CHAPTER ONE

REPRESENTATION AND AGENCY: THE LOCATION OF INTELLECTUALS

The Intellectual in Perspective

The signing of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 divided the world in three.¹ This, along with the Cold War, saw the emergence of three worlds, each with its own set of economic, political and sociological reference frames.² These frames of reference have interacted internally and externally to create a network, a set of equations that have governed the behaviour of a state in the years that followed the Second World War. The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in the nineties of the last century have once again re-arranged the patterns of political and social discourse throughout the world. The emergence of the United States almost as the lone super-power has had its own implications in terms of the politics of culture and representation. All these, in short, have opened up the socio-political debate about representation and negotiation towards multiple possibilities, and ruptured the very notion of a centre that creates and nurtures the idea of a stable and resolute subject-position.
The role of the intellectual has been of representative significance within the international dimension of this behavioural dynamic. The absorption of intellectuals into these by and large political interactions between states has resulted in an interesting presence of rational, thinking individuals in a game of domination and intimidation, coercion and subjugation. What many of these intellectuals have done is to try and promote a particular brand of philosophy or ‘knowledge’ which the state uses to justify its political interests.

The continuous tension among different schools of knowledge, among asymmetric patterns of writing history has successfully deflated the concept of an organic truth or a fixed pattern of historical development that had been promoted all this while by the pervasive logic of liberal humanism. We are now familiar with the terms ‘knowledges’ and ‘histories’, with their very own connotations of pluralism. Each one of these sets of ‘knowledges’ or ‘histories’ qualifies the other and tries to establish a discursive dominance that goes towards the repudiation of a particularly qualified ‘truth’. Thus inevitably, there are as many ‘truths’ as there are ‘histories’ or ‘knowledges’, each equally valid (or, at least, claiming to be so), and each claiming constitutional validity within its framework of influence and domination.

This is, of course, not to say that the intellectual has always worked towards the validation of a state-promoted philosophy. Intellectuals over the world have also consciously played the oppositional role—of trying to undercut
state domination, wage resolute battles against intimidation and coercion,
sometimes at the cost of their independence and even, in extreme cases, their
lives. I shall come back to this soon, but the point I am trying to make is that by
the middle of the last century universal ideals such as ‘truth’ and/or ‘knowledge’
had become minutely localized and acquired limited and agenda-based
constituency. Robert Young makes this point well while discussing Edward
Said’s book *Orientalism*:

…all knowledge may be contaminated, implicated even in its very formal
or ‘objective’ structures. To the extent that all knowledge is produced
within institutions of various sorts, there is always a determined relation to
the state and to its political practices at home and abroad.³

Thus the intellectual inevitably has to play a difficult game of balancing self and
state, of trying to work out a space for oneself that might be located beyond the
state and its political practices. This space, however, is intensely political, and not
the kind of space that someone like Julien Benda has imagined for the
intellectual.⁴ Benda imagines the intellectual to be inhabiting a universal, neutral
space that exists beyond national boundaries and is not qualified by ethnic
identity. It is interesting to notice, however, that of all those that Benda considers
to be intellectuals (namely, Spinoza, Voltaire, Ernest Renan et al), Jesus is the
only non-European who gets his approval. Benda was writing in the twenties of
the last century, and by the time we got to read him in English things had changed
a great deal. The politics of the world around us had ceased to be one of binary opposition between the ‘West’ and the ‘rest’, and issues of representation had acquired multiple polarities that could not possibly have been imagined by Benda. As Edward Said says in his Reith Lectures:

Things have changed a great deal since then [the time when Benda was writing *The Treason of the Intellectuals*]. In the first place, Europe and the West are no longer the unchallenged standard-setters for the rest of the world. The dismantling of the great colonial empires after World War Two diminished Europe’s capacity for intellectually and politically irradiating what used to be called the dark places of the earth. With the advent of the Cold War, the emergence of the Third World, and the universal emancipation implied, if not enacted, by the presence of the United Nations, non-European nations and traditions now seemed worthy of serious attention.5

Thus, there had already been a perspectival shift in the latter half of the twentieth century in terms of the centering of power distributions across the world. It was thus imperative that one started to address the steadily growing presence of intellectuals from the Third World, who were already making their presence felt in the larger issues of distribution of power across both the political and the theoretical milieu alike. What was considered the prerogative of the Western world, namely discussions, research, production of knowledge for and about
human subjects as such, suddenly involved a presence from the least expected part of the globe—the Third World. The questions of representation and ontology were now opened up for discussions in diverse forums (like the United Nations, for example) that compulsorily involved representatives from the erstwhile colonized parts of the world, and this in a way unsettled the steady and sure progress of First-World humanism and its pervasive assumptions.

**Location and Space: Defining the Intellectual!**

With the increasing importance of the questions of constituency and validity of knowledges and histories, the idea of location has gained in importance. The absence of universals leads inevitably to a scuffle between diverse centres of power for the acquirement of discursive ground. This acquirement depends on the ability of the particular centre of power in the creation and disbursal of knowledge/s. The role of the intellectual becomes crucial here. He is the chosen one who would create (or manufacture) systems of thought or knowledges that would consolidate and perpetuate area-based, need-based or issue-based domination.

This is where the *location* of the intellectual or the *space* he inhabits within a state, a culture, or a group becomes of supreme importance. Considering that the idea of an ‘intellectual’ presupposes such qualities as intelligence and discretion, it might be inferred that his/her inclusion in a particular group or
coterie is a conscious choice. Coercive techniques of the state might lead the lay citizen, but not the intellectual, to submit to the politics of power. Admittedly this statement raises many questions such as whether the intellectual needs coercion, or why an intellectual belongs to a certain group or supports a particular method of protest. The location of the intellectual thus has multiple connotations.

I shall now discuss the ways in which the intellectual might be defined, and the kind of intellectuals I would be talking about in my thesis. I have already referred to the way in which people such as Julien Benda like to conceive of the intellectual as a tiny band of super-gifted and morally superior philosophers, whose words have a vatic, universal appeal. They uphold what might be called eternal standards of truth and justice that are beyond question, let alone subject to discursive qualifications or considerations of agency. Benda considers real intellectuals to be ‘those whose activity is essentially not the pursuit of practical aims, all those who seek their joy in the practice of an art or a science or metaphysical speculation, in short in the possession of non-material advantages, and hence in a certain manner say: “My kingdom is not of this world.”’ 6 It is evident from Benda’s almost transcendental definition of the intellectual that he subscribes to a world-view that is purely humanist in its import. Obviously in the anti-humanist surge of theoretical writings after the Second World War, such an almost sterilised definition of the intellectual would not be able to hold its ground. The intellectual is definitely, or needs to be more earth-bound in order that he/she
successfully battles the continuous attempts at essentializing him/her by various agencies of power that would use him/her for reasons strictly political.

Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist thinker, however sees the intellectual as a person who is nowhere near Benda’s intellectual priest. For Gramsci, the intellectual is a professional who fulfils a particular set of functions in the society. For him a journalist, an academic, a management consultant, a lawyer, a policy expert, a government advisor, a labourer—are all intellectuals who perform their given functions in the society. He is rather impatient with the kind of distinctions generally made between the intellectuals and the non-intellectuals:

All men are intellectuals…When one distinguishes between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, one is referring only to the immediate social function of the professional category of the intellectuals, that is, one has in mind the direction in which their specific professional activity is weighted, whether towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous effort. This means that, although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist…There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: *homo faber* cannot be separated from *homo sapiens.*

That is to say that for Gramsci any human subject carries on some form of intellectual activity, and participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct and thereby brings in new modes of thought. By
this he does not mean that each man has a splendidly original revelation to make, but that each one of them is differentially original in his or her thought and therefore also an intellectual. Although Gramsci’s definition of the intellectual is far removed from Benda’s, he is also, in a sense, defining the intellectual more philosophically than practically. The specific role, if any, of the intellectual remains hazy and unspecified in his definition.

In the face of this Edward Said’s definition of the intellectual seems to be more relevant and near the mark, considering the kind of politics of representation that we are negotiating here. Said visions a strictly public role for the intellectual, one that is neither transcendental like Benda’s, nor the very pedestrian one of the intellectual as professional as envisioned by Gramsci. While Benda’s definition is not acceptable to him for obvious reasons of Eurocentricity, Said finds Gramsci’s suggestions ‘pioneering’. It is due to Gramsci’s idea of associating the intellectual with the production and distribution of knowledge (that is to say his ‘organic’ presence in a particular field of work) that, Said thinks, the intellectual has become a subject of study:

Just put the words ‘of’ and ‘and’ next to the word ‘intellectuals’ and almost immediately an entire library of studies about intellectuals that is quite daunting in its range and minutely focused in its detail rises before our eyes…There has been no major revolution in modern history without intellectuals; conversely there has been no major counter-revolutionary
movement without intellectuals. Intellectuals have been the fathers and mothers of movements, and of course sons and daughters, even nephews and nieces.\(^8\)

But, what Said is concerned about is that in this Gramscian attempt at making intellectuals of all human beings, the intellectual would become only another professional, lost in the maze of information and detail. Instead, Said insists that the intellectual is an individual with a specific public role in the society, whose function cannot be easily reduced to faceless professionalism, or somebody who just goes about his business like anybody else:

The central fact for me is, I think, that the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public...[He is] someone whose place it is publically to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d’être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. The intellectual does so on the basis of universal principles...\(^9\)

Said thus emphasizes the public role of the intellectual. It is the intellectual’s duty to see to it that those around him get justice and freedom. The obvious issue of
representation is enmeshed with these ideas of justice and freedom. The state, or the nation, or the other centres of power are incessantly, in their various ways trying to violate the sovereignty of the human subject. It is the duty of the intellectual to talk about this. To make the people aware of these violations of their individual rights and freedom. To assume the role of the public intellectual who addresses the people directly. That is to say, in spite of all barriers the intellectual should visibly represent a standpoint and articulate this representation to his/her public. Said mentions Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre as this kind of intellectuals who have spoken to their people directly, articulated their likes or dislikes publicly, and been very political presences in their respective societies. Most definitely, Said does not want the intellectual to mince words. He writes:

Least of all should an intellectual be there to make his/her audiences feel good: the whole point is to be embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant.¹⁰

Said has thus charted the trajectory of the intellectual’s vocation in no uncertain terms. The purpose of the intellectual’s activity, he emphasizes, is ‘to advance human freedom and knowledge’.¹¹ I would like to digress a bit here to talk about some of the words that Said uses, and some assumptions that he makes in the course of his defining the intellectual. He talks about ‘universal principles’, ‘human freedom’, ‘knowledge’ as if these are concepts beyond qualification, those that have transcendental meanings that cannot be problematized. The question that crops up is whether he is falling into the same essentialist trap like
some of his predecessors. In trying to situate the intellectual as the truest representative of the people is he somewhere playing into the hands of the same Eurocentrism that he consciously tries to resist?

The answer to these questions is not easy. Edward Said belongs to that generation of academics and intellectuals who have grown up on humanist principles of thought and knowledge. Said, for example, has always acknowledged the two great German humanist thinkers Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer as his formative influences. At the same time, however, Said is also keenly aware of the essentialist assumptions that intellectuals like Julien Benda are succumbing to. With the publication of his hugely influential book *Orientalism* in 1978, it was Said who first problematized the politics of representation on such a large scale. He realized the need for deconstructing myths, for deflating pre-conceived notions about the superiority of the West or the inferiority of the East, and most of all the veritable need for a counter-discourse that would challenge the pervasive assumptions of the West. But he could not, in the same breath, disown his humanist training, the solid foundations of the study of the humanities that formed the core of the intellectual in him.

In a way, therefore, Said can be seen as located somewhere in between the liberal humanist tendencies of old school academic thinking on the one hand, and the open-ended postmodernism of the present. His work could be seen as a kind of bridge, a middle path between the two extremes. However, Said does not seem
to align fully with any one of these tendencies in his definition of the intellectual. While he has expressed his qualified disapproval of the image of the transcendental intellectual as envisioned by Julien Benda, or the extra-liberal Gramscian image of the ‘everyman’ intellectual, he does not seem to be very comfortable with postmodern versions of the role or function of the intellectual either. For him, somewhere, there is the need for grand narratives, for the solid, unerring presence of ‘truth’ or ‘freedom’ as still centres or reference points:

According to this [postmodern] view grand narratives have been replaced by local situations and language games; postmodern intellectuals now prize competence, not universal values like truth or freedom. I have always thought that Lyotard and his followers are admitting their own lazy incapacities, perhaps even indifference, rather than a correct assessment of what remains for the intellectual a truly vast array of opportunities despite postmodernism.13

This, Said infers, is because of the fact that governments across the globe still oppress their people; there are grave miscarriages of justice virtually in every part of the world; and, most of all, there is rampant co-optation of intellectuals by governments, multinational agencies and centres of power throughout the world. The ambivalence of postmodernism cannot effectively cope with these very basic problematics of the public role of the intellectual, one who directly addresses the problem of a people willingly and in public.
I shall discuss these aspects of Said’s work in the chapters that follow. For the purpose of my thesis I have taken the role of the intellectual to mean the very political nature of his/her involvement with the world around. Therefore I shall rarely use the word ‘intellectual’ in the Gramscian sense, to mean the scientist, or the artist, or even the theorist involved in his/her objective pursuit of knowledge. The intellectual for me is essentially a political being, one who tries to uncover representational anxieties, and talks about the ontological and the political in the same breath. In this I tend to agree with the American sociologist C. Wright Mills when he writes:

…it is in politics that intellectual solidarity and effort must be centred. If the thinker does not relate himself to the value of truth in political struggle, he cannot responsibly cope with the whole of live experience.14

I shall ignore the humanist assumption embedded in the word ‘truth’ for the time being and come back to it at a more opportune moment. I agree with the basic thrust of the argument about the political role of the intellectual. And I do not completely agree with Said’s scepticism about the postmodern intellectual’s commitment to the idea of justice. In his arbitrary and contingent manner the postmodern intellectual also aptly addresses the problems of representation and location, and hence I include him in all eagerness within the ambit of the political role of the intellectual.
The Study of History and the Problem of Representation

One of the chief debates concerning the problem of representation has revolved around the development of certain academic disciplines, and the varied ways in which they have operated discursively to marginalize certain groups, or peoples, or voices. The most talked about discipline in this context has been that of history. The debate about historiographical elisions has raged throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, and intellectuals around the world have actively participated in this.

As a preamble to the multiple connotations of location and representation it might thus be useful to look at the study of the growth and development of the discipline of history. With the deflation of the concept of a universal Truth, historical thought has opened itself up to multiplicities, sets of perspectives within which are quantized centres of power—each fighting for hegemonic space and hence canonization. History thus becomes a conglomerate of knowledges that are tentative, and constructed by historians working under all kinds of presuppositions and pressures. The interpretation of ‘truth’ thus becomes inevitably contingent to the dynamics of discursive authority, and hence becomes an open-ended text riding on the whims of myriad centres of power. As Keith Jenkins notes:
…history remains inevitably a personal construct, a manifestation of the historian’s perspective as a ‘narrator’. Unlike direct memory (itself suspect) history relies on someone else’s eyes and voice; we see through an interpreter who stands between past events and our readings of them…the historian’s viewpoint and predilections still shape the choice of historical materials, and our own personal constructs determine what we make of them.15

The American historian Peter Novick discovers in this mad rush for domination an ultimate loss of all sense of historicity. From the point of view of the modernist historian he comments on how from such a dialogic world of conflicting interests historiographic enterprise had gradually evolved into a quagmire of competing claims and counter-claims, all of them wearing down any semblance of agreement by historians as to what objectivity could be, or whether at all such objectivity was achievable. Novick writes:

…as a broad community of discourse, as a community of scholars united by common aims, common standards, and common purposes, the discipline of history had ceased to exist…The professor [of history] was as described in the last verse of the Book of Judges: In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.16
The veiled sarcasm is obvious. Novick refuses to problematize the question of authenticity of the historical document down to the last figleaf. What he is also doing is to completely evade the problematic thrown up by postmodernism about the different and the differential versions of history that are possible. In this context it would be very topical to take a somewhat detailed look at the way the historian Paul Ricoeur problematized the discipline of history in the year 1965, much before postmodernism had really become an abiding fashion in the academia.

**History and Theology: Paul Ricoeur and The Logic of Singularity**

Paul Ricoeur, in his book *History and Truth*, talks about the process of pluralization of human existence and experience, and the possibilities of innumerable counterpoints that are present within the scope of social habitation. However, he regrets the lack of problematization in the study of history:

> And yet we are not dedicated to unity. Our wish is that truth be in the singular, not merely in its formal definition but also in the works of truth. We would like for there to be a total meaning which would be as the meaningful form totalizing all our cultural activity.\(^{17}\)

The search for unity and reason makes it imperative that the exigency for a single truth enters into history. Ricoeur sees this search for a singular truth to be
immediately affected with a mark of violence. A singular version of history is marked by a phenomenon of authority. Unlike the postmodernists, however, Ricoeur does not immediately attack the conception of authority as a vicious principle; he rather sees it as an indispensable function within the development of sociological thought:

Authority is not culpable in itself. But yet it is the occasion of the passions of power. It is by means of the passions of power that certain men exercise a unifying function. In this way, violence feigns the highest goal of reason and the most persistent expectation of feeling.¹⁸

The first historical manifestation of this violent unification of the truth, Ricoeur sees, in the authority exercised by theology. A character of authority is always/already present in the foundations of theology. It is a fundamental aspect of the Revelation and the truth which the believer confesses. The implicit presence of God’s will is a fundamental phenomenon of authority in the religious sphere. This religious authority is treacherous for it believes itself to be serving the truth. Formations of power are thus automatically sutured into the very function of the clergy, and the unitary nature of truth consolidates the authenticity of such a clerical authority. Understandably, this ecclesiastical authority is inevitably marked by violence.
At the end of the triumph of the Renaissance, the stage was set for the transition of the societal order from clerical violence to political violence. Power and authority being the two major signposts of order and rule, the function of the State now was to discover a replacement for the ecclesiastical authority of God with some kind of political authority. What was imperative was the creation of a unitary formation of power that could be discursively upheld as the authority of a singular truth. Ricoeur writes:

The Church exercised it [power] by means of a doctrine, a doctrine having authority: theology. From the point of view of a sociology of knowledge, this mediating function between the power of the state and the different levels of human research has been adhered to by the philosophy of history for the past century.19

In order that history may emerge as a replacement for the authority of the Church it becomes necessary for the discipline of history to search for a unity of meanings. The historian of the State intends the emergence of a single truth that will cancel out all contradictions and culminate in a higher synthesis. Obviously, it is here that violence enters the discipline of history. The role of history within a political synthesis thus becomes identical to the role of theology within a clerical synthesis.
Ricoeur discovers a violence in the entire project of the writing of history. Given the dialectical structure of Marxist historiography it could have been possible for it to provide a rational politics which was capable of encompassing both the interests of the proletarians and of the coloured people, and of formulating a long-range world politics. Ricoeur finds the case of Marxism to be ‘uncommonly complex for in many respects, it is the philosophy of history par excellence’. He sees in Marxism’s universalism a founding of the history of the proletarian class. The basic pattern of the development of Marxist historiography was to establish the universal and concrete reality that, though the proletarian class was oppressed, it would constitute the unity of history in the future. Thus the emergence of any philosophy of history in post-enlightenment times was linked to questions of power and a monopoly of orthodoxy.

Thus, in the sixties of the last century, historians like Paul Ricoeur were trying to problematize the writing of history. History was heterogeneous, many, hydra-headed. No one version of history could ideally be privileged over any other. Ricoeur writes:

The history which we write, retrospective history (die Historie) is made possible by the history which is made (die Geschichte). If there are several possible interpretations of history, perhaps it is because there are several entangled movements of “historization”, if I may use the expression…We carry on several histories simultaneously, in times whose periods, crises,
and pauses do not coincide. We enchain, abandon, and resume several histories, much as a chess player who plays several games at once, renewing now with one, now with another.\textsuperscript{21}

Thus, Ricoeur was anticipating the movement of historiography into a postmodern problematization, something I am going to talk about in much detail in the later chapters. The idea of an integral history is a limiting idea. The dialectic of history is basically laid out in longitudinal fibres and latitudinal strands that form a complex network much beyond a simple logic of humanist interpretation. An attempt to look at history, therefore, is to look beyond the unity of the orders of truth. Unity, truth and power are fast friends, and critiquing each one of these formations becomes the central problematic of a theory of representation.

**Beyond Singularity: The Breaking Up of History**

The movement beyond singularity problematized by Paul Ricoeur was taken up with a lot of enthusiasm by the later practitioners of historiography. The discipline of history—both practice and theory—was opened up in the later years of the last century into a complex heterogeneity, which addressed the problem of representation from newer and more complex perspectives. There were obvious objectives and advantages of such enterprise. Once attempts at theorizing historiography were initiated, the puritan homogeneity of a canonical discipline
was immediately unsettled. Not only were there significant changes in the conventional patterns of studying history, but theories of the subaltern and the marginal cropped up as consistent attempts to undercut the implicit domination of Western epistemology and ontology. The New Historicist search for co-texts rather than contexts was symptomatic of a magnification of the historiographic enterprise, to analyse history as text, to undercut the difference between history and fiction.

The meteoric rise of postmodernism marked this rupture in Western epistemological thought with a finality. Postmodernism came to signify the awareness of European culture, that it was no longer the unquestioned and dominant centre of the world. Derrida’s theory of deconstruction involved the decentralisation and decolonisation of European thought. He tried to resist, through his writings ‘a certain fundamental Europeanization of world culture’. What culminated in the writings of Derrida or Foucault was perhaps initiated by Arnold Toynbee, who used the term ‘postmodern’ for the first time. In *A Study of History* Toynbee talks about how from the 1870s onwards Western historiography was beginning to come to terms with its loss of supremacy and an acceptance of cultural globalization accompanied by a re-empowerment of the non-Western states. Although, Toynbee did not assume that the West was in decline, he realised that history had created ‘a distorting egocentric illusion to which the children of a Western Civilisation had succumbed like the children of all other known civilisations and known primitive societies’. Thus, the
conception of postmodernism is accompanied by a certain self-consciousness about a culture’s own historical relativity which leads to the loss of the sense of an absoluteness of any Western account of history.

The Decentering of History

This interesting attempt at relativization of historical thought has significantly enriched the discipline of history. The sudden breakdown of Western discursivity has created multiple centres of power which continuously debate the possibilities of interpretation, and become cultural policemen that try to undercut forms of hegemony. The exhilarating heterogeneity into which the discipline of history has been broken up has led to contingent clashes between civilisations and arbitrary aporetic formations that question the disciplines of knowledge and power.

It is interesting to note in passing that such opening up of history towards theory was consistently opposed by the closed dialectic structure of Marxism itself. The Existential Marxist humanism of Jean-Paul Sartre attempted a totalizing of the concept of ‘history’ as an objective discipline out of the dialectical structure of theoretical Marxism. The primacy of history above all else was asserted within a Marxist discourse, together with an accompanying defence of humanism, primarily under the influence of a Marxism of a Sartrean existentialist form. Sartre argued a return-to-history format when he insisted that ‘both sociology and economism must be dissolved in History’.25
The Stalinist regime subverted these theoretical concepts and initiated the rise of post-Marxist philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault or Jean-Francois Lyotard. These historians, writes Robert Young, ‘rejected not the dialectic as such, nor history, but the closed dialectic as an autonomous principle that was supposed to produce the grand narrative of History…Instead, Merleau-Ponty proposed an open dialectic which would concede Marxism’s equivocalness, and give up the claim to the dialectical logic of History as a process of objective truth’.

Such post-Marxist attempts were developed later on by Louis Althusser. In his treatment of history Althusser has systematically and consistently tried to undercut the continuous and homogeneous spatio-temporality of both the Hegelian and the Sartrean conceptions of history. He finds in history a certain type of complexity, the unity of a structured whole that contains instances which are distinct and relatively autonomous. These autonomous and distinct pockets of history coexist within a complex structural unity of the discipline of history. This unity is contingent and ruptured, and is not to be confused with the autonomous, self-contained, discursive unity that Ricoeur talks about. Each mode of production of history in the Althusserian schema is made up of differentiated histories. These differentiated histories form a specific historical totality, for each history operates within the general totality of the mode of production. Consequently, many totalities are created, differential and contingent, and none of them has a necessary discursive transcendence that makes it superior to the others. The
decentred nature of historicity that Althusser talks about is dislocated, uneven and without a single ideological base time. The presence of one history presupposes the absence of another, and the simultaneous coexistence of the ‘presence’ along with the corresponding absences creates the effect of decentricity. Althusser was thus anticipating the logic of postmodernism as he basically argued that there can be no history in general, only specific structures of historicity. Robert Young writes:

Althusser…suggests that history can only be thought through as a permanent contradiction: it is a totality, but that totality is a decentred structure in dominance in which each history’s history is defined not through its identity with, or difference from, a general history but by being differentiated from every other history, on which it is necessarily also therefore dependent, in a kind of negative totalization…Another way of putting this would be to say that Althusser demonstrated that according to the protocols of conventional logic, history is impossible.27

Thus, the discipline of history was already split into many discursive centres, even before the ideas of postmodernism had properly set in. The location of Third-World intellectuals in the First World is thus a many layered problematic that is underscored by the problem of history. The works of all the three intellectuals I write about in my thesis—Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha—share alike a distrust of simple historicisms. The scepticism towards
Historicist grand narratives lead to a rejection of these, in favour of a multiplicity of heterogeneous, conflicting and incommensurable histories. The postcolonial conception of history that is evident in the works of these three (particularly, Spivak and Bhabha) matches Althusser’s concept of history as explicated by Derrida:

Althusser’s entire, and necessary, critique of the ‘Hegelian’ concept of history and of the notion of an expressive totality, etc., aims at showing that there is not one single history, a general history, but rather histories different in their type, rhythm, mode of inscription—intervallic, differentiated histories. I have always subscribed to this.28

The Problem of ‘Location’

The location of the intellectual within any such dynamic of the creation or dispersal of knowledge and historicity is thus inevitably and automatically qualified. Locations on the basis of political preference ramify into cultural and geographical locations that give birth to a multi-layered frame of reference, replete with ideological and often reflexive significance. The concepts of ‘positionality’ or ‘representation’ are themselves problematic and need inevitable qualifications. Let us say, for example, the Third-World intellectual in the First World, or the black American woman trying to be heard in the circuit of sophisticated First-World academia: these are complex positions to negotiate in a
world where equations of power (political, geographical, cultural etc.) are differentially related to each other and challenge ideological formations continuously by resorting to a postmodern logic of epistemological fragility. Each one of the qualifications used in my examples above, namely, ‘Third World’, ‘intellectual’, ‘First World’, ‘black’, ‘American’, ‘woman’ has its own set of representational signposts which challenges its differential/s.

There are obvious problems of such representational signposts though. Such complex qualifications of being or belonging automatically negate the independence of the intellectual. He/she becomes enmeshed in this web of representational metaphors that are continuously trying to locate him/her within particular schools of thought or modes of historicity. In other words we might even assert that until and unless we have located the intellectual safely within a tidy and manageable historical frame we are not comfortable with his/her presence. Our conception of knowledge has become myopic in the sense that, the relative independence of an intellectual causes discomfiture and a consequent failure to understand his/her work. Teaming up becomes essential for the intellectual to be heard, and once the intellectual is successful in locating himself/herself within a particular coterie, we appropriate his/her work to search for sensational ripples within it. Location thus remains a problem for the intellectual, no matter how differentially he/she tries to pinpoint his/her co-ordinates. This is why, perhaps, such umbrella terms as the Third-World intellectual and the First-World intellectual have to be used, no matter how
diverse or different that the intellectuals we are talking about are. Thus, in spite of
the perfect awareness of the differences between the works and the points of view
of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha—I have had to club them
together under the sub-heading of Third-World intellectuals. Let me try, in the
next few pages, to problematize this part of the debate.

**The Third World and History**

The idea of location is closely linked to the central thematic of my thesis. I talk
about the Third-World intellectual in the First World, and the three intellectuals I
deal with are deeply enmeshed with the problem of location and representation.
Each one of these ideas of location and representation is linked to the problem of
history or the evolution of historiography—and hence there is a need to map the
general trajectory of the development of the discipline of history in the Third
World. It would not be an overstatement to suggest that the politics of
representation is directly and explicitly influenced by the notion of history and the
development of historiography in a particular tradition. Since two of the
intellectuals I am talking about in my thesis (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and
Homi Bhabha) are Indians, and the other (Edward Said) has sporadically shown a
keen interest in the development of Indian historiography, I would take up the
development of the discipline of history in India as a case in point.
To start off, it is better to clarify that the study of history in India has taken a very different turn from the early eighties of the last century. It will not be an overstatement to suggest that in the wake of the Subaltern School of historians there has been almost a kind of paradigm shift in the development of historiography in India. We can emphatically say today that Indian history has been successfully problematized, and recent attempts at reconstruction of a better theorized historiography have been more or less successful. That this has been possible is not only due to the interventionist attempts of the historians of the Subaltern School, but also because of postmodern theoretical interventions of the likes of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Gyanendra Pandey, Gyan Prakash and certain others. I shall discuss these attempts at theorizations of contemporary Indian historiography in greater detail in the final chapter of my thesis. As of now, I would like to concentrate on the practice of post-colonial historiography in India.

**Whose History is India Writing?**

In one of his essays, the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty makes a very incisive remark about the practice of history writing in post-colonial India. He writes:
…in so far as the academic discourse of history—that is, ‘history’ as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university—is concerned, ‘Europe’ remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ‘Indian’, ‘Chinese’, ‘Kenyan’, and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called ‘the history of Europe’. In this sense, ‘Indian’ history itself is in a position of subalternity; one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history.31

That is to say, that the master narrative of Indian history has always been qualified by a pervasive Eurocentrism, and the Indian historians have a ‘hyperreal’ Europe in their imagination to which they incessantly and automatically go back for ideological and structural reinforcements.32

The development of the discipline of history in post-colonial India, be it nationalist or Marxist, has minutely followed the set paradigms of Western modernity. The liberal-humanist mode of writing history has generally followed a narrative of transition, and most Third-World histories have been written in accordance with the transition narrative followed in the West. Sumit Sarkar, the Marxist historian for example, traces the development of Indian historiography within a pattern of three absences:
So many of the aspirations aroused in the course of the national struggle remained unfulfilled—the Gandhian dream of the peasant coming into his own in *Ram-rajya*, as much as the left ideals of social revolution. And as the history of independent India and Pakistan (and Bangladesh) was repeatedly to reveal, even the problems of a complete bourgeois transformation and successful capitalist development were not fully solved by the transfer of power of 1947.\textsuperscript{33}

Sarkar also sees the trajectory of the development of modern Indian history as a transition that remains ‘grievously incomplete’. In *Modern India* he writes:

> The sixty years or so that lie between the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and the achievement of independence in August 1947 witnessed perhaps the greatest transition in our country’s long history. A transition, however, which in many ways remains grievously incomplete, and it is with this central ambiguity that it seems most convenient to begin our survey.\textsuperscript{34}

That is to say, the pattern of historical thinking in India has generally followed a model laid down by colonial modernity. And within this narrative that vacillated between the imperialist, the nationalist, and the Marxist imaginations, the ‘Indian’ always remained a figure of lack or failure. Dipesh Chakrabarty finds a ‘double bind’ in the articulation of the subject of ‘Indian’ history:
On the one hand, it is both the subject and the object of modernity, because it stands for an assumed unity called the ‘Indian people’ that is always split into two—a modernizing elite and a yet-to-be-modernized peasantry. As such a split subject, however, it speaks from within a metanarrative that celebrates the nation state; and of this metanarrative the theoretical subject can only be a hyperreal ‘Europe’, a ‘Europe’ constructed by the tales that both imperialism and nationalism have told the colonized.35

Thus, the reconciliation between class identities on the one hand, and a ‘European’ notion of a unified nation-state on the other remains perpetually irresolute and hanging in the balance. The notion of ‘India’, therefore, remained in the hand of her historians a half-formed narrative, in perpetual transition, which was modelled on what Chakrabarty calls a ‘hyperreal Europe’, yet never reaching a shapely fruition. This is why, Sumit Sarkar, in spite of discovering at least three possible narrative trajectories that Indian historiography might have followed, ultimately concludes that the project of writing ‘India’ has remained ‘grievously incomplete’.

However, in spite of this realization about the apparent lack of completeness inherent in the ideological formation of India, there was no immediate way out. The arbitrary and contingent formations of postmodernism
had not yet made their way into the very conservative nature of the growth of Indian historiography. India was still in search of a selfhood that could go beyond the categorical binaries of the West and the non-West, the white and the non-white, and other such tropes which had strong foundations within the very ideas of colonization and imperialism. The inchoate ambiguity of a postmodern ethic was too much to ask for, even in the 1980s, from the practitioners of Indian history. What could however be expected was the refusal on the part of the indigenous historiographers to play the game of binaries that was only helping the re-establishment of a post-independence hegemony.

**Searching for a Self-Image : Decolonizing Indian History**

Ashis Nandy, for example, tries to formulate an Indian self-image that would go beyond an essential Western construction. What the discursive impact of colonialism had successfully done was not only to ingrain the idea of the nation-state as the only possible movement towards modernity for India, but also create ethnic stereotypes who would sustain the legacy of colonialism within the construction of their history. That is to say, not only was the creation of stereotypes true in terms of the conception of the general mass of Indian people, it also held good for thinkers and intellectuals, who would write nationalist, or Marxist, or ethnicist histories about India and her people. Nandy does not hide his exasperation when he talks about this:
India is not non-West; it is India. Outside the small section of Indians who were once exposed to the full thrust of colonialism and are now heirs to the colonial memory, the ordinary Indian has no reason to see himself as a counterplayer or an antithesis of the Western man. The imposed burden to be perfectly non-Western only constricts his, the everyday Indian’s, cultural self, just as the older burden of being perfectly Western once narrowed—and still sometimes narrows—his choices in the matter of his and his society’s future…The pressure to be the obverse of the West distorts the traditional priorities of the Indian’s total view of man and universe and destroys his culture’s unique gestalt. It in fact binds him even more irrevocably to the West.36

What Nandy wishes to achieve through this argument is to come out of the entire trap of modernity laid down by the West. He wants to concentrate solely on the predicament of India, the notional trope of being ‘Indian’ and writing the history of an India ‘which is neither pre-modern nor anti-modern but only non-modern’.37 This non-modern India, he says, can successfully survive the Western onslaught; it would co-exist with the India of the modernists who think they have imitated the best of the Western man, and turn out to be pathetic copies of the Sahib.38 But this non-modern India would summarily reject most versions of Indian nationalism ‘as bound irrevocably to the West—in reaction, jealousy, hatred, fear and counterphobia’.39
For the time being Nandy’s argument seemed to be the best option to move out of hegemonic formations of colonial modernity. To stand out of the idea of modernity was not only to reject the game of binaries that would perpetuate the trappings of power, but also throw up possibilities of moving towards the formation of an independent subjecthood that is neither Western nor Indian, but something in between. In some of his essays Homi Bhabha also toys with this idea of a contingent subjecthood, and I shall discuss these in detail in my chapter on Bhabha. There is an implicit paradox in Nandy’s argument, which does not remain unnoticed:

The absolute rejection of the West is also the rejection of the basic configuration of the Indian traditions; though, paradoxically, the acceptance of that configuration may involve a qualified rejection of the West.

He calls this ‘ethnic universalism’ of non-modern India. So, this idea of non-modern India not only rejects the pervasive Eurocentrism of Indian historical thinking, but also, in a way, does away with a traditional idea of ‘Indianness’ (which is also a construct based on false consciousness). Nandy is thus surreptitiously moving into the logic of postmodernism, by rejecting the possibility of any unilateral formation of subjecthood or political positionality.
In fact, we will see how, towards the end of his essay Dipesh Chakrabarty is also moving towards an argument that is not very different from Nandy’s. He argues that both European imperialism and Third-World nationalism have worked in collusion to promote the nation-state as the most desirable form of political economy. The discourses of both the disciplines of economics and history have celebrated the rise of the nation-state and a capitalist mode of production narrative:

Since these themes will always take us back to the universalist propositions of ‘modern’ (European) political philosophy—even the ‘practical’ science of economics that now seems ‘natural’ to our constructions of world systems is (theoretically) rooted in the ideas of ethics in eighteenth-century Europe—a third-world historian is condemned to knowing ‘Europe’ as the original home of the ‘modern’, whereas the ‘European’ historian does not share a comparable predicament with regard in the pasts of the majority of humankind.43

In the face of this Chakrabarty posits his project of ‘provincializing Europe’. It is not, he insists, a simplistic rejection of ‘modernity, liberal values, universals, science, reason, grand narratives, totalizing explanations, and so on’.44 But it is an interventionist project of writing history that is heterogeneous and plural and actively resists the coercive (sometimes) totalizations of the tropes of European modernity.
Dipesh Chakrabarty is categorical about how this project of provincializing Europe cannot be a project of ‘cultural relativism’. The idea of cultural relativism presupposes the centrality of European culture and consolidates the idea that reason, science, rationalism have their culture specific origins within European enlightenment. Chakrabarty’s project also sets out to prove that Europe’s acquisition of the adjective *modern* for itself not only consolidated the project of imperialism, but was, in its turn, helped on by Third-World nationalisms whose celebration of colonial modernity was undeniably self-reflexive. His critique of nationalism is interestingly complex:

I do not mean to overlook the anti-imperial moments in the careers of these nationalisms; I only underscore the point that the project of provincializing ‘Europe’ cannot be a nationalist, nativist, or atavistic project. In unravelling the necessary entanglements of history—a disciplined and institutionally regulated form of collective memory—with the grand narratives of ‘rights’, ‘citizenship’, the nation state, ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres, one cannot but problematize ‘India’ at the same time as one dismantles ‘Europe’.

Chakrabarty’s project is thus to problematize the project of European modernity along with those of nationalism that were collusive in the perpetuation of Western hegemonic formations. He tries to knit into the history of modernity
all those tropes that have been ignored in its steady march of progress—those of contradiction, ambivalence, coercion and irony. The victory of modernity, in other words, is not unilateral or homogeneous. It is replete with strategies of power and suppression and foundational violence. He writes:

…since Europe cannot after all be provincialized within the institutional site of the university whose knowledge protocols will always take us back to the terrain where all contours follow that of my hyperreal Europe—the project of provincializing Europe must realize within itself its own impossibility. It therefore looks to a history that embodies this politics of despair.47

Thus, in a way, Chakrabarty’s project chalks out the failure of history as a discipline. This failure, however, is not the end of history, but a movement towards more contingent disciplinary formations, where each would question the other, in a state of perpetual flux. Thus, though Chakrabarty does not intend to talk about ‘postmodernism’ in so many words, he already indicates the need for a post-‘modern’ historiography which would enable India to write its own history, overcoming the abiding presence of a hyperreal ‘Europe’. The question of space or location of the Third-World intellectual in the First World is thus intricately linked with the question of history. One of the primary tropes that he/she has to grapple with is this one of representation—and representation is linked intrinsically with the question of history or historiography. History and the formations of historiography thus remain one of the primary thrust areas in my
research into the location of the Third-World intellectual in the First-World academia. As I discuss the work of each one of the three intellectuals who I propose to examine in the course of my thesis I shall time and again bring up this question of history and its implications for the postcolonial intellectual.

**The Third-World Intellectual in the First-World Workplace**

The problem of representation and/or representability is something that the Third-world intellectual carries with him/her as a baggage when he/she enters the First-World academy. Questions about history, his/her colonial positionality, or strategic postcolonial manoeuvres are carried along with the intellectual to his/her new location. Placed within such a hybrid and ambivalent reference frame it becomes difficult for the Third-World intellectual to have a solid foundational base, in terms of a theoretical or historical discourse that would launch him/her suitably into an academia that is replete with multiple heavyweight centres of domination and discursivity. Thus the problem of location is multiplied when the native intellectual reaches the highly competitive (and sometimes even coercive) First-World academy that becomes his or her place of work. Readjustments are inevitable, as the intellectual needs to be able to conform (or at least not to blatantly contradict) to the various policy decisions that go into the making of a department. The politics of knowledge is closely attuned to the political economy, and formations of epistemic systems are more often than not dependant on interest
groups that might include corporations, the private sector, the economic practice of the state, and so forth.

The newly arrived intellectual from the Third World has to step inside with utmost care. It is his/her merit that has primarily been responsible for situating this person where he/she is. Merit, in most cases, breeds independence and it is his/her relative independence in terms of a politics or a subject position that must be uppermost in his/her mind, when he/she ventures into academic research. How does this Third-World intellectual now deal with the various silent coercive forces that might force him/her to submit to policy? It would be relevant to note at some length Aijaz Ahmad’s comment on this:

The liberal pluralistic self-image of the university can always be pressed to make room for diversity, multiculturalism, non-Europe; careers can arise out of such renegotiations of the cultural compact. But this same liberal university is usually, for the non-white students, a place of desolation, even panic; exclusions are sometimes blatant, more often only polite and silent, and the documents of one’s culture become little sickles to clear one’s way through spirals of refined prejudice…Out of these miseries arises a small academic elite which knows it will not return, joins the faculty of this or that metropolitan university, frequents the circuits of conferences and the university presses and develops often with the greatest degree of personal innocence and missionary zeal, quite considerable
stakes in over-valorizing what has already been designated as ‘Third World Literature’—and, when fashions change, reconciles this category even with poststructuralism.\textsuperscript{48}

Ahmad is literally opening up a debate with multiple angles. First, he talks of the ‘liberal, pluralistic self-image’ of the Western academy. Walking into the academy from a hybrid, ill-represented and under-nourished Third World, the native intellectual is initially deceived by such metropolitan pluralism and liberal-humanist approach of a healthy and nourished First-World academy. He sees this as the ideal atmosphere for research and theoretical learning and practice. All this is true until he or she steps unconsciously onto the slippery terrain of discursively determined policy decisions. In other words, if the work of this intellectual becomes too politically volatile for the comfort of the academy, Ahmad suggests, the university has means to cut the intellectual down to size. It could be in the form of a freezing of research grants, or a deprivation of due tenureship, which are ‘polite’ or ‘silent’ ways of qualifying his or her location; a more ‘blatant’ way is of course to directly ask the intellectual to leave. It is this situation that can be described as one of ‘desolation, even panic’. To be, that is, always at the receiving end of things.

Or, it could be the easier way out—the one that involves no militancy or protest, but a submission into the hands of the policy makers and their politics of qualifying the ‘Other’. The new entrant into the metropolitan academia allows it
to essentialize knowledges of the Third World, and use them strictly for purposes of ‘academic’ research. This serves a two-fold purpose: on the one hand, this consolidates the much advertised liberal and pluralist image of the First-World university; on the other hand, by limiting the strategic practices of the Third World within the confines of a university department, it limits their scope of becoming a large-scale political protest. The non-white student has to assimilate his theories within the current and existent patterns of academic pursuit to ease his entry into, what Ahmad calls the ‘circuits of conferences and university presses’. Thus, the purpose of the creation of a new and separate identity, a representative status which is not consumed by changing ‘fashions’, is defeated. The sense of security that accompanies the entry into the canonical zone of sophisticated theorizing is overwhelming. What had begun almost as a protest against suppression or trivializing of identity ends up in being lost through the process of assimilation within the same canon that was guilty of denying identity. In other words, as many suggest, the rustle of First-World currency lures the intellectual from the less privileged part of the world into dismissing his protest (sometimes even unwittingly) in exchange of security and a life of comfortable ease.\textsuperscript{49} The basic idea of the need for theory, mainly the declaration of a separate, rational, representative identity is thus defeated.

This politics of affiliation and/or disaffiliation complicates the position of the Third-World intellectual. Coercion and lure, consequently a huddling together in search of security, homogenizes the presence of these intellectuals in the First
World. What might thus be lost in the process is the fact that many of these intellectuals—like Said, or Spivak, or Achebe, or Bhabha—might be addressing very different constituencies, or are widely different in their theoretical stand points. The motives of Edward Said in his critique of Israel (and hence the United States) are very different, politically, from Spivak’s translations of Mahasweta Devi, which are again removed from Achebe’s vitriolic attack on the intentions of Joseph Conrad. The problem, however, was that in spite of realizing this constitutional heterogeneity they were not, at least in the initial years, successful in establishing their unique subject positions—the gap between the First and the Third World in terms of power being so obvious. With time, however, many of these intellectuals from the Third World emerged as strongly discursive presences within the First-World academia itself, and became, in their own right, forces to reckon with. I shall come to this discussion in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

**Forms of Displacement and the Location of the Intellectual**

The problem of representation is layered and contingent upon the different forms of displacement. By ‘displacement’ I mean to suggest a movement away from one’s ‘home’—a movement that is qualified by different historical or sociological factors. A movement away from home could be in the form of exile, or immigration, or expatriation, or a mass movement of the refugee. Each one of these movements is qualified by its own set of contingencies, and hence the kind
of representational anxiety is different for each of these sets of people. However there are times when they intertwine and overlap making representation a more complex issue to negotiate.

In one of his essays Edward Said clinically differentiates between these different types of movements.\textsuperscript{51} The exile is banished from his/her own country, generally as an individual, who lives in another country as an outsider. More often than not the exile is an intellectual who speaks truth to power and hence is driven out of his/her country. The forms of counter-discursivity that this person practises pose a threat to the discursive dominance of the power centre, and hence the government considers it safer to banish this individual from his/her home country. This banishment is a desolate movement away from the familiarity of one’s roots, and the exile jealously guards his or her individual identity and, in many cases, refuses to belong to the country where he or she is banished. Edward Said finds the location and the representation of the exile to be very complex:

\textit{Wilfulness, exaggeration, overstatement: these are characteristic styles of being an exile, methods for compelling the world to accept your vision—which you make more unacceptable because you are in fact unwilling to have it accepted. It is yours, after all. Composure and serenity are the last things associated with the work of exiles. Artists in exile are decidedly unpleasant, and their stubbornness insinuates itself into even their exalted works.} \textsuperscript{52}
I shall come back to this question of the exile and his locational dynamic a little later in this chapter. Another movement away from one’s home is that of the refugee. The refugees are a creation of the twentieth-century state. The word ‘refugee’ has embedded within it the conception of a ‘herd’—a large group of people uprooted from their homeland due to political exigencies—and hence, somewhere, the qualifiers of commonality underline the presence of the refugees. But they are distinctly different from the exile, who is a loner, a person of merit and importance, and in most cases an intellectual. The other sharp difference between the exile and the refugee, as Darko Suvin suggests, is in the manner of their departure from their respective homelands:

…in fact the conditions of forced displacement differ sharply between exiles—usually able to choose at least the day of departure and afford a ticket on a cross-border train, ship or plane—and refugees, often tens of thousands or indeed millions of people, uprooted by immediate fear of death and fleeing by whatever improvised means are available.53

The ideas of being and belonging are not uppermost in the minds of the refugees. The primary instinct is that of survival. Born out of this instinct of survival are attempts at physical resistance, a nervously guarded sense of racial and cultural identity (not in the sense of the individual’s identity politics, but in terms of collective cultural identity), an exaggerated feeling of ‘belonging’ to a group from
which the slightest deviation would be considered treachery and disloyalty. The location of the refugee could thus be conceived of in the Darwinian sense as an instinct for life and its basic needs for which the refugees huddle together.

Another movement out of the homeland is that of the expatriate. The expatriate voluntarily chooses to live in an alien country, usually for personal and social reasons. The condition of the expatriate is not one of forced migration, but a wilful movement for greener pastures. His condition is the least problematic in terms of inhabiting a physical space, or in terms of socio-economic anxiety. All the three intellectuals from the Third World who I discuss in detail in my thesis belong to this group—the expatriate. However, there are moments when Edward Said seems to inhabit a middle space between the exile and the expatriate due to his very active role in the Israel-Palestine conflict over the Gaza strip. The expatriates sometimes share the solitude and estrangement of the exile ‘but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions’.54

The only other movement is that of the émigré. The location and definition of the émigré is a little ambiguous because anyone who immigrates to a new country can be termed as an émigré. Of course the movement of the émigré is defined by the consideration of choice.
In the essay ‘Displaced Persons’ Darko Suvin makes a thought provoking distinction between two kinds of intellectuals—the critical intellectuals and the reproductive or distributive intellectuals. The latter are more like the Gramscian organic intellectuals:

...the engineers of material and human resources; admen and design professionals; the new bishops and cardinals of the media clerisy; most lawyers—in other words, the ‘organic’ mercenaries, for whom postmodern cynicism dispenses with the need for alibis. Most distributive intellectuals work to reproduce, at one level or another, the means of psychophysical repression. The critical intellectuals, those who produce new forms of consciousness and subconsciousness, are most likely to be alienated from today’s regimes, to feel themselves what used to be called ‘inner émigrés’ or undeclared exiles.55

Other than his marked distaste for postmodernism, what is clear from the above lines is Suvin’s obvious preference for the critical intellectual. This is the kind of intellectual that Thedore Adorno was, or Julien Benda preferred. The meaning of the word ‘exile’ thus seems to have multiple connotations in intellectual history. And no wonder, all these connotations are positive in a way such that the exile seems to be an exalted being. This is perhaps the reason why Edward Said very
consciously makes the domain of the exile and the expatriate overlap. Indeed there are at times marked similarities between the two and sometimes Said tries to replace the sustained pessimism of the exile with the optimism of the expatriate:

…I speak of exile not as a privilege, but as an alternative to the mass institutions that dominate modern life. Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you. But, provided that the exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound, there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity.56

Thus, unlike the expatriate, the condition of the exile is not a matter of choice. What the exile can choose, however, is to act like the expatriate—to explore the discursive possibilities of his subjectivity. Said had realized the one major difference in the conditions of these two groups: ‘Expatriates may share in the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions’.57 Said’s eagerness to overcome the differences between the exile and the expatriate is thus born out of his energetic activism, his realization of the potential of the expatriate. He was never an armchair intellectual, and he almost demanded of the exile the use of his superior intellect in active political interests. What he perhaps envisioned was a coalition of the exile and the expatriate, in terms of the Third World, so that the struggle for representation was better equipped. The urgency of the expatriate to succeed in alien surroundings could be
combined with the austerity and unconquerable will of the exile to create a new idiom of counter-discourse in a different country.

However, Edward Said’s eagerness to situate the exile and the expatriate on a level ground needs serious qualifications. No matter how similar their intellectual abilities or their geographical locations (away from ‘home’) might be, there is one major difference in their respective reference frames—the question of choice. It is in the light of the inability of the exiled intellectual to go home that Said’s statement about the expatriates sharing in the feelings of ‘solitude’ and ‘estrangement’ of the exile needs to be qualified. However much might the expatriate suffer from alienation and loneliness, the condition of his or her existence in a foreign land cannot be equated with the fateful situation of the exile. The expatriate’s loneliness and insecurity are always underlined by the precondition of choice. ‘Personal or social reasons’, qualifications used by Said himself, may be binding on the individual who makes the choice, but is not such a momentous occasion for history.58 It is rather surprising that Said uses the word ‘estrangement’ for the expatriate. It is too strong and poignant a term for someone who has willingly migrated to another country, mostly for better career opportunities, or a better lifestyle and can, if he or she so wishes, go back to his or her native country. A very immediate example could be the markedly different situations of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak—the expatriate Indian intellectual, and the Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen. While the former frequently visits her
hometown in Kolkata, India, the latter, exiled from her homeland, could not even visit her ailing mother in Bangladesh.

Another aspect that needs mention here is that Said is perhaps being too defensive in his empathy for the expatriate. He is generally talking of a selective constituency of Third-World expatriates in the First World, defined implicitly and unerringly, by the continuous fear of rejection and a consequent despondency. But expatriation might also happen the other way round, in which case, the symbiotic equation of the similarity between the exile and the expatriate is immediately defeated. Will a Mark Tully, for example, be defined by the same reference frames of solitude and estrangement? I daresay that many like Tully have always been showered with extra attention due to the immanent colonial hangover still prevalent in India. They are almost always surrounded by admirers, free to move about the corridors of power, free to migrate whenever they choose, to their respective home countries. Might their condition even remotely be compared with that of the exile, is a question we need to earnestly consider. Before I wind up this discussion on the condition of exile, I would like to digress a bit from the central argument about the location of the Third-World intellectual (the expatriate, to be more precise) in the First World. Comparisons and similarities between the respective conditions of the exile and the expatriate are perhaps inevitable. In my thesis I intend to discuss the expatriate intellectual in much detail. But before I go back to that discussion, I would like to talk about two examples of exile, in brief, to put the difference between the exile and the expatriate in perspective.
Two Cases in Point

I have already insisted how there must be a distinct locational difference between the exile and the expatriate in spite of the fact that they might inhabit the same geographical domain. The pervasive sense of censor and repression accompanies the body politic of the exiled. Surveillance is constant, whereby the subject-position of the exile is perpetually compromised. I would examine, albeit very briefly, the experience of exile of the Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen, and the Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti.

Case I: Taslima Nasreen

Taslima Nasreen had to leave her own country Bangladesh in 1994 after her writings infuriated the religious fundamentalists, who declared a death sentence on her. Since then she has been in exile for fourteen years. She was not even allowed to visit her country when her mother, with whom she felt a strong sense of attachment, was on her deathbed. She moved about various cities of Europe till she was given political asylum in Sweden—a country that eventually gave her citizenship. For an author who wrote only in her mother-tongue, Bengali, she suffered from a deep sense of rootlessness in far away Europe and frantically wanted to speak and express herself in her native language.
After a few years she decided to return to Kolkata, a city close to her country Bangladesh, and a place where she could speak in her own language. The years of her exile were made tolerable in this city till September 2007, when a movement was initiated in West Bengal by Islamic extremists demanding her expulsion from the city. The government felt pressurized and after frantic politicking Taslima was shunted off, first to Jaipur in Rajasthan, and then to the capital city, New Delhi. In the capital Taslima was secretly taken to a ‘safe-house’ and put under house-arrest. In a poignant poem, while in house-arrest she wrote:

Today for the one hundred and fiftieth day, the poet languishes in safe custody

For one hundred and fifty days the poet is unaware
If this earth yet hosts any creature with a human soul
For one hundred and fifty days the poet is unsure
If she is alive or dead.60

On 18th November, 2007, while still in house-arrest in New Delhi she wrote of her intense desire to be freed, to roam the streets of the city uninhibited, to be able to move about once again as someone free and devoid of censor:

My world is gradually shrinking. I, who once roamed the streets without a care in the world, am now shackled. Always outspoken, I am now silenced, unable to demonstrate, left without the means of protesting for what I hold dear… I spend my existence surrounded by walls: a prisoner.
But I refuse to acknowledge this as my destiny. I still believe that one day I will be able to resume the life I once enjoyed.61

Eventually In March 2008, Taslima decided to leave India and returned to Sweden, where she still is as I write these lines.

Case II: Mourid Barghouti

Mourid Barghouti, the Palestinian poet, was forced to leave his homeland in June 1967 when Ramallah, his hometown, fell to the Israeli army. By the time he had completed his education from Cairo University, he was already a much discussed and controversial poet. On the eve of the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat’s visit to Israel, he was refused entry into Palestine, and Egypt did not want to keep him.62 He was deported to Hungary, was allowed to live in Budapest, and could not come back to Egypt for almost seventeen years. During most of these seventeen years he had to remain separated from his wife, the Egyptian novelist Radwa Ashour, and their only son Tamim. It was only after the Oslo Accords that Barghouti was allowed to visit Palestine.63 His return to his ‘home’ in Deir Ghassanah, near Ramallah, after thirty long years, is the context of a poignant memoir that touches upon many chords of the life of an exile.64

Barghouti’s narrative is stark in its frankness, and the shock the reader might feel is necessarily qualified more by the author’s experience of exile, and a
sense of seething and despondent psychological anxiety at his rootlessness born out of an absence, rather than by the immediate physical consequence of a war between two nations and its political effects. The deliberate method of disruptive intervention through language is Barghouti’s way of avenging his personal cause at being thrown out of home by political exigencies that were beyond his control. He takes it out through his exaggerated disgust, and a language that is meant to annihilate all presumptions of a possible peace process initiated by the Oslo agreements. He speaks for his countrymen, but more overwhelmingly he speaks for himself—the assault on his individual autonomy as a Palestinian, and as an intellectual—and this is perhaps the reason behind his almost exaggerated intention of politicizing the subject position of the individual, the marginalized, the exile:

My own defect was that I find it too easy to retreat when I see something I do not like. I turn my back. The days have proved to me that it would have been better if I had put up with a little more and tried a lot more. I marginalized myself in order to put a distance between myself and the slightest hint of cultural or political despotism. The intellectual’s despotism is the same as the despotism of the politicians of both sides, the Authority and the opposition. The leadership of both share the same features. They stay in their positions forever, they are impatient with criticism, they prohibit questioning from any source, and they are
absolutely sure that they are always right, always creative, knowledgeable, pleasant, suitable, and deserving, as they are and where they are.\textsuperscript{65}

This is the anger of the exile that Said has written about. The anger of the person who is left with no choice, no autonomy of the self, bereft of even the companionship of friends and family. One of the most touching incidents of the memoir is where Barghouti touches upon his very private life, his relationship with his son. Politics as the semiotic, at the level of the private is frequently qualified by the one at the level of the personal or the realpolitical, and the exile can never escape the feeling of slipping away from the personal to the private, as he is increasingly torn away or segregated from the familiar registers that qualify meaning. Mourid Barghouti is exiled in Budapest, and his wife and son come to visit him from Egypt. The son does not know the father and thus the personal explodes as the private is born again in this moment of politics:

This boy—born by the Nile in Dr. Sharif Gohar’s Hospital in Cairo to an Egyptian mother and a Palestinian father carry in a Jordanian passport—saw nothing of Palestine except its complete absence and its complete story. When I was deported from Egypt he was five months old; when Radwa brought him with her to meet me in a furnished flat in Budapest he was thirteen months old and called me ‘Uncle.’ I laugh and try to correct him. “I’m not ‘Uncle’, Tamim, I’m ‘Daddy’.” He calls me “Uncle Daddy”.\textsuperscript{66}
In the sheer immensity of such incidents, the condition of the exile is markedly different from that of the expatriate. For the expatriate, the homeland might be an emotional link, a deep attachment, which might sometimes result in a sense of solitude and estrangement. But for the exile, the separation is part of a desperation to exist, to hang on the fringes of life or death, to stay alive for a cause that could die with him/her.

I thought it imperative to clarify this difference between the exile and the expatriate for a number of reasons. First, in the pages that follow I would be discussing the expatriate intellectual and not the exile. The presence of the exile as well as his or her writings is sporadic and contingent. In my thesis I plan to discuss the development of a theory of representation by the Third-World intellectual in the First. I daresay, the sporadic and highly charged contingency of the exile shall not hold good for my purpose. This is of course not to say that the body of work produced by the exile is less serious than the expatriate. On the contrary, there is a paramount historical value in the work of the exile that demands serious scholarship and abler hands than mine. Second, the work of the exile is generally of a very personal (and in many cases, private) nature, and cannot be considered to be representative of a cross-section. The expatriate intellectuals that I plan to deal with in the course of my thesis address a substantial constituency of people and their anxieties of location. Third, most of the work produced by exiles is literary—in the forms of stories, or novels, or poetry, or memoirs—and rarely do they venture into theoretical issues which are a
major concern in my thesis. The three Third-World intellectuals in the First World who I have taken up for discussion, namely Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha, have all made significant theoretical contribution to debates about postcoloniality, and the issues of resistance to the hegemonic formations of epistemic systems across the Western world. Even though confined sometimes to their respective academic worlds, they have contributed on a regular basis in the very public sphere of debates and discussions about representing the self, or in problematizing discursive historiography, or regarding questions of negotiating Third-World representation and representability. Fourth, in many discussions on issues of representation the constituencies of the exile and the expatriate are frequently mixed-up or confused. Although there might indeed be many points of contact and referential similarities between the exile and the expatriate, the terms or the people concerned cannot, on any account, be interchanged. In my thesis I talk about the expatriate intellectual.

**The Expatriate Third-World Intellectual and the Question of Honesty**

However much there is a difference between the exile and the expatriate in terms of their constitutional location, there are obvious points of contact. These points of contact are sometimes even abstract, linked to the very relativistic questions of honesty and integrity. The attempts to probe into the problems of representation or representability of the Third World are inevitably linked to a principle of honesty on the part of the intellectual. This is the intellectual who has migrated
from the Third to the First World, and is now comfortably ensconced in a position of considerable power and prestige within the Western academia. The question of honesty is linked with the problematic of representation. It lies in the extent to which the intellectual is willing to compromise his/her position of institutionalized power, if need be, in order that he/she might defend representational metaphors of the margin (the Third World in this case) against set principles of domination of the West.  

This brings us finally to the abiding problematic of placing the intellectual in context. Edward Said divides intellectuals into two groups—the ‘yea-sayers’ and the ‘nay-sayers’. The former always say ‘yes’ to the centre of power and kowtow to its orders, while the latter are ‘individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power and honors are concerned’. Here Edward Said is giving us another dimension of the exile, whereby it is easier for us (as well as for him) to relate the expatriate intellectual with the exile. The expatriate Third-World intellectual should, according to Said, assume the role of the nay-sayer. The nay-sayer suffers from a continuous sense of not-at-home-ness, a kind of psychological exile, where society and its structures of power try to unsettle him/her, as he/she finds himself/herself in a state of suspended ambivalence:

The pattern that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider is best exemplified by the condition of exile, that state of never being fully
adjusted, always feeling outside the chatty, familiar world inhabited by natives, so to speak, tending to avoid and even dislike the trappings of accommodation and national well-being. Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled and unsettling others.⁶⁹

Said talks about Theodor Adorno in this regard, who he considers to be the dominating intellectual conscience of the middle twentieth century. Adorno represents the intellectual as a permanent exile who is cryptic and mannered in his/her style of writing, and thus cannot be understood immediately. This lack of immediacy serves the intellectual in a two-fold manner: first, it shields him/her from immediate acclaim and thus from the vulnerability of being in public glare; second, he/she demands committed attention from his/her reading public in order that they might realize the import of his/her voice and be sincere in their efforts to understand what he/she tries to convey. Inevitably, such an intellectual is perpetually at odds with the sectors of power. Their recurrent ability to play the role of the parrhesiastes makes the power centre increasingly uncomfortable in their presence.⁷⁰

Set against this parrhesiastes or the nay-sayer is the yea-sayer—the organic intellectual I have talked about at the beginning of this chapter. All that is denied to the nay-sayer, in the form of state sponsored privileges and prizes and awards, is consistently showered upon the yea-sayer. He/she is the one who is
supposed to be the intellectual face of the government or the state. He/she becomes a strategic part of the system that determines policy. At his/her worst this yea-sayer becomes a salesman for state policy. He/she convinces people, writes essays, organises media support and gradually becomes enmeshed in a coercive corporate system. Almost Faustian, this intellectual barters his/her mind, his/her knowledge, his/her intellect for comfort and power, and most of all security. But Said finds in this sense of security a certain nervousness, a panic of the yea-saying intellectual 'constrained, by his or her affiliations with universities that pay salaries, political parties that demand loyalty to a party line, think tanks that while they offer freedom to do research perhaps more subtly compromise judgement and restrain the critical voice.' 71 Thus, although this organic intellectual might be vociferous in protesting against any compromise of human rights while speaking in general or about the fate of nations that have no immediate political bearing on his or her subject position, his/her silence is awkward yet eloquent when it comes to speaking about what should be his/her immediate concern.

My intention in the following chapters shall be to examine the role of the Third-World intellectual in the First World in the light of the above. If the Third-World intellectual decides to speak up against First-World policy he/she becomes twice removed, at least apparently, from the centre of power: once, as he/she belongs to or represents a less powerful part of the world, and is always/already vulnerable in his/her present location; second, by consistently opposing and unsettling the power centre, he or she cannot befriend the policy-makers, thereby
consolidating his or her present, privileged location. By thus refusing to become an organic intellectual he/she transcends the limits of expatriation and almost becomes an exile in the sense in which Adorno was one. Indeed it is difficult to consistently maintain such a position of unilateral opposition. The Third-World intellectual’s position of subalternity (although he/she might be located in the First World), the hybridity of his/her culture, or the anti-historical pattern of thought that is sometimes inherent within his or her nation’s cultural diagram makes this task of opposition or resistance all the more daunting for the Third-World intellectual. As a result, the intellectual has to wade through a very complicated mechanism of influence and counter-influence in order that he/she might take up the problem of representation and address it in the proper perspective. It is my intention, in the following chapters, to find out whether Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha have been successful in addressing this politics of representation.
1. Officially named the *Warsaw Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance*, the Warsaw Pact was an organization of Communist States in Central and Eastern Europe. It was established on 14\(^{th}\) May, 1955, in Warsaw, Poland, and official copies were made in German, Polish, Czech and Russian. This treaty was modelled on the NATO treaty, in that there was a political Consultative Committee, followed by a civilian secretary general, while down the chain of command there was a military commander-in-chief and a combined staff, although the similarities between the two international organizations ended there. This could be seen as the official declaration of the Second World (the Communist Bloc), creating the possibility of the Third World. For a detailed analysis of the implications of the Warsaw Pact see Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *A Cardboard Castle: An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005); William J. Lewis, *The Warsaw Pact: Arms, Doctrine and Strategy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982); Vaclav Havel, *To the Castle and Back* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

2. For an insightful analysis of the Cold War see John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).


10. Ibid., pp.9-10.

11. Ibid., p.13.


18. Ibid., p.176.
19. Ibid., p.183.
20. Ibid., p.183.
21. Ibid., p.186.

29. The first volume of Subaltern Studies was published in India in 1982. See Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982).


32. For Chakrabarty’s use of the term ‘hyperreal’ see, ibid., p.223.


34. Ibid., p.1.


37. Ibid., p.74.

38. I cannot resist the temptation to quote here a few lines from the autobiography of the controversial Bengali writer Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Thy Hand Great Anarch!: India, 1921-1952 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987). I presume he fits Nandy’s description of the Brown Sahib perfectly. This is a part of the description of Chaudhuri’s wedding night by the man himself. It remains a classic example of how cultural colonialism had a pervasive effect on the psyche of the colonized Indian:

I was terribly uneasy at the prospect of meeting as wife a girl who was a complete stranger to me, and when she was brought in… and left standing before me I had nothing to say. I saw only a very shy smile on her face, and timidly she came and sat by my side on the edge of the bed. I do not know how after that both of us drifted to the pillows, to lie down side by side. Then the first words were exchanged. She took up one of my arms, felt it and said: ‘You are so thin. I shall take good care of you.’ I did not thank her, and I do not remember that beyond noting the words I even felt touched. The horrible suspense about European music had reawakened in my mind, and I decided to make a clean breast of it at once and look the
sacrifice, if it was called for, straight in the face and begin romance on such terms as were offered to me. I asked her timidly after a while: ‘Have you listened to any European music?’ She shook her head to say ‘No.’ Nonetheless, I took another chance and this time asked: ‘Have you heard the name of an man called Beethoven?’ She nodded and signified ‘Yes.’ I was reassured, but not wholly satisfied. So I asked yet again: ‘Can you spell the name?’ She said slowly: ‘B,E,E,T,H,O,V,E,N.’ I felt very encouraged…and [we] dozed off. (pp.350-51).


41. Nandy, The Intimate Enemy, p.75.

42. Ibid., p.75.


44. Ibid., p.241.

45. Bhabha was also critical about the ideas of cultural relativism and cultural diversity, both of which he saw as strategies of consolidating a pervasive Eurocentrism. Instead he promulgated the idea of cultural difference in his writings. See Bhabha, ‘Articulating the Archaic: Cultural Difference and Colonial Nonsense’ and ‘DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation’ in The Location of Culture, pp.175-98 and pp.199-244.

47. Ibid., p.243.


52. Ibid., p.182.


57. Ibid., p.181.

58. Ibid., p.181.

59. Sir Mark Tully (born 24 October 1935 in Calcutta, India) was the Chief of Bureau, BBC, New Delhi for 22 years. Schooled in England, he stayed mostly in India covering all major incidents in South Asia during his tenure. He was made an Officer of The Order of the British Empire in 1985 and was awarded the Padma Shree in 1992, a rare exception for a non-Indian. He was knighted in the 2002 New Year Honours. In 2005 he received the Padma Bhushan.


62. On November 19, 1977, Anwar Sadat became the first Arab leader to officially visit Israel when he met with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and spoke before the Knesset in Jerusalem about his views on how to achieve a comprehensive peace to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which included
the full implementation of UN Resolutions 242 and 338. This was considered by the entire Arab world to be a serious blow to Arab nationalism.

63. The Oslo Accords, finalised on August 20, 1993, officially called the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or Declaration of Principles (DOP), was a milestone in Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was the first direct, face-to-face agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. It was the first time that the Palestinians publicly acknowledged Israel’s right to exist.


65. Ibid., pp.124-5.

66. Ibid., p.130.

67. I do not mean to say that the pre-condition of honesty should only be peculiar to the Third-World intellectual practising postcoloniality in the First World. Intellectuals should always necessarily be ‘honest’, although I am forced to use this abstraction with all the implications of its possible relativistic use and/or abuse. For a lengthy discussion on the idea of the honesty of the intellectual and his ability to speak truth to power see Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001).


69. Ibid., p.39.

70. For a detailed discussion on the role and function of the parrhesiastes see Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*. 