. Affiliation provides the political flexibility necessary for this reserved political support for the PLO. That Said re-evaluated his position less than two years later is evidence of such flexibility. In *Peace and its Discontents*, which was published in 1993, Said completely disregards the PLO as a ‘compromised [and] submissive Israeli captive’ which can no longer be a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people due to what he believed to be their total submission to the United States and Israel.³⁹ What such affiliative positions divulge is Said’s flexible ability to connect and disconnect with political positions and parties. What this also offered Said was the possibility to affiliate with different factions and political positions within Palestine rather than be confined to one political movement or party. The central criticism which could be waged against the practicality of his political affiliations is that they are modelled on his own relatively privileged position, and, at times, underestimate the actual situation within Palestine, especially with regards to pressures inflicted by Israeli and Palestinian authorities upon individuals within the occupied territories. Although Palestinians are definitely able to produce different levels of affiliative efforts, it would be logical to assume that those individuals would not have the same level of lenience and political freedom available to Said as a prominent American academic speaking from the West.

Another example of Said’s affiliative rendering concerns his appropriation of cultural preferences and positions. Said deploys his affiliative strategy in many instances bound with his wider cultural and political positions. His association with the Civil Rights movement in the United States attests to the consistency of his humanistic cultural and political advocacy for equality and justice beyond the confines of the Palestinian conflict. Yet there are other examples which might be considered incompatible with his position as postcolonial critic and progressive activist. The following example attests to my point. Said’s affiliative approach was consistently administered in the appropriation of his conservative cultural and literary preferences, which seemingly clash with his apparent liberal and leftist leanings. Said speaks explicitly to this self-fashioned form of affiliation when he describes his conservative predilections for Western high culture and the canon.

³⁹Edward W. Said, *Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p.38.

Said admits that, regardless of his postcolonial positions, his ‘cultural biases are on the whole tinged with conservatism’, and his preferences for Western art, classical music and literature attest to this fact.⁴⁰ Said is certainly convincing when he asserts that cultural affiliations should not be governed by ideological or institutionalized positions which dictate personal preferences, or require certain identifications. Yet the anomaly in Said’s analogy is that he is implicitly claiming that his affiliations allow him to remain somehow free from any ideological or institutional identifications connected with such conservative preferences. This would mean that Said is insistent on occupying two contradictory positions simultaneously, namely postcolonial humanist emancipation and Western conservatism. Said himself acknowledges the ‘oddity’ of his situation, but still insists that he is able to combine his ‘radical political philosophy [with being] culturally conservative’.⁴¹ My point here is not that Said’s cultural preference are intrinsically flawed, rather, my argument is that such instances elucidate the fine line Said draws between different kinds of affiliation. As I will discuss later, he criticises many intellectuals for their Western preferences and biases, yet these same positions would later become permissible under the pretext of his affiliations.

I believe that it is indeed possible for a postcolonial intellectual such as Said to affiliate with Western high culture and canon, and that such personal and cultural preferences in themselves do not compromise his intellectual position and motives. But I also consider that such affiliative practices would certainly extend the limits and boundaries of Said’s proposed strategy to an extent that might become counterproductive. Throughout his career, Said engaged almost exclusively with European texts, critics and canon. The main exceptions are found in his writings on Palestine. And while this in itself does not impugn Said in any way, it does indicate that his affiliative methodologies could easily be exploited to maintain positions connected to cultural and political hegemony. Said himself criticised the tendency of various Arabs to view the West and America as something which ‘is to be worshipped, emulated, admired without qualification’.⁴² It is interesting that Said did not view these positions as political and cultural affiliations which were driven by

⁴⁰Edward W. Said, *Beginnings Intention and Method* (London: Granta Books, 1998), p.xiii.

⁴¹Emily Eakin, ‘Look Homeward Edward’, *New York*, 1999, p.49.

⁴²Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, p.94.

individual preference. If indeed Said believes that affiliative choices rest entirely upon the individual's subjective insight, it should be logical to assume that some of these individuals will choose to associate with radical or conservative, political, religious and cultural positions which their affiliations originally set out to offset. It is understandable that all individual and subjective choices are under constant risk of permitting unwarranted opinions and positions, and that these individual risks are always going to be easier to overcome and dismiss than is the case if they were produced on a collective or communal level. Nevertheless, the fact that these affiliative methodologies can be easily exploited and misconstrued reduces the practicality of Said's alternative, and highlights its susceptibility to counterproductive utilization.

After his graduation from Harvard in 1963 with a PhD, Said joined Columbia University as a professor and continued in that position for the remainder of his life. And despite his cautiousness towards the influences of all public and private institutions, Said continuously affirmed his affiliation with his academic position in general and that of Columbia University in particular. He described Columbia as 'one of the few remaining places in the United States where reflection and study can take place in an almost Utopian fashion'.⁴³ However, he was aware that the independence of the academic or intellectual can be severely constrained by 'affiliations with universities that pay the salary' and offer research opportunities. Said nevertheless maintained that such institutional affiliations offer intellectuals advantageous positions for initiating their counter-arguments and narratives.⁴⁴ He also confessed that although American academic institutions might pose certain risks to intellectual independence, they are still, 'compared, say, to most African, Asian, and Middle Eastern universities [...] a relatively Utopian space'.⁴⁵ The instantaneous affiliation to these institutions and the recognition of the risks they pose is questionable. Said might have been correct in his estimation that American academic institutions in general offer more freedom and independence for their faculty than many of their counterparts in the Middle East, for instance, yet such independence is still relative. The question would be whether such affiliation should have any consequences for the intellectual's position. It is

⁴³Said, *Orientalism*, p.xii.

⁴⁴Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, 1993 (London: Vintage, 1994), p.51.

⁴⁵Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2012), p.500.

significant that Said himself was strenuously scathing in his critique of what he describes as the ‘complicity’ of many Arab academics with the lines drawn by their overtly politicized institutions. As he recounts the ‘constraints and difficulties in Arab universities’, he describes universities in the Middle East and other parts of the ‘third world’ as being ‘part of the political system and academic appointments [as] necessarily, very often [...] outright political appointments’.⁴⁶ He compares such complicity to that shown by many orientalists in their adherence to colonial and imperialistic pressures in their appropriation of knowledge for political and economic use. Yet what Said fails to acknowledge is that it might also be argued that American institutions, including Columbia, do exert their own demands and restrictions upon their academics, and that these pressures can put into question their impartiality. Being consistent in his cautious approach towards his affiliations, Said concedes these risks but chooses to assert his attachment to these institutions affiliatively:

[M]y intellectual work generally has really been enabled by my life as a university academic. For all its often noted defects and problems, the American university—and mine, Columbia, in particular—is still one of the few remaining places in the United States where reflection and study can take place in an almost Utopian fashion.⁴⁷

As is the case with his political and cultural affiliations, Said acknowledges the risks associated with his institutional affiliations but is very ambiguous with regard to the extent of their effects and how it is possible for affiliations to bypass them. It is even more incongruous that he was able to offer himself broader choices he had already denied many of his Arab counterparts. There is a clear combination of dismissal and reductiveness towards Arab intellectuals and their motives on Said’s part.

1-3 Affiliation as Identification: Reinstating Filiations

In his definition, Said presents his affiliative methodology as an emancipatory alternative to filiative identities. According to Said, affiliative connections and relationships have become the preferred structures for individual and communal forms of belonging and identification

⁴⁶Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p. (393 and 500).

⁴⁷Said, *Orientalism*, p.xii.

as his coming discussions and quotes will validate. In this section I elaborate on Said's theorizations of affiliative alternatives, and, crucially, investigate how he envisages replacing or refashioning filiative ties. My arguments and analysis are based on theories presented by Timothy Brennan and Asha Varadharajan, who argue that Said's affiliative shift was initially instigated by his disappointment with postcolonial 'ethnographic' depictions of identities, which resemble a regressive 'lapsing into nativism' that brought the postcolonial response to imperialism to the point of being a filiative form of authority in its own right.⁴⁸ Varadharajan continues her elaboration by affirming that Said believed that the 'struggle against identity thinking begins [...] in the acceptance of affiliations over filiation'.⁴⁹ Said, according to Brennan and Varadharajan, was frustrated with postcolonial counter-positions and discourses which were dependent predominantly on ethnic and nativist identifications. He also believed that nationalist and ethnographic responses, although initiated to counter imperialist and colonialist onslaughts, were in themselves restrictive through their over-dependence on fixed notions of collective identities. Other non-filial forms of identification were sometimes relegated in the formation of these identities. Said's dismissal was also hinged on his conviction that filiative associations are based on explicit linear and genealogical inheritance and superimposed rigidity. Affiliation, argues Said, provides the contingency for choice-based forms of identification and belonging for the postcolonial subject.

The contours of Said's affiliative theorization centre on what he perceives as the regressive nature of filiative forms of identification as necessarily restrictive and authoritative. His affiliative alternative, crucially, presents what he recognizes as redefined forms of individual and communal belonging and attachment. This stance is obvious in the introduction to *Reflections on Exile*, where Said reaffirms his shift from the 'politics of ethnic identity', opting instead for 'alternative communities' which thrive in their affiliative relations and connections. Yet, beginning from 1990 onwards, Said began to take a more lenient approach towards filiations. Within *Reflections on Exile* itself, he does appear to

⁴⁸Timothy Brennan, 'Angry Beauty and Literary Love', in *Revising Culture, Reinventing Peace*, ed. by NaseerAruri and Muhammad A. Shuraydu (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p.190 (pp.91–92); See also: Asha Varadharajan, *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said, and Spivak* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p.134.

⁴⁹Varadharajan, *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said, and Spivak*, p.134.

accept the designation of Palestinians as a ‘coherent people [who can be identified through] various nationalist assertions’.⁵⁰ That the Palestinian people could regressively become cohered into nationalist identifications appears at odds with Said’s affiliative alternative, especially given that his arguments with regard to filiative ties remained centred on the assumptions that ethnic and nationalistic identities do not take into consideration the complex nature of political, social and cultural identifications. However, despite his adamant rejections of ethnic bonds, Said became more tolerant towards extending the limits of his affiliative methodology to incorporate the possibility of refashioning filiations. In his earlier elaborations in *The World, the Text and the Critic*, it was not clear whether or not this methodology might be extended to filial forms of belonging such as familial and ethnic relations. I purposely stress this point because it is a critical turning point for the practicality of his affiliative methodology, as the coming discussion will reveal. What such extension establishes is the verification of affiliation as a comprehensive strategy, as it becomes able to refashion both filial and affiliative relations and positions, a decisive extension that moves beyond the restricted rubrics of Said’s original affiliative formulation.

Based on the assumption that filial ties can be refashioned to construct identities, I argue that Said’s affiliations offer a technique which enables individuals and communities to form new relationships and connections equally based on filiative and affiliative connections. Yet the question remains as to how this is practically possible given the rigidity of filiative relations, as affirmed by Said himself. Although affiliative relations are, relatively speaking, already characterized by disposition and choice, the same might not be supposed with relation to fixed natural connections such as ethnicity and origin. But before presenting my own rationalization for how filiation might become incorporated in Said’s affiliative strategy, I will first introduce two theorists who are very familiar with Said’s work in order to reinforce my contention that he is actually including filiations. Anna Bernard, for instance, affirms that Said’s affiliative methodology allows the postcolonial subject to become fairly removed from the rigidity of a filial ‘location based on class, ethnicity, religion or nationality, to a chosen position based on affiliation’.⁵¹ It does not

⁵⁰Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, pp.xxxiii–xxxiv.

⁵¹Anna Bernard, ‘The Last Jewish Intellectual: Borrowing from Edward Said’, *Jewish Quarterly*, 60.3–4 (2013), 80–83 (p.81) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0449010X.2013.855450>>.

come as a surprise that Bernard's idea of choice includes non-filial ties. What is significant is that she also assumes that it is possible to deconstruct filiations and refashion natural forms of belonging through affiliative strategies in order to construct a Palestinian identity, in Said's case, a claim which I find convincing. I agree that affiliative methodologies serve as divergence from the rigidity of natural bonds, as well as being able to refashion them. Otherwise, affiliative methodologies would offer only partial formulations for choice and identification as they would become incapable of affecting filial structures and identities. Seamus Deane's reading also promotes the argument that Said is calling for an amalgam of both filiation and affiliation to reach the intended identitarian position:

At its simplest, the filiative is what we are born or incorporated into; the affiliative is what we acquire by effort, exploration, and historical circumstance. If it were ever possible to live at the conjuncture between these two, then the intellectual could retain the closeness to actuality and the perspective on experience that would provide an ideal balance.⁵²

Deane is persuasive in his estimation that Said prefers affiliative relations which are based on personal effort and choice. Yet his assertion that Said calls for an amalgam of filiations with affiliations is more crucial. For although Said clearly and extensively demotes filiations in his presentations and definitions, in his later work he promotes the ideal that it is possible to refashion them through his affiliative methodology. Thus, what Said presents through implementing affiliation is his own elective rendering of both affiliative and filial connections. Deane, crucially, describes Said's nuanced approach to affiliation as an 'ideal balance' which can be achieved between all forms of relations. I believe that such 'balance' and 'conjuncture' are both achieved through Said's tentative rendering of both affiliation and filiation. But the most crucial term here is 'ideal', which alludes to the aspirational effort Said is basing his affiliative approach upon. Such ideality will be extensively tested as Said tries to delineate the practicality of his affiliative strategy in order to circumvent the apparent fixity of filial, and at times affiliative, positions and identities.

Although Said originally seemed very dismissive of filial relations and their incorporation in his affiliations, in his later work, post-1990, he appears to accept the view

⁵²Seamus Deane, 'Under Eastern and Western Eyes', *Boundary 2*, 28.1 (2001), 1–18 (pp.11–12) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/01903659-28-1-1>>.

that filial ties could be reformed through his affiliative approach. However, this assumption is complicated by the fact that filial, linear and natural bonds are difficult to break from or discard. As Jacqueline Rose suggests, ‘the fixity of identity [...] is something from which it is very hard to escape—harder than Said, for wholly admirable motives, wants it to be’.⁵³ Rose is alluding here to filial forms of belonging such as ethnic origin and familial ties which are fixed and permanent. Yet while Rose is correct to question Said’s ability to escape any form of filial identification, Said has not in actuality ever disputed this fact. As the next quotation suggests, Said is well aware of the fixed nature of ethnic and filial forms of belonging. Based on his own assertion of the fixation of all filial connections, it was logically assumed that affiliative methodologies are restricted to reconstructing non-filial forms of relationships and positions. However, he was clear concerning the postulation that these filial forms of belonging could never be eluded:

All of us without exception belong to some sort of national, religious or ethnic community: no one, no matter the volume of protestations is above the organic ties that bind the individual to family, community, and of course nationality.⁵⁴

The rational outcome of such an affirmation would be that Said is actually restricting his affiliative methodologies to non-filial bonds. The grounds for reemphasizing this restrictive statement concerning affiliation is to expound one of its most intrinsic misconceptions, namely that it is bound within affiliative connections and relations. This would therefore necessitate that Said’s ‘identity alternative’ is only partial as it is not able to refashion any form of filial bonds. My own contention is that Said became well aware of these restrictive boundaries concerning the limits of affiliative methodologies, and that this realization instigated a shift in his emphasis towards the application of affiliation as a methodology able to include both affiliative and filiative relations. In *Representations of the Intellectual*, from which the above statement was quoted, Said argues that whilst he still accepts that filial bonds are fixed and permanent, he nevertheless asserts that ethnic identities based on these filial ties are constructed and fashioned through human effort. Said extends his argument concerning the ‘constructed’ nature of all identities to include ‘group and national

⁵³Edward W. Said and Jacqueline Rose, *Freud and the Non-European* (London: New York: Verso, 2003), p.74.

⁵⁴Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.30.

identities', insisting that the notion of 'ethnic identity' is 'not a natural or God-given entity but is a constructed, manufactured, even in some cases invented object'.⁵⁵ This quotation reveals that Said found it necessary to include ethnic and filial relations within his affiliative refashioning of alternative identities. What this entails is that affiliations, according to Said, would be able to include ethnic and filial origins despite their apparent rigidity. His logic is that ethnic and familial belonging are stable and fixed, but identifying with them creates innovative constructions called ethnic or filial identities. Although the incorporation of filial relations expands the parameters of Said's affiliative strategy, in practice they present problematic inconsistencies and complications.

Based on the discussion and evidence presented above, I argue that Said's affiliative methodology is not restricted to social, political, cultural or other non-filial relationships or bonds. Said actively differentiates between the fixity of ethnic and linear origins and between identification with such origins and positions. There are different approaches which could be applied in order to explain how Said was able to incorporate filiations through his proposed affiliative methodology. David Huddart, for instance, presents a convincing view of filiative positions which disputes filial fixation. He argues that all filiative bonds are partially prone to transforming to affiliations in essence. He bases his analogy on the fact that all performances of identity are relative and interpretational, even if these identities were formed depending on fixed linear and ethnic origins. He continues by asserting that it is impossible to assume that any individual is able to comprehensively cohere with their presupposed identitarian position, as such individual efforts are subjective and based on personal perception.⁵⁶ Fundamentally, what Huddart is proposing is differentiation between ethnic and familial origins and how individuals perform or identify with them. In other words, he is arguing against the notion that filiations are necessarily 'natural' ties. It is important to note that Huddart's notion of 'performance' resonates with Stuart Hall's 'identification' theory, which I discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Huddart provides a very interesting example to reinforce his theory. In a telling statement, Said

⁵⁵Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.24.

⁵⁶David Huddart, *Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 2014), p.51.

seems to be espousing that ethnic identities could in fact be fashioned and restructured, as the following quotation suggests:

No one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities.⁵⁷

It is not surprising that Said is disputing the notion of a unitary ethnic or religious identity which ignores the diversity and disparity of human experiences and identities. However, what is notable is that Said is claiming that humans actually ‘make their [...] ethnic identities’. And given that Said has asserted his belief that human ethnic origins and familial belongings are fixed, it would be logical to assume that he is, along with Hall and Huddart, differentiating between these fixed origins and belongings and proposed identifications and affiliations with them. As Said’s comments assert, transforming ethnic origin and ethnicity into an identity is overwhelmingly dependent on individual interpretation and identification and could never be subsumed within one framing and uniform identity. This is despite the fact that individuals also require recognition from their community and culture in order for their identitarian assertions to have meaning. Said presents himself as an example. He points out that although he identifies as a Palestinian, his origin has its own distinct features. His belonging to a Maronite Christian Palestinian minority as well as being partially of Lebanese origin through his maternal grandmother attests to the different ways his Palestinian identity might be understood and interpreted. He contends that although he is still considered Palestinian, his own form of Palestinianness is unique and differentiated from that of many of his counterparts. While such an example does show how filial identities might become relative and constructed, it also demonstrates that the individual is still able to bring these filiations to the level of political, cultural and professional affiliations in terms of their flexibility towards refashioning an identity.

⁵⁷Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp.407–8. Emphasis in original.

Another facet of Said's claims with regard to the construction of 'ethnic identities' is that they signal his belief that all forms of identification and belonging might be affiliated with and constructed. He insists that all identities, whether ethnic or otherwise, are 'always constructions' which are prone to the processes of human change and modification.⁵⁸ What the notion of 'identity construction' offers is the extension of Said's affiliative approach, which was originally confined to non-filial positions. It also helps overcome the risk of affiliative relations becoming filiations. In such contexts it would also be impossible to assume that there is a collective or national model for an all-encompassing identity, as all identities would be considered human formations rather than fixed or inherited structures. Said moves on to attack prevailing notions concerning the stability and fixedness of identity, arguing instead that all identities are humanly manufactured:

[M]ost people resist the underlying notion that human identity is not only not natural and stable, but constructed, and occasionally even invented outright. [There is a need to] undermine the naive belief in the certain positivity and unchanging historicity of a culture, a self, a national identity.⁵⁹

This passage not only signals Said's scepticism towards identity stability, it also indicates his assertion that identities, whether filial or affiliative, are human inventions which could equally be reconstructed. Said extends his argument concerning the 'constructed' nature of all identities to include 'national identities', insisting that they are also based on human effort. The argument that all identities are human inventions and constructions further accentuates Said's argument that identifications, on one hand, and affiliative and filiative relations, on the other, are two separate entities. And as these identities are always constructed through human effort and choice, this reaffirms his argument that affiliation is able to fashion all positions and identitarian formations.

One consequence of Said's extended affiliations, as a methodology able to refashion certain forms of connections whether filial or affiliative, is that the individual becomes able to construct his or her identity based on will and deliberate choice to an extent. The

⁵⁸Neni Panourgíá, Stathis Gourgouris, and Yiorgos Chouliaras, 'The Stratigraphy of Dislocation - Jerusalem, Cairo, New York', (Interview), *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 3.2 (2003), 139–50 (p.144) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1469605303003002001>>.

⁵⁹Said, *Orientalism*, p.332.

postcolonial subject is able to refashion an identity hinged on their own preferences rather than being framed within ethnic, national, political or cultural collectives. In an article titled 'By Birth or by Choice' published in 1999, Said argues that affiliation provides for the individual the possibility of an affiliative positionality dependent on optional personal deliberation:

The point to be made in addition is that identity by choice is a political commitment to be Palestinian, as an active commitment not just to the establishment of a separate state, but to the more significant cause of ending injustice and liberating Palestinians into a new secular identity able to take its place within contemporary history.⁶⁰

Said goes on in the article to explain that his affiliations offer an alternative identity not based solely on religious or nationalistic basis. The notion of 'identity by choice' is also presented in the article as a form of affiliative attachment obtainable regardless of origin and filiation. Affiliation is considered in this context as a political form of identification readily accessible and appropriated by individuals. What Said also asserts in his 'Identity by Choice' article is the fact that such choice is constantly curtailed by many restrictions and boundaries. Social, political and cultural relations are generally available for affiliations and attachments, but this is not always the case. This is clear within authoritarian regimes, regressive social settings and dogmatic ideologies, or when under occupation. And while it is conceivable to assume that political, social and cultural positions are relatively more flexible towards affiliative identifications, within the article, Said is also suggesting that affiliation could also refashion and reconstruct filial and ethnic identities. Said insists that while the 'idea of Palestinian identity signified far more than a simple ethnic nationalism', affiliating with ethnic and nationalistic components of such an identity was still essential.⁶¹ He presents himself as an example to illustrate his assertion. He contends that because of the occupation of Palestine and, as a consequence, the exile of millions of Palestinians, including Said, he found it more practical to re-affiliate with certain factions of that ethnic, cultural and national identity. Based on these assertions, I offer the following analysis of Said's 'identity by choice' conjuncture. Firstly, I contend

⁶⁰Edward W. Said, 'By Birth or by Choice', *Alahram Weekly On-Line* (Cairo, 28 November 1999), 453 edition, section Opinion, p.2 <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Archive/1999/453/op2.htm>>.

⁶¹Said, 'By Birth or by Choice', p.2.

that these identitarian choices are not merely confined to non-filial ties. For if the assumption is that these choices are limited to affiliative forms of relation such as political and professional positions, then it is unclear how such a methodology presents a complete form of ‘Palestinian identity’, as it is not able to refashion filial relations. And secondly, that Said is very aware of the limits which might hinder connection with affiliative and filiative ties in order to fashion his proposed identities.

In practice, Said’s affiliative methodology is used expansively in his own framing and construction of Palestinian resistant positions and counter-arguments, as well as a system for fashioning affiliative relations and connections. Extending it to include filial bonds meant that his identity formation methodology became, in theory at least, more empowering for individuals. I here discuss one of his most obvious applications of affiliation in order to examine the practicality of its incorporation of ethnic and natural relations. I believe that his approach towards Palestinian nationalism is very telling of the limits and boundaries of his proposed affiliations. Said would come to associate with and defend Palestinian national identity and culture, despite his staunch rejection of nationalist forms of belonging as postcolonial counter-positions in opposition to colonialism and occupation. And given that affiliation itself was originally devised as an alternative to nativist, ethnic and nationalist identifications and resistances, it might seem paradoxical that it would later be incorporated to support Said’s alternatives. It should be noted that Said did not amend his opinion concerning the reductive nature of ethnic and nationalist positions. He remained consistent in his rejection of nationalism as a model for ‘ethnic [and] racial particularity’ which works on creating national essences which are non-existent.⁶² Nationalisms are usually based on shared characteristics such as ethnicity and race, thus presuming that all individuals within a certain society or nation belong to one background or origin. This is why Said insists that such nationalistic particularity strengthens ‘secession, isolation, separation’ within human societies as it is based on exclusivity and binarism.⁶³ Societies and nations are hence reduced to specific parameters which do not accommodate the hybrid and diverse nature of human societies and identities. Whilst he does concede that most postcolonial nationalisms came in the form of anti-

⁶²Said and Barsamian, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian*, pp.59–60.

⁶³Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.425.

imperial and anti-colonial resistance, he also asserts that such nationalisms only serve as mirrored reincarnations of colonial and imperialist identifications which are extensively based on an exclusive rendering of belonging.⁶⁴

Despite all of its drawbacks, Said still found it critical to affiliate with Palestinian national identity and culture. He explicitly endorses this nationalism as a successful form of defence against occupation and oppression. For although he believed that nationalism was ‘a deeply problematic enterprise’, it also resembled for Said the most successful ‘mobilizing force that coalesced into resistance against an alien and occupying empire on the part of peoples possessing a common history, religion, and language’.⁶⁵ It is quite antithetical that Said is describing nationalisms characterized by historic, religious and linguistic commonality as being problematic but successful forms of resistance. His elaborations concerning nationalisms were not purely theoretical; he later found it necessary to actually support Palestinian nationalism and affiliate with it:

Palestinians are [...] an independence movement, which is fuelled by a kind of nationalist ideology, which is a form of resistance to oppression. In that sense, how could I not support it, because I’m part of it. But it has all the limitations of nationalism, essentially a Palestinian-centred vision of the world which infects us all. There’s a certain kind of xenophobia connected to it, a chauvinism which is an inevitable part of any resistant nationalism.⁶⁶

Regardless of all of the problematic ‘limitations’, ‘xenophobia’ and ‘chauvinism’ associated with Palestinian nationalism, Said declares his support for it. What should be noted is how affiliation assists in facilitating this seemingly incongruous position. Said is able to associate with and support such nationalism without being compromised or affected by its shortcomings. He fervently maintains that he is not in any way a political or cultural nationalist, yet he is able through affiliation to associate with certain nationalist movements which he recognizes as being prone to xenophobia and chauvinism. While Said’s affiliations with nationalism were based on individual choice and will, as opposed to being imposed through ethnic or political pressures, this still does not dispel the fact that he has actually realigned with a nationalist movement based on ethnic, religious or linguistic

⁶⁴Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp.xxxvi–xxvii.

⁶⁵Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.269.

⁶⁶Said and Barsamian, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian*, pp.49–50.

particularity. That this attachment was optional rather than compulsory does not in any way dismiss the faults he has already attributed to these nationalistic movements. And whether this might have been intended by the individual affiliators or not, such affiliation also necessitates the creation of a binary involving what constitutes a Palestinian identity and what does not.

To explicate his motives for supporting certain forms of nationalism, Said presents examples of nations and peoples that required the instigation and support of nationalist resistances as they were oppressed and under assimilative threat. Said presents Palestinians and Bosnians as examples of peoples who have gained his support for their national collective struggle:

For an emergent and beset group—say, the Bosnians or the Palestinians today—feeling that your people are threatened with political and sometimes actual physical extinction commits you to its defence, to doing everything within your power to protect, or to fight against the national enemies. This is defensive nationalism, of course.⁶⁷

Said's support for the idea of 'defensive nationalism' is significant. Individuals are able to affiliate with their own nationalisms, when they perceive them as being under threat. This is despite the fact that Said himself criticized Palestinian nationalism for its essentialist portrayal of national identities, which marginalized minorities. What might seem more surprising is the fact that he, in one of his interviews, calls for reconstructing nationalist opposition against ethnocide within American society:

Nationalism [is a] necessary defence against extermination, elimination and ethnocide, those things Palestinians and others such as Native Americans and African-Americans have suffered.⁶⁸

It is paradoxical that Said's nationalist support comes as a response to threats posed to societies and communities. His support for nationalism as resistance against repression and assimilation resembles the nationalist responses initiated to repel colonial onslaughts on colonized nations, which he originally devised his affiliative strategy as an alternative to. Nevertheless, his own support was permitted as an affiliation with these stigmatized

⁶⁷Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.30.

⁶⁸Hussein Ibish and Edward Said, 'Nationalism, Secularism, Postcoloniality', *Cultural Dynamics*, 14.1 (2002), 97–105 (pp.99–100) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/09213740020140010801>>.

nationalisms. The risk would be that such affiliations could easily be administered to support reductive forms of collective belonging, as he himself is not overtly clear with regards to the limits of his affiliative support for nationalism.

1-4 Overcoming Identity: A Postcolonial Re-conceptualization

The notion of identity itself is vital to Said's theorization of affiliation. His affiliative alternative is, to some extent, based on presenting the choice to refashion new forms of identification beyond the repression of fixed collective identities. Consequently, Said vigorously attacks filial and affiliative relations and identities which are imposed upon the individual. His preference comes in the form of an affiliative identity fashioned through choices made by the individual. Yet what might seem paradoxical within Said's position towards the formation of affiliative identities is his wariness of the concept of identity itself. As stated above, he understandably attacks the notion of 'ethnic identity' as a regressive form of identification which adheres to linear and communal pressures and demands, as well as attacking affiliative relations which have transformed into filiative-like ties through their exclusive essentialism. What is significant, on the other hand, is that he extends his denunciations to the concept of identity, which is perceived as a form of homogeneity in itself. Hence, Said would use his affiliative methodology to reconceptualise identity as necessarily hybrid and diverse. As I have discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Said's affiliative approach echoes Stuart Hall's 'post-identity' argument. Both Said and Hall believe that identities have come to signify a unified and static model which could assimilate communities and collectives. In *Reflections on Exile*, Said describes efforts to obtain and fashion homogenous identities as 'boring [and] narcissistic' endeavours which constitute binary differentiation and subordination on an individual and communal level.⁶⁹ Said's claim is that homogenous identities have tended to be used as subordinating structures through which stronger cultures or societies are able to impose their identities on a collective scale. The individual was then left with limited or no options with regards to

⁶⁹Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.567.

framing his or her own identity beyond these imposed paradigms. Said presents American society as an example of such homogeneity. He argues that while being a predominantly immigrant population, American society was, until recently, based on a uniform, mainly European, ideal of what constitutes their collective culture and belonging. Most ethnic and religious minorities were not included in these identitarian structures. In this instance, identitarian essentialisms were used to confine and homogenise all sections of that society. Said argues that because the conceptualization of identity was understood to be necessarily homogenous and comprehensive, it became impossible for individuals and minorities to form alternative or contingent identities which better align with their diverse and hybrid backgrounds.

As a corollary of presenting identity as a unitary and confined model, Said argues that it has also become a system through which societies and collectives were able to subordinate different communities through limiting available options for identification. Understood as a process of ‘essentialization’, Said insists that identity has been deployed by individuals and collectives as involving binary positions.⁷⁰ As a result, he argues that it was necessary for individuals themselves to form singular identities beyond the rubrics of homogenous impositions. Alternatively, individuals would be either assimilated or excluded in the formation of these homogeneities:

Identity is what we impose on ourselves through our lives as social, historical, political, and even spiritual beings. The logic of culture and of families doubles the strength of identity [...] identity is the process by which the stronger culture, and the more developed society, imposes itself violently upon those who, by the same identity process, are decreed to be a lesser people.⁷¹

Said’s critique of homogenous identities is based on his contention that the individual is not left with any option other than to accept the imposed position or identity. His aim was to redefine identity as a heterogeneous concept which represents a collective community without necessarily being static and uniform. If identity was to be redefined as fundamentally hybrid and heterogeneous, then this would disable the possibility of

⁷⁰Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.60.

⁷¹Edward W. Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain*, paperback ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p.85.

applying it as an assimilating parameter. The notion of a collective or superimposed identity is not feasible when its construction becomes extensively diverse and individualized.

Said presents other ramifications for his affiliative approach. He argues that understanding identities as being homogenous fixtures means that asserting them will always necessitate differentiation and demarcation. He presents the example of essentialist nationalist movements in the Arab world, where identities became restraining rather than emancipatory. The model of Egyptian identity, for instance, where Said spent his childhood until the age of sixteen, was defined after independence as predominantly based on Arab and Egyptian ethnicity. This is despite the fact that large communities of people of non-Arab and non-Egyptian descent resided in the country. This resulted in the marginalization and exclusion of large swathes of society, including Said's Levantine community in Egypt. The consequence was that whenever an Egyptian identity is affirmed, this simultaneously necessitates that other opposing identifications become marginalized, as only one prevailing identity is permitted. Said claims that 'when you assert an identity, one identity is always going to infringe on others that also exist in the same or contiguous spaces', as there is no contingency offered for alternative or individual choice.⁷² Through affiliation, the idea of an overarching collective identity is impossible to sustain and even produce. As each individual is presented with the opportunity to construct their own identity, this necessitates that all formed identities become hybrid and amalgamated. The notion of a community or nation which is capable of essentializing an all-encompassing identity becomes superfluous, as every individual within these groups is able to affiliate with diverse identitarian positions.

Said's alternative to homogenous identities comes in the form of hybrid and heterogeneous identities formed through affiliation. His alternative identities are formed through individual effort and preference. This, argues Said, makes authority over identity construction entirely dependent upon the individual. And as the power to construct identity is shifted from the collective to the individual, this creates polyphonic identifications able

⁷²Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.130.

to better represent the diversity of human communities. Such hybridity is only achieved through affiliation, as Said explains:

I think I would say that in the time that I have left to live, the one thing I want to try and do is to get away from my own identity rather than consolidate it in some way. I like the idea, which New York encourages, of changing my identity, or being different things. Without regard for number or cost. I really have very little time for the idea of belonging to a national community. It seems to me not very interesting. And above all not nourishing intellectually. I find it so disappointing. And so impoverishing, that the spontaneity of affiliations [...] are what I really cherish.⁷³

The notion of an identity which is constantly ‘changing’ and comprised through many ‘different things’ is impossible to achieve through collective impositions. Said rejects the idea of belonging to a firm concept of a fixed identity, opting instead for changing identities which are formed through constant affiliations more able to accommodate the diverse nature of human backgrounds and belongings. What he is trying to accomplish is to redefine the concept of identity as unavoidably heterogeneous and hybrid.

Said advocates a ‘hybrid’ affiliative identity which is not confined to the parameters of filial or even affiliative fixities.⁷⁴ He presents the example of American identity in order to elucidate his idea of hybridity. He argues that the idea of a ‘unitary and homogenous’ American identity is impossible to sustain in practical terms due to the variations of any given identity.⁷⁵ American society, like any other human society, is more diverse and varied than can possibly be contained within one overarching identity. Consequently, Said rejects the ideal of a single collective identity, encouraging instead the proposal of different affiliatively fragmented identities which resemble a more logical amalgam:

I think we all have a kind of mythological view of identity as being a single thing that is basically intact, and has to be protected. I think that’s simply nonsense. History teaches us that all of us are mixed, that every individual is made of several different, perhaps even competing, strands.⁷⁶

⁷³Edward W. Said and Tariq Ali, *Conversations with Edward Said* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2006), p.120.

⁷⁴Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), p.122.

⁷⁵Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp.xxvii–xxix.

⁷⁶Edward W. Said, Amritjit Singh, and Bruce G. Johnson, *Interviews with Edward W. Said, Conversations with Public Intellectuals Series* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), p.203.

Affiliation reaffirms this fact about the hybridity and diversity of human identity. It is epistemologically inconceivable to assume that identities are uniform and not multi-faceted. Said himself attested to this fact when he continued to present and describe himself as an 'Arab, Palestinian and [...] American'.⁷⁷ Said's aim is to demystify the common perception that identities are necessarily consistent and unitary in order to facilitate collective belonging based on ethnicity, language, culture or religion. In his own situation, a uniform American identity would not be able to incorporate his Palestinian identity ethnically, culturally or linguistically. Through affiliation, Said was able to reconstruct his own alteration of that identity, taking into account his Palestinian origin.

What Said also bestows on his affiliative approach is the claim that it offers the individual the ability 'to maintain difference but without the domination and bellicosity that normally accompany affirmations of identity'.⁷⁸ Said argues that affiliation is able to evade constructing binary others through its hybrid forms of identification. Therefore, no single identity could ever be asserted as the correct interpretation of any given ethnic, cultural or national actuality, as every member of society is given the chance to formulate their own version of that identity. Said elucidates his argument through invoking how orientalists and colonialists have been continuously entrapped within such identitarian binaries of self and other:

The construction of identity—for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experience, is finally a construction—involves establishing opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us'.⁷⁹

Said's alternative comes in the form of his affiliative methodology. He insists that such an approach is able to 'reconcile one's identity [with] other identities' through avoiding 'reductive formulas' of fixed identifications or essentialist forms of belonging.⁸⁰ As the notion of identity as cohesive is rejected, it becomes epistemologically impossible to

⁷⁷Edward W. Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors', *Critical Inquiry*, 15.2 (1989), 205–25 (p.26).

⁷⁸Daniel Barenboim, Edward W. Said, and AraGuzelimian, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003), pp.154–55.

⁷⁹Said, *Orientalism*, p.332.

⁸⁰Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, pp.69–70.

uphold binaries. Said's arguments concerning hybridizing the concept of identity are convincing. Redefining identity as a concept which permits hybridity and amalgamation offers the individual the opportunity to move beyond any solitary framing of identification. Therefore, when Said declares that his identity is Palestinian, this is based on the understanding that his is not a dominant or unitary identity. And that different forms and versions of that Palestinian identity are permissible and indeed possible.

Despite the fact that Said extensively attacks the idea of a collective homogenous identity, he does affirm its positive and crucial role in constructing successful forms of resistance against colonialism and imperialism. Incongruously, the reason such forms of resistance become effective in their counter-positions and arguments is that they have built consistent and homogenous collectives in order to repel and respond to imperial and colonial advancements. In the following passage, Said assesses the success of implementing a postcolonial 'resisting identity':

What interests me in the politics of identity that informed imperialism in its global phase is that just as natives were considered to belong to a different category—racial or geographical—from that of the Western white man, it also became true that in the great anti-imperialist revolt represented by decolonization this same category was mobilized around, and formed the resisting identity of, the revolutionaries. This was the case everywhere in the Third World. [...] Much the same revaluation of the native particularity occurred in India, in many parts of the Islamic world, China, Japan, Indonesia, and the Philippines, where the denied or repressed native essence emerged as the focus of, and even the basis for, nationalist recovery.⁸¹

Although he admits that these resistant identities were formed as nativist essences which resemble homogeny in his earlier affiliative theorizations, he seems covertly supportive of such opposition. This, I believe, is not an indication of Said's relinquishment of filial or homogenous identities. It is, rather, an example of how he utilizes affiliation to connect with certain positions and identities he might have otherwise found objectionable. A clear example of such affiliation is found in his support for emerging nativist identities. Interestingly, Said finds it necessary to support and advocate these identities, as they offer efficient resistance to discrimination and repression:

⁸¹Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.377.

For those of us just emerging from marginality and persecution, nationalism is a necessary thing: a long-deferred and denied identity needs to come out into the open and take its place among other human identities.⁸²

It does seem extremely paradoxical that Said might support such identities, given his staunch critique and dismissal of these reductive nationalist identifications. Yet it must also be remembered that such support comes in the form of affiliation rather than an entire espousal of these identities and positions. That Said claims that his affiliative methodology offers hybridity beyond oppressive notions of identification, while simultaneously supporting collective nationalist identities, is perplexing. In supporting these nationalist positions, he also maintains their evident essentialisms and the binaries they have created. I believe that such exemptions and divergences within Said's position signal the limitations of his affiliative methodology in rendering an adequate alternative for filial identities. The fact that Said found in these nationalist responses a successful form of resistance, necessitating his affiliation, is an affirmation of this fact.

Another example of Said's affiliative contradictions is found in his support for a collective Palestinian identity. Said describes how he finds it necessary to affirm his individual and collective Palestinian and Arab identity in the United States as a means of countering the onslaught of dismissal and propaganda directed at Palestinians and their causes:

In North America, one was compelled, almost humiliatingly, to keep to a testimonial level: I am Palestinian, we have a collective identity that while Arab is not only generally Arab but specifically Palestinian, and an attachment to the actual land of Palestine.⁸³

His advocacy of individual and collective identities is illuminating in this context. It resembles a clear admission of the crucial role collective identities play in countering subordination, especially in the context of a hostile American lobby and press. More explicitly, he argues for the necessary defence of all forms of 'Palestinian identity' in particular, as well as all forms of identity when threatened with extermination, oppression

⁸²Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.402.

⁸³Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, p.xvii.

and subornation in many other instances in his books and interviews.⁸⁴ To a large extent, the notion of a 'Palestinian identity' is problematic within the context of Said's rejection of ethnic identities and his adamant calls for an affiliative approach to formulating identities. Having a national communal identity limits, and at times stifles, free affiliative choices Said associates with individual affiliation. For if a nationalistic identity is already predestined and embraced, it would be illogical to argue that an individual's identity is based on his own preferences. Nevertheless, given that Said's scepticism towards ethnic and racial identities continued throughout his life, my own argument would be that Said believed that it was possible and even necessary to affiliate with these filial identities. The limits to such affiliation seem capricious. In Said's advocacy of affiliative hybrid identities and his support for a collective Palestinian identity is an apparent inconsistency. Such collectives would necessarily, in Said's own theorization, limit and even prevent the formation of his proposed affiliative alternative. His support for collective identities reveals the limits of his alternative affiliations, as he found it necessary to reconnect with these dominant collectives. Moreover, these affiliations could be easily administered in order to reconnect with the rigid positions they were originally devised to counter.

1-5 Conclusion

Said originally devised his affiliative methodology as an alternative to all forms of restrictive identity based on filial and affiliative relations. He presented his affiliative theorizations as a practical resistance apparatus against all fixed or rigid formulations of identity, whether initiated by colonial and imperial incursions or through postcolonial responses which repeated those essentialist renderings of identification. And although Said was extensively cautious in his approach towards affiliative connections, as they could easily be transformed into filiative positions, he still underestimated the possibility of their appropriation as assimilative positions. Said's claims concerning the capacity of his affiliative methodology to overcome political, cultural and institutional narratives and positions is restricted in numerous contexts which prohibit the implementation of his

⁸⁴Said, Singh, and Johnson, *Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.143; See also Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.567.

alternative strategy. Despite the fact that he acknowledges the existence of limiting situations which curtail his affiliative alternatives, he was not always able to offer explicit resolutions for such restrictive boundaries. I do not mean here to entirely diminish Said's efforts or reject their practicality. Yet, that affiliative alternatives might become obstructed through political or cultural hegemonies seems antithetical, as these methodologies were originally devised to counter similar compulsions perpetuated by colonialism and imperialism. Additionally, Said's reinstatement of filial identities within his affiliative strategy was logical but problematic. He found that incorporating filial ties in forming identities resulted in a more coherent and empowering form of identification. Yet refashioning ethnic and filial connections reveals a very apparent contradiction. As Said originally sought to counter ethnic and nationalistic identifications, it would seem paradoxical that he administers affiliation to reconnect with Palestinian nationalism. The same contradiction appears in Said's reconfiguration of identity. Although Said envisaged that his affiliative strategy offered a hybrid alternative, he found it necessary to reconnect and support collective assimilative identities as counter-positions and sites of resistance. It is telling that Said found that filial and collective identities, despite acknowledging their problematics, to be successful counter-positions against oppression. For all its merits as an emancipatory position, the exemptions to and limits of Said's affiliative methodology put into question the practicality of its implementation and its viability as a postcolonial alternative. These affiliations are, however, productively enabling in the context of oppression and subordination. They enable identitarian formulation for embattled and dispossessed individuals with no recourse to apparatuses of power. They also have a considerable capacity for enabling individual control over identitarian reconstruction. Yet Said's theories were sometimes restricted with limiting inconsistencies and contradictions which permit these affiliations to contradictorily extend and reinforce reductive forms of belonging they originally set out to repel. They are also highly susceptible to being utilized to reinstate privileged or compromising positions and attachments, such as Said's connections with Columbia University.

Chapter Two

‘The Executive Value of Exile’: Exile and Displacement as Empowerment

2-1 Introduction

This chapter discusses how Said attempts to utilize exile and displacement as an enabling critical and individual position rather than a disabling fate or imposition. I analyse Said’s presentation of his exilic positionality as a useful methodology in countering forms of control and domination mainly perpetrated by colonial, orientalist and imperial incursions. I examine the possibility that Said envisages a very idealistic presentation of exilic positions as an alternative to what he perceives as dominant collectives and essentialist positions. What I intend to achieve through this chapter is to reconsider Said’s emancipatory exilic position, and whether he might have underestimated the possibility that this strategy could counterproductively become essentialist and accommodative in many of its applications. I also discuss the implications of my hypothesis with regards to Said’s anti-imperialist and postcolonialist position. As Said originally sought to utilize exile as an anti-locational methodology, my examination concentrates on the possibility that his own exilic alternative might have become a rigid and fixed position in its own right, thus mimicking the positions it originally sought to oppose. I have divided the chapter into three sections. The first section is concerned with Said’s extensive and personalized elaborations on exilic definitions. The second section discusses the theoretical reasoning which Said presents as the basis for the need to implement his exilic methodology. This includes his rejection of three collective forms he perceives as oppressive. The final section discusses the significance of Said’s exilic strategy and how it is connected to his broader theoretical positions. But before moving on to these sections, I provide a discussion of exile as postcolonial condition and how that might intersect with Said’s own understanding of the term.

The term ‘exile’ is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘the state of being barred from one’s native country, typically for political or punitive reasons’, while an exiled individual is further defined as a ‘person who lives away from their native country,

either from choice or compulsion'.⁸⁵ These definitions assert two main assumptions about an exilic status. The first is that an exile is a person who has been driven away from his/her native country, and secondly that such a state is either obligatory or optional. And while these two definitions are sufficiently clear in their depiction of the state of exile in general, I have introduced them in order to exemplify their incomplete partiality within postcolonial exilic contexts, and particularly Said's. Exile, as I will explain shortly, is located far beyond the realms of geographical displacement in Said's theorization of the term. What the coming discussion reveals is that his exilic position is more of a methodology or manufactured position than an imposed spatial occurrence instigated by internal choices or external pressures.

Although Said acknowledges his predicament as a Palestinian who was driven out of his native country by occupation in 1948, his theorization of exile is more nuanced than being solely based on geographical banishment or extradition. Exile for Said has to be appropriated in order to produce an enabling methodology for individuals, and specifically postcolonial subjects. From a postcolonial perspective, Said presents his exilic alternative as a chosen position which does not necessarily include geographical displacement, as he explains in *Reflections on Exile*:

[Exile] remains risky, however: the habit of dissimulation is both wearying and nerve-racking. Exile is never the state of being satisfied, placid, or secure. Exile, in the words of Wallace Stevens, is 'a mind of winter' in which the pathos of summer and autumn as much as the potential of spring are nearby but unobtainable. Perhaps this is another way of saying that a life of exile moves according to a different calendar, and is less seasonal and settled than life at home. Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentred, contrapuntal; but no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew.⁸⁶

In this passage, Said describes how exile might be employed to move the individual beyond the rubrics of the rigidity of the 'habitual order'. He explains that cultural, political and intellectual nomadism and decentredness enable the individual to counter not only external imperial and colonial dominance, but, more crucially, influences instigated through cultural and political pressures within one's own colonized (or formerly colonized) society and

⁸⁵*The Oxford Dictionary of English*, ed. Angus Stevenson, 2010.

⁸⁶Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.186.

community. What is most significant in Said's elaboration of exile is that he extends the practical employability of his exilic methodology to incorporate any willing individual, whether physically exiled or not. As I explain later, he describes his exilic positioning as either 'actual or metaphorical' depending on the individual's own situation with regards to physical displacement. Therefore, becoming exiled from one's own culture, society or polity becomes possible even if the individual was never actually displaced. What is crucial for my discussion in this chapter is that exile resembles for Said an acquired position which could be utilized by any individual in order to circumvent any perceived authoritarian or assimilative paradigms, whether political, cultural or religious.

Said states in *Reflections on Exile* that much of his theoretical inspiration in regards to exile came from his fellow exile Theodor Adorno. Like Adorno, Said portrays exile and detachment as necessary empowerment rather than debilitating misfortune. The notion of belonging to a fixed ethnic, cultural or political position is depicted as both a confinement and a restriction of the human capacity to produce original and emancipatory narratives and responses. In *Reflections on Exile*, Said presents the following quotation from Adorno as a model for his exilic theorization. He praises Adorno's bald decision in his rejection of fixed and confined positions within human societies, and opts instead for exilic detachment which moves the individual beyond the assigned and superimposed political, cultural and religious parameters:

The predicament of private life today is shown by its arena. Dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible. The traditional residences we grew up in have grown intolerable: each trait of comfort in them is paid for with a betrayal of knowledge, each vestige of shelter with the musty pact of family interests. [...] The House is Past. [...] The best mode of conduct, in face of all this, still seems an uncommitted, suspended one: to lead a private life, as far as the social order and one's own needs will tolerate nothing else, but not to attach weight to it as to something still socially substantial and individually appropriate. 'It is even part of my good fortune not to be a house-owner', Nietzsche already wrote in the *Gay Science*. Today we should have to add: it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home.⁸⁷

⁸⁷Theodor W. Adorno *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, Radical Thinkers, Trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: New York: Verso, 2005), pp.38–39. Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) was a German philosopher known for his contributions to the Frankfurt School of critical theory. His life was characterized by his exile and opposition.

Said presents this quotation in *Reflections on Exile* in order to accentuate his contention for the prevalence of exile as means of resituating individuals. The individual becomes ‘uncommitted [and] suspended’ in order to escape being assimilated and ‘manufactured’ through native or alien subordinations and impositions. The suspension of ‘home’ and ‘dwelling’ through exile becomes the preferred intellectual position for opposition and resistance. The metaphorical and optional nature of Adorno’s exile further affirms my own assertion that what Said is actually proposing is an exilic site accessible by any individual. This move also signals a departure from the notion of exile as a disabling pediment, to it being viewed as an empowering position. The scepticism towards the concept of a permanent home, and the notion of suspension, become vital for Said’s own advocacy of exile as an enabling and liberating position.

Said’s implementation of exile as an emancipatory methodology also has a very close connection to his Palestinian experience. As a Palestinian exile who suffered the ravages of occupation first hand, it is not surprising that he extensively discussed and appropriated his predicament. Exile by individual choice becomes crucial in the context of Palestinian emancipation and opposition to occupation. Within the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, exile itself becomes a contested location between two peoples, Palestinian and Israeli. And through rendering it a positional choice, Said was able to reclaim Palestinian exilic status from being essentialized. As Ella Shohat explains, Said became disillusioned with the fact that within Western discourse and media the notion of displacement and suffering was exclusively reserved for Israelis.⁸⁸ This is particularly apparent within the rubrics of dismissing Palestinian suffering and displacement in the context of their ongoing conflict with Israel. Monopolizing exilic suffering was linked by Said and Shohat to the Holocaust and horrors inflicted on the Jewish people, as these facts problematize depictions of Palestinians as the victims of the victims. Said’s own exile was constantly put under scrutiny and suspicion. Shohat, who is herself an Israeli-American Jew, believes that the Palestinian exilic narrative came to be viewed by many in the West and Israel as a threat to the uniquely Jewish narrative of suffering, as opposed to their Palestinian counterparts.⁸⁹

⁸⁸Ella Shohat, ‘Antinomies of Exile: Said at the Frontiers of National Narrations’, in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Michael Sprinker (Oxford: Cambridge, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), pp.133–35.

⁸⁹Shohat, ‘Antinomies of Exile: Said at the Frontiers of National Narrations’, pp.133–35.

That Said came to appropriate exile as a Palestinian experience was seen by some as an infringement on Jewish claims to victimhood and diaspora.⁹⁰ Although this Palestinian-Israeli exilic conflict is contested within the realms of actual rather than metaphoric exile, it does accentuate the extent of the pressures being exerted upon Said, and how all these factors emphasize his individual reclamation of his exilic status. What I aim through introducing Shohat's arguments is to assert that actual physical exile remained problematic and essential for Said despite his rendering of a metaphorical form of exile. Actual exile does not allow individual choice and preference regarding its presence and degree of appliance on a level comparable with metaphorical exile. The dialectic between actual and metaphorical continues throughout Said's arguments for exilic positionality.

In the context of postcolonial studies, exile is equally dialectic and extensive. The shifting between the actual and the metaphorical, the disparaging and enabling, echoes Said's own exilic assertions. In *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin all agree that exile 'involves the idea of a separation and distancing from either a literal homeland or from cultural and ethnic origin'.⁹¹ Although this definition might seem contradictory to Said's extended form of exile, they are quick to address the postcolonial appropriation of the term. They argue that exile has become an 'ambivalent state' in postcolonial studies in general and in the work of Said in particular. This ambivalence is found in the oscillation between the portrayal of exile as 'desolation and empowerment' and the appropriation of 'detachment as both disabling and enabling'.⁹² Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that the discrepancy allowed under the rubrics of exile seems over-elaborate and relative, but nonetheless it does offer the individual the ability to render their own position rather than being framed within any assigned fixity. Along with its alternating features, exile is also viewed by Robert Spencer as a methodology readily available for emancipation and empowerment for the individual:

Exile, in other words, is a means not an end; it is above all a way of thinking. Exile involves a willingness to step outside the province of ideological preconceptions, sectarian loyalties, and insentient theoretical and philosophical systems. Moreover, it enables us to alert those inward-looking

⁹⁰Shohat, 'Antinomies of Exile: Said at the Frontiers of National Narrations', pp.133–35.

⁹¹Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p.85.

⁹²Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p.87.

dogmas to the reality they obscure and to the experiences and lives, which they routinely overlook, of the persecuted, the marginalized, and the dispossessed. Exile allows us to contrast insular doctrines with the real political alternatives disclosed by open discussion, sensitive scholarship, unprejudiced cultural contact, and, above all, by a tolerant regard for the equality and diversity of human life.⁹³

What interests me in these critical assertions is the fact that exile has come to be viewed as a ‘means’ and a method rather than being a destined human tragedy. It is this move from the actual towards the metaphorical that signals the most significant shift in postcolonial theorization of exile, although the practical realm of both is within the actual. This shift echoes Said’s own presentation of his exilic alternative as a postcolonial strategy able to counter dominance and empower the individual. The exilic alternative becomes a methodology for emancipation and resistance within postcolonial positions and narratives used to facilitate the fashioning of cultural, political and intellectual narratives and arguments.

2-2 Exile: From Fateful Imposition to Fashioned Position

In the following discussion, I examine Said’s portrayal of exile as an enabling position which is capable of countering controlling and dominant entities and narratives. I put into question the legitimacy of such a stance and the viability of exile as an alternative to imperialist narratives. My argument is that despite Said’s intentions and claims, exile occasionally resembles a rarefied position in itself, thus becoming counterproductive to his original aim for implementing it. I also investigate the possibility that his exilic positioning sometimes limits, rather than espouses, emancipatory alternatives for individuals through essentializing postcolonial and emancipatory positions. The importance of such a discussion is that it sheds light on exile as one of the most fundamental features of Said’s personal and intellectual methodologies. As Vinay Lal asserts, ‘it can be argued that the entire tapestry of Said’s writings is woven around multiple ideas of exile’.⁹⁴ Hence, due to

⁹³Robert Spencer, ‘Contended Homeland Peace: The Motif of Exile in Edward Said’, in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, ed. by Adel Iskander and Hakem Rustom (London: University of California Press, 2010), pp.389–90.

⁹⁴Vinay Lal, ‘Enigmas of Exile: Reflections on Edward Said’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40.1 (2005), 30–34 (p.32).

the great emphasis Said places on exile throughout his oeuvre, it is common sense to attempt to concentrate on and examine such a position. In this section, I elaborate on Said's self-fashioned version of exile, which he perceives as enabling. My contention is that while exile is theorized by Said as a marginalized and outsider position, in reality it is utilized as an empowering structure from which counter-arguments and narratives may be produced. My aim is to investigate the validity of his alternative view of exile and whether Said overestimates the benefits of self-imposed exile and detachment.

Said provides an extensive portrayal of exile throughout his writings. It is clear from all of these elaborations that Said defines exile as a composite of many different human states and positions. For Said, exile is a term which denotes notions of outsidership and marginality. He defines the exile as 'anyone prevented from returning home', while also associating the term with notions of 'banishment', 'outsidership' and 'solitude'.⁹⁵ This definition offers a description of physical exile from one's native country or community. The anomaly appears when Said attempts to appropriate actual forms of exile. For while the definition presents exile as an inflicted human state, Said later argues that it is also an enabling vocation for exiled individuals, and even an oppositional position. For instance, he contends that 'exilic displacement' provides for intellectuals liberation from all the prescribed vocational and canonical paths which are assembled for them to follow.⁹⁶ What he is suggesting here is that an exile might find it possible to be outside mainstream designated paradigms through self-imposed marginality. Exile, according to Said, also allows for freedom from prescribed and fixed notions of belonging. It is not clearly explained how this is possible, given that some exilic marginalities are imposed rather than being chosen by the individual. If the individual, and this includes Said himself, in question was not able to fend off a superimposed exile, it would be logical to assume that they would also become less able to counter other forced impositions. Said's answer to this dilemma is revealed when he describes the exile as someone who 'exists in a median state' and who is 'beset with half-involvements and half-detachments'.⁹⁷ This detached 'median state', which entitles its beholder to 'half-involvements and half-detachments', is a crucial factor in

⁹⁵Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.181.

⁹⁶Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.46.

⁹⁷Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.36.

explaining the vitality of exile for Said, I argue. For it is exactly in such a suspension that Said bases his logic concerning the practicality of the enabling features of exile. Therefore, the individual, according to Said's analogy, could belong to and detach her or himself from a certain position or culture without being compromised, as he or she is based in a middle ground between different locations.

There are a number of issues which arise from Said's analogy which seriously jeopardize his argument and the viability of his exilic position. One issue to consider is whether it is possible for non-exiled individuals to assume these counter-positions. For if banished, dispossessed and displaced individuals are able to relocate and counter different forms of containment, then it would be logically possible for all non-exiled individuals to counter and fend off these incursions without the need for exiling themselves. Said is also ambiguous with regards to the conditions and limits of his elaboration of exile as a universal emancipatory methodology. The general privilege which Said associates with exile seems to underestimate the fact that exile, although a form of liberating detachment, is still a disabling confinement for many exiles. This is never more obvious than in the case of actual exiles, where this detachment became a crippling political and cultural marginalization which impedes their counter-arguments and narratives. This is not to say that Said's logic concerning the liberating features of exilic 'median states' is not feasible. It is, however, the case that the viability of his exilic alternative does not take into consideration the different circumstances and levels of exile.

Along with his contention that exile is a 'median state', Said also argues that exile is a position which provides a 'contrapuntal juxtaposition'.⁹⁸ Contrapuntalism refers to the possibility of acquiring more than one standpoint for an exile. What Said is claiming here is that exile can provide a multiple perspective where more than one narrative or position is available for the exilic individual due to his/her unfixed location.⁹⁹ The exile is able to acquire different perspectives and approaches due to their 'median' position between two or more cultures or nations. Said insists on the beneficent outcomes of this perspective in countering cultural and intellectual dogma and orthodoxy. As the exile is constantly

⁹⁸Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.186.

⁹⁹Said describes the critic as a 'wanderer' between the canon and theories. See Said, *Beginnings, Intention and Method*, p.8.

exposed to multiple positions and perspectives, this limits the possibility of him being confined to cultural, intellectual or political rigid conventionalities:

I think the essential privilege of exile is to have, not just one set of eyes but half a dozen, each of them corresponding to the places you have been. Therefore, instead of looking at an experience as a single unitary thing, it's always got at least two aspects: the aspect of the person who is looking at it and has always seen it, looking at it now and seeing it now and then as you are looking at it now you can remember what it would have been like to look at something similar in that other place from which you came. [...] There is always a kind of doubleness to that experience.¹⁰⁰

It is not surprising that Said addresses the privileges of exile as a location for enabling a broader perspective. This is another indication of the dialectical alternation between the enabling and disadvantageous features of exile, as I discussed in the introduction to this chapter. But having half a dozen eyes seems highly dubious and contentious. For it is difficult to guarantee that being exiled necessarily renders the individual numerous perspectives and viewpoints. It is even more contentious that other individuals are deprived of obtaining such ability simply because they are not ascribed as exiled. Said attributes this ability to the fact that exiles are able to obtain the enabling status of 'belonging', as it were, 'to both sides of the imperial divide'.¹⁰¹ It is not impossible to foresee that an exile might acquire different perspectives due to their experiences. What is questionable is whether such positions and perspectives cannot be achieved regardless of exile and detachment. Said seems to be monopolizing the idea of having different perspectives as a consequence of his exilic position. Denise De Caires Narain discusses this precarious positioning and calls it a 'paradoxical position' in which the 'critic/intellectual', for instance, is 'necessarily mobile and at home' at the same instance and able to sustain different discursive and counter-locations.¹⁰² Narain alludes to the fact that being inside and outside a certain culture is not necessarily achievable or possible as Said might have suggested, and does not guarantee attaining a multiplicity of perspectives. My main assertion is that the privileging

¹⁰⁰Edward W. Said, 'The Voice of a Palestinian in Exile', *Third Text*, 2.3–4 (1988), 39–50 (pp.47–48) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09528828808576188>>.

¹⁰¹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp.xxx–xxxi.

¹⁰²Denise De Caires Narain, 'Affiliating Edward Said Closer to Home: Reading Postcolonial Women's Texts', in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, ed. by Adel Iskander and Hakem Rustom (London: University of California Press, 2010), p.122.

status of exile seems over-elaborated and illogical at times. For, as Narain suggests above, it is very precarious to assume that an individual could be selectively within and outside a certain position or culture if they have already been exiled from one of these locations forcibly. And what is more contentious is Said's effort to portray these multiple perspectives as essential consequences of exile. This claim would entail that exiles are more capable of attaining a humanistic and comprehensive understanding of cultures, more so than native singular perspectives; a stance suspiciously resembling colonial Orientalists who claim to know the Orient more than Orientals. According to Said, as a Palestinian-American, he would quintessentially be more able to approach both of these cultures and critique them simply because he is occupying the location of the Palestinian exile in the United States. Evidently, it is epistemologically impossible to validate such a claim, let alone present it as a universally held perspective applicable to all exiles, as Said envisages.¹⁰³ Arif Dirlik has acutely touched upon the fact that Said moved towards 'privileging exile as the site for a superior form of knowledge'.¹⁰⁴ This superiority sets the ground for the individual exile to acquire full control over the narrative in order to construct counter-arguments. But the consequence is that these privileges seem to have turned exile itself into a dominant form used by exiles to differentiate themselves from non-exiles, as well as to monopolize certain resistant and ethical narratives and positions. Dirlik believes that these exilic positions have morphed into opposing communities which might exclude non-exilic individuals. And although Said does assert that his 'metaphorical' exile and his cautiousness towards fixation on exile might defer such risks, the fact that he differentiates between 'actual' exiles and non-exiles as two separate groups in his theorization affirms Dirlik's contention.

As the above discussion suggests, Said presents exile as a position which is either forced upon or acquired by the individual. And given that this position was devised as an emancipatory methodology, it might seem paradoxical that Said describes it as being

¹⁰³Said insists that despite his exile in America, his perspective is still valid. He explains that exilic distance provides a 'perspective and certain freedom' which might not be readily available for immobilized individuals. See Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, pp.xxv–xxvi.

¹⁰⁴Arif Dirlik, 'Placing Edward Said: Space, Time and the Travelling Theorist', in *Edward Said and the Postcolonial*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft and Kadhim Hussein, Horizons in Post-Colonial Studies (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2001), pp.22–23.

susceptible to becoming a rigid stance. Said, puzzlingly, warns that exile itself must not become a home or a fixed position; in other words, one must be also exiled from exile, for if the individual becomes ‘accustomed’ to the notion of being ‘suspended’ then the ‘state of in-betweenness can itself become a rigid ideological position’.¹⁰⁵ The reason for such militant abhorrence of any form of permanent situatedness is that Said believes that many forms of fixed locatedness are correlations with ‘dogma and orthodoxy’, thus a ‘provisional’ state is always advocated, as was discussed in the introduction to this chapter.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, I still believe that Said indirectly acknowledges the vulnerability of exile to becoming a ‘rigid ideology’, as is the case with other constraining entities he originally aimed to evade. His solution to such a dilemma was to further extend the position of exile in order to deter its rigidity, as when he stated above that even exilic ‘in-betweenness’ is susceptible to becoming a stable and settled fixed position. And although this approach might provide for the exile the selective privilege of counter-positioning, it also assumes that such suspended ideality is possible.

This is why I agree with John Barbour when he questions the overwhelming positional and discursive privilege of exile. Barbour argues that Said depicts the ‘exile’s life as nomadic, decentred, and lived on the periphery of the established order’ to the extent that they must construct their own positional and discursive structures.¹⁰⁷ Barbour also insists that Said aimed to gain empowerment through rendering himself a comprehensive reconfiguration of exile. In his effort to deconstruct essential structures of selfhood through exile, Said constructs his own exclusive exilic structures of belonging. He contends that his reconstruction of positionality is necessarily individualized and thus free from all forms of collective forceful identification. Despite these claims, I believe that such a position has more in common with the entities it aims to combat than Said is willing to admit. For if

¹⁰⁵Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.43.

¹⁰⁶Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.185.

¹⁰⁷John D. Barbour, ‘The Consolations and Compensations of Exile: Memoirs by Said, Ahmed, and Eire’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 79.3 (2011), 706–34 (p.711) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr007>>. Adel Iskander and Hakem Rustom describe Said’s exilic position as a form of nomadism which is both ‘theoretically unhoused, methodologically untidy’. They explain that his position became emancipatory yet indefinable, thus jeopardizing his approach’s availability for universal appropriation. See Adel Iskander and Hakem Rustom, ‘Introduction: Emancipation and Representation’, in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, ed. by Adel Iskander and Hakem Rustom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), p.548 (p.5).

essentializing and prohibiting the other is the main reason for Said's counter-exilic arguments, then what difference does it make if it comes from an individual or a communal projection from the perspective of a colonized subject, for instance? He himself acknowledges that it is impossible to guarantee that his exilic position would not transform into an exclusive community, especially in regards to those who choose not to identify as exiles, hence the need to be alert to the risks associated with being accustomed to 'in-betweenness'. I believe that Said is underestimating the fixity and boundaries of his theorization of exile to an extent that might turn it into an exclusive form of rigid belonging. The enabling powers which Said bestows on exile and the positional legitimacy it supposedly provides are deeply problematic, and could easily provide a pseudo-dominant apparatus, although he does claim that this might be avoided through theoretical alertness. Said sought, through exile, to free himself from any form of belonging or static positioning in order to counter subordinations. But what is interesting is that he found that his exilic methodologies might become repressive in themselves. That his exilic alternative was in constant risk of becoming a confined position which excludes non-exiles meant that Said would work on repelling such possibility through reasserting the metaphorical nature of his projected exilic methodology.

Because of all the complications concerning the accessibility of his exilic methodology for non-exiles, Said proposes that exile is metaphorical in nature. This would theoretically allow any individual to utilize the exilic methodology as a matter of choice rather than fate. Said explains the parameters of metaphorical exile in the following quotation:

One is that while it is an *actual* condition, exile is also for my purposes a *metaphorical* condition [...] Even intellectuals who are lifelong members of a society can, in a manner of speaking, be divided into insiders and outsiders: those on the one hand who belong fully to the society as it is, who flourish in it without an overwhelming sense of dissonance or dissent, those who can be called yea-sayers; and on the other hand, the nay-sayers, the individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power, and honours are concerned.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.39. Emphasis in original.

Said presents exile as an available position which is acquired through choice and individual will. The insiders are those individuals who accept being assimilated within any given society or polity, while dissidents assume the preferred position of becoming exiled, detached and oppositional. These ‘nay-sayers’ become exiled through their refusal to be deprived of forming their own narratives and arguments, rather than being marginalized within collective discourses or communal positions. As is the case with ‘actual’ exile, ‘metaphorical’ exile is depicted as an enabling position. The individual is therefore capable of instigating their own exile through opposing all or parts of his/her culture, society or nation. It is of course impossible to imagine that any individual would be entirely exiled from their community metaphorically. Said acknowledges the ‘relative’ independence such exile provides for individuals.¹⁰⁹ He himself is a perfect example of such relativity. In fact, ‘privileges, power, and honours’ would seem to describe Said’s privileged academic and intellectual position more so than that of many of the ‘yea-sayers’ he seems to vindicate. What is equally contradictory is that the metaphorical ability to reject such privileges and power structures is, ironically, more attainable through an advantaged and powerful position. The oscillation between ‘actual and metaphorical’ exiles is evidently problematic. As Bill Ashcroft concludes, ‘the line between geographical displacement and intellectual distancing seems impossible to draw’, when discussing Said’s exilic position.¹¹⁰ It becomes unclear, for instance, whether Said considers his own exile exclusively metaphorical, actual or both, and whether his actual exile presents a more authentic form of displacement. As Jason Mohagheghe argues, Said’s exilic position became a ‘recurrent technique of self-blurring that allows the exile to become a prosthetic for both *obscurity* and *distortion*’, thus rendering his position ‘incomprehensible’.¹¹¹ Mohagheghe is asserting the fact that Said’s exile is simultaneously both an insider and outsider as he strives to counter various forms of fixation. The only condition for Said’s exile is to become un-positioned and beyond

¹⁰⁹ Said believes that exile provides ‘relative independence’ for intellectuals from all pressures and assimilations. See Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.xiv.

¹¹⁰ Bill Ashcroft, ‘Worldliness’, in *Edward Said and the Postcolonial*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft and Kadhim Hussein, Horizons in Post-Colonial Studies (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2001), p.88.

¹¹¹ Jason Mohagheghe, ‘The Exilic Imagination: Literary and Existential Trajectories of the Outside’, in *Counterpoints: Edward Said’s Legacy*, ed. by May Telmissany and Stephanie Tara Schwartz (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p.110. Emphasis in original.

location. Exile essentially becomes a means by which belonging is defined as un-belonging to any collective, ironically creating its own counter-collective.¹¹²

Despite the correlative discrepancies between actual and metaphorical exiles, I believe that Said was more invested in creating a new independent positionality, rather than being subsumed with exilic terminologies. As I indicated in the introduction to this chapter, Said's exile was devised as a methodology which assists in reaching a desired position of independence and emancipatory suspension. This is what Timothy Brennan indicates when he describes Said's 'shifting' from the 'locational' to the 'positional' in his approach towards exile.¹¹³ Brennan argues that Said's aim was to move from any imposed location towards an ideal form of positioning. This means that exile becomes democratically available even for those individuals who would never have identified themselves as being actually exiled. My contention is that through this departure from the imposed fate of locational and geographical exile, Said asserts the move towards a 'positional' status in which he is more able to fashion his narratives and opinions, further asserting his disdain for imposed forms of collective belonging and orthodox discourses. What might be confusing is that in Said's extensive rejection of all forms of collective fixity and positions, he seems to have produced a nondescript position which is difficult to apprehend and implement. Yet Bharat Mohanty believes that such discrepancy in regards to fixed positionality is the real strength of Said's analogy:

He adequately takes into account both its denotational and connotational dimensions and looks into it from its supposed privileged geographical, cultural, ethical, and psychological positions. It would be an outright misreading of Said's observations on exile if we look into it from a specific theoretical, or ideological, or political position. At a very fundamental level, he is in search of a permanent site of resistance. By resistance, he means, a state of independence, or freedom, or liberation, from all kinds of fixity, centralising forces, and egotistical formations.¹¹⁴

¹¹²For a discussion of Said's exile from a Palestinian perspective see Judith Butler and others, 'What Shall We Do Without Exile?': Said and Darwish Address the Future, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 2012, 30–54. For an approach to exile as a critical position see Robert T. Tally Jr, 'Mundus Totus Exilium Est: Reflections on the Critic in Exile', *Transnational Literature*, 3.2 (2011).

¹¹³Timothy Brennan, 'Edward Said: American Theory and the Politics of Knowledge', *Atlantic Studies*, 2.1 (2005), 93–103 (p.98) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1478881052000341738>>.

¹¹⁴Bharat Bhusan Mohanty, *Edward W. Said's Orientalism: A Critique* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2005), pp.261–62. Mohanty notes that Said sees both imperialism and nationalism as 'primarily monolithic, exclusive

Although Mohanty's assertion that Said's exile is a 'permanent site of resistance' in a quest to denounce all forms of 'fixity' and 'centralising' seems contradictory, I believe that his general point is convincing. What Said actually sought through the promotion of exile was to construct a site of resistance from which the individual might initiate independent arguments and narratives. And although his efforts to refashion 'actual and metaphorical' forms of exile as enabling and empowering positions are aspirational to some extent, they do provide practical alternatives to becoming assimilated within contested subjugations.

What the discussion in this section indicates is the great emphasis which Said places on what he calls the 'executive value of exile'.¹¹⁵ The methodological positionings exemplified by Said show exile as a counter-position from which an individual becomes independent from communal and societal pressures and impositions, and better able to counter imperial or dogmatic dominance. Said also presents exile as an alternative position to 'dominant' institutions, whether cultural, religious or political: 'Necessarily, then, I speak of exile not as a privilege, but as an *alternative* to the mass institutions that dominate modern life'.¹¹⁶ What is interesting is that Said seems to acknowledge the necessary empowerment of exile, as opposed to it being a form of deprivation. And in order to prevent exile from transforming into a form of exclusive position for actual exiles, Said proposes a metaphorical form of exile accessible to all individuals regardless of their exilic status.

2-3 Exile as Counter-Dominance

Said's entire oeuvre constitutes an effort to critique and counter all monolithic entities and narratives such as Orientalism and imperialism.¹¹⁷ His stance was also that of a postcolonial subject engaged in exposing and deconstructing the power apparatus of all ethnocentric modes of identification and positioning. This proposition, of course, is not a novel approach for postcolonial critics; for, as Neil Lazarus asserts, any 'attempt to unthink Eurocentrism is

and discriminatory'. Nevertheless, he chooses to counter them from an unfixed position of exile. Mohanty, *Edward W. Said's Orientalism: A Critique*, p.260.

¹¹⁵Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp.7–8.

¹¹⁶Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.184. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines hegemony as 'leadership or dominance, especially by one state or social group over others'. See *The Oxford Dictionary of English*, ed. Angus Stevenson, 2010.

lodged as a foundational aspiration of postcolonialist scholarship'.¹¹⁸ Thus, Said's counter-colonial and anti-imperial writings intersect and align with many postcolonial oppositional arguments and resistant positions. What is significant is that he also extends his anti-dominance position towards postcolonial resistant responses which he deems nativist and nationalistic. What Said calls for is a counter-position which disavows forms of belonging and attachment that restrict individual choice, regardless of their source. His theorization rests on a nuanced depiction of what constitutes domination and essentialism and the appropriate methodologies available to counter them.

My own contention, nevertheless, is that Said's proposed exilic position seems to offer the individual the proposed ability to reconstitute themselves beyond certain fixities and collectives. I here investigate how Said practically proposes a non-authoritative alternative in the form of exile. I also question whether Said's exilic positions, which were originally devised to counter prevailing entities such as colonialism and imperialism, might become counterproductive in regards to his original aims of emancipation. In what follows I present further explanation of how Said rejects three dominant entities, namely Orientalism, culture and nationalism, and how such rejections show the practical implications of his exilic positioning. Said articulates the logic of his argument as follows: because many forms of collective narratives, projections, positions and entities are essentially monolithic, they prevent the individual from forming his/her own narratives and fashioning his/her own position. They become, or have the potential to become, means of misrepresenting and essentializing self and other. The solution is obvious for Said; individualism in the form of exilic detachment and marginality can present an uncorrupted safeguard against all forms of ideological imposition. Said presents exile as 'an *alternative* to the mass institutions that dominate modern life'.¹¹⁹ My aim is to examine the validity of such an alternative, and whether his counter-exilic position can actually offer an ideal substitute for regressive collectives and essentialist forms of belonging.

¹¹⁸Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p.126.

¹¹⁹Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.184. Emphasis in original.

Said found it fundamental to utilize and even construct an exilic position in order to counter essentialist collectives and communities.¹²⁰ Said calls for a move beyond forms of centric theorizations, narratives and positions. He attacks what he describes as ‘Eurocentric and imperial’ positions that stem from a rigid idea of cultural and societal belonging, and which elevate specific cultures to the status of the ‘essential and universal’.¹²¹ Said’s proposition here is acute and complicated. While it is plausible to assume that imperial narratives and positions have always been characterized as essentialist and dominant, Said’s proposition is evidently more comprehensive. He believed that European colonialists and orientalist were mainly pressured in these essentialist positions due to their association with nationalist movements. Thus, Said’s objection seems to be based on the fact that many affiliations with collective narratives and social impositions are bound to produce reductive outcomes, regardless of individual motivations. In a revealing passage in *Orientalism*, Said contends that European Orientalism collectively coaxed individuals through monopolizing all alternative positions:

It is therefore correct that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric. Some of the immediate sting will be taken out of these labels if we recall additionally that human societies, at least the more advanced cultures, have, rarely offered the individuals anything but imperialism, racism, and ethnocentrism for dealing with ‘other’ cultures.¹²²

Said is speaking about a ‘European’ who is situated within an orientalist and colonial setting and period. But what is baffling is that this anti-orientalist standpoint is immediately sidestepped by Said’s affirmation that all human societies and cultures are essentially imperialist, racist and ethnocentric when dealing with others, and that his critiques are not reserved for colonialist aggression. He is contending that many forms of positioning which are hinged on societal and cultural collective identification are susceptible to assimilating

¹²⁰The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines essentialism as ‘a belief that things have a set of characteristics which make them what they are, and that the task of science and philosophy is their discovery and expression; the doctrine that essence is prior to existence’. See *The Oxford Dictionary of English*, ed. Angus Stevenson, 2010..

¹²¹Edward W. Said, *Musical Elaborations* (London: Vintage, 1992), pp.51–52.

¹²²Said, *Orientalism*, p. 204. Said argues that even liberals, feminists and progressive movements who are situated within an imperialist culture are by collusion also imperialist. See Said and Barsamian, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian*, p.67.

their members and opposing collectives and groups. This is evident, argues Said, in the fact that many participants in colonialism were not entirely convinced by its actions, but found it difficult to escape societal and collective pressures in their framing of other cultures and peoples as inferior or necessitating colonization. This is seen in the participation of many scholars who became orientalist pushing the colonialist agenda forward, despite their opposition to oppression in some instances. Joseph Conrad, for instance, was critical and sceptical of colonialism to the extent of being ‘anti-imperialist’. Yet, according to Said, he was also convinced that ‘imperialism was inevitable’.¹²³ Said proposes a move beyond the realm of these imperialistic collective limitations through an exilic position which situates the individual in isolation outside the monolithic realm of these collectives. The notion that ‘all human societies’ participate in repressing their members as well as other cultures and societies is telling. The significance of Said’s elaboration is found in his indictment of all societies and collectives as being unable to offer adequate accounts of and approaches to the other as they stifle and assimilate individuals through dominant structures, thus impeding an individualistic alternative beyond such centricities.

Said proposes that the individual should become vigilant towards and aware of the controlling nature of all human societies. But what is the impact of depicting some forms of collective and communal activity as dominant and essentialist? And how does it fit with Said’s exilic positioning? I propose that there is a considerable level of contradiction in Said’s reasoning with regards to societal subordination. For while he affirms that these societies have offered individuals limited alternatives, he also contends that it is possible to circumvent such domination through exile. Therefore, it be would possible to assume that these societies are not actually totalitarianas they allow individuals to become exiled and liberated. Asha Varadharajan argues that Said’s characterization of collective and societal positions as inherently imperialistic and essentialist might actually reinforce these entities rather than counter them.¹²⁴ She asserts that Said is portraying these collectives as being constantly dominant over all individuals, and that these collective impositions always impede individual choice and narratives from forming beyond their rubrics. Depriving all individuals of their collective positions might not be as readily available as Said might

¹²³Said and Barsamian, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian*, p.69.

¹²⁴Varadharajan, *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said, and Spivak*, pp.133–34.

imagine. Varadharajan is correct in her observation that such depictions of orientalist and imperialist discourse would make it very difficult for colonized societies to counter colonialism if their own collective counter-discourse itself is likened to imperialism by Said. He is actually advocating partially limiting resistant responses to any collective autonomy towards his specified alternatives. For Said there is no escape from the fact that any type of belonging necessitates conformity, polarization and a dichotomy of 'us' and 'them'. Hence, he envisages the solution in an individualized and ethical form of exilic positionality in which no structure of collective othering is possible.¹²⁵

Another example of Said's generalizations towards collective positions is his antagonistic stance towards culture.¹²⁶ Said defines culture as an entity which contains societal production but which also simultaneously 'designates a boundary' through 'powerful differentiation':

In the first place, culture is used to designate not merely something to which one belongs but something that one possesses and, along with that proprietary process, culture also designates a boundary by which the concepts of what is extrinsic or intrinsic to the culture come into forceful play. [...] But, in the second place, there is a more interesting dimension to this idea of culture as possessing possession. And that is the power of culture by virtue of its elevated or superior position to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate, demote, interdict, and validate: in short, the power of culture to be an agent of, and perhaps the main agency for, powerful differentiation within its domain and beyond it too.¹²⁷

Again we see Said being consistent in his generalization through depicting culture itself as a source of collective 'hegemony' and polarization.¹²⁸ Culture provides the vehicle for asserting boundaries and defining self and other through differentiation. Said, conversely,

¹²⁵Seamus Deane observes that Said has aligned belonging with 'irrationality' through associating exile and detachment with rational and correct perspectives and critiques. See Deane, 'Under Eastern and Western Eyes', pp.14–15.

¹²⁶In *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Said defines culture as follows: 'an environment, process, and hegemony in which individuals (in their private circumstances) and their works are embedded. [...] In short, the power of culture to be an agent of, and perhaps the main agency for, powerful differentiation within its domain and beyond it too'. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said makes the following assertions concerning culture: 'In time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state this differentiates "us" from "them," almost always with some degree of xenophobia. Culture in this sense is a source of identity.' See the following: Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp.8–9; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp.xii–xiv.

¹²⁷Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp.8–9.

¹²⁸Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 8.

does not indicate how his own exilic proposition is any different with regards to defining boundaries and differentiating self and other. For it could be argued that all positions, at some level, require different forms of polarization and differentiation in order to define the self through and with the opposite other, this is despite the fact that all of these self-definitions might not necessarily produce Orientalist domination. Nevertheless, Said's scepticism towards cultural influences necessitates the implementation of an exilic counter-position, as he believes that 'every culture and each society' acquire their 'existence' through recreating their 'others'.¹²⁹ In his descriptions of culture, Said comes very close to aligning it with his portrayal of imperialism and Orientalism. Therefore, if one's own culture is a form of overbearing containment, this would entail not only that it is not a suitable vehicle for countering imperialism, but that it has also become a reductive entity which necessitates countering itself. It is interesting to observe that Said goes as far as declaring that imperialism has continued to thrive in modern times in the realm of culture:

As I shall be using the term, 'imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism', which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory. [...] It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire. In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism, as we shall see, lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.¹³⁰

Said thus proposes that powerful entities such as culture facilitate rather than block or fend off imperialism. Said's assertion that culture may be infiltrated by imperialism is significant for his promotion of exile as this claim further accentuates exilic positions as logical and ethical alternatives. No one could ever escape such vast monolithic and imperialistically infected entities, for the reality is that, according to Said, everyone is working within such dystopian cultures. Thus, if human collectives are in danger of becoming monolithic and dominant, the only alternative position available would ideally be in the form of self-

¹²⁹Said, *Orientalism*, p.332.

¹³⁰Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.8.

imposed detachment. Consequently, Said presents his individualistic exilic position as a preferable location for producing ethically fashioned narratives and positions.

In practice, what Said advocates is providing the individual with the ability to construct their own cultural preferences and positions. Hence, when he asserts that an individual must step outside the realm of such cultures, this does not necessitate a complete rejection of the culture in question. An example of this position is presented in his approach to Palestinian culture. Although he fervently rejects the ideal of an all-encompassing cultural collectivity, he still maintains a very close association with certain aspects of Palestinian culture. The logic behind such a seemingly contradictory position is found in the elective nature of Said's exile. It is exactly the fact that the individual is able to select and construct their own cultural, political and intellectual position that he finds empowering. He reveals how cultures are always prone to being 'twisted by authoritarian figures', and thus administered as repressive apparatuses.¹³¹ Moving outside the realm of these dominant entities through exile becomes the solution to such dilemmas. Yet there is a considerable level of idealism in Said's assumption regarding refashioning culture from an exilic position. Firstly, Said assumes that an individual would be able to escape such authoritarian cultural impositions through exile without consideration of the different contexts of such authority. He does not consider how such authorities could simply prohibit his exilic alternative, otherwise they would not be considered either oppressive or authoritative. This nuanced observation is presented by William Monroe. Monroe observes that such exilic situatedness is idyllic if not utopian, for how can anyone position themselves within a culture and acquire an intimate understanding and position within it 'while somehow remaining untainted by [that] hegemonic culture'?¹³² Monroe's point is that it is impossible to imagine that individuals might use exile to reaffirm and maintain cultural practices within any culture while simultaneously distancing themselves from that same cultural position. The key point to consider is how Said's exile seems to offer an elective ability to move in and out of such cultural prohibitions, and how such a position does not attend to all the practical implications of this methodology.

¹³¹Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.xv.

¹³²William F. Monroe, 'The World, the Text, and the Critic. Edward W. Said', *Modern Philology*, 82.4 (1985), 454–59 (p.458) <<https://doi.org/10.1086/391424>>.

The third problematic dominant entity which Said discusses extensively is nationalism.¹³³ In fact, among all other monolithic discourses and positions, nationalism provides the clearest example of electiveness in Said's exilic positionality and counter-arguments. For despite the enormous 'pitfall of nationalism', as Said describes it, his position towards it is once again ambivalent.¹³⁴ Said actually presents nationalism as the quintessential opposite of exile. His analogy is that nationalism is an 'assertion of belonging' to a home, a community or a tradition.¹³⁵ The contradiction arises when his rejection of nationalism is aligned with other contradicting positions in which Said proposes a more nuanced and accepting position with regard to nationalism:

That is to say, it was received by radical nationalists within the Palestinian movement as being soft on the question, whereas what I was proposing was basically a nationalism of coexistence. I certainly still feel that, at a certain stage of historical development in the colonized world, nationalism is a necessary defence against extermination, elimination and ethnocide, those things Palestinians and others such as Native Americans and African-Americans have suffered. So at that level, I am unequivocally a supporter of nationalism.¹³⁶

In such instances Said reveals his paradoxical tendencies, as he locates himself in the position of exile in order to accommodate denouncing Palestinian nationalism while simultaneously supporting it (or at least some of its aspects). Said's alternating support for

¹³³Said has a very ambivalent approach towards nationalism. For instance, he declares that he supports the 'nationalist ideology' formed by Palestinian resistance, though he acknowledges its pitfalls such as 'xenophobia', 'chauvinism' and 'ethnic particularity' as inevitable. In fact, Said rejects the 'idea of belonging to a national community' as disappointing. He defines nationalism as a form of 'separation' and 'isolation'. He also defines it as an 'assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage' in order to create a national community and cultural locus. He also describes it as the 'philosophy of identity made into a collectively organized passion', also declaring that there are forms of such nationalism which he finds acceptable. Thus, despite his rejection of nationalism as a form of 'essentialism', 'exclusiveness', 'polarization' and even imperialism through reinstating ethnic divisions, he also asserts that he accepts what he calls 'nationalism of coexistence' which fends off and resists oppression. See the following: Said and Barsamian, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian*, pp.49–50 and 59–60; Said and Ali, *Conversations with Edward Said*, p.120; Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.425; Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, pp.176–77 and 402; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp.35–36; Ibish and Said, 'Nationalism, Secularism, Postcoloniality', pp.99–100. A comparative reading of Said's nationalistic theorization is presented by Michael Sprinker. See Michael Sprinker, 'The National Question: Said, Ahmad, Jameson, *Public Culture*, 1993, Vol.6, pp.3-29.

¹³⁴Said and Barsamian, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian*, p.60.

¹³⁵Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, pp.176–77.

¹³⁶Ibish and Said, 'Nationalism, Secularism, Postcoloniality', pp.99–100.

Palestinian nationalism, whilst at the same time acknowledging its appropriation as a form of resistance, accentuates the contradictory nature of his exilic strategy. These instances of alternating positioning emphasize the main strengths and weaknesses of Said's theorization of exile. For although such flexibilities offer the individual the ability to freely fashion and construct their narratives and positions, they also produce sporadic selectivities which supposedly amalgamate conflicting positions. The fact that Said was able to support what he considers to be reductive forms of nationalistic belonging is contradictory. Said believed that Palestinian nationalism itself, like all nationalism, is essentialist, as it does not take into consideration the varied and diverse nature of individual identifications, especially with regards to Palestinian minorities.¹³⁷ Ding Zhaoguo acutely describes Said's predicament when she states that Said's exile is an 'ambivalent positioning, which always runs the risk of reinforcing and reproducing the dominant power structures such as their original targets of dismantling'.¹³⁸ I believe that while Said's rejection of different modes of collective positions or narratives as essentially subordinating and monolithic might be epistemologically sound in some instances, what is worrying is that he returns to Palestinian nationalism to selectively fashion them through what he believes to be an ethical exilic alternative. This posture towards nationalism and identification reveals a selective appropriation that is concealed through exilic detachment.

Based on his delineation of imperialism, culture and nationalism, I argue that Said essentially paved the way for the application of exilic strategy through rejecting various forms of belonging, collective positions and narratives as essentialisms. It is clear that

¹³⁷ In *Reflections on Exile*, Said asserts that collective nationalisms tend to 'consign truth exclusively to themselves and relegate falsehood and inferiority to outsider'. And in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said agrees with Franz Fanon that: 'The national bourgeoisies and their specialized elites, of which Fanon speaks so ominously, in effect tended to replace the colonial force with a new class-based and ultimately exploitative one, which replicated the old colonial structures in new terms' produced by native efforts and individuals. Specifically concerning Palestinian nationalism, in *Power, politics and Culture*, he explains what he perceives as 'the problem of national minorities' within Palestine, Israel and the Arab world in general. His alternative is to formulate a 'secular and humane vision' which creates the potential for a community that is 'political, cultural, intellectual, and is not geographically and homogeneously defined'. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, pp.176–77; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 296; Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.130;

¹³⁸ Ding Zhaoguo, 'Identity, Text, Positioning: On Edward Said's "Voyage in" as Politics of Resistance', *Studies in Literature and Language*, 6.1 (2013), p.24
 <<https://doi.org/10.3968/j.sll.1923156320130601.15694>>. Zhaoguo also reflects that Said's exile is 'idealized' and runs the risk of reproducing hegemonic and assimilative structures through 'reifying exile' as an 'exclusive privilege' for the appropriated few.

Said's counter-dominant methodologies, such as exile, reach far beyond his positioning as an 'anti-imperialist subject' countering all forms of constraint and essentialism perpetrated by colonialism and Orientalism, as Prasad Pannian claims.¹³⁹ In the previous examples, Said exemplified his rejection of all repressive collectives regardless of the society in which they were produced. The marginality of his position becomes empowering, yet it does produce its own problematics. Shelly Walia acutely describes the risks associated with Said's flexible exilic alternations:

Said has often been blamed for engaging in almost a ritual of accommodation and assimilation that does not allow him to be at home in any one culture or, for that matter, a single theoretical position'.¹⁴⁰

Although Said's exilic alternative portrays the individual as being beyond any form of fixity or belonging, it does risk becoming self-serving, according to Walia. Said does not allow himself, or at least such is his claim, to be a stable and fixated part of any culture or national location in order to set the basis for an alternative legitimate and ethical refashioning of the self. The significance of such a position rests on two crucial outcomes. Firstly, Said is able to ethically reconstruct acceptable forms of belonging according to his individualistic projections. And secondly, he is able to legitimately elect the appropriate parts of these entities which he can claim and even use as counter-arguments and narratives. This is clear in his simultaneous rejection and appropriation of Palestinian nationalism and Western culture. I also believe that his exilic detachment does offer a very empowering position for free choice and individual independence, albeit only relatively. Yet, and regardless of his motivations, Said overestimates the ability of his exilic methodology to overcome obstructive entities.

2-4 The Individualized Practicalities of Exilic Empowerment

After discussing Said's stance on the dominant nature of all collective locations and narratives, and after analysing examples of those collective authorities, I discuss in this

¹³⁹Prasad Pannian, 'Edward Said and the Politics of Subjectivity', in *Counterpoints: Edward Said's Legacy*, ed. by May Telmissany and Stephanie Tara Schwartz (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp.77–78.

¹⁴⁰Shelly Walia, *Edward Said and the Writing of History*, Postmodern Encounters (Cambridge, UK: Icon Books, 2001), pp.10–11.

third section how his exilic methodologies provide practical alternatives which refashion many of his own narratives, positions and counter-arguments. What I propose is that fashioned exilic positionings became essential for the formation of many of Said's emancipatory alternatives. And despite its ambivalence and relativity, exile has provided for Said an individualistic option which avoids all potentially regressive collectives. The individual becomes the main authority in the formation of his or her cultural, political and intellectual narratives and positions, rather than being dependent upon collective or communal impositions. I aim to evaluate the success and practicality of Said's exilic methodology, and whether he was able to provide an alternative which is neither involuntary nor constraining.

One of the main features of Said's exilic individuality is that it espouses the fact that all discourses and positions, whether singular or collective, are in fact human constructions. This demystification of collectively imposed viewpoints allows for the individual contingency to move beyond presumed sacred or permanently fixed positions. Said presents the example of collective cultural and political universalities which he believes stifle the formation of individual forms of selfhood and discourse.¹⁴¹ As these rarefied forms of essentialism become demystified and normalized as human constructions, the individual would then be able to construct their own narratives and positions. Said's analogy takes several steps to reach such a conclusion. As I have pointed out in the two previous sections of this chapter, any form of collectivism is rejected by Said. Through such collectives, universal connections and paradigms are formed to bind individuals and communities. Said thus rejects any form of universal binding or discourse simply because the universalisms in such situations are 'usually the universalism of whoever happens to be most powerful'.¹⁴² And in order to delineate the power of such universalisms, the individual chooses to become exiled beyond the parameters of any external authority. What he advocates instead is a postcolonial position which is 'centred upon the agency of human individuality and subjective intuition, rather than on received ideas and approved authority'.¹⁴³ Though Said is adamant that it is possible to become partially separated from one's culture or polity, I

¹⁴¹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp.407–8.

¹⁴²Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, pp.390–91.

¹⁴³Said, *Orientalism*, p.xxii.

believe that there is a considerable level of relativity that should be associated with his proposed exilic detachment, as it is impossible to imagine that any individual could in fact detach and reattach entirely from his/her culture or society. Said himself acknowledges such relativity, as will become clear in the discussion below.

Another example of Said's practical utilization of exile is found in his formulations of alternative processes for identity construction. He was disillusioned with the reductive nature of collective oppositional resistance. He presents the example of how Palestinian identities were not configured within Israel, despite the presence of a large number of Arabs within their community. This, Said points out, is not an Israeli-specific problem. The Palestinian response itself is similarly nationalistic as it essentializes identities within Palestine and neglects the presence of minorities.¹⁴⁴ The individual is therefore forced to assimilate with the available communal structures as part of that ethnic or cultural group, even if such identifications do not accurately represent them:

The whole idea of homogeneity is that if you belong to a group everybody of that group has to be exactly the same, and that only that group has the right, if it's the majority: that's completely flawed.¹⁴⁵

Said's claim is based on the fact that such collective groups do not allow for diversity and heterogeneity. A nationalistic form of belonging, for instance, would set the parameters for a specified and monolithic collective identity, thus limiting the capacity of individuals to move beyond such restrictions. It would also mean that many groups who do not conform to these collectives would be side-lined and marginalized.

Said's solution to identitarian impositions was to formulate 'alternative communities that have emerged from the experience of exile' and which also provide the individual with a more contingent form of identification.¹⁴⁶ As the burden of formulating identities is undertaken by individuals, it becomes difficult to essentialize and differentiate, because a single overarching identity or collective could never be formed in exilic frameworks. Each individual is able to construct their own identification and dismisses at the same instance

¹⁴⁴Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.130.

¹⁴⁵Said and Barsamian, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian*, pp.59–60.

¹⁴⁶Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, pp.xxxiii–xxxiv.

any notion of collective binaries. The first notion which Said dispels is that of a single identity which is based on collective heterogeneity:

If you're an exile—which I feel myself, in many ways, to have been [...] there's necessarily that sense of counterpoint. And by counterpoint I mean things that can't be reduced to homophony. That can't be reduced to a kind of simple reconciliation. [...] I think the one thing that I find, I guess, the most—I wouldn't say repellent, but I would say antagonistic—for me is identity. The notion of a *single* identity. And so multiple identity, the polyphony of many voices playing off against each other, without, as I say, the need to reconcile them, just to hold them together, is what my work is all about. More than one culture, more than one awareness, both in its negative and its positive modes. It's basic instinct.¹⁴⁷

What exile offers Said is the ability to move from one identity to another and to hybridize the concept of identification itself. This is achieved through the exilic debasement of collective identities. Said argues that identity should move beyond this idealized fixity and locatedness towards an exilic rendering of selfhood and attachments:

A single over-mastering identity guided by a religious or secular authority [...] whether that identity be Western, African, Islamic, Arab, or Asian, is a confinement, a deprivation [...]. Our model for academic freedom should therefore be the migrant or traveller.¹⁴⁸

As the individual is detached from communal and societal connections and pressures through exile, he/she is more easily able to form his or her own selfhood and identity. And although I do agree with Said that individual identities offer non-dominant forms of belonging, they do not, however, necessarily diminish binaries and differentiation, even on an individual level. For in order to affirm any form of identity, one would surely need to acknowledge its presence and its differentiation from other identities. This is exactly what David Huddart means when he explains that 'situating gestures become simply assertions of identity and its privilege'.¹⁴⁹ Huddart states that any form of identity is in itself a differentiation from others in affirming selfhood. Therefore, the simple acts of situating and positioning denote identification of self and other, namely the construction of an identity;

¹⁴⁷Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.99. Emphasis in original.

¹⁴⁸Edward W. Said, 'On the University', in *Edward Said and Critical Decolonization*, ed. by Ferial J. Ghazoul (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2007), p. 32.

¹⁴⁹Huddart, *Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography*, pp.13–14.

although this in itself does not necessarily denote negative connotations. If this is acknowledged, then it becomes very clear that what Said actually achieved through his exilic position was an individualistic self-construction which is still unable to escape all the paradigms of identification and exclusivity. Despite this fact, exile still offers a theoretical framework for non-conformist identities which do not necessarily adhere to ethnic origin or communal collectives.

As Said's concept of exile endows the individual with a relative detachment and autonomy, it consequently offers a very enabling position for implementing his or her affiliations. Being detached from some forms of collective and belonging provides the ideal site for refashioning narratives and positions beyond restraints. Said acknowledges that being exiled is 'a practice that distances [the individual] from all connections and commitments [...] the exile is offered a new set of affiliations and develops new loyalties'.¹⁵⁰ This neglects actual exilic experiences where such 'distances' and 'loyalties' are not absolute nor invited. Still, being detached through exile is an ideal location for facilitating all forms of affiliation, whether cultural, political or intellectual. Therefore, when Said confesses that 'the spontaneity of affiliations, rather than filiations and belonging' is what he really cherishes, rather than anything which might 'develop out of my particular position', it becomes clear that self-fashioning is a counter-position for repelling authoritative influences.¹⁵¹ Although Said's exilic affiliations might seem liberating and empowering, they do have their own setbacks. The paradox is that Said's refashioning might become so intertwined with his own preferences and personal projections that he risks falling in to the trap of what Shelly Walia calls the 'ritual of accommodation and assimilation', which allows him to be situated beyond any single culture or 'theoretical position'.¹⁵² Said's efforts seem to hinge on the fact that due to the distortions of many prevailing positions, essentialist narratives and power structures, the individual is permitted to restructure his own position and narrative subjectively and idiosyncratically. Despite these impediments, affiliative exile provides two main advantages. Firstly, the move from filial to affiliative relation through exile resembles for

¹⁵⁰Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.183.

¹⁵¹Said and Ali, p.120.

¹⁵²Walia, *Edward Said and the Writing of History*, pp.10–11.

Said the departure from ‘origin to beginning’.¹⁵³ Exile, therefore, is intertwined with affiliations in the departure from fixed notions of belonging and natural bonds, to a new self-formed beginning determined by the individual. Secondly, as Anna Bernard argues, the combination of exile, affiliation and beginning resembles an ‘intentional act of individualism’.¹⁵⁴ As the individual voluntarily disassociates from their national, cultural and societal parameters, they detach from their origins and ‘begin’ their new connections and arguments based on personal predilection. Exile, as a detached position, offers the ideal location for reconstructing individual affiliations. As the individual becomes free from certain stifling connections, reassembling their affiliative cultural, political and intellectual ties becomes more plausible, despite the risks of accommodation and selectivity.

From an intellectual perspective, exile provides a very useful and necessary position, according to Said. He argues that exile and marginality provide for the intellectual the necessary distance needed for independence from the pressures exerted by institutions, governments and societies:

[I] describe the intellectual as an outsider or as marginalized, in the sense that he/she is a committed person but nevertheless stands outside the realm of power or official institutions, in the wider sense of the words power and institution. The intellectual must maintain a margin of independence and must be an instrument of resurrecting lost memory.¹⁵⁵

Although Said believes that such exilic independence is a ‘principal intellectual duty’, he acknowledges that it is still ‘relative’ as it is impossible to be completely cut off from all pressures and influences.¹⁵⁶ The acknowledgement of such relativity is essential, I believe, in considering the practicality of his exilic intellectualism. What such independence provides for the intellectual is the ability to ‘remain outside the mainstream, un-accommodated, un-co-opted, [and] resistant’.¹⁵⁷ Said, therefore, believed that such marginality and outsidership are essential for the intellectual vocation. In *Representations of the Intellectual*, Said presents a comprehensive elaboration, with regard to dialectic, of this empowering marginality. He asserts that no individual, whether intellectual or

¹⁵³Said, *Beginnings, Intention and Method*, p.xix.

¹⁵⁴Bernard, ‘The Last Jewish Intellectual: Borrowing from Edward Said’, p.81.

¹⁵⁵Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, p.184.

¹⁵⁶Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.xiv.

¹⁵⁷Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, pp.38–39.

otherwise, could ever maintain a position beyond attachment, i.e. could not become 'free-floating'. He does, however, insist that being exiled and marginalized means that the intellectual is guarded from being co-opted within assimilative institutions and groups. Exile, asserts Said, might seem like an ill-fated position, because it genuinely is. Nevertheless, he argues that the irony of such deprivation is that the individual can sidestep the essentialization of his counterparts, thus inadvertently exile becomes a liberating and emancipatory experience.¹⁵⁸ Said's argument is clearly aimed at reclaiming sites of marginalization as resistant positions. It is also a vocal form of intellectual dissidence beyond the pressures of institutions, professional guilds and dominant theories. Understood in this manner, exile becomes a formulated positioning rather than an imposed position:

It would be an outright misreading of Said's observations on exile if we look into it from a specific theoretical, or ideological, or political position. At a very fundamental level, he is in search of a permanent site of resistance. By resistance, he means, a state of independence, or freedom, or liberation, from all kinds of fixity, centralising forces, and egotistical formations.¹⁵⁹

In the quest for intellectual independence and freedom, exile resembles an essential and empowering position. Through it, the intellectual is able to undermine, to an extent, the pressures and influences of fixed positions and alliances. Maintaining the position of outsidership and marginality might be isolating, yet it does offer the ability to form free intellectual opinions.

One of the most powerful aspects of Said's notion of exile is the immense locational flexibility it allows the individual. His vision of exile is not merely a championing of detachment and isolationism, rather it is a strategic position which democratizes attachments and connections. Said describes this empowering position as the cultivation of the 'insider-outsider' dichotomy.¹⁶⁰ He also describes the exile as a 'wanderer, going from place to place for his material, but remaining a man essentially between homes'.¹⁶¹ The exile is therefore able to connect and disconnect with different locations and positions, whether political, cultural or intellectual. Nevertheless, there are a number of practicalities

¹⁵⁸Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.47.

¹⁵⁹Mohanty, *Edward W. Said's Orientalism: A Critique*, pp.261–62.

¹⁶⁰Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p.76.

¹⁶¹Said, *Beginnings, Intention and Method*, p.8.

which should be considered when applying Said's 'outsider-insider' dialectic. Said does not acknowledge the limitations of his exilic strategy in its applications and he ignores the constraints which could impede its success. His 'insider-outsider' strategy is very vague with regard to its extent and the limits of the implications of these attachments and detachments. Valerie Kennedy presents Said's exile as an illuminating example of such ambivalence:

Although he insists on his experiential credentials as a Middle Easterner and a Palestinian in exile early in the book, Said is scarcely an exile in the privileged world of Anglo-American academia, but a full member of the club, although one who is always in opposition.¹⁶²

The exilic proposal which calls for an alternation between conflicting positions seems exaggerated at times, as it is curtailed by practical restraints and degrees of detachment and attachment. For instance, if Said chooses to affiliate with the American academy, as Kennedy points out above, when is it possible to draw the line on whether he is outside the boundaries of such a position, or actually affiliated with this academic institution? And how is it possible to ensure that a certain level of insiderness might not become excessive to the extent that it compromises exile? As Said points out in his discussion above regarding intellectual exile, a considerable level of relativism must be included within many exilic applications, otherwise they risk becoming idealistic or even unattainable.

The final point I will discuss concerns an exilic characteristic indicated by numerous critics. Although Said does not explicitly delineate his exilic methodology as such, many have described it as an ethically enabled position. Sean Scalmer, for instance, describes Said's exile as an 'ethical position' which transforms displacement from being a 'burden' to becoming an enabling 'vantage' point.¹⁶³ Prasad Pannian and Bryan Turner also describe it as 'ethical perspective' and an 'ethical status' which transcends human relations and provides a more humanistic alternative.¹⁶⁴ Martha Nussbaum describes it as 'a morally

¹⁶²Valerie Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press; Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p.43.

¹⁶³Sean Scalmer, 'Edward Said and the Sociology of Intellectuals', in *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, ed. by Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), p.43.

¹⁶⁴Pannian, 'Edward Said and the Politics of Subjectivity', p.70; See also Bryan S. Turner, 'Edward Said and the Exilic Ethic: On Being Out of Place', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 17.6 (2000), 125–29 (pp.126–27) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/02632760022051527>>.

valuable condition'.¹⁶⁵ All of these critics concentrate on the fact that exile provides a position from which alternative arguments and narratives might be initiated ethically. Although exile might provide an ethical and impartial position for the production of postcolonial narratives and arguments, this is neither guaranteed nor restricted to exilic positionalities. In fact, such privileging shows the danger of proposed counter-narratives and positions through limiting their ethicality to exilic locations. That such a position might have such moralistic and ethical status bestowed upon it might transform it to the level of essentiality, as Andreea Ritivoi asserts: 'Said embraced an idyllic vision of exile, which transformed the political and existential crises facing exiles into a moral and epistemic superiority'.¹⁶⁶ Ritivoi alludes to the fact that Said presents exile as an example of un-co-opted and voluntary responses. Although Said himself does not explicitly claim such ethicality, his depictions of the exilic alternative do allude to the 'superiority' of his counter-positions. The issue, I believe, does not concern the fact that Said might see exile as an ethical stance. The real matter concerns his dismissal of contending positions when promoting his exilic position. That his alternative resembles an ethical and moral position would surely necessitate that the dismissed non-exilic positions are not on the same level of ethicality and rationality. This would be especially limiting for individuals who still face occupation and oppression, as is the case for Palestinians under occupation. As exiles, whether actual or metaphorical, they are, under Said's exilic rubric, advised against asserting their own collective and national position of resistance, as this is considered repressively authoritarian and unrepresentative of minorities.

2-5 Conclusion

Said presents exile as a methodology rather than an aberrant or disabling position. This postcolonial alternative becomes an enabling site for counter-arguments, narratives and positions. The reclamation of exile in the context of postcolonial theorizations is original. Said sought to refashion exile as an empowering position in which marginality and

¹⁶⁵Martha Nussbaum, 'The End of Orthodoxy', *The New York Times* (New York, 18 February 2001), p.1 (p.1).

¹⁶⁶Andreea Deciu Ritivoi, *Intimate Strangers: Arendt, Marcuse, Solzhenitsyn, and Said in American Political Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p.207.

debasement become synonymous with independence and free individual will. Rather than being confined to the spatial deprivations of displacement, Said sought to reconfigure exile as an essential feature of postcolonial intellectual and individual emancipation. This is done through reconstituting exile as a metaphorical 'median state' where ideal positions and narratives are produced. Nonetheless, such empowerments are curtailed through excessive privileging of exile, as well as in its susceptibility to being transformed into a rarefied position. Such factors severely limit the practicality of exile as an alternative to perceived dominant structures. More limiting is the fact that the parameters for exilic positions are not clearly outlined. Besides the ideal that the exile should refrain from all collective and fixed positions, Said does not offer much detail on the specificities of his exilic methodology. These factors are intensified through Said's denunciation of collective and institutional positions. It becomes extremely complex in such a context to accurately define exile or locate its boundaries. Said is also vague with regard to situations in which denouncing collectives is not a feasible option. Despite these critiques, exile does offer a logical oppositional site against essentialist universalities and impositions. It also provides for Said the ideal location from which to initiate his affiliative and intellectual counter-arguments and narratives. What needs to be acknowledged, as Said indeed has done, is that such exilic methodologies are at times relative in their empowerment, and depend largely on the prospect of being able to choose one's own position, and on obtaining a certain degree of power and privilege. Moreover, many of Said's exilic features tend to be exaggerated, as is the case with his 'insider-outsider' dialectic. Said's exilic position does show originality and innovativeness in its espousal of postcolonial alternatives; nevertheless, the severity of its relativity, its susceptibility to becoming restrictive, and its monopoly over appropriate responses as well as its under-estimation of the rigidity of some imposed structures, all contribute to hindering its ability to offer a convincingly comprehensive site for counter-discourses and arguments. This is not to say that his exilic alternative is not practical or viable. My point is rather that it does not provide a significantly more beneficial and readily-attainable position, more so than those already available for exiles and non-exiles alike.

Chapter Three

Edward Said's Intellectualism: The Limits and Compromises of Postcolonial Alternatives

3-1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine Said's intellectual positionality. He presents conditions for an intellectual alternative which both empowers and emancipates individuals through reproducing independent scholarly activity. Said's alternative is largely dependent on his own position as a postcolonial scholar writing from the West. Said aims to reclaim and refashion intellectual vocations within metropolitan Western centres to practically exemplify the possibility of new intellectual arguments and positions which can bypass being compromised by dominant powers and institutional impositions. His ideal intellectual positionality would be that of a 'basically cosmopolitan' individual who is not oppressed by power structures, whether societal, institutional or governmental.¹⁶⁷ Such cosmopolitanism transcends boundaries and dichotomies between different imbalanced power relations, as was the case with colonial interventions and assimilations of disadvantaged peoples and nations. His intention is to produce a framework for transnational intellectual work that is able to empower individuals regardless of their status and nationality. Aware of his postcolonial location and status within the dialectic of centres and peripheries of power, Said describes how he was able refashion his intellectual academic position within the United States:

I am an Oriental writing back at the Orientalists, who for so long have thrived upon our silence. I am also writing to them, as it were, by dismantling the structure of their discipline, showing its meta-historical, institutional, anti-empirical, and ideological biases. Finally, I feel myself to be writing for compatriots and colleagues about matters of common concern.¹⁶⁸

Said is outlining his reclamation of postcolonial and post-imperial positions and narratives from within the metropolitan centre—the United States in this instance. His main objective

¹⁶⁷Said, Singh, and Johnson, *Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.205.

¹⁶⁸Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.38.

is to showcase the possibility of reproducing intellectual activity which is neither dominant nor condescending towards other individuals, communities and nations inside or outside the United States. Said's intellectual mission became centred on the ideal of scholarship which is not curtailed by dominant structures and is yet able to offer authoritative and powerful opposition. My aim in this chapter is to investigate his intellectual alternative, and whether such a balance between opposition and appropriation of power structures to the intellectual's advantage is ever possible. I also examine how Said himself dealt with the practicalities of intellectual work, and if he was able to implement his arguments concerning independent and emancipatory scholarship.

Said argues that imperialist and colonialist practices still exist, and that intellectual activity has long been controlled by governments, institutions and other dominant structures. Through combining intellectuality with power structures and official institutions, colonial scholars were complicit in efforts to dominate and oppress different peoples and colonize territories:

As I shall be using the term, 'imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism,' which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory. [...] In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism, as we shall see, lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.¹⁶⁹

For Said, imperialism is still present and active despite the demise of colonialism. And as the threat of imperial oppression and dominance is still eminent, so is the risk of intellectual activity being infiltrated and influenced. The constant menace of the appropriation of knowledge production by those in positions of power is vital for understanding Said's insistence on an alternative theorization which emphasizes scholarly sovereignty. His solution is to construct intellectual positions that circumvent these subordinating liabilities which are not only theoretical assumptions, according to Said, but real occurrences which constantly threaten intellectual activity. He presents the example of how the American government influences cultural studies through an official agency called the 'Congress for Cultural Freedom'. He also indicates that American intelligence agencies have spent two

¹⁶⁹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.8.

hundred million dollars on subsidizing academic humanities conferences and journals in order to promote certain agendas.¹⁷⁰ Said is explicit that his goal is to create a ‘post-imperial’ intellectual space which diminishes certain forms of domination and hostility:

I want first to consider the actualities of the intellectual terrains both common and discrepant in post-imperial public discourse, especially concentrating on what in this discourse gives rise to and encourages the rhetoric and politics of blame. [...] I shall consider the ways in which a reconsidered or revised notion of how a post-imperial intellectual attitude might expand the overlapping community between metropolitan and formerly colonized societies. [...] I shall try to formulate an alternative both to a politics of blame and to the even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility. A more interesting type of secular interpretation can emerge.¹⁷¹

Said’s ‘post-imperial intellectual attitude’ provides an alternative to hostile and imbalanced relations between temporal and spatial communities. He not only aims to eradicate metropolitan domination over peripheries, but also the hostile ‘politics of blame’ which assumes Western complicity in all of the peripheries’ miseries and misfortunes. It must be asserted that there is a considerable amount of ambiguity concerning Said’s denunciation of the ‘politics of blame’ emerging from the peripheries, although it might be assumed that he is referring to a passive postcolonial position which continue to blame colonialism for all its setbacks without offering practical alternatives. Said aims to produce scholarship which empowers the individual through demoting the rule of institutions and organizations and prioritizing individual agency.

His strategy for such positionality depends heavily on what he calls the intellectual ‘voyage in’. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said presents the postcolonial intellectual as being able to ‘voyage’ both in and out of cultural centres and peripheries and connect with different communities. His aim is to move the power and authority of intellectual relations from the grip of institutions to the hands of individuals:

The voyage in, then, constitutes an especially interesting variety of hybrid cultural work. And that it exists at all is a sign of adversarial internationalization in an age of continued imperial structures. No longer does the logos dwell exclusively, as it were, in London and Paris. No longer

¹⁷⁰Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p.35.

¹⁷¹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp.19–20.

does history run unilaterally, as Hegel believed, from east to west, or from south to north, becoming more sophisticated and developed, less primitive and backward as it goes. Instead, the weapons of criticism have become part of the historical legacy of empire, in which the separations and exclusions of 'divide and rule' are erased and surprising new configurations spring up.¹⁷²

Said's 'voyage in' arguments are mainly based on de-centralizing scholarship and intellectualism. Both the previously colonial Western centres and the colonized peripheries become equally represented in their narratives, arguments and positions. The intellectual is able to move beyond the rubrics of imbalanced relations exacerbated by colonialist and imperialist backing, to an approach which favours an equal interaction between individuals within different spatial and temporal locations.

The intellectual strategy Said advocates is largely based on the arguments presented by Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci and French philosopher Julien Benda. Gramsci's intellectuals are divided into two main characterizations, 'organic' and 'traditional'. 'Organic' intellectuals are scholars who are more interested in participating in and affecting their societies. Although they are sometimes bound by professional occupations, they are more inclined to guide and direct mass populations and opinion:

It can be observed that the 'organic' intellectuals which every new class creates alongside itself and elaborates in the course of its development, are for the most part 'specializations' of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new class has brought into prominence.¹⁷³

They are 'organic' because they resemble a very vital part of their social setting. They act as intellectual and philosophical leaders of their social class in order to organize the development and direction of the masses. The organic intellectual is also able to provide his/her societal group with 'homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic, social and political fields'.¹⁷⁴ Examples of organic intellectuals would include party analysts, think-tank pundits and political commentators. They are all characterized by the way they gain prominence through their commitment to advancing and

¹⁷²Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.295.

¹⁷³Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: The Electronic Book Company, 1999), p.135.

¹⁷⁴Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.135.

assisting their parties and social classes. ‘Traditional’ intellectuals, according to Gramsci, are inheritors of societal functions and occupations. They are intellectual by virtue of the fact that, as Gramsci believed, all human activity is intellectual at some level. This is linked to his insistence that ‘all men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals’.¹⁷⁵ Intellectuals are individuals whose function is to fulfil essential tasks which do not necessarily accompany an agenda, although they might do. Traditional intellectuals include individuals who have gained their position through prestige and past tradition, such as priests, lawyers and teachers, or traditional intellectuals who have achieved their prominence through vocational specialization, such as engineers, doctors and bankers.

Julien Benda, on the other hand, presents the intellectual position as a rarefied and distinct endeavour. Intellectuality is not bound by social, political or economic interests; it is itself a goal to be strived for and pursued. The intellectual is also distinct in their position and vocation from other more traditional employees who only serve and act within the parameters of their professions:

Since the Greeks the predominant attitude of thinkers towards intellectual activity was to glorify it insofar as (like aesthetic activity) it finds its satisfaction in itself, apart from any attention to the advantages it may procure. Most thinkers would have agreed with Renan’s verdict that the man who loves science for its fruits commits the worst of blasphemies against that divinity. The modern clerks have violently torn up this charter. They proclaim the intellectual functions are only respectable to the extent that they are bound up with the pursuit of concrete advantage.¹⁷⁶

According to Benda, the intellectual vocation is almost ‘aesthetic’ in its pursuit of high values and truth. The intellectual must, therefore, rise above the temptations of advantage and benefit in an effort to produce arguments and narratives which are beyond appeasement and subordination. Intellectualism is presented as a utopian endeavour which places the individual beyond worldly interests.

¹⁷⁵Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.140.

¹⁷⁶Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals* trans. by Roger Kimball, (London: Routledge, 2017), pp.151–52.

Said's own intellectualism is a combination of Gramsci's organic intellectual and Benda's rarefied intellectual. His model contends that it is possible for the intellectual to be part of the social fabric of the community and population, but also to espouse ideal and aspirational values. Acknowledging Gramsci's 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectuals, as well as Benda's rarefied model, Said asserts that 'the most important role for the contemporary intellectual is to combine Gramsci and Benda'.¹⁷⁷ The combination aspires to bring the communal and social immersion of Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' together with the uncompromised bipartisan nature of Benda's rarefied intellectual. Although Said seems confident in his intellectual combination, this simultaneous variance between rarefied universal values and populist immersion became problematic in Said's theorization. As William Hart asserts, Said became 'torn' between utilizing power structures to induce change and opposition and maintaining the higher ground of aesthetic autonomy:

[The intellectual] process inspires resistance, the most important of which (for Said's purpose) is offered by the intellectual, not the party man or woman, but the isolated individual consciousness. Said, as we shall see, is torn between this solitary romantic individualist, Julien Benda-like intellectual and Antonio Gramsci's 'organic' intellectual who, as the word organic suggests, is a component of a larger social organism.¹⁷⁸

The dialectic of social and political activism, along with adherence to universal values and ideals, prove challenging in Said's elaboration of postcolonial intellectual work. As he elaborates on methods and systems which empower the individual, he is faced with the difficulty of maintaining a balanced relationship with cultural, political and institutional influences and sustaining an independent and un-coerced intellectual. My argument is that Said's original and aspirational elaborations of intellectualism reveal the difficulties of sustaining scholarship beyond the influence of power apparatuses. They also espouse the relative nature of Said's intellectual model as exemplary of universal values and defined paradigms.

¹⁷⁷Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, pp.183–84.

¹⁷⁸William D. Hart, *Edward Said and the Religious Effects of Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Religion and Critical Thought, 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.9.

3-2-1 Universal Intellectualism as Empowering Emancipation

Said's intellectualism aimed at restructuring the dialectic of power positions within both a global and a national setting. His new configuration of intellectuality aimed to abandon local and transnational polarizations and dichotomies of metropolitan centre and periphery, colonizer and colonized, authority and dependence. His solution was to devise an accessible form of universality which advances humanistic commonality rather than antagonistic differentiation and otherness between individuals and collectives. Sustaining universal values and ideals would offer individuals the opportunity to interact on the basis of common beliefs and values, rather than according to political, economic or racial hierarchies. While it might be correctly assumed that intellectual universalisms are devised to offset orientalist, imperialist or European dominant theories and discourses, they are not confined to countering these power structures. Said was not only dissatisfied with colonial and imperialistic monopolies over knowledge and intellectual vocation; he was equally frustrated with postcolonial responses which were characterized by introversion and privileging exclusiveness of experience. Such responses also risked monopolizing and rarefying intellectual activity and localizing its practice. As R. Radhakrishnan acutely observes, Said utilizes his 'universalist imagination' to initiate 'common ground' for intellectual practice. His universalism not only counters spatial dichotomies of 'us' and 'them', it also dispels the postcolonialist obsession with a 'privileging of localism and regionality'.¹⁷⁹ Said, argues Radhakrishnan, believed that 'local and regional' manifestations of intellectuality provide a resistant alternative which accentuates difference. Intellectual activity is curtailed in these anti-European, anti-colonial responses, producing scholarship which is culturally specific. Universal ideals of justice, humanism and truth are espoused by Said as an emancipatory and empowering intellectual basis for all individuals. Such universality offers the possibility of reclaiming intellectualism from the monopoly of any national or institutional influence regardless of location or status. Said believes that new encompassing intellectualisms are possible and necessary methodologies for countering all reclusive forms of knowledge and scholarship.

¹⁷⁹R. Radhakrishnan, 'Edward Said's Culture and Imperialism: A Symposium', *Social Text*, 40.40 (1994), 1–24 (p.16) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/466793>>.

Said's intellectual alternatives are presented in the form of general proposals which are agreeable, though idealistic to a considerable extent. Most of his intellectual definitions present a very generalized illustration of intellectual vocation and effort. For instance, Said insists that the intellectual's task is 'to break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication [and] to advance human freedom and knowledge'.¹⁸⁰ Said's definition of intellectual vocation calls for the abandonment of all stereotypical limitations and the advancement of ideals of freedom and knowledge. What I want to emphasize in this example is the aspirational and broad spectrum of this definition, as it advocates human emancipation and free will. In another example, Said presents the intellectual as an individual who is willing to challenge and oppose authority, whether social or institutional. The intellectual must possess the audacity to speak the truth under all circumstances:

Speaking the truth to power is no Panglossian idealism: it is carefully weighing the alternatives, picking the right one, and then intelligently representing it where it can do the most good and cause the right change.¹⁸¹

The intellectual must advance the 'truth' and always represent the 'good' in order to challenge authority and change the status quo. Ideals such as 'good' and 'right' choices and change recur in Said's delineations of intellectuality. Moreover, challenging authority in the above quotation alludes to the prevailing ideal of oppositionality, which is also abundant in Said's elaborations of intellectualism. Such oppositions are not only directed at authorities, but also against social, intellectual and epistemological subordinations:

Moreover, the role of the intellectual is [...] that he/she must be a rebel against power and against prevailing ideas. The intellectual must raise doubts about the illusions of the status quo, all that is tyrannical in society, especially for the sake of the deprived and the oppressed.¹⁸²

There are numerous other instances in which Said presents a general and universal characterization of intellectualism. What all of them reveal is the generalised intellectual ideals Said advances about truth, justice, freedom, and other similar ethical principles and humanistic values. That Said advances these ideals does not in any way call into question

¹⁸⁰Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, pp.x, 13–14.

¹⁸¹Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.75.

¹⁸²Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, p.184.

his efforts, nor is my goal to underestimate his aspirations for a humanistic intellectual vocation. These broad parameters for intellectualism do, however, elucidate Said's awareness of the need for 'common ground' for his advocacy of universal intellectual values.

My argument is that universal ideals are not only characteristics of Said's intellectual vocations; universalities are an objective in themselves. He is conscious of the fact that totalizing intellectual characterizations offer a more accessible alternative than Westernized and nativist limited manifestations of scholarship. They also prevent any national or political movement from claiming or appropriating any of these values. For instance, he criticizes orientalist for their claimed monopoly over 'objective knowledge' and reliable scholarship. But he also critiques postcolonial responses which were immersed in differentiated 'polarization' and 'exclusivity' of experiences, in which only Arabs, Africans or women understand the Arab World, Africa or feminism.¹⁸³ Said presents intellectual universalisms as humanistic commonalities shared by all peoples, rather than localized or nationalistic exclusivities:

Universality means taking a risk in order to go beyond the easy certainties provided us by our background, language, nationality, which so often shield us from the reality of others. It also means looking for and trying to uphold a single standard for human behaviour [...]. The attempt to hold to a universal and single standard as a theme plays an important role in my account of the intellectual. Or rather the interaction between universality and the local, the subjective, the here and now.¹⁸⁴

Said advocates two main themes in this quotation. Firstly, that universal principles and ideals provide a more global perspective for intellectuals. They offer standards which are agreed upon rather than spatial or temporal specificities which claim objectivity and hence monopolize interpretations of universal values and ideals. Moreover, they provide a 'single standard' which is easily accessible and relatable by individuals regardless of their location or involvement with power structures. These single and agreed-upon standards prevent misinterpretations and miscarriages of scholarship, as was the case with orientalist who were intellectual collaborators with colonialism through assimilating values and ideals to

¹⁸³Edward W. Said, 'Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World', *Salmagundi*, 70/71, (1986), 44–64 (pp.55–56).

¹⁸⁴Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, pp.xi–xii.

facilitate their political and military agendas. I believe that Said's universality is aimed at relinquishing national and regional loyalties, and the regulation of all intellectual and human activity under universal standards. Universal intellectual ideals would represent the transnational and bipartisan postcolonial locations which bypass, on different levels and to an extent, the possibility of monopoly or accommodation.

Yet, despite his advocacy, Said is also very cautious towards universalities as they can also facilitate monopoly and assimilation. An abstract universalized standard could be administered to dominate ideals and values and monopolize the arguments and narratives available. In fact, Said confesses that universality could assist imperial domination through prioritizing and rarefying certain centric standards:

I'm not in favour of an abstract universalism, because it's usually the universalism of whoever happens to be most powerful. If you look around today, the language of universalism is proclaimed by the United States.¹⁸⁵

What such cautiousness reveals is that there is a considerable degree of ambivalence in Said's argument. Is it not the fact that most, if not all universalisms, including Said's own, are in actuality abstract to a certain extent? Ideals of truth, freedom and equality are prime examples of abstract generalization. And despite Said's protestations against abstraction, his own definitions of intellectualism do fall within this category to a considerable extent. I would not go as far as Catherine Gallagher when she describes his espousal of intellectualism as a 'contentless universalism' which renders his elaboration 'vague, unspecifiable and situationless', yet I do believe that his elaborations of universality indicate a degree of ambiguity which is undeniable.¹⁸⁶ In fact, it is epistemologically logical that abstraction might be permitted, otherwise such universality could never be achieved. Said's rejection of 'abstract universalism' seems inconsistent, as it is not clear how he envisages his own universalisms as not abstract. It is equally unclear how Said proposes that his own universalisms are not in danger of being appropriated by 'power', as is the case with 'abstract' universalities, as he suggests in the quotation above.

¹⁸⁵Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, pp.390–91.

¹⁸⁶Catherine Gallagher, 'Politics, the Profession, and the Critic', *Diacritics*, 15.2 (1985), 37–43 (p.38–40) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/464980>>.

In order to examine Said's arguments on universalism, I present his intellectual opposition to Eurocentrism as a practical illustration of his universalist strategy and its benefits. Said was well aware of the risks of universalizing dominant standards and paradigms. His universalist intellectualism was actually partly envisaged to counter European monopolies over humanistic and universal objective values such as justice and truth that were built through colonial and orientalist repression. It is these colonialist and imperialist claims to 'essential and universal' theories and positions that render them 'Eurocentric', according to Said.¹⁸⁷ Orientalists sought to appropriate and monopolize knowledge and utilize it to the advantage of colonialism. But more crucially, orientalists managed to espouse the argument that European narratives, arguments and theories were the only correct and humanistic manifestation of knowledge and truth. In *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Said criticizes what he called the 'ideological, Eurocentric model' implemented by many humanistic scholars even after the abolition of colonialism. He accused proprietors of these models of authorizing the marginalization of all 'non-European' positions and narratives in favour of an 'orthodox canon'. Thus, he accuses 'Eurocentric' humanism of colluding in the subordination and domination of other cultures and peoples alongside colonialism and imperialism through presenting an orthodox and essentialist vision for culture, identity, humanism etc.¹⁸⁸ Consequently, when Orientalists advance their ideals for truth and justice, for instance, they are actually promoting their own interpretations and ideals as universalities which must be followed by colonized natives. But if universalist claims provided by Orientalists are indeed centric and limiting, how can postcolonial intellectuals provide an alternative which can move beyond any notion of centrality? It is equally possible to accuse all universalisms of monopolizing and essentializing certain values and ideals based on powerful positions and privileged locations, regardless of motivation. My argument is not focused on questions concerning the factuality or falsity of Orientalist or nativist universalities, it is more focused on showing that the faults Said locates in Orientalist universalisms are sometimes found in universalisms produced by their native counterparts. All universalisms, I believe, may be

¹⁸⁷Said, *Musical Elaborations*, pp.51–52.

¹⁸⁸Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp.22, 31.

accused, on one level or another, of monopolizing or claiming the correct definition or interpretation of ideals such as truth, justice etc.

Providing a non-centric and non-essentialist intellectual alternative becomes an anomaly in Said's delineations. His calls for intellectuals to 'fashion a different kind of humanism' which could cater for all of humanity rather than be accustomed to European ideals are a perfect example.¹⁸⁹ What is extremely peculiar is that he amalgamates universal notions of humanism as an alternative with his own humanistic choices and perceptions. In the following passage, he simultaneously promotes and refutes different aspects of European cultural and intellectual positionalities:

It may seem odd, but it is true, that in such matters as culture and scholarship I am often in reasonable sympathy with conservative attitudes [...] What I am criticizing is [...] the almost unconsciously held ideological assumption that the Eurocentric model for the humanities actually represents a natural and proper subject matter for the humanistic scholar.¹⁹⁰

Beyond his 'conservative sympathies', what is interesting here is that Said criticizes the notion that the Eurocentric canon and theories might be considered the only option available to intellectuals, hence ignoring narratives and arguments originating in the peripheries of Western metropolitan centres. Yet this is exactly what all universalisms offer. His own theoretical basis for intellectualism, which he presents in *Representations of the Intellectual*, as well as the theoretical basis for his humanistic approach as explained in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, are predominantly Western, for instance. While this in itself is not meant as a reductive attack on Said's intellectual choices, it does show how his proposed universalities could easily be accused of promoting centric appropriations of universal beliefs and ideals. An intellectual could choose to align his positions and discourses with national or regional philosophies and ideals, as did Orientalists, and would still not be accused of monopolizing universalisms according to Said's arguments. A manifestation of Said's paradoxical universal applications is seen in the following example:

¹⁸⁹Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p.10.

¹⁹⁰Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p.22.

What one misses in current Arab and Palestinian culture is a moral and intellectual standard by which truth and falsehood can be distinguished and according to which intellectuals act regardless of profit or patronage.¹⁹¹

The general register of Said's comments on Palestinian culture and intellectuality is alarming in its dismissal and simplification. Yet what I want to concentrate on is the fact that Said is subjecting Palestinians to a universal standard devised and enabled through and within a Western metropolitan centre. The theoretical basis for his intellectual approaches itself is dependent entirely on European scholars such as Benda and Gramsci, for instance. It might seem ironic, but Said here is dismissing Palestinian intellectual standards while advocating a predominantly Western alternative. This exemplifies how his proposed universalisms could easily be administered to dismiss and stigmatize other intellectual choices from a position of authority and privilege. And how most forms of universalism could be described as essentialist. Arif Dirlik emphasizes Said's contradiction:

Edward Said is an intellectual of many paradoxes. His work over the last three decades has articulated the most cogent and sustained critiques of Eurocentrism, and yet he retains an intellectual and personal commitment to the values of European humanism, and the products of its high culture.¹⁹²

I wish to reiterate my assertion that his Europeanized choices are not in themselves problematical. What is noteworthy, nevertheless, is that his alternative universalistic intellectualism does not in any way guarantee not being essentialized, as is the case with all intellectual positions and arguments. I believe that Said's contradiction has its basis in the fact that he aims to amalgamate individual agency and choice with universalism. Hence Said tries to empower individual agency, while also calling for a collective adherence to his universal values and ideals. To expect all individual intuitions and subjectivities to synchronize and align is far-fetched and illogical. My critique is not meant as a diminishment of Said's arguments and theorized analogies, which are commended. I do, however, want to highlight the difficulty many postcolonial theorists, including Said, found when they sought to overcome the amalgam of individual-universal ideals. The essentiality of individual interpretation of universalisms, which Said critiqued Orientalists for, is still both necessary yet problematic in postcolonial theories.

¹⁹¹Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, p.xxxi.

¹⁹²Dirlik, 'Placing Edward Said: Space, Time and the Travelling Theorist', p.1.

3-2-2 The Paradoxes of Universal Subjectivity

Said presents universality as an essential feature of postcolonial oppositional intellectuality. Through universalisms which promote ideals of freedom and justice, communities and individuals can transcend boundaries and borders between nations in the name of common values. Challenging established powers and authorities with reclaimed values becomes vital, in Said's estimation. 'Speaking the truth to power' becomes the manifest objective for intellectual activity in Said's theorization.¹⁹³ Although there is a considerable degree of confident assertion associated with his intellectual theorization, there are instances in which Said seems more inclined to accept a realistic manifestation of intellectualism. In the following passage, Said presents the intellectual as an individual who is struggling in a 'secular' world in order to maintain his/her values and universal beliefs:

By contrast the true intellectual is a secular being. However, much intellectuals pretend that their representations are of higher things or ultimate values, morality begins with their activity in this secular world of ours—where it takes place, whose interests it serves, how it jibes with a consistent and universalist ethic, how it discriminates between power and justice, what it reveals of one's choices and priorities.¹⁹⁴

Here Said seems to subtly acknowledge the relative nature of intellectual human endeavours. That the intellectual 'jibes' with 'ultimate values' and 'universalist ethics' is a revealing acknowledgement of the realities of scholarly vocations. Such realistic relativity is understandable and predictable in any human activity, and it would present Said's universalism as a more practical methodology. Nevertheless, such relativism is also followed by several examples which reveal what I will call a subjective tendency that puts into question Said's claims to universalist intellectuality. In this section, I examine Said's seemingly contradictory approach towards a subjective form of universality, and how such alternations might affect his arguments and positions on intellectualism.

¹⁹³Edward W. Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (London: Granta, 2000), pp.83–84.

¹⁹⁴Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.89.

A factor which complicates Said's intellectual universalism is his pronounced individuality. Said presents intellectualism as an 'individual vocation'.¹⁹⁵ It is not at all illogical to assume that all human effort, whether intellectual or otherwise, is based on individual choices and endeavours. Yet basing all human production on individuality does complicate Said's universal claims. He insists, for instance, that he believes 'very much in the individual consciousness. That it is the root of all human work'.¹⁹⁶ Intellectualism, for Said, thus resembles not only an individual position, but more crucially a personal 'consciousness' which is based on personal experiences and perceptions of what constitutes a rational choice. A valid counter-argument would be that Said is presenting 'individual consciousness' as a strategy for having intellectual preferences and aligning them with universal values and ethics. As Said explains in the following passage, he conflates his intellectual effort with his own personal experience. Whereas such a claim by Said might seem typical of any intellectual, as it would be impossible to completely separate the public and the personal, the great emphasis placed on personal reflection still problematizes his universal arguments:

Let me put this in personal terms: as an intellectual I present my concerns before an audience or constituency, but this is not just a matter of how I articulate them, but also of what I myself, as someone who is trying to advance the cause of freedom and justice, also represent. I say or write these things because after much reflection they are what I believe; and I also want to persuade others of this view. [...] There is always the personal inflection and the private sensibility, and those give meaning to what is being said or written.¹⁹⁷

I am not contesting the fact that all human effort, including intellectual work, is based on individual and personal reflection and choice. Nevertheless, if intellectual beliefs and universalities become based on individual reflection and human will, it would be possible to assume that the outcome will be considerably varied and diverse. In these contested individualistic contexts, it becomes difficult, even impossible, to imagine a universal consensus between intellectuals around the globe, or even within one academic institution. As Sean Scalmer contests, the manner in which Said generalizes his own personal

¹⁹⁵Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.55.

¹⁹⁶Edward W. Said and David Barsamian, *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward W. Said* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p.98.

¹⁹⁷Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, pp.9–10.

experience as a privileged academic and intellectual assumes that the context and options of his intellectual choices are readily available for all scholars.¹⁹⁸ Said's personal positions are not necessarily suitable for exemplifying universal experiences and positions, as they resemble a specific environment and personal circumstances. My contention is that it is considerably illogical to assume that dispersed and distinct individual scholarly effort could produce a consensual universal basis for intellectual work and activity.

A more pressing anomaly in Said's theory of intellectual universalism concerns his scepticism towards the capacity of Orientalist methodologies in obtaining objective knowledge. In *Covering Islam*, Said links the monopoly over 'objectivity' to Orientalism and colonialism. Said argues that orientalists depend extensively on ideals of universal objectivities in order to monopolize knowledge and scholarship. And as such knowledge is produced through human effort, Said believed that it was, to an extent, actually subjective and biased. For Said, 'social and humanistic sciences' seem to be compromised by ideology and political pressures in the name of 'objectivity', an accusation which he does not reserve exclusively for orientalists:

It is not that Orientalism is more biased than other social and humanistic sciences; it is simply as ideological and as contaminated by the world as other disciplines.¹⁹⁹

Said presents the instance of how anthropology was extensively appropriated to maintain the superiority of European ethnicities, and to relegate the population of colonized and oppressed nations to the level of inferiority and the sub-human. Therefore, Said's logic here is that the intellectual must position themselves outside the realm of any objective or subjective absolutes through reflective individuality. Consequently, the implementation of his alternative approach becomes a logical and even ethical position which offers the individual a possible method for moving beyond essentialist projections.²⁰⁰ This nuanced

¹⁹⁸ Scalmer, 'Edward Said and the Sociology of Intellectuals', p.44.

¹⁹⁹ Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (London: Routledge, 1981), p.23.

²⁰⁰ J. A. Cuddon defines subjectivity as a position 'concerned with conveying personal experience and feeling'. Objectivity, on the other hand, suggests that the individual is 'outside of and detached from what he is writing about'. Cuddon does affirm that any form of writing is 'simultaneously subjective and objective' in different measures. See John A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Penguin Reference Books, 3. ed. (London: Penguin, 1992), p.927.

argument itself is not contradictory; the contradiction arises from the alignment of this position with his arguments for universalism and common values and ideals. Yet beyond any question of appropriation or accommodation of objective knowledge by orientalists, Said believes that both subjectivity and objectivity are difficult to ‘empirically’ prove within certain contexts:

Let us grant, therefore, that it would be a long and potentially impossible task to prove empirically that, on the one hand, there could be objectivity so far as knowledge about human society is concerned or, on the other, that all knowledge is esoteric and subjective.²⁰¹

Due to his belief that obtaining empirical proof concerning the objectivity of human societal knowledge, as well as an equal difficulty in empirically proving that knowledge is subjective, Said presents individual choice and ‘consciousness’ as a refuge against these confinements. He further argues that ‘truth, perfectly true knowledge and objectivity’ are all ‘abstractions’ which cannot be quantified nor verified universally.²⁰² Based on Said’s statements, I would agree with Claire Heristchi, who argues that his position is not only that Western objectivity is empirically difficult to validate, but also that such an assumption applies to objectivity in any spatial context.²⁰³ The problem Said faced was that Orientalist claims to superior objective knowledge were often permitted through the powerful positions they occupied, more so than the actual persuasiveness of knowledge itself. His efforts became aimed at bypassing the dilemma of knowledge’s infiltration by power.

The consequence for Said’s intellectual universality is apparent. If it is indeed the case that it is impossible to empirically prove either the objectivity or subjectivity of knowledge, especially concerning human society, then it would also be empirically impossible to universalize any position or argument, as it would become a form of judgment and intuition which expresses an individual opinion. In fact, such an assumption would also suggest that universality itself may become almost impossible to envisage. Each definition of any given ideal or abstract notion will presumably resemble, to a certain extent, a personal

²⁰¹Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2012), p.127.

²⁰²Said, *Covering Islam*, pp. xvii–xviii.

²⁰³Claire Heristchi, ‘The Politics of Dispossession, Belonging, and Hope: Remembering Edward W. Said’, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 30.3 (2005), 251–73 (p.260)
<<https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540503000301>>.

interpretation of that ideal rather than a fixed, universalized or agreed-upon essence. As Saree Makdisi indicates, such a subtle but crucial paradox in Said's proposition 'makes it difficult, or impossible, to locate a single objective standpoint from which to accumulate knowledge and evaluate the truth'.²⁰⁴ The logical consequence would be that Said's universalized intellectuality becomes illogical to sustain as a transnational communal basis for intellectual activity. Consequently, David Huddart asserts that it would be illogical to depend on what Huddart calls 'universalized subjectivities' due to the fact that this is an oxymoron.²⁰⁵ Subjectivity denotes individual vision and personal beliefs, which clearly negates the possibility of universalizing such subjectivities. Empirically and epistemologically, it would be impossible to envisage a universalized notion or theorization that is based on subjective and individualized approaches.

In *Representations of the Intellectual*, Said seems to acknowledge the anomaly of rejecting the existence of objectivism. And although he continues to insist that objectivity is difficult to obtain empirically, he also dismisses what he calls complete subjective 'indulgence'. In the following passage, Said calls for a middle ground for his intellectual activity:

Of course, there are questions of patriotism and loyalty to one's people. And, of course, the intellectual is not an uncomplicated automaton, hurling mathematically devised laws and rules across the board. And, of course, fear and the normal limitations on one's time and attention and capacity as an individual voice operate with fearsome efficiency. But whereas we are right to bewail the disappearance of a consensus on what constitutes objectivity, we are not by the same token completely adrift in self-indulgent subjectivity.²⁰⁶

Paradoxically, Said acknowledges the difficulty of achieving consensual objectivities, and also warns against drifting subjectivism. Hence, it becomes unclear where he envisages intellectual activity to be placed and how it is accurately produced. My own assessment leads me to argue that his intellectualism is connected to a very nuanced form of human

²⁰⁴Saree Makdisi, 'Edward Said and the Style of the Public Intellectual', in *Waiting for the Barbarians: A Tribute to Edward Said*, ed. by MugeGursoySokmen and BasakErtur (London: Verso, 2008), p.53. See also Prasad Pannian 'The Politics of Subjectivity in the Protocols of Edward W. Said', *Indian Literature*, 54.3 (257) (2010), 176–89 (pp.186–87).

²⁰⁵Huddart, *Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography*, pp.4–5.

²⁰⁶Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.72.

effort. I believe that Said's middle ground is connected to intentionality. Although intentionality itself is evidently subjective, Said insists that it offers a rational guide for his intellectualism:

An intention, therefore, is a notion that includes everything that later develops out of it, no matter how eccentric the development or inconsistent the result. I do not mean, on the other hand, that *intention* is a more precise equivalent of *totality* [...]. By *intention* I mean an appetite at the beginning intellectually to do something in a characteristic way—either consciously or unconsciously.²⁰⁷

Said clearly states that it is intention that presents the intellectual with the ability to produce independent and legitimate scholarship. This point is crucial in understanding how Said envisages the work of the intellectual. Nevertheless, intentionality is evidently a highly subjective and illusive notion to incorporate into universal intellectual arguments. It would be rationally impossible to elucidate any theorization upon similar implicit characteristics which cannot be quantified. Yet for Said, such intentionality is essential, as it resembles the only option, because objectivity is either easily assimilated or even non-existent. How such individual intentionality fits in with Said's ideals of universalism is neither clear nor easily envisaged. The following example attests to Said's ambiguity and inconsistency.

Said's confusing objective-subjective dichotomy is obvious in his approach to Palestinian intellectual practices. Given that intellectualism, according to Said, is individualized and intentional to some extent, it is surprising that he holds the Palestinian intelligentsia to universal standards. The following quotation offers an example of this:

The intellectual failure is no less great. It is simply inadequate to keep repeating clichés about struggle and resistance that imply a military program of action when none is either possible or really desirable. Our defence against unjust policies is a moral one, and we must first occupy the moral high ground and then promote understanding of that position in Israel and the United States, something we have never done. We have refused interaction and debate, disparagingly calling them only normalization and collaboration. Refusing to compromise in putting forth our just position (which is what I am calling for) cannot possibly be construed as a

²⁰⁷Said, *Beginnings, Intention and Method*, p.12. Emphasis in original.

concession, especially when it is made directly and forcefully to the occupier.²⁰⁸

While the generalized register of such a statement is notable, what is significant is that Said presents the Palestinian collective as if it was one definable monolithic entity. It is also interesting that Said clearly presents himself here as outside this Palestinian collective, speaking from a distance as if he is detached. It is equally notable that Said is emphasizing morality in the context of his critique. Holding intellectuals to a 'moral high ground' becomes severely precarious in a context of non-existent objectivism. If intellectual vocation is indeed individually rendered, it would be expected to consider these Palestinian positions permissible under such parameters.

A more perplexing example reveals another scathing generalization by Said with regard to public and intellectual opinion in the Arab and Islamic worlds. This instance, again, accentuates my contention concerning the confusing parameters of his proposed intellectualism:

[M]ost opinion in the Arab and Islamic world dictates either a general hostility, or a general approbation toward what is called the West [which has developed from] ignorance and a similar sense of defensive inadequacy.²⁰⁹

Ironically, Said is critiquing supposed generalized hostility and approbation with equal generalization towards the populace of the Arab and Islamic worlds. More contradictory is that he did not view these opinions as subjective manifestations of intellectual activity and thought. The following quotation reveals another very dismissive rejection of Palestinian and Arab intellectual efforts:

[W]e have not developed, as I said above, a coherent intellectual position because that position would require real criticism, real innovation, real effort of the sort we have neither yet created nor expended.²¹⁰

It is significant that Said was able to use his intellectual standing within Western institutions to severely scrutinize Palestinian and Arab intellectual narratives and

²⁰⁸Edward W. Said, intro. by Tony Judt, *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), pp.128–29.

²⁰⁹Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, p.96.

²¹⁰Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, p.334.

arguments. Although his critiques of Arab intellectuals may as well be correct, my point is more concerned with the fact that his relatively powerful position allowed him to generalize his dismissal of certain intellectual collectives. It is also interesting to note the similarities between Said's dismissal of these intellectual efforts and similar prohibitions by orientalists who rejected native knowledge and beliefs through monopolizing an appropriated form of objective knowledge and truth. He similarly uses his universalized notion of intellectualism to critique and dismiss other intellectual manifestations. What all of these examples reveal is Said's complicated and ambiguous definition of intellectuality. As he seeks to combine the individual with the universal, and question the attainability of objectivity and subjectivity, I believe that Said found it impossible to neglect the necessity of objectivity as well as the susceptibility of universalisms to becoming essentialisms despite his precautions. Said's intellectualism reveals a very promising and original approach towards providing an intellectual alternative which caters for global and local scholarly empowerment. Intellectuals are offered an individual site for a common ground for humanistic scholarship which transcends boundaries and delineates difference and hierarchy. Yet, in practice, Said's intellectual ideals seem to have been unable to bring these benefits into full fruition or avoid all the pitfalls he associates with Orientalist intellectualism. Faced with the realities of global power imbalances as well as an inability to find an appropriate methodology for producing these universalities, Said's intellectual applications exemplified a great deal of uncertainty regarding the practicality of his universal intellectual alternative.

3-3-1 Amateurism as Intellectual Defence against Oppression

Along with universality, Said also presents amateurism as a strategy through which intellectuals can regain a postcolonial emancipatory and empowered position. Through amateurism, Said claims that the individual can maintain distance from influence and pressure exerted by institutions, governments and even totalizing theories. What this kind of intellectualism offers, according to Said, is the possibility of stepping beyond the rigidity of what he calls occupational 'professionalism'. He believes that intellectuals have become subsumed in specialization and expertise to an extent which has morphed scholarship into

becoming a clerical vocation under the guiding authority of employers, institutions and governments:

There is a danger that the figure or image of the intellectual might disappear in a mass of details, and that the intellectual might become only another professional or a figure in a social trend. [...] But I also want to insist that the intellectual is an individual with a specific public role in society that cannot be reduced simply to being a faceless professional, a competent member of a class just going about her/his business. The central fact for me is, I think, that the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public [...] the intellectual does this on the basis of universal principles [such as] freedom and justice.²¹¹

Said laments the fact that intellectuals have become professional members of institutions and guilds. Yet he also believes that intellectuals must maintain relationships which facilitate their influence and interference with institutions and governments and local communities, reasserting his amalgamation of Gramsci's and Benda's definitions. There is a degree of ambivalence concerning the manner in which Said imagines achieving such a balance, as he is not clear concerning the practical conditions of such amateurism. Nevertheless, in other instances, Said seems more direct and specific in his advocacy. He explains that many intellectuals become proprietors and promoters of public and institutional goals rather than retaining autonomous opinions and arguments:

Well, basically, what has happened is that [intellectuals] have become caught up in professionalism and expertise, that is, the narrow focus. You know, in fact there has been quite a dramatic willingness on the part of so-called policy intellectuals who are concerned with the economy, with social issues, women's issues, to work with the powers that be. The idea of the intellectual as somebody who represents the powerless, the dispossessed, doesn't exist.²¹²

These 'policy intellectuals' resemble paid clerks who follow due processes and prescribed policies rather than retaining oppositional positions and challenging the status quo. As the coming discussion will show, Said's amateurism seems to be based on the notion of maintaining intellectual relations within public and institutional structures, but these relations should also be governed by the intellectual's awareness of his/her integral

²¹¹Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, pp.8–9.

²¹²Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.413.

autonomy as an agent of dissent and opposition. The intellectual must, therefore, prioritize intellectual values and ideals over vocational duties and should never succumb to positions or arguments under pressure or imposition. Although Said's general point concerning intellectual immersion in specialization and neglect of activism outside the boundaries of vocational duties is valid, the growing pressures of the practical social and economic reality of intellectual and academic work, of which speciality and occupational expectations are integral parts, complicates the implementation of his proposition. Said also does not concede that specialized intellectual efforts could in themselves represent the 'powerless and dispossessed', as is the case with specialized fields in postcolonial minority or feminist studies.

According to Said, amateur intellectualism manifests itself through providing a self-sustained distance from impositions and assimilation exerted by vocational or societal influences. He is adamant that the intellectual must maintain an autonomist position in order to claim any credibility or integrity, otherwise their opinions and decisions would become directed by employers or governments:

[T]he principal intellectual duty is the search for relative independence from such pressures. Hence my characterizations of the intellectual as exile and marginal, as amateur.²¹³

Said explains that these pressures include national, societal and institutional demands which resemble limiting parameters on free intellectual activity. While such a statement might seem relatively achievable, what Said alludes to here is much more complicated. He is advocating for the intellectual to choose to become amateur and marginal within any power structure, such as academic institutions and political organizations, for instance. Therefore, the intellectual is able to reconstruct their own arguments and narratives from the margin, rather than being incorporated within institutional and public roles which stifle choice and free will. Said nevertheless still maintains that such 'marginalized' and outsider positions do not preclude the intellectual from being committed; rather what he suggests is that the individual is able to stand outside the circle of influence of 'power and official institutions'

²¹³Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.xiv.

so that they can maintain a 'margin of independence' without relinquishing his or her duties:

Let us use another expression to describe the intellectual as an outsider or as marginalized, in the sense that he/she is a committed person but nevertheless stands outside the realm of power or official institutions, in the wider sense of the words *power* and *institution*. The intellectual must maintain a margin of independence and must be an instrument of resurrecting lost memory.²¹⁴

The dichotomy of independent marginality and direct commitment is the basis for Said's amateur intellectual. The conscious individuality of situating one's self outside the realm of 'power and institution' gives individuals the leverage to fashion their own independent positions and discourses while being attached to official positions or duties. Yet what must be emphasized is that the leniency of such an analogy does seem exaggerated to an extent. Although it is possible for intellectuals to challenge their own institutional and vocational authorities and renounce their influences, such oppositionality is not always possible. To insist that all academic intellectuals move beyond any institutional influence seems to be a utopian notion rather than a practical alternative. It is impossible to envisage that any academic intellectual is able to ignore or even partially follow university policies and guidelines even if he or she disagrees with them. Consequently, I consider that Said's intellectualism must always be administered with a certain amount of aspirational ideality and practical relativism in mind.

What amateurism also provides for the intellectual is the possibility of moving beyond the orthodoxy of theoretical positions and arguments. As the intellectual becomes detached from critical and theoretical canonical rigidity and collegial pressures, he/she is more able to articulate individual visions and opinions. The intellectual is never subsumed in one theoretical movement such as postcolonialism or feminism, but rather is able to sustain an affiliative approach to critical theories:

There is in particular an intellectual, and perhaps moral, community of a remarkable kind, affiliation in the deepest and most interesting sense of the word. As a way of getting seriously past the weightlessness of one theory after another, the remorseless indignations of orthodoxy, and the

²¹⁴Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, p.183. Emphasis in original.

expressions of tired advocacy to which we are often submitted, the exercise involved in figuring out where the theory went and how in getting there its fiery core was reignited is invigorating—and is also another voyage, one that is central to intellectual life in the late twentieth century.²¹⁵

The intellectual is not identified with a certain guild or theoretical movement which might presuppose his or her ideological arguments and positions. Yet again, Said is quick to accentuate the relativity of his theoretical autonomy. In the following quotation, he confesses to the difficulty of maintaining total detachment from all positions and collectives, and that such partial attachments are even necessary at some level. His argument is that the intellectual should not necessarily be isolated from their surroundings; rather, the intellectual must maintain a sceptical relation towards all subordinating arguments and theories, and a will and an ability to challenge them when required:

A condition of marginality, which might seem irresponsible or flippant, frees you from having always to proceed with caution, afraid to overturn the applecart, anxious about upsetting fellow members of the same corporation. No one is ever free of attachments and sentiments of course. Nor do I have in mind here the so-called free-floating intellectual, whose technical competence is on loan and for sale to anyone. I am saying, however, that to be as marginal and as undomesticated as someone who is in real exile is for an intellectual to be unusually responsive to the traveller rather than to the potentate, to the provisional and risky rather than to the habitual, to innovation and experiment rather than the authoritatively given *status quo*.²¹⁶

His notion of amateurism is portrayed not as resembling a 'free-floating' intellectual, but rather as a free-willed individual who is not predetermined by profession, policy or theory. Through such oppositional sentiments, the intellectual is then able to obtain the aptitude to challenge and evaluate their position, rather than being inducted into any appropriated argument, narrative or theory. Said is arguing for the intellectual to always maintain a level of scepticism and suspension towards all forms of authority, and to constantly question all of their theoretical positions rather than accepting them as part of their intellectual prerequisites. It is important to note that Said invokes 'exile' to stipulate his intellectual

²¹⁵Edward W. Said, 'Travelling Theory Reconsidered', in *Critical Reconstructions: The Relationship of Fiction and Life* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), p.265.

²¹⁶Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.47. Emphasis in original.

marginality. Exilic detachment allows the intellectual to maintain autonomy accompanied with an affiliative ability to reattach with desired arguments and positions.

Said's concept of the amateur with regard to fixed intellectual and theoretical positions and institutional influences is partly persuasive. Such scepticism allows the scholar to become constantly alert to the possibility of being appropriated or assimilated within institutions or guilds. However, this will also mean that the intellectual risks becoming theoretically miscellaneous and incoherent in their discursive and argumentative output. Theories might become stifling at times, but they do offer a framework for consistent paradigms and narratives. Said clearly understood these difficulties and criticisms, for he stated on numerous occasions that he accepted these inconsistencies and viewed them as part of his own fashioned intellectuality:

I've often been criticized for my inconsistency [...] I responded at the time that inconsistency was very important, because I hate systems and I hate determinism and it seems to me that the whole idea is to *fight* them.²¹⁷

This acknowledgement nevertheless only sidesteps the issue at hand. For even if inconsistency becomes part of the intellectual vocation, this still does not dispel the fact that the intellectual might become contradictory or even selectively opportunistic when applying amateurism. Surprisingly, and despite the contradictions and paradoxes of Said's intellectual position, Arif Dirlik views these inconsistencies as essential in the formation of the postcolonial intellectual. While Dirlik concedes that Said's 'dialectical positioning' between different locations might become contradictory, he also argues that these contradictions helped Said develop an 'autonomous intellectual identity' which enabled him to situate himself beyond ideological orthodoxies.²¹⁸ Although theoretical and intellectual inconsistencies can probably offer a logical defence against orthodoxy and dominant systems, they also risk ambiguity and epistemological contradiction. To instigate amateurist marginality to fashion incompatible and inconsistent positions is either a form of accommodation or an escapist tactic disguising the inability to produce alternative theoretical arguments and discourses.

²¹⁷Said, Singh, and Johnson, *Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.231. Emphasis in original.

²¹⁸Dirlik, 'Placing Edward Said: Space, Time and the Travelling Theorist', p.10.

3-3-2 Professionalism and the Dialectics of Necessity and Threat

Despite Said's adamant advocacy of intellectual amateurism and marginality, academic positions, in general and on different levels, are usually enabled by scholarly, institutional and professional privileges. In this section, I examine the practicality of Said's amateur position, and whether it was possible for him to offer a concrete exemplary application for his proposed intellectual position. As Said viewed amateurism as an alternative to intellectual professionalism, I begin by presenting his definition of this term:

The particular threat to the intellectual today, whether in the West or the non-Western world, is not the academy, nor the suburbs, nor the appalling commercialism of journalism and publishing houses, but rather an attitude that I will call professionalism. By professionalism I mean thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and another cocked at what is considered to be proper, professional behaviour—not rocking the boat, not straying outside the accepted paradigms or limits, making yourself marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and un-political and 'objective'.²¹⁹

Said describes intellectual professionalism as a conformist, pseudo-clerical occupation under the controlling dominance of institutions and governments. The main theme presented in this definition seems to be that professional intellectuals do not, or will not, oppose or challenge dominant ideas and authorities, as this will damage their professional standing or vocational position. In these professional circumstances, the individual is confined and controlled so is not able to challenge the boundaries of his/her vocation. The difference between amateurism and professionalism is the difference between free will and choice, as opposed to conformity and dependence.

Being confined to marginal and amateur positions does have its risks, however. Said himself seems to note and discuss one of the side effects of his intellectual anti-professional posture. In the following quotation he confesses that his outsider position might transform into a form of passive escapism:

²¹⁹Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.55.

In underlining the intellectual's role as outsider I have had in mind how powerless one often feels in the face of an overwhelmingly powerful network of social authorities [...] To deliberately *not* belong to these authorities is in many ways not to be able to effect direct change and, alas, even at times to be relegated to the role of a witness.²²⁰

It is interesting to note that if the intellectual was to 'deliberately *not* belong to' institutional and social authorities through maintaining a position of marginality, as Said argues, then this would severely hinder their ability to interact and direct change or even express dissent. Said does affirm that he encourages interaction with different dominant institutions and communities, and that such contact should always be from a position of outsiderhood and marginality. Nevertheless, in actuality, there is always a strong possibility that oppositional and dissenting intellectuals might become side-lined and relegated.

Although Said relies extensively on the differentiation between intellectual amateurism and professionalism, it is difficult to accurately identify and specifically implement this distinction. Said himself is an illuminating example. As someone who is deeply connected, and indeed empowered by American academic 'privilege', it is unclear how he is able to draw the limits of his own professional involvement with Columbia University, where he worked for decades. He joined Columbia in 1963 and maintained his academic position for the remainder of his life. His professional academic positions and accolades also include being a Fellow at the Centre for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences at Stanford University from 1975 till 1976. In 1976 he was granted the Lionel Trilling Award at Columbia. He was also elected president of the Modern Language Association in 1999. It becomes very difficult to define exactly what Said means by intellectual amateurism as he himself declares that his position is that of 'the professional voice of an American academic'.²²¹ Said had an obviously close professional connection with academic institutions, for instance, yet he is not explicitly clear how and where the intellectual might move from the limits of amateurism to professionalism. The following statement, which Said made in 2003 months before his death, presents an illumination of his ambivalence:

²²⁰Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.xiv. Emphasis in original.

²²¹Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.562.

Nevertheless, I do want to affirm yet again that [...] my intellectual work generally has really been enabled by my life as a university academic. For all its often noted defects and problems, the American university—and mine, Columbia, in particular—is still one of the few remaining places in the United States where reflection and study can take place in an almost utopian fashion.²²²

I do not intend to question Said's right to assume a professional position within the academy or any other institution. I do argue, however, that a substantive part of his intellectuality was enabled and promoted through his association with American academic institutions. And while this does not mean that his integrity or his opinions are necessarily compromised, it does indicate how Said himself is a professional intellectual at some level. Within the context of the above quotation, Said confesses that as a university professor restricted by curricular impositions and his specialization in 'comparative literature', and who teaches 'European and American Humanities', he was unable to teach '*anything* about the Middle East', despite his personal wishes, thus affirming that scholarly work is curtailed within the academy to an extent.²²³ These examples underline the relative nature of Said's intellectual professionalism, as it could be assumed that Said was compromised, to a degree, through his vocation and connections with academic institutions, which limited or controlled his academic position and work. This is why Stephen Howe suggests that Said tried to combine 'privileged professional status with marginal, exilic consciousness'.²²⁴ I believe that Said's flexible theorization of the professional intellectual who can be inside and outside any institution simultaneously is accommodating to an extent. It would mean that an intellectual would be able to work within an institution and simultaneously claim independence from its influences. My main aim in this discussion is to highlight the ambiguous limits of Said's professionalism, and how it becomes extremely difficult to locate a convincing differentiation between professional and amateur intellectuals.

A more nuanced argument is presented by Valerie Kennedy. She contests that Said fails to recognize the professional and academic authority of his position. As Said presents intellectualism as promoting justice and freedom as well as supporting the disadvantaged,

²²²Said, *Orientalism*, p.xii.

²²³Said, *Orientalism*, p.xii. Italics in original.

²²⁴Stephen Howe, 'Edward Said: The Traveller and the Exile', *Open Democracy*, 2003, p.1
<<https://www.opendemocracy.net/node/1516>>.

Kennedy argues that all of these empowered positions were either entirely or partially enabled by his intellectual and academic privilege. Ironically, Said is practicing an inverted form of institutional authority which curtails and essentializes arguments and narratives for the misrepresented and unprivileged. Kennedy explains Said's predicament as follows:

The enterprise is a difficult one, and Said's own position in relation to the issue of intellectual authority has frequently been criticized for succumbing to the temptation of power as an authoritative intellectual when he represents the underprivileged. That is, in attacking the authority of the establishment, Said himself might be said to claim an inverted version of that authority as an oppositional intellectual, even as he contests the whole notion of authority.²²⁵

The contradiction, as Kennedy asserts, is that Said underestimates the power and authority bestowed upon him by his professional intellectual position. Said's claims concerning individual authority and empowerment in the face of domination are legitimate. However, his approach develops contradictory actualities as it becomes very difficult to envisage uninfluenced emancipatory outcomes from a position which is completely enabled by institutions which enforce different levels of authority and control over academic output and curricula, despite all of the enabling empowerment these utopian institutions facilitate.

3-4-1 Intellectual Independence: A Relative Approach

Along with universality and amateurism, Said placed great emphasis on intellectual independence. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that independence was the aim of many of his intellectual strategies, such as universalism and anti-professionalism. He insists that in order to produce un-co-opted and integral forms of knowledge and criticism, the intellectual must become 'free and independent [from] membership' of any monocratic entity which might influence his/her scholarship or manipulate his/her opinions.²²⁶ Said places great emphasis on the individual agency of the intellectual as an autonomous thinker who is free from constraining influence. In *Representations of the Intellectual*, he divides intellectuals into two main groups, controlled and oppositional:

²²⁵Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*, pp.148–49.

²²⁶Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.441.

Even intellectuals who are lifelong members of a society can, in a manner of speaking, be divided into insiders and outsiders: those on the one hand who belong fully to the society as it is, who flourish in it without an overwhelming sense of dissonance or dissent, those who can be called yeasayers; and on the other hand, the nay-sayers, the individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power, and honours are concerned.²²⁷

The intellectual, according to Said, is either complicit with the power and privilege in their society, or chooses to become an oppositional dissenter who challenges authority and dogmatic arguments. Retaining authority over one's arguments, opinions and narratives is essential in Said's depiction of intellectual independence. Intellectual oppositionality is not only concerned with producing dissenting opinions; it is, for Said, more concerned with retaining individual power over arguments and discourses. His manifest aim is to ensure that all 'intellectual' activity and discourse 'returns to the individual'.²²⁸ The intellectual, according to Said, must base all of their opinions, arguments and discourses on their own individual 'agency' and not rely on institutional or communal impositions or assimilations.

Many critics believe that Said's intellectual independence is based on individual absolute sovereignty over opinion and discourse, beyond theoretical, institutional and societal pressures. As Saree Makdisi indicates, Said's comprehensive intellectualism is not only concerned with dissent and opposition, it is also more concerned with the ideal of freedom of opinion from all kinds of influences, regardless of their origin:

[Intellectualism is] not merely a unique differentiation from a surrounding present of ever-greater homogenization, specialization, and professionalization but also a refusal to accept the prerogatives, inducements, and pressures of power.²²⁹

There is a certain dialectic involved in this process, as the intellectual is never completely cut off from their surroundings and community. This dialectic concerns maintaining the ability to be inside and outside these entities at the same time, and a similar ability to detach and re-attach at will. Harold Veesser believes that Said's 'absolute sovereign independence' differentiated him from most of his intellectual contemporaries.²³⁰ Veesser argues that Said

²²⁷Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.39.

²²⁸Said and Barsamian, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian*, p.99.

²²⁹Makdisi, 'Edward Said and the Style of the Public Intellectual', p.59.

²³⁰Harold Aram Veesser, *Edward Said: The Charisma of Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p.196.

is distinguished in his depiction of postcolonial theories of intellectualism with their unwavering rejection of all forms of assimilation regardless of motivations and sources. He insists that there was considerable hesitation on the part of many intellectuals and critics to expand their critiques of oppression beyond opposition to colonialism and imperialism. Said, on the other hand, was more direct in his rebuttal of all locations or arguments which hinder intellectual independence, even if they were initiated in the name of resistant narratives and oppositional positions.

Given that Said places immense emphasis on intellectual independence, and that he equates intellectual integrity with scholarly autonomy, it might seem surprising that in the following examples he expresses scepticism towards the possibility of obtaining intellectual sovereignty. As Asha Varadharajan indicates, Said's faith and confidence in the 'independence of scholarship quickly begins to wear a bit thin' in many parts of *Representations of the Intellectual*.²³¹ As this book was entirely dedicated to discussion and espousing Said's arguments on intellectualism, it is disconcerting that such explicit reluctance might have been expressed. As the following quotation suggests, Said seems sceptical with regards to intellectual independence.

And yet the question remains as to whether there is or can be anything like an independent, autonomously functioning intellectual, one who is not beholden to, and therefore constrained, by his or her affiliations with universities that pay salaries, political parties that demand loyalty to a party line, think-tanks that while they offer freedom to do research perhaps more subtly compromise judgment and restrain the critical voice.²³²

Said believed that intellectual independence is complicated by many economic, social and political factors, as well as financial, political and vocational pressures, that render such independence difficult to obtain and sustain. And as these restraints are usually evident in most vocations, it is difficult to see how an intellectual would be able to assume independence, as Said eventually concludes.

²³¹Varadharajan, *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said, and Spivak*, p.126.

²³²Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.51.

In the context of his reluctance to affirm the possibility of relative independence, it is necessary to investigate the exact boundaries of Said's intellectual autonomy. In the following quotation, Said further accentuates his scepticism:

When we think of an individual intellectual—and the individual is my principal concern here—do we accentuate the individuality of the person in drawing his or her portrait, or do we rather make our focus the group or class of which the individual is a member? [...] With the increased number of twentieth-century men and women who belong to a general group called intellectuals or the intelligentsia—the managers, professors, journalists, computer or government experts, lobbyists, pundits, syndicated columnists, consultants who are paid for their opinions—one is impelled to wonder whether the individual intellectual as an independent voice can exist at all.²³³

This statement exemplifies Said's reluctant admission that intellectual independence is difficult if not impossible to sustain in 'twentieth-century' societies. What is problematic is not his concession to this evident reality, but that he espouses the confusing boundaries drawn for intellectual independence. Between idealizing the aspirational efforts of intellectuals as independent proprietors of free will and thought, and acknowledging the economic, political and social realities of any individual position, Said was forced to present the following compromise:

[Intellectual independence] is a tremendously important question, I think, and it must be looked into with a combination of realism and idealism, certainly not cynicism. [...] To accuse all intellectuals of being sellouts just because they earn their living working in a university or for a newspaper is a coarse and, finally, meaningless charge. Thus, it would be far too indiscriminately cynical to say that the world is so corrupt that everyone ultimately succumbs to Mammon. On the other hand, it is scarcely less serious to hold up the individual intellectual as a perfect ideal, a sort of shining knight who is so pure and so noble as to deflect any suspicion of material interest. No-one can pass such a test.²³⁴

These concessions to the realities of intellectual independence are more compromising than aspirational in my estimation. Said is trying to find a middle ground where a conciliation between intellectual independence and dependence might be reached. Yet Said's resignation and recognition does burden his arguments on intellectual independence with

²³³Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.51.

²³⁴Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.52.

contradictory degrees of relativism. The language of the above quotation is abstract and does not specify how a ‘combination of realism and idealism’ can be achieved. The possibilities are limitless with regard to individual interpretations of what constitutes this ‘ideal balance’.

3-4-2 Said’s Intellectual Independence: A Case Study

It is clear from Said’s arguments concerning intellectual independence that his ideal vision for intellectual work includes a degree of separation and distance from all powerful institutions which might influence free thought and scholarship. He also believes that ‘the intellectual’s role is to present alternative narratives and other perspectives’ which are beyond the authoritative realms of institutional and governmental assertions.²³⁵ Said is suggesting that any disciplined intellectual could only produce valid arguments and discourses if she or he is aware of the risks associated with communal and societal attachments of any kind or proportion. Said also insists that powerful positions offered by institutions and organizations are compromising as they could stifle academic work and scholarship. He calls for all intellectuals to stand ‘outside the realm of power or official institutions’ as real ideas and values cannot be articulated and expressed from within a position of power unless the intellectual is conscious of the dangers of their privileged position.²³⁶ Otherwise, the intellectual might be compromised by such power apparatuses and risk losing their margin of intellectual independence.

In practice, however, Said’s intellectual independence shows many signs of ambivalence. His relations with powerful entities such as academic institutions or political organizations, despite his insistence on being anti-institutional and independent, are perfect examples of this ambivalence. Despite all of his assertions concerning intellectual positioning, Said does acknowledge that he is at times deeply indebted to American academic institutions. His self-identification as an American academic could be viewed as an attempt to define himself realistically. But when such a statement is combined with his admission that his ‘intellectual work’ was enabled by his life as a ‘university academic’,

²³⁵Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p.141.

²³⁶Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, pp.184–85.

Said's position becomes paradoxical.²³⁷ To suggest that Said is independent from the influence of an institution which has enabled his intellectual work resembles a misconception in my opinion. This is not to say that Said's intellectual integrity, or that of any intellectual, might be instantly tarnished by their connection to an institution. Decades of intellectual, resistant and oppositional writings and actions demonstrate a relatively high level of independence on Said's part. The presence of 'independence' itself is not questioned in my argument. My point is rather that independence is much more complicated and relative than Said is willing to acknowledge. With such apparent relativity, it becomes almost impossible to accurately specify when an intellectual is influenced by his/her institution/employer or not. In addition, different levels of independence should be taken into account, especially within nations or institutions where freedom of speech might become hindered by politics or financial constraints. In the context of the practicalities of Said's relative independence, the following quotation is telling:

To a great extent [...] intellectuals exist by virtue of a very interesting network of relationships with the State's almost absolute power [...] Quite the contrary, nearly everyone producing literary or cultural studies makes no allowance for the truth that all intellectual or cultural work occurs somewhere, at some time, on some very precisely mapped-out and permissible terrain, which is ultimately contained by the State.²³⁸

This passage offers a concession that absolute intellectual independence is impossible to achieve. That all intellectual work is produced under permission and containment of the government ultimately means that the entire body of scholarship is regulated and confined under authoritative control on different levels. In such instances where Said makes such stark explicit contradictions, his arguments on intellectualism become perplexing. That intellectuals may become influenced or constrained by the 'permissible terrain' of the state and its institutions on any level suggests that independence could potentially be hindered, limited or even controlled from the outset.

A very interesting instance which might explain Said's confusing arguments is to look at his own involvement with official positions and power structures, such as being a faculty member of a prominent American institution. Robert Young does not question the

²³⁷Said, *Orientalism*, p.xii.

²³⁸Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p.169.

possibility of sustaining an independent political, cultural or intellectual position to a certain level. However, what he does find paradoxical is the claim that an individual can be both independent and subordinate at the same time. Young's argument, with which I agree, is based on the fact that Said's theorization and intellectual independence is compromised by his great reliance on Western theories and privileges. He insists that being able to fashion one's individuality in accordance with subjective intuitions of what constitutes intellectual independence and dependence seems impossible to envisage as practical:

Said's difficulty is that his ethical and theoretical values are all so deeply involved in the history of the culture that he criticizes, that they undermine his claims for the possibility of the individual being in a position to choose, in an uncomplicated process of separation, to be both inside and outside.²³⁹

Said's Westernized intellectualism, which includes most of his theoretical background and methodologies, contradicts his claims of being able to move beyond such compromises. He also over-estimates his detachment from the power structures and privileges of Western culture and institutions. This elucidates the fact that claiming to work within while simultaneously opposing such institutions and their impositions and impact upon academic vocation, arguments and narratives is highly relative and dependent on the institution itself.

3-5 Conclusion

Said strives to provide a 'post-imperial' intellectual alternative which is both ambitious and empowering. His aim is to produce intellectual arguments and narratives which transcend power imbalances exacerbated through connectivity to institutions as opposed to marginality, and proximity to the centre as opposed to the periphery. Said's proposed intellectual strategies share the common characteristic of oppositionality to power structures and an ability to exploit their benefits through working within them. Such a balance between dissent and appropriation of these positions was difficult to maintain and sustain.

²³⁹Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, p.172.

The practicality of Said's intellectual arguments reveals that it is impossible to construct an idyllic location which is completely beyond engagement with power structures and institutions. He actively espoused a universal intellectualism which could produce a value-based commonality able to diminish spatial and institutional imbalances of power between different individuals. Yet, because his universality was extensively reliant on individual agency and hindered by his scepticism towards obtaining empirically proven objective knowledge concerning human society, it became empirically impossible to sustain or even to attain a consensual form of intellectual universality.

Amateurism is a more promising strategy in my opinion. Said criticises intellectuals who have morphed into institutional and governmental clerks who are unable to challenge authority or express dissenting opinions. Said's idea is that the marginality offered by amateurism provides the intellectual with the ability to maintain their position within any given society, institution or power structure while upholding a considerable distance from professional impositions. He is more realistic in his discussions on amateurism as he recognizes the necessity of professional occupations, and warns that amateurism risks demoting the influence of the intellectual. The main criticism which might compromise Said's amateur arguments is his ambivalence with regard to the boundaries between amateurism and professionalism.

Said's final strategy is linked to his high regard for intellectual independence. Said's arguments are concentrated on providing space for free will and liberal opinions. Despite initially questioning the possibility of attaining any absolute intellectual independence, Said was quick to espouse that a balance needs to be reached between individual connections to society and its institutions, and an equal adherence to higher ideals and values. Although Said presents a plausible argument concerning the necessity of intellectual independence, in practice his own positions were more inclined to accept the benefits and necessities of institutional enablement.

Said's efforts reveal a consistent striving for practical emancipatory and empowering strategies for postcolonial intellectuals. What makes Said's arguments unique is that they were produced from within Western metropolitan centres, and utilize power structures from within what he perceived as a modern imperialist power, namely the United States.

Although Said's efforts were aimed at decolonizing and reclaiming power structures from within the West, his endeavours also highlight the contradictions of postcolonial intellectuals working inside the entities and structures they critique. His arguments and narratives accentuate the difficulties of negotiating postcolonial involvement with power structures and their connections with peripheries. All these factors impose a considerable burden on the practicality of Said's intellectual elaborations, particularly those related to issues beyond his privileged Western location.

Chapter Four

‘Permission to Narrate’: Limiting Postcolonial Discursivity

4-1 Introduction

Among all of Edward Said’s counter-positions and arguments, discursivity has prominence and constantly recurs. He viewed it as a means by which subordination is imposed, and, equally, emancipation may be achieved. Said’s aim was to produce forms of knowledge, arguments and discourses which defy oppression. Having been greatly influenced by Michel Foucault’s theories on how discourse, truth and knowledge can all be manipulated and controlled, Said found it necessary to initiate an alternative postcolonial discursive project. His aim was to reclaim authority over narrative, interpretation and representation, and to produce counter-arguments to imperialist and orientalist monopolies over knowledge and truth. My argument in this chapter is that although Said’s discursive project succeeds in demoting orientalist, imperialist, and other prohibiting narratives and arguments through deconstructing their epistemological contradictions, it also affects resisting responses to those dominant discourses. As there are no alternatives to using discourses and narratives to convey opinions and arguments, Said sought to produce resistant responses which were conscious of the risks and deficiencies he associates with orientalist and imperialist arguments. I argue that his arguments concerning narrative, interpretation and representation emphasize the methodological difficulties of refashioning discursive alternatives outside of the paradigms he is critiquing. His successful denunciation of orientalist and imperialist narratives and arguments becomes too elaborate and over-encompassing, to an extent which impedes all alternative narratives and counter-arguments, including his own.

Foucault was one of Said’s main theoretical influences. The French post-structuralist presented Said with the basis for a comprehensive discursive argument concerning the formation of narratives and their apparent complicity with power. Valerie Kennedy, author

of *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*, reinforces my assertion concerning Said's indebtedness to Foucault:

Foucault is perhaps the most important single theoretical source for Said. His work is unimaginable without Foucault's concepts of discourse and of discursive formations, his discussions of the relationships between power and knowledge, and his view that representations are always influenced by the systems of power in which they are located.²⁴⁰

The Foucauldian correlation between power and discourse represents a distinctive part of Said's discursive arguments. Said found in Foucault's arguments a logical basis for his delineations and rebuttals of orientalist narratives and their aggression. And as the coming discussion demonstrates, Foucault's theories are a recurrent theme in Said's discursive theories.

Considering Foucault's impact on Said's discursive arguments, it is essential to discuss some of his key theories with regard to discourse. Foucault's main arguments are concerned with how power influences knowledge, truth and narrative. What he means by power is not any specific position or definable entity. Rather, it is the mechanisms and locations through which an individual, a collective or an institution finds it possible to direct and control any given narrative or argument:

Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.²⁴¹

The generalization concerning power positions is indicative of Foucault's larger arguments concerning authority. In his estimate, power and forceful imposition affects all individuals and their discourses. Accordingly, all human communities are intrinsically hierarchal and based on relationships of oppression and submission. Foucault's originality is based on the connections he draws between discourse and power. He argues that what makes power more effective is not merely its ability to suppress and subordinate. It is actually the fact

²⁴⁰Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*, p.25.

²⁴¹Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p.236.

that it is able to produce forms of knowledge and discourses which assist in consolidating its authority and legitimatizing its actions:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.²⁴²

As power structures take hold in any society, they restrain and assimilate other arguments and narratives. This is not only achieved through suppressing individuals from forming their own discourses and positions, but also through offering their own narratives and arguments as the ideal or correct form of knowledge and truth. As knowledge becomes 'linked to power', argues Foucault, it assumes the position of authority on the basis that it resembles abstract truth and fact. The subsequent result is that knowledge is used by authoritarian individuals or collectives to 'regulate and constrain' members of a society. Authority is then able to create a whole system of truths and objectivities which consolidate power positions and prohibit oppositional and dissenting discourses from forming.²⁴³ Knowledge, truth and fact become monopolized through brute force by whoever happens to be in power in a society or community.

The concept of truth is an essential part of Foucauldian theorizations of discourse. Far from viewing it as an abstract ideal of factual accuracy, Foucault is immensely sceptical of the idea of claiming a single form of truth. In many of his arguments, his descriptions seem to be conveying the notion that truth is not only meant to convey and promote the dominant agendas and beliefs, but also that truth is an embodiment and manifestation of power itself:

The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of

²⁴²Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, p.119.

²⁴³Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), p.27.

power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements.²⁴⁴

Far from being an abstract factuality, truth is viewed as a human construction which is produced, regulated and managed by individuals or institutions. What counts as true or false in any discourse or argument is left to the mechanisms and procedures devised to categorize false and true statements. In a sense, Foucault is drastically humanizing and secularizing the portrayal of truth through connecting it to realistic power apparatuses. He believes that when such regulated truths are introduced into societies, they acquire their power and status according to the political, economic and social standing of their producers, rather than human rationality or idyllic strife for absolute fact. Truth acquires legitimacy not only because of its factual essence, but also because of the rules and powers which standardize and present it within societies:

'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. [...] 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it.²⁴⁵

What this quotation signifies is that Foucault's main concern is not with the factual accuracy of truths or their correspondence to reality; rather he is more concerned with how truth is produced and acquires its status within any society. That truths are connected to power is more disconcerting for him than their proximity to factuality. I believe that Foucault's main argument concerning truth is aimed at emphasizing the fact that there is always a contingency with regards to truth and fact, and that there is a constant contestation between different versions of truth. The quandary for him is that power is somewhat in the advantage when faced with opposing discourses and arguments, regardless of actual proximity to fact and reality.

²⁴⁴Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, p.131.

²⁴⁵Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, p.132.

Like truth, discourse plays a vital role in the consolidation of power, according to Foucault. Discourse offers a vital expression of power as a conveyor of permitted truths and arguments essential for the formation and sustainability of power apparatuses:

Relations of power are indissociable from a discourse of truth, and they can neither be established nor function unless a true discourse is produced, accumulated, put into circulation, and set to work. Power cannot be exercised unless a certain economy of discourses of truth functions in, on the basis of, and thanks to, that power.²⁴⁶

Despite the fact that truth and discourse are both produced through power, they are also indispensable parts of its existence and functionality. A clear interdependency is formed between power and discourse. Discourse itself becomes a sign of power status in Foucauldian arguments. Yet despite the vitality of discourse for power structures, and like truth, they are also controlled and regulated within all societies and communities. Discourses are formed through strict systems which govern their formation and organize their usage:

I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures. [...] In a society such as our own we all know the rules of exclusion. The most obvious and familiar of these concerns what is prohibited.²⁴⁷

Power is not presented as a specific entity, but a set of regulations and procedures which control and distribute discourse. I believe that the value of Foucault's arguments concerning knowledge, truth and discourse is that they illuminate the possible infiltration of these abstract notions by power apparatuses. The appropriation of these notions advances power positions enormously through facilitating monopolies over truth, knowledge and discourse. And through these monopolies, structures such as Orientalism and imperialism are able to present their narratives as the embodiment of objectivity, while simultaneously disregarding opposing arguments and discourses as irrational, ill-informed and inferior.

Said concurs with Foucauldian arguments concerning the complicity of truth with power. He even goes as far as asserting that writing itself is never free from control.

²⁴⁶Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, p.93.

²⁴⁷Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p.216.

Consequently, Said considers truth to be, among other factors, the artefact of power-related interventions, rather than only being an abstract notion or consensual fact:

This has been Foucault's great discovery. Writing is not free, nor is it performed uniquely by a sovereign writer who writes more or less as he or she pleases. Writing belongs to a system of utterances that has all sorts of affiliative, often constricting relationships with the world of nations, as Vico called it. One can see this most clearly in scholarly writing, or writing that belongs to such disciplines as history, sociology, economics, and philology, disciplines in which the individual writer is borne on very heavily by institutions, rituals, exclusions, prohibitions, and a highly particularized, even tyrannical conception of truth and the desire for truth.²⁴⁸

Said presents the example of scholarly writing and how it is always governed by disciplines and prohibitions which in turn shape and construct the parameters of truth and acceptable knowledge. He also acknowledges the fact that discourse is exploited and employed to manufacture power-constructed manifestations of permitted arguments and narratives. All individuals, according to Said, are constrained by their cultural, political and economic environments. What is permissible or prohibited is dependent on the norms and disciplines imposed by power structures surrounding the writer, whether institutional or societal. This reality in turn curtails and administers what constitutes truth and fact in society. And acknowledging such repressive realities is the first step in constructing counter-positions, arguments and narratives, according to Said.

Like Foucault, Said believes that what really consolidates power apparatuses in any society is the fact that they are able to present their discourses as undisputable manifestations of objective truth and scientific knowledge. Through discourses of truth and knowledge, power structures are able to monopolize and dictate narratives and arguments within any discursive situation:

It is now certain that Foucault's greatest intellectual contribution is to an understanding of how the will to exercise dominant control in society and history has also discovered a way to clothe, disguise, rarefy, and wrap itself systematically in the language of truth, discipline, rationality, utilitarian value, and knowledge. And this language, in its naturalness, authority, professionalism, assertiveness, and anti-theoretical directness, is what Foucault has called *discourse*. [...] The power of discourse is that it is at

²⁴⁸Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.24.

once the object of struggle and the tool by which the struggle is conducted.²⁴⁹

Said is largely in agreement with Foucault concerning the power struggle over discourse, knowledge and truth. Discourse becomes not only the aim for power acquisition within societies, but a manifestation of power itself. Discourse, therefore, becomes both a means and an end for power structures. What I want to emphasize here is Said's apparent unease regarding the explicit collusion between knowledge and powerful structures within scientific disciplines as well as in society in general. As the next section of this chapter reveals, Said's discursivity became unequivocally invested in depriving power structures from access to these abstract values and ideals, as they facilitate subordination. I also argue that Said's strategic scrutiny of notions of truth and objectivity pose a very complicated epistemological hurdle for the practicality of his discursive arguments.

Said's main contribution would materialize through his extensions of Foucault's discursive theories. As Asha Varadharajan and Ferial Ghazoul point out, unlike Foucault, who only concentrated on exposing the complicity between power and discourse, truth and knowledge, Said actually argues for the possibility of alternative and resistant narratives and arguments.²⁵⁰ Although Foucault deconstructs the mechanisms that produce imposed discourse and knowledge, he is reluctant to advocate a clear substitute or alternative, as this would, according to his rationale, also require power appropriation and complicity. Said, on the other hand, believes in the possibility of achieving a discursive alternative, and his own negotiations of power relations would prove crucial for his proposed counter-arguments. His own discursive preference advocates the prospect of individual resistance to and refutation of power-based discourses, arguments and knowledge:

Yet unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted. I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation [...].²⁵¹

²⁴⁹Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p.216. Emphasis in original.

²⁵⁰Varadharajan, *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said, and Spivak*, pp. xi–xii; Ferial Ghazoul, 'The Resonance of the Arab-Islamic Heritage in the Work of Edward Said', in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Michael Sprinker (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p.158.

²⁵¹Said, *Orientalism*, p.24.

Said is more accepting of the possibility of appropriating power in the service of emancipatory resistance than Foucault. Through many counter-arguments and strategies, he presents an alternative discursive theory which he claims bypasses accusations of complicity with power. And it is specifically these discussions of discourse, truth, subjectivity and knowledge, and their relationships with power, that this chapter examines. In the first section of this chapter, I question Said's position concerning discourse and narrative. In the second section, I discuss how Said presents a nuanced position with regard to interpretation as a means of receiving and understanding discourse. Finally, in the third section, I discuss Said's arguments for an appropriate and permissible characterization as a method of producing discourse and narrative.

4-2 Repositioning Truth, Objectivity and Knowledge: The Epistemological Implication and Applications

Foucauldian discursivity forms the basic framework for Said's arguments as a postcolonial theorist concerned with producing alternative counter-narratives. His aim was to construct emancipatory discourses and arguments which were not controlled by any dominant power structure or able to subordinate other narratives. As a scholar considered by many critics to be the 'founder of postcolonial discursivity', Said was comprehensively invested in discussing and arguing for new systems of discursive production.²⁵² Because knowledge, truth and discourse are all compromised through their connections with power, Said's strategic move was to argue for new approaches which debase and disarm power apparatuses from their ability to assimilate and control these entities. In this section, I discuss how Said argues for a discursive strategy which he claims is able to dismantle the ability of power apparatuses to claim monopoly over truth and knowledge. He also presents alternative discursive applications which are authoritative yet not under the influence of power, and are not subordinate to other narratives. My argument is that although Said's discursive counter-arguments defuse power structures through denying the attainability of some forms of objective knowledge and their exclusive claims to one form of absolute truth, they also destabilize the rationale for the formation of counter-narratives. As Said's

²⁵²Ali Behdad, 'Edward Said: The Founder of Postcolonial Discursivity', *Amerasia*, 31.1 (2005), p.10.

discursive alternative is based on preventing any narrative from gaining exclusive authority over objectivity, truth and knowledge, emancipatory and resistant discourses are also demoted and disarmed as they also become targets of his drastic discursive strategy. I examine the implications of this impasse, and how Said is able to produce counter-narratives despite all his self-imposed restrictions.

What Said took from Foucault was a very sceptical view of knowledge and truth as constantly being saturated in power through claiming to be objective and scientifically undisputable. As Foucault insists, truth and knowledge become centralized and ‘disciplined’ through social, political and economic pressures. They then become institutionalized through their appropriation by controlled apparatuses such as education, the media and socio-political activities.²⁵³ Foucault presents ‘truth’ as a product of discursive activity. Objectivity and abstract truth become hindrances in the face of counter-narratives produced by the colonized and the dominated. What Said observed in Foucault is the assertion that dominant knowledge only succeeds in portraying its position as objective if its deep saturation in relative subjectivity is neglected. Said’s main example concerns orientalists, and how they were able to conceal their collusion with colonialism through portraying their arguments and narratives as material manifestations of undisputable knowledge and objectivity.

As the basis of his counter-discursive theory, Said disputes the notion that empirical evidence could be presented to prove that objective knowledge about human societies could be achieved, or that that such knowledge could be entirely subjective. As the previous discussion in this section has shown, Said’s argument is that knowledge and truth are often conveyed through the mediums of discourse and narrative. And as it is a Foucauldian argument that power and control over these mediums largely interferes with what is presented as truth and knowledge, Said argues for more scrutiny and caution towards them. The connection between knowledge and power meant for him that individuals and communities who are disconnected from authority are unable, or partially able, to present opposing and alternative discursive knowledge and truth. Yet, Said also recognizes the

²⁵³Michel Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, in *Orientalism: A Reader*, ed. by Alexander Lyon Macfie (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p.42.

impasse of how it is equally difficult to prove the opposite; that all knowledge concerning human society is subjective:

Let us grant, therefore, that it would be a long and potentially impossible task to prove empirically that, on the one hand, there could be objectivity so far as knowledge about human society is concerned or, on the other, that all knowledge is esoteric and subjective.²⁵⁴

As empirically proving the objectivity or subjectivity of knowledge about human society becomes 'potentially impossible' in Said estimation, all positions concerning the acquisition of such knowledge becomes both demoted and potentially disputable on different levels. The repercussion is that knowledge becomes exceedingly dependent on human perception and judgement to an extent, and such perception is relative to the individual's resources and experiences. Through this conceptualization, Said is initially trying to counter dominant narratives by rejecting their privileged reliance on objectivity, or even their implicit subjectivity. He is therefore reclaiming narrative and discourse by rejecting any absolute epistemological attainability of objectivity, yet he was also forced to concede that the opposite, the epistemological possibility of subjectivity, is also disputable. Said's scepticism concerning 'empirical' proof for either objective or subjective knowledge concerning human societies does not simultaneously require that any narrative or discourse instantaneously becomes mere distortion and falsification with no relation to facts, as Sadik Jalal Al-Azm claims. Rather what Said is arguing is that there is no privileged position through which discourse could ever monopolize or claim possession of one version of absolute truth or objectivity.²⁵⁵ As a result, all narratives and discourses become equal in their objective and subjective claims to knowledge.

That Said views discourse as a power apparatus would only be surprising if he did not follow Foucault rigorously in this matter. For Said, as was the case for Foucault, discourse is not only connected and attached to power, but also discourse itself is a form of power. Invoking Foucault specifically in *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Said asserts that power inequality must ensue and become apparent in every 'discursive situation':

²⁵⁴Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.127.

²⁵⁵Al-Azm, 'Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse', pp.221–22.

[F]ar from being a type of conversation between equals, the discursive situation is more usually like the unequal relation between colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed. [...] Words and texts are so much of the world that their effectiveness, in some cases even their use, are matters having to do with ownership, authority, power, and the imposition of force.²⁵⁶

Said is arguing that narratives and discourses intrinsically facilitate domination. The conjuncture would be, of course, utilizing these narratives and discourse without being compromised. These extensively generalized descriptions of discourses and narratives as mediums unavoidably tainted by power and domination eventually come to complicate Said's own counter-narrative. And in order to continue to denounce orientalist and imperialist narratives through these generalizations while finding enough theoretical rationality for his own counter-narrative, he required a novel epistemological balance. My aim is to show the extent of Said's impasse in his rejection of power-related discourses, and how his own alternatives became more difficult to attain than he originally anticipated.

Said presents Orientalism as an obvious illustration of how powerful structures are able to control and assimilate objectivity and knowledge. The threat Said recognized in Orientalism is its capacity to create and maintain a discursive proliferation of empirical stereotypes and archival disciplinary facts. Through claiming that their textual production is the manifestation of objectivity, as well as propagating their arguments as discursive inevitabilities, orientalists were able to put knowledge in the service of political and economic colonialist agendas. Through such monopolization of knowledge disciplines, colonialism was able to determine and control discourses and decide which are permissible and which are prohibited. As Patrick Williams and Peter Childs suggest, discourse is the means through which knowledge has often been controlled and maintained:

The tendency of any discourse is [...] to elicit forms of knowledge which conform to established paradigms, in a circuit of mutual reinforcement, and Orientalism provides an example of this characterized by remarkable power and longevity.²⁵⁷

Childs and Williams argue that Orientalism was able to reinforce its discourse through maintaining a consistent parameter for knowledge. Through presenting discursive

²⁵⁶Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p.48.

²⁵⁷Childs and Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, p.104.

consistency as the preferable resource for truth and objective knowledge, other opposing narratives and arguments were dismissed on the grounds of being contradictory to knowledge and objectivity themselves. And this is exactly Foucault's and Said's argument, that power structures in any society can simply nominate their own subjective perceptions and arguments as the abstract embodiment of promoted truth, rationality and knowledge.

For Said, discourse is held within the confines of power structures such as Orientalism and colonialism as they create an oppressive discursive monopoly around colonized communities, nations or regions. The oppression here is meant to describe the huge emphasis Said places on the power of narrative and discourse, as they are able to shape and dominate the existence of individuals and peoples. Said claims that the whole experience of Orientalism is mainly dependent on a discursive totalitarianism which subordinates and controls all narratives related to or about the Orient:

In the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these. Direct observation or circumstantial description of the Orient are the fictions presented by writing on the Orient.²⁵⁸

Orientalism is based on the overwhelmingly textual uniformity which enables orientalists to dominate and silence opposing or dissenting arguments and discourses. This is underpinned, of course, by economic, political and cultural authority which further reinforces their narratives. Thus, what Orientalism, or any dominant power apparatus, does is confine their discursively colonized subjects in a set of references and texts which are governed by the authority of orientalists and colonialists themselves. Thus, they attempt to prevent non-conformist narratives from ever forming as they are created outside the accepted orientalist paradigms of what constitutes truth and objectivity, although such efforts are not always successful. The exclusivity of orientalist narratives becomes a means through which it is possible to dominate individuals, communities and nations, and obstruct oppositional responses. Said proposes countering these monopolies through denouncing exclusive claims to objectivity, regardless of motive.

²⁵⁸Said, *Orientalism*, p.177. Emphasis in original.

Said's scepticism towards the attainment of certain forms of objective knowledge offers a very logical argument for providing opposing arguments against dominant appropriation of these abstract notions, but they also affect counter- and resistant positions. For instance, if it is assumed that it is 'potentially impossible' to prove that knowledge concerning human societies is either objective or subjective, then this argument will necessarily mean that narratives and discourses fall within the same category of disputability and relativism. And if narratives and discourses are indeed disputable and could not be proven 'empirically', then arguments for countering opposing discourses would surely become specious, no matter the motive behind them, as these competing arguments become equally relative; an assumption which may be disputed by the existence of undisputable objective facts. In this context, it is unclear how a consistent rationale can be formed in order to explain replacing a certain discourse with another. Although Said's argument might seem understandable when waged against oppressive colonial and Orientalist discourses, in other contexts the paradoxes of his analogy becomes apparent.

A very good example is shown through attending to what Said tries to achieve in his book *Covering Islam*. The whole book is premised on the notion that the Western depiction of Islam is power-based and authoritative, as Westerners present their perceptions as objective truths. To this end, Said's argument in the book is consistent with his main discursive arguments I have already presented in this chapter. Yet to claim that there is 'potentially' no possibility of proving objective knowledge concerning human societies, and that knowledge is power-related would also mean that counter-narratives and discourses are also tainted with similar demotions of their arguments when conveying any form of information. Furthermore, if discourse is relative and disputable, how could Said then reject any given narrative or argument as false, given that there is no 'empirically' proven objectivity to be distorted to begin with?

Let us say that discourse on Islam is, if not absolutely vitiated, then certainly coloured by the political, economic, and intellectual situation in which it arises: this is as true of East as it is of West. For many evident reasons, it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that *all* discourse on Islam has an interest in some authority or power [...] I cannot say for sure whether in matters having to do with human society there is such a thing as absolute truth or perfectly true knowledge; perhaps such things exist in the

abstract—a proposition I do not find hard to accept—but in present reality truth about such matters as ‘Islam’ is relative to who produces it.²⁵⁹

What Said presents as the basis for his rejection of certain narratives on Islam are undisputable truisms to an extent. For instance, it is not possible to claim that any narrative, discourse or text is not affected by the political, economic and intellectual position from which it emerged. This could easily apply to all narratives, including Said’s own. The confusion centres on Said’s implicit concession to objectivity which accompanies his argument. That he bases the entire book on correcting and critiquing false Western depictions of Islam would indubitably require that he has at least some form of objective factual truth in mind concerning a more dependable portrayal of Islam. Asha Varadharajan has acutely pointed out how Said risked creating these anomalies through asserting the impossibility of attaining objective knowledge in certain contexts:

[T]hat discourse simultaneously refuses to contemplate the opposite or perhaps complementary possibility: that the production of knowledge can also serve the cause of emancipatory critique and of resistance.²⁶⁰

Varadharajan’s argument illuminates these paradoxes when put against Said’s position on the impossibility of proving some forms of objective knowledge. Although his argument might facilitate the rejection of dominant narratives, it also risks jeopardizing his proposed counter-narratives. For what Said’s proposal permits is the possibility of demoting discourses on the basis that they are either disputed subjective intuitions or ‘empirically’ unproven objectivities. Yet, in the context of Said’s scepticism, it is not possible to foresee a common and impartial basis for critiques and refutations of distorting dominant discourses.

As I have suggested above with regard to *Covering Islam*, contending discourses become discursive variations of unproven objective knowledge concerning human society. It might be also argued that Said has inadvertently reinforced orientalist and imperialist positions through consolidating their monopoly over objectivity and truth. Said actually portrayed orientalist discourse as an all-encompassing narrative which cannot be circumscribed. And by denying the possibility of attaining proven objective and subjective

²⁵⁹Said, *Covering Islam*, pp.xvii–xviii. Emphasis in original.

²⁶⁰Varadharajan, *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said, and Spivak*, pp.xi–xii.

human knowledge concerning human society, and through conceding that they are power-related notions, he is preventing postcolonial counter-narratives from relying on the empowerment of factuality and truth. Yet imperial, colonial, and all power-oriented narratives still have the capability of monopolizing and initiating arguments and discourses, as they have the upper hand in terms of the means at their disposal. On the other hand, counter-arguments and narratives would lose one of their most powerful instruments, their claim to factually and empirically proven knowledge which disputes orientalist, imperialist and colonialist distortions. The dichotomy of Said's Foucauldian scepticism towards all discourse, and his acknowledgement of the necessity of reclaiming the 'power to narrate', becomes paradoxical in his counter-arguments.²⁶¹ The main question is not whether he accepts discourse as a necessary medium for constructing arguments and expressing selves, as this is clearly evident and logical to assume. The question to be asked is how he differentiates between suppressive and emancipatory narratives if both are disputable and relative. As the following two sections demonstrate, Said himself eventually recognized the need for 'empirically' proven objective truth and factual knowledge to assist in the formation of his counter-arguments and alternative discourses. As discursive production is always limited and confined to certain paradigms and parameters, devising non-implicated narratives and arguments becomes epistemologically difficult or improbable.

4-3 Conditioned Interpretation: Said's Refashioning of Repressive Narratives

Said's arguments on power-oriented discourses are not entirely abstract. His positions concerning narrative are essential for understanding much of Said's discursive theories and their practical implementations. As I indicated in the first section of this chapter, Said acknowledges that there is no possible method that can replicate textuality as the only available medium of receiving and producing knowledge, as well as being a convenient means of advancing resistant arguments. Hence, what I argue in this section is that Said, despite his critique of discourses as unreliable conveyors of truth and knowledge, does actually reaffirm their usage through his own conditional methodology. This is done in

²⁶¹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.xiii.

received discourse in the form of his interpretation of others and their narratives, and in producing his own representative discourses. I concentrate first on his appropriation of discursive interpretation. My argument in this section is that Said presents his interpretations as an acceptable alternative to restrictive discursivities. What distinguishes these discursive interpretations is that he associates them with conditions of intentionality and existential experience. I examine the practicality of these stipulations and whether they constitute a logical differentiation between voluntary and involuntary interpretations, or whether they are actually unworkable, appropriated methodologies.

Firstly, it is essential to note that Said extends his arguments concerning power-infiltrated discursivity towards interpretation. Said argues that what is perceived as truth and knowledge is actually interpretation of those notions, and is largely dependent on individual insight and perception. He claims that human beings not only do not depend on direct contact with either truth or reality, but that they constantly rely on discursive ‘conventions’ which form their perception of reality and truth as ‘received interpretations’.²⁶² Said is actually extending his position on the impossibility of obtaining proof for objectivity and subjectivity, concerning human society, through presenting the argument that all of reality is actually a form of human interpretation which is subject to human individual discernment. The significance of this argument is that it offers an ethical and rational basis for producing counter-discourses. For if the perception of truth and knowledge is achieved through human-based interpretation, and interpretation is individualized discursivity, then there is no basis for imperial or oriental discourses to presuppose their monopoly over objective superiority. Said confirms, for instance, that ‘all knowledge’ is built upon what he describes as ‘judgement and interpretation’, and therefore facts, data and information gain their prominent status through human intervention rather than for their abstract philosophical value.²⁶³

As an extension of his relative subjectivity and objectivity theory, Said claims that all ‘interpretation is misinterpretation’ and that there is no dispute in which there could ever

²⁶²Said, *Covering Islam*, pp.41–42.

²⁶³Said, *Covering Islam*, pp.154–55.

be something which can be described as ‘correct interpretation’.²⁶⁴ His logic is based on the fact that it is epistemologically impossible to completely and accurately convey or describe any form of truth or any version of reality. As interpretations are always based on human perception, it is also logically impossible to argue that any discursive interpretation is able to fully articulate and transmit any piece of information or describe any realistic experience in its entirety. I believe that the rationale for Said’s argument is common-sensical and persuasive with regard to the relativity of all discourse and interpretation. Nevertheless, this argument does create a paradoxical dilemma. If all interpretation is indeed ‘misinterpretation’, whether produced by colonizer or colonized, for instance, then acknowledging this argument would compromise the justification for replacing one interpretation with another on the basis of its misinterpretation. It is obvious, and even commendable, that such an argument would demote any claim to objectivity and absolute knowledge, by orientalists for instance, as their interpretations and analyses would lose the leverage which enabled them to monopolize truth. Yet, ironically, this will also necessitate that counter-arguments, discourses and positions are also guilty of misinterpreting truths and reality.

What is more confusing is that Said presents other statements in which he further stigmatizes interpretation as necessarily repressive towards other discourses and arguments. In the following quotation from *Reflections on Exile*, Said presents another sweeping account which also implicates his critique of interpretation:

More urgently still Nietzsche saw human history as a battle of interpretations; for since man exists without hope of getting to the first link in the chain of interpretations he must present his own interpretation as if it were a secure meaning, instead merely of one version of the truth. By doing so he forcibly dislodges another interpretation in order to put another in its place.²⁶⁵

Here Said agrees with Nietzsche’s notion that any interpretation necessitates two logical trajectories. Firstly, that the interpretation presented by the interpreter is correct while other opposing ones are wrong; and secondly that another interpretation is ‘dislodged’ and

²⁶⁴Edward W. Said, *The Edward Said Reader*, ed. by Mustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (London: Granta Books, 2000), pp.423–24.

²⁶⁵Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.73.

dismissed by this ‘correct’ interpretation. It is not clear how claiming an interpretation is truthful or correct might transform it into a monopoly. Logically, the rejection of any misinterpretation does necessitate that there is a correct, or a more correct, interpretation that needs reinstating in its place. His own accusation of orientalist misinterpretation, for instance, plausibly requisites such a belief, otherwise how would it be possible to dispute the validity of any interpretation, if all interpretations were to be considered equal and disputable perceptions?

Said acknowledges the need for interpretation as well as a similar need for interpretation-resistant discourses to counter oppressive narratives. This logically leads to the conclusion that there is actually an acceptable form of interpretation. And this belief in interpretational possibility is crucial for his postcolonial resistance arguments, as the inability to produce interpretations is viewed as a prerequisite for restrictive intervention. In *Orientalism*, Said argues that the reason Orientalism was able to monopolize discursive interpretation is that it was able to dismiss opposing narratives, mainly due to their inadequacy. Orientalists argued that the orient is ‘radically incapable of interpreting itself’, and therefore orientalists were forced to take on the task of ‘reinterpretation’ of the orient and ‘rebuilding it’.²⁶⁶ Hence, according to Said, there was an urgent need for counter-interpretational discourses to deter and resist forced incursions. This is never more evident than in Said’s advocacy of the Palestinian cause and his calls for an ‘interpretational struggle’ against Israeli monopolies over the discursive reality of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.²⁶⁷

In order to evaluate Said’s interpretational arguments concerning objectivity and knowledge, I will examine one of the books he participated in editing and compiling. In *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, Said presented a scholarly and factual rebuttal of misinterpretations and misrepresentations of Palestinian history and the country’s struggle with occupation. In the introduction to this book, Said laments the fact that Israel has been able to sustain the discursive upper hand with regard to

²⁶⁶Said, *Orientalism*, pp.158 and 289.

²⁶⁷Said, *The Question of Palestine*, pp.8-9.

forwarding their ‘ideas, representations, rhetoric and images’.²⁶⁸ He poignantly describes Israeli aggression as a form of ‘Zionist colonialism’ which, like its colonial predecessors, has managed to deluge the West, in particular, with sustained discursive consistency which has monopolized and essentialized the ‘truth’ of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He insists that because the narrative of the Palestinian struggle has been predominantly controlled by Israel, Palestinian counter-discourses and arguments have become relegated to the status of fallacies and unreliable knowledge. Palestinian resistant discourses were restrained and even diminished under the pressure of a more dominant ‘Zionist viewpoint’.²⁶⁹ My purpose for referencing *Blaming the Victims* is to draw attention to a tangible example of the epistemological contradiction in Said’s interpretational arguments. Although Said has always insisted that it is ‘potentially’ impossible to empirically prove objective knowledge with concern to human societies, and that all interpretation is ‘misinterpretation’, the rationale behind the publication of *Blaming the Victims* disputes and contradicts these assertions. In fact, the whole book was premised on the idea that it was a corrective substitute for a book by Joan Peters titled *From Time Immortal: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine*. Said presents *Blaming the Victims* as a discursive project which is based on historical, geographical and anthropological counter-facts. His aim was to provide ‘evidence to refute most, if not all [Israeli] myths’ through a Palestinian ‘oppositional’ discourse. He even praises the idea that his publication was able to provide a pivotal contribution in a new wave of ‘counter-archival works’ which express Palestinian arguments and narratives.²⁷⁰ Regardless of its motives and intentions, Said’s book highly resembles any other discursive portrayals or interpretation. He insists that *Blaming the Victims* presents a more reliable factual source for the narration of the Palestinian situation and the conflict with Israel. My aim is to elucidate the fact that he was unable to produce different forms of discursive interpretation. For if there is indeed no way to avoid the compromised nature of discursive interpretations and representations, it becomes unclear how his own utilization of such narratives is acceptable while others are disputed. As the

²⁶⁸*Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, ed. by Edward W. Said and Christopher Hitchens (London: Verso, 2001), p.1.

²⁶⁹Said and Hitchens, *Blaming the Victims*, p.8.

²⁷⁰Said and Hitchens, *Blaming the Victims*, pp.13–15.

coming discussion will reveal, Said does see huge dissimilarity between his utilization of interpretational discourses and that of orientalists, for instance.

Due to his generalized scrutiny of interpretation, both regressive and resistant, Said argued for differentiations which separate admissible and rejected interpretative discourses. Said presents motive and intentionality as characteristics which distinguish permissible discourses. As postcolonial emancipatory discourses aim for justice, freedom and equality, Said permits their narratives as they do not seek to advance power apparatuses which oppress and subordinate individuals and nations. There are many instances in which Said differentiates between narratives which are used by orientalists and those used by postcolonial writers like himself on the basis of intention and motivation. An example of this differentiation is found in the following quotation from *Orientalism*:

What I do argue also is that there is a difference between knowledge of other peoples and other times that is the result of understanding, compassion, careful study and analysis for their own sakes, and on the other hand knowledge—if that is what it is—that is part of an overall campaign of self-affirmation, belligerency and outright war. There is, after all, a profound difference between the will to understand for purposes of co-existence and humanistic enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purposes of control and external dominion.²⁷¹

Said differentiates between two distinct kinds of knowledge which are ethically divergent. This differentiation is performed within the framework of his arguments about the disputability of subjective and objective knowledge and relativity of truth. Thus, it is logical to assume that such differentiation is mainly based on a considerable emphasis on individual intentionality. Yet Said is not very clear on how such intentionality might be measured or verified. It is possible that imperial, orientalist and colonial oppression could be perpetrated while claiming that it was done ‘for their own sake’, as Said suggests above. I am not in any way disputing the importance of motives and intention in all human actions and discourses. What I find perplexing is that such implicit characteristics could form the basis of a theoretical approach. It is absolutely impossible to discern how any discourse or interpretation could be permitted or discarded based on something so inherently implicit. Moreover, commendable intentions or motives do not guarantee a correct approach as

²⁷¹Said, *Orientalism*, p.xiv.

opposed to generating distorting narratives and interpretations. It would have been more logical to base his evaluations of interpretations on their actual accuracy and proximity to objectivity, truth and reality; yet this is ‘potentially’ impossible within Said’s theory of empirical relativity.

In another instance, Said once again calls for well-intentioned interpretations which take into consideration the motives for initiating discourse. But what is notable is that he also considers the possibility that the interpreter might actually attain knowledge:

[A]ll knowledge is interpretation, and that interpretation must be self-conscious in its methods and its aims if it is to be vigilant and humane, if it is also to arrive at knowledge. But underlying every interpretation of other cultures—especially of Islam—is the choice facing the individual scholar or intellectual: whether to put intellect at the service of power or at the service of criticism, community, and moral sense.²⁷²

The difficulty which arises is that humanistic and moralized knowledge could easily be claimed by any party, even orientalists, especially with objectivity and subjectivity being highly disputable in Said’s formulation. His concession that ‘arriving at knowledge’ is possible contradicts his earlier arguments concerning the necessarily mis-interpretive nature of all interpretations. My argument, again, is not that humanistic and value-based intentions are not legitimate or even commendable. My contention is that such differentiations which are based on intentionality and motive can never be quantified, and can easily be claimed by any individual or power structure.

The other condition which Said presents as differentiating between regressive and emancipatory narratives comes in the form of empirical experience. He argues that having ‘concrete experience’ assists in grounding his narratives by means of empathy and accuracy. Hence, unlike the narrative of Orientalism, which he described as being saturated in tropes of textually-imposed discipline, his narrative is supposedly built upon empirical observation and real-life understanding:

I’m an empiricist in many ways, you know. I think the experience of reading, the experience of the text, is for me, the first point. And it’s very difficult for me to make theoretical statements without reference to what I

²⁷²Said, *Covering Islam*, pp.163–64.

would call historical experience. So I always insist on the priority of historical and concrete experience.²⁷³

Said presents his narrative as experientially proven through practice and engagement, while simultaneously excluding other presumed un-empirical narratives from forming similar analogies. He is arguing that it is possible to evade the misinterpretations of narratives through situating them within their circumstances. This in turn prevents and restrains the interpreter from any misguided interpretations based on impositions of power structures or erroneous intentions. It is not very clear, still, how putting into consideration the ‘circumstances’ and ‘historical moments’ of a text or narrative and describing it as ‘worldly’ could in any way prevent it from becoming power-connected, or indeed affect the manner in which it is interpreted.²⁷⁴ The issue here is not, as Bill Ashcroft insists, solely based on the ‘crucial’ presence of the ‘worldliness of the text’ for the whole ‘business of interpretation’, although it is definitely beneficial.²⁷⁵ The crucial issue is that such ‘worldliness’ in circumstantial interpretation is jeopardized by Said’s relative and complicated view of objective and subjective knowledge. In fact, it would be commonsense to assume that if the interpreter is indeed individually waging an interpretative ‘battle’, as Said has argued, it would become very difficult to fault their interpretation and adherence to the circumstances of the text based on the simple fact that their effort is relative to individual perception. It would also be very difficult to envisage any interpreter, including orientalist, who would deny that their interpretation is not conscious of its reality or historical circumstances. The problem, I believe, is that Said has in mind a fixed notion of how a correct interpretation should be enacted based on personal experience. Nonetheless, arriving at such a result does not necessarily mean that all other interpretations would follow suit and arrive at the same un-coercive outcome, or indeed that this outcome is definitely free from interpretative distortions.

²⁷³Said, Singh, and Johnson, *Interviews with Edward W. Said*, pp.132–33.

²⁷⁴Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 4. Said defines Worldliness as follows: ‘some location of oneself or one’s work, or the work itself, the literary work, the text, and so on, in the world, as opposed to some extra-worldly, private, ethereal context. Worldliness was meant to be a rather crude and bludgeon-like term to enforce the location of cultural practices back in the mundane, the quotidian, and the secular.’ See Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, pp.335–36.

²⁷⁵Bill Ashcroft, ‘Edward Said’s Humanism’, in *Counterpoints: Edward Said’s Legacy*, ed. by May Telmissany and Stephanie Tara Schwartz (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p.5.

Said depicts acceptable and un-coercive interpretations as being dependent on individual intentionality and direct experience. This strategy becomes the foundation of Said's desired form of acceptable interpretation in the face of all forms of controlled and power-oriented analysis. The subjectivity of this strategy is apparent, as the following quotation suggests:

[I]nterpretations depend very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is in interpreting, at what historical moment the interpretation take place. In this sense, all interpretations are what might be called *situational*.²⁷⁶

Yet, conceding that 'all interpretations' are 'situational' does not in any way differentiate any interpretation from another. These observational descriptions, although evidently correct, are broad and relative. And given that Said presented intentionality and circumstantiality as conditions for more appropriate interpretations, those interpretational conditions, along with the observations above, do not guarantee that an interpretation is beyond influence from power due to their evident relativity and implicitness. Thus, it is unclear how the interpretational arguments Said presents are any different, or indeed better, than any given interpretation. Arif Dirlik believes that Said's scepticism led him to devise an approach which 'rendered personal experiences into method'.²⁷⁷ Dirlik suggests that Said is attempting to generalize personal experiences of rendering interpretation as the basis for theorizing permissible forms of discursive interpretation. What is noteworthy is the fact that Said found it possible to interpret the other and their narratives despite all his critiques of the risks associated with descriptive narration and interpretation. In the coming discussion are some examples of this.

The practicalities of Said's interpretations are not clearer than in his analytical approach towards texts and narratives. In what follows, I discuss how some interpretational risks manifest themselves in his reading and interpretation of Joseph Conrad and Jane Austen. The first example concerns his depiction of Conrad and the relation Said has with his narratives and circumstances. While it might seem iniquitous to judge Said's relationship with Conrad on the basis of one quotation, my real intention here is directed

²⁷⁶Said, *Covering Islam*, pp.154–55. Emphasis in original.

²⁷⁷Dirlik, 'Placing Edward Said: Space, Time and the Travelling Theorist', p.2.

towards the interpretative mechanism which he applies rather than his stance on Conrad in particular. I argue that Said's own interpretations reveal themselves extensively when he attempts to address Conrad and his narratives. To exemplify my point here, I present the following example from an interview conducted with Said:

That's true of Achebe's response to Conrad. He said, well, people study Conrad, but Conrad is just a racist. No matter how clever a writer he is, however good at depicting local colour, in the end his political attitudes are despicable to me as a black man. That's another version of the same argument. But they're not that to me. There's no reason for me to perform acts of amputation on myself, intellectual, spiritual, or aesthetic, simply because in the experience of other people from the Third World, a black novelist from Nigeria like Achebe or your West Indian friend, can make my Proust or Conrad into someone who is only despicable. I can share in feelings of alienation, and extremely severe critique, but I can't fully accept the dismissal of these writers; because they have meant a great deal to me and indeed play a role intellectually and aesthetically in the cultural life of the world in which we live.²⁷⁸

His stance towards Conrad raises many questions. Firstly, it indicates that Said finds it permissible to accept the misrepresentation of certain writers simply on the basis of their cultural impact. The subjectivity of his position is extreme in this instance. For it could be argued that others could dismiss Said's denunciation of orientalist narratives because they have also meant a great deal to other recipients who will not amputate their experience based on an accusation put forward by a former colonized subject. The appropriation and accommodation in Said's statement here is evidence of the risks which inconsistent positions might lead to when put into concrete practice.

Another very similar example is found in *Culture and Imperialism*, where Said performs a similar form of interpretive inconsistency regarding Jane Austen's narratives. Said ambiguously excuses many misgivings about Austen on the basis that she was of her time and that accusing her retrospectively is merely falling into the 'rhetoric of blame':

It would be silly to expect Jane Austen to treat slavery with anything like the passion of an abolitionist or a newly liberated slave. Yet what I have called the rhetoric of blame, so often now employed by subaltern, minority, or disadvantaged voices, attacks her, and others like her, retrospectively, for being white, privileged, insensitive, complicit. Yes, Austen belonged to a

²⁷⁸Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, pp.151–52.

slave-owning society, but do we therefore jettison her novels as so many trivial exercises in aesthetic frumpery?²⁷⁹

It would be logically possible to claim that some orientalists might be excused based on the fact that they were also of their time and circumstances, rather than blaming them retrospectively. Said's exemptions seem precarious with regard to their limits and the power they provide for individuals. He himself rejected any accusation of 'retrospectively attacking great writers and thinkers like Jane Austen' on the basis that they are politically incorrect in their views of slavery or Indian traditions, claiming instead that he simply saw them within their 'historical circumstances' and the 'context' of their own reality.²⁸⁰ However, this explanation does not refute the fact that Said's approach is highly assimilative and accommodative. The question not only concerns the methodology of Said's interpretation, it is also about its evident inconsistency, which permits accommodation and selectivity for the interpreter based on personal preferences and experiences.

Intentionality and circumstantiality are both important characteristics to consider when forming interpretations. Nevertheless, their application is severely curtailed by Said's earlier scepticism toward some forms of objective and subjective knowledge. They also become exclusionary, as they are advocated as forms of acceptable interpretation, while other interpretations are described as misinterpretations by Said. The epistemological conjuncture in Said's interpretational alternative is that it does not reveal a practical universal basis for a convincing argument, as many of its features are implicit and relative. That a comprehensive discursive alternative might be based on implicit intent and subjective circumstantial perceptions is highly unrealistic in my estimation.

4-4 Deconstructing Representation: Said Between Utilization and Prohibition

In the final section of this chapter, I concentrate on how Said deals with the idea of producing descriptive narratives and discourses. I discuss the manner in which Said treats

²⁷⁹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.115.

²⁸⁰Said and Rose, *Freud and the Non-European*, p.23.

representation as a means of constructing discourse and narrative to signify the self as well as other cultures and communities, and whether these arguments indeed align with his overarching position towards emancipation and discursivity. The coming discussion scrutinizes the consistency of Said's discursive strategy. I argue in this section that Said's descriptive approaches symbolize a characterizing feature of many of his anti-subordination confutations. Said's attack on and deconstruction of powerful discursive apparatuses, such as representation, involves all their applications, through a generalized dismissal of their sufficiency. Said found it epistemologically complex, and at times impossible, to circumvent the comprehensive restrictions and stigmas he attached to the concept of representation in order to rationalize a rejection of imperialist and colonialist discursive subjugation.

First, I will discuss Said's extensive critiques of discursive portrayals as mediums of conveying narrative and discourse, before moving on to review his own eventual utilization of this discursive apparatus. Said wrote extensively about representation, but I believe that his critique of this discursive method was based on the following three main rebuttals. Said begins by affirming his conviction that any description or narrative about another culture or people is in fact a characterization of that culture or people. And this necessitates two unavoidable consequences for Said. Firstly, that representations acquire a certain 'discursive consistency' in the form of a disciplined narrative which frames the whole argument surrounding the described entity, and deforms it.²⁸¹ Secondly, because 'all the descriptions' are in fact 'representations', they slowly acquire the status of 'discursive history' for all subsequent narratives, and gradually assume the status of solid 'facts and knowledge'.²⁸² Although this would apply to broad collective and institutional delineations, such as those produced by Orientalists, for instance, its application to specific individual accounts may seem implausible, to an extent. Yet, I do believe, however, that even individual discursive accounts of peoples and cultures could eventually become, whether intended or not, part of a larger collectively dominant descriptive discourse. What Said means is that these authoritative representational texts become confining discursive

²⁸¹Said, *Orientalism*, p.273.

²⁸²Eugenio Danato and Edward W. Said, 'An Exchange on Deconstruction and History', *Boundary 2*, 8.1 (1979), 65–74 (p.71) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/303139>>.

disciplines. Consequently, they develop into a consistent discourse which permits certain narrative structures and rejects others that are in opposition to them. Representation becomes built upon archival and textual formations which are received as objective truths and facts, and subsequently extended. What orientalists did, for instance, was rely on the discursive consistency of their narratives, which obstructed any non-conformist arguments from developing. Robert Young explains Said's theorization in the context of Orientalism:

The Orient is constructed in a representation that is then transmitted from text to text, with the result that Orientalist writing always reproduces its own unchanging stereotype of an unchanging Orient. Orientalism as a discourse constitutes a linguistic repetition structure of representations that draw their reality from the authority of textual repetition rather than any truth-value in relation to what they claim to represent. At this point, Orientalism begins to be seen as operating not primarily as a discursive discipline, but rather at the level of a tradition of representation, which Said criticizes on the grounds of its misrepresentation of the real in a hegemonic power/knowledge structure.²⁸³

Said's critique of representation in Orientalist contexts is based on his belief that they are not necessarily affiliated with reality or truth, although this in itself does not affect their practical implementation by Orientalists. These portrayals are, according to Said and Young, essentially discursive formations which hegemonize the other and monopolize narrative production. What this kind of discursive consistency provides is the structure for easily controlled and framed narratives and arguments. Colonialism, for instance, was able to direct and hegemonize orientalist narratives in order to align arguments with its own political and economic agendas.

I believe that the challenging aspect of Said's argument is the fact that many discourses could easily be accused of adhering to similar textual consistencies, even as they advance oppositional narratives. Narrative itself is preconditioned to be extended and built-upon with the likelihood of the formation of discursive bodies or archives. In addition, it is impossible to imagine that any writer, including Said, would be able to claim that their narratives are wholly based on personal direct experience and not dependent on other narratives as textual references, at least partially. But the main anomaly which Said's

²⁸³Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p.388.

critique produces is actually connected to its implications for all counter and resistant narratives. For if all representations are indeed reductive deformations, then this would surely include all narratives, whether dominant or resistant. Peter Childs and Patrick Williams noticed this contradiction and argue that it would present discursive incongruity for Said's arguments:

While the idea of representations as necessarily 'deformations'—which is how Said describes them at one point—might seem acceptable when we are dealing with the self-interested productions of Orientalism, it becomes more of a problem when we move to the most important post-colonial form, the self-representation of (formerly) colonized peoples.²⁸⁴

Childs and Williams are persuasive in their estimation concerning the complication Said's representational theorization presents for any postcolonial or resistant narrative. For it is clear that his depiction of representations as necessarily 'misrepresentations' would stifle many resistant narratives from ever forming. While Said's critique might be aimed at orientalist narratives and depictions, its generalized refutation of representational deformities means that all representations are indeed imprecise distortions. His argument also demotes resistant responses, and positions them on the same level as oppressive discursivities.

In his second critique, Said espouses his conviction that all forms of representation are flawed misrepresentations, at times, based on ideological motivations. He first indicates that all representations are defective by nature due to their intrinsic reliance on power structures. Yet, paradoxically, Said was also adamant that there could never be a representation which is free from power-instigated contamination and corruption:

My critique was premised on the flawed nature of all representations and how they are intimately tied up with worldliness, that is, with power, position, and interests. This required saying explicitly that my work was not intended as a defence of the real Orient or that it even made the case that a real Orient existed. I certainly held no brief for the purity of some representations against others, and I was quite specific in suggesting that no process of converting experience into expression could be free of contamination. It was already and necessarily contaminated by its

²⁸⁴Childs and Williams, *an Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, p.105.

involvement with power, position, and interests, whether it was a victim of them or not.²⁸⁵

What Said's statement here indicates is that all representations are by nature tied to positions of power and domination. And, consequently, all of these representations are contaminated with interests and manipulations which distort their discursive output. Again, Said's critique here is not confined to orientalist's portrayals, rather it encompasses all representations, as his broad generalization signifies. Said concludes that because all representations are actually contaminated forms of expression, it is possible to assume that '[a]ll representation is misrepresentation of one sort or another'.²⁸⁶ To understand Said's argument we must once again return to his Foucauldian conviction that knowledge and truth are basically discursive, and that representation itself is a manifestation of these discursivities. I believe that the general parameters of Said's argument concerning the impossibility of absolute and precise portrayals of any proportion is logical and difficult to dispute. As Bernhard Leistle indicates, even for advocates of the existence of absolute objective truth and knowledge, these abstract notions are only perceived and produced through subjective human perception, which is both relative and diverse to an extent.²⁸⁷ Yet to concede representational relativity is very different from claiming that all representations are 'misrepresentations'. This necessitates two logical options for Said. Either he is able to offer a methodological alternative to discursive accounts and illustrations, or he must accept their intrinsic imperfections and utilize them despite their compromising nature.

There are contradictions which arise from Said's second critique of representation which I would like to discuss. Because Said, as I have discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, is incredulous about proving subjective or objective knowledge in some contexts, this entails that there could not be an entity or notion which is perfectly representable to begin with. It could also be claimed that it is impossible to denounce any discursive depiction as misrepresentation, as there is no 'empirically' proven factual reality to distort. Robert Young acutely observed this conundrum when reviewing Said's *Orientalism*:

²⁸⁵Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, pp.48–49.

²⁸⁶Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, pp.237–38.

²⁸⁷Bernhard Leistle, 'Representations of the other: Reading Orientalism through Phenomenology', in *Counterpoints: Edward Said's Legacy*, ed. by May Telmissany and Stephanie Tara Schwartz (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p.216.

Furthermore, if Said denies that there is any actual Orient which could provide a true account of the Orient represented by Orientalism, how can he claim in any sense that the representation is false?²⁸⁸

This argument is also connected to Said's claim that all forms of truth and knowledge are relative and disputable. Moreover, if all discourse is already a misrepresentation, as Said argues, then this confirms it as the only method of perceiving and describing reality, and to call it misrepresentation necessitates two possibilities. Either all representations are only manifest as misrepresentations and the concept of representation is non-existent in practice. This possibility is refuted by the fact that Said utilizes representation to present alternative emancipatory discourses, as I discuss later. The other possibility requires that there is actually a potentially acceptable form of portrayal that could be implemented. In actuality, what Said does is confirm the existence of representation through critiquing misrepresentation. This is because denouncing misrepresentation as distortion logically necessitates that there is actually better and worse forms of representation. And this is exactly my argument. For although Said seems to rigorously denounce certain forms of representation, what he succeeded in achieving was to curtail the possibility of a nuanced representational utilization.

The third and final critique which Said presents as evidence for the inability of all representations to become viable methods for producing non-coercive narratives is his assertion that all representations are premised on their intrinsic force. Said argues that all forms of representation require control and even violence towards those represented and their narratives:

[C]ertainly representation, or more particularly the act of representing (and hence reducing) others, almost always involves violence of some sort to the *subject* of the representation. [...] The action or process of representing implies control, it implies accumulation, it implies confinement, it implies a certain kind of estrangement or disorientation on the part of the one representing [...] a discursive system involving political choices and political force, authority in one form or another.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, p.170.

²⁸⁹Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, pp.40–41. Emphasis in original.

Said is claiming that all forms of representation necessitate forms of reductive control over the other to some degree, because there is no perfect method of conveying experience in its totality. As a result, representation is able to produce reductions which confine and essentialize those represented, although this not persistently the case. An even more imposing claim is made by Said when he also argues that '[a]ll cultures tend to make representations of foreign cultures the better to master or in some way control them'.²⁹⁰ The epistemological situation becomes very precarious here concerning Said's stance on representation. For if all cultures participate in these misrepresentations, then surely orientalist have not committed anything beyond what is widely practiced. And if such representations are all forms of reductive control, then it would be a more logical alternative for Said to reject them completely rather than assimilate and utilize them. Sadik Jalal Al-Azm noticed these contradictions concerning the participation of all cultures in such reductive apprehension of the other in the form of representation:

If, as Said insists, the unfamiliar, exotic and alien is always apprehended, domesticated, assimilated and represented in terms of the already familiar, then such distortions and misrepresentations become inevitable.²⁹¹

I believe that Al-Azm is accurate when he espouses that Said describes all portrayals of realities, cultures and peoples as forms of misrepresentation and reduction; and this in turn had the counterproductive effect of normalizing all these misrepresentations as the only available means of conveying and portraying reality and others, hence their inevitability. It is very interesting to point out that Sara Farris and Bill Ashcroft agree that Said's real concern with representation was not only its inability to convey accurate truths or correct facts, but that he was more focused on matters related to its involvement with power, authority and domination.²⁹² Said is correct to question representational complicity with power, and I certainly believe that deconstructing representational relativity lessens the ability of power apparatuses to use it to constrain other arguments and narratives. Yet it must be also stated that such critiques do not necessitate that Said's alternative depictions

²⁹⁰Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.120.

²⁹¹Jalal Al-Azm, p.221.

²⁹² See the following: 'An Ideal Type Called Orientalism', Sara Farris, *Interventions*, 2010; 'Representation and Liberation: From Orientalism to the Palestinian Crisis', Bill Ashcroft, in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, ed. by Adel Iskander and Hakem Rustum.

are incapable of dismissing other discursive portrayals or essentializing those who are being represented.

Said seemingly contradicts his sceptical stance on representation, as he argues that it could be possible, or even necessary, to implement representation as a discursive method of conveying experiences and arguments. He explains the need to appropriate discursive presentations from two perspectives: the first is the intellectual perspective and the other is his personal perspective as a Palestinian. Beginning with his intellectual reasoning for the use of representation, Said argues that an intellectual is a 'representative figure [...] with a vocation for the art of representing'.²⁹³ Representation becomes a vital part of any intellectual vocation, according to Said. He argues for a re-fashioned representational strategy which could be admitted as opposed to the corrupt forms of representation. For instance, Said argues that all representations should be 'tied' to an 'ongoing experience in society', where the intellectual becomes the representative of the poor, disadvantaged, unrepresented and the powerless.²⁹⁴ Said is calling for intellectual portrayals which always side with the underprivileged rather than being co-opted by power structures or driven by personal interest. This condition seems highly idealistic and subjective to the extent that it might amount to being an ethical truism. It would be highly unlikely to find an intellectual who claims that their description is detached from reality or unethical. But what is more significant in Said's appropriation of intellectual representation is his confession that some form of objective truth could actually be attained. In his arguments for admissible representations, he proclaims that an intellectual has to choose between 'actively representing the truth to the best of [their] ability, and passively allowing a patron or an authority to direct [them]'.²⁹⁵ It would be empirically difficult to represent the 'truth' if it is relative and dependent on varied human perceptions and interpretations. Daniel Varisco explained this contradiction perfectly as he explains that Said's 'numerous writings and interviews strongly suggest that he has the needed truth or at least the right kind of truth'.²⁹⁶ Said's scepticism concerning empirically proven objective knowledge have become

²⁹³Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.10.

²⁹⁴Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.84.

²⁹⁵Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.90.

²⁹⁶Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*, Publications on the Near East (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), p.viii.

impossible to maintain when trying to devise mechanisms for counter-narratives. As Varisco indicates, what Said eventually advocated was representational aspirations for truth. Therefore, not only did Said acknowledge the need to represent truth, he also affirmed the existence of truth, or at least some form of truth. That intellectuals aspire to represent truth and justice is a perfectly logical and commendable aim. Yet without access to universal and objective truths and values, this would most certainly lead to varied renditions of these formulations. As I discuss below, Said found it necessary to promote historical, geographical and anthropological facts in order to counter what he believed to be misrepresentations of Palestine and Palestinians.

As I have indicated above, Said envisages that there is scope for an appropriated form of representation which is conscious of the ethical conditions of its permissible application. What Said proposes is a representation which is free from all forms of dominant authority and distortion:

Representations are a form of human economy, in a way, and necessary to life in society and, in a sense, between societies. So I don't think there is any way of getting away from them—they are as basic as language. What we must eliminate are systems of representation that carry with them the kind of authority which, to my mind, has been repressive because it doesn't permit or make room for interventions on the part of those represented.²⁹⁷

Said is correct to point out that his representational alternative 'permits and makes room for interventions'. Yet it would be very difficult to envision a representation which is free from all forms of authority and power influence, as Said proposes, even if the motives are aspirational and ethically commendable. For as Said's agreement with Nietzsche earlier indicates, representation is inherently premised on a degree of power association as well its ability to dislodge or dismiss other contending narratives.

Representation is also used by Said as a personal means of emancipation, as a dispossessed Palestinian postcolonial subject. There are numerous examples in which Said is actively portraying himself as representational figure for both Palestinians and Arabs. Said's representational efforts, although justifiable, do fit my argument that it is exceedingly difficult to sidestep all the compromising negativities which he has already

²⁹⁷Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, pp.41–42.

criticised in orientalist and imperialist portrayals and discourses. A glaring example is found in Said's concession that at least eight of his books were aimed at representing Palestinian, Arab and even Islamic people and causes. And while it could be argued that there is nothing inherently wrong with a Palestinian trying to represent Palestine, the suggestion that a single narrative could represent Palestine as a collective seems incredibly reductive in the context of Said's arguments. His claim of representing a form of Palestinian reality contradicts all of his positions on individuality of experience, perception and delineation. My contentions might seem hypothetical, but they are actually based on clear and specific examples in which Said states emphatically that his aim is to represent the Palestinian situation and people. This is clear when Said declares that he has written *The Question of Palestine* for the sole goal of 'putting before the Western reader a broadly representative Palestinian position', and that he has based his views on what he calls 'the Palestinian experience'.²⁹⁸ How such representational discourses, which are based on his individual experience to a large extent, cannot be themselves misrepresentations to a degree, in the context of Said's arguments, is an anomaly.

There are actually explicit examples in which he takes his representative position to excessive lengths. He states, for example, that he does not mind being presented as a 'token' Palestinian who says something 'reasonable' in Western media. He also believes that being a 'leading Palestinian intellectual' meant that proving him a liar jeopardizes all Palestinian narratives and arguments.²⁹⁹ These examples are not meant as a selective interrogation of Said's integrity, especially given that he has continuously been attacked as a main target of anti-Arab hostility. His representational and discursive efforts are both justified and commendable. It is, however, incongruous that Said has attempted to escape the dominant narratives of exclusive objectivity he associates with Orientalists, only to use similar methodologies in similar situations, as when he advocated the presentation of Palestinian objective corrective facts in the face of falsification and fabrication. This polemic position is indicative of the dilemma which Said's theorizations have led him towards with regard to representation. He was finally forced to use the same discursive mechanisms which he had criticised orientalists for using and rarefying, insisting that they

²⁹⁸Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p.xxxv.

²⁹⁹Said, Singh, and Johnson, *Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.180.

are in fact adequate and ethically enabling. There is no denying that he has contradictorily ‘engaged in asserting empirical truths against alleged misrepresentation or fabrication’, as Stephan Howe asserts.³⁰⁰ In short, Said came to use representation and narrativity in an appropriated manner, which, nevertheless, still did not disguise the similarity of his rendering to that of any other depiction he rejected in terms of methodology and approach. But as Said himself confesses, his own narratives, arguments and descriptions similarly demanded factual truths and societal approval in order to become viable.

4-5 Conclusion

Said’s approach to discourse, narrative, interpretation and representation reveals a tendency towards fashioning a position which simultaneously provides the facility for counter-narrative and emancipatory discourses while also being free from all forms of subordination. In his radical rejection of these discursive forms, Said exemplifies the difficulties associated with the production of postcolonial counter-narratives and arguments. And while Said strived toward producing alternatives that are less compromised by any form of authoritative domination, in many instances he has clearly shown a tendency to essentialize and dismiss other narratives, representations and interpretations. Emancipatory narratives and discourses are not necessarily immune in terms of showing signs of control and assimilation. I believe what my analysis of Said’s discussions of discourse, interpretation and representation reveals is the epistemological difficulty of producing narratives which are not affected by power or dismissive of other arguments. Although Said is convincing in his denunciations of power-related narratives which manipulate discursivity, his own applications and narratives do not offer a persuasive alternative. His severe critiques of orientalist and imperialist narratives succeed in devaluing their claims to objectivity, yet they also demote counter and resistant responses. His alternatives to the generalized scepticism towards dominant narratives, interpretations and discourses are permissible on the basis of implicit and relative conditional appropriations which are both vague and difficult to utilize as practical and comprehensive alternatives to existing discourses. I believe that Said’s discursive arguments reveal

³⁰⁰Howe, ‘Edward Said: The Traveller and the Exile’, 2003, p.10.

commendable awareness and remarkable efforts to counter oppressive and dominant incursions. Yet, as Foucault and Nietzsche both argued, discursive forms are always conditioned with certain levels of power with regard to other narratives. They are also in constant need of political, social and economic support, and tend to assimilate and essentialize the objects of their interpretations and representations. Unlike orientalists and imperialists, Said was not the perpetrator but the victim of limited discursive paradigms available for oppositional resistant individuals. Said's epistemological anomaly is located in his excessive conflation of discursive method and power appropriation. The fact that discourse, interpretation and representation are methodologies which might become facilitators for orientalist authority does not necessitate abandoning them entirely. That Said's own interpretational and representational alternatives were circumscribed with explicit conditions such as intention, experience and circumstantiality espouses this fact. Rather than portraying all of these methodologies as power-oriented misinterpretations and misrepresentations, it would have been more logical to introduce his implicit conditions from the outset. Through his extensive and rigorous insistence on the deficiency of this methodology, Said actually curtailed other emancipatory discourses without providing viable alternatives.

Chapter Five

After the Last Sky and the Paradoxes of Postcolonial Representation

5-1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine Said's alternative depictions of Palestine and Palestinians. Said was a Palestinian-American academic who fervently critiqued orientalist and imperialist essentialism and impositions; *After the Last Sky* is one of his earliest attempts at producing alternative postcolonial accounts. My main aim is to examine Said's ability to evade the discursive deficiencies he associates with imperial and orientalist narratives, and to explore whether his Palestinian counter-representations offer an ethical and practical model for postcolonial discursivity. This chapter considers the possibility of his production of precarious portrayals being considered reductive and essentialist, and thus my arguments mainly focus on delineating this paradoxical prospect. I argue that Said's counter-orientalist and anti-imperialist arguments and theories do not digress or extensively discuss the possibility of native-produced 'Orientalisms'. As Said's own collective auto/biography reveals, oppositional narratives and alternative discourses initiated by the oppressed and the colonized are not immune from the essentialisms and distortions he associates with Orientalism.³⁰¹ I also examine whether the 're-orientalist' occurrences in Said's *After the Last Sky* expand the margins of orientalist implications and elucidate the complexities of producing non-coercive collective life narratives. As Said speaks from the West, and to the West, aiming to provide correctives and alternative narratives, he found it exceedingly difficult to sidestep the implications of the power apparatuses he associates with orientalist and imperialist depictions.

In my analysis of Said's auto/biography, I invoke Lisa Lau's theory of 're-orientalism'. Lau argues that due to the presence of large diasporas in many Western

³⁰¹ Although *After the Last Sky* is an overwhelmingly biographical text, I have chosen to use the phrase 'auto/biography' due to the fact that Said extensively inserts digressions of an autobiographical nature. The dichotomy of the biographical and the autobiographical in *After the Last Sky* is also crucial for some of my discussions in this chapter. Biography and autobiography are defined as follows: 'Biography is generally defined as the story of a person's life written by another, and autobiography as the story of one's life written by one's self'. See Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom, *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography and Gender* (Albany: State University of New York, 1990), p.3.

nations, it became exceedingly problematic to decide whether to consider their narratives ‘oriental’ or ‘occidental’, this is despite the fact that labelling them in this manner might, in itself, be considered reductively essentializing. She argues that while these ‘non-Westerners’ sometimes write from their positions as diasporic individuals, their narratives are relatively dependent on powerful positionalities which are amalgamated with their insider-outsider status, or the Eastern-Western dichotomy. Lau asserts that through combining their occidental power-positions with oriental authenticity, they sometimes acquire a privileged standing which echoes that associated with orientalists.³⁰² I examine the applicability of Lau’s ‘re-orientalism’ theory in my reading of Said’s auto/biography. In the remainder of this introduction, I present a historical contextualization of Palestine and an account of the country’s struggle with Israel. I then discuss the circumstances which led to and accompanied the production of *After the Last Sky*. The second section of this chapter discusses Said’s depiction of and opinions concerning Palestinian narratives and historical discourses. The subsequent section concentrates on Said’s relations with the general population of Palestine, and how he represents the Palestinian masses. The final section of this chapter delves deeper in examining Said’s portrayal of Palestinian and Arab women. My aim in analysing all of these portrayals is to examine the validity of Said’s ‘re-orientalist’ essentialisms in his auto/biography.

I must affirm from the outset of this chapter that I do acknowledge the emancipatory and aspirational nature of Said’s auto/biography. I also emphasize my conviction that most of his narrative in *After the Last Sky* is sympathetic and accurate in its depiction of Palestinians. Yet I have chosen not to address these overwhelming instances because they resemble what is logical and expected from one of the leading advocates of the Palestinian cause. I chose instead to concentrate only on the instances where I believe he might have shown signs of essentialism and misrepresentation. The reason for this is that these examples offer invaluable insight into the practicalities of his theoretical anti-orientalist frameworks, and also indicate the limits and vulnerabilities of postcolonial counter-narratives.

³⁰²Lau, ‘Re-Orientalism: The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Orientals’, (pp.571–75).

The history of Palestine provides an essential context for understanding Said's life and narratives. *After the Last Sky* itself was motivated to a large extent by the Palestinian plight, as Said directed his efforts towards formulating discursive forms of resistance against Israeli occupation. Prior to the First World War, Palestine was still part of the Ottoman Empire, which was already nearing its collapse. As part of the Levant region, along with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, Palestine had an important strategic, economic and religious status for the Ottomans and Arabs. Being a portal country with access to the Mediterranean, the Dead Sea and the Red Sea further cemented its geo-political importance for the Ottomans, and later for colonialists. It was also a highly fertile agricultural land with abundant access to rivers and irrigation, in a largely dry and barren region. It famously houses many holy sites for Muslims, Christians and Jews. During the early decades of the twentieth century, Palestine had a Muslim majority, along with many minorities, including considerable Christian and Jewish communities. Although Jewish immigration to Palestine started early on during the reign of the Ottomans, it was small in scale and there was no significant conflict during this era.

As the First World War neared its end, with the victory of the allied forces, the Ottomans suffered a crushing defeat which exacerbated their dissolution and demise in Turkey. The central event during this turbulent period occurred far away from the region, in London. In 1917, and as the allied forces were nearing their complete victory in the war, Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, declared British Government support for the establishment of a 'Jewish state' in Palestine. Earlier that year, the British had established their colonial presence on Palestinian soil, as they, along with the French, effectively divided the Levant between them. But it was not until 1920 that the British gained legitimate and recognized control over Palestine. During the 1920 Allied Powers Conference in San Remo, the British were officially granted a mandate which gave them absolute governance over Palestine and its people. From 1920 till the abrupt end of the British Mandate in 1948, Palestine witnessed numerous riots from the Arab population, along with extensive Jewish immigration and settlement under British supervision.

As the Mandate ended in 1948, the establishment of the 'Jewish State of Israel' immediately followed during the same year. The Jewish state had already gained

considerable legitimacy even before its official establishment, as the United Nations called for a two-state solution in 1947, in order to resolve the already brewing Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine. With the founding of Israel, there were a series of Arab-Israeli wars and skirmishes which witnessed considerable Arab and international interference. The year 1948, of course, signals the Arab Nakba, catastrophe, which led to the exile and displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, including Said's own family. Although Israel gained huge areas of land during these conflicts, it was not until the 1967 Naksa that it solidified full control over the whole of Palestine. It is also important to note that with the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the PLO, the situation began to veer towards being framed as an Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Arab support becoming either implicit or reluctant. Although Said and his family became refugees in 1948, forbidden from returning to their homes and country, he asserts that it was not until 1967 that his political awakening, which motivated and ignited his activism and defence of the Palestinian cause, came into being.³⁰³

Before discussing *After the Last Sky*, it is vital to contextualize its links and dependence on *Orientalism*. I believe that a clear line can be drawn between these two projects, though they may appear distinct in their genres. *Orientalism* was written in 1978 as a scholarly refutation of colonial and orientalist essentialisms of the East. In it, Said offered a ground-breaking analysis of how Western knowledge and objectivity became assimilated and governed by political, cultural and economic colonial interests, while simultaneously being disguised as scholarly endeavour. Said himself did not consider *Orientalism* an 'abstract' historical account, but rather part of the 'struggle of Arab and Palestinian nationalism [and] liberation from [...] stereotypes and [...] domination'.³⁰⁴ For Said, the struggle with colonialist, imperialist and orientalist incursions is not in any way hypothetical for Palestinians, as they are still under colonial 'Israeli' rule. He presents the example of the continuous American and Israeli collusion in maintaining Israeli dominance and control over 'the native Palestinian Arab population' since 1948. Through their armies of 'Arabists and Islamists', who worked alongside military and political officials, they

³⁰³Said and Hitchens, *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*. This book offers a comprehensive account of Palestine's history.

³⁰⁴Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.374.

continued the classic orientalist practice and were able to control the narratives and frame most of the arguments concerning the conflict. Said presents Menachem Milson, a professor of Arabic literature who administered the West Bank during 1983, as an example of the persistence of colonial-orientalist collusion. Said saw these Palestinian realities as evidence of the continuation of classical forms of Orientalism and imperialism against the Orient.³⁰⁵ As colonialism and imperialism are still concrete actualities for Palestinians, this in turn would justify his extensive body of counter and alternative narratives and arguments, including *After the Last Sky*.

But how does *After the Last Sky*, as an auto/biography, fit within the framework of Said's resistant anti-orientalist and anti-imperialist theories and arguments? I believe that *After the Last Sky* continues the arguments made in *Orientalism*. *Orientalism* itself, as Said confirms, was not overtly concerned with offering any alternative or more accurate depictions of the Orient. He explicitly describes his 'project' in *Orientalism* as being more inclined to describe and critique the 'system of ideas' used by orientalists, rather than replacing that 'system' with any alternative or improved methodology of his own.³⁰⁶ And this point was unequivocally repeated in *Orientalism* and elsewhere. Yet, only two years later, Said would come to the conclusion that an alternative 'system' was indeed necessary and possible in order to deter and replace orientalist and imperialist misrepresentations of Palestinians, Arabs and even Muslims. As the following quotation suggests, he overtly called for the construction of Palestinian alternative arguments and discourses as part of the effort to counter misrepresentations of Arabs and Palestinians in Israeli and Western media and scholarship:

The point has come when we [Arabs] cannot simply accuse the West of Orientalism and racism—I realize that I may be vulnerable on this point—and go on doing little about providing an alternative. If our work isn't enough in the Western media, for example, or isn't known well by Western writers and scholars, a good part of the blame lies with us.³⁰⁷

The context of Said's confessed vulnerability is a conscious reference to the many critiques which *Orientalism* received, notably by James Clifford and Aijaz Ahmad, who both agreed

³⁰⁵Said and Barsamian, *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian*, p.27.

³⁰⁶Said, *Orientalism*, p.325.

³⁰⁷Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, p.393.

that Said did not or was not able to provide any notion of what an alternative to Orientalism might resemble, or indeed if it even exists.³⁰⁸ Evidently, it could be argued that Said was never interested in forwarding any form of systematic alternative to Orientalist strategies as he was more focused on critiquing Orientalism; although this in itself does not diminish the criticism raised by Clifford and Ahmad. I do believe that their critique is not exclusively concerned with producing alternative theories and strategies, but also with real-life implications of Said's critiques with concern to discussing, depicting and representing other peoples and cultures. The quotation also implies that attending to academic discourses without also thinking about popular perceptions of the Palestinian cause was problematic. And although Said was extremely cautious with regard to providing any form of substitutional narrative or alternative, he immediately followed *Orientalism* with two books which he describes as compensating for what he recognized as missing in his 1978 publication, namely a theoretical and discursive 'alternative'. In his 1994 'Afterword' to *Orientalism*, Said describes it as a book which was 'understandably written against a personal and national history shaped and dominated' by colonialism, imperialism and Orientalism. This observation in itself is neither surprising nor scarce within Said's oeuvre. His subsequent remarks, however, indicate an essential basis for understanding the motives behind the writing of *After the Last Sky*. Invoking the dismissal by Golda Meir, the fourth Israeli Prime Minister (1969–1974), of the existence of any Palestinian people, he presents his two books which immediately followed *Orientalism* as an attempt at providing representative and discursive alternatives:

There was, of course, an attempt in both of the later books [*The Question of Palestine* (1980) and *Covering Islam* (1981)] to supply what was missing in *Orientalism*, namely a sense of what an alternative picture of parts of the Orient—Palestine and Islam respectively—might be, from a personal point of view.³⁰⁹

I believe that this crucial statement challenges the widely acknowledged misconception that Said was never interested in providing an alternative to orientalists' deformations and

³⁰⁸ See Bryan Turner, 'Edward W. Said: Overcoming Orientalism', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21.1 (2004), 173–77 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404041958>> ; James Clifford, 'Orientalism (Book Review)', *History and Theory*, 19.2 (1980), 204–23 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2504800>> ; Aijaz Ahmad, 'Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Cosmopolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27.30 (1992), pp.98–116.

³⁰⁹Said, *Orientalism*, p.338.

stereotypes. In both of the books which followed *Orientalism*, he attempts to present an ‘alternative picture’ of Islam and of Palestine. What is significant for the discussion in this chapter is that *After the Last Sky*, which was originally conceived in 1983 and then published in 1986, would continue and extend the line of arguments and narratives presented in these two books. This chronological contextualization would certainly explain Said’s insistence on describing his auto/biography as an ‘alternative’ to prevailing perceptions and misconceptions, particularly in the West.

The circumstances which led to the inception of *After the Last Sky* were ironically fitting with its purpose. In 1983, Said was serving as the United Nations consultant for the ‘International Conference on the Question of Palestine’, which was held in Geneva. As part of the functions accompanying the proceedings, Said suggested that Jean Mohr, a Swiss photographer, be commissioned to provide a photo exhibition showcasing the life and plight of Palestinians within Palestine and in refugee camps in neighbouring Arab countries. Unexpectedly, the exhibition was almost cancelled due to various pressures exerted by some delegates, including the Israelis and Americans. Finally, a compromise was reached through which only photos were allowed to be exhibited, without any form of comment or description.³¹⁰ Said’s response was to reinstate the project as a book which was accompanied by extensive comments, descriptions and anecdotes. This oppressive episode further accentuated Said’s argument for the urgent need to provide Palestinian alternative discourses which highlighted and advanced their cause and arguments, in response to such suppressions. That Said was intent on defending the Palestinian cause is not unexpected, nor is the fact that an occupied people might be prevented from fully and freely articulating their arguments and narratives. What is noteworthy, nonetheless, is the methodological strategies which he employs in order to achieve his emancipatory alternatives in *After the Last Sky*, as the coming discussion will reveal.

In the final part of this introduction, I will analyse Said’s auto/biographical strategies. My aim is to emphasize how these methodologies intersect and reinstate many of the emancipatory strategies I have discussed in the previous four chapters of my thesis. The

³¹⁰Edward W. Said and Jean Mohr, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp.3–4.

main strategic basis which characterizes Said's auto/biography is his reliance on the concept of 'double vision', which he proposes as the methodological foundation for the construction of *After the Last Sky*.³¹¹ 'Double vision' is a term which describes Said's ability to amalgamate different positions and strategies when constructing his oppositional narratives or arguments. It is, in short, a dialectical alternation between two or more contrasting positions or strategies. In *Orientalism*, he describes his 'double vision' as a form of 'thinking contrapuntally'.³¹² An example of such 'double vision' alternation in his auto/biography is found in the amalgamation between subjectivism and objectivism, or detachment and attachment. At times, such dialectical dichotomies might seem contrasting or even epistemologically contradictory, yet Said is adamant that they produce workable, practical and more accurate narratives and arguments. In the remainder of this introduction, I present different examples of his 'double vision' strategies and how they can, at times, transform shortcomings into strengths, according to Said.

The notions of doubleness and 'juxtaposition' are frequently and explicitly articulated in *After the Last Sky*. The first clear feature of this book is its tendency to amalgamate biography with autobiography. Although the book was originally designed as a biographical, photographic and textual narrative about Palestinian life and people, Said moves swiftly between collective and personal narratives and anecdotes. In many instances, there are sudden shifts between 'I' and 'we'. There are numerous examples of biographical episodes concerning Said, his parents and even his extended relatives. This juxtaposition of 'personal disclosure' and 'communal voice', as Ana Dopico describes it, is not uncommon or contradictory in many auto/biographical texts.³¹³ And as a Palestinian himself, it is not in any way unusual that personal experiences are incorporated in Said's Palestinian biography. The amalgamation, however, becomes complicated when Said describes his auto/biography as a 'source book'. He goes on to explain that *After the Last Sky* is 'a central feature of [his] writing and political life', that is, of course, up to the publication of the book in the mid-Eighties, but also, and more significantly, he declares it 'a source book for the Palestinian

³¹¹Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.6.

³¹²Said, *Orientalism*, p.xvii.

³¹³Ana Dopico, 'The Recourses of Necessity: Repetition, Secular Mourning, and Edward Said's inventories of Late Return', *Social Text*, 24.2 (87) (2006), 111–23 (p.117) <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-24-2_87-111>.

condition'.³¹⁴ The notion of authoring an auto/biography which is self-proclaimed as being a 'source book' for a people is in itself somewhat ambiguous, although it is presented in very modest terms, unless Said is presenting his private experience and perceptions as representative of Palestinians, which he is not. Said is not very lucid on how exactly his personal auto/biographical narratives might amount to a 'source' for collective Palestinian situations and experiences. The coming discussion will elaborate further on Said's ambiguity.

Said's personal incursions within a national biography stem from a very conscious and rational decision. His personal connections to the Palestinian cause and plight further intensify his standing as someone who is able to describe Palestinians with considerable authority and direct experience. That Said would consider his own personal experiences representative of a general Palestinian condition is somewhat implausible. In *Orientalism* Said warns against 'morphing [...] the purely autobiographical and personal to official statement'.³¹⁵ He also criticized orientalist scholars for rendering their personal experiences and narratives as undisputed objective facts which they claimed to be resembling the reality of the Orient. And as a scholar writing in the West and to the West on issues concerning the Middle East, Said is well aware of his credentials as someone who is able to render both positions while consciously acknowledging their risks. In a revealing passage from *The Question of Palestine*, which was published a few years prior to *After the Last Sky*, Said elaborates further on his enabling personal standing:

Let me use myself as an example. Most of my education, and certainly all of my basic intellectual formation, are Western; in what I have read, in what I write about, even in what I do politically, I am profoundly influenced by mainstream Western attitudes [...] And yet, because I am an Arab Palestinian, I can also see and feel other things—and it is these things that complicate matters considerably, that cause me also to focus on Zionism's other aspects. The result is, I think, worth describing, not because what I think is so crucial, but because it is useful to see the same phenomenon in two complementary ways, not normally associated with each other.³¹⁶

³¹⁴Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, pp.x–xi.

³¹⁵Said, *Orientalism*, p.157.

³¹⁶Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p.60.

That Said sees his diverse personal experiences as enabling is not in itself erroneous. It is understandable that Said, who is predominantly addressing Western audiences, as he himself affirms, would be interested in demonstrating his experiences and credentials as the author of reliable alternative narratives and illustrations. Yet the depictions of his ‘double’ experience seem to suggest that he is in an advantageous position with regard to representing the situation in Palestine. As the coming sections of this chapter reveal, Said depends heavily on his implicitly inferred ‘expertise’. His expert-based portrayals become exceedingly problematic in the context of collective narratives of the Palestinian people, as they provide him with disproportionate power and authority over communal and national discourses and narratives of Palestine and Palestinians.

It is important to note that Said was always aware and critical of orientalist’s utilization of their standing as experts as a means of marginalizing other opposing narratives and arguments. He argued that orientalist have ‘tended to use their standing as experts [...] to certify their objectivity and scientific impartiality’.³¹⁷ My point is not concerned with putting Said’s expertise into question, rather it is to emphasize the difficulty Said found in sidestepping the need for such a position in his own rendering of the Palestinian and Arab experience. To reiterate, in *After the last Sky*, Said presents an auto/biography which he hoped might become a ‘source book’ for rectifying the misconceptions and misrepresentations of Palestine and Palestinians. Nonetheless, in doing so Said implicitly reinstated himself as an expert presenting a corrective narrative for the Western reader. And although Said criticizes Orientalism for being immersed in reductive forms of ‘expertise’, he does not really show how his own utilization sidesteps such stigma, or if his ‘nativist’ collective representations are permissible.³¹⁸ The risk concerns espousing his ‘expert’ status to formulate collective representations which might oppress and assimilate other Palestinian narratives and arguments, a possibility which will be validated through my analysis of his auto/biography.

Said’s approach in *After the Last Sky* is dependent on many of the positional strategies which were discussed in previous chapters. These positions offer Said an

³¹⁷Said, *Covering Islam*, p.23.

³¹⁸Said, *Orientalism*, p.199.

enabling location from which to narrate and represent himself and Palestine. Right from the very outset of his auto/biography, Said declares that '*After the Last Sky* is an exile's book, written in the mid-1980s as an attempt to render Palestinian lives subjectively, at a great distance from Palestine itself'.³¹⁹ Said here confesses to the obvious limitation of his position when writing his auto/biography. But also he asserts one of his main positional strategies which he employs in his book, namely exilic locatedness. The exilic position from which he projects his narrative is essential and enabling, in Said's estimation. Exile, as I have shown in the second chapter of this thesis, is not confined to the idea of being detached physically from Palestine, as might initially be inferred by the term. What Said means by exile is detachment from any cultural, political or ethnical fixed location in order to position himself affiliatively in a desired site of his choice. This position, nevertheless, creates noticeable difficulties for Said when he begins to discursively render Palestine and Palestinians in *After the Last Sky*. Said was very aware of how being 'isolated from the region' meant that he sometimes felt he lacked 'accurate details of the situation'.³²⁰ As an exiled victim of occupation and expulsion, this conundrum was obviously imposed on Said by Israel. However, as Said is adamant that exile might resemble an enabling misfortune, he links it to his idea of 'double vision'. Valerie Kennedy explains that, in utilizing his exilic strategy, Said sought to avert 'a potential clash between the detachment of the scholarly humanist and the commitment of the polemicist who argues for Palestinian rights'.³²¹ Through the dichotomy of being both inside and outside Palestine, Kennedy believes that Said tried to present his detachment as a sign of his independence in order to balance his personal implication with the collective Palestinian cause. Hence, exile helps Said personally and communally in *After the Last Sky*, as he is able to become both connected and disconnected to Palestine and Palestinianness simultaneously. This in turn allows him to narrate Palestine with the authenticity of a Palestinian auto/biographer and the scholarly independence of a Western biographer. Although Kennedy's argument concerning the benefits of exilic detachment is logical, it must be stated that its benefit,

³¹⁹Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.xii.

³²⁰Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.440.

³²¹Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*, p.6.

along with Said's claims of exilic empowerment, does not diminish the reality of how distance and 'isolation' might affect or even hinder the accuracy of Said's accounts.

Given that Said describes *After the Last sky* in its preface as a 'source book', it might seem contradictory that he insists that it has no claim to objectivity.³²² The idea of a non-objective auto/biography is not in itself extraordinary or impractical. It is, nonetheless, very peculiar that a book which was heralded by Said as an 'alternative' response to Western misinterpretations, as well as being a 'source book for the Palestinian condition', might be devoid of any 'objective' attributions. I believe that the following quotation provides some explanation for Said's confusing position concerning objectivity:

This is not an 'objective' book. Our intention was to show Palestinians through Palestinian eyes without minimizing the extent to which even to themselves they feel different, or 'other,' [...]. [D]ouble vision informs my text. As I wrote, I found myself switching pronouns, from 'we' to 'you' to 'they,' to designate Palestinians.³²³

Again, the key term is 'double vision'. Said claims that his book is not meant to represent an entirely factual anthropology or historical description of Palestine. This is despite the fact that it does offer extensive facts concerning Palestinian historical events, geographical descriptions, and anthropological insights on its people and their customs. Said's argument is centred on constructing a narrative which is able to produce objective knowledge while simultaneously admitting to its partial, subjective human nature. This speaks to Said's evident wariness of orientalist monopolies over objective knowledge which block and prohibit other arguments and narratives from forming based on their exclusive claim to truth and objectivity. I therefore concur with Yifen Beus, who describes *After the Last Sky* as a 'juxtaposition of subjectivity and objectivity', which in turn enables Said to effectively merge both his personal and collective descriptions of Palestine and Palestinians.³²⁴ As a consequence of renouncing their factual objectivity, Said's alternatives would not monopolize Palestine discursively through claiming his narrative to be the only available substitute in his analogy. This is the reason that led Krista Kauffmann to describe Said's

³²²Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.xi.

³²³Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.6.

³²⁴Yifen Beus, 'After the Last Sky: A Liminal Space', in *Paradoxical Citizenship: Edward Said*, ed. by Silvia Nagy-Zekmi (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), p.212.

biography as ‘an ethical practice that paves the way for difference without domination’.³²⁵ What Said sought to avoid was to conceal his subjective and personal projections and opinions in the guise of objectivity and solid factuality, in order to allow other opposing contestations to form.

Although Said’s argument is rational and clear, it is still not compatible with some of his declarations concerning *After the Last Sky*. The fact that this auto/biography is constructed as non-objective does not diminish the objective and factual nature of some of Said’s narrative. He is adamant, for instance, that the book is mainly focused on exemplifying the ‘Palestinian existence’ for Western readers.³²⁶ And as he presents his ‘source book’ as a corrective alternative to Western and Israeli misconceptions concerning Palestine, it is not clear how many of the alternative discourses he states in his book do not constitute objective truth. This is of course is not to say that Said himself might be an orientalist, for that is a very different proposition. Rather my point here is that Said found it very difficult to work within the constraints he initially associated with orientalist narratives concerning their monopolies over objective knowledge and truth. I believe that Said’s over-cautious attitude towards objectivity does not in any way diminish its presence or authority within his narratives. I consider that a more reasonable proposition might have been to argue for the relative nature of all objective perceptions of truth and fact.

Representation in general and the representation of Palestinians in particular have long occupied Said both as facilitators of orientalist misrepresentation and, on the other hand, as methodologies able to produce counter-narratives and arguments for the colonized and dispossessed. I am referring of course to Said’s ambivalent position concerning representation, as discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis. This ambivalence is put into practice in the form of his representations of Palestine and Palestinians in *After the Last Sky*. In numerous books and articles, Said always insisted on the fact that ‘[a]ll representation is misrepresentation of one sort or another’.³²⁷ Said’s scepticism is a complicated position which is made more confusing by the fact that he uses representation

³²⁵Krista Kauffmann, ‘Double Vision: Visual Practice and the Politics of Representation in Edward W. Said and Jean Mohr’s *After the Last Sky*’, *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 43.3 (2003), 93–122 (p.97).

³²⁶Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.107.

³²⁷Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, pp.237–38.

extensively, as is the case in *After the Last Sky*. These representations are possible, according to Said, despite his reservations concerning the distorting nature of all discursive accounts.

In *After the Last Sky*, Said not only represents Palestine and Palestinians, he sometimes, inconsistently, depicts them as ‘frequently’ unable to perform this same task. Right from the opening pages of his auto/biography, Said insists that Palestinians are ‘frequently unable either to speak the “truth” of [their] experience or to make it heard’, and that they have been constantly ‘distorted’ due to linguistic and cultural barriers which necessitate an ‘interpretive translation’ to his mainly Western audiences.³²⁸ That Said might be denying Palestinians their own discourses may be an exaggerated claim, for he is recognizing the huge Israeli dominance over Palestinian narratives. He is also identifying the difficulty Palestinians face in representing their plight on an international level due to cultural and linguistic constraints. Nonetheless, Said is also confining their responses through his sweeping reluctance to recognize their ability to produce viable portrayals. Said does concur that, as a people, Palestinians ‘can be represented’, as his auto/biography indicates.³²⁹ I am not in any way suggesting that Said is replicating orientalist rationales which offer ‘representations’ for the ‘poor Orient [...] which cannot represent itself’.³³⁰ He is, nevertheless, overstating the difficulty of producing Palestinian representations for Western audiences, which unconvincingly suggests that these cultural and linguistic barriers are not evident in any other non-Western depictions. As I exemplify in the second section of this chapter, there are comprehensive examples of Palestinian characterizations, some of which were produced by Palestinians in the West, a fact which refutes Said’s insinuations.

Despite his reservations and contradictions, Said presents *After the Last Sky* as an effort to produce alternative forms of representation. From the beginning pages of his auto/biography, Said indicates that he aims to replace forms of misrepresentation with a more adequate Palestinian account:

³²⁸Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, pp.6–7.

³²⁹Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, pp.121–22.

³³⁰Said, *Orientalism*, p.21.

The whole point of this book is to engage this difficulty, to deny the habitually simple, even harmful representations of Palestinians, and to replace them with something more capable of capturing the complex reality of their experience. [...] I believe that essentially unconventional, hybrid, and fragmentary forms of expression should be used to represent us. What I have quite consciously designed, then, is an alternative mode of expression to the one usually encountered in the media, in works of social science, in popular fiction. It is a personal rendering of the Palestinians[...].³³¹

Said clearly frames his corrective representations in very careful terms. What is apparent is that Said questions 'harmful' representations of Palestine. What is not obvious, however, is what exactly he is proposing as an alternative, although the general outlines of his aims are observable. He describes the Palestinian experience as almost incomprehensible and unavailable to non-Palestinians due to its unique features, which include 'hybridity and fragmentation'. It is not apparent what Said means by these descriptions or indeed if they are confined to the Palestinian experience rather than being features found in every culture or nation. Said also describes his 'alternative' approach as a 'personal rendering' of Palestine and its 'national community'.

The duality of Said's proposed discursive strategy is, again, indicative of his notion of 'double vision'. His strategy, which combines photos with text, the personal with the communal, the subjective with the objective, the detached with the attached, the American perspective with Palestinian insight, speaks to his representational 'hybridity'. Nevertheless, his proposal does not take into consideration the confined and limited choices available for most Palestinians. Arif Dirlik presents a very nuanced reading of Said's descriptions in *After the Last Sky*, arguing that because Said is distanced and removed physically and intellectually from Palestine, he finds it imperative to form an imaginary and even a metaphorically-based 'self-identification' with Palestine and Palestinians. This fact, combined with Said's intended Western readership, Dirlik argues, means that this biography is possibly both 'propaganda' and 'essentialism' of Palestine and Palestinians.³³² This is despite the fact that, in this biographical narrative, Said utilizes his subjective positioning to distance himself from any form of bias or monopoly based on privileged exclusivity. Although he is far removed from Palestine, I do believe that Dirlik's argument

³³¹Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.6.

³³²Dirlik, 'Placing Edward Said: Space, Time and the Travelling Theorist', p.14.

concerning Said's 'self-identification' is unconvincing, as he has always maintained a very decisive and clear connection with his Palestinian origins, at great cost. Whilst there is much stigma associated with the term, describing Said's auto/biography as 'propaganda' is logical on more than one level. As Said clearly aimed his book at a misinformed Western readership, he was consciously trying to sway their opinions towards his cause. This in itself is not problematic or unethical, I believe. Questions concerning 'essentialism', on the other hand, are more complicated in *After the Last Sky*. As I discuss in detail in the remainder of this chapter, there is considerable evidence of Said's essentialisms in his portrayals of Palestinians and Arabs. I must assert that my own arguments concerning Said's essentialisms do not simply dismiss them as contradictions, although they are so in the framework of his valiant denunciations of orientalist deformations. In the coming discussion, I examine the recurrence of Said's essentialisms, and my main aim is to put forward a logical explanation for Said's misrepresentations in *After the Last Sky*, and how these misrepresentations might reflect on Said's broader theories concerning Orientalism and auto/biography as a genre.

5-2 Palestinian Narratives: Between Emancipation and Erasure

In this section of the chapter I examine Said's depictions of Palestinian discourses in *After the Last Sky*, and examine the possibility that Said might have extensively over-determined the power of oppressive and essentialist discourses, to an extent which compromises all Palestinian narratives. I argue that his descriptions of Palestinian discourses might amount to reductive generalizations based on personal and subjective opinions.

In *After the Last Sky*, Said presents the difficult reality of repression which Palestinians find themselves bound by. Palestinians are portrayed as being prohibited, to a large extent, from producing their own narratives due to dominant Israeli and Western discourses. Said, nevertheless, recognizes the need to form counter-narratives and arguments in order to reinstate Palestinian cultural, historical and political rights. He insists that the prerequisite to any Palestinian oppositional movement against occupation must be based on reformulating resistant narratives. He acknowledges that 'something has been

lost' in the lives of many Palestinians, but only through regaining discursive 'representation' can they start their campaign to end oppression and occupation.³³³ Said is arguing for the establishment of consistent arguments and narratives which might form the basis for the assertion of Palestinian presence as a dispossessed people. Said's advocacy forms part of his larger effort to support the Palestinian cause and to 'inform, explain, interpret what was otherwise unreported, misrepresented, or falsely portrayed'.³³⁴ It would not be an exaggeration to describe his mission in *After the Last Sky* as a reconstruction and refashioning of a people and their narratives. Said himself does not shy away from this assertion; he specifically describes his biography as 'a political occasion geared at reconstructing the experience and lives of Palestinians'.³³⁵ Said thus presents his endeavour as a conscious exertion to restore Palestine through discursive methodologies. He insists that he has always felt that 'his role was to demonstrate the existence of the Palestinian people' on an international scale.³³⁶ Consequently, his auto/biography must be viewed from the perspective of his two main aims. These are, firstly, to form the basis for an alternative Palestinian narrative which is able to counter and dispel essentialist representations of Palestine. And secondly, to present Western audiences with a reliable and authentic Palestinian narrative written purposefully with this specific readership in mind. His admission of the collective nature of his narratives and discourses is essential for contextualizing the coming analysis of his auto/biography.

That Said calls for more rigorous and sustained Palestinian interventions is expected and logical, as he belongs to a people who are still under occupation. Yet, in many recurrent instances, Said depicts Palestinian narratives and arguments as either 'inadequate' or even non-existent. And while such claims do accentuate the urgent need for discursive interventions, they also diminish Palestinian efforts through inadvertently reconfirming the domination of Israeli and Western discursive dominance. The following quotation presents

³³³Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.84.

³³⁴Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, p.xix.

³³⁵Said, *the Edward Said Reader*, p.420.

³³⁶Panourgíá, Gourgouris and Chouliaras, 'The Stratigraphy of Dislocation: Jerusalem, Cairo, New York', (Interview), p.140).

an example of Said's tendency to overstate the power of imperial and dominant institutions as he confesses that a 'great deal' of Palestinian experiences were not recorded:

Yet, for all the writing about them, Palestinians remain virtually unknown. Especially in the West, particularly in the United States. [...] We have experienced a great deal that has not been recorded.³³⁷

Said's claims, of course, must be seen within their historical context, the mid-eighties of the twentieth century. Although Palestinians might indeed have been 'unknown' in the West and in the United States to some extent, Said underestimates the fact that this predicament is mostly attributed to limited resources and complex issues of access to Western outlets, as well as the overwhelming prominence of opposing Israeli narratives. What is more perilous is his claim that a great deal of the horrors and miseries which Palestinians experienced have never been 'recorded'. Such a statement completely dismisses the great wealth of evidence and narrative recorded by Arab historians, as I will show shortly. Although, it must be asserted that he is partly alluding to the political, cultural and economic pressures and realities which prevent Palestinians themselves from recording their experiences. Despite the great importance of reaching out to Western audiences in order to advocate the Palestinian cause, it is highly reductive to suggest that the 'absence' or 'inadequacy' of narratives aimed at the West necessitates the absence or inadequacy of existing Palestinian efforts.³³⁸ Within his auto/biography, Said is very aware of how the Western and Israeli media dismiss and neglect Palestinian points of view concerning the conflict in Palestine. However, Said's blame for such 'absence' is not confined to Israeli occupation and Western neo-imperialists. He intermittently accuses Palestinians in *After the Last Sky* of not being able to rise to the challenge and produce 'adequate' narratives which might counter the onslaught of reductive depictions which left them with 'no completely coherent discourse adequate' to them.³³⁹ Although these assertions might be considered national lamentations of Palestinian powerlessness, they still pave the way for underestimating Palestinian capabilities in developing their own discourses on the basis that they have repeatedly been unable or prevented from producing any (or at least any appropriate) form of narration, a claim which echoes orientalist justifications for monopolizing the representation of the

³³⁷Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, pp.4–5.

³³⁸Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.68.

³³⁹Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, pp.159 and 129.

Orient. As they are portrayed as unable to represent themselves, representing them by others, Israelis or Westerners, becomes inevitable.

Said's main argument is concerned with exposing the difficult and precarious situation endured by Palestinians under circumstances of occupation and oppression. His efforts aim to accentuate the devastating situation Palestinians find themselves in whenever they attempt to produce oppositional narratives. Yet, in many instances, his efforts are accompanied by a severely reductive tone which counterproductively misconstrues Palestinians' situation. The following quotation is a clear example of his conflicting stance:

There is no great episode in our history that establishes imperatives for our future course, partly because our past is still ragged, discredited, and unassimilated, partly because we endure the difficulties of dispersion without being forced (or able) to struggle to change our circumstances. We have no dominant theory of Palestinian culture, history, society; we cannot rely on one central image (exodus, holocaust, long march); there is no completely coherent discourse adequate to us, and I doubt whether at this point, if someone could fashion such a discourse, we could be adequate for it.³⁴⁰

Said vividly describes the effects occupation and displacement have had on Palestinian national consciousness. It becomes exceedingly difficult for any Palestinian to devise an overarching or 'coherent' discourse which adheres to national and communal paradigms, as is the case with most nations. That an occupied and displaced people produce 'broken narratives [and] fragmentary compositions' is not in any way unusual, as displacement and oppression are rife.³⁴¹ But combining these logical accounts with his claims that, there is not, 'at this point', an adequate 'discourse' for Palestinians is dismissive, and reduces numerous past discourses on Palestine to the level of insufficiency or improbability. It is also not very clear how not having 'central images' such as the Holocaust or the Exodus have any connection with Western and Israeli subordination of Palestinian discourses. Said is clearly alluding to how Israel has succeeded in taking advantage of these national Jewish tragedies to advance their narratives. Nevertheless, this undermines the fact that political, economic and cultural factors were definitely also at work. In fact, underestimating the weight of equally defining Palestinian national episodes or images in the West completely

³⁴⁰Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.129.

³⁴¹Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.38.

ignores the fact that the prominence of Israel's narratives is evidently not solely based on their historic and humanistic weight; Israel's own political, economic and ideological standing is more prominent in this context, I believe.

Closely connected to Said's dismissal of the existence of any 'coherent' Palestinian narratives is his equal denial of the inadequacy of their history. He recounts how he was constantly 'perturbed by the inadequacy of [Palestinian] history'.³⁴² Said does not provide much detail on how Palestinian history is specifically 'inadequate', so it remains a personal evaluation. Yet, in the following quotation, Said presents a far-reaching critique of Palestinian historical narratives which further clarifies his assertions:

Surely Zionism's genuine successes on behalf of Jews are reflected inversely in the absence of a major history of Arab Palestine and its people. It is as if the Zionist web of detail and its drama, in alliance with our own inability and recalcitrance to dramatize and speak about ourselves, screened the Palestinians not only from the world but from ourselves as well.³⁴³

To claim that Israel has managed to produce successful and comprehensive historical narratives does not mean the absence or inadequacy of Palestinians' own histories. Unless Said is referring to an 'absence' in the context of Western or American accessibility to such histories compared with their Israeli counterparts, then his statement is inaccurate to a large extent.³⁴⁴ There has been extensive and elaborate historical work done by many Palestinian academics and historians. I have located more than one hundred historical books, anthropologies and encyclopaedias authored by Palestinians which specifically concentrate on Palestine and its people during the twentieth century. Some of these historians were actually well acquainted with Said. Walid Khalidi and Hicham Sharabi were both American-Palestinian academics who were prolific authors. Elia Zuriel was a Canadian-Palestinian academic who co-authored with Said an extensive historical profile of Palestine published in *Blaming the Victims*. Abdul Latif Tibawi was an academic and historian who was referenced by Said in *Orientalism*.³⁴⁵ My aim is not to undermine Said's arguments

³⁴²Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.68.

³⁴³Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.106.

³⁴⁴ Said claims that 'there were no histories of Palestine. I mean I had to reconstruct the history, partly'. See Said and Ali, *Conversations with Edward Said*, p.97. In *Power, Politics and Culture*, he also claims that 'there is no decent Palestinian history', and that Palestinian history is basically 'unrecorded' (see p.427).

³⁴⁵ Palestinian historians include: Emile Touma, Professor Abdul Latif Tibawi, Professor Hicham Sharabi, Professor Anis Sayigh, Professor Walid Khalidi, Sami Hadawi, Izzat Darwaza, Aref Alaref, Professor Essam

concerning the imperfections of Palestinian history, although I disagree with his generalizations. My purpose is to showcase his incongruous tendency to dismiss and reduce Palestinian arguments and narratives in his quest to illuminate how their discourses have been marginalized.

Having spent most of his adult life advocating Palestinian rights and causes, it might seem contradictory that Said can participate in accentuating such reductive generalizations towards Palestinian narratives and histories. Given his call for Palestinian narratives to rise in the face of distorting misrepresentations, it is also very paradoxical for Said to deny or indeed dismiss, completely or partially, the existence of their histories. I believe that Said's insistence on the absence of any 'coherent pattern' or adequate 'presence' on the Palestinian side is understandable on a certain level.³⁴⁶ What might explain Said's precarious position is an assertion he made in the first pages of *After the Last Sky*. In this statement, he is acknowledging, albeit reluctantly, the presence of a 'very great deal' of Palestinian narratives and counter-arguments:

It was then that Jean Mohr and I decided to work together. Let us use photographs and a text, we said to each other, to say something that hasn't been said about Palestinians. Yet the problem of writing about and representing—in all senses of the word—Palestinians in some fresh way is part of a much larger problem. For it is not as if no one speaks about or portrays the Palestinians. The difficulty is that everyone, including the Palestinians themselves, speaks a very great deal. A huge body of literature has grown up, most of it polemical, accusatory, denunciatory.³⁴⁷

Said claims that most of the available literature produced by Palestinians is not sufficient for their cause. That most of what Palestinians have produced is 'polemical, accusatory, denunciatory' is in itself a polemical and scathing generalization which might explain his dismissal of Palestinian narratives and their 'adequacy'. It is expected that a Palestinian might have objections and critiques concerning the nature or status of his/her own national discourses. Nevertheless, Said's generalization does become problematic in the context of

Essam Sesalim, Ahmad Alaqad, Ihsan Alnemr, Professor Nicola Ziyadh, Nasser Nashashibi, Professor Elia Zuriel and Professor Ibrahim Abu Lughod. As I have mentioned above, collectively they have authored over one hundred books concerning Palestine and its history. It is important to emphasize that many of them were American, Canadian and British. A fair number of their books were originally written in or have been translated into English. See Appendix 1 for a full list of Palestinian historians and their books.

³⁴⁶Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.140.

³⁴⁷Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.4.

his self-proclaimed biographical 'source book'. As I discussed earlier, Said utilizes his 'double vision' dichotomy of subjectivity/objectivity, exile/attachment, individual autobiography/collective biography. In the context of his auto/biographical narrative, Said's opinions, which are mainly directed at a misinformed Western readership, acquire a certain authoritative power over other Palestinian narratives. Inadvertently, he is also justifying further neglect of Palestinian discourses, through conflating his generalized dismissal of their adequacy and even existence with his own personal opinions concerning their appropriateness and viability. It is epistemologically impossible to envisage how encouraging and promoting Palestinian narratives in the West can be done through dismissing 'most' of them as 'polemical and accusatory'.

The difficulty Said faces centres around successfully avoiding essentializing Palestinian experiences and actualities through his personal perceptions. The whole of Said's auto/biography rests on the crucial notion that his narrative is correcting and reconstructing other inadequate narratives, whether they are Israeli, Western or Palestinian. Nevertheless, as Arif Dirlik acutely indicates, *After the Last Sky* shows how Said's 'idiosyncrasies' and personal projections have been presented as the mainstay of the Palestinian 'national narrative', despite the fact that Said's position and intellectual ideals and opinions are 'not necessarily shared by most Palestinians', a fact which Said is reluctant to admit.³⁴⁸ To claim that 'most' Palestinian narratives and discourses are 'polemic and accusatory' speaks to Said's 'idiosyncratic' paradigms for acceptable forms of Palestinian expression. The significance of Said's reductive and dismissive depictions of Palestinian narratives and history is multifaceted. It highlights the risks of natively-produced reductive narratives. It also reveals how postcolonial empowered narratives initiated from the West are able to instigate effective forms of portrayal and narratives, but that there is always a risk of including other non-conformist oppositional narratives in their dismissals. Most importantly, these discursive reductions underscore the nuanced and implicit occurrences of power-related subordinations, which are not necessarily connected with colonialism or imperialism. For despite Said's cautious and extensive strategies in his

³⁴⁸Dirlik, 'Placing Edward Said: Space, Time and the Travelling Theorist', p.18.

construction of *After the Last Sky*, he was still unable to avoid producing dismissive reductions of Palestinian narratives and histories.

5-3 Essentializing Palestine: A Non Colonialist Possibility

In *After the Last Sky*, Said presents an extensive and elaborate depiction of Palestinians. While the vast majority of his narrative presents sympathetic and emancipatory depictions of Palestinians, there are many instances in which he was evidently unable to escape accusations of essentialism. My argument in this section is that essentialism and reductive portrayals of individuals and communities are not always instigated through colonial and political pressures, and that societal divides can easily create similar subordinating parameters. As the coming discussion will reveal, regressive essentialism is not necessarily alien to any society, as it can be based on social class and economic status.

When Said discusses Palestinian identity in *After the Last Sky*, he portrays it as unattainable and impossible to sustain. This is of course understandable in the context of Palestinian dispossession and exile. Although his aim was to accentuate the suffering of his people, what Said actually reaffirms in his auto/biography is the abnormality of Palestinian identity as always being dissimilar and difficult to comprehend. In the first pages of *After the Last Sky*, Said logically assumes that ‘identity [...] is difficult to maintain in exile’ and can never be taken for granted by any displaced individual, including Palestinians.³⁴⁹ These passing comments show no significant signs which particularize Palestinian identities. But a few lines later, Said describes the comparative relegation of Palestinian status in the West as being a result of not having known ‘Einsteins’ or ‘Freuds’ or even a ‘Holocaust’ to elicit Western appreciation and compassion.³⁵⁰ The abrupt integration of these individuals and events is puzzling. These Western symbols and monumental events are not solely responsible for the suppressed identity of the Palestinian people. If Said is suggesting that they were successfully deployed to generate symbolic force for Israeli narratives, this would severely neglect the huge disparity between the prominence of political and cultural

³⁴⁹Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, pp.16–17.

³⁵⁰Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, pp.16–17.

influences which Israel has in comparison to their Palestinian counterparts. He risks reaffirming Western misconceptions regarding the insignificance of Palestinian experiences and culture. Palestinians have suffered hugely under occupation, and the presence or absence of prominent figures or events should not undermine their affliction or the actuality of their oppression. In a more lucid statement, Said declares that it has become the norm for any Palestinian identity to be constantly perceived as other. This is not due to occupation and displacement, as might be inferred, but a result of being attached to Palestine itself as a historic and religious bastion for many peoples and religions:

All cultures spin out a dialectic of self and other, the subject 'I' who is native, authentic, at home, and the object 'it' or 'you,' who is foreign, perhaps threatening, different, out there [...] For Palestinian culture, the odd thing is that its own identity is more frequently than not perceived as 'other.' 'Palestine' is so charged with significance for others that Palestinians cannot perceive it as intimately theirs without a simultaneous sense of its urgent importance for others as well.³⁵¹

By 'other' Said does not simply differentiate between varied identities, communities or nationalities. Rather, he is actually claiming that there is a distinctiveness that bestows Palestinians with an identity which they themselves perceive as characterised by 'otherness'. Said explains that because their identities are politically charged and contentious, Palestinians have come to incorporate that otherness as a natural part of their selfhood, a feature which should be embraced and celebrated. Ironically, his effort seems highly counter-productive, for it has actually intensified the idea of Palestinian differentiation and further alienated possible affiliation with their experience and cause. Said's arguments are also unconvincing, as all identities logically denote otherness and uniqueness to some extent. Although Palestine is a politically, culturally and religiously 'charged' location, this is also not uniquely restricted to Palestine. Most locations and nations have many claims to different forms of distinctiveness.

Said's depiction of Palestinian exile is another very interesting example of how he sometimes exaggerates the differentiation of Palestinians to an almost irrational degree. Although exile is an evident part of the experience of many Palestinians, it resembles for Said a preferred position. He declares that 'Palestine is exile', despite the fact that for some

³⁵¹Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.40.

Palestinians who still reside within their country, this is not the case.³⁵² And given that Said views exile not only as an actual plight of displacement, but also as a metaphorical positionality, as I discussed in the second chapter, he is claiming preference for it collectively as he did individually. At one stage in *After the Last Sky*, Said declares his predilection for his people's 'wanderings' over resignation with regard to Jewish return, which he believes symbolizes reductive solidity and rigidity.³⁵³ Again we see Said conflating his favoured ideals with those of the Palestinian collective, as he urges Palestinian adherence towards a collective preference for exile. He also asserts that Palestinian exiles and refugees will always remain 'aliens [...] in the eyes of their host country', hence further exaggerating the plight of emigrant Palestinians.³⁵⁴ Although the Palestinian disaster can never be underestimated, claiming that Palestinians will specifically be viewed and portrayed as 'aliens' dismisses the complex experiences of diasporic Palestinians. Said is trying to present a characterization of Palestinians which seems to further their estrangement rather than consolidating the universality of their tragedy, cause and demands. His overstatement of the distinctive nature of Palestinian exile is not more obvious than in the following comments:

The Palestinian is very much a person in transit: Suitcase or bundle of possessions in hand [...]. It could even be argued that we are too mobile and too adaptable. Is this why we did not prevent our own exodus in 1948. In the end we can't give ourselves too much credit for being forced out by terror, instead of standing fast, organizing, fighting; the excuse that we did not know that an irrevocable loss would result from our departure certainly does not help now, especially since it has been used since 1967 to justify the panicked flight of Palestinians who lost their property for the second time.³⁵⁵

These descriptions portray Palestinians as a people who are inherently mobile and dislocated, even before the creation of Israel in 1948, to the extent that they might have inadvertently brought occupation upon themselves. The issue is not only concerned with the legitimacy or accuracy of Said's sweeping claims; what is significant is the fact that Palestinians are being depicted as a special kind of people who need to be represented with

³⁵²Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, pp.30–32.

³⁵³Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.150.

³⁵⁴Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, pp.11–12.

³⁵⁵Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, pp.130–33.

their unique features in mind. My point is to indicate how Said particularizes the Palestinian reality as somehow unique and distinct when compared to other forms of exile and displacement. I discern the significance of these depictions below.

Said's descriptions of Palestinians risk taking the form of 'exclusiveness', demoting other narratives and depictions as unoriginal or inaccurate.³⁵⁶ Said seems to have over-determined the extent to which Palestinians have been misrepresented. He depicts Palestinians as somewhat rarefied and never fully or accurately represented by his predecessors. And, hence, he takes on the mission of adequately reconstructing their depictions and narratives. The danger is that Said is underestimating the privileged and dominant position from which he is projecting such wide-ranging claims about Palestinians. His depictions appear susceptible to accusations of constraining Palestinian representations through his authority in *After the Last Sky*, as Tobias Doring contends.³⁵⁷ Doring argues that although Said is very conscious of the risks associated with authoritative representations and interpretations, he was, as a Western-based author, unable to avoid essentialist depictions in this auto/biography. He continues by asserting that Said's attempt at 'textualizing' the accompanying photos and interpreting their 'silence' is to a certain level a form of 'colonization', no matter how sympathetic Said might be. Doring's general point concerns the necessarily interpretive authority of Said's narrative in *After the Last Sky*. As Said had absolute control over the narratives accompanying all the photos in his auto/biography, there is a considerable risk that he might exaggerate or assimilate Palestinians through his descriptive comments. As Doring indicates, there is nothing inherently essentialist in commenting on Palestinian photos or commenting on Palestinian lives. Yet when this is accompanied with relentless insistence on their inability to voice their concerns or to represent themselves in the West, this becomes suspiciously reductive. The discursive authority generated through Said's analogy becomes problematic, as the following discussion reveals.

³⁵⁶Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.215.

³⁵⁷Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*, p.51. And see also: Tobias Doring, 'Picturing Palestine: Edward Said and Fiction of Photography', in *Edward Said's Translocation: Essays in Secular Criticism*, ed. by Tobias Doring and Mark Stein (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp.215–16.

Given all of Said's warnings against essentializing Palestinians and the difficulties associated with representing them accurately, it seems unexpected that some of his own descriptions in *After the Last Sky* might be considered reductive. I here present a few examples which could shed light on how personal and social factors might have shaped and driven Said's interaction with Palestinians. In the following passage, Said presents a very confusing and extraordinary elaboration of his position as a Palestinian detached from most of the populace through his social and economic background:

I am perhaps an extreme case of an urban Palestinian whose relationship to the land is basically metaphorical; I view the Palestinian rural community at a very great remove. [...] In any case my knowledge of my immediate relatives, friends, and acquaintances is so crowded with doctors, business people, and professionals (teachers, professors, lawyers, writers, clerics) as to eclipse any direct relationship with the majority rural population of Palestine. If I also factor in my long residence in the United States, as student and now academic, with increasingly infrequent visits to the Middle East, whatever tenuous childhood relationship I may have had with Palestinian village or farm life is pretty much dissipated. So even though I can still note the largely agricultural roots of our society, these have no direct personal immediacy for me. I continue to perceive a population of poor, suffering, occasionally colourful peasants, unchanging and collective. But this perception of mine is mythic, and further (de)formed by the specific inflections of our history and the special circumstances out of which my identity emerged.³⁵⁸

That Said views these collectives from a distance is understandable given his exilic status. Yet his perception of Palestinian 'peasants' as mostly 'unchanging' and 'poor' is problematic even when presented as a 'mythic' exilic portrayal. Said's amalgamation of subjective and objective rendering has created an authority which essentializes perception of the majority of Palestinians. The objective rendering of Palestine and Palestinians becomes submerged under Said's personal subjectivities. His own concession to the mythical and '(de)formed' nature of his perception, although commendable, does not relegate the fact that he went on to produce an extensive and collective portrayal of Palestinians and their experiences as the coming quotes will demonstrate. Valerie Kennedy calls this position a 'potentially contradictory double imperative', in which Said represents Palestinians from a personal exilic perspective combined with his public Western academic

³⁵⁸Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.88.

position, invoking different levels of privilege and power.³⁵⁹ The quotation clearly shows how Said found it permissible to describe the vast majority of the population as a collective who are ‘poor’ and ‘unchanging’, a description which could be easily attributed to any orientalist rather than a Palestinian activist.

Said’s essentialism of the Palestinian ‘masses’ continues as he describes how the advent of modernization affected the mainly agricultural population of Palestine. He describes how the initiation of political activism changed and affected these rural dwellers:

The effect of this revivalism on the peasant with a *kaffiyah*, who had always been and was still called Abu Mohammad or Abu Jaafar, was a mixed blessing. His choices were either to remain an obscure figure, known only to his immediate relatives, friends, and fellow villagers, or to become a potential recruit to one or another political organization.³⁶⁰

The overt simplification of ‘peasant’ life in rural Palestine cannot be ignored. The tone and context of Said’s descriptions of Palestine’s agricultural majority illuminates the large disparity between Said’s own experiences as a middle-class Palestinian, as his previous comments explicitly affirm. And even when the masses were able to move up the economic ladder and become merchants and grocers, Said’s descriptions still seem rather trivializing:

It is as if after decades of backbreaking work, much pain, and the miseries of poverty, disease, and ignorance, we were able only to transport ourselves from the field to the marketplace, a dingy, miscellaneous, and untidy repository of produce strewn about in hopes that it will catch someone’s eye—a passing businessman’s, a dawdling boy’s, a timid housewife’s—there to be consumed on the spot, and thence to disappear.³⁶¹

I emphatically believe that Said’s descriptions were originally aimed at presenting a humanizing and realistic portrayal of Palestinian life, as most of his auto/biography demonstrates. Yet there is a recurrent tendency on Said’s part to either exaggerate or essentialize Palestinian life. He describes the vast majority of Palestinians as ‘agricultural’, and accompanies this claim with his contention that agricultural life is synonymous with

³⁵⁹Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*, p.71.

³⁶⁰Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.91.

³⁶¹Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.96.

‘poverty’ and ‘ignorance’, thus the Palestinian population is portrayed as mainly deprived and illiterate.

What should be factored in to any critique of Said’s depictions of Palestinian ‘masses’ is the context of his efforts as an exiled victim. As someone who had been forcefully driven outside Palestine and prevented from returning for decades, it is understandable that some of his descriptions might seem inaccurate or even counterproductive. As W. J. T. Mitchell emphasizes, it would be crudely unjust to ignore Said’s predicament as a Palestinian who is not only physically distant from Palestine, but is also religiously, educationally and even socially distinct from the majority of Palestinians:

The writer is the alien, the outsider, estranged from a land he dimly remembers as a child, a land in which he would have been, as an urbane, Christian intellectual, estranged from the rural, local culture of the Palestinian masses. The writer acknowledges that he himself is the ‘cracked lens’, unable to see, quite literally, the native country he longs for except in fragmentary glimpses provided by others.³⁶²

I believe that these restrictive factors are extremely important to consider in any reading or critique of Said’s auto/biography. I also believe that these critiques do not in any manner put into question Said’s integrity or commitment to the Palestinian cause. My main aim in compiling these essentialist instances is to examine their implications, key among which is how they definingly put into practice and question Said’s alternative discourses and narratives. These instances also complicate the manner in which orientalist and imperialist essentialisms are viewed. If it was possible to present some of Said’s essentialisms out of their context of ‘Palestinian counter-narratives’, and then read them alongside other orientalist narratives, would it be possible to condemn and assess them equally? And would it be rational to expect any representation, whether by the colonizer or the colonized, to be completely devoid of all forms of essentialism? Said’s essentialisms accentuate the susceptibility of many postcolonial writers to social and economic forms of subjugation not usually associated with orientalist, imperialist and colonialist contexts. These factors illuminate the inadvertent nature of ‘re-orientalist’ essentialism and domination. They also emphasize how alternative narratives produced by postcolonialists bestow extensive

³⁶²W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, paperback ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp.316–17.

representative powers on writers. Such powers are not only comparable to the authority found in orientalist depictions of the Orient, they also run a similar risk in conflating personal perspectives with collective portrayals of nations and communities.

5-4 Postcolonial Stereotypes: Analysing the Portrayal of Palestinian Women in *After the Last Sky*

In the final section of this chapter, I address Said's accounts of the status of women in *After the Last Sky*, and his accounts of Palestinian and Arab women. Said's presumptive stereotypes of Palestinian and Arab women are another example of how his counter-orientalist strategies are not able to take into consideration the possibility of 're-orientalism' produced by natives. As these stereotypes are based on social and cultural generalizations produced by a Palestinian writer, I analyse the significance of their occurrence as opposed to orientalist misconceptions.

Being a Western-influenced progressive activist, Said found many instances where women's rights might have been violated or suppressed within Palestinian culture.³⁶³ The coming discussion reveals that he was also sympathetically aware of Israel's role in abusing men and women's rights with equal measure. Yet Said sometimes marginally veers towards reaffirming and consolidating Western stereotypical misconceptions concerning the status of women in Arab and Islamic societies. More often than not, Said would sympathetically portray women in order to elucidate the absurdity of some international portrayals of Palestinian women. An example of this is found in Said's comments on a photo in *After the Last Sky* showing two Palestinian women engaged in a sewing lesson. He aims to humanize Palestinians through commenting on the mundane nature of the activities depicted in this photo as proof of the normalized life of Palestinian workers, teachers and so forth. He affirms that besides their Islamic attire, nothing in the picture is 'freighted with kind of history' which connects them to their present condition and reality. Said states that 'except for the Islamic headdresses of the two young women' the pictures depict two women engaged in everyday life.³⁶⁴ What Said is trying to achieve through his comments on this

³⁶³Said, Singh, and Johnson, *Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.29.

³⁶⁴Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.146.

photo is to highlight how such a photo might elucidate and how much more it might conceal in different contexts. Similar photos depicting Islamic or Arabic attire might easily be consolidated to affirm misconceptions about Palestinians. What these photos also convey, as Said indicates above, is how easily relatable the normality of Palestinian life is.

Yet the consistency and overt assertions of other, more controversial, comments in Said's auto/biography complicates his arguments and depictions. The problem, again, is not that Said is critiquing and evaluating the difficulties which Palestinian women face, or even that he finds certain aspects of Palestinian culture regressive. It is that he generalizes his assumptions concerning the status of Palestinian women and links their miseries, continuously, to their Palestinian, Arab and Muslim origins, beliefs and cultures. The following quotation is a testimony to the dangers of Said's generalized assumptions as he describes the deplorable fate of many Palestinian, Arab and Muslim women:

Later I realized that being such a mediated person, distributed among a number of important but secondary roles, is the fate of all Palestinian and Arab women; this is the way I encounter them, and the way they exist in our various societies. Certainly these are general social and historical facts, but their particular meaning in Palestinian life, given our special situation, is unusually intense. The question becomes how to see the woman's predicament: is she subordinated and victimized principally because she is a woman in Arab, Muslim society, or because she is Palestinian? However the question is answered, there is an urgent need to take stock with equal precision of the woman's negation and the Palestinian's dispossession, both of which help to constitute our present situation.³⁶⁵

In this passage, Said is reinforcing the reductive depictions of Arab and Muslim women as essentially oppressed and subordinated. The issue here concerns the generalization of such a statement rather than disputing the fact of its occurrence. And it is in such sweeping statements that Said essentializes Palestinians or factions of their society. In fact, this quotation in particular seems to portray a very bleak view of the fate of all Arab and Muslim women, as it is not confined to Palestinian society. And even if it were to be accepted that Palestinian women are regressively subordinated due to Arab and Islamic social norms, Said's insinuation in his rhetorical question would still be problematic. To implicitly suggest that Israeli occupation might be compared with cultural and social

³⁶⁵Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.78.

subordinations within Palestinian society is both illogical and counterproductive. This discursive analogy not only aligns Israeli military aggression with aspects of Palestinian social regression, as it compares it with regressive aspects of society, it also portrays a very bleak prospect for Palestinian women, where there seems to be no escape from internal and external assimilation and control.

Another very poignant example concerns Said's rationalization for the scarcity of the representation of women in the photos provided in his auto/biography. As Said comments on a photo of a Palestinian cafe where only men are seen seated, he begins to reminisce on how women are neglected and absent in Palestinian culture and society. Although it is possible that women are indeed sidestepped and ignored in representations of Palestine, his description seems overtly reductive:

And yet, I recognize in all this a fundamental problem—the crucial absence of women. With few exceptions, women seem to have played little more than the role of hyphen, connective, transition, mere incident. Unless we are able to perceive at the interior of our life the statements women make—concrete, watchful, compassionate, immensely poignant, strangely invulnerable—we will never fully understand our experience of dispossession.³⁶⁶

It is difficult to imagine that the entirety of the Palestinian society, with only a few exceptions, has participated in silencing and relegating all women. It may be difficult to disagree with Said's calls for the full recognition and integration of women within all aspects of Palestinian life and society. And it is also probable that in all human societies, more must be done to elevate the status of women. Nevertheless, to patronizingly portray the vast majority of the Palestinian community as regressive and misogynist is certainly a form of subordination against women in itself.

The justification for Said's controversial depictions of women in his auto/biography may be connected to the nature of his narrative. As an overtly non-objective book which weaves between personal reflection and collective biographical assertions, there is a constant risk that individual opinions might be presented as predominant facts or concrete realities. This is intensified by Said's aim to consciously address a supposedly misinformed

³⁶⁶Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.77.

Western audience. To illustrate my argument, I present the following example. One of the most striking stories Said evokes in his auto/biography is an account of the life of an elderly widowed woman named Farah Hatoum. Her story is that of a displaced and dispossessed individual who was fighting poverty, loneliness and Israeli aggression till the final years of her life. As she became the sole provider for her family, she undertook numerous jobs in factories and farms to cater for her children. Amazed by her perseverance, Said applauds her successful life as a working mother against all the odds of her circumstances. As Said describes his ‘feelings of peculiar respect’ for her diligence, he recounts that his expressed sentiment of respect directed to a woman is hard to fathom from the perspective of ‘the effusively male character of Palestinian nationalism [which] doesn’t ordinarily permit’ such affectionate recognition of women’s efforts.³⁶⁷ Another similarly illuminating example is found in Said’s comments on the life of Sahar Khalife, a successful young teacher living in horrendous circumstances in the West Bank, who, unlike Farah, is politically and socially active. What is noteworthy in the context of my discussion is that Said portrays a peculiar dialectic concerning her oppression and misery. For while he acknowledges how ‘Israeli power’ oppresses her identity and prospects as a woman, he amalgamates that with a similar pressure bestowed through Islamic and Arab traditions. As she is a ‘divorced working woman’, Said believes that Sahar is held back by the norms of a ‘predominantly Muslim and traditional community’. She is understandably described as being ‘alienated’ from any political or cultural ‘fulfilment’ due to Israeli occupation. But she is also portrayed as a woman who is deprived of ‘sexual fulfilment’ because she is simply an ‘Arab woman’. In an astounding sentiment of resignation, Said concludes that Sahar, like many other Palestinian and Arab women, is predestined to gendered subordination, as these women’s ‘lives are led where such lives have always been led’.³⁶⁸ Both of these examples evidently intensify certain stereotypes concerning the status of women in Arab and Muslim societies. Although Said was evidently cautious and aware of all the risks associated with generalized reductions, he nevertheless produced numerous examples of stereotypes which inaccurately portray Palestinian women.

³⁶⁷Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.79.

³⁶⁸Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, p.83.

5-5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have concentrated on analysing and examining Said's different forms of essentialism and reduction in *After the Last Sky*. Although his auto/biography was initiated in order to counter the misrepresentations and distortions of Israeli and Western anti-Palestinian discourses, his own alternatives, which are predominantly sympathetic, themselves show symptoms of essentialism and reduction. Whilst describing these essentialist instances as 're-orientalist' is not completely irrational, as he does produce pseudo-orientalist distortions, this term does not entirely espouse the particularity of the paradox of Said's writing. 'Re-orientalism' could logically apply to Arabists such as Fouad Ajami, who, although being of Arab descent, was an anti-Arab, anti-Palestinian American scholar described by Said as a 'racist'. The term 're-orientalism' becomes more problematic in the case of Said, who was a prominent defender of Arab and Palestinian rights, a valiant stance which was unpopular and risky. Said's moments of essentialism also expand the margins and paradigms for orientalist formations. As nativist counter-narratives themselves are not immune to essentialist reductionism, it becomes clear that motivation and intention do not guarantee sympathetic or accurate depictions. Although Said's auto/biographical narrative was not instigated or empowered through imperialism or colonialism, it is still dependent on different forms of subordinating authorities. Expertise, class divides, generalized stereotypes and ideological beliefs can all be instigated to limit and prohibit other arguments and narratives. What *After the Last Sky* also emphasizes is the difficulty of constructing non-essentialist collective and national narratives, especially when writing for foreign audiences.

Chapter Six

Out of Place: Autobiography as Postcolonial Resistance

6-1 Introduction

Out of Place is a memoir written by Edward Said between 1994 and 1999. Although intended by Said as a ‘personal’ account, it focuses heavily on political, social and cultural events and discussions relevant to his youth.³⁶⁹ My aim in this chapter is to examine *Out of Place* not only as a personal narrative of recollection, but as a manifestation of a postcolonial decolonizing project. As Said deconstructs his past, he also reinstates his postcolonial authority and his oppositionality to different forms of domination. This text demonstrates how an autobiographical narrative can facilitate a retrospective take on the past from a postcolonial perspective and in relation to an oppositional consciousness. I argue that Said’s memoir shows the capability of postcolonial autobiographies to challenge power structures and domination through reinterpreting and reconstructing the self in the past. I also consider the possibility that autobiographical reinstatements of authority risk producing dissimilar forms of subordination. This introduction discusses how discursive authority develops through the autobiographer’s ‘performance’ in life narrative, and how such narratives intersect with postcolonial emancipatory efforts.

Throughout the chapter I discuss *Out of Place* as an autobiography rather than a memoir. This is despite the fact that Said insists on calling it a ‘memoir’ because he does not ‘try to account for a public trajectory’ within it.³⁷⁰ This claim might be disputed on two grounds. Firstly, his autobiography itself reveals a very public projection with regard to its subject matter and its intended addressees, and Said himself indicates this through his awareness of its anticipated audience. And secondly, contrary to Said’s misconception, memoirs are traditionally more inclined to facilitate public ‘trajectories’ than autobiographies. As Margaretta Jolly, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson all concur, memoirs

³⁶⁹Edward W. Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (London: Granta Books, 2000), p.xv.

³⁷⁰Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.421.

historically emphasize ‘life in the public sphere’.³⁷¹ Therefore, Said’s reasoning for portraying *Out of Place* as a memoir actually contradicts its common use as a life narrative genre. More importantly, in contemporary life-writing autobiography and memoir are usually ‘used interchangeably’, as Smith and Watson assert.³⁷² As for the arguments concerning differentiating memoirs and autobiographies in terms of partial or complete renderings of life stories, I argue that all forms of life-narrative are epistemologically partial and incapable of ever portraying a life in its entirety. As my discussion of Said’s autobiography will make clear, Said himself moves far beyond the parameters of any specific period, discussing very late events in his life, rather than confining his narrative to his youth. In other words, *Out of Place* consists of a highly selective sequence of events in Said’s life, not confined to a specific life period.

Smith and Watson explain the derivation of the term ‘autobiography’: in Greek *autos* denotes ‘self’, *bios* ‘life’ and *graphie* ‘writing’. Taken in its entirety it translates as ‘self life writing’. Autobiography might therefore be defined as a form of narrative written about the self. Although autobiographical narratives date back to the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine in 397 CE, the term itself was first used in English by Robert Southey in 1809.³⁷³ As Smith and Watson point out, as noted above, memoirs and autobiographies are usually used ‘interchangeably’ to denote narratives written about the self. Autobiographies might also be divided into thematic sub-genres depending on their subject matter, whether political, religious, intellectual etc. They might also be subdivided in accordance with their structure, such as diaries, journals and blogs. It is important to note that although autobiographies are personal life-narratives, they do not present their subject in isolation. As *Out of Place* demonstrates, autobiographies can present extensive descriptions of other individuals and collectives.

I should state at the outset that my primary aim in this chapter is not to determine the truthfulness of the historical facts included in Said’s account. Much has been discussed on

³⁷¹Margaretta Jolly, *Encyclopaedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms. V. 1, A-K*. (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), p.595; See also Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, NED-New edition, Second (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p.274.

³⁷²Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p.274.

³⁷³Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p.1.

these issues, the most controversial of these discussions being Justus Reid Weiner's article in *Commentary Magazine*, "My Beautiful Old house" and other Fabrications by Edward Said', published in September 1999 shortly before Said's own autobiography was due to be distributed.³⁷⁴ The article aimed to dispute the chronology of Said's life in Palestine.

Although Weiner does not question many of the facts concerning Said's connections to Palestine, Egypt and Lebanon, his main argument rests on rejecting Said's claims to being Palestinian, given that Said lived most of his youth in Egypt. While I strenuously disagree with Weiner's historical claims, my chapter is not concerned with the accuracy of Said's stated facts, but with their presentation and rendering and their reflections upon the autobiographer himself. This is not to insinuate that his autobiography is either fictional or fabricated, but rather, I argue, that the significance of any autobiography lies not only in its factual historicity, but more significantly in its personal rendering of events and experiences and the autobiographer's interpretation of these occurrences. As Roy Pascal argues:

Autobiographies offer an unparalleled insight into the mode of consciousness of other men. Even if what they tell us is not factually true, or only partly true, it always is true evidence of their personality.³⁷⁵

My discussion concentrates on Said's reinterpretation of his life and youth, and how those events came to shape and affect his later theories and arguments. As Pascal states, the autobiographer's refashioning and reinterpretation of his/her life is not only significant for the historical and factual chronological events they disclose. Rather, it is the manner in which the autobiographer recounts his/her life which significantly reveals more about the individual at the time of writing the autobiography than it discloses about their past life and self.

It is important to emphasize the centrality of the author-subject dichotomy in autobiographical narratives. As the individual is both the subject and author of their own life story, autobiography becomes an empowering strategy for self-expression, which is extremely useful for dispossessed and subordinated individuals such as Said. As John

³⁷⁴Justus Reid Weiner, "My Beautiful Old House" and Other Fabrications by Edward Said', *Commentary Magazine* (New York, 1999), September edition <<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/my-beautiful-old-house-and-other-fabrications-by-edward-said/>>.

³⁷⁵Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1985), p.1.

Sturrock affirms, 'autobiography is by nature an authoritarian mode of writing'.³⁷⁶ The individual has complete power over the rendering of their life narrative through personally constructing their life story. As the autobiographer is generally the individual most capable of reproducing their own life and experiences, their authority gains superiority over any other claims concerning narrating their life and reconstructing their past. This is most evident in postcolonial autobiographies, where the colonized subject seeks empowering strategies in order to reinstate and reaffirm their own narratives in order to counter reductive depictions. As many colonized subjects were denied the possibility of producing their own counter-narratives, autobiography becomes an ideal site for initiating more authoritative personal narratives. Linda Haverty Rugg points out that autobiographical 'exertion of control' allows the individual to 'authorize' their own account of their life and to 'privilege' their own personal narratives.³⁷⁷ Although there may be limits to the extent of autobiographical freedom and 'control', autobiographical writing is more attuned to personal authority and subjective rendering than most forms of descriptive narrative such as biography and history.

The concept of autobiographical performance is essential in reading Said's autobiography. In many instances, Said likens his effort in *Out of Place* to that of a 'performer' who addresses an 'audience', hence 'creating an image in the mind of [his] reader'.³⁷⁸ He also describes his autobiography as 'a text that [...] exists only in performance'.³⁷⁹ What the notion of 'performance' indicates is the importance of recognizing the centrality of the autobiographer's personal presentation in reproducing his/her life discursively. It also refers to the fact that it is only through discursive production of selfhood that the self comes into being in a recognizable way; as if the text performs the autobiographer into existence. Though the events depicted in any autobiography are situated in the past, the writer reinstates them through the capacity, intellect and perspective

³⁷⁶John Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography: Studies in the First Person Singular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.15.

³⁷⁷Linda HavertyRugg, *Picturing Ourselves: Photography & Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p.4.

³⁷⁸Barenboim, Said, and Guzelimian, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*, p.76.

³⁷⁹Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.124.

of the present self at the time writing. As Angel Loureiro explains, ‘performative’ autobiographies emphasize the authority of the ‘present self’:

A momentous shift in contemporary theory of autobiography occurred with the replacement of a conception of autobiography as reproduction of a life with the idea of autobiography as a performative act, as the creation or re-creation of the self at the time of writing.³⁸⁰

The performativity of autobiography recognizes that the discursive presentation of the narrating ‘I’ requires an audience for its recognition. But most importantly, performance accentuates the fact that autobiographies are re-conceptualizations of narratives through the perception of the present self of the autobiographer rather than impartial recordings of statements concerning previous facts and events. What appears in any autobiography is not the actual characters and events of the past, but a mediated reflection through the selective and subjective authority of the autobiographer at the time of writing.

Performance has substantial and evident consequences for all autobiographies. The individual becomes the sole authority over their autobiographical narrative, and ‘retrospect’ becomes vital. As Paul John Eakin observes, a life story never precedes the life itself. As a result, autobiography becomes the ‘art of retrospect’.³⁸¹ Hence, because autobiography in its entirety is based on a ‘retrospective’ performances of earlier life events, the text becomes subjective and totally dependent on the author’s discernment. In the preface to *Out of Place*, Said acknowledges that his autobiography is an inherently ‘subjective account’ of his life, and that his efforts as an autobiographer were concentrated on ‘translating experiences’ of his life to the reader.³⁸² This confirms that the significance and emphasis of events and characters in an autobiography are always bound by personal perspective rather than chronology or mere occurrence.

As autobiography is dependent on ‘retrospect’ and personal reflection on the past; it is removed from the realm of the historical to the artistic, as Eakin suggests. Its significance lies in personal self-reflection which ‘translates’ and presents experiences. The

³⁸⁰Angel G Loureiro, *The Ethics of Autobiography: Replacing the Subject in Modern Spain* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), p.1.

³⁸¹Paul John Eakin, *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), p.148.

³⁸²Said, *Out of Place*, pp.xiii and xv.

considerable subjective emphasis associated with autobiographical narratives makes clear their ‘artistic’ nature as opposed to biographical or historical documents, where a more direct alignment with ‘truth’ may be expected. The consequence is that the autobiographer is able to subjectively include and exclude any part of their experience: ‘To write a history of oneself that carries real conviction demands the hand of an artist in order to know what can be said and what may be omitted’.³⁸³ Although omissions and inclusions are entirely dependent on the autobiographer’s subjectivity, this does not lessen their significance. As my examination of Said’s text argues, autobiographical omissions and oversights are as significant as textual inclusions.

The ‘power to narrate’ is one of the cornerstones of Said’s postcolonial emancipatory efforts. His autobiography extends those efforts.³⁸⁴ As Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism*, being ‘blocked’ by dominant power structures necessitates oppositional narratives. Despite his exasperation with discourse, for Said, *Out of Place* becomes a personal effort aimed at reconciliation and explication of all the contradictions of his past and present lives. In the preface to his autobiography, Said confesses that his ‘main reason for [authoring the memoir] is the need to bridge the sheer distance in time and place between [his] life today and [his] life then’.³⁸⁵ Although such ‘bridging’ might take many forms, I believe it alludes to taking authority over his past self and retrospectively refashioning the coherence of his life. In the following quotation from one of his interviews, Said describes the process he adopts in constructing *Out of Place*, describing it as a form of ‘inventing’:

In Latin, *inventio* is to find again. It was used in classical rhetoric to describe a process by which you find past experiences and rearrange them to give them eloquence and novelty. It’s not creating from nothing, it’s reordering. In that sense, I invented myself. [...] And I saw that we can make our own beginnings. That they are not given, they are acts of will. [...] But I was afraid of not being able to recapture and to restate and to reinterpret those aspects of my life that I thought had some value. [...] It was then, while looking back, that I realized that the world I grew up in, the world of my parents, of Cairo and Beirut and pre-1948 Talbieh, was a

³⁸³H. N. Wethered, *The Curious Art of Autobiography from Benvenuto Cellini to Rudyard Kipling* (London: Johnson, 1956), p.1.

³⁸⁴Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.xiii.

³⁸⁵Said, *Out of Place*, p.xvi.

made-up world. It wasn't a real world. It didn't have the kind of objective solidity that I wanted it to have. For many years, I mourned the loss of this world. I truly mourned it. But now I discovered the possibility of reinterpreting it.³⁸⁶

Said suggests that a new postcolonial beginning can be forged retrospectively according to the needs and perspectives of the present. He is also suggesting that the world of his parents' description was 'made-up', a recognition that ideas of the past are themselves always a 'version' of that past, inflected by the interests and circumstances of the person remembering. The self and the past can both be 'reinterpreted' and reconstructed by the present authority of the autobiographer. The figure in these past reconfigurations is either acknowledged or re-assimilated by the author. Through the located authoritative self of the autobiographer, an effort is made to reinstate and re-join past experiences with present insights. As Georges Gusdorf and John Sturrock both suggest, autobiography is constantly utilized by individuals as a methodology for constructing 'integration' and 'unity' between past and present selves.³⁸⁷ Such 'bridging' is particularly significant for Said as a displaced postcolonial intellectual. As the coming discussion shows, his narrative demonstrates how he reinterprets and reconstructs his life in the past to accentuate his status as a colonized subject, constantly stating his opposition to and defiance of all forms of authoritarian suppression, colonial or otherwise. In my analysis of *Out of Place*, I explicate these autobiographical factors, and how they assist Said in producing an evidently postcolonial oppositional and resistant autobiography.

6-2 Challenging Parental Authority: Said's Palestinian Re-emergence

Said began writing *Out of Place* in 1994, three years after he was diagnosed with leukaemia. His autobiography was published in 1999, four years before his death in 2003. Despite being one of the most renowned and active Palestinian intellectuals, the autobiography itself reserves large parts of its text for Said's familial associations,

³⁸⁶Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.456.

³⁸⁷Sturrock, *the Language of Autobiography: Studies in the First Person Singular*, p. 4. See also: Georges Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography', in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by James Olney (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp.28–48 (p. 37) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7zmtj.5>>.

especially his relationship with his parents. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that the major part of his autobiography is dedicated to describe the failings and successes of his bond with his parents. And as his autobiography appeared very late in his career and life, it might seem surprising that the political and humanitarian plight in Palestine does not take prominence in the book. As Bart Moore-Gilbert observes, in many respects, Said's autobiography resembles a 'traditional' example of Western forms of life writing in its overtly introvert and individualistic scope:

A preliminary reading might suggest that Said's text itself seems 'out of place' alongside the substantial critical and political engagements with issues of colonialism—and its effects in Palestine more specifically—on which his public profile largely rests. It offers no sustained critique of post-1948 Israel-Palestine, nor any practical programme for nation-building of the kind encountered in the life—writing of Gandhi or C.L.R. James, for example. Instead, *Out of Place* can be read as a seemingly unexceptional, even rather traditional, example of literary autobiography written by an intellectual located since the age of 15 in the West and conversant with the conventions of the genre as it developed there.³⁸⁸

Moore-Gilbert is correct that Palestine is not prominent in the autobiography, nor is there any extensive discussion of the aftermaths of Israeli occupation and Palestinian displacement, an event which tremendously affected Said personally. Nevertheless, Said's descriptions of his troubled interaction with his parents, and his opposition to many of his relatives' political positions, do reveal a different form of national reconnection and postcolonial resistance. Said's critique of and opposition to his parents' political, cultural and social impositions are not only indicative of his emerging independent selfhood, they also resemble an explicit challenge to repressive authority, a stance which resonates considerably with his ideals of postcolonial oppositionality.

In *Out of Place*, familial struggles against dominating parents are extensively revisited by Said. His own interpretations and narrations of these domestic incidences are indicators of his insistence on reforming and reinstating his connections and identifications with his Palestinian origins and culture as an independent identity. I argue that Said's 'retrospective' narration of his family life provides a strategic reestablishment of his

³⁸⁸B. J. Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics and Self-Representation*, Postcolonial Literatures (London: Routledge, 2009), pp.115–16.

national Palestinian selfhood and origins, and that through this strategy he retrieves more directly postcolonial elements of his 'self'. As Anna Bernard observes, in *Out of Place*, Said is not only reconnecting his 'private experiences' with the history and struggle of Palestine, he is also reconfiguring the national, cultural and even humanistic parameters of his past self.³⁸⁹ Through his opposition to his parent's zealous Americanization, and his renouncement of their neglect of Palestine as homeland, Said reveals his parameters for his formation and reformation of postcolonial selfhood and identification.

Said opens his autobiography with this sentence: 'All families invent their parents and children, give each of them a story, character, fate, and even language'.³⁹⁰ As I have mentioned above, family takes prominence in Said's autobiography. Yet what this sentence alludes to is the extent of the domination he faced at the hands of his parents, and his meditation on that fact throughout his autobiography. Although much of their control concerns Said's body and behaviour, their influences extend towards subordinating his Palestinian identity. Said struggles throughout the text to reclaim not only his body, but also his Arab and Palestinian identity. As Linda Anderson asserts, his parents 'enthusiastically embrace the role of the colonizer' towards their children's identities and bodies.³⁹¹ Both of Said's parents were Palestinians who immigrated to Egypt for economic reasons before the establishment of Israel in 1948. William Said, Edward's father, was born in 1895. His previous Arabic name, Wadie, was changed when he immigrated to the US in 1911 to join their army; he later fought with the allied forces in France. He returned to Palestine in 1920 as an American citizen. Hilda Said was born in 1914 in Nazareth, the daughter of a Baptist minister. Hilda and William Said were married in 1932 in Nazareth. Before Said's birth in Jerusalem in 1935, William had already established the Standard Stationary Company in Cairo, gaining considerable social prominence and economic success.

³⁸⁹ Anna Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration, and Israel/Palestine*, Postcolonialism across the Disciplines, 14 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p.50.

³⁹⁰ Said, *Out of Place*, p.1.

³⁹¹ Linda Anderson, 'Autobiography and Exile: Edward Said's *Out of Place*', in Edward Said and the Literary, Social and Political World, ed. By Ranjan Ghosh, (London: Routledge, 2009).

A recurring example of his parents' authoritarian emphasis on assimilation is their obsession with reforming Said's physical appearance. Despite the fact that his mother showed more intimacy and warmth towards her only son, both parents were engaged in a constant and rigorous mission to enhance and reform Said's body. Whether it was his posture, walk, hands or even his suspected sexual discrepancies, he was constantly belittled and critiqued for his physical incompetence. Said describes how these parental verdicts concerning his physique and athletic delinquency caused him great 'terror, guilt, shame and vulnerability' which scared him throughout his life.³⁹² An illuminating example of his bodily torments occurs as he describes reluctantly participating in playing football in after-school clubs. Being both uninterested and incompetent in sport, Said's performance caused his father much alarm. After each match, his father would continually scold and lecture him on how to better his performance and athleticism. On one particular occasion, his father was especially frustrated with his performance, a frustration that had a long-lasting effect on Said:

I do not know whether my feelings of physical incompetence, which came from a sense that neither my body nor my character naturally inhabited my assigned spaces in life, derived from this quite unpleasant ordeal at my father's hands, but certainly I have always found myself tracing these feelings back to that event. Body and character were, I began to discover, interchangeable so far as his scrutiny was concerned.³⁹³

This episode caused a great rupture in Said's self-confidence and stamina. As his father was continually voicing his disappointment with his sporting performance, Said's physical incompetence began to invade his whole being and personality. His 'character' became more fractured and torn through such devastating episodes. His mother also participated in similar acts of reform and administration. But unlike his father, who was more concerned with physical competence and athleticism, his mother was more inclined to contemplate and agonize about Said's sexual development. He describes how she would always check his clothes for signs of 'self-abuse'. She would constantly invade his room unannounced and check all of his books and magazines for explicit photos which might encourage his sexual misconduct. What made matters more damaging for Said was the fact that she rarely

³⁹²Said, *Out of Place*, p.72.

³⁹³Said, *Out of Place*, p.50.

confronted him in person, as she believed that it was inappropriate for any lady to discuss intimate matters directly; instead she would usually usher her husband or one of her brothers in to take on the task of confronting Said:

It was through my mother that my awareness of my body as incredibly fraught and problematic developed, first because in her intimate knowledge of it she seemed better able to understand its capacity for wrongdoing, and second because she would never speak openly about it, but approached the subject either with indirect hints or, more troublingly, by means of my father and maternal uncles, through whom she spoke like a ventriloquist.³⁹⁴

All of these physical demands and suspicions took a huge toll on Said's sense of himself. These intimate incursions caused great strife for Said, making him more awkward and less confident about his physical identity. *Out of Place* is punctuated with many examples of parental attempts to subordinate the young Said's body and sensibility to their wider aim of assimilating him to Euro-American ideals. Although parental authority is not usually associated with postcolonial resistant narratives, Said utilizes his autobiography to reinstate his authority and reclamation over his body and counter his parents' assimilation. Significantly, Said will later link this 'bodily' subordination with their suppression of his Palestinian identity. His entire ordeal with his parents exemplifies how life narratives can be used to 'retrospectively' reinstate physical and intellectual emancipation against all forms of authority, colonial or otherwise.

Said's rebellion only begins to materialize after one last episode during his graduation from Princeton University at the age of 22. Just before the commencement of the ceremony his father insisted that Said's posture was not sufficiently adequate for such an occasion. He immediately took Said to a corset and brace-maker in New York where a harness was administered under his shirt without any objections.³⁹⁵ As Said reminisces about this incident, he expresses his astonishment that he was escorted like a child without muttering a word and against his will to perform yet another parental physical reform. As he looks back at these intrusive reforms and corrections, which had continued since his childhood, he describes the lasting effect they had on his later life. He describes how he still finds it 'unbearably difficult to look at [himself] on television, or even read about

³⁹⁴Said, *Out of Place*, p.61.

³⁹⁵Said, *Out of Place*, p.64.

[himself]’.³⁹⁶ Despite all of these devastating authoritarian reforms of Said’s body, he later found methods of overcoming the effects of his father’s and mother’s parental domination. As Said grew older, he found it possible to overcome these prohibiting effects and managed, with difficulty, to reconstruct and accept his physical appearance. As he took control of managing his body, Said discovered that ‘that there was more to “Edward” than the delinquent yet compliant son’ who was passively controlled and ruled by the demands of his parents.³⁹⁷ He presents these experiences as a pretext to his later rebellion against his parents’ imposition of an American identity upon their Palestinian son. Although these events might seem intrinsically domestic, they indicate how Said utilizes autobiography to retrospectively reinstate his authority over different forms of domination not usually associated with postcolonial narratives.

Said’s parents had an enduring effect on his identity. As an intently American family, their lives were confusingly split between their Palestinian origin and their Americanized lifestyle and allegiance. Very early in his life, Said would always sense a degree of desperation and alienation concerning his American citizenship. In his autobiography, he recounts these identitarian confusions, and questions his parent’s neglect and ambivalence of their Palestinian origin. His autobiographical accounts reveal an attempt to assert his origins and establish his Arab authenticity. As Ioana Luca argues:

Out of Place can be interpreted as achieving the connection (a highly problematic and problematized one, in Said’s case) between individual and national identity via personal memory and recollection.³⁹⁸

The identity which William and Hilda provided for their son was an ‘alien, insecure and highly provisional identity’.³⁹⁹ His struggle with this reality is the repeated theme of his autobiography. His first and long-lasting encounter with identitarian confusion starts with his anglicized first name, which was in stark contrast to his Arabic family surname. His naming was at the insistence of his parents, particularly his father, who was keen on maintaining and honouring their American nationality and belonging. Since his father’s

³⁹⁶Said, *Out of Place*, p.55.

³⁹⁷Said, *Out of Place*, p.78.

³⁹⁸Ioana Luca, ‘Edward Said’s Lieux de Mémoire: ‘Out of Place and the Politics of Autobiography’, *Social Text*, 24.2 (87) (2006), 125–44 (p.137) <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-24-2_87-125>.

³⁹⁹Said, *Out of Place*, p.135.

acquisition of American citizenship prior to his deployment with the American army in Europe, he fervently asserted his Americanness at the expense of Arab and Palestinian connections. Upon gaining his citizenship, Wadie immediately changed his name to William, or 'Bill', as his close acquaintances would later call him. Throughout his life, William would come to view himself and his family as solely American. In numerous episodes retold by Said, William reveals a very deep loyalty to and belief in his American status. During the Second World War, and as news came to Egypt that German forces were advancing towards the country, William and his family hastily fled to Jerusalem, not as Palestinians, but as Americans fearing capture by their German foes.⁴⁰⁰ Another instance recounts how Said was scolded for reciting the British national anthem, as he attended an English school. His father insisted that they did not recognize any 'king' and that they were 'American', and only have presidents.⁴⁰¹ William would always hoist an American flag on the top of his company building and would constantly side with the United States in all of its political and economic decisions, continually asserting that his motto was 'my country, right or wrong'.⁴⁰² Said recounts all of these instances as evidence of his early rebellion against being Americanized. These recollections not only serve as melancholic reiterations of his confused past, they also serve as part of Said's effort to 'bridge' the two segregated parts of his life. The affirmation of his Palestinianness reconstructs a consistency more in tune with his later, more confident, retrospective selfhood.

Said describes how he was always confused and shocked by his family's mock status as Americans, despite their obvious attachments to their Arab and Palestinian environment. His protestations were instigated by his puzzlement concerning the peculiar absence of Palestine and its politics during his youth. He describes how, in his family household, the 'subject of Palestine was rarely talked about openly'.⁴⁰³ He even recounts how Palestine's 'loss' in 1948 was only mentioned once by his parents.⁴⁰⁴ This is contrasted with his

⁴⁰⁰Said, *Out of Place*, p.26.

⁴⁰¹Said, *Out of Place*, p.49.

⁴⁰²Said, *Out of Place*, p.10.

⁴⁰³Said, *Out of Place*, p.116.

⁴⁰⁴Said, *Out of Place*, p.142.

parents' constant insistence on following an American lifestyle and observing US festivities and holidays. Said explains his frustration:

It seems inexplicable to me now that having dominated our lives for generations, the problem of Palestine and its tragic loss, which affected virtually everyone we knew, deeply changing our world, should have been so relatively repressed, undiscussed, or even remarked on by my parents.⁴⁰⁵

Although Said's reengagement with his Palestinian origins would only materialize after the Israeli-Arab war of 1967, the rekindling of his Palestinian identification started much earlier in his life. Said's rejection of his parents' imposed American identity began as an opposition to his father's immersion in American identification. During his adolescence, he would 'chafe' at the designation of 'khawaja' given to his father, who as an American readily accepted it.⁴⁰⁶ This term was given by Egyptians to Western expatriates who lived in Egypt. Said, on the other hand, refused this designation due to what he called his 'growing sense of Palestinian identity'. Whilst such rebelliousness started early in his life, the manifestation of such independent selfhood and identity would only come into fruition decades later. As Said battled to efface his parent's American involuntary construction, it would take the Naksa of 1967 to bring his Palestinian identity into existence:

Until 1967 [...] the remoteness of the Palestine I grew up in, my family's silence over its role, and then its long disappearance from our lives, my mother's open discomfort with the subject and later aggressive dislike of both Palestine and politics, my lack of contact with Palestinians during the eleven years of my American education: all this allowed me to live my early American life at a great distance from the Palestine of remote memory, unresolved sorrow, and uncomprehending anger.⁴⁰⁷

Despite being focused on family matters, *Out of Place* reveals how Said's politicized postcolonial self emerged, despite his family's best efforts to avoid politics. Palestine was largely absent from Said's youth, yet his autobiographical narrative is able to reinforce a reconnection with his national origin. It is in the very process of writing the autobiography that Said is able to retrieve his sense of Palestinianness. His re-affiliation with Palestine,

⁴⁰⁵Said, *Out of Place*, p.117.

⁴⁰⁶Said, *Out of Place*, p.195.

⁴⁰⁷Said, *Out of Place*, pp.140–41.

despite his parents' efforts, shows the ability of autobiography to construct national belonging later in the autobiographer's life.

From 1943, the Saids spent all their summers in Dhour El-Schweir in Lebanon. A mountainous village near to Beirut, it was the birth place of Hilda's mother. The Badrs, her mother's extended family, resided in and around this picturesque Lebanese resort. The village became an instant favourite for the whole family, away from their busy life in Cairo. But in the family gatherings in Dhour, Said came across instrumental and life-changing experiences. In his encounters with several of his mother's relatives, he would recognize the seeds of the sectarian and xenophobic divide which would later characterize the Lebanese Civil War, which continued from 1975 to 1990. What is significant in these accounts is Said's early awareness and rejection of any idea of separatism or discrimination. He recounts how family acquaintances such as businessman Zeine Zeine, academic Dr Faiz Nassar and politician-professor Charles Malik would not only express 'anti-Muslim' sentiments, but would also voice their grievances towards Palestinians and their cause. This was epitomized in the villagers' refusal to bury William Said in their village, as he was considered an outsider, as a Palestinian.⁴⁰⁸ Although Said believed that many of these sentiments were a reaction to the rise of Arab nationalism, which was usually associated with Arab Muslim majorities, he decisively distances himself from all of these reactionary, over-zealous religious and nationalist binaries:

But there were early signs of this hostility toward Islam, which I caught glimpses of beneath the merry atmosphere of familial gatherings in Dhour. They seemed to emerge as expressions of unquestioning enthusiasm for Christianity, unusual even within Jerusalem's pious confines. As 'Edward Said,' I found myself counted as a Christian in Lebanon, though even today after years of internecine civil conflict there I must confess I am unable to feel any identification at all with Christianity as threatened by Islam. [...] Later I thought this aggressively Christian ideology was very paradoxical and difficult to accept, so little did I, or anyone in my immediate family, have any sense of primarily religious hostility toward Muslims.⁴⁰⁹

His rejection of religious dogmas and nationalist divisions reveals the humanistic aspects of Said's project. Although Said never engaged in direct confrontation with any of his

⁴⁰⁸Said, *Out of Place*, p.296.

⁴⁰⁹Said, *Out of Place*, p.169.

relatives at that time, his reminiscences reveal an astute anti-dogmatic awareness from an early age. It is very important to note the retrospective mode of these recollections by the author of *Covering Islam*. As Said comments on these sectarian incidents, he also announces that these episodes encouraged him to prioritize humanistic and intellectual convictions over 'loyalty' to clan, religious denomination or nationalistic zeal.⁴¹⁰ What this and all of his familial narrations reveal is his ability to reinstate national belonging, humanistic and intellectual beliefs within his 'retrospective' recounting of past events and characters. Autobiography thus becomes a useful methodology for reconfiguring and reconstructing the present self as much as it is a vehicle for reminiscences and historical accounts.

6-3 Schools as 'Colonial Encounters': Resistance from Within

Said utilizes autobiography to reinstate his suffering under the colonial educational system as well as his resistance to its depredation. In these autobiographical descriptions, Said reveals an unconventional manifestation of how colonialism affected and governed his life. Comparatively privileged in terms of his social and economic status, his memoir reveals the effect colonial subordinations had on him socially, culturally and intellectually. As Said tries to 'bridge' the distance between the life of a postcolonial academic and his earlier life as a Palestinian with no recourse to authority, the practicality of autobiographical empowerment is revealed. While Said's oppression and subjugation under colonial and imperialist rule is well documented and beyond dispute, in his reinstatement of 'colonial encounters' during his education is an apparent exposition of his colonial-subject status. My argument is that autobiographical narratives may be utilized in exposing and resisting colonial domination and authority.

The first school Said attended was Gezira Preparatory School (GPS). It was located in the affluent Cairene district of Zamalek. The school was very close to Said's home in Zamalek, which was an enclave reserved for Westerners and rich Egyptians. Said explains that the school was quintessentially an English institution, where much attention was given

⁴¹⁰Said, *Out of Place*, p.280.

to the Battle of Hastings, the Saxons and the Normans, while no mention was made or import given to local history or geography.⁴¹¹ Said attended the school from 1941 to 1946. The student population in the school was diverse and included English, European, Arab and Egyptian students, usually from prosperous families. Although Said was well aware of his setting within this 'frontier between the native urban world and the constructed colonial suburb [they] lived, studied, and played in', he was not himself exempt from colonial discrimination.⁴¹² During one of his trips home from school, he decided to take a short-cut through a field adjacent to the Gezira Club which Said and his father had official membership of. He was immediately confronted by a British officer named Mr. Pilley who ordered Said to leave the grounds at once. Trying to explain that he was indeed a member of the club, Said was met with Pilley's cold instances that 'Arabs are not allowed here, and you are an Arab'.⁴¹³ Said's frustration was also directed towards his father, whose reaction to this discriminatory incident was ambivalent. The reason this episode was significant is that Said links it with his encounters with his teacher Mr Bullen, who would constantly punish Said through detention or other forms of discipline. On one occasion, he was sent by one of the teachers to Mr Bullen's office for discipline after an 'infraction' in class. As soon as Said entered the office, Mr Bullen held him by the neck and 'caned' him several times. Said describes it as another 'colonial encounter'.⁴¹⁴ He recounts how he always found it impossible to differentiate between the British military colonial presence in Egypt and his teachers at GPS. Although he did not show any immediate sign of resistance to his 'colonial' teachers, Said still believed that the relationship between the local students and English teachers was seen by staff at the school as an unequal colonial relation between modern authority and delinquent 'wogs'.⁴¹⁵ This portrait is drawn despite the fact that Said does not in actuality present any instance in which teachers or staff at the school ever used derogatory language or racist remarks. Nevertheless, Said is implying that their treatment of him was informed by a prevailing and powerful institutionalised racism.

⁴¹¹Said, *Out of Place*, p.39.

⁴¹²Said, *Out of Place*, pp.39–40.

⁴¹³Said, *Out of Place*, p.44.

⁴¹⁴Said, *Out of Place*, pp.41–42.

⁴¹⁵Said, *Out of Place*, p.185.

From 1946 to 1949 Said attended Cairo School for American children (CSAC). The school itself was far more accepting of local culture and language. Arabic was taught at the school, and staff were more accepting of the presence of Arab students within their institution. Said found the experience less stressful than GPS; nevertheless, being an American citizen, he became more conscious of his split identity. Among American students, Said felt unable to connect or relate to their experiences or their culture. He describes himself on the first day of school as being an American who ‘hadn’t the slightest feeling of being American’.⁴¹⁶ Said’s answer to such a dilemma was to settle for a provisional and artificial identity during school in order to meet the requirements of his nationality:

CSAC forced me to take ‘Edward’ more seriously as a flawed, frightened, uncertain construction than I ever had before. The overall sensation I had was of my troublesome identity as an American inside whom lurked another Arab identity from which I derived no strength, only embarrassment and discomfort.⁴¹⁷

Said explains that although he was supposed to be more integrated among his fellow Americans within an Americanized environment at school, he immediately felt alienated from his compatriots. He renounced the school’s manifest ideals of patriotism and the virtues and duties of American citizenship. Having been enrolled in the school by his parents as a conscious decision made by ‘American’ citizens in Cairo, Said rejected this designation and became reclusive and underperformed academically during his time at CSAC. What is interesting in all of Said’s descriptions of his time at CSAC is that he insistently repeats his scepticism towards his American identity and confusion towards his Arab origin. His time at CSAC seems similar to his experience at Mount Hermon. Said’s time at Mount Hermon School in Connecticut, which he later attended in 1951, was also marred by feelings of alienation and loneliness. Although Said had relatives in New York whom he frequently visited, he felt abandoned by his parents in a foreign country. In school, he maintained an American identity for public display in order to fit his new role as an American citizen. Said excelled academically at Mount Hermon and immersed himself in study and extracurricular activities. Yet Said had interestingly sweeping opinions

⁴¹⁶Said, *Out of Place*, p.80.

⁴¹⁷Said, *Out of Place*, p.90.

concerning Americans and their society. He scathingly describes American society as follows:

I felt that there was no depth, no ease, to the Americans, only the surface jokiness and anecdotal high spirits of teammates, which never satisfied me. [...] They seemed less emotional, with little interest in articulating their attitudes and reactions. This was the extraordinary homogenizing power of American life, in which the same TV, clothes, ideological uniformity, in films, newspapers, comics, etc., seemed to limit the complex intercourse of family life to an unreflective minimum in which memory has no role. [...] I battled my way through, trying more and more successfully to hold on to and develop the sensibility that resisted the American levelling and ideological herding that seemed to work so effectively on so many of my classmates.⁴¹⁸

Although the generalizations in this quotation seem reductive in their broad descriptions of American society, they more importantly reveal Said's continuous resistance to being Americanized. The differentiation he draws between himself and American people and society is indicative of his recurring insistence on the prevalence of his Palestinian identity. They also signify an autobiographical reconstruction of Said's Palestinianness which was continuously suppressed in these institutions.

Victoria College in Cairo was attended by Said from 1949 up to his departure to the United States in 1951. As Said became more mature and brazen, his resistance to colonial British authority began to manifest itself more explicitly. Said was able for the first time in his life to assert his Arabic language, at times through disturbance and infraction. Forced to join the colonized elite of Egypt at this school, he believed that he was unwillingly required to learn the language, history, geography and minute details of an un-relatable English life. Arabic language and Arab culture and history were not just neglected, they were prohibited and 'criminalized':

A little pamphlet entitled the School Handbook immediately turned us into 'natives'. Rule 1 stated categorically: English is the language of the school. Anyone caught speaking other languages will be severely punished. So Arabic became our haven, a criminalized discourse where we took refuge from the world of masters and complicit prefects and anglicized older boys who lorded it over us as enforcers of the hierarchy and its rules. Because of Rule 1 we spoke more, rather than less. Arabic as an act of defiance against

⁴¹⁸Said, *Out of Place*, pp.233–36.

what seemed then, and seems even more so now, an arbitrary, ludicrously gratuitous symbol of their power. What I had formerly hidden at CSAC became a proud insurrectionary gesture, the power to speak Arabic and not be caught, or, more riskily, the use of Arabic words in class as a way of answering an academic question and attacking the teacher at the same time.⁴¹⁹

Said's resistance would take the shape of 'troublemaking' and delinquency as a form of 'resistance' against the authority of the 'colonial British' at school, and for that he was constantly and severely punished.⁴²⁰ During these descriptions of his 'resistance' to colonialists at school, Said was very conscious of his overtly privileged status. He describes the school as a colonial institution aimed at reproducing 'elite' colonized subjects in order to maintain the colony in Egypt. Said's accounts of his resistance are an essential affirmation of his postcolonial resistance and oppositionality, as well as being important examples and signifiers of his subject status under colonial rule. Alon Confino argues that *Out of Place* is a self-portrayal by a Palestinian 'combatant' against 'structures of domination'.⁴²¹ In all of the above examples, Said accentuates, retrospectively, his rejection of colonial subordination and assimilation. Through his re-affirmation of his Palestinian Arab identity, culture and language, he discursively reinstates his standing both as a former colonial subject and a current postcolonial oppositional intellectual.

6-4 Re-orientalizing Egypt: A Postcolonial Portrait

The previous two sections of this chapter have dealt with Said's oppositionality to authority perpetrated by his family and the colonial school system. As he utilized autobiography as a means of challenging and dismantling these dominant institutions, he was able to a considerable extent to display the discursive capacity of life narratives to empower postcolonial subjects and reinstate their emancipatory arguments. In this section, I concentrate on Said's portrayals of non-authoritarian individuals and collectives in his autobiography, namely Egyptians. As they do not constitute an authority which should be

⁴¹⁹Said, *Out of Place*, p.184.

⁴²⁰Said, *Out of Place*, p.186.

⁴²¹Alon Confino, 'Remembering Talbiyah: On Edward Said's *Out of Place*', *Israel Studies*, 5.2 (2000), 182–98 (p.185) <<https://doi.org/10.2979/ISR.2000.5.2.182>>.

challenged and resisted, they are an exception within the autobiography. Because *Out of Place* focuses on challenging imposed cultures and identities, Egyptians are excluded because they are not powerful. As the first sixteen years of his life was predominantly spent in Egypt, and as his autobiography concentrates on this period and the effects it had on him, Said presents scarce but illuminating examples of interaction with the population, their history and culture. I argue that Said's depictions of Egyptians in *Out of Place* represent an inadvertent extension of and challenge to his arguments in *Orientalism*.⁴²² My contention is that the parameters and paradigms Said sets for Orientalism do not take into consideration the possibility that the essentialisms and reductions he associates with orientalist narratives can be similarly produced and administered by postcolonial autobiographers, such as himself. I also argue that the precautions Said takes in order to sidestep these parameters reveal his awareness of their implications, but also accentuate his inability to develop a perfect non-coercive autobiographical alternative.

I will first discuss the parameters Said sets for orientalist association and his offsetting counter-strategies in *Out of Place*. *Orientalism* was published in 1978, and in it Said concentrates on orientalist associations with colonialism and how they manage to put their knowledge and scientific exertions to the service of imperialist schemes and colonial advances. The first condition Said sets for orientalist compromise is their manifest and evident 'power to orientalise' through their association with power apparatuses and institutions, which were all put into the service of imperialist and colonial enterprises.⁴²³ Orientalists were not only able to produce dominant narratives about the East, they were also able to prevent other opposing narratives from ever forming through monopolizing knowledge and objectivity concerning the orient, politically, economically and culturally. Through their materialized superiority, they were able to produce undisputed and self-evident depictions of the Orient. Said, on the other hand, identifies himself in his autobiography as a colonial subject who was being constantly ruled by 'colonial authority'

⁴²² Although most of the quotations in this section are from *Out of Place*, some also come from *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* by Edward Said. There are three essays in *Reflections on Exile* which are evidently autobiographical and which extend and replicate the narratives and stories depicted in Said's autobiography. These are 'Cairo Recalled', 'Cairo and Alexandria' and 'Homage to a Belly Dancer'.

⁴²³ Said, *Orientalism*, p.5.

in all aspects of his life.⁴²⁴ Hence, any association with power structures is manifestly refuted. This, however, does not take into consideration the fact that autobiographical narratives are ‘retrospectively’ produced by individuals at the time of writing the memoir, rather than the time the events in the text took place. Although this in itself does not necessitate that Said is in any way involved with power, and also does not affect whether or not he was able to challenge colonial authority, it does illuminate his empowering location in the West and the relative authority which characterizes all autobiographical narratives as personalized retrospective texts.

The second feature of Orientalism offered by Said is connected to its monopoly over ‘objectivity’. As Said insists, ‘the modern orientalist does not, as he believes and even says, stand apart from [the Orient] objectively’.⁴²⁵ And through their monopoly over objective knowledge, orientalists demote all other narratives and depictions as necessarily irrational or inaccurate. In *Orientalism*, Said specifically warns against rendering personal ‘autobiographical’ experiences into ‘official statements’ which then acquire objective validity.⁴²⁶ He explains how orientalists have tended to portray subjective insights as textual and archival facts concerning the East. In the preface to *Out of Place*, on the other hand, Said insists that his narrative is a ‘subjective account’ which he presents as ‘an unofficial personal record’.⁴²⁷ Although autobiographical subjectivity is empowering in the context of opposing authority and reclaiming portrayals of the self, it becomes problematic in the context of depicting another culture or people. Even if an autobiographical narrative is indeed ‘unofficial’ and ‘personal’, this does not diminish its representational significance nor its ability to produce reductive depictions of other individuals or collectives. Moreover, as one of the most vocal spokespersons for Palestinian rights, and as one of the most renowned public intellectuals in the United States and elsewhere, it is difficult to see how sustaining an ‘unofficial’ and ‘personal’ autobiographical narrative is possible for Said. As

⁴²⁴Said, *Out of Place*, p.42.

⁴²⁵Said, *Orientalism*, p.104.

⁴²⁶Said, *Orientalism*, p.157.

⁴²⁷Said, *Out of Place*, pp.xiii–xv.

I indicated in the introduction to this chapter, Said is well aware of his status as a ‘performer’ addressing an ‘audience’.⁴²⁸

The third and final condition for orientalist compromise concerns politicization. Said argues that he draws a clear ‘distinction between pure and political knowledge’ when discussing Orientalism.⁴²⁹ He explains that knowledge and discourse about ‘other peoples’ which is conducted with ‘compassion’ and which is also for the subjects’ ‘own sake’ is possible and permissible. Nevertheless, politicized approaches to the ‘other’ which are waged for political or economic purposes in order to ‘control and dominate’ are exemplary of orientalist excursions.⁴³⁰ Said presents *Out of Place* as a ‘non-political’ rendering of experience which leaves in ‘abeyance the politics of [his] other writings’.⁴³¹ He also insists that he does not intend to reinstate his ‘political awareness or political program’ at the time of writing *Out of Place* into his narrative.⁴³² The question of an apolitical narrative is itself problematic, for it is impossible to definitely guarantee that a text is completely devoid of any implicit or explicit politicization. This is particularly true with regard to *Out of Place*, which was instigated with a clear intention to confront all forms of authority, including colonialism, and in the context of ‘retrospective’ autobiographical narratives, where the autobiographer’s perceptions take precedence. In this context, Said’s claim becomes particularly unconvincing.

I here consider the practicality of Said’s precautionary measures against Orientalism in his autobiography. In my reading of *Out of Place*, I examine whether Said’s alternative strategy was able to offset any form of Orientalism, or if such essentialist and reductive depictions were still persistent. I scrutinize the claim that certain forms of Orientalism remain evident despite the autobiographer’s awareness of and opposition to all forms of regressive structures. I argue that personal discourses such as autobiography represent an ideal space for implementing postcolonial strategies, as well as revealing their inefficiencies and contradictions.

⁴²⁸Barenboim, Said and Guzelimian, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*, p.76.

⁴²⁹Said, *Orientalism*, p.9.

⁴³⁰Said, *Orientalism*, p.xiv.

⁴³¹Said, Singh and Johnson, *Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.192.

⁴³²Said and Viswanathan, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, p.124.

It is important first to contextualize and outline Said's status in Egypt. Although of Arab origin, Said was persistently conscious of his standing as an alien resident in a foreign country. This was exacerbated by his Americanized life style, and his family's reclusive inhabitation of Zamalek. Said describes the area in which he dwelt, one of Cairo's most affluent districts, as an enclave for 'foreigners' and colonial officials.⁴³³ The Tewfiqya and Gezira clubs were obvious examples of this privilege. The 'non-Arab, non-Muslim life' which they provided contributed another dimension to the distance Said had from his overwhelmingly Egyptian Arab surroundings.⁴³⁴ As Said reveals, frustratingly for him, not much was considered or said concerning the native population of Egypt. Yet Said found a very interesting use for the dichotomy he constructed between himself and the Egyptian populace:

At the Gezira one felt English and hence orderly, perhaps even superior. Only the upper ranks in the British army were permitted entry, as were diplomats, wealthy foreign businessmen, and a handful of Egyptian aristocrats. The Gezira encouraged me, I remember, to feel that the logic of the place and what it stood for overruled what to me seemed like the unforgivable messiness of my true reality. Only in *that* Cairo, at that time, could my family and I have made sense, with our carefully subdivided existence and absurdly protected minority status.⁴³⁵

Although Said found difficulty in establishing his identity and origin, he and his family found refuge in the seclusion of their social and economic status. As they were differentiated from the majority of Muslim Egyptians, they were able to identify with their artificially constructed 'minority status' as Christian Americans. Whilst this would certainly not amount to an orientalist distinction, it does solidify the fact that the establishment of identities necessitates othering and differentiation. In *Orientalism*, Said criticizes orientalists for their feverish insistence on establishing their mirror-opposite identities, in contrast to those of Orientals. He continues by stating that the 'construction of identity involves establishing opposites and others', and that these others become 'subject' to reductive 'interpretation and reinterpretation' against the self.⁴³⁶ Said's identitarian differentiation does not necessitate misrepresenting Egyptians, but it does however

⁴³³Said, *Out of Place*, p.22.

⁴³⁴Said, *Out of Place*, p.199.

⁴³⁵Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.270. Emphasis in original.

⁴³⁶Said, *Orientalism*, p.332.

contradict his rejection of binary identitarian oppositionality. Said found it possible and advantageous to situate himself against the binary of others in order to locate his selfhood and identification. Hence, it might be argued that creating opposites or counterparts does not necessarily equate with subordination, and that opposites might assist in defining and locating the self. Otherwise, Said risks selectively reinstating the binaries that he accuses orientalist of establishing.

The servants in *Out of Place* present an interesting example of Said's overtly problematic ambivalence towards ordinary Egyptians. It is evidently perplexing that while living in a household which had numerous servants and staff, Said did not engage or interact with any of them. Most of these staff members remain faceless and nameless throughout his autobiography. Said presents the following description of the house staff:

Outside school our lives were of an inordinate and untoward luxury and peculiarity. The families close to us all had their own staff of drivers, gardeners, maids, washerwomen, and an ironing man, some of whom were familiar to all. 'Our' Ahmed, the Dirliks' Hassan, the Fahoums' Mohammed, were almost talismanic in their presence; they turned up in our conversations as staples of our quotidian diet, like the garden or the house, and it felt as if they were our possessions, much like old family retainers in Tolstoy. We were brought up not to be too familiar with the servants.⁴³⁷

Although Said presents his parental ruling against familiarizing with servants as an excuse, this still does not explain his retrospective neglect of their presence in his memoir. Despite the fact that he does describe very short episodes where he interacts with the servants, the memoir is generally more focused on other events and individuals. It would indeed have been possible to engage in emancipatory autobiographical reinstatement of their presence, but the retrospective point of view offered by the autobiographical genre is not made use of by Said to reflect on his neglect of the servants in his home. What is more troubling is the fact that Said seems passively indifferent to the many abuses directed at these servants. He discusses how the servants in the Tewfiqya club are all constantly 'harassed and overworked'.⁴³⁸ He describes how one of his mother's staff in Dhour El-Sheweir was a cook named Hassan who was referred to by everyone in the village as 'al-abd', 'the slave'

⁴³⁷Said, *Out of Place*, p.197.

⁴³⁸Said, *Out of Place*, p.198.

in Arabic. He ignores this degradation, choosing instead to focus more on his mother's plight in their Lebanese summer resort, being understaffed with only two servants and a cook at hand.⁴³⁹ I am not retrospectively placing the blame on Said for these incidents. I am, however, drawing attention to the peculiar lack of sympathy and compassion towards servants and their evident maltreatment. It strikes me as contradictory that a narrative which is explicitly presented as an emancipatory postcolonial recollection should engage in such passive negligence.

Said's descriptions of Cairo and Alexandria reveal a surprising longing for Western influence and culture which is also aligned with his distrust of and frustration with an incompetent native administration. Throughout his autobiography, Said describes how his leisure time was often divided between attending operas and orchestral concerts. And although he was aware of how the European colonial presence was instigated and maintained through brutal force, he nevertheless acquired a great affinity with European high culture. Although this in itself is not a negative attribute, my aim is more focused on comparing these preferences with his descriptions of local Egyptian culture and heritage. He describes the Cairo of his youth as 'an international city dominated in its cultural life, so far as I could tell, by Europeans'.⁴⁴⁰ This comment is remarkably dismissive of Egyptian native culture. And even if it were to be excused due to Said's insulated lifestyle in Cairo, there are other examples of similarly dismissive comments. In *Reflections on Exile*, his later visits to Cairo in 1977 are presented with emphasis on its impression on Western visitors:

No wonder it's easier for the Western visitor to spend time among the ancient monuments, most of which are either on the outskirts of central Cairo or farther south in Upper Egypt, than in the confusing jumble of a teeming city, in which history is displaced without commemorative plaques, or allowed to crumble slowly, or left to co-exist with other competing histories. Whichever the case, you don't feel that the curatorial conservation of the past is a top priority for Cairo: a communal interest in things that are useful or serve the present takes precedence. And since the present is overwhelmingly demanding, what with poverty, urban crowding, inadequate resources and unstoppable growth, and since the state is somehow unable to

⁴³⁹Said, *Out of Place*, p.151.

⁴⁴⁰Said, *Out of Place*, p.98.

plan for all its increasingly well-educated and exigent citizens, Cairo fends for itself, and history must do the same.⁴⁴¹

Visiting ancient monuments may well be easier for Westerners as Said claims, but his descriptions of the inability, or unwillingness, of Egyptians to manage and preserve their history is sweepingly reductive, even if these instances are accurate and do occur.

Moreover, my critique is focused more on the generalization of his description rather than its accuracy. A more imposing portrait is drawn by Said in his description of Alexandria. In these eulogies of Alexandria's former glory, Said seems to link his perception of its deterioration with the disappearance of the foreigners who once dwelt there:

So forlorn is the city without its great foreign communities, so apparently without a mission, so reduced to minimal existence as a cut-rate resort that it filled me with sadness. Crowds mob once-attractive shopping streets like Sharia Sherif intent on bargains from stores that have been divided and subdivided into garishly over-stocked slits where cheap shoes and plastic beach toys hang from the ceiling in tasteless abundance. The one or two little islands of Levantine refreshment—the restaurant Santa Lucia, or Pastroudis, the coffee shop frequented half a century ago by Cavafy—are mostly empty. [...] Alexandria was in fact over: the city celebrated by European travellers with decadent tastes had vanished in the middle 1950s, one of the casualties of the Suez war, which drowned the foreign communities in its wake. One of the few meaningful glimpses of the old Alexandria is a little quasi-monument to Cavafy, the great Greek poet and a former Alexandrian resident, that exists more or less secretly on the second floor of the Greek Consulate.⁴⁴²

The xenophobic sentiments which affected the livelihoods of many foreign communities in Egypt during the turmoil it witnessed following the end of colonial rule are not to be minimized. However, completely disregarding the city as being 'over' and dilapidated simply because of the disappearance of the European presence is an exaggeration. What cannot be neglected in these two quotations is Said's apparent suspicion of local abilities in regards to preserving and maintaining history and its artefacts. His descriptions might be indicative of actual neglect and incompetence in dealing with Egypt's history and heritage, but their context reveals a tendency which might amount to reductive generalizations that echo Said's own criticism of orientalists' belittlement of Orientals' capacities to appreciate

⁴⁴¹Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.341.

⁴⁴²Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, pp.343–44.

and conserve their own heritage. He critiques their condescending approach to Oriental cultures and histories, accusing them of being superior observers of an Orient which is marred with ‘silent obscurity’, and describing hapless Orientals leaving all of their history and monuments ‘neglected’ until a learned Westerner arrives to ‘lift’ them from their eminent demise.⁴⁴³

Tiyanbe Zeleza complains that *Out of Place* is dubiously neglectful of the native populace. He describes how Said gives ‘copious depictions of European and American characters’ he meets throughout his youth, while Egyptians are either ‘invisible’ or depicted as ‘faceless masses’.⁴⁴⁴ Zeleza’s contention is accurate. Throughout *Out of Place*, only a few Egyptian characters are present, and most of them are discussed or mentioned in passing, as is the case with Said’s family servants. Alongside this disregard, Said also consistently makes generalizations about the Egyptian masses. Although he critiqued orientalist for their tendency ‘to conceive of humanity either in large collective terms or in abstract generalities’, some of his own engagements with the Egyptian population reveal reductive generalizations.⁴⁴⁵ For instance, during a visit from Princeton in 1955, and with the advance of a new republic in place of the monarchy, he bemoans how Egypt had become less welcoming to foreigners, who had previously found in its secluded enclaves an ‘open, luxurious and voluptuous paradise’ which was made possible by ‘the subservience of its natives’.⁴⁴⁶ Despite Said’s limited interaction with ‘natives’, as he continuously asserts, it is still surprising that he would describe Egyptians in such derogatory terms, along with the evident broad generalization of this depiction. Portraying the enthusiastic crowds which during the revolution instigated this reminiscence, Said is no less sweeping. He describes the ‘Egyptian crowds’ which would come to cheer the leaders of the new revolution as cheering and clapping aimlessly and without thought: ‘theirs not to reason

⁴⁴³Said, *Orientalism*, p.86.

⁴⁴⁴Paul Tiyanbe Zeleza, ‘The Politics and Poetics of Exile: Edward Said in Africa’, *Research in African Literatures*, 36.3 (2005), 1–22 (pp.6–7) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ral.2005.0156>>.

⁴⁴⁵Said, *Orientalism*, p.154.

⁴⁴⁶Said, *Out of Place*, p.199.

why'.⁴⁴⁷ The most disturbing of these episodes occurs decades later during a family visit to the former building of Cairo's Victoria College in 1989:

At that moment a very angry-looking woman wearing a head covering and Islamic-style dress swept into the room demanding to know what we were doing. I tried to explain the circumstances ('Use your charm,' said my daughter, Najla) but to no avail. We were trespassers, and as school director she was demanding that we leave immediately. She refused my extended hand, staring at us with a surfeit of nationalist hostility and unbending zeal as we shuffled out, rather cowed by her evident outrage. The British Eton in Egypt had now become a new kind of privileged Islamic sanctuary from which thirty-eight years later I was once again being expelled.⁴⁴⁸

The conclusions Said draws from this incident are puzzling. The 'angry-looking woman' may well be condescending and impolite. But it is extremely difficult to envisage how her demeanour constitutes 'nationalist hostility', as Said himself spoke fluent Egyptian Arabic. It is also not clear how one of the teachers' 'Islamic-style dress' immediately transforms the entire institution into an exclusionary 'Islamic sanctuary'. Said ends his over-reading and interpretation of this incident by likening the 'hostility' he witnessed with the colonial oppressive authority which had governed his life decades earlier. It is not that this institution might not resemble what Said attributes to it, it is the fact that he was able to draw and deduce from this short and individual incident sweeping generalizations about both the school and Egypt itself. These reductive generalizations accentuate the risks associated with depicting other individuals and collectives. Whilst Said is conscious of the risks associated with representational narratives producing distortions, he was himself engaged in such reductive portrayals.

I will finally examine Said's solitary engagement with Egyptian popular culture. Tahia Carioca (1919–1999) was Egypt's most renowned and prolific dancer. She starred in more than a hundred movies, theatrical plays and television series. Said's fascination with her life and work started very early in his life, as he attended her dancing performances in Cairo as an adolescent. Said expresses a keen interest in Carioca's life and preserving her legacy. He was interested in how she was able to sustain a career spanning over half a

⁴⁴⁷Said, *Out of Place*, p.110. This line is borrowed from a 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892). This might affirm Said's dismissal of Egyptian popular culture, as he used an English poem to describe Egyptian crowds.

⁴⁴⁸Said, *Out of Place*, p.213.

century within a region in turmoil and in a predominately Muslim society. Said determined that he would make it his mission to recover and preserve her work. He was able to meet the semi-retired performer in the summer of 1989 during a visit to Cairo. His academic and anthropological efforts are also accompanied with an apparent interest in her physical appearance. In *Out of Place*, Said describes his first ever encounter with Tahia decades before he wrote the text. He proclaims her performance the ‘most unmistakably erotic scene’ he had ever witnessed, while also describing all the parts of her semi-naked body as ‘paradisical’.⁴⁴⁹ These descriptions must be contrasted with his later encounter with Tahia as he attended one of her plays in 1975. Said expresses huge frustration and ‘disillusionment’ at Tahia’s deteriorating physique. Gone is her ‘graceful’ physique, as she had turned into a ‘220-pound swaggering’ shadow of her former self.⁴⁵⁰ It is notable that Said places much emphasis on Tahia’s physical features. His lamentation of her later bodily features indicates a stereotypical view of what a female performer should look like. Combined with his musings on her bodily features, Said was also concerned with preserving her legacy and works:

Tahia’s life and death symbolise the enormous amount of our life in that part of the world which simply goes unrecorded and unpreserved, despite the videos that will undoubtedly proliferate now, the retrospectives of her films. [...] There exists no complete record of Tahia’s films, no bibliography, no proper biography—and there probably never will be. All the Arab countries that I know don’t themselves have proper state archives, public record offices, or official libraries any more than they have a decent control over their monuments, antiquities, the history of their cities, individual works of architectural art like mosques, palaces, schools. [...] Tahia seems to me to embody that beyond-the-boundary life for Arabs today. Our history is mostly written by foreigners, visiting scholars, intelligence agents while we do the living, relying on personal and disorganised collective memory, gossip almost, plus the embrace of a family or knowable community to carry us forward in time.⁴⁵¹

Although it might be tempting to liken Said’s position to orientalist fascination with Oriental exoticism, as was the case with the orientalist Gustave Flaubert and the Egyptian Madame Kuchuck Hanem, whom Said critiques in *Orientalism*, I believe that Said’s

⁴⁴⁹Said, *Out of Place*, p.193.

⁴⁵⁰Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p.352.

⁴⁵¹Edward W. Said, ‘Farewell to Tahia’, *Alahram Weekly* (Cairo, 7 October 1999), 450 edition <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Archive/1999/450/cu4.htm>>.

position is more nuanced. His discussion of the dire state of Arab preservation of history and heritage, combined with his gallant efforts to preserve Tahia's legacy, do indeed echo his descriptions of orientalists who view themselves as 'heroes rescuing the orient from the obscurity'.⁴⁵² Said's frustration with the Arabs' lack of interest in and ability to preserve their own culture is certainly consistently reductive towards all Arab and Egyptian efforts to preserve or record their history. It reveals how personal narratives can easily transform into rigid formations when discussing other collectives and cultures. Although such reductive generalizations are scarce in Said's autobiography, they are still significant in the context of his postcolonial arguments and narratives. They crucially espouse the fact that self-awareness and precautionary conditions limit but do not eliminate reductive depictions.

6-5 Conclusion

Said's autobiographical narrative espouses the possibility of revisiting and reinstating oppositionality and resistance to different forms of 'colonial encounters'. Whether familial, educational or colonial, Said was able to reaffirm his authority and decolonize his former self. Autobiographical reconstruction was evidently enabling in its ability to maintain identitarian and intellectual consistency through bridging the divide between current and former selves. Yet, although autobiography is valuable in its empowering individualized 'retrospect', it is vulnerable because of its susceptibility to reproducing reductive depictions concerning the 'other'. Despite all of his evident precautions, Said still found it difficult to completely eliminate the reductions and essentialisms he associates with orientalist narratives. He was able, nevertheless, to show how portrayals and depictions of other individuals and collectives remain problematic in postcolonial alternative and resistant narratives.

⁴⁵²Said, *Orientalism*, p.121.

Conclusion

An alternative to Orientalism is not possible for Said.⁴⁵³

The point has come when we [Arabs] cannot simply accuse the West of Orientalism and racism—I realize that I may be vulnerable on this point—and go on doing little about providing an alternative. If our work isn't enough in the Western media, for example, or isn't known well by Western writers and scholars, a good part of the blame lies with us.⁴⁵⁴

This thesis has evaluated Edward Said's theoretical positions and discourses. My work has sought to elucidate and analyse Said's alternative project in order to reveal the limits of orientalist critiques and the boundaries of postcolonial works produced in Western metropolitan centres. Through examining his theoretical reconfigurations of selfhood, location, vocation and discursivity, as well as his biographical and autobiographical narratives, additional innovative extensions and dimensions have been presented for orientalist and postcolonialist practical applications. My purpose has been to remap postcolonialist parameters, their orientalist possibilities, and the causes and manifestations of such associations. My analysis of Said's theories and narratives has elucidated the paradigms of postcolonial responses, and their compromising location within the West. They also provide essential examinations of the compromising hindrances which curtail postcolonial alternative narratives and arguments, as well as espousing the expanding boundaries of deformities and essentialism usually associated with colonialism, imperialism and Orientalism.

My intention was to revisit and reevaluate Said's oeuvre in the light of his critiques and analyses of Orientalist shortcomings. The practicalities and specifications of his own counter and alternative positions and discourses were not only located and analysed. More significantly, they were able to offer new insights and elaborations for the dimensions and boundaries of many of the terminologies used by Said in *Orientalism*, among other books,

⁴⁵³Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism*, Concepts in the Social Sciences (Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 1999), p.74.

⁴⁵⁴Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, p.393.

articles and interviews, with evident implications for his arguments regarding postcolonialism in general. As Said reconfigures the limits and compromises associated with authority and power structures and apparatuses, particularly in his discussions concerning intellectuality and exile, he promoted certain methodologies and strategies which elucidate his arguments concerning countering these dominant constructions. And although Said does not necessarily promote these arguments and alternatives as theorized methodologies, they do still represent promoted and reformulated positions aimed at challenging power and authority and the postcolonial subject's connection with them. These elaborations, in their entirety, become a necessary component in Said's critiques of Orientalism, as they expand and digress the specifications and conditions of his positions.

Connected to Said's elaborations regarding power structures are his discussions concerning personal and public roles of the postcolonial individuals and intellectuals. His extensive elaborations with regard to origin and beginning, lineage and dis-connectivity, centred and decentred positionalities, institutional privilege and individual dispossession, among other discussions, all present instrumental insights with regard to the particularities of his critique of Orientalism. As he elaborates on the necessity of these, and other, positions and terminologies which were evidently present within his critique of Orientalism as well as his proposed postcolonial positional and discursive alternatives, it becomes essential to emphasize the nuanced nature of his analysis. Although Said's dialectics of rejection and application might seem contradictory at times, they are still intrinsically revealing in the context of his work in its entirety.

These and other examples, discussions and arguments not only elucidate the boundaries of Orientalism, but more productively, they also disclose the practical parameters of Said's preferred, and at times, implicitly promoted alternative discourses, positions and even methodologies. It is essential to affirm that Said's applied positions and discourses were sometimes criticised in this thesis for their apparent relative and over-estimated ability to provide persuasive alternatives to those critiqued by Said as being Orientalist. Thus, along with the discussions concerning the practicalities of these positions and discourses, the analysis presented in this thesis examined the persuasiveness of Said's

appropriation of certain methodologies and terminologies he had already rejected or critiqued in *Orientalism*. Yet, rather than categorizing his positions and discourses as either realistic flexibilities or selective self-serving appropriations, I have sought to reintroduce these actualities as practical manifestations of postcolonial emancipatory and decolonizing empowerment. Said's efforts are presented as post-orientalist manifestations of postcolonial reconceptualization at work. Aligning Said's critiques of Orientalism with his own postcolonial work has offered new insights into the boundaries and conditions of susceptible, prohibited and acceptable forms of methodologies, terminologies and discourses. The implications are that new paradigms and parameters are drawn for his espousals concerning both Orientalism and postcolonialism; as he decolonizes, appropriates and redefines the line between these and other terms.

Deeply influenced by the works of humanists such as Giambattista Vico and Erich Auerbach, Said sought to 'fashion a different kind of humanism' which might espouse individual agency and universal values.⁴⁵⁵ Disillusioned, at times, with the radical anti-humanist assertions of postmodernism and poststructuralism, Said was motivated to introduce a refashioned philosophy able to substitute colonialist, orientalist and imperialist dominant narratives. Decolonizing the metropolis theoretically is both an illumination of the ingenuity of his oeuvre and the vulnerability of his alternatives. As he was curtailed by the methodological and theoretical limits of his humanistic canonical foundation, his alternatives were compromised and he was not able to completely avoid supposed influence by Orientalism. My work has elucidated the epistemological conundrum of postcolonial situatedness within Western centres through examining the work and discourse of one of its most prominent figures. These locations were not only spatial or physical; they indicate a deep embeddedness within Western canonical and theoretical paradigms. These foundational realities complicate the possibilities of fashioning and producing postcolonial alternatives from within the cultural and intellectual hemisphere being interrogated and opposed.

⁴⁵⁵Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p.10.

The interdisciplinary methodology applied to an examination of Said's work has proved invaluable when redirected at postcolonial theories and discourses. Said's 'colonial discourse analysis' is vital in revaluating his own oeuvre. Although instrumental in detecting his own saturation within centric theoretical positions or essentialist narratives, more importantly, they delineate and extend the boundaries of Orientalism and complicate postcolonial emancipatory and oppositional alternatives. Examining Said's susceptibility to producing his own forms of postcolonial 'Orientalisms' necessitates a new configuration able to accommodate the advent of non-conventional forms of Orientalism.

Methodology resembles an intrinsic, yet compromising, dilemma for postcolonialism. Said's reconstructions of identity, exile, intellectualism and discourse illustrate this impasse. His over-determined and often restrictive conceptualizations of these theoretical positions reveal a recurrent insistence on conflating theory with method. As Said viewed 'Eurocentric' canonical and theoretical dependence as a concessional form of subordination, he sought to reinstate parameters for a postcolonial theoretical framework beyond this. Yet, as his own alternatives were heavily dependent on Western humanistic paradigms, he was restricted and hence forced to concentrate his efforts on accommodating methodological mediums in order to offset this quandary. This is evident in the numerous examples of exemptions which inundate his alternatives, as well as his over-dependence on ethical motives and intentionalities. These instances not only show the difficulties associated with producing alternative theoretical frameworks, they also highlight the restrictive methodological nature of postcolonial paradigms.

Autobiographical and biographical narratives have been analysed for their ability to provide practical postcolonial locations for discursive emancipations and oppositionality. *Out of Place* and *After the Last Sky* were approached with detailed analysis in order to scrutinize their applications and supposed associations with Orientalism. *Out of Place* exemplifies the capacity of individual life-narratives to produce empowering and oppositional discourses able to offset past and present dominant impositions. As Said was able to 'retrospectively' reinstate his postcolonial affiliation and resistance, autobiography has been emphasized as an invaluable location for producing un-coerced and un-coercive

narratives. Yet the disjuncture in Said's biography and autobiography lies in the fact that they are both affected by their inability to construct descriptive narratives not caught up by distortions or essentialisms. These factors underscore the persistent inability of postcolonial theorists and writers to permanently eradicate all forms of involvement in Orientalism. These instances highlight the urgent need to reformulate new conceptual frameworks for collective depictions and descriptions, as they still represent a clear weakness in postcolonial discourses.

Through all my analyses of Said's positions and narratives, I have endeavoured to suggestively advocate broader perspectives and different approaches for multidisciplinary discursive examinations based on 'decentred', rather than centred forms of 'colonial discourse analysis' which rely heavily on the intrinsic fallibility of Orientalist discourses being examined, as this is not necessarily the case. This also applies to the assumption which presupposes that dominant and essentialist discourses are almost exclusively produced by Westerner Orientalists and their institutions. My focus on Said's metropolitan and postcolonial-subject dialectic accentuates the need for a composite modality for 'postcolonial discourse analysis' more able to take into consideration the far-ranging parameters of essentialism and power-relations. As 'colonial discourse analysis' was more inclined to be restricted in its spatial and temporal colonial templates, new boundaries should be set for a more hermeneutical analysis which does not refrain from exposing and detecting any form of Orientalism. Rather than concentrating disproportionately on power-related apparatuses or institutional connections, postcolonial analysis should also delve into localized and nativist forms of Orientalism and subordination. The configuration of colonialist incursions as necessarily foreign and alien does not allow for the diversified and nuanced forms of new pseudo-orientalist discourses. Moreover, such analysis departs from the restrictive rubrics of colonialist compromises, towards comparatively analysing reduction and regression on an individual basis. These new postcolonial conceptualizations will allow for a comprehensive and rigorous analytical methodology more able to take into consideration the expanding boundaries of postcolonial theories and narratives beyond the dialectical dichotomies of colonizer and colonized or East and West.

Lisa Lau and Sadik Jalal Al-Azm present a very convincing theorization of recurring Orientalisms. Al-Azm's distillations, nonetheless, are mainly concerned with Occidentalism as a reversed form of antithetical Orientalism produced by 'Orientals'. His discussions do not take into consideration Orientalisms produced from the West itself by 'Orientals' concerning the orient. Lisa Lau's 're-orientalism', in her illuminating article, critiques diasporic Orientalism produced in the West. Her work was nevertheless more concerned with literary texts and did not delve extensively into the ramifications and extensions that such a hypothesis might have for postcolonial and Orientalism theories. My own analysis of Said's work has sought to extend the parameters of postcolonial discursive analysis as well as expand the paradigms of orientalist association. What might be described as dominant and manipulative forms of Orientalism are not seen as necessarily foreign or ill-motivated; they could be internal and initiated by natives as emancipatory and resistant efforts and discourses. I have also sought to emphasize the fact that colonial discursive analysis could be equally redirected towards postcolonial and oppositional narratives and positions. My contention is that Orientalism is not necessarily institutional or monolithic. As my analysis of Said's work demonstrates, Orientalism is relative, non-contingent and non-reciprocal. This would necessitate either redefining Orientalism itself or reconfiguring its exemptions. Such urgency is exacerbated by the nature of a postcolonial globalized and cyberized world in which questions of belonging and ethnicity have become more complicated, and associations with positions of power and imperialist institutions more accessible to any individual around the globe. An orientalist is no longer the stereotypical scholar or traveller situated within a colonial metropolis such as London or Paris.

What all of my analysis of Said's positions, theories and narratives reveals is the intrinsically relative and ambivalent nature of his postcolonial emancipatory and oppositional alternatives. This ambivalence can also be extended towards precisely locating Orientalism itself. It becomes exceedingly difficult, or indeed impossible, to directly align Said's positions and discourses with regard to orientalist associations. Although it can easily be argued that he was the humanistic victim of the limited capacity of the Western canon and Western theories to reproduce non-orientalist alternatives, I believe that such

approximation does not accurately describe his postcolonial dilemma. That one of the most vocal and prominent postcolonial theorists and writers might himself engage in Orientalism might lead to a reactionary scepticism being directed at Said, *Orientalism* or even postcolonialism itself. My own suggestion would be to reconsider the stigmatization of Orientalism itself as a term long-associated with colonialism, imperialism, subordination and power. Because essentialisms and monopolies over canons and discourse are not in any way restricted to orientalists, as my analysis of Said has shown, I believe that it would be more productive to pluralize Orientalism to take into account the different levels of and motivations for orientalist activity. This would be beneficial in re-categorizing all forms of Orientalism, rather than reducing them to one monolithic dichotomy supposedly resolute on subordinating the other, as Said did in *Orientalism*. Orientalism should be reconfigured to take into account nativist, diasporic, sympathetic, postcolonialist and other unconventional forms of Orientalism which are not necessarily imperialist or colonialist, nor intent on subordination. This is not to say that Said himself sees Orientalism as singular or monolithic, it is however to suggest that Orientalist activity should occupy a broader spectrum in terms of its presumed initiators.

In the context of all of these considerations and discussions, Orientalism, postcolonialism, decolonization and indeed 'Evading Orientalism' become reconfigured in the context of Said's oeuvre. Orientalism, therefore was not only essential for Said's establishment and joint initiation of postcolonialism, it was also vital for locating and specifying his postcolonial status, arguments and discourses. And although the thesis has extensively elaborated on the shortcomings, contradictions and fallibilities of some of Said's postcolonial positions and narratives, this must not demote the value and significance of his work. These analyses do not only espouse Said's postcolonialist and post-orientalist methodologies, positions and discourse, they actually illuminate the realities and practicalities of Orientalism and postcolonialism themselves. Thus, *Orientalism* in particular, and Orientalism in general both become essential in analysing and understanding Said and his postcolonial arguments and narratives. The six chapters in this thesis reemphasize the assertion made by Said's epigraph in the beginning of this conclusion. Saidian postcolonialism is, therefore, the practical manifestation of evading, countering and

providing the alternative to Orientalism and colonialism. *Orientalism* and Orientalism in broader terms are therefore the conceptual instigators of postcolonialism and the recurring and necessary differentiating factor for defining counter resistance and emancipatory forms. This is why it becomes extremely difficult, I believe, to define and conceptualize postcolonialism and its alternatives as absolutely sovereign from Orientalism, its terminology and methodologies. Evading Orientalism would, thus, only be possible in terms of hypothetical absolutes where its connotations, methodologies and discourses are evaded in their entirety. And as many of Said's alternative positions and discourses are either relative or conceptually appropriated in order to reclaim them from their association with power, authority and essentialism, for instance, it would be intrinsic to reframe Orientalism as relatively non-monolithic and its methodologies as not necessarily distorted, infiltrated or intrinsically reductive.

What the thesis has sought to achieve, among other aims, is to bring together many of Said's positions and discourses. And although Said was, and still is, one of the most quoted, prominent and discussed figures within postcolonial literature, I believe that my thesis has brought together a compilation which sought to put more emphasis and bring different perspectives concerning his life, discourses and arguments. As my research brought together many of his positions concerning identity, location, vocation and discourse; their ensemble provided illuminating insinuations and implications for his oeuvre. Chief among which is revealing the extent and magnitude of his life work. And although Said had deep and vocal scepticism towards theory and canon, his own arguments and positions in their entirety may provide the basis for postcolonial strategies, practical methodologies and even partial theories to an extent. I believe that the thesis has shown that Said's life work and positions, as an analysed and intertwined compilation, validate such an assumption.

Although I have tried to cover as much of Said's literature as possible, I am aware that there are limits to the ability of any research study to comprehensively cover all aspects of an author's work and life. I have, nevertheless, endeavoured to factor into my analysis representative theoretical and discursive components of Said's work. Moreover, as I have

chosen to examine Said's implication in and susceptibility to Orientalism, I have purposefully focused on evaluating his theoretical contradictions and paradoxes, as well as his discursive essentialisms and influences. This might be misinterpreted as a reductive form of selective analysis of his work. Yet, I would repeat here, I am not in any way calling into question Said's integrity or credentials as one of the most sincerely humanist postcolonial theorists and writers. My rationale has been to impartially offer a new reading and evaluation of Said and his work in order to provide an approach not usually used when discussing his theories and narratives.

Although my work has concentrated mainly on Edward Said's theories and narratives, I believe that it might be productively extended to the work of other postcolonial theorists and writers. A comparative study of the three most influential postcolonial theorists such as Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak would potentially yield some interesting findings concerning their ability to produce adequate alternatives to colonial imperialisms and Orientalisms while also evading being associated with these themselves. More productive and interesting, I believe, would be to re-read postcolonial literary constructions produced by diasporic theorists in the West in order to dissect their ability to produce non-orientalist narratives, or indeed their associations with Orientalism. I believe that such approaches might be insightful and productive on various levels.

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APENDIX 1

Author	Date of Publication	Language	Title	Publisher
Hussein Abu Alnamil	1975	Arabic	<i>The Israeli Economy</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1979	Arabic	<i>The Gaza Strip 1948-67</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1979	Arabic	<i>The West Bank and Gaza 1967-78</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1980	Arabic	<i>Israeli Industries</i>	Beirut: Dar Altaliah
Professor Ibrahim Abu-Lughod	1970	English	<i>The Arab-Israeli Confrontation of 1967: An Arab Perspective. Editor</i>	Evanston: Northwestern University Press
	1972	English	<i>The Transformation of Palestine. Editor</i>	Evanston: Northwestern University Press
	1974	English	<i>Settler Regimes in Africa and the Arab World: The Illusion of Endurance. Editor</i>	Wilmette, Illinois: Medina Press
	1982	English	<i>Palestinian Rights: Affirmation and Denial. Editor</i>	Wilmette, Illinois: Medina Press
Professor Asad Albargouthi	1966	Arabic	<i>American and German Aid to Israel</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1967	Arabic	<i>Israel's Asian Infiltration</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1969	Arabic	<i>The Zionist Movement 1947-48</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1969	Arabic	<i>A Prisoner's Pamphlets</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1979	Arabic	<i>Palestine: a Land, a People and a Cause</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
Dr. Ahmad Khalil Alaaqqad	1939	Arabic	<i>Nationalist Arabic Popular Poetry in Palestine</i>	Beirut: [s.n.]
	1946	Arabic	<i>Who is Who: Palestine</i>	Jaffa: [s.n.]
	1966	Arabic	<i>The History of Arabic Journalism in Palestine</i>	Damascus: Alwafa Press
Aref Al-Aref	1933	Arabic	<i>The Justice System among Bedouins</i>	Jerusalem: Bait Almaqdis Press
	1934	Arabic	<i>The History of Beersheba and its Tribes</i>	Jerusalem: Bait Almaqdis Press
	1943	Arabic	<i>The History of Gaza</i>	Jerusalem: Dar Alaytam Press
	1943	Arabic	<i>A Brief History of Asqalan</i>	Jerusalem: Bait Almaqdis Press
	1947	Arabic	<i>The History of the Jerusalem Sanctuary</i>	Jerusalem: Dar Alaytam Press
	1951	Arabic	<i>The History of Jerusalem</i>	Cairo: Dar Almaarif Press
	1955	Arabic	<i>The History of the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque, and a Short</i>	Jerusalem: Alandalus press

			<i>Survey of the History of Jerusalem</i>	
	1961	Arabic	<i>A Detailed History of Jerusalem</i>	Jerusalem: Alandalus press
	1961	Arabic	<i>The Nakba: The Nakba of Jerusalem and the Lost Paradise</i>	Saida: Alasria Press
	1961	Arabic	<i>The Nakba in Photographs: The Catastrophe of Palestine's Arabs</i>	Beirut: Dar Alem Lilmalayeen
Ihsan Alnemr	1938	Arabic	<i>The History of Mount Nabuls and Balqaa</i>	Nabuls: Alnasser Press
	1978	Arabic	<i>Studies in Ottoman History</i>	Nabuls: Alnasser Press
	1980	Arabic	<i>Alramini's Letter on Nablus: A Critique</i>	Nabuls: Aliqtisad Press
	19--	Arabic	<i>Palestine: Township Role</i>	Nabuls: Cooperative Publishing Workers' Press
Professor Maher Charif	1980	Arabic	<i>Palestinian Cultural Heritage</i>	Moscow: Losecomore Press
	1981	Arabic	<i>Communism and Arab Nationalism in Palestine 1919-1948</i>	Beirut : PLO Research Centre
	1985	Arabic	<i>An Introduction to the Cultural and Social History of Palestine</i>	Tulkarm: Ibn Khildoun Press
Muhammad Izzat Darwaza	1959	Arabic	<i>Palestine and Palestinians Under Ottoman Rule</i>	Damascus: Dar Ya'rub
	1960	Arabic	<i>Palestinian Resistance</i>	[s.n.]
	1960	Arabic	<i>The Phases of the Palestinian Cause</i>	Damascus: Dar Ya'rub
	1960	Arabic	<i>The Palestinian Catastrophe</i>	Damascus: Dar Alyagaza Alarabiya
	1961	Arabic	<i>The History of the Jewish People</i>	Cairo: Alnahdha Press
	1964	Arabic	<i>The History of the Arab Race</i>	Beirut: Alasria Press
	1980	Arabic	<i>The Palestinian Cause: Misconceptions and Neglects</i>	Beirut: Alasria Press
Sami Hadawi	1957	English	<i><u>Land Ownership in Palestine</u></i>	New York: <u>Palestine Arab Refugee Office</u>
	1959	English	<i><u>Palestine Partitioned 1947-1958</u></i>	New York: <u>Arab Information Center</u>
	1959	English	<i><u>Israel and the Arab Minority</u></i>	New York: <u>Arab Information Center</u>
	1960	English	<i><u>Israel According to Holy Scriptures</u></i>	Dallas, Texas: [s.n.]
	1961	English	<i><u>Palestine: Questions and Answers</u></i>	New York: <u>Arab Information Center</u>
	1961	English	<i><u>German Reparation Versus Israeli Confiscations</u></i>	New York: <u>Arab Information Center</u>

	1961	English	<i>Who Benefits from Anti-Semitism</i>	New York: <u>Arab Information Center</u>
	1963	English	<i>Palestine Loss of Heritage San Antonio, Texas</i>	San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Co.
	1964	English	<i><u>Palestine in the United Nations</u></i>	New York: <u>Arab Information Center</u>
	1967	English	<i>Bitter Harvest: Palestine 1914-1967</i>	New York: New World Press
	1969	English	<i>Palestine in Focus</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1970	English	<i>Village Statistics, 1945: A Classification of Land and Area Ownership in Palestine</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1972	English	<i>The Palestine Diary: Volume I and II</i>	Beijing: New World Press
	1972	English	<i>Crime and no Punishment: Zionist Israeli Terrorism, 1939-1972</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1979	English	<i>Bitter Harvest, Palestine Between 1914-1979</i>	Tehran: Caravan Books
	1981	English	<i>The Jews, Zionism, and the Bible: (A Study of 'Biblical' and 'Historical' Claims)</i>	Toronto: The Arab Palestine Association
	1980	English	<i>British Policy Towards Syria and Palestine, 1906–1914</i>	Reading: Ithaca Press
Professor Rashid Khalidi	1982	English	<i>Palestine and the Gulf (Co-editor)</i>	Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies
	1986	English	<i>Under Siege: PLO Decision-Making During the 1982 War</i>	New York: Columbia University Press
Professor Walid Khalidi	1971	English	<i><u>From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948</u></i>	Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies
	1974	English	<i>Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Annotated Bibliography</i>	Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies
	1983	English	<i>Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East</i>	Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press
	1984	English	<i>Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians, 1876–1948</i>	Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies
Nasuraldin Nashashibi	1959	Arabic	<i>Palestine and Unity</i>	Beirut: [s.n.]
	1960	Arabic	<i>What Happened in the Middle East</i>	Cairo: Dar Alhikmah press
	1961	Arabic	<i>Return Ticket</i>	Beirut: [s.n.]

Professor Anis Sayigh	1961	Arabic	<i>Conceptual Development of Nationalism among Arabs</i>	Beirut: Dar Altaliah
	1966	Arabic	<i>The Hashemites and the Great Arab Revolt</i>	Beirut: Dar Altaliah
	1966	Arabic	<i>The Hashemites and the Palestinian Cause</i>	Beirut: Alasria Press
	1967	Arabic	<i>Palestine and Arab Nationalism</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1967	Arabic	<i>Military Balance between Arabs and Israel</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1968	Arabic	<i>Occupied Palestinian Townships between 1948-1967</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1968	Arabic	<i>Zionist Thought</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1969	Arabic	<i>Israeli Settlements Since 1967</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1970	Arabic	<i>Ignorance towards the Palestinian Cause among Arab University Students</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1970	Arabic	<i>Israeli Politicians</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
Professor Hisham Sharabi	1966	English	<i>Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World</i>	New York: D. Van Nostrand
	1969	English	<i>Palestine and Israel: The Lethal Dilemma</i>	Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril
	1970	English	<i>Arab Intellectuals and the West</i>	Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press
	1970	English	<i>Palestinian Guerrillas: Their Credibility and Effectiveness</i>	Washington D.C.: <u>Institute for Palestine Studies</u>
Professor Abdul Latif Tibawi	1956	English	<i>Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine</i>	London: Luzac
	1961	English	<i>British Interests in Palestine, 1800-1901</i>	Oxford: Oxford University Press
	1966	English	<i>Russian Cultural Penetration of Syria-Palestine in the Nineteenth Century</i>	London: Royal Asian Society
	1969	English	<i>A Modern History of Syria, Including Lebanon and Palestine</i>	London: Macmillan
	1969	English	<i>Jerusalem; Its Place in Islam and Arab History</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1977	English	<i>Anglo-Arab Relations and The Question of Palestine</i>	London: Luzac
	1978	English	<i>The Islamic Pious Foundations in Jerusalem: Origins, History and Usurpation by Israel</i>	London: The Islamic Cultural Centre
Dr. Emile Touma	1960	Arabic	<i>Arabs and Historical Developments in the Middle East</i>	Haifa: Dar Alittihad Press

	1973	Arabic	<i>The Roots of the Palestinian Situation</i>	Beirut: PLO Research Centre
	1974	Arabic	<i>Diary of a People</i>	Haifa: Arabesque Press
	1978	Arabic	<i>Sixty Years of Palestinian and Arab Nationalism</i>	Ramallah: Bayyadir Press
	1982	Arabic	<i>The Path for Popular Arab Resistance in Israel</i>	Acre: Abu Salma Press
	1982	Arabic	<i>Studies in Contemporary Zionism</i>	Amman: Arab Publishing House
	1983	Arabic	<i>Palestine under Ottoman Rule</i>	Jerusalem: Dar Alfajir
	1984	Arabic	<i>The Arab Nationalist Movement and Palestine</i>	Acre: Dar Alaswar
	1986	Arabic	<i>Palestinian Liberation Organization</i>	Haifa: Dar Alittihad Press
Professor Nicola Ziyadh	1942	Arabic	<i>The old World</i>	Beirut: The Complete Works: Alahlia Press
	1945	Arabic	<i>Arab Leap</i>	Beirut: The Complete Works: Alahlia Press
	1946	Arabic	<i>Images from Arab History</i>	Beirut: The Complete Works: Alahlia Press
	1950	Arabic	<i>Arabism in the Views of Nationalism</i>	Beirut: The Complete Works: Alahlia Press
	1967	Arabic	<i>Studies in the Great Arab Revolt</i>	Beirut: The Complete Works: Alahlia Press
Professor Ellia Zureik	1979	English	<i>Sociology of the Palestinians, Co-Editor</i>	London: Croom Helm
	1979	English	<i>The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism, Co-Editor</i>	Toronto: McClelland and Stewart