INTRODUCTION

Studying “other cultures” has long been seen as problematic, and the concern spans the entire history of the social sciences. As postcolonial and cultural studies gained prominence in the late twentieth century, the attempts worldwide by scholars and critics to comprehend and establish the various dimensions of “other cultures” acquired significance. Towards the end of the twentieth century, Edward Said’s ground-breaking work *Orientalism* (1978) opened new vistas of enquiry in postcolonial studies. Based on these critical notes, this study is primarily interested in how -- in the concrete medium of discourse -- cultural forces acted in a systematic and disciplined way, not merely to buttress misperceptions of “Self” and “Other”, but to “produce” the very objects of dichotomy.

As much as it is concerned with the examination of Said’s critical project, this study will also attempt to locate his endeavors to the present-day Arab culture and its crisis. Indeed, his contribution represents a trend whose thought is influential. Said is not studied here for himself, but for his contribution to the general picture of Arab culture today. He always believed in the power of thought to contribute to social change. Being itself a product of the socio-political and cultural conditions he experienced, his thought has a dialectical relation to the socio-political and cultural world he aspires. In other words, his thought has been affected by the conditions of its world, but it is capable of contributing to it as well. He looks at writing as

a way of trying out thought, of expressing ideas, of trying to reach people . . . it’s a refusal of the silence . . . a very varied thing . . . to raise questions and inspire skepticism. Not to let people feel that there is nothing that can be done . . . to try
and stimulate or at least involve the reader in a process which you can help along with your own writing. (qtd. in Rose 10-1)

A charismatic character that combines within himself the paradox of life, Edward Wade Said is a Palestinian Christian with a healthy respect for Islam. Versatile and subtle, Said was also better at elucidating distinctions than formulating systems. He devoted his intellectual career for bringing together dichotomous parts into a single whole. Recalling the cultural and socio-political set up that goes into the making of his paradoxical upbringing, he passionately writes:

With an unexceptionally Arab family name like Said connected to an improbably British first name . . ., I was an uncomfortably anomalous student all through my early years: a Palestinian going to school in Egypt, with an English first name, an American passport and no certain identity at all. To make matters worse, Arabic, my native language, and English, my school language, were inextricably mixed: I have never known which was my first language, and have felt fully at home in neither, although I dream in both. (“Between Worlds” 557)

It is to be noted that Said has been studied worldwide as an international intellectual whose contribution to the world theory and criticism is far-reaching. These studies have dealt with him from the perspective of an influentially world figure without studying the specificity of his critical project whose actual and launching point is culturally specific and politically problematic. As a way of outdoing the oppositional Occident-Orient binary, he has bridged the local with the global, the private with the public, the specific with the general, and the professional with the amateur, producing a paradoxically constructed whole of interdependent relationship and common shared responsibility.
Subsequently, in his debunking of the dichotomous world system, represented by the Orientalist project, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been treated globally so as to reflect the universal trauma of human suffering under the effect of the colonalist/Orientalist geopolitical design and construct. Palpably, the Israeli-Palestinian issue in its latent form represents, for him, the East-West dichotomy. Throughout his work, Palestine has been the focus of textuality of power and this fact reveals that the Palestinian suffering with all its cruel reality has become the essence of reification of Western Orientalist enterprise and the byword of its devastating legacy. Though he has never sided himself with nationalist, nativist, parochial, racial or any other narrow categorization, Said has taken the Palestinian issue as the center of his critical and cultural enterprise. The East-West encounter, the colonial/Orientalist manifestations, Occident-Orient demarcation, colonial and imperial repercussions, superior/inferior classification, racism and dispossession, displacement and alienation, occupation and resistance -- all postcolonial traumas and global dualities have been represented and experienced in the Palestinian issue. This reified process has been tackled under the notion of Palestinization. In his discussion of the Occident-Orient dichotomy, therefore, the question of Palestine forms the inner range of which the “Orient” represents its outer range.

Said brought the concept of Occident-Orient dichotomy into question. His thought gained currency as he placed the concept of dichotomy to the scrutiny of cultural criticism in the light of the rapid development and global geo-cultural transformations that throb the world today. As a preliminary area of study, the thesis attempts to explore, analyze, question and articulate the ways in which perceptions of this concept are shaped in and through Said’s critical oeuvre. His concept will be explored through the ways in which the concepts and processes of Orientalism and cultural formations are expressed in and
through Orientalist texts and how he has productively responded to their propositions. The study will also delve into how concepts such as “culture”, “imperialism”, and “imagined Other”, etc., are treated by Said as ideologically constructed processes, and how these discourses designate, allocate and create cultural codes and “identities” through mass media and narrative texts as processes of representation, reflection and imagination. The concept of dichotomy suggests that cultural identity is shaped and reshaped by composers reflecting on from outside rather than springing from inside experiences and events. Accordingly, the main question of this study is: How do Said’s critical interventions change or challenge our perceptions of Occident-Orient Dichotomy?

The Occident-Orient dichotomy is considered to be one of the main cultural problematics of the Modern Arab thought. The tension that has emerged between the traditionalist and modernist Arab thought was ultimately a consequential outcome of the cultural and epistemological disparities that have been sustained and nourished by the discourse of “Othering”. The East-West dichotomy was traditionally ruled by a conventionally religious distinction between the “Muslim East” and “Christian West”. Later, the idea developed further to divide the globe into the “spiritual East” and the “materialist West”. With emergence of the capitalist, imperial and colonial powers in the West, the East-West divide has taken a new turn that has culturally and politically institutionalized and essentialized the divide through the discourse of Orientalism.

Locating Said within the framework of Arab thought formalistically matters, especially for those who care about language and geography of upbringing. For them this is a vital point of argument since his writings are mostly in English. Since the concern of the study is his intellectual and critical production, and not the sociology of his language and academia, the scope and mapping of the thesis is intellectual and not spatial. Thus,
Said will be studied as an Arab intellectual thinker and will be examined from an Arab vintage point as well. What distinguishes Said from many other Arab intellectuals, in effect, is that he speaks for both the Arab and Western audience, as insider and outsider of both worlds. His critical thought, therefore, transcends the geography of place to the whole world, bringing the seemingly disparate events or experiences into a meeting point. His potential as an outstanding bicultural critic, theorist and political thinker has enabled him an influential position in Arab contemporary thought. Needless to say, he has been acknowledged as the representative spokesperson of the Arabs in the West.

Moreover, an attempt in this thesis is made to investigate from an Arab perspective the structured mentality of Western culture in its relation to a non-Western culture, particularly in its relation to the Arab Middle East, and the correlation between political discourse and cultural formation in the light of Said’s conceptualization of Orientalism as a discourse of power relationships. The argument is premised upon the idea that the Occident–Orient dichotomy is ideologically epistemological rather than philosophically ontological. The politico-cultural map of this dichotomy has created a state of unhealthy relationship between nations, peoples and communities.

In fact, the Occident-Orient dichotomy has a history of its own which casts a lot of questions about the role of science, religion and culture in bringing together or setting apart the geography of humanity and maintaining a space for human understanding free from the shackles of politics and ideology. This cannot be achieved without using common denominator or ground, a theory or methodology that recognizes but not sides with one over the other. These critical methods are called by Said as “secular criticism” and “contrapuntal reading” which look at the historical experience as an event that occurs between two mutual parts and in which no one can claim the singularity of it.
The importance of Said does not lie in his brilliantly theoretical and critical views which emphasize the role of the intellectual in setting right the wrongs done to human being and his/her identity and culture, but also in his continual and constant efforts to undo the unwise East/West, developed/undeveloped or Orient/Occident divide, in giving importance to human as human, in highlighting the interactive nature of cultures, and in speaking truth to power. The extraordinary impact of his critical and cultural theory is its repeated dissolution of boundaries drawn by colonial and neocolonial Western hegemony. His departure from the colonial discourse has ignited an intellectual and ideological conflagration due to its insistence on destabilizing and deconstructing of oppositional formula: representation and reality. He has offered a new reading of the Occident-Orient dichotomy based on mutual and reciprocal relationship. As credentially Saidian critical terms, the concepts of “Orientalism”, “travelling theory”, “secular criticism”, “contrapuntality”, “voyage-in”, and “worldliness” are among the still sustained and widely discussed terms in the fields of critical and cultural studies today. His interviews tell us clearly how committed an intellectual he is and to what extent he is true to his principles and views. The principal issue for him is: “Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly?” *Orientalism* 45.

In such a theory, cultures and events are moving to prominence alternatively and mutually as interactive interlocutors. Practically, Said has shown a move in the development of his thought regarding the Occident-Orient relationship from cultural critique to cultural dialogue. His early work began with a gesture of refusal and rejection, and ended with a kind of ambivalent acceptance. If *Orientalism* questions a pattern of misrepresentation of the non-Western world, *Culture and Imperialism* explores with a
less confrontational tone the complex and ongoing relationships between the East and the West. His other writings such as *Covering Islam* and *After the Last Sky* reflect his quest for an answer for the unreasonable conflict. In his collection of interviews *Power, Politics and Culture*, posthumous book *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* and *On Late Style*, he offers new critical values based on new humanist ideals that celebrate “worldism” as a relativistic cosmopolitan concept.

The present study attempts to probe into the nature and the structure of Said’s polemics not as a counter-discourse, but as a contrapuntal reading of the cultural construct endorsed by the concept of dichotomy that has been nourished and cultivated between the “Occident” and its various “Others”. The study will also expound how Siad’s strategically critical vision transcends the Occident-Orient divide into a system of a relatively cosmopolitan value that endorses the “glocal” and cultural dialogue. The study will mainly focus on Said’s concept and polemics of the Occident-Orient dichotomy in such texts as *Orientalism* (1978); *The Question of Palestine* (1979); *Covering Islam* (1981); *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983); *Culture and Imperialism* (1993); *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994); *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994); *Out of Place: A Memoir* (1999); *Reflections on Exile* (2001); *Culture and Resistance* (2003); *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004).

The study takes Said’s critical oeuvre as a complete whole, consisting of two complementary parts: theory and praxis. Hence, as it will be examined in the research, Said has first exposed and undone the hierarchical conception of history of human cultures and civilizations that was predominantly proposed by Western intellectualism, and secondly, he has proposed and introduced a new communicative approach based on mutual understanding, cultural dialogue and reciprocal interlocution. Thus, the thesis
achieves two objectives: the first is critical pertaining to establishing a Saidian school of thought, unique and independent by itself, the second is analytical, related to examining his conception of the dichotomy between the “Occident” and the “Orient”.

Though he has been celebrated as a controversially remarkable world thinker, Said has not been duly studied as an influential Arab scholar. Also, although the Arab critical thought today is greatly indebted to his intellectual production, especially his injection of cultural criticism and debunking of the epistemological and politico-cultural dichotomization between the Arab-Islamic culture and the West, his critical repertoire has not been fully explored from a critically Arab perspective. Ironically, his popularity as a world critic has eclipsed his presence as a significant Arab thinker.

However, attempts have been made, and a number of articles and essays on Said have been written by Arab scholars, but they have been limited to discussing some aspects of his work, failing to bring in a comprehensive Arab reading of his thoughts, especially his concept of cultural dichotomy. These writings include, but not exclusive to, Mustapha Marrouchi’s Edward Said at the Limits (2004), Rana Kabani’s Europe’s Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule (1986), Aziz al-Azmah’s “The Articulation of Orientalism”, Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm’s “Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse”, Amal Rassam’s “Comments on Orientalism”, Mustapha Marrouchi’s “The Critic as Dis/Placed Intelligence: The Case of Edward Said”, Mustapha Marrouchi’s “Counternarratives, Recoveries, Refusals”, Khadija Chaker, “Uncovering Covering Islam: A Critical Analysis of Anti-Islamic Forces”, Fouzi el-Asmar, “The Portrayal of Arabs in Hebrew Children’s Literature”, Ghazi Falah, “The Frontier of Political Criticism in Israeli Geographic Practice”, and Ihab Hassan, “Polemic”. A recent study on Said comes from Al Sayed Mohamed Aly Ismail’s MA dissertation entitled “Edward Said’s Concept of Criticism: A
Strategy for a Value System.” It is concerned with Siad’s literary criticism and his role as a humanist.

Nevertheless, the Arab and East-West encounter has been the concern of several Arab scholars and researchers. These attempts include Ibrahim Abu Lughod’s *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, originally a PhD thesis which traces the transmission of modern social and political concepts from Europe to the Arab World during the first seven decades of the nineteenth century, Rashid El-Enany’s *Representations of the Occident: East-West encounters in Arabic Fiction*, which examines Arab representations of the West in Arabic fiction, Raghad Al-Hussamy’s *Images of Self and Other in Modern Arabic Prose Narrative*, which also attempts a textual analysis of some Modern Arab narratives, Ali Bassam Al-Jarbawi’s *Modernism and Secularism in Arab Middle East*, Mohammed Nasser Shoukani’s *Orientalism and Arab Literary Responses*, as comparative studies between some Arab and Western writers on the notion of imaging of the other, and Mohammed Al-Quwaizani’s “Orientalism and Postcolonialism in Modern Arabic thought: Imaging and Counter-Imaging,” a PhD thesis, which attempts a reading of the dominating Orientalist/colonialist image of the Arab in the Modern Arabic thought. In their critical outlook, however, these studies can be termed as a general survey of the effects of modernity on the Arab life and thought.

The present study deals with Occident-Orient dichotomy as a critically cultural concept that brings within itself the accumulative effects of Westernization, modernity, tradition, Orientalism, imperialism, Islamophobia and other terms related to Arab and East-West encounter. The argument has been built on the idea that Modern and Contemporary Arab Thought was contended with the concept of cultural dichotomy and interface between the Arab-Islamic world and the West, particularly after the Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798. In fact, no other critic has ever aptly handled this concept, or
approached a systematic study of the historical and epistemological nature of this concept as Edward Said has done. In a deep and down-to-earth theory, he has discursively traced the concept of cultural dichotomy and its invalid politico-cultural discourse of knowledge/power in the globally polycentric world. Consequently, this thesis comes to fulfill two goals. The first is to undo the Western concepts of the Oriental “Other” -- here the Arabs -- that has dominated the East-West relationship for more than four centuries, and secondly the thesis attempts to build an alternatively positive critical approach based on mutually contrapuntal and simultaneous world view.

Indubitably, as a world figure whose insights have dealt with the core of the postcolonial cultural problematic, that is, “the West” and “the rest”, Said’s cultural project and critical endeavor must have produced various responses and ignited different reactions from inside and outside the Arab intellectual sphere and academia. These reactions ranged from attacks and critiques to attributes and salutations. Critics of Said argued out that even at the height of the imperial era, European power in the East was never absolute, and remained heavily dependent on local collaborators, who were frequently subversive of imperial aims, and that “Orientalism, in Edward Said’s sense, was only one among a variety of localized engagements between power and knowledge”, persisting that “Edward Said’s followers emphasised orientalism’s political agenda in creating ‘otherness’ more resolutely even than he had done himself” (Bayly 143, 282). Other critics suggested that Said was more interested in making political points about the Middle East (Irwin, For Lust of Knowing 159-60, 281-2). Yet, the strong criticism of Said came from academic Orientalists, including some of Eastern backgrounds. This includes Bernard Lewis’s “The Question of Orientalism” (99,118); Sadiq Jalal al-‘Azm’s “Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse” (217-38), Aijaz Ahmad’s “Orientalism and After” (98-116) and “Between Orientalism and Historicism” (285-97). Robert Irwin in
Edward Said’s shadowy legacy” and Ibn Warraq in Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said’s Orientalism accused Said of creating a monolithic “Occidentalism” to oppose to the “Orientalism” of Western discourse, arguing that he failed to distinguish between the paradigms of Romanticism and the Enlightenment. Other critics argued that by making ethnicity and cultural background the test of authority and objectivity in studying the “Orient,” he drew attention to the question of his own identity as a Palestinian and as a “Subaltern” (Pati 77-9). Malcolm H. Kerr criticizes Said of repeating the same error he attempts to castigate: “In charging the entire tradition of European and American Oriental studies with the sins of reductionism and caricature, he commits precisely the same error” (544). Ahmad views Said as enamored of the West, critiquing him for implying that imperialism is “mainly a cultural phenomenon to be opposed by an alternative discourse” (In Theory 204, italics in origin). Gyan Prakash observes that “Said wove the ‘knitted-together strength’ of the Orientalist discourse too tight, that he allowed little room for variation, change, ambivalence, [and] that he essentialized the Orientalists”, and, by extension, the West in which Orientalism took shape (206). For James Clifford, Said’s book “appears to mimic the essentializing discourse it attacks” (262).

Said’s critics also antagonized and interrogated his negligence of gendered narratives of dissent while others such as Lila Abu-Lughod and L. Ahmed found a redemptive feminist component in Said’s writings and explication of Orientalism. However, perspicacious readers will have noted that gender was not a central concern of Orientalism, though he had certainly pointed out how the “Orient” and Orientals were often not only eroticized, but also depicted as effeminate, weak and passive, in contrast with a West portrayed as active, powerful and male, and he had also discussed various writers’ depictions of Oriental women.
Nevertheless, these critiques have adopted two lines of attack on the book’s alleged performative contradiction: first, the book is accused of replicating the essentializing tendencies of Orientalism that it seeks to repudiate; and, second, it is criticized for relying on the universalizing or totalizing concept of humanism to oppose the equally totalizing tendencies of Orientalist discourse. Almost all the controversy and criticism revolve around three main points: sheer Occidentalism, essentialism, stereotyping of European. These allegations have been refuted by Said and his supporters alike. They argue that the first criticism is not there since Said has made it clear in his book that he has excluded the German Orientalism, and his concern was Orientalism as a corporate institution as had been appropriated by the then classical colonial powers -- the French and British in the mid-eighteenth century. The second is rejected on the basis that Said has tackled the concept of Orientalism as a discourse which incorporated the political, religious, literary, social and epistemological aspects. The third can be invalidated by referring to catalogue of texts he has introduced of western scholarship literature which turn up the critique against itself.

The problem with Said’s critics is, however, to apply an “either-or” logic to his “both-and” approach and, consequently, fault Said for methodological or theoretical contradiction. In fact, Said welcomes contradiction and inconsistency. As he remarked in an interview: “I am invariably criticized by younger post-colonialists (Ahmad, etcetra) for being inconsistent and untheoretical, and I find that I like that -- who wants to be consistent?” (“Conversation with Bill Ashcroft” 90). Elsewhere, he says, “Orientalism is theoretically inconsistent, and I designed it that way” (“Literary Theory at the Crossroads of Public Life” 80). Said embraces inconsistency and contradiction because he believes in the need for a critical method supple enough to track the complex interplay of consistency and inconsistency in the discourses and practices that shape the world we live in. He
rejects his critics’ call for theoretical consistency and systematic rigor: “Orientalism is a partisan book, not a theoretical machine . . . What I tried to preserve in my analysis of Orientalism was its combination of consistency and inconsistency, its play, so to speak” (Orientalism 340-41, italics in origin). Therefore, in calling for greater theoretical consistency, then, it is Said’s critics, who reveal themselves as systematizers, failed to understand that paradox and inconsistency have been the creative and enabling forces of his critical repertoire.

Said’s supporters argued that his ideas hold a venerated position in literary, critical and cultural circles, and that the breadth of his influence is genuinely global, resting on his unique and innovative blend of cultural criticism, politics, and literary theory. Lauded by Homi Bhabha as the work that “inaugurated the postcolonial field,” Orientalism was also recognized by Gayatri Spivak as “the source book of postcolonial theory” (qtd. in Moore-Gilbert 35). Maxime Rodinson ascribes the “great merit” of the book to its power that shakes “the self-satisfaction of many Orientalists” and its subtle way to link Orientalism “to the colonial expansion of Europe” (130-31). Gyan Prakash attributed the phenomenal success of Orientalism to its capacity to unsettle “received categories and modes of understanding” (201).

Located within the general framework of postcolonial tenets, the thesis develops a new cultural relativist reading of Said’s work, relating his undoing of the cultural and epistemological dichotomy between the “Occident” and the “Orient” to the question of Palestine as a universal idea of human justice and equality. This has been made through tracking his personal experience as a Palestinian in exile and as a critic of hegemonic systems and cultures. Having worked as literary critic, cultural theorist and political activist, he was able to connect the idea of Palestine as a relative issue to the general issue
of human experience. The “Occident” and “Orient” should be looked at as equal interlocutors and not as hierarchical, disparate identities.

In the light of this theory, the thesis argues that both extreme models of centrism and globalization failed to prove true to human culture and nature. The centric model proved to be dichotomous and discriminatory whereas the globalized model failed to capture a humanist-based ethos of awareness that encompass the specificities of culture and human nature. This refers to what Bronislaw Malinowski, Franz Boas, and others have called “the native point of view,” a theoretical framework that substitutes the evolutionary models of a single, overarching human culture. By this, they called for the ethnographic study of diverse cultures based on field work involving participant observation, and on an attempt to understand various beliefs and practices from the vantage point of a localized culture. This is the characteristic Boasian toggle switch between science and history, between universal human nature and the impact of culture on human social identity. One involves individual agency, intra-cultural variability, and member awareness, whereas the other privileges analytic distance and aspires to objectivity.

Founded on the idea of cultural relativism, therefore, this study reads Said’s work in two different ways: on one hand, as a test-case of what effective intellectual activity can be and, on the other, as a response to the dangers of dichotomous, binary thinking. By reading a selected group of his writings, the study attempts to show how cultural formations can provide us with some grounds for a theory of the intellectual and call into question the almost stereotypical, oppressive and falsified weight of constructed ideas.

In a simplified way, cultural relativism is simply read as a theory or a principle of regarding the beliefs, values, and practices of a culture from the viewpoint of that culture itself. Thus, cultural relativism means that the function and meaning of a trait are relative
to its cultural setting. A trait is neither good nor bad in itself. It is good or bad only with reference to the culture in which it is to function. However, cultural relativism may concern globalization as to its effects in different cultures, it may concern cultural diversity of the world which is being united by the new communication technology.

As a highly complex doctrine surrounded by various epistemological, political, and ethical controversies, cultural relativism broadly refers to “the view that culture is the key variable to explain human diversity and that an individual's behavior, thought, emotion, perception, and sensation are relative to and bound by the culture of the group he or she belongs to”. This cultural relativist stance is “opposed to the universalist position . . . It is also opposed to other forms of relativism, such as biological or racial relativism, which holds that differences between groups are due to differences in innate endowments.” In its broadest form, cultural relativism extends to “all manifestations of human existence”. In this context “even truth is regarded as a local and culture-bound phenomenon,” a position known as epistemological or cognitive relativism. (Weiler 908).

Originating in the work of Franz Boas in the early 20th century, cultural relativism has been used to avoid cultural bias in research, as well as to avoid judging another culture by the standards of one’s own culture. For this reason, cultural relativism has been considered as an attempt to avoid ethnocentrism. As formulated by the Boasians, cultural relativism entails that “each culture is said to constitute a total social world that reproduces itself through enculturation” (Brown 364). As Melville J. Herskovits puts it, “the pluralistic nature of the value systems of the world’s cultures . . . cannot be judged on the basis of any single system . . .” (qtd. in Brown 365). This relativism provides a standpoint from which dialogues could be framed with others. In the present-day of plural
cultures the global and the local can coexist only when both sides attempt to understand one another’s position.

In convergence with Boasian theoretical tenet, Said’s proposed concepts of “secular criticism”, “travelling theory”, “worldliness”, “contrapuntality”, and “worldism” are especially laudable because they all acknowledge and contribute to the existence of human universals and take into account the cultural dimensions of globalization and intra-societal diversity, yet, emphasize the importance of continuing to study cultural worlds as distinctive, relatively coherent entities. On this basis, three theses are proposed: first, radical cultural difference and radical worlds is primarily a political rather than an ontological process, second, radical sameness is just as implausible as radical difference, and third, Said’s relativism is a sensibility more often associated with “rootless cosmopolitanism” than with the place-based community culture.

Furthermore, some of concepts that were brought in by Boas have their counterparts in Said’s work. For example, Boas’s “diffusion” is compatible with Said’s concept of “travelling theory,” referring to the spread of an idea from culture to culture, and “independent invention” is concomitant with Saidian sense of “beginning”, which describes the state when a culture forms a new idea on its own without any influence from another culture. It follows that the idea of cultural relativism becomes the most appropriate theoretical foundation for examining Said’s work and thought as a useful intellectual tool in encouraging cross-cultural understanding and contributing to an expansion of human freedom. As Michael F. Brown noted, “By forcing us to act as if the human social world were divided into discrete islands, cultural relativism disciplines the imagination, prompting us to observe carefully while avoiding the temptation to take much for granted” (372).
Besides an introduction, the study contains six chapters followed by a conclusion. The first chapter, “Edward Said’s Making and Undertaking,” examines Said as an ardent intellectual whose influence is significantly multidisciplinary and far-reaching. It presents a purview of Said’s multifarious intellectual and critical potentials. The second chapter, “Occident-Orient Dichotomy: Historical Background and the Trouble of Definition,” discusses, particularly from a Western intellectual perspective, the philosophical, perceptual and cultural history of the concept of Occident-Orient dichotomy. The third chapter, “Orientalism, Imperialism and Epistemological Bias,” elaborates on Said’s discussion of the concepts of “Orientalism”, “epistemological Othering”, “cultural imperialism”, and Orientalist/colonialist public discourse and political hegemony, pinpointing the interplay between the episteme of power and the colonial experience, and politico-cultural instrument that legitimates Western hegemony over the Arab World. In the light of this, the fourth chapter, “Orientalism, Geopolitical Mappings and the Ideation of Palestine,” will reflect on the methodological and ideological interlinked discourses of Zionism and Orientalism and the collusion between Zionist encroachment and European imperialism. It focuses on the strategic relationship between Israel and American powers which has been informed by the strategic co-deployment of Orientalist discourse in its dehumanizing forms, and the correlation between American exceptionalism and superpowerism, and the theologically ordained assumption of the Jewish supremacism. The main idea of the chapter is to point out how Palestine becomes the central concern in Said’s conception of the Occident-Orient dichotomy, and how he deals with it as a universal idea of human concern. The fifth chapter entitled “From Critique to Emancipation: Saidian Humanism and the Concept of Worldism” examines Said’s insightful, humanistic reflections and orientation and his critical projection of the concept of “Worldism”. The chapter will shed light on how Said struggles to undo the ever-held
assumptions of the West racial superiority and cultural supremacy by insisting that any historical experience or cultural event, whether literature, history, anthropology or cultural theory has to be read contrapuntally in order to get a fair critical consciousness and truth. It also expounds Said’s aim at bringing into light the hidden fact of cultural exchange and the travelling of thought and theory from one generation to another and from one civilization to another, thus, highlighting the basic idea that cultures are essentially hybrid. The chapter takes a methodological reasoning which moves from dichotomy into interface and, consequently, relates this fact to Said’s critical enterprise as an exemplary strategy of value system. The sixth chapter, “Edward Said’s Presence and Absence in Contemporary Arab Thought,” is dedicated to the discussion of Said’s influence on the contemporary Arab thought. The chapter shows where and where not Said has been a major influence in the contemporary Arab thought. This will be followed with a conclusion, summing up the argument and listing out the major findings and suggesting some areas for further investigation.
Works Cited


---. “Counternarratives, Recoveries, Refusals.” Edward Said and the Work of the Critic:


