CHAPTER ONE

Edward Said’s Making and Undertaking

Approaching Said from a single critical point of view certainly cannot do justice to his contribution to humanity. He was a cultural phenomenon by himself. His implementation of cultural dialogue is not separated from his recognition of the political, the social and the literary. In other words, Said the political commentator is not in discrepancy with Said the cultural theorist, Said the literary critic, Said the public intellectual, or Said the humanist. His contention was always that the poetics of space reflects the politics of place as much as the representation of an image depicts the mind and desire of its creator.

Said rejects the single view of history and abhors the monolithic insular view of culture. His conceptualization of human space lies in his elimination of the dichotomous trends of thought. In order to do this, he attempts to redefine the superimposed images of culture and theories, and establishes a strategy of value system based on down-to-earth theory.

This chapter deals with Said as a prolific intellectual whose ideas are influentially wide and far-reaching. The aim of this chapter is to explore in a capsule form his different critical manifestations and his intellectual capabilities. In other words, it tells why Said’s critical interventions are vital in the study of cultural encounters and interfaces. The study of Said poses itself as critically vital because it can be examined in subjects which include criticism such as literary and cultural studies and other areas and disciplines which rely on criticism, theories, ideas and unquestioned assumptions. Also, Said is critical because
studying his work will provide us with a “toolkit” for our informed critical reading and thought.

Above all, Said is critical because his intellectual oeuvre deals with ideas and questions which intend to overturn our conventional understanding of the world, of texts, of everything we take for granted, leaving us with a deeper understanding of what we already knew and with new ideas. As Paul A. Bove observes, “We need ways to understand Said’s importance in so many fields, to so many projects, and in relation to so many other powerful intellectuals and their thought” (6). Therefore, it is vital to relate Said’s project and his multifaceted personality to his self-created role as a strategic intellectual and a committed critic who has polemically substituted affiliation for filiation, worldism for nationalism, and public mission for specialized profession. It is important that we approach Said as a figure not simply to be mentioned but read, studied and followed.

**Edward Said and the Concept of Culture**

The concept of culture is a key-element in Said’s understanding of the Occident-Orient dichotomy. He contends that the notion of “culture” should be looked at and examined as a secular vein if we want to keep on a healthy relation between nations and civilizations. For this reason, he disapproves Matthew Arnold’s argument that culture and the state cover each other with a sacred veneer. He dismisses this view as “quasi-theological exterior,” since those who are inside are comfortably at home, and those outside are homeless (*The World, the Text and the Critic* 11). In the hegemonic systems, culture becomes a sacred covering that includes and excludes simultaneously. According to Said,
in the transmission and persistence of a culture there is a continual process of reinforcement, by which the hegemonic culture will add to itself the prerogatives given it by its sense of national identity, its power as an implement, ally, or branch of the state, its rightness, its exterior forms and assertions of itself: and most important, by its vindicated power as a victor over everything not itself. (14)

In Said’s view, if culture is the transfiguration of religious thought, then the state, under cover of sacred authority, is the policing function of religion augmented and transformed by culture. Equally, if culture is a collective superego, then the state is the embodiment of the national ego. Culture, for him, becomes a trope for atavistic religious ideas and commitments such as nationalism, Orientalism, and imperialism. Hence, his concept of secular criticism breaks with the gods of nationalism and state-worship, by severing the link between critical consciousness and the politics of identity. This Saidian conceptual framework, therefore, parts with the cultural residue which takes different forms and notions such as nationalism to create an excessive veneration of the state that is always wedded to strong forms of ethnocentrism and xenophobia.

In the light of this, the delineation between “us” and “them” is demarcated by “the power of the state and its institutions” whereby “anarchy, disorder, irrationality, inferiority … are identified, then deposited” on the “Other” (11). Said’s specific historical examples includes Macaulay’s infamous Minute of 1835 on Indian education and the utilitarian philosophy of British colonialists. He quotes Macaulay as saying: “all the historical information which has been collected in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England” (qtd. in Said, The World, the Text and the Critic 12). Hence, Arnold’s idea of culture did not embrace Europe’s “Other”. The “ours and theirs” distinctions that Arnold and his peers drew were bolstered by the human sciences, social-Darwinism, and high
cultural humanism. Said points to the exclusionary power of culture, especially when wedded to the repressive power of the state. Under this description, the “others of culture” (colonized people, the poor, and delinquent) are grouped under the rubric of anarchy, which includes in such context, “blacks” and the underclass, or Palestinian “terrorists” and Islamic fundamentalists.

In this sense, culture can be considered as “an environment, process, and hegemony in which individuals . . . and their works are embedded, as well as at the superstructure and base by a whole series of methodological attitudes” (8). Thus, culture with its ability “to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate, demote and validate . . . within its domain and beyond it too” and determines what belongs and what does not (9). It becomes a “system of exclusions” whereby certain things “such as anarchy, disorder, irrationality, inferiority and bad taste are identified and deposited outside the culture and kept there by the state and its institution” whilst other items are positively known, accepted, and associated with “home, belonging and community” (11). Thus, culture “designates a boundary of what is extrinsic or intrinsic to culture” achieving this by setting the valorized culture over the “Other” (9).

Alternatively, Said believes that the world of today has been approaching a common culture because its history is based on and rooted in a shared experience of colonialism and imperialism. As a result, he calls for a new paradigm of “humanistic” research, an eclectic, interdisciplinary method whereby “cultural” critics can combat the dichotomizing that is characteristic of Western scholarship. This represents an expansion of the approach outlined in Orientalism. In Culture and Imperialism, regarded as one of the spectacular books that appeared in the field of cultural studies in the last two centuries, he treats culture as a vehicle for the imperialist venture rather than an area of art and learning alone. Following Gramscian parameters by treating culture as an
instrument of political control, Said’s critical view has the ambitious scope of defining the patterns of relationships between the Western world and its overseas territories. He provides insights into two significant concepts towards increasing our knowledge and understanding of the association between culture and imperialism, first by stating that culture is the instrument of imperialism, then by his emphasis on the fact that we cannot understand the power of imperialism until we understand the importance of culture. In this regard, Said’s view of culture is somewhat different from Raymond Williams’ definition of culture as “a whole way of life” (vi, 344). In Said’s analysis, culture is, indeed, the power which changes a colonized people’s view of the world, without the colonizer needing to resort to full-grown military control.

In his definition of culture, Said has identified two meanings for the term “culture”. In one sense, “it means all those practices, like the arts of description, communication and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principle aims is pleasure” (Culture and Imperialism xii). In this sense, Said’s definition is close to the view of the Palestinian scholar, writer, and translator, Issa J. Boullata, who defines culture as “a growing system of relations, beliefs, attitudes and values rooted in institutions that keep developing and changing in accordance with the historical experiences and needs of the human group” (9). The second meaning exposed by Said is that “culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society’s reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Matthew Arnold put it in 1860s”. Said regards this meaning as a given praxis of certain selective format, and dismisses it as unfathomable: “You read Dante and Shakespeare in order to keep up with the best that was thought and known, and also to see yourself, your people, society, and tradition in their best lights” (xiii).
Moreover, Said regrets that culture “comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or state,” thus, “differentiates ‘us’ from ‘them’, almost always with some degree of xenophobia”. In this case, it becomes “a source of identity” and an “uncritically” contested vision of national and ideological goals. This idea of culture, consequently, “entails not only venerating one’s own culture but also thinking of it as somehow divorced from . . . the everyday world” (xiii). In his 1976 work Communication and Cultural Domination, Herbert Schiller defines cultural imperialism as: “the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system, and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even to promote, the values and structures of the dominant center of the system . . .” (9).

In fact, Said’s emphasis on the historical experience and narrations as an integral part of conceiving the cultural manifestation has its grounding in his tracing of the intimate relationship between culture and imperialism. He suggests that those cultural forms and issues were “reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative” given that “nations themselves are narrations.” That is, “the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them”. As a result, “culture conceived in this way can become a protective enclosure: check your politics at the door before you enter it” (Culture and Imperialism xiii).

Said observes two forms of consciousness in a situation of domination, which can be divided into cultural forms of accommodation and those of resistance. When domination prevails, the paradigm of cultural transfer dominates the lifestyles. This results in a form of resistance. In Culture and Resistance, he accentuates, “in the case of a political identity that’s being threatened, culture is a way of fighting against extinction
and obliteration. Culture is a form of memory against effacement” (159). Thus, he draws attention to the centrality of culturally popular resistance as a form of human struggle for right and recognition in which the Palestinian struggle for recognition and justice is a living example.

Nevertheless, Said is vexed at the view of embracing “the politics of blame” approach as a strategy of resistance. He believes that such a view is a backward-looking and self-defeating approach. To advance it further, he suggests that resistance to the colonial and imperial culture and domination can be advanced by engaging the dominant culture, by engaging on “a voyage in” through a multiple of hybrid cultural works, which counters dominant culture without simply rejecting it. This includes directly studying first-hand the “Occident” and its culture and civilization.

Accordingly, the best way to critically overcome the dichotomous and antagonistic view of culture is to consider it within its historical experience and fairly critical consciousness because “cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure” (Culture and Imperialism 14). For this purpose, he has introduced his “contrapuntal method” of analyzing cultural and literary text to remind us that “in our wish to make ourselves heard, we tend to very often to forget that the world is a crowded place, and that if anyone were to insist on the radical purity of one’s own voice, all we would have would be the awful din of unending strife” (xxi).

On another plane of thought, culture is a civilizational notion that can be perceived and practiced either as a form of cultural confrontation as in the case of Palestinian issue or as a source of human coexistence as has been lived and experienced in the Arab Spain. Said reminds us that in Abbasid and Andalusian cultures, there are reservoirs of intellectual imagination and responsibility that confirm that the present
disposition of force need not always be, since it has not always been. In resonance with Said’s exemplary reminiscence, Paul A. Bové writes: “Cultures form themselves and, as formed, can claim respect and recognition, especially in conflict with or, better, in dialogue with the peoples of other cultures . . . remembering Abassid and Andalusian alternatives . . . the intellectual’s responsibility is to be in relation to those very formations” (3).

**Edward Said and the Notion of the Intellectual**

Said is invariably remembered for his advocating of the role of intellectuals in society -- a role exemplarily illustrated by himself. He insists that the true intellectual’s role must be that of the amateur, as an amateur is not stimulated by academic rewards nor pursuing career. In *The World, the Text and the Critic*, he foregrounds the pitfalls of the idea of professionalization. His deconstruction of specialization allows him to identify its inhumanistic force on both the text and critic. In first place, specialization empties the text of its humanistic values by detaching it from reality or concealing certain facts that may help present an objective interpretation. Second, it reinforces all forms of coercive and manipulative knowledge, celebrating Ethnocentrism and culturalism. Finally, it discredits criticism, its main function, as a means of change and resistance of oppression. Thus, professionalization separates both the intellectual and the text from the Saidian concept of world -- the world of worldliness. It neither means the actual world nor the East nor the West. In contrast, it refers to a world of altruistic humanistic values which is not divided by man into different areas, each area is marked by certain features and qualities corresponding to its fabricated reality. Subsequently, specialization dissociates the intellectual not from the ordinary world, but from worldliness; from the world as it should be.
Said’s political and literary writing is ethical, emphasizing the invariable endeavor to continually think anew and to investigate one’s projections and illusions. There is no place for complacency in his work. Throughout his perpetual engagement with social relations between the West and the Middle East, he “seamlessly repositions theoretical links in order to deliver a moral and political analysis pertinent to contemporary life and the violence perpetrated in the name of nationalism, identity and ‘democracy’” (Treacher 375). In his obituary in the Guardian, 26 September 2003, Malise Ruthven wrote that Said’s work challenged “conventional assumptions about art, music and literature, opening up new avenues of inquiry and questioning the criteria by which knowledge is organized and husbanded”. Indeed, it is difficult to sum up Said’s theoretical and political preoccupations or to fully convey the robustness and pungency of his writing and thinking. He passionately believed in the importance of thinking continually anew.

As a free intellectual who considers his mission as an ethical obligation and intellectual commitment, Said has his intellectual achievement both grounded in worldly convictions and deterritorialized admission. His presumably active -- rather than activist -- role in the public sphere does not diminish or alter his exilic and consistently revolutionary thinking. His intellectual and political positions unfold in various forms and directions. They encompass the ambiguous position of a free mind, where out of place means also out of reductive partisanship -- bestowed upon him on both sides of the East-West divide -- and out of territorialized expressions of nationalist and religious dogmatisms. In order to convey this intellectual mission, Jan Selby argues “Said spoke to more different types of audience, and on a wider range of exceedingly difficult themes . . . he spoke on a diverse range of literary, cultural and political issues that often demanded quite different epistemological starting points” (42-3).
Hence, it becomes obvious that the ethical as well as the hermeneutical dimensions of a contrapuntal reading of the cultural archive are seminal to Said’s conception of the role of the intellectual. The impetus for a contrapuntal approach comes from an ethical mission to confront prejudices. In his Introduction to *Representations of the Intellectual*, he writes: “One of the tasks of the intellectual is the effort to break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication” (xi).

It is believed that Said’s universalism and global reach and celebrity essentially stem from his commitment as an intellectual who opposes the commonly held views that associate the word “intellectual” with terms such as “ivory tower” and “a sneer”. He insists on the public role of the intellectual “as outsider, ‘amateur,’ and disturber of the status quo” (x). He speaks about intellectuals as “precisely those figures whose public performances can neither be predicted nor compelled into some slogan, orthodox party line, or fixed dogma”. He goes on to suggest that “standards of truth about human misery and oppression were to be held to despite the individual intellectual’s party affiliation, national background, and primeval loyalties”. He adheres to the fact that “nothing disfigures the intellectual’s public performance as much as trimming, careful silence, patriotic bluster, and retrospective and self-dramatizing apostasy” (xii-xiii). “Challenging of the clichés and misconceptions inherent to all fixed interpretations of the human experience at large,” May Telmissany and Stephanie Tara Schwartz argue, “Said draws on hybrid, exiled, marginal and multiple existences to construct a universal standard of human behavior where the recognition of the polyphony of voices and the contrapuntal understanding of self and other pave the way to his poignant work on the limitations and the shortcomings of History” (xix). Above all, intellectuals, he contends, “should be the ones to question patriotic nationalism, corporate thinking, and a sense of class, racial or
gender privilege” (*Representations of the Intellectual* xiii). It is the role of progressive intellectuals to awaken the people: “I think one of the roles of the intellectual . . . is to provide a counterpoint, by storytelling, by reminders of the graphic nature of suffering, and by reminding everyone that we’re talking about people. We’re not talking about abstractions” (*Culture and Resistance* 187).

In his view, the intellectual is a non-conformist humanist, a provocative thinker, a political dissenter, an oppositional activist, whose task is to try and simulate, to negotiate and participate, to induce solutions and offers alternative; who always believes in praxis and works for it; his role is to found basis for dialogue and conciliations, not to weave theories and profess dogmas. In short, the intellectual has mission to handle not profession to earn; “It is a spirit in opposition, rather than in accommodation” (*Representations of the Intellectual* xvii). As Said puts it, the principal duty of the intellectual is “the search for relative independence” from “worldly powers, which in our time have co-opted the intelligentsia to an extraordinary degree . . . to the state” (xvi).

What makes people more affiliated with Said is the need for change and the desire to find an alternative to the polarized political, social, intellectual, and cultural orders. Indeed, he carved a space where we could be more than an inaudible minority on the margins, where we could join a movement that is dynamic, self-representing, and heard. Asserting the responsibility of the intellectual to be politically engaged, Said himself produced “worldly” ideas that traversed academic, political, geographic, and artistic realms. He has inspired a new generation of intellectuals to embrace a sense of purpose, a commitment to critical action, and a faith in dignity as vehicles of self-representation in the Saidian style.
Most importantly, Said refuses to belong to a particular critical school and prefers to belong to a value system of critical thought. He prefers amateurship, inconsistency and praxis to professionalism, consistency and theory. In the words of H. Aram Veeser, he was “a work in progress” (20). In his essay, “The Intellectual as Exemplar: Identity, Oppositional Politics, and the Ambivalent Legacy of Edward Said,” Vinay Lal praises Said as “an intellectual hero” who had “a relentlessly inquiring mind,” and for whom “the intellectual is, or ought to be, the supreme oppositional figure, writing against the grain, thinking contrapuntally, disturbing the established verities, and comforting the (genuinely) afflicted” (39). In Out of Place, Said recalls his role as a non-conformist intellectual, a dissent who resists being silent in the face of political and cultural oppression: “Why did I allow myself to be so powerless, so ‘weak’ . . . as to let him [the British administrator] assault me with such impunity?” (42).

Moreover, he has rendered personal experiences into method as he has brought his own diverse and conflicting cultural allegiances into play against one another. He tells us at the beginning of Culture and Imperialism that “this book is an exile’s book. For objective reasons that I had no control over, I grew up as an Arab with a Western education . . . I have felt that I belonged to both worlds, without being completely of either one or the other” (xxvi, italics in origin). He describes the “perspective” that his experience of exile produced as “contrapuntal,” which refers both to a way of thinking about people, and a method of analysis and reading texts; the method suggesting a decoding of a text, a culture or whatever with the aid of its acknowledged or suppressed “Other”, while recognizing the integrity of both. In Edward Said: The Charisma of Criticism (2010), H. Aram Veeser describes Said as “an intellectual rake, a fundamentally unpredictable character whose ultimate professional and cultural centrality never extinguished his charming eccentricity” (3).
Categorically, Said’s intellectual vocation and professorial courage must be seen in the light of this view. He identifies himself as one of a tiny band “whose stentorian voices and indelicate imprecations are hurled at humankind from on high” (*Representations of the Intellectual* 7). He is “someone able to speak the truth to power, a crusty, eloquent, fantastically courageous and angry individual for whom no worldly power is too big and imposing to be criticized and pointedly taken to task” (8). He believes that what distinguishes the truly struggling intellectual is the conception of his/her work as activity, not as passive contemplation.

In the “Collective Passion”, he bemoaned the failure of the secular intellectuals to “provide analysis and models to offset the undoubted sufferings of the large mass of their people”, pointing out that “we need to step back from the imaginary thresholds that supposedly separate people from each other into supposedly clashing civilizations” and to re-examine the labels so as to “decide somehow to share our fates with each other as in fact cultures mostly have done, despite the bellicose cries and creeds.” He stressed that “Demonization of the ‘Other’ is not a sufficient basis for any kind of decent politics” and that “‘Islam’ and ‘the West’ are simply inadequate as banners to follow blindly” (111).

In fact, a secular reading of Said’s legacy restores the distance he himself created and maintained between his own “contrapuntal style” on the one hand, and dogmatic nationalism, identitarian sectarianism, and self-congratulatory historiography, on the other. His motto, “Never solidarity before criticism is the short answer,” can be viewed as one of Said’s major arguments against ideology (*Representations of the Intellectual* 32). He compels us to think beyond our narrow political or professional goals and consider how our contributions as humans, writers or intellectuals can impact or create meaning in the world.
Edward Said as a Cultural Theorist

Edward Said is important not only to the independent-minded global fraternity and those interested in Orientalism as a field of study, but also to those whose subject is the internal workings of Western civilization and the foregrounding of Occident-Orient relationship. Significantly, Said had established himself as an undisputed world-class cultural theorist in two areas: “his foundational place in a growing school of postcolonial studies, particularly through his book *Orientalism*; and his insistence on the importance of ‘worldliness’ or material contexts of text and the critic” (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 1). This new discipline provides new ways of understanding global, national and local political and cultural concerns through a variety of tools and lenses by raising critical cultural questions. His message was always that in a world engulfed with ethnic conflicts, wars and riots and demonstrations to overthrow dictators, it is important that our understandings of history, sense of place, race, culture and identity be examined with an open mind as practicable as possible.

This significant position has inspired many scholars and critics to apply a fair critical consciousness when discussing a matter of culture and representation, making use of the broadness of his approach to literature and cultural indexes that eludes easy categorization. His theory of Orientalism is credited with helping to change the direction of several disciplines by exposing an unholy alliance between the Enlightenment and colonialism. The validity of such critical position is that it “became an indispensable resource, a primer that helped us decipher and grapple with these issues, catalyzing our understanding of how and why negative discursive constructions dominated mainstream depictions of the region” (Iskandar and Rustom 3). His audacious cultural and social thoughts and ideas “radically transformed the intellectual landscape of the humanities and
the social sciences”. From the postcolonial world perspective, his theory of Orientalism provides

a new lens through which to understand one’s own cultures and her relationship to the West. For scholars in the Western academy, it pointed to the complicity between supposedly disinterested scholarly pursuits and the edifice of Western imperialism. For its many lay readers, it articulated in an accessible way the interconnections between political power and knowledge. (Siddiqi 65)

Specifically, Said’s work contributes significantly in enabling upwardly mobile academics from non-Western countries to take advantage of the mood of political correctness it helped to engender by associating themselves with “narratives of oppression”, creating successful careers out of transmitting, interpreting and debating representations of the non-Western “Other”. Moreover, whereas the aestheticization of politics has been a problem for intellectuals throughout this century, Said’s theory of Orientalism has identified and subverted the role of the aesthetic in colonialism.

Among the most important aspects of Said as an influential cultural theorist is his emphasis on the informal and the disaggregated. This reflects the nomadic and rhizomatic feature of his cultural and theoretical project, embedding it in an epistemology of displacement that searched beyond the “rituals and performances of conventional metropolitan intellectuals” (“Criticism and the Art of Politics” 162). This perception of unsettledness extends to Said’s “overarching critical project, which he acknowledged was unfinished, a condition he showed little interest in rectifying” (Iskandar and Rustom 5). Therefore, nomadism was a source of theoretical and critical interrogation that spanned much of Said’s oeuvre, from his critique of colonial discourses in Orientalism to his comments on the power politics of scholarly discipleship. The nomadism of Palestinian dispossession becomes methodological when it unsettles the political impasses produced
by dubious peace initiatives, as Said described in *The Politics of Dispossession* (1995). Itself a source of liberation, an alternative theology, a site of contradiction, and a terrain of shifting contours, Said’s nomadism was theoretically unhoused, methodologically untidy, and spatially fluid (“Reflections on Exile”, 186; *Culture and Imperialism* 331–32; Hussein 48). Being at once inhabitable and uninhibitable, intrinsically veracious, Said’s nomadism resisted any master paradigm, contested all-encompassing theorization, and questioned the predictability of dominant knowledge systems.

Theoretically, the possession of land and the land’s people is a contest that involves ideas, images and imaginings. Accordingly, colonial and imperialist ideologies are propelled by beliefs about domination, authority, and the right to rule. At the nub of subjectivity, Said links the political with the personal because, he argues, these ideas and values had been so internalized and “allowed ordinary indeed decent men and women accepted the notion that distant territories and their native peoples should be subjugated, and, . . . could think of the *imperium* as a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced people” (*Culture and Imperialism*10, italics in origin). He made it clear that different motivations have consequences on the knowledge produced. For him, the will to knowledge is a key-element, arguing that we have to know and distinguish between the wish to understand to enable peaceful co-existence, and the use of knowledge to dominate for malevolent ends. Therefore, understandings and knowledges have to be continually re-visited and re-thought. Following this injunction, Said revised his work to argue that he had under-estimated how the “Orient” resisted the power of the “Occident” and that a more complex web of power relations had been in operation, but always, he insisted, within unequal power relations. In *Culture and imperialism*, he uncovers the imperial context that underpinned, for example, Jane Austen’s novel -- *Mansfield Park*, and Verdi’s Opera -- *Aida*. His continual demand is
that we reintegrate ourselves “with worldly actuality”. “[T]he critic of texts,” he adds, “ought to be investigating the system of discourse by which the ‘world’ is divided, administered, plundered, by which humanity is thrust into pigeon-holes, by which ‘we’ are ‘human’ and ‘they’ are not” (“Beginnings: An Interview” 26).

Substantially, Said is one of the most stringent critics of the problematic discourse that promulgates that the “West” and the “Rest” are in inevitable collision. In his essay “The Clash of Definitions,” Said takes Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis to task for declaring that the West and the Arab region are in inevitable conflict. He argues that the “sad part is that ‘the clash of civilizations’ is useful as a way of exaggerating and making intractable various political or economic problems” (571). Actually, Said seems to be interested not in denying political and economic difficulties, but in casting the arguments in ways that further understanding and mutual tolerance.

Said’s cultural theory aims, on one level, to bring to the fore the absent voices and the losers of history and to restore the lived experiences of those who are rendered absent in social contests. As a result, he emphasizes the importance of the writings of the marginalized and champions those who are not quite made of the right stuff; continually bringing to awareness what can be learnt from the voice speaking from outside the boundary (Reflections on Exile xxix-xxx). He points to the fact that it is keeping your story going on and by way of writing out your history that you can get your voice heard and yourself acknowledged. On the other level, his cultural theory contends that cultures, nations and societies are inextricably linked. In her psychoanalytical reading of the cultural mix of Arab-Muslim and Western cultures and civilizations, Amal Treacher observes, “subjectivities are also intertwined” and subsequently their “societies are bound together and operate across one another”. She further illustrates, “Arab and Western subjectivities are replete with shifting desires, split fantasies, vulnerable uncertainties that
move through and across ambivalence, ambiguity, denigration and fascination” with variously different degrees of intimation (384).

Said’s anti-theory theory is worth noting. His notion of “theory” is based on a situated world of human experience be it postmodernism or postcolonial theory. He develops his theory as a reaction and alternative solution to the commercialization of human knowledge that lost its value in the world of unmanned theories. He opposes the grand discourse and theory that seeks to command the whole field of human endeavor, and celebrates instead what he calls “hybrid counter-energies” and “discontinuities of intellectual and secular impurities” (Culture and Imperialism 335).

As it is obvious in any epistemology of knowledge, definitional motives characterize the modes of inquiry and their objectives. The investigation of knowledge looks at associations between knowledge and other notions within the epistemological frame. Hence, Said’s cultural theory and criticism discuss in great clarity the relationship between knowledge and each of the philosophical notions of belief, causations, reversibility, and finally justification which have been brought by T. Honderich in his edited book The Oxford Companion to Philosophy (1995). According to Honderich, the “philosophy of the mind” constitutes an examination of one’s “own” mind (inner states), one’s “own” experiences, and finally an examination of the minds of “others” (570-71). This rendition of knowledge is the basic premise of Said’s Orientalism. It does so by showing the ways by which the construction of the “Other” configures the “mind” and creates an incongruent and contradictory image to the “self” ( Orient or Occident).

In line with this, Said’s theorization of Orientalism comes as a remarkable turning point in the genealogy of cultural politics. By moving “Orientalism” from a conventionally treated meaning as an artistic genre and scholarly discipline to an
ideological and political concept that establishes epistemological and ontological distinctions between the “Occident” and the “Orient”, he has theoretically and critically directed the attention to geopolitical theory and criticism. He further demonstrates that structuralism emerged from the philosophies of language that originate from *a priori* epistemology. This shows how he is uneasy about these thematic properties that effectively deny specificity in literature, disregard historical change, and overemphasize the role of system and method. He critically demonstrates that the “Orient” and “Occident” do not refer to fixed categories, but to time-bound discursive constructs because their geographical and substantial scopes vary across time on the basis of shifting power relations.

Therefore, the formation of an idea/opinion/position about an element is dependent on its representation. In this case, representations are “deformations” more than formations. He utilizes this structuralist definition in his critique of Orientalism by showing, via an exhaustive collection of literary criticisms, the way European scholarship deformed representations of the “Orient” (*Orientalism* 273). A deformation of this sort, he believes, derives from the position and dynamics of authority. By examining the relationship between myth and power, he concludes that once a myth has been formulated and consumed by the structure within which it is functional, it can reinvent itself ceaselessly.

Admittedly, Said has actually invented and laid down a theoretical lexicon that no writer can do without today: “Orientalism”, “worldliness”, “culture and imperialism”, “intellectuals,” and “Palestine” itself. None of these concepts would have their current urgency if Said had not lent them the force of his intellect as well as the glow of his personality. In the words of Veeser, Said’s *Orientalism* stands “at once a searing attack, an elegy, a work of literary criticism . . . and an inspired essay of cultural criticism” (9).
Nonetheless, he argues, Said moved away from high theory on a bridge made up of theory’s own insights. What he called “disciplines of detail” was the “local knowledge” under whose banner marched interpretative anthropology, sociology, the New Social Movements, and New Historicism. What he called “speaking truth to power” encompassed the “rhetorical” arts of persuasion and delivery. By championing “the art of delivery,” Veeser argues, “[Said] alone proposed that a critic by definition had to fight for a political movement” (14).

Besides his critical and cultural articulations, Said was also noted for his controversial journalism on the Palestinian political situation. It is important to note that his Orientalism was a result of his deep understanding of the “Occident” and the complex nature of Western literature and academy. His enormous contribution is, therefore, celebrated simultaneously by those interested in Orientalism and Occidentalism. In addition to propagating and popularizing the area of postcolonial studies, it has been used to describe relationships between culture and imperialism outside of the Middle East. As Said’s polemics show, the authorial text and discourse represent a dimension of authority exhibited in the realm of the phenomenal world -- whether in a form of a Foucauldian binary of power/knowledge structure, or of Gramscian hegemonic body.

The focus of Said’s theory is on the dialogic nature of culture. In his “Traveling Theory”, for example, he argues that as ideas travel from one time and place to another time and place, so are cultures and cultural forms. That is why cultures for him are hybrid and impure. It is only when certain imposed conditions and selective processes intervene that cultural move becomes conflictual. The transfer of ideas, he argues, is influenced by both “conditions of acceptance” and “resistances”, depending on the receiving discipline’s dominant paradigm.
This cultural relativist position in Said’s thought has directed the critics’ attention to the importance of the geopolitical concern of culture, and introduces him as a precursor of spatial thinking. As explorer of “imaginative geographies,” Michael C. Frank argues, Said shows how power and knowledge are basically rooted in the geopolitical thinking (61).

**Edward Said as a Literary Critic**

Said has been applauded as an important literary critic who based his critical writings on the circumstantial reality of the text, its world and the situatedness of its author. He invariably insists on the deep correlation between the text and its world. His literary critical theory comes as a reaction against the unworldly theory of the New Critical School that celebrates the autonomy of the text as a separate entity independent of its authorial context. The text in contemporary criticism has been killed by the formal operations that discard its materiality. The result of this is that text becomes “a kind of self-consuming artifact . . . idealized, essentialized, instead of remaining the special kind of cultural object it really is, with a causation, persistence, durability, and social presence quite its own” (*The World, the Text and the Critic* 148). Said’s most important contribution to literary criticism is his concept of “worldliness”, and his insistence on the function of criticism as a socio-cultural and intellectual tool.

In fact, Said’s method was developed and formulated within the framework of two major veins that kept nourishing his intellectual life: literature and music. He decries literary theory that isolates textuality from the events and circumstances that make it possible. His reading of Joseph Conrad and Jane Austen, for example, illustrates his critical method that insists on the relationship between texts and its circumstantial
realities. What is considered contrapuntal in Said’s literary criticism is the fact that he brings forth extradiegetic voices and discourses as inseparable from the fictional text.

Much of his literary critical views were laid down in *Beginning*. Although it analyzes mainly the history of the modern novel, the book discusses the imperialism of the mind. Furthermore, though, at the surface, *Orientalism* seems to be mainly a text on cultural and political discourse, it significantly reveals how literary criticism could help highlight the political connotations implied in the text. The function of criticism, in Said’s view, is to lay bare the relation of the text to its world. It should provide the intellectual with the concealed or absent historical experience of others in order to present an objective interpretation of the text. In the main, Said’s critical theory attempts to foreground “the connection between texts and the existential realities of human life, politics, societies and events” since “[t]he realities of power and authority . . . are the realities that make the texts possible, that deliver them to their readers, that solicit the attention of critics” (*The World, the Text and the Critic* 5). Therefore, he rejects professionalization because it dedicates the intellectual to depict the historical experience portrayed in literary text through the lenses of his/her culture and tradition, thus downplaying the shared, overlapped and intertwined historical experience of others. The final product of professionalism is an intellectual whose authority forces him/her to be subject to specialization and narrow parochialism.

To address this critical weightlessness, he introduces the concept of “worldliness” as a critical term that helps the intellectual to provide an objective criticism without detaching both the text and the intellectual from circumstantial reality. He points out that “worldliness does not come and go; nor is it here and there in the apologetic and soupy way by which we often designate history. . . . texts have ways of existing that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstances, time, place and society”
(34-5). He breaks out the idea of specialization “in order to shock critics into reexamining their practices and assumptions and into abandoning their ‘home,’ that is, the ideological attitudes constraining a freer, more ‘neutral’ pursuit of knowledge” (JanMohamed 111). The idea of specialization, he maintains, practices an inhumanistic force on the critic and text such as “barely sublimated Eurocentricism and nationalism, as well as surprisingly insistent quasi-religious quietism” (*The World, the Text and the Critic* 25). The professionalization of Orientalists, for instance, does not allow them to depict the reality of “Orient”. Their representation of the “Orient” came in the form of misrepresentation and disfiguration. In other words, professionalization misinforms reality.

Accordingly, instead of the idealistic objectivity of Practical Criticism, the materialist subjectivity of Marxism, and the radical deconstructive method of New Historicism, Said advocates a middle or contrapuntal critical approach that could bring together these critical tenets in a homogenous critical and theoretical framework. Said’s critical method “does not imply the rejection of universalism per se. It implies a scrupulous recognition that all claims of a universal nature are particular claims . . . to rethink and remake universalist . . . claims” (Mufti 244, italic in origin). Said’s worldliness, therefore, creates a state of balance between two dominating oppositional powers; the first is that of one’s filiations to his/her culture and nation that espouses consciously or unconsciously his/her cultural values; the second is the power that widens affiliation and belonging to all humanity. Accordingly, worldliness helps the critic to “open it [text] out both to what went into it and what its author excluded,” juxtaposing the vision of the cultural work “with various revisions it later provoked” (*Culture and Imperialism* 67).

On this basis, one can observe how both patterns of filiation and affiliation can easily be metamorphosed into systems of domination and power. Secular criticism, Said
suggests, liberates us from falling into the trap of this hegemonic self-appraisal and canonized view, because secular criticism is consciously nomadic and critically non-systemic. In her essay “Politics, the Profession and the Critic” Catharine Gallagher remarks that Said’s idea of worldliness provides his critical concept with “a cosmopolitan critical distance from all cultures that expands the possibilities for attachment to the world in general” (38). Hence, by explicating that texts are actually events and that criticism is always situated, linked, contextualized, he condemns the patterns of Eurocentric criticism for their tendency that “reinforces the known at the expense of the knowable” (*The World, the Text and the Critic* 23). The value of criticism lies in the refusal to be labeled, and in the systematic demystification of *isms*. Its nomadic thought should outdo the narrow confines of ethnicity, nationalism and partisanship. In the light of this view, it is no surprise to observe many possible lines of connection between the exilic condition endorsed and analyzed by Said and his theoretical elaboration of nomadic criticism. In *Beginnings*, for instance, he refers to the literary critic as “a wanderer, . . . a man essentially between homes” (8, italic in origin).

In *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, a meticulously written piece of analytical prose on the nature of beginnings in literary endeavors, Said discussed most of his critical literary concepts. The book offers a premise for the study of “initiation” and “intentionality” both in the genre of novels and artistic literature and their generalizability to a broader assessment in all of structural inquiry. Said’s very premise arose from questioning why would someone embark on a journey, write a text, or conceive of an idea? In a somewhat pragmatic manner, Said enlists such notions as “starting out”, “origins”, “originality”, “initiation”, “inauguration”, “revolution”, “authority”, “point of departure”, and “radicalism” as expressions of the same tensions that motivate and eventually become “beginnings.” In his attempt to legitimize his claims, Said incorporates
the usage of such terms as “action”, “work”, “attitude”, “consciousness”, thereby travelling across the philosophical landscape from Marx and Althusser to Derrida, Freud and Foucault in addition to offering a treatment of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach.

These ideas formulated a structure for Said upon which the implications of power, agency, ideology and identity came into play in the construction of text. This would eventually become the premise upon which his work on Orientalism was developed. The confutations within Orientalism became a reasoning which conceded to such questions as: What were the motivations that drove the Orientalist academicians to embark on Orientalist research? What were the interests involved in accomplishing such scholarly gains? To Said, actions (beginnings) are often preceded and prerequisite by reason and intention. In the case of Orientalism, Said purports that beginnings are camouflaged under the rubric of imperialism, whether consciously or otherwise, bringing him full circle back to a debate on agency and choice. His concept of Orientalism as a systematic structure, in short, is based on his discussion of structuralism in Beginnings.

After all, Said is not mainly a cultural theorist or a purely disinterested critic. He is also an aesthetician who finds amidst the most culturally prejudiced text a sense of beauty and neatness. Therefore, when some African writers such as Chinua Achebe dismissed Conrad as a racist, arguing that, whatever his gifts as a writer, his political attitudes must make him despicable to any African, Said saw such reasoning as amounting to spiritual, intellectual and aesthetic amputation. Despite the hidden political agendas and attitudes of cultural supremacy that inform the Western narrative and literary work, he never diminished their artistic integrity. Hence, whereas Orientalism discusses the significance of colonial discourse and sketches its contours, Culture and Imperialism proffers rich and extended readings of writers such as Austen, Conrad, Kipling, Camus,
and Gide, showing how significant the experience of Empire was for writers of the European literary canon. Moreover, he acknowledges the artistic value of Austen’s novels and admires the technical twists of Conrad’s storylines. He has also written possibly the best critical introduction to Derrida and Foucault for students of literature in his longish essay called “Criticism between culture and system” in *The World, the Text and the Critic*. For the sake of objectivity, therefore, he introduces his critical method of contrapuntality in order to emphasize that, in literary texts as in counterpoint, different themes coexist and the critic can reveal the full complexity of its value by examining the interplay between the situated world and the storylines, between the concealed truth and the constructed facts, and between the articulating central voice and the marginal, invisible and excluded one.

**Edward Said the Postcolonial**

Said’s theory of Orientalism has changed the course of cultural studies, in general, and postcolonial studies, in particular. It marks a departure from the dominant colonial discourse to the postcolonial criticism and discourse. It has changed the West’s view of the “Orient”, and the “Orient’s” conception of itself. In order to identify Said’s postcolonial initiative and strand, it seems imperative to look at themes and values that have embedded in creation of his theory. At the outset, his postcolonial, or more specifically, anti-colonial thought arose from a number of different concerns: political, ethical and psychological. It is not a coherent body of thought as it draws upon different themes and values such as social justice, literary and cultural theory. It is concerned with conceptualizing, understanding and speaking about the complex relations between the colonized and the colonizer, and how these politico-cultural inscriptions should be reworked and reconstructed in the present polyphonic and multicultural world.
Significantly, the “post” in Said’s postcolonialism has been taken to mean both the period “after”, and “before”. The concern is not periodicity but a theoretical orientation. Said’s postcolonialism, therefore, draws upon complex relationship between colonial and postcolonial situation and geography. This is close to Young’s identification of the term as it is concerned with questions of subjectivity, consciousness, history and temporality, and a theoretical tradition which is founded on a notion of the fundamentally unstable, contradictory, interdependent and mutually transformative relations between ‘subject’ and ‘object’, ‘self’ and ‘other’ (11).

In its general scope, Said’s postcolonialism can be described as “partly a response to, and a resistance against, the endurance of colonialism and is unashamedly political with its intent to change political, cultural and social structures . . . demanding democracy and decency for all” (Treacher 376). Indeed, Said was a true postcolonial liberationist who always argued that “no race has a monopoly on beauty, or intelligence, or strength, and there is room for everyone at the convocation of conquest” (Reflections on Exile xxvii). Hence, if postcolonial theory is seen as an intellectual engagement with the systematic theorizing of colonization and pertains to its consequences and its attendant features such as race, language, resistance and representation, then “Said’s Orientalism stands as a reference point and a marker at an imagined junction of the many tributaries that had been feeding the growing awareness of post-colonial cultural production since World War II” (Ashcroft and Kadhim x).

Said’s postcolonial criticism explores the relation between the text and the outside world through the focus on the concepts of the center and the periphery as well as the ability of the discourse to interact with the outside. His postcolonial thought embraces different approaches to the issue of center versus periphery. Accordingly, if Frantz Fanon in his The Wretched of the Earth (1967), Toward the African Revolution (1967) and Black
Skin, White Masks (1986) provides a psychological evaluation of the relationship between the center and the periphery, Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak focuses on the gender aspect of this problem in her works such as “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” (1985) or In Other Worlds (1987), and Homi Bhabha adds a philosophical dimension to the postcolonial discussion in Nation and Narration (1990) and The Location of Culture (2007), Said presents a point of view related to sociology and history in his Orientalism (1978), Covering Islam (1981), The World, The Text and The Critic (1983) and Culture and Imperialism (1994).

As a postcolonial classical text, the debut of Orientalism provides a deep insight into the discourse of power and elaborates that although initially Orientalism was an artificially and systematically created entity, through its development it started to create the outside reality by forming the identity of the “Occident” as an opposite to the “Orient”. According to Arif Dirlik, Orientalism “is likely to remain as Said’s most lasting contribution to postcolonial thinking. It is in many senses a pivotal work; a cultural product of a transition between the two senses of the postcolonial” (16). On his part, Timothy Brennan argues that postcolonial studies “had seemed to take up Said’s critique in Orientalism for the purpose of realizing it in a comprehensive way and across an entire array of subjects and styles” (“The Illusion of a Future” 564). Brennan goes on to say, “The prima facie case for seeing postcolonial studies as an extension rather than a departure from Orientalism is strong” (565, italic in origin). Significantly, Said’s work has undeniably provided so much “vigorous theoretical energy” to the field of postcolonial studies. His relationship with the postcolonial is “lies in the affinities he has with contemporary cultural studies, and nowhere is this more obvious than in Culture and Imperialism” (Ashcroft and Kedhim xii).
Following Fanon, Said draws a distinction between “independence” and “liberation”, between “resistance” and “nationalism”. He writes: “If I have so often cited Fanon, it is because more dramatically and decisively than anyone, I believe, he expresses the immense cultural shift from the terrain of nationalist independence to the theoretical domain of liberation” (Culture and Imperialism 268). This shift entails a transformation of national into social and political consciousness, transcending the nation in its compass, and aiming at some kind of universalist humanism. In an interview with Jennifer Wicke and Michael Sprinker, he states: “What Fanon calls the conversion, the transformation, of national into political and social consciousness, hasn’t yet taken place. It’s an unfinished project, and that’s where I think my work has begun” (236). The issue of revolution, for him, is not one of violence, but a process of creating a new culture that would ultimately transcend nationalism to create new cultural forms on the way to liberation.

Said’s postcolonial term “hybridity”, with reference to both himself and his analytical perspective, is dealt with as a form of “intentional hybridity,” that sets different voices against one another without denying their irreconcilable differences. His identity was extremely paradoxical and he was able, through his own experience, to demonstrate to us as to how paradoxical and constructed all identity is. His paradox of identity was indicative of the complex identities of diasporic and postcolonial peoples throughout the world today. Instead of submerging difference into an opaque hybridity, Said inhabits “a space of multiple allegiances,” or perhaps even more accurately, multiple spaces, which are not always easily reconciled, but provide him with a multiplicity of interpretive locations (Marrouchi 189). This fact is reaffirmed by Arif Dirlik who argues that “Said inhabits both worlds of the postcolonial; the postcolonialism of radical national liberation movements, which informs his writing and his self-image, as well as the postcolonialism of identity politics, to the articulation of which he has contributed significantly”. Dirlik
Ascribes Said’s dialectical positioning between these worlds to the paradoxes and contradictions in his thinking. He suggests that Said’s “quite apparent will to contradictoriness has provided him with an autonomous intellectual identity that enables him to re-read past ideologies with present concerns, while avoiding entrapment in the ideologies of the present, because he continues to invoke the past against the present” (10). Nevertheless, while quite contemporary in his recognition of multiple complicities in the making of colonialism as well as postcolonialism, Said points to “acknowledging the shared and combined experiences that produced many of us” (Culture and Imperialism 263).

From a rather different angle, Bill Ashcroft in his essay simply entitled “Worldliness”, views “worldliness” as Said’s most “postcolonial” and also most crucial contribution to critical theory. As such, Ashcroft argues, “Said’s key concept reflects the aims of postcolonial criticism to represent and intervene in the world” (74). Despite the controversy surrounding Said’s positioning within the postcolonial, his insistence on the materiality of the text and his emphasis on the necessity for criticism to be politically and socially engaged signal the real convergence between Said and postcolonialism. It is to be stressed that one of the keys to the vexed relationship between Said and postcolonial studies is the fact that in interest and background, Said is concerned with the broad impact of Europe’s imperialism rather than with the specifics of its colonialism. According to Ashcroft:

It is this dogged and unfashionable commitment to worldliness . . . that best characterises Said’s place in that shifting field called post-colonial theory . . . The controversies surrounding his position as a post-colonial intellectual . . . may well benefit from a consideration of the issue of worldliness . . . worldliness is Said’s most ‘post-colonial’ contribution to textual analysis. (74)
However, what distinguishes Said’s postcoloniality is the fact that it emerges from his unwavering and constant effort to bring the concept of time to the study of culture and cultural politics. Memory and invention are two basic terms that characterize his cultural polemics. History, anthropology, philology and literature are interdisciplinary subjects that intervene in the making of Orientalist discourse. By way of imagining the “Orient” the way they want, Orientalists legitimated its colonization. Said’s postcolonial features thus lie in his questioning of the privileging of the colonial over the present/future, especially through the propagation of certain memories, stories, and images. The politics behind such representations invariably arise, not just between “home” and “exile” but also “upstairs” versus “downstairs”, “inside” versus “outside”. He calls for “voyaging in” rather than “blaming” the colonial powers for present devastating realities. Instead, he suggests that postcolonial peoples may resist most effectively by engaging in the dominant culture, by embarking on “a voyage in” through a variety of hybrid cultural works, which counters dominant culture without simplistically rejecting it.

Said juxtaposes past, present, and future, so that each may illuminate a way of understanding, framing, and shaping the other. Accordingly, the future does not become a repository of past desires/oppressions, but a beacon of emancipation. In his essay “Said’s Exile: Strategic Insights for Postcolonial Feminists,” L.H.M. Ling argues that like it was for all other postcolonial writers and critics,

Exile for Edward Said was a painful yet enriching condition. Indeed, exile accounted for his extraordinary productivity in theorising about and strategising for social justice for the displaced, the marginalised, the silenced. He spoke specifically on the exile of Palestinians from their historic homes but his insights apply to all subjects and subjectivities suffering from hegemonic oppression and stultification. (135)
Identity politics is one of the main issues of the postcolonial literature and criticism. In this particular issue, Said takes a position different from other postcolonial writers and critics. It is, perhaps, because of his view of theory as an opponent to praxis. He believes in the necessity of being among all, but against the assimilating of all. His paradoxes on exile and home is resonant of postcolonial queries. On space, for example, he pinpoints what it means to be “settled” and “unsettled”. In view of this, postcolonial writers in exile do not just discover creativity and stimulation in exile but also a voice for their stories, their concerns, and their dreams, “turning exile into a ‘productive contradiction’ in which the mechanisms of alienation are transformed into mechanisms of liberation” (Zeleza 15).

Said’s postcolonial initiative and colonial discourse theory have been embedded in analyzing and understanding of home and exile in the discipline of International Relations in which analogies are made between mainstream International Relations to a colonial household. This kind of spatiality clearly demarcates who is “inside” and “outside”, who is “upstairs” and “downstairs”, and who wavers dangerously on the “borders”. Those “erasures and violences” that accompanied the colonial rule have created a system that continues to control the present international relations. (Agathangelou and Ling 22-33). From this perspective, Said’s *Orientalism* has “cross-fertilized with members of the House of IR . . . to produce new schools of thought such as Postcolonial IR that speak to world politics from the perspective of those outside of yet intertwined with the West” (Ling 137). It is actually these intertwined elements and intellectual hybrids that formulate the postcolonial approaches, and open up for a specific articulation of multiple worlds or “worldism”. Actually, Said has been invoked in the postcolonial critical circles today not because his thinking was perfect, but because the paradoxes he produced in his
treatment of exile and home compel us to search further, probe deeper, inquire more comprehensively.

Another substantial Saidian contribution to the postcolonial studies is the conceptualization of knowledge/power constellation that underlies the Western colonial discourse. His *Culture and Imperialism* offers a reading of the working of literature in the making of the empire and points out how empire is created out of and supported by consciously narrative codes. His postcolonialism is not to translate a reflective image of the self, but to undo these images by aligning them contrapuntally. His critical method is to labor on bringing in various hidden element embedded in the text so as the text is situated within its circumstantial reality and is stripped off of its master image. It should appear as a showroom of models rather than a mastering brand. In this case, the question of whose culture and image is left to reader to discern.

Incontestably, postcolonialism and postmodernism are an ultimate theoretical and critical schools of thought initiated against the backdrop of the colonial, capitalist system. But, though they share common theoretical assumptions related to hybridity of cultural formation, they are heavily at bay concerning the issue of critical methodology to identity politics. This explains way Said is critical of postmodernism as an unworldly school of thought. Identity and culture, politics and place are fundamental critical themes in Said’s postcolonial project. In this line of thought, Said keeps his place between high culture criticism and liberationist critical movement.

From what has been stated above, we could say that Said is neither a radical postcolonial as in the nationalist classification nor a socialist-based scholar as in Marxist historical assessment. His understanding of home and culture is closer in trajectory to the freely diverse, multiple postmodern perspective than to the radical, nationalist
postcolonial perspective. Viewed from this vantage point, one can find in Said’s exilic condition and life a point of convergence between the postcolonial and the postmodern. Being a displaced and dispossessed citizen living in exile and speaking from the margin, he posits a truthful picture of the postcolonial critic and intellectual who resists and criticizes the colonial culture and policy. In this case, he is a diasporic figure whose cause is to narrate his story and invest his memory to regain his home and culture.

Said’s criticism of cultural hegemony places him in the postmodern perspective, though he strongly criticizes the postmodern “weightlessness”. It is a well-known fact that Said is an adherent of multiplicity and equality, a feature that makes him an acceptable figure worldwide. Perhaps, his experience of being an exile has nourished in him a thought of heterogeneity and difference. He looks at cultural difference as a healthy sign of human variety and coexistence. More importantly, “difference” for him is a totally different concept from “Othering”. If difference is a common natural idea among humankinds, “Othering” is a deliberately disciplined and systematically constructed ideology. Besides, Said’s postcolonial and prolific use of “we” and “our” is invested with an individualist postmodern touch. He passionately states: “Identity -- who we are, where we come from, what we are -- is difficult to maintain in exile” (After the Last Sky 16).

Edward Said as a Postmodernist

If paradox is a value, then Said is an epitome of paradoxical set-up. He is the academic author who has written judiciously about the complicity of academic institutions in domination and hegemony. He is also a thorough professional who is critical of professionalism in the name of the public obligations of intellectuals. While his work has inspired new theoretical departures in literary and cultural criticism, he disclaims theory as a major concern of his work. His paradoxes “have served to empower
his work, and enabled him to retain his autonomy as a critic against pressures to conformity of changing intellectual and political fashions” and his “credibility is due in part to an intellectual integrity that refuses to disavow the many pasts, and the cultural baggage, accumulated in the course of the complex personal itinerary” that contributed to his making (Dirlik 2).

Multitudes or multiple identities and histories are recurring theme reflected upon by Said throughout his monographs, interviews and personal moments. “I contain multitudes,” he recited this line from a Walt Whitman poem in the concluding moments of the film Selves and Others: A Portrait of Edward Said, as a warm, personal tribute to his life. In Culture and Imperialism, he tells us that he belonged to two “worlds, without being completely of either one or the other” (xxvi). Commenting on this fact, Conor McCarthy argues in his essay, “The Wake of Edward Said,” that Said famously combined “a Romantic image of the intellectual as a brave individual bearing dramatic witness in public with a distinctly postmodern stress on mobility, fluidity, border-crossing, exile, and the abandonment of the redoubts of power” (200). In fact, Said’s persona is a jumble of a number of experiences and influences. As noted by Brennan, “his understanding of ‘home’ . . . is less literal than positional, less filiative than political. Exile for him was . . . ideational” (“Edward Said and Comparative Literature” 25).

Although dissociating himself from the postmodern realm, he unknowingly offers his own postmodern solution to the debates and tensions between complete relativism and complete universalism, as well as a vision of how to approach the study of others, minorities, colonized or postcolonial peoples: “we must be able to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them coexisting and interacting with each other” (Culture and
His critical project is not a search for a single authentic representation of humanity’s cultural archives, but rather a commitment to listen to and think through experiences outside of one’s own. This commitment to a humanistic purpose goes further to a postmodern tic that attempts to transcend the “destructive politics of confrontation and hostility” (18). His critical method, therefore, involves a practical and methodological engaging with the interplay of different voices, identities and texts in the broader socio-historical contexts of both colonialism and postcolonialism. His attraction to contarpuntality, thus, can be regarded as a preceding step towards postmodern discourse which celebrates difference and polyphony as part of its ontological condition. He writes: “Polyphony, the organization of more than one voice, is what really interests me. I’m attracted to the combination of voices, the way one voice becomes subordinated by another . . . In the interpretation of polyphonic compositions, there is no predictability” (qtd. in Bayoumi and Rubin 425).

Simultaneity, temporality, and difference are celebrated notions of Said’s thought that enable him to “look back at the cultural archive . . . with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories” (Culture and Imperialism 51). According to Telmissany and Schwartz, “By reading together, listening to and actually hearing other voices, he shares similarities with the discourse produced and sustained by French postmodernism” (xviii). No wonder, then, that “[w]ithin post-colonial debates, Edward Said has tended to be viewed by critics and admirers alike through a predominantly postmodern lens” (Selby 40). His concerns with texts, representations, identity, truth, and exile have shown his deployment and articulation of some of the key tropes of postmodernism.

Interestingly, Said’s later work seem to have followed a theoretical journey to “Think Globally, Act Locally” knowledge. Having revolted against the injustice done by
super-image of high culture, his later works turned out into humanist with a touch of postmodern weaponry. His polyphonic tune, his democratic thought, his advocacy of multiple centers, and his prolific writings and confrontational style place him in the postmodern school of thought. These featuring qualities are all understood best through the lens he provides in his essays on Swift. There he writes: “We do him a greater service if we accept the discontinuities he experienced in the way he experienced them: as either actual or imminent losses of tradition, heritage, position, history, losses located at the center of his disjointed verbal production” (The World, the Text and the Critic 65). In other place he writes: “The artist who is fully in command of his medium nevertheless abandons communication with the established social order of which he is a part and achieves a contradictory, alienated relationship with it” (On Late Style 8).

It is worth noting that his counter-argument of and the infusion of alternative for the Western polemics, theory and philosophy reveals him a postmodern theoretician who attempts to blur the borders. His discussion of the geopolitical and geo-cultural mapping of the postcolonial world sheds some light on the postmodern trends in his trajectory. In her essay, “Mapping Edward Said: Geography, Identity, and the Politics of Location,” J. A Kasbarian aptly remarks that Said’s approach to the concept of geographical space and imagined communities have been done through a postmodern perspective. “Committed to transgressing established borders,” she maintains, “Said invites us to imagine new topographies, in which units heretofore deemed separate -- cultures, professions, realms of experience -- become inescapably hybrid and interpenetrating” (529).

Further, Said strongly defends modality against determinism. In an Interview he declared: “I like . . . doubt and uncertainty . . . I hate systems and I hate determinism and it seems to me the whole idea is to fight them” (“Cultures Aren’t Watertight” 231). In another he added, “I simply gave up and figured that one is moved in ways that are quite
mysterious . . . who wants to be consistent?” (“Conversation with Bill Ashcroft” 90). He incessantly emphasized, “[w]hat I’m interested in is people who are unsystematic” (“An Interview with Te-bsing Shan” 131). In his memoir, he reveals: “I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance. These currents . . . require no reconciling, no harmonizing” (Out of Place 295). He urges all of us to engage with that which contradicts and unsettles and this injunction becomes more urgent towards the end of his life. He writes: “Most people are principally aware of one culture, of one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions. . .” (Reflections on Exile” 186).

Conceptually, Said looks at exile in terms of intellectual space rather than of distance and place. As a result, he attempts to cross the ideological as well as the geopolitical borders of place as a territory to a place as human geography. He develops a critical concept of exile as a cause and effect of knowledge/power constellation. He believes that cultural and political hegemony are the products of unidimensional, monolithic and insular system. He holds the view that cultures are basically hybrid, and human histories are intertwined and their geographies are overlapping.

It is the importance of breaks, of fragments, of disjunctions that become increasingly important to Said. He declares: “Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience” (Reflections on Exile” 185). Actually, Said’s concern centers on the “unreconciled strains in a life”. For him, it is critically important that we “develop the capacity to embrace that which is jagged, which jars, to think thoughts previously unthought and to allow new experiences that genuinely change us” (Treacher 386).
Treacher goes on to testify that throughout his life and work, Said “struggled to overcome splits -- political, social, emotional -- partly through thinking about what may be irreconcilable and fragmented in order to reach out for that which can be healed and repaired” (387).

After all, it is not so easy to discern a clear-cut between Said the postcolonial and Said the postmodern: whereas the former refers to Said’s political and historical engagement, the latter identifies Said’s utopian theorization.

**Edward Said the Humanist**

What distinguishes Said’s cultural and critical project is its humanistic terrain. The human is the target and the source of his critical endeavor. His concern is to liberate the human from the confines of ideology and political interest. He unremittingly argues that criticism should motivate the intellectual to think of what is beyond his or her own culture and tradition. Therefore, humanism has been used by Said as a parallel world for the intellectual’s wider filiations to the entire world. He argues, “There can be no true humanism whose scope is limited to extolling patriotically the virtues of our culture, our language, and our monuments” (*Humanism and Democratic Criticism* 28). Above all, humanism for him is “the final resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history” (*Orientalism* xxii). However, his humanism is not the humanism of autonomous subject celebrated by Western Enlightenment thought.

The inseparability of humanism and politics in Said’s work arises not as a result of political action, but out of a potent humanism. Humanism thus is integral to his vision of cultural coexistence without coercion. In the words of Emily S. Apter, “Said was always an accomplished literary critic in a humanist vein” (36). Said makes it clear at the outset of *Orientalism* that his idea and critique of *Orientalism* is “to use humanistic
critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and
analysis to replace the short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison
us”. He unequivocally affirms that imperialism and Orientalism trespassed the human
value in favor of purely ideological grounds, “What imperialism has done, and what
Orientalism continues to do?” he asks. “Each of these phases eras,” he explains,
“produces its own distorted knowledge of the other, each its own reductive images, its
own disputatious polemics” (xvii). As a result, he tends to maintain dialectic “between
individual text or writer and the complex collective formation” (24). This dialectic
prevents conceptual closure and keeps itself open and ongoing.

Said’s humanism, therefore, must be read catachrestically as a productive misuse
of the term which forces us to rethink the “human” not as a totalizing or universalizing
subject, but as that unassimilable force, that unruly and resistant messiness that disturbs
discursive systems and theories. Matthew Abraham aptly observes,

Said established an ambivalent relationship toward humanism throughout his life
and work. While Said extolled humanism’s power to connect progressive
intellectual workers and create lines of solidarity between the discrepant
experiences of those working against grave injustices in the world -- regardless of
national filiations -- he also recognized humanism’s potential destructiveness in
contributing to the realization of totalizing discourses such as Orientalism. (1)

Throughout his critical oeuvre, humanism becomes “a dialectical concept,
generating oppositions it could neither absorb nor avoid” (Mitchell 490). Therefore, he
obtrusively advocates a new humanism that would affirm the highest aspirations of
culture while, at the same time, working against the pitfalls of identititarian thinking, which
impels national and religious enthusiasm. To achieve this, he takes up “Auerbachian
humanism” as a way of “futural parameters for defining secular criticism in a world increasingly governed by a sense of identitarian ethnic destiny and competing sacred tongues” (Apter 43). For the purpose of exposing detract intellectual movements from their religious enthusiasm and the cults of discipleship and expertise, he develops his concepts of “secular criticism” and “worldliness,” as two critical ideals and prerequisite elements of his humanism.

In the main, Saidian humanism resists determinations of system and theory. This escape of determinism enables us to understand humanity not as fixed essence, but as open-ended possibility. Thus, by addressing “[T]he notion of man . . . in all its untidy diversity”, Said reveals the provisionality and possibility that make up human reality (Beginnings 350). Said here is a humanist, but like Adorno, a “negative humanist,” a humanist critical of the humanistic enterprise without necessarily descending into nihilism. In his MLA Presidential Address, he asserts: “perhaps we can go so far as to imagine paradoxically a nonhumanistic humanist” (Humanism and Heroism 290).

In a moment of grave political uncertainty inside and outside the academia, Said’s extensive and path-breaking literary and political work is deployed and utilized to “advance a critical humanism for the creation of noncoercive knowledge” (Abraham 1). Consequently, by challenging essentialized and given categories such as “culture,” “the Arab mind,” and “the clash of civilizations,” he sought to recuperate through careful analysis what others had left as immutable, uncontested, and forgotten.

Edward Said as a Political Commentator

Completely apolitical until 1967, Said entered the public fray as a writer trying to correct (mis)perceptions of the Arab peoples that had come to his attention during the Arab-Israel six-day war. By 1990, he had taken on “the aura of a political prophet”
(Veeser 8). He takes upon himself the responsibility to present the question of Palestine to world politics. From the early 1970s, he began writing on Palestine for the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

Well-known as a learned, refined, but acid Palestinian activist, Said differs from many other cultural critics in matters of political engagement and intellectual activism. His influence, in fact, was far from being confined to the worlds of academic and scholarly discourse. He distinguished himself as popular commentator and trenchant critic of cultural, political and other ideological dogmatism. He is an authentic voice of the independent critic, speaking truth to power, supplying a dissenting voice in conflict with authority. Therefore, as much as he was an advocate of the Arab cause and right, he was conspicuously critical of the Arab decolonized state. He once wrote in the Cairo newspaper *Al-Ahram* in May 2001, “What concerns us is the shabby state of discourse and analysis in the Arab world,” criticizing the Arab regimes as “a byword for brutality, autocracy and unimaginable corruption”. He never subdued to the woes of authority: “I think what they want is my silence. Unless I die it’s not going to happen” (*Culture and Resistance* 82).

However, he paid much for his intellectual and political position. For his intellectual political stand, he was dubbed “professor of terror” by the rightwing American magazine *Commentary* and was accused of falsifying his status as a Palestinian refugee to enhance his advocacy of the Palestinian cause; he has been accused of anti-Western essentialism by Western critics and scholars; Arab regimes found him a threat to their undemocratic rule; and finally he was seen by some Arab nationalists and fundamentalists as complacent with the Israeli state due to his advocacy of a single bi-national state for Palestinians and Israelis. He appeared to the authoritarian regimes as a frequently irritating critic, to his critics as lightning rod, attracting fear and castigation; to
Israel and Jews alike he was implausibly cast as a corporeal incarnation of every threat -- real or imagined; to diasporic community, he was a provocatively articulate remembrancer of Israel’s very own victims. This struggle, as Paul A. Bove has observed, is an “intellectual’s tasks of speaking truth against power and building the severe poetic institutions of freedom and justice” (6).

Needless to say, Said is a secular intellectual and democratic critic whose chief enemy is injustice and oppression. The hostility he encountered from inside and outside academia was predictable, given his critique of the Western intellectuality and mentality towards the non-Western, his trenchant attacks on Israeli violations of the human rights of Palestinians and his outspoken condemnations of US policies in the Middle East. Mihir Bhattacharya briefs Said’s political activism in the following lines:

A thorn in the flesh of the imperialist-Zionist consensus, an indefatigable campaigner for the liberation of Palestine, a defender of the rights of refugees and migrants, he stood out . . . as a man who would not be cowed or corrupted into complicity . . . he was a secular, democratic, independent-minded participant in the cause against imperial hegemony, bitterly critical of regressive Islamic positions, trying continuously to evolve a rational, humane, equitable order of peoples living together, continuously frustrated by entrenched bigotry, oppression and injustice. (108)

Said realizes the intricate relationship between knowledge, culture and politics, and starts grappling his intellectual project on the basis of such complex relationship. Starting as a literary critic, he became a celebrated cultural theorist and established himself as a political commentator. According to Veeser, “Said’s intellectual and political lives curved along comparably rounded arcs. Starting as a literary theorizer . . ., he soon
abandoned the theory craze and found an audience wider than the academy” (9). The fact that Said’s *Orientalism*, for instance, poses an intellectual threat to the policymakers in the West especially Washington verifies its persistent documentation of how Western knowledge of non-Western cultures and peoples cannot be separated from the very colonial structures of perception that produced that knowledge. It stands as an ultimate testament to Said’s brilliant legacy and commitment to blurring the boundary between the academic and public discourse. Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom find in Said’s political writings “a stubborn and unwavering source of enlightenment that aided in the interpretation of current events and exposed gross failures by the political and media establishments to deal contextually with the Middle East”. They argue that “Said offered a sober and sobering utterance amid a cacophony of voices in and on the wider Arab, Muslim, and Middle Eastern societies . . . addressing culture and society as a whole without erecting rigid fences between them” (3).

In an able and engaged venture, Said brought into light the hidden contempt and degradation of the Arab people in the political discourse of Western, especially American politicians and top-thinkers. He cited, for instance, how US Secretary of State Colin Powell, while addressing the United Nations, repeatedly stated “Sodom” instead of “Saddam.” He also mentioned this as an example of demonization, trivialization, and reduction. Commenting on news anchors “who say I-raq, I-ran . . . the Mooslems, and Izlum,” he dismissed them as “part of the same arsenal of Orientalist clichés that are designed to alienate, distance, and dehumanize a people,” explicating that “That’s why most Arabs feel a tremendous animosity toward the U.S. media and government” (*Culture and Resistance* 165-66).

Said’s commitment to scholarship, memory, and history has been endorsed succinctly in his contention that “the struggle for history is a political struggle” (Bove 5).
Indeed, his imagination, scholarship, activism and criticism continue to inform on the most pressing issues of the day and to interrupt the dehumanizing representations and their underlying policies of the Arab region. The invasion and destruction of Iraq is nothing but an accelerated idea of the Orientalist/colonialist project. He was always interested in the notion of politics as an affair of rival narratives, with each movement trying to validate its picture of the world by telling a tale about its own birth and origin. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a classic example. He often noted that presenting the Palestinian case in the world media meant having to keep retelling the story from the start, insisting that there is a story. Therefore, he takes “storytelling to be . . . a form of political action and testimony” (2). In the words of Abdul JanMohamed, “Said’s subject-position is only partly that of articulator and defender of Palestinian aspirations within the West; he is also an active and important producer of the evolving Palestinian identity.” JanMohamed considers Said’s *The Question of Palestine* as formulative book that produces such a history because it “is motivated not only by the current plight of Palestinians, but also by a utopian vision of Palestine, a ‘nonplace,’ an idea that galvanizes Palestinians everywhere” (104).

Said’s concern as an engaged political critic was to consistently pursue three themes: the urgent need to tell the world the truth about Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians; the parallel urgency of getting Palestinians and other Arabs to recognize and accept the reality of Israel and engage with Israelis, especially the Israeli opposition; and the duty to speak openly about the failings of Arab leadership. However, his political struggle for recognition and self-determination was not based on a collective desire and nativist ground, because “collective passions are being funneled into a drive for war” (“Collective Passion” 108). What manifested to Said are the totalitarian and unidirectional views of the dominant power, its oppressive policy and prejudice that unknowingly entail
a reverse act. He believes that “anti-Americanism in this context is not based on a hatred of modernity or technology . . . it is based on a narrative of concrete interventions, specific depredations” (108). Therefore, he regrets that politics gets over knowledge and truth is hardly sought.

Said’s political activism, however, is grounded on ethical principle that we are humans before being Palestinians or Americans or Israeli etc. On this basis, his outcry against Israeli occupation, dispossession and aggression against the Palestinian people and territory cannot be nationalized. Therefore, he considered the 1993 Oslo Accords between Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli government as a political deal that sacrificed the displaced Palestinians and their human cause. To his shrewd criticism, the peace process was actually “a repackaging of the Israeli occupation” (Culture and Resistance 33). “The struggle over Palestine,” he argues, “cannot really be simply resolved by a technical and ultimately janitorial rearrangement of geography allowing dispossessed Palestinians the right . . . to live in about 20 percent of their land . . . [nor] would it be morally acceptable to demand that Israelis should retreat from the whole of former Palestine, now Israel . . .” (“The Public Role of Writers” 39). Instead, he argued for all-inclusive, democratic, and undiscriminating terms of citizenship. He in his article “Israel-Palistine: A Third Way” to Le Monde Diplomatique (12 September, 1998), he wrote: “We can neither return to the days before the war of 1967, nor can we accept slogans of rejectionism that in effect send us back to the golden age of Islam . . . The only way to undo injustice is to create more justice, not to create new forms of vindictive injustice”.

Said astutely distinguishes between two types of behavior: political and intellectual. He argues that “the intellectual’s role is to speak the truth, as plainly, directly and as honestly as possible.” Speaking the truth to power “means additionally that the
intellectual’s constituency is neither a government nor a corporate or a career interest: only the truth unadorned.” This political behavior “must begin in terms of the idea of citizenship, not nationalism, since a concept of citizenship whereby every individual has the same citizen’s rights, based not on race or religion, but on equal justice for each person” (Le Monde Diplomatique 1998). His political comments are linked to his battle for democracy and equal rights, for a secular world in which all the members are equal citizens, in which the underlying concept is a secular notion of citizenship and belonging, not some mythological essence or an idea that derives its authority from the remote past.
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74