

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

DIMENSIONS OF EXILE: ON DISPLACEMENT,
ABSENCE, AND ALIENATION

by
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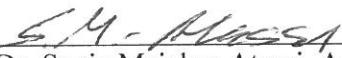
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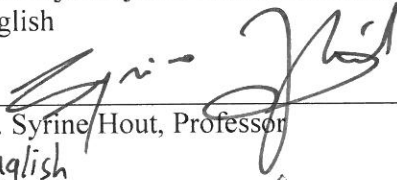
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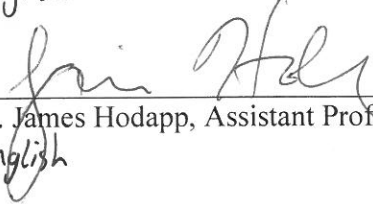
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Razan Mohammed Farhat for Master of Arts
Major: English Literature

Title: Dimensions of Exile: On Displacement, Absence, and Alienation

In this thesis, I study narratives by three exiles respectively living abroad, in the Arab world and inside the homeland—Palestine: Edward Said’s memoir *Out of Place* (2000), Jabra Ibrahim Jabra’s novel *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978), and Mourid Barghouti’s autobiographical essay, *I Saw Ramallah* (1997). I attempt to answer the following questions: How is the experience of exile depicted in the narratives for each intellectual in their unique place of exile? How is homecoming portrayed in the texts and what kind of relation does the exile have with his nation? How has exile left a mark on the texts in content and form?

Narratives on exile depict the experience as tragic and disorienting. They speak of a longing for homecoming that is fetishized to the extent that it is portrayed as the exile’s only dream. My aim is to break down this “single story” (term by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie). I argue that the tragic exile can still be enriching, and that homecoming does not necessarily provide solace. I explain that Said’s exile was not only the result of banishment from Palestine; rather, it was the outcome of a colonial rule, upbringing, and discrimination. Said felt out of place all his life, but he managed to secure a place for himself as a writer both back in Palestine and the world at large. Written in English, his memoir has been part of world literature from the beginning.

Jabra found a place for himself in a new country in the Arab world, Iraq, while maintaining his commitment to Palestine. He was less disoriented than Said and Barghouti because of his ability to find roots in Iraq. His literary work made him an influence in Palestine, the Arab world, and beyond. While firmly embedded in Palestinian and Arabic literature, his novel has circulated abroad in translation and became part of world literature.

Barghouti returned home to discover that homecoming can be as alienating as exile because he neither recognized his homeland, nor the people he had left behind. Nevertheless, his determination to return and bring his family back to his homeland remained strong. His narrative, although a part of world literature in its translation and circulation, speaks most closely to Palestinians.

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INTRODUCTION

Exile, displacement, and migration – the first meaning banishment from one’s home, the second a forced movement from one’s home, and the third a chosen movement from one’s home – are movements that were and still are responsible for shaping the lives of populations across the world. My study focuses on three Palestinian writers whose lives were significantly influenced by the experience of exile that they shared, and the dimensions of exile expressed in their literary writing: Edward Said (1935-2003), Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (1919-1994) and Mourid Barghouti (b. 1944). I focus on Said’s memoir, *Out of Place* (2000), Jabra’s novel, *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978), and Barghouti’s autobiographical account, *I saw Ramallah* (1997).

My aim is to question the following: How is each intellectual’s experience of exile depicted in the narratives in their unique place of exile? How is homecoming portrayed in the texts and what kind of relation does the exile have with his nation? How has exile left a mark on the texts in content and form? Exiles are said to be wanderers with dismantled identities while an exile’s attachment to his place of belonging inhibits him from seeing possible benefits of his wandering. The desire and need to return home—which become symbols to be cherished and idolized—allow them to grow intellectually while depriving him of stability. In the case of return, where the exile expects his home country to have remained the same, stability is not achieved, as in Barghouti’s *I Saw Ramallah*. Even if he does physically return, he remains “out of place.”

In “Reflections on Exile” (1984), Said says, “... the exile can make a fetish of exile, a practice that distances him or her from all connections and commitments” (183). Still, in

“Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals” (1993), while describing the life of intellectuals in exile Said says, “It is also very important to stress that that condition carries with it certain rewards and, yes, even privileges” (59). Given these two statements, I argue that exile does not simply dismantle identities but it also enriches the exile’s life, especially the exiled intellectual. I argue that the fetishized idea of return can be turned into a force that pushes the exiled intellectual to be more involved in the quest of return instead of it being the reason for never settling down. Homecoming is not possible because return does not provide the peace that the exiled thrives for; instead, it is the ability to find a place or a calling for himself in the world that can help ease the exile’s disillusionment.

My choice to study these three texts, in particular, comes from the distinctive location of their authors, which is also projected into the texts; Said outside the Arab world, Jabra within the Arab world, and Barghouti inside Palestine. This distinction shows the stages of the exile’s return journey. More importantly, the movement from abroad (the West) closer to the Arab world and back into Palestine allows for a study of the notions of identity and the exile’s relationship to the nation from the viewpoint of the exile abroad, the exile in the Arab world, and the exile within Palestine. My contribution to the topic of Palestinian exile is that I offer a comparative perspective on exile by examining three different dimensions of exile as experienced and written about by different intellectuals. Thus, I not only contribute to literary study but also to Palestinian intellectual history.

A. Palestinian Writers: The Exiled Intellectuals

Said’s memoir, *Out of Place*, written in English, reflects the state of feeling exiled due to an upbringing and a life under colonial rule instead of being the result of detachment

from the homeland only. He scarcely mentions his place of origin – Palestine – but gives much insight on the experience of wandering. This is because Said focuses in the memoir on the early years of his life when he was little concerned with Palestine which after 1967 changes to a concrete commitment to the Palestinian cause. Jabra and Barghouti offer a better view on the meaning of a national affiliation and clearly express their desire to return.

In Jabra's novel, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, the protagonist's eagerness to return radiates from the words of the novel. It was first written in 1978 then translated and published in 2000 into English by Roger Allen and Adnan Haydar. As mentioned above, the protagonist, as well as author, are placed in Iraq, i.e. the Arab world, but not the homeland. Unlike Said who cannot find a home in any place including Palestine, Jabra's protagonist is capable of appreciating his new home in Iraq, probably because of his place in the Arab world, while maintaining a connection to his original home, Palestine.

The fate of Jabra's protagonist remains open and it is unclear whether he returns to Palestine, whereas Barghouti's 1997 autobiographical narrative offers a view from inside Palestine when he returns after thirty years in exile. *I saw Ramallah* was translated into Arabic by Ahdaf Soueif, herself a renowned author, and published with a foreword by Said in 2000. Through it, we see that Barghouti is unable to recognize his home, Dar Ra'd – the place he thought he knew - upon his return. Being Palestinian, like those inside Palestine, does not necessarily mean an understanding of the nation's situation nor an awareness of the changes taking place within it. Confronted with questions of identity, he writes:

“Are you you? Am I me?/ Does the stranger return to where he was?/ Is he himself returning to a place?” (55)

His book exposes the reader to the reality of return and explores the feeling of uncertainty about one’s belonging. These notions are made manifest when Barghouti is unable to recognize his home and by extension himself. His desire to return, and success at it thereof, shocks Barghouti by revealing to him that his home is not the same place he left, and he might just be a stranger in it.

The three texts shed light on the notions of the self and the place of belonging. Together they allow me to explore three different perspectives on identity and place: (1) in Said’s memoir the exile remains in exile, (2) in Jabra’s novel the exile’s fate is left open as the protagonist, Walid Masoud, disappears in the no man’s land of a border crossing, and (3) in Barghouti’s autobiographical account the exile returns “home”.

They also offer insights on how the authors are questioning their identities (whether they are who they are), as well as the meaning of and their relation to the homeland. This is evident in Said’s emphasis on being “out of place” no matter where the exile turns, to what used to be his homeland or to what has or should have become his new homeland. Additionally, he relates to three different selves, his parents’ Edward, the American Ed and what he sees himself as. In Jabra’s novel, the protagonist is known under different names and is introduced as an absent hero, having disappeared at a border crossing, which puts into question his very identity, existence and the reality/fiction of his return. In Barghouti’s narrative, his inability to recognize Dar Ra’d leads to questions not only about his belonging to his homeland, Palestine, but also about the place’s very identity.

The texts range from memoir to novel and autobiography – literary genres that are closely interrelated. Abbas El-Zein, in his lecture on the meaning of autobiography vs. memoir, “Interpreting Oneself: On Memoirs, Essays, Fiction and Travel Writing” (2009), says:

If autobiography is conceived of as a structured exploration of one's self and if the “self” is shaped in large parts by the bigger forces of culture and history, the “memoir” opens up onto other genres and the integrity of the form can become threatened (1).

He explains how the memoir evokes the use of other genres by involving a literary construction of self-drama, only possible with the use of other characters, plots and themes thereby becoming similar to the novel because of the literary structures used (3).

Alternately, the “autobiographical essay” means that the author is allowed to freely construct a narrative about the self with no boundaries on where the words can take him nor if they would remain on the same topic (6).

While Said's and Barghouti's narratives are of personal experiences, Jabra's narrative is fictitious. The novel is, nonetheless, another form of literature well capable of representing a personal experience. In *Theory of the Novel* (1920), George Lukacs says that the novel is the form of “transcendental homelessness” and that “the hero of the novel, is the product of estrangement from the outside world” (66). The novel provides a ‘place’ to find one's essence and therefore feel complete (89). Jabra's novel shows strong autobiographical traits, and nicely exemplifies how the novel as a genre is taken from the reality of life as in the memoir. His estrangement can be felt within the form of the novel.

Jabra did write two autobiographies, one about his childhood in Palestine, the other about his adult life in Baghdad, but his novel *In Search of Walid Masoud* is more focused on the exile finding himself between these two poles.

Said, Jabra, and Barghouti might have had different experiences with exile, but they share the identity of intellectuals. As intellectuals who have often traveled and lived in different places, they have benefited from the different cultural contexts they lived in. Said says that intellectuals in exile “never [take] anything for granted” and learn “to make do in circumstances of shaky instability that would confound or terrify most people” (“Intellectual Exile” 59). Migration and travel left a mark on their work in the form of the usage of different languages, adding a variety of artistic styles, and more. Choice of language, for instance, comes as a result of travel, political implications, as well as preferences or ease of use. While many Francophone Lebanese writers consider that their choice to write in English does not influence their Lebanese identity (Syrine Hout 2012, 5), this matter is different for other writers, like Jabra and Barghouti who chose to write in Arabic. Although many writers have resolved to write in languages other than their original, this was not always the result of a colonial interference, rather, it was a matter of Western education (Hout 5). Said’s choice of writing in English – as he explains it – was influenced by his schooling and father, while Jabra moved from writing in English to Arabic to support and emphasize his Arab/Palestinian origin (Issa J. Boullata 2001). As for Barghouti, writing in Arabic has been his choice from the start and has never been called into question, although he has published some essays in English.

B. Palestinian Exiles: A Short Historical Note

The three intellectuals were deeply influenced by the 1948 *nakba*, which translates in English to ‘catastrophe’, “referring to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians that took place in the context of a United Nations’ plan to partition Palestine, armed conflict and the establishment of the state of Israel”, and the 1967 *naksa*, usually referred to in English as ‘the setback’ (BADIL 2-4). These events mark turning points in the lives of Arabs, especially Palestinians, whose lives have since changed drastically because of the direct correlation between these events and the loss of their homes. The *nakba* is the period extending from 1947 to 1949 that saw the displacement of around 750,000 Palestinians. It also marks the day the British mandate ended, leading to the establishment of the Israeli state. The mandate stated that parts of Palestine—formerly ruled by the Ottoman Empire—were to be ruled by the British until its people could stand on their own, but the Balfour declaration¹ of 1917 was bound to reveal the falsehood of the mandate. The declaration granted “recognition of and support for the idea of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine through immigration and colonization” (BADIL xvii). The mandate’s end started the chain of events leading to the Palestinian diaspora. An additional 400,000 to 450,000 Palestinians were displaced from the West Bank, including eastern Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip during the 1967 *naksa*, the Israeli-Arab six-day war and Israel’s occupation of these areas (BADIL 2-4).

¹ “One-page letter from Arthur Balfour from 1917, the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs to Lord Rothschild, head of the British Zionist Federation, granting” them rights to establish an Israeli state (BADIL xvii).

The Palestinian diaspora, which spreads across the world from the Arab countries to Europe, North America, and Australia, shows striking similarities with the Jewish diaspora, as Jabra writes, depriving its subjects of a place of belonging (“Palestinian Exile” 77) but at the same time inspiring them. Diaspora in the general sense, which means dispersion across different locations, tells of a people’s common interest in their origin, loyalty to that place, and an increased sense of commitment to those of a similar status (Gorman and Kasbarian 2015). Unlike the Iranian revolution of 1979 or the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990, which caused many in these countries to flee to different parts of the world, the Palestinian people lost citizenship when the British mandate ended.

Diaspora speaks of a longing for homecoming, which in the Palestinian case cannot be easily achieved given the Palestinians’ status as a people deprived the right to return. Although recognized by the United Nations (UN) as a nation in 1989, many Palestinians in the diaspora are still incapable of obtaining Palestinian passports as a document that confirms their nationality. Compared to Palestine, other diaspora populations are able to set foot on the land of origin, turning their new locations into locations of choice. Most Palestinians do not have this privilege. They are in exile, which in their case means being “banned from one’s place of origin” (Hout 8).

While diaspora tackles issues of cultural hybridity and identity, it is “less inclined towards suffering and longing” (Hout 8), which are more prominent in a discussion about exile. In this study, I concentrate on the Palestinian intellectual in exile and not on the larger diasporic community. My focus sheds light on one group of people, but it cannot be forgotten that eighty percent of the Palestinian population consists of refugees living in

historical Palestine's neighboring countries (Hammer 2005, 11). It is important to note that many Palestinians consider themselves refugees, including those who have established themselves in places that grant them civil rights or citizenships (Hammer 11). Nevertheless, I restrict the term refugees to the definition given by The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinians (UNRWA). They define Palestinian refugees as "persons whose normal residence was Palestine during the period from 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict and took refuge in one of the countries or areas where UNRWA provides relief, and their descendants through the male line" (BADIL xv & xviii). Unlike the intellectuals my study focuses on, in most cases, refugees live in extremely difficult conditions in refugee camps, unable to obtain formal documents of citizenship in the country of their current location.

C. Theoretical Framework

In my thesis, I consider the exiled intellectual a victim of the "single story" as explained by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her lecture, "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009). She argues that the "single story" is any story which focuses on one perspective/view of any given situation while presuming that this is the only reality. The story is controlled by power dynamics that force one story to become dominant over others. For the purposes of my thesis, I do not tackle the aspect of danger that comes with the "single story." The prevailing idea of exile romanticizes it and restricts it to the notions of longing and pain. This might be due to the circulation of works on exile written by Western intellectuals from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Said "Reflections on Exile" 174), which made the fetishized and romanticized notion of exile the most prevalent. It is a story

of dismantled identities and isolated beings. In our current era, media outlets show footage of refugees living in drastic conditions, making this story the more dominant and believable story. I am not denying the truth of it but I am pointing to the presence of another story. The Palestinian intellectual's exile should not be the "single story" of the desire to return home. The exile gives us many stories in one, lending him and his literature a richness that comes from the constant travels of the exile, as well as the travels of literary writing from place to place and from one language to another. This exile literature becomes an ideal of what world literature should be in content, form, and circulation as described by David Damrosch—as discussed further below.

I draw on Said's "Reflections on Exile" to give a picture of the sorrowful exile. I challenge it by shedding light on "[t]he achievements of exile [that] are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever" (173). Said explores the experience and the personality of the exile. His exile is haunted by a struggle against feelings of homelessness and loss. Feeling disconnected from his homeland makes him cling to it even more. After all, the nation-state is not simply about the land; to be denied return to the place of belonging is to be denied a culture, a language, and a feeling of solidarity with your people.

Colonialism did that exact thing; prohibiting and denying a national culture. Said himself was one of the key writers who contributed to colonial studies. Said, who also lived a life under colonial rule, will be studied from a post-colonial perspective using Frantz Fanon's "On National Culture" (1963). Fanon's article exposes the role of the intellectual in overcoming the aftermath of the colonial process on the people and their culture. He

states that the intellectual goes through different stages in his reaction to his culture which eventually enable him to become part of his nation and how he, in fact, needs to integrate the colonizer's culture into his and be able to live with both. He describes the process by saying:

In the first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. ... In the second phase, we find the native is disturbed; he decided to remember what he is. ... Finally in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native, will ... shake the people (258-259).

Said goes through these phases as he struggles with feelings of difference at a young age, and as he later finds his place in the national struggle. Said says, "There is no getting away from the fact that, as an idea, a memory, and as an often buried or invisible reality, Palestine and its people have simply not disappeared" ("Palestine has not Disappeared" 1998). At a point in his life, Said was indifferent to Palestine whom he thought of as a dream, but this dream changes to reality when he gets involved in the struggle for his people.

Jabra dreamed of a Palestinian/Arab unity that will save Palestine. This he states in "The Palestinian Exile as writer" (1979), in which he elaborates on the role of the intellectual in the struggle to overcome occupation and to lift the status of Arab nations. He also explains that there is more to the exile than his suffering. I will use this article to study Jabra's exiled protagonist and his role as an intellectual in helping the cause. I also rely on Said's "Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals" to show some differences between Said and Jabra as intellectuals in exile.

In studying Jabra's narrative, I will also use Homi Bhabha's conception of hybridity from his *Location of Culture* (1994). He considers the hybrid as someone who lies in an "interstitial place" between the culture of his home and the culture of the colonizer (4) or in this case, a new home. "This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (5). He asserts that we live in the age of hybrids with different ethnicities and backgrounds, and explains that people need to let go of the monolithic classification of people and cultures, this itself being another "single story". I will study Jabra as someone who lives in this interstitial space that allows him to have two homes.

Barghouti, however, has one home, Palestine, where he returns to after thirty years in exile. In *Palestinians Born in Exile: Diaspora and the Search for a Homeland* (2005), Hammer names people like Barghouti, who return after years in exile, 'returnees.' Barghouti will be studied as a 'returnee' who returns to Palestine. This person is not necessarily accepted or appreciated by the people inside Palestine because of his privileged position. He is a person who cannot relate to the people inside Palestine because he has not lived or experienced life under occupation.

This project considers Palestinian literature, unlike the Palestinian author, free from the restrictions of exile. To explain this, I will look at the texts from the point of view of what Damrosch termed world literature because they are texts that have circulated or have been born outside their home of origin. The texts themselves—authors and protagonists aside—also have complex identities. They belong (or not?) to Palestinian, Arab and world literature. *I Saw Ramallah* and *In Search of Walid Masoud* might be part of all these three

categories, while *Out of Place*'s position in Arabic literature is not clear because it is originally written in English. The foreign language in the case of Palestinian writers is an interesting aspect because what is foreign is not easily determined.

In "The World, the Text, and the Critic" (1983), Said writes that the text is "a significant form, in which ... worldliness, circumstantiality, and the text's status as an event having sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency, are considered as being incorporated in the text, an infrangible part of its capacity for conveying and producing meaning" (9). This tells us of the importance of considering the many elements that come with its creation, including its status—meaning the place it occupies in the world in which it is read. Books have the ability to reach more places than any human being.

The three books have been translated into different languages, allowing them to enter new worlds. The social life of books is made easier with translation. In *What is World Literature?* (2003), Damrosch explains that world literature is "a mode of circulation and of reading" that allows any text at a given time to become a part of world literature because of the many ways in which it can be read (5). Literature in translation allows a fresh look and understanding of the works because they are being read by different people, but the circulation in 'world literature' complicates their identification in a specific cultural context. The texts break out of their original place of belonging and since they do not have a concrete national affiliation, their categorization becomes more problematic. Still, these texts can be part of national literature because I consider Palestinians to be a nation with no identifiable home. This is the result of the Israeli occupation preventing them from returning to their homeland. The word "nation" will be used as a "spiritual principle"

(Ernest Renan) that brings together an “imagined political community” (Benedict Anderson) regardless of geography. Being homeless, nonetheless, does not deprive them of cultural belonging because the presence or absence of a homeland does not deny a people a culture.

Due to the colonial legacy, the *nakba*, and *naksa* questions of identity and national affiliations have come to the fore. Comparisons can be drawn to African identity; while fighting colonial rule, Africans forged a ‘Negro culture’ which encompasses the cultures of the whole Africa and is not restricted to nations separately to prove the existence of their culture before focusing on the culture of the homeland (Fanon 254-256). This comparison tells us about the importance of maintaining a cultural identity for any nation. Geography ceases to matter. Faced with the Israeli occupation, Palestinian writers have produced literary texts that render Palestine present as a nation. Their productivity and success in whatever field they pursue have allowed them to occupy a place in the world. In “Permission to Narrate” (1984), Said explains that the whole existence of Palestinians was being denied by Israel and the West (specifically the US). As a people, the presence of their narrative was being covered up (250, 252 & 253). As such, Palestinian literature reminds the world of their presence and becomes a form of resistance in itself. Exile can act as a motivation while exile literature is a way of resistance as well as a method to maintain and confirm the nation’s presence in the world.

In *Resistance Literature* (1987), Barbara Harlow defines resistance literature as “an arena of struggle” in which the authors can participate in the struggle inside the place of belonging via the world of the text (2). By introducing us to a number of exiled and

imprisoned poets, narrators, and freedom fighters, who write for and about their nation, Harlow allows us to see that resistance is an action that is shared by many across the world. She explains that the struggle is not limited to live combat; rather, it can be done using a ‘pen’ (which Jabra also says). In *Reading Across Modern Arabic Literature and Art* (2012), Sonja Mejcher-Atassi explains how the idea of pen and arms is borrowed from the Abbasid poet, al-Mutannabi, whose verse reads:

فالحيل و الليل و البيداء تعرفني و السيف و الرمح و القرطاس و القلم

(For the horseman knows me, and the night and the desert,
And the sword and the lance, and the paper and the pen.)²

The notion of fighting using arms and pen is an old practice that remains valid. The common experience and struggle, although different for each nation, is the same in essence; all these nations have or had the common goal of keeping their struggle for freedom alive.

Equally important is that the authors find a place for themselves in the struggle by writing for it. This idea is shared by Said, who tells us about the exile’s eagerness to be part of something to escape their isolation (“Reflections on Exile” 177), which is why they become writers or poets. By means of the word, they feel connected to the world. The questions of identity and belonging are at the heart of Said’s and Harlow’s writing, showing an interaction of exilic and resistance literature. Harlow’s description of resistance literature as an “arena of struggle” whose power is equal to the power of the fight on land says that

² Salma Khadra Jayyusi (ed.), *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, 16. (qtd. in Mejcher-Atassi 73)

the exile's place in resistance literature designates a place for him in the world. Ironically, the one place the exile belongs to in the real world is the realm of words, narratives, and books. In his poem, *I Belong There*, published in his collection, *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems* (2013), translated by Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché, Mahmoud Darwish mentions finding his home in words:

I have learned and dismantled all the words in order to draw from them a single word: *Home* (9).

The fictional world of words provides a space for the desired reality in the form of narratives of struggle derived from the reality of life to reflect hope for a better future. Nevertheless, this says that exiles have no real place. Despite them living on through their works, they might remain eternally 'out of place.' Where does the exile without a place/nation belong to? Can he rely on words only to live through and possibly overcome the exile that torments him? Location is depicted as an important part of the exile's life; after all, many are seeking to return to their original homeland. Therefore, I base my project on the location of the authors—abroad, within the Arab world, and in Palestine—to study how it affects their lives, as seen in their narratives, and reflects in their writing.

D. Chapter Outline

1. *Eternally Out of Place*

My first chapter will deal with the exile who does not return in Said's memoir, *Out of Place*. At the same time, he is the exile who finds solace neither in Palestine, nor in any other place. I will explore the notions of identity and the nation from a post-colonial perspective because both his family and he were influenced by life under colonial rule. I

attempt to show that Said's inability to belong anywhere is the result of a background in which he was discriminated against for being a foreigner, an Arab and a Palestinian. This was congregated by his parents' insistence that he stays away from the politics of Palestine, which increased his distance from it. His return to his roots comes in the form of resistance literature, especially after 1967, but never an actual return.

2. *Freedom in Absence*

Chapter two deals with the exile who is lost in between the foreign land, if within the Arab world, and the homeland to which he desires to return, as represented by the disappearance of the protagonist in Jabra's novel, *In Search of Walid Masoud*. His identity and attachment to the homeland will be studied in reference to Said's description of the exile and Bhabha's notion of the hybrid in an "interstitial space." This novel, in its translation, is also a hybrid. I argue here that Jabra's acceptance of his position outside Palestine whilst maintaining the fight for Palestine allows him to overcome the pain of exile. He lives a prosperous and productive life full of creative output that engages in the fight for liberation.

3. *Alienation in Return*

Chapter three assesses the exile who does return home in Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*. His relation to the homeland and its people will be at the center of the discussion because he reaches the 'alleged' finality that should put an end to his exile when he returns to Palestine. Said once said that "homecoming is out of the question" ("Reflections on Exile" 179). I, therefore, attempt to show that homecoming is not possible because return

does not provide the peace the exile looks for. Reality reveals that sharing a homeland connects Palestinians living in the diaspora or within Palestine but makes them perceive the homeland and the life within it differently. His narrative, however, marks its place within Palestinian literature with its specificity that clearly targets a Palestinian audience across the diaspora.

CHAPTER I

ETERNALLY *OUT OF PLACE*

Edward Said is without doubt one of the most renowned writers of the twentieth century. This is a fact that he proves in his writings that discuss, but are not limited to, issues of colonialism, imperialism, and cultural studies. Said was born in Jerusalem in 1935 but raised in Cairo. He was educated in colonial and imperial schools: the Gezira Preparatory School (GPS, British system), the Cairo School for American Children (CSAC, American system), during which he spent a brief time in Jerusalem in 1947 attending St. George's School, and then continued the remainder of the school year at CSAC. He later transferred to Victoria College (British system) and finally graduated from Mt. Hermon Boarding School in New England, USA. These moves from one school to the other and from Egypt to the USA are at the center of Said's life. While Said lived in Egypt most of his early life, he used to travel with his family to a number of places, notably Lebanon, in the summers. He moved to the United States in 1951 and stayed there until his death in 2003.

Said is known as an academic and public intellectual, but with *Out of Place*, he returned to literary writing. From his theoretical writings on exile, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2000) is the most prominent. This book exposes the reader to multiple appraisals on exile (Vinay Lal "Enigmas of Exile: Reflections on Edward Said" 2005). Lal considers Said to have had a "nomadic upbringing" that made him belong "between cultures" (32). This conception is common in studies on exile whereby even Said considers the exile to be in a constant state of wandering no matter where he goes as stated earlier in

the introduction. The idea of belonging to different cultures reflects itself in the studies made on *Out of Place*. It has been read in an Arab-American context as well as an Egyptian context (Hosam Aboul-Ela (2006); Roger J. Porter (2001), respectively) because of Said's life in both places. While I do not assign a place of belonging to *Out of Place*, I attempt to situate its place – if any – in the world and in relation to Palestine.

In “The Idea of Palestine in the Lives and Works of Abu-Lughod and Said” (2004), Ghada Hashem Talhami states that Said was deeply committed to Palestine and his Palestinian national identity. She explains that the constant failures of the Palestinian liberation movements, as well as the nakba and naksa, resulted in his increased dedication to the Palestinian cause (26-27). Similarly, in “Displaced Autobiography in Edward Said's ‘Out of Place’ and Fawaz Turki's ‘The Disinherited’” (2011), Asaad Al-Saleh contends that although *Out of Place* sheds light on Said's interaction in different locales, Palestine remains the center of gravity for him. Both Talhami and Al Saleh consider Said's dedication to the Palestinian national cause as a primary contributor in his experience of exile. While I agree with Talhami's conclusion that Said is committed to Palestine, I disagree with her reasoning for it. Although Palestine remains the main focus in Said's narrative, there is significant emphasis on his state of wandering with little explicit mention of Palestine or its relation to his life as an exile.

In “Edward Said and the Space of Exile” (2007), John D. Barbour argues that Said's desire to return to the homeland was not the most important item on Said's agenda. Said knew he would not return to Palestine (294). Still, Barbour confirms the importance of attachment to a place for any exile (297). While I cannot claim to know why Said does not

return or attempt to return, I consider this an act that problematizes his relationship with Palestine, his narrative's place in relation to Palestinian literature, and his status as an exile as I will discuss further below.

Contrary to what Talhami and Al-Saleh say, I explain how Said's exile is not only the result of his detachment from the homeland; instead, it is the result of a number of life circumstances that include his upbringing and education. This contribution breaks down the "single story"—explained in the introduction—of the exile whose homelessness and isolation are the consequences of banishment from the homeland, which Said himself contributes to, and also shows how Said's experience of exile is influenced by manifold conditions. I argue that Said is the exile that he describes in "Reflections on Exile" but also the victim of the "single story." His life under colonial rule, alongside his parents and his constant travels, not only creates in him an unsettled affiliation to any place, but also allows him to be more understanding of the dilemma of exile and nationhood. Although he never returns or intends to return to his land of origin, he engages in Palestinian resistance literature due to a sense of responsibility towards a place he was deprived of, but not a place he necessarily considered home because for him, there is no home.

Said's upbringing and schooling are amongst the prominent factors that contributed to shaping his identity and dictating his path in life. The memoir shows evidence that his school experience made him a product of colonial and imperial institutions. Additionally, his father's strict rules and expectations of him, and his mother's emotional "manipulation" of him (as Said calls it), provided a household that "shape[d] him" (12). His upbringing results in his identification of himself as Egypt's and his parents' "Edward" (19, 56, & 90),

America's "Ed" (236), and a third perception of himself that he considers his real self, but is not given a name (*Out of Place* 165, 231).

Although this multiplicity can be the outcome of exile as a disorienting experience, his exile is different since the "out of place" sensation that haunted him is not the result of his detachment from Palestine only as I have stated earlier. His struggle to find a place in the world and amongst people was made harder because of his life under colonial rule. Colonialism infiltrated the institutions in which he learned and the places he went for entertainment. Colonial rule aimed at denying people their culture by forcing their own culture on them (Fanon 254). It impacted the hierarchy of power, the faces they saw on the streets, and the language they used to communicate as is illustrated by Said in his memoir. In "Reflections on Exile", Said states that exile deprives people of their culture, similar to what colonialism aimed to do, and in turn shows how the two are related to one another. Said lived the entirety of his adolescent life in these conditions and therefore, it is possible to trace the colonial influence on him in *Out of Place*. The narrative mostly sheds light on his life as a child. Out of the eleven chapters in the book, the first nine mainly tackle his life at school until he finishes his undergraduate studies at Princeton, while only the last two chapters focus on his father's and mother's struggles with illness and death and his feelings as an adult.

His choice to limit his memoir to the first eighteen years of his life is something worthy of note. It explains why he does not explicitly mention Palestine. As an adolescent, Palestine did not occupy an important place in Said's life. However, this changed after 1967 (*Out of Place* 279). In these years, his relationship with Palestine is not that of a place

he considers home, but later, it is the place he feels the need to defend because of its relevance to his identity as an Arab of Palestinian origin. The focus on the early years of his life enables the reader to thoroughly look at their impact in shaping his experience of exile and in understanding why he constantly feels “out of place”. In examining Said’s memoir, I particularly focus on his depiction of his relationship with his parents, the way he was treated in Egypt’s colonial school systems and the people’s innate racial ideology, inevitably leading to a decline in Palestinian cultural consciousness that he overcomes at a later stage of his life.

A. Questions of Identity

Said’s role in the family and attitude towards his parents highlight his insecurities and explain his parents’ contribution to him feeling out of place. This blame comes from the memoir’s opening paragraph where he describes himself as having been “invented”, a faulty invention which made it hard for him to fit into his family (3). He asserts that his parents are responsible for this, where he says: “[t]he trouble seemed, to begin with [my] parents, their pasts, and names” (7). His frustration towards his family begins with the name they selected for him, Edward, which was chosen after Edward the Prince of Wales. Said felt that having an English name followed by the Arabic surname ‘Said’ was confusing as well as shameful. I infer this from his description of his name as foolish, in addition to his attempts to pass over one of the names when asked what his name was (*Out of Place* 4). It is notable, however, that his disappointment is not justifiable because all his sisters were given English names. In fact, the majority of his family’s younger generation were called by English names.

This discomfort is the topic that he debuts his memoir with, continues to talk about for the next three pages, and brings up occasionally in later sections. I am not trying to reduce the influence of a name on a person, but given his continued expression of discomfort about it, it is evident that his name had a troubling effect and is related to his problem with self-identification. A similar issue is seen in Jabra, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Said wished he could be fully one thing instead of a mixture of things, and his name which was Arab did not match with his American nationality (*Out of Place* 5). Names and their association with the person are essential for the formation of an identity. In *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life*, Allyson Vanessa Hobbs explores the identity of Elsie Roxborough, a white skinned African American who left her family and their luxurious life to live a life as a white woman. In order to do so, she dropped her name and chose a name that allowed her to pass as White, given her fair skin (139). Changing one's name is, therefore, an instrument used to invent a new identity. Names are an embodiment of their holders.

Said mentions that his father was called William, except by Said's mother who continued to use his Arabic and original name, Wadie. The English name, William, is chosen to represent Wadie's American identity since Wadie considered himself an American citizen (6). This change allows Said's father to drop his association with the Arabs and take on the role of the American citizen. This citizenship status is so important to Said's father whereby he describes him as being "armed with U.S. citizenship" after his return from military service there. Said adds that for his father, America was the place of his "self-making"—a notion that he imposed on the entire family, especially on Edward

(10). The father also chooses to give his children names that fit with their American citizenship: Edward, Rosie, Jean, etc. The father loses his Arab identity to take the American one, and he enforces the same on his children. William also proclaimed that he “hated Jerusalem”, their home of origin, because “it reminded him of death” (*Out of Place*

6). The result of this on Said is that his affiliation to Palestine weakens. Wadie/William portrays the characteristics of a colonial subject who was taken over by colonialism. Said, however, at this point in his life, is building an identity. He is not comfortable in his own skin because living in colonial conditions destabilizes the formation of the identity since, as I stated earlier, colonialism wants to take over its subjects and deny them their culture.

Language manipulation is one way in which colonialism infiltrated cultures (Hout 5). Said and his family were victims of language infiltration. His inability to identify as one person escalated due to the language of the colonizer spoken at home. His mother communicated with him in both English and Arabic, disabling him from realizing whether his first language was English or Arabic, or remembering which of the two he spoke first. He tells us that both “can” be his first language but neither are. Said refers to the Arabic language as “*her* first language” (4, emphasis his) but not his. This problem intensified in the schools he attended. Being educated in English (either American or British) and having to use the language in the entirety of his school life made this language his first language, and as an author, it is the language that he chose to utilize.

His life in an Egypt – an Arab state – still under the influence of British colonial rule escalated his problems with self-identification. Said himself talks about the influence of colonial rule on him in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Like many of his

contemporaries, he is pulled to both poles, the origin and the foreign (195). So can his parents be blamed for choosing an English name for Said, or speaking English at home? Having their identities and lives tarnished with the colonial powers' culture is a consequence of living under this rule. Colonial powers wanted to exterminate the local culture and the locals survived by keeping their cultures alive, but a mix of the two was bound to occur (Fanon 253-254). Said's case as a child living under these circumstances makes him the product of these colonial institutions. Later, as an adult with no strong bond to his country of origin—Palestine—and knowing that he was neither Egyptian nor feeling American, the dismantled identity is bound to reach a climax. Said was often asked questions as a young boy that intensified his confusion; such as: "How come you were born in Jerusalem and you live *here*?" (6, emphasis his). The "*here*" in this case is Egypt. Being exposed to such questions at this young age with no interference or explanation from his parents as to why this was the case resulted in his inability to identify as one; rather, he is his parents' and schools' Edward (*Out of Place* 19) and non-Edward to himself.

In his memoir, Said wears different faces on different occasions; at times he is the "little Arab Boy" (39), but at other times, he is "an American citizen" (*Out of Place* 6). As an adult writing his memoir, Said allows the reader to see the mix-up in his younger self by deliberately using different affiliations at times, while at other times, showing us that he belongs nowhere. Making this conscious choice in writing also shows that he is not necessarily unaware of his identity; rather, he is displaying his alternative attachments to himself both as an Arab and an American. This duality is what I explained in the

introduction as the ability of the intellectual to integrate both his culture and the new culture.

Said further dramatizes the situation when he informs us that his disillusionment surfaced early in his life at the very young age of five or six when he first refers to himself in the second person. This happens when his mother calls him a naughty boy, to which he replies by echoing her, and deliberately referring to himself by ‘you’ instead of ‘me’. He also introduces us to a “non-Edward” part of himself, which is his true self (4 & 27). He was Edward to his parents and at school but not to himself. As an adult, he knows and even remembers that this was due to his parents for a reason or another. The “extreme and rigid regime of discipline and extracurricular education that [his] father would create and in which [he] became imprisoned from the age of nine left [him] no respite or sense of [him]self beyond its rules and patterns” (*Out of Place* 19). This explains how Said’s isolation, which in the context of the “single story” of exile would be explained as the result of his detachment from the homeland, has to be seen in part, as the result of his father’s rigidity which isolated him from the world outside his house. At this point in time, there is no reference to exile as being the reason for any of this confusion; instead, the problems with his identity come from his name, his passport, his parents, and schools.

Schools, which are commonly referred to as a child’s second home, were the second home in which Said was reminded of his difference. His anger and repulsion towards the colonial British as well as the teachers’ antipathy towards the children is evident in the memoir from the words Said said they used to describe one another. His GPS teacher, Mrs. Bullen, had “bad British teeth and ungenerous lips shaping [her] words with an

unmistakable distaste for the mongrel-like collection of children who stood before her” (38). His description of her “British” teeth and her view of the “mongrel” children points to a rift between the two, an undisputed difference and loath for one another. His loath extended to the English students with their “enviously authentic names”—taking us back to his troubling name—and British features (39). This was his first experience of colonial British rule (42). Said understood colonial discrimination at a very young age. He recalls a time when he was scolded by an English man for being in Gezira club because he was an Arab. He considers this to be the first time he came to realize that he must be an Arab (*Out of Place* 44) and in being an Arab, he sensed a weakness – something he needed to be rid of (I say this of the young Said).

The discrimination practiced on him by the British, which he often delves into, is considered colonial hegemony taking over Said’s mind at a very young age as explained by Anina Loomba in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998). Antonio Gramsci explains this hegemony as a process of coercion and repression which leads the colonial subjects to eventually believe in the discourse presented to him, i.e. the discourse of being weak, resource-less, and savage (Loomba, 29). Not that this is specifically Said’s case, but he was constantly picked at by his English teachers. His naughtiness and weakness were affirmed at home by both his mother and father who accepted the punishments imposed on their child (44). This reaction from his parents made him believe that he was of inferior status. He continued to feel out of place when he moved into the American school, CSAC, where he dressed differently and ate food that was different from that of the ‘authentic’ American children (*Out of Place* 80-81). These details are sure to resonate in the mind of a child

exposed to discrimination from a young age. He was unsure of who he was, feeling unfit under the British system, and then moving to CSAC where he should supposedly feel that he belonged as an American, only to see more clearly that he was indeed different.

Additionally, “Miss Clark, whose single-minded persecution of [him] crippled [his] already uncertain sense of self” made the situation worse. He thought of her, and she thought of him as an enemy (83), similar to what he felt at GPS. She was able to single him out from the entire year group as the only misbehaved child—something that made him feel ashamed and out of place (*Out of Place* 85-86). Having come to his place, as Edward the American, he realizes that he is still out of place and is still being discriminated against, perhaps even punished for not being an authentic American. He is a false creation that does not look, speak or act like Americans but is privileged to have an American nationality.

The ideology of Said’s educators as a better race, better informed, and more aware of Said’s identity is continuously brought up by Said’s parents: “Remember what Miss Clark said” his mother would say to remind him of his faults and failures (*Out of Place* 87). His parents have accepted the imperial hegemony of “serve or be destroyed” (*Culture and Imperialism* 168). Their actions resonated in Said for life, and given the nature of his relationship with his mother, it must have hurt him that she reinforced what his teachers thought of him. His mother, Hilda, was his home, his anchor, supporter, and lover. He wanted her blessing and approval at all times. This gave her power over him and made her the person capable of raising and controlling his insecurities. He explains this throughout his memoir. Said describes his mother saying:

...she communicated a kind of melting softness and supportive sentiment that sustained me for as long as it lasted. In her eyes, I felt, I was blessed, whole, [and] marvelous. One compliment from her about my brightness, or musicality, or my face caused me such a lift as momentarily to give me a feeling of actually belonging somewhere good and solid ... (45).

He loved his mother but also felt her betrayal for siding with his educators. Yet, this did not affect their relationship. They continued to write letters to one another for as long as he lived in the USA (54), meaning that they maintained a strong bond. His mother was his home but this increased his pain for her believing Miss Clark, and perhaps made him believe that he was not as good as *they* were. Thinking that you are different and feeling out of place is a crippling sensation that can dismantle a personality (Hobbs 140).

It is important to note that there is a sense of over-dramatization that Said has applied in his memoir. His continuous blame of his parents and their expectations of him compared to his sisters, his incessant reminders to the reader of his lost/incomplete identity, and the overly alert teachers to no one else's faults but his own are examples of dramatization. I am not trying to underestimate the importance of these events or the lack of their truth, but it is necessary to remember that this is a memoir where the center of attention needs to be the one and only author. According to El-Zein, "Every memoir is an act of self-dramatization The writer must begin by making the imaginative leap of seeing oneself as a subject at the center of a dramatic line of events" in addition to adding fictional events that make the book more eventful and interesting (2). Here, fictional does not mean false, but it is the process of telling the events through characters (3).

The events in Said's life did not shatter him; rather his ideas, beliefs, tradition and culture were not allowed to form and stabilize as a consequence of colonialism which made him feel insecure about himself and his identity. From a young age, Said is living amongst people of multiple traditions, exposed to different languages, and he has an uncertain national affiliation. Add to this the constant feeling of difference and the result was yet again, Ed, Edward, and something else. He definitely displays the characteristics of the exile which he explored in "Reflections of Exile". However, the process in which he reaches this point is, as I have explained, different from that of an exile banished from home. Barbour asserts this when he states that exile is not the same for everyone. Some will await the journey to return home, but for Said, this was not the case. Said understood that there will be no return to Palestine, He also understood that his exile was the result of the family's cocoon that engulfed him within the same circle of people and the idea that their wealth is enough for a good life (294).

B. Belonging and Commitment

Said's exile was imposed on him by his father when he sent him to the United States to study. Later it was caused by his father, again, when he got him involved in an illegal deal that put him under persecution in Egypt for a period of fifteen years, in which he could not return. Wadie's "ostensible indifference" to Said's fate exiled him twice (289). His wanderings and movements disabled him from getting accustomed to or acceptant of the places he went to. Said, although a citizen of America by the passport he holds, was culturally committed to the life he had in Egypt but not Egypt itself, and later to Palestine, a nation he fought for as a public intellectual.

Said found it hard to live in America where he was “unlearning” and “relearning” his old ways, “improvising, self-inventing, trying and failing, experimenting, canceling, and restarting in surprising and frequently painful ways.” He did not accept his life in America (*Out of Place* 222), albeit his citizenship, his success, and the fact that it was the place where he lived for the entirety of his adult life. This is due to the childhood that forced him to live through painful discriminatory challenges caused by none other than his fellow American citizens at school or at camp. Said was in a position of weakness for a long time through his adolescence, making it hard for him to forgo the idea of his difference even after his success there. Said, the adult, reestablished a connection to his Arab origin and culture, making it more difficult to accept either of the two.

Said’s mother played an important role in maintaining his connection to the Arab world because of her presence there. She was, as stated earlier, his center of gravity. Said says:

There is no doubt that what made this whole protracted experience of separation ... agonizing was my complicated relationship with my mother, who never ceased to remind me leaving her was the most unnatural ... and yet tragically necessary of fates. ... I still find myself reliving aspects of the experience today, the sense that I’d rather be somewhere else – defined closer to her, ... because being *here* was not being where I/we wanted to be, *here* being defined as a place of exile, removal, unwilling dislocation” (*Out of Place* 218, emphasis his).

He continues to say that being with her was to be “*for*” her, although she might not be his (218, emphasis his). The way he expresses his longing for her is similar to an exile’s need of his land. Return for the exile means getting back to your homeland, and Said was separated from his mother who resembled his homeland. The home or the nation is often described as someone’s *motherland*. The difference is that the land can actually be *for* a people, but his mother, as a person, cannot be *his* (emphasis mine). I say this because mothers get the right to consider their children ‘property’ from the maternal emotion of having to protect them. Land, however, needs to be protected by its people, thereby making it the property of its people. Said’s mother rooted in him, from a very young age, the sensation that he was always going to need her. He enjoyed “the pleasure of being called” and “being wanted” by her (*Out of Place* 4). This feeling accompanied him while abroad but it was infiltrated with the pain of the distance that prevented him from getting to her. When talking about Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, who according to Said is “the dominating intellectual conscience of the twentieth century,” he says that Adorno was incapable of accepting anything about America – Adorno’s place of exile – because of his early life under a Marxist-Hegelian influence (54-55). Like Adorno, Said chooses to be unhappy in America. He states that the intellectual in exile is “happy with the idea of unhappiness” (“Intellectual Exile” 53), although Jabra does not fit this profile, as I will discuss in the next chapter. Therefore, Said’s inability to love America stems from his need to be with his mother wherever she resides.

His relationship with his mother is his most concrete one unlike his relationship with the Arab world, Palestine or America. As a child, Said considers his memories of

Palestine as unremarkable (20). At the age of twelve, in 1947, he spent some time at a school in Palestine, surrounded by his family, and it is the only occasion and place where he says: “our family in Jerusalem, “belonged”” and it was the first time that he felt connected to those at school, instead of being a stranger (108). But why does he quote the word belonged? And why does he not say ‘I’ belonged instead of ‘our family belonged’? Even when he talks about himself, he prefers the word ‘connected’ over ‘belonged’ perhaps making the link to the place weaker. Also, using quotation marks for the word ‘belonged’ makes it a questionable belonging. As a child, Said was ashamed of his Arab identity which caused him “embarrassment and discomfort” (90). However, as an adult, he decided to stand up for the Palestinian cause and he started considering Palestinians ‘his people’ (*Out of Place* 214). These stages in Said’s life, from feeling unsettled to abandoning his original culture/nation and then realizing their importance, is what Fanon describes as the stages of the intellectual’s growth under colonial powers (mentioned in the introduction). Feeling a disconnectedness towards one’s original culture is, therefore, expected in those who lived under colonial rule, but Said’s return (in spirit) to his people was not as easy as Fanon describes.

When as an adult he acknowledged and was hurt that his land was now inhabited by people different from Palestinians (111), it is a little too late for him to feel that he belongs. He spent the majority of his life avoiding the subject of Palestine, whether by will or due to his parents’ refusal that he be involved in politics (117). He also avoided thinking about the United States’ role in supporting Zionism (*Out of Place* 140-141). Add this to his shame of

being a weak Arab and so his final arrival at the need to defend Palestine and the Arab world came with a sense of guilt.

It is a guilt that is projected in his body image (50, 63) which he talks about on several occasions, his self-pity (166), his inability to look at himself in TV interviews (55), and his inability to see himself as important. He was ashamed of being an Arab (90) and in turn being Palestinian. This thought disables him from belonging anywhere as if he does not deserve to belong anywhere. By first abandoning the place he should have belonged to – whether due to listening to his parents’ advice (117) or his personal ignorance (127) – he is unable to belong anywhere else. Although he was exposed to the suffering of the Palestinian people through his aunt Nabiha’s “obsession” in Palestine and the charity work for “her” refugees (*Out of Place* 118 as written in the book), he remained indifferent to the whole situation.

Said could have easily returned given the fact that he holds an American passport that allows him to enter the country, but perhaps he could not gather the courage to enter Palestine using a passport given to him by a country that supports Zionism. Still, “Fernando Alegría writes, “It seems to me that only an exile who intends to return has a true exile’s consciousness. There is no exile without the intention to go back” (53 qtd. in Klagge, James C.). If I were to apply this argument to Said, who does not mention return at any point in his memoir, then it would be possible to say that he is not an exile. In Said’s case, however, I disagree with this argument. In *Wittgenstein in Exile*, Klagge says that the feeling of exile could easily be a state of mind (56). Ludwig Wittgenstein’s exile was self-imposed; he sought for isolation (55) while Said’s exile is more like “a sense of not belonging, of being

in an environment hostile to the values of [his] community and its vocation” (54 qtd. in Klagge). This reinforces my argument that the experience of exile is not only about the banishment, and loss of a culture, for example; instead, there are many factors that should be considered for each case of exile. I mentioned earlier that for Said, these included his schooling, parents, colonial discrimination, and a long period in which he was dissociated from Palestine, but once he realized her importance, he used his intellect and influence to support her.

Said’s acknowledgment of Palestine was a mission to salvage a place. In “Yanko’s Footprints: Edward Said and the Experience of Exile” (2007), Mohammed Salama concedes that for Said, it is a place that “would fall into forgetfulness if we did not pay attention to the process of erasure exercised against it” due to the colonial and imperial powers that try to diminish its importance (241). Said goes through Fanon’s phases of the native intellectual from his greedy attachment to the foreign culture, to the fear of being swamped into it or his people’s rejection (257) and thus “decides to remember what he is.” Eventually, the intellectual, “after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will, on the contrary, shake the people” with his “fighting literature” and “revolutionary literature” (“On National Culture” 259). Said’s memoir tells us of these phases, from his dissociation from Palestine to his commitment to defending it.

C. At Home in Writing

His memoir is an interesting addition to his legacy of works because he chose to write a literary narrative. The memoir, which I explained allows for an exploration of the

self, is a nice choice considering the fact that he wrote it when he was about to die, at the ups and downs of his cycle of thought and at some of his weakest moments. Said says:

[T]he time of this book is intimately tied to the time, phases, ups and downs, variations in my illness. As I grew weaker, the number of infections and bouts of side effects increased, the more this book was my way of constructing something in prose while in my physical and emotional life I grappled with anxieties and pains of degeneration (216).

Nonetheless, it is a literary work that engages in resistance literature. Said himself asserts that the purpose of the memoir is to recall an “essentially lost or forgotten world” (*Out of Place* ix). In his final days, Said continues to prove his commitment to Palestine. As a renowned intellectual, he wrote many theoretical texts that are part of exile and resistance literature. The release seminal work, *Orientalism*, became a major eye opener for many readers about the Arab world while much of his other publications focused on Palestine. When Said writes about Palestine, his work is “fighting literature” as Fanon says. His work is also what Harlow calls “resistance literature”. *Out of Place* is Said’s “arena of struggle” in which he shares his experience, his pain, and his ups and downs. It allows him to clear his image against skeptics that question his affiliation to a Palestine that he was indifferent to in his adolescence. I mentioned in the introduction how such works influence the nation concerned. Said permits himself to narrate, against the powers that want to deny Palestine the story of their existence (“Permission to Narrate” 252, 253). *Out of Place* participates in the resistance literature and fighting literature that awakens the people who might be indifferent to the cause as he once was.

The choice of writing his memoir in English was neither a way of affiliating himself with the West nor a way of fighting back the enemy; rather, it was his Western schooling and life in the West that made him do so. Said hardly practiced his Arabic. Therefore, it is expected that he used English to write. In fact, by writing in English, he allowed his work to circulate more and benefit the Palestinian and Arab causes even more. Damrosch, who tells us that world literature is a mode of circulation and readership, allows Said's works to become pioneers of world literature. His works circulate in the Middle East and the West with translations in many languages.

Unlike other Palestinian writers, Said was privileged to live in the United States and work at an Ivy League university, thereby making the circulation of his books easier. It also exposed him to a wider Western audience, which allowed him to, once again, confirm the Palestinian existence through writing. In "The End of Illusions: On Arab Postmodernism" (2010), Andreas Pflitsch explains that many Arab writers are burdened by the Western image of them as backward (25), thereby making many Arab writings – especially if written in Arabic – unavailable to a Western audience or not as easily available as Said's works. Nevertheless, his life and his easy access to a wider audience does not diminish the power of his work or the influence of it thereof on the Palestinian cause or the Arab world.

As I just stated, his narrative is part of 'world literature'. However, Said's uncertain belonging—even in his essence, he sees himself a stranger—complicates the belonging of his writings. In "World Literature, National Contexts" Damrosch informs us that works of literature are usually born into or categorized under national literature (513). This complicates the categorization of Said's works further since he neither regarded America

his nation-state nor can Palestine be considered his nation-state either. If I were to look at world literature as a mode of circulation, then I could say that *Out of Place* not only passes the test, but it is ‘world literature’ from the moment of its creation because of Said’s inability to consider himself as a national of one place, and because his book is born in the West. Contrary to Damrosch’s argument that literature begins as a national work, Said’s memoir and other academic works are ‘world literature’ in the first place and part of Palestinian resistance literature in the second place.

While Said’s works find a place for themselves in the world, Said remains a wanderer by choice by accepting that he belongs nowhere, except in writing. He says:

Now it does not seem important or even desirable to be "right" and in place. Better to wander out of place, not to own a house, and not ever to feel too much at home anywhere, especially in a city like New York, where I shall be until I die (269).

Perhaps he became “the perfect man [who] has extinguished his” love for all places (qtd. in “Reflections on Exile” 185). This he takes from a quote—that he used a number of times—by Hugo of St. Victor³, who was a renowned theologian, philosopher, and writer on mystical theology in medieval Saxon. Nonetheless, Said will always have a place in the memory of those influenced by him.

Said ends chapter one of *Out of Place*, as I end mine, by stating that he “became “Edward,” a creation of” his parents who themselves were creations of different and

³ “Hugo of St. Victor.” New Advent. Kevin Knight. n.a. Web. 28 Apr. 2016.

mashed up backgrounds who lived in British Colonial Egypt (19). He lived in a mixture of cultures, around people of mixed cultures, and moving from place to place and group to group until he felt that he belonged nowhere. The circumstances of his life shaped his unique experience of exile. Said's exile is very different from that of the Palestinian refugee because he lived a privileged life, but he is looked at from the perspective of the "single story" because it has become the norm to think of people in exile as people with tragic lives. Said, contrary to the refugees, had a rich and influential life. His influence can be seen through his academic and literary work. Said's exile allowed his literature to prosper. His books benefited from his travels and encounters and definitely benefited from his Western education, which allowed them to circulate easily and gain a wider audience. His literature succeeded in reminding the world of Palestine.

His exile did not make him eager to return to Palestine, nor was he able to settle anywhere else; rather, it turned Palestine from a dream to his center of gravity. He dedicated many of his works to her, and as a public intellectual, he insisted on reminding the world of her. His restlessness should not be taken as a form of suffering; rather, it enriched him and his work. Perhaps Said finds his place in his writings, which might inspire some of the less fortunate exiles to continue the fight. Jabra, like Said, uses his literary work to fight for Palestine, while allowing his protagonist Walid to move from the pen to the rifle.

CHAPTER II

FREEDOM IN ABSENCE

Jabra's novel, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, engages in exile literature but breaks out of the "single story" of the exile who lives in trauma and seeks return to the homeland only. Jabra allows his exiled protagonist, Walid, to find a home outside his homeland Palestine, namely in Iraq. Jabra himself lived outside his homeland, in Iraq, and was deeply involved in Iraq's cultural life, in both literary and artistic circles⁴. The novel shows strong autobiographical traits and asserts Jabra's commitment to Palestine and Palestinian as well as Arabic literature while also engaging in world literature, as I will discuss further in this chapter.

Jabra has been studied in comparison with or alongside Abdulrahman Munif, a brilliant author and translator (Badawi (1992); Roger Allen (2010); Sonja Mejcher-Atassi (2015)), in part because of their close friendship, and in part because both men were involved in Iraq's literary and artistic circles. In "Dialogic Interaction Between the Historical Backgrounds and Events in the Novels of J.M. Coetzee and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: A Contrapuntal Reading", Jihan Mahmoud (2014) focuses on the novel's female characters and their role compared to the male characters in Arab society. Alternately, in her dissertation, "Writing Melancholy: The Death of the Intellectual in Modern Arabic Literature" (2011), Halabi discusses how the fida'i (Palestinian freedom fighters or

⁴ For example, he established the Baghdad Modern Art Group with Jawad Salim in 1951. He was a member of the International Association of Art Critics and was "president of the Association of Art Critics in Iraq." "In 1981, he organized the International Arts Festival in Baghdad and chaired its International Committee of Judges" (see Boullata 2001 and Mejcher-Atassi 2012).

guerillas against Israeli forces) emerges due to the failure of the intellectual in the modern Arab world. While she focuses on fida'i in her dissertation, in "The Day the Wandering Dreamer became a Fida'i" (2015), she explores the role of the intellectual in the modern Arab world. She considers *In Search of Walid Masoud* a novel that "captures [Jabra's] growing ambivalence towards his generation and channels its own anxieties as its role began to change" (162), meaning that Jabra's novel reflects his own stance on the role of the Arab intellectual of his generation. Similar to Halabi's paper, Mejcher-Atassi in "The Arabic Novel between Aesthetic Concerns and the Causes of Man" (2015) and Rebecca Carol Johnson in "The Politics of Reading: Recognition and Revolution in Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud*", both look at the exiled intellectual as a person capable of finding his place in the world and losing his disillusionment. Mejcher-Atassi also argues that the intellectual can become a fighter, not by taking up weapons, but through his art, or pen—which Jabra refers to in his novel. My focus in this chapter is the novel's protagonist Walid and the depiction of exile in the novel as represented through his story. I argue that the exile story is more complex than the "single story" and that the exiled intellectual can find a new home that is different from his country of origin, while remaining committed to the latter.

Before venturing into the analysis of the novel further, it is helpful to explain Jabra's notion of the exile. He says that "An exile feels incomplete even though everything he could want physically was at his fingertips" (83). Said describes the exile in a similar manner. Both descriptions are entrenched with mourning, yet both writers discuss how the exile is able to use the feelings of "incomplete"-ness or "estrangement" to prove himself in

a world that is rejecting him. For Said, the exile overcomes the sense of loss through the use of “mobility and skill” (“Reflections on Exile” 181). Jabra’s Palestinian wanderer relies on art to turn his “exile into force” (“Palestinian Exile” 84). There are characteristics that the exile possesses/gains after his uprooting, which allow him to become an enlightened wanderer.

These points are worthy of note because they touch upon both the novel’s protagonist Walid and its author—both exiles. This similarity in the life of the writer and the protagonist is a reflection of Jabra’s own exile. Jabra congregates his experiences by projecting the same in his writing. The inspiration to create Walid from the reality of Jabra’s life is expected given Lukacs’ explanation of the exile writing his life in prose. The parallels between the two are numerous: starting with both being Palestinian exiles who witnessed the 1948 *nakba*, they both descend from poor Christian families, they were both born in Bethlehem, received their education in Europe—Jabra in Britain while Walid in Italy—and they both became intellectuals. In “Reflections on Exile,” Said mentions how the exile “need[s] to reassemble an identity out of the refractions and discontinuities” of his life. This is usually done aesthetically by creating art: poems, paintings or novels. Said tells us that Joseph Conrad’s novels are abundant with themes of loss, fear, and pain, which are a reflection of what Conrad felt. He identified himself as an exile, and thus, his work “carries the unmistakable mark of the sensitive émigré’s obsession with his own fate” (179). The same strategy is used by Jabra who expresses his experience of exile through the novel. These features are present in both the novel’s protagonist and author, Walid and

Jabra. It is as if Jabra created Walid through a looking glass, if not to reflect himself, to reflect the Palestinian exile and the Arab and Palestinian tragedy.

A. A Life and an Identity ‘in Between’

Part of his expression as an exile can be seen in the form and content of the novel. The form is disoriented with flashbacks of Walid’s life told mostly by his friends because he goes missing in the novel. Neither his whereabouts nor the circumstances under which he went missing are known. This remains the case until the end of the novel. Going back in memories is a significant part of the exile’s life that Jabra makes use of. He allows Walid to take part in telling his memories in three chapters of the novel (chapters 4, 6 & 8) and through the tape that he leaves in his abandoned car. His car is found between the borders of Syria and Iraq are known—specifically in a no man’s land (5). Walid is missing but his voice is heard, meaning that he is not here yet still here. The novel displays a number of themes which speak of the exile’s consciousness as described by Said and Jabra; one being Walid’s disoriented identity.

The same is seen in Said’s *Out of Place* where his distorted identity is reflected in the three different perceptions of himself, and his problematic name. Said’s conflict with his name is directly proportional to his identity issues, indicating the importance of a name for a person’s identification of him/herself. In Jabra’s novel, Walid changes his name (74). This implies that, like Said, he has a distorted identity. Add to that his unknown whereabouts since he goes missing in a no man’s land as if proclaiming that he belongs nowhere. These ideas foreground Jabra’s novel as a narrative that tackles the tragedy of exile. Yet, *In Search of Walid Masoud* discloses another side of exile in presenting the idea

of belonging both to the location of exile and the land of origin. Walid's new name introduces a new identity and a fresh beginning or a proclamation that the name does not define a person. Said is troubled by his name but does not attempt to change it, whereas Walid identifies himself anew by changing his name.

Walid "got the [new] name from one of those books he reads at night" (74). Walid was an avid reader, although the conditions he was living in did not make his reading an easy task (74). Jabra, by portraying Walid as an avid reader, sheds light on the importance of education for the exile because it is a weapon that he can use to secure his life. Furthermore, by allowing Walid to make the decision to change his name based on a character in a book, he implies to Walid's strong character where he makes his own choices from a young age. It is an identity that he was able to maintain even after the hardships of exile. This is why I consider Walid—and by extension Jabra—to be an exile who does not embody the common idea of the tragic exile. Rather, he is an exile in an "interstitial space" which Bhabha describes as:

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities (4).

Walid is an exile who is made stronger by exile. His identity that is initially tough is made tougher by exile because he allows himself to live in the interstitial space of his new

cultural contexts. I mentioned in the introduction that Said says that exile and wandering make exiles stronger. Walid is an exile who benefits from living in different cultures. Furthermore, being lost in a no man's land affirms the idea of living 'in between' because a crossing border is a place in between two nation-states that connects the nation-states. "Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro so that they get to other banks... The bridge gathers as a passage that crosses." Bhabha takes this quote from Mladen Dolar's *The Legacy of Enlightenment* (4) which relates to the significance of Walid's position. He is on land that connects nations— like a bridge. This is a space that allows him to be affiliated with two places. By being 'in between', he has no specific place to go to or be at. This is further emphasized by the idea of his unknown whereabouts, suggesting that he is in no specific place. Consequently, he can be anywhere.

Exiles are victims of the "single story" of the desire to be located in their original land. Walid's location of disappearance and location in life defies the logic of this "single story" because he is able to find a homeland other than the land of origin. Walid finds a place for himself amongst the people who loved him. When Walid's location is unknown, he is assumed dead and grieved by many people. In other words, he had many friends who cared about him. Jabra shows the reader the importance of this character to many, and Jabra, by being the image of Walid, informs us that he knows he matters. Walid was known in Beirut, Baghdad and Palestine (10), while Jabra was a major influence in Iraq and the Arab world as a writer (Boullata). Additionally, Walid had many friends who knew him closely—just like Jabra—which is made clear from the different chapters told by his friends

that relate stories about their experiences with him. In addition, there is Dr. Jawad Husni's interest in writing a study about Walid (9), Kazim Ismail's desire of a "careful, conscious reflection" from all the listeners of the tape (all of whom are Walid's close friends) regarding its contents (21), and most importantly, Wisal—Walid's supposed lover—who joins the fedayeen for Walid's sake (288).

Walid belonged to these people—and Jabra belonged in Iraq—and in the process belonged to the experiences he had with them, whether in Iraq, Lebanon or any of the places he lived in. Belonging does not have to do with the land of origin only; instead, it also means being and feeling part of a group of people, which I related in the introduction. Being part of the nation in a diaspora which connects its people to one another (as defined earlier) is one thing, but being part of those who do not share the experience of exile can be a solution to forgo the exile's sensation of disconnectedness. Walid (as Jabra) was connected to Palestine as his place of origin, but he was also attached to his group of friends in Iraq.

Equally important is that as an exile, he was able to associate himself with these people when he wanted to and dissociate himself at any given moment (27). This ability is the result of exile that allows the creation of a hybrid who lies in an "interstitial place" that lets him flow freely between being part of this group (his friends) and the other group (the diaspora). In Bhabha's words, which I mentioned in the introduction, these places are between the culture of his home and the new culture he is exposed to. This power is called "[b]alance" by Walid, who describes it as a presence "[a]mid the turmoil", "a calm voice, in the thick of contradictions, a tangible hidden harmony, and between the poles of attraction

and repulsion, a deep still point...” (3-4). Walid did not abandon Palestine, and he was able to live a life outside it with relationships and affiliations that he cared about. This is evident from his numerous friendships and their sincerity. Jabra presents Walid as a participant in life instead of being a loner and a sufferer (47). Contrary to Said who, as I explained in the previous chapter, was an intellectual happy about being unhappy, Walid and by extension Jabra, is an intellectual who found happiness, whether in Iraq amongst the people he lived with, or in his role as an intellectual fighting for the Palestinian cause, and later possibly a *fida'i* engaging in live combat.

B. An Intellectual and a *Fida'i*

Walid's place as an intellectual allowed him to participate in Baghdad's cultural society and form friendships within Baghdad's rich and educated community. Amongst his friends there are three Ph.D.s (from contents), and two magistrates (Maryam and Wisal) (*Walid Masoud*, Jabra, 9), in addition to the rich Amer Abd-Alhamid. The novel begins with a dinner at Amer's extravagant house with its shooting fountains and hanging palms (9) where the circle of friends gathers to listen to Walid's tape. The party scene is repeated with part or all of the characters present (146, 150) in addition to “writers, poets, journalists, bankers” (163). Their lives are abundant with luxury. Again, Jabra allows us to see Walid as someone who enjoys life. This included numerous love relations—a couple mentioned in the tape recording—that signify his thirst for the lavishes in life. These examples emphasize Walid's prosperous life. His place in this society is made easier by the fact that he is an intellectual; his life is different from the refugees who are not as lucky. Walid enjoys his life unlike the exile of the “single story” who is described by Said as a

person who is envious of others, who sees those outside the nation as “an enemy” (178), and as person who isolates himself from the world, only seeking homecoming (“Reflections on Exile” 179).

The novel mentions that Walid was “trying to find a country to replant” (49) his roots. Replanting connotes that he wants to establish roots in a new place. This allows him to accept a new home and possibly feel secure on the land other than on the land of origin – unlike Said who constantly felt out of place. This does not, however, negate the importance of homecoming to the exile. Said felt estrangement with a broken spirit, while Walid—and by extension, Jabra—defied the trauma of being shattered and embraced his exile to become stronger. Walid participated in the fight for Palestine in his writings and wanted to join the Fatah⁵ movement later in his life alongside his son (214). Fatah is a “political and military organization of Arab Palestinians, ... with the aim of wresting Palestine from Israeli control by waging low-intensity guerrilla warfare” (Encyclopedia Britannica). Walid also wanted “society to achieve self-identity through intellect, freedom, and creativity...” and he said this using his “lips and pens” (27). “Society” addresses not the Palestinian population, but the Arab society as a whole. This society needs to use “intellect” and “creativity” to dissociate itself from the Western shadow overwhelming it. Nevertheless, Walid still wanted his land because without his roots “he can’t think, write, or achieve anything” (49).

⁵ Sometimes spelled Fath, meaning “Conquest” or “Opening”. It is an “inverted acronym of Ḥarakat al-Taḥrīr al-Waṭanī al-Filasṭīnī (“Palestine National Liberation Movement”),” and it was “founded in the late 1950s by Yāsir ‘Arafāt and Khalīl al-Wazīr (Abū Jihād).”

Walid's place as an intellectual and position in society enables him to use his intellect to the benefit of the Palestinian and Arab struggles. Refugees, however, are not often as privileged. They can be identified as Gayatri Spivak's subaltern who cannot speak, but can be spoken for by those in power. Both Jabra and his fictional character, Walid, do not abandon Palestine. In "The Day the Wandering Dreamer Became a Fida'i", Halabi says that "Jabra's distinction between refugees and intellectuals, or asylum seekers and exiles, is central to his conception of the exiled Palestinian" (159). These are people he should represent as a person in power. At the same time, it implies that his experience is different from theirs. The entirety of his life is different, from his suffering to his prosperity.

He takes on his role as an intellectual to write about the need for the Arab society to be part of the struggle and even declares that he wants to make the struggle an Arab one, instead of Palestinian only. In "The Palestinian Exile as Writer", Jabra says that the Palestinian fight against Zionism is an Arab fight that ties them in one fate. He states that having been an exile, he prefers to be an exile in the Arab world because he believes it "to be a world of tomorrow" (85). He creates a bond between Arabs and Palestinians and clearly sees hope for a better Arab world and man/woman. He describes Arabs as "vigorously pushing their intellectual, economic and social frontiers toward" a powerful future that will allow the long decadent nations to prosper however long that may be (85). This faith in the Arab world, especially the Arab intellectual, comes to the fore in his novel. Jabra and Walid construct the role of the exiled intellectual as an influence and a strong individual able to participate in the fight for the nation (at least) through art.

Jabra criticizes the role of the intellectual through Walid and the other characters. He believes that Arabs need to use their intellect to overcome decadence and regain the freedom of Palestine, whose fate is connected to theirs. It is, however, through Walid that Jabra gives an answer to what should be done or to the role of the exiled intellectual and the Arab intellectual as well. Walid's strength and prosperity in exile is that he does not allow exile to shatter him or make him feel different; rather, he takes advantage of the places and people it exposes him to. This allows him to influence others to join in his fight. "Walid's life has been unlike any other person's ... He resisted, produced, made himself wealthy, and gave birth to some ideas. He left a heritage behind him whose dimensions will take us a great deal of time to define" (61). Walid's exile and hybrid identity made him stronger and more capable of influencing others. Exile forces the person to interact with new people and cultures. The illusion that life in the homeland is the solution for the exile's disillusionment is not necessarily true, as will be elaborated on in my next chapter. This does not negate the importance of homecoming. For Palestinians, the return is not only a matter of taking back their land; rather, it is coupled with a political injustice. I stated in the introduction that they have no political authority and no passports. Without a nation-state, they are deprived of many rights that come with having a nationality. Therefore, return to the country of origin becomes a desire, as well as a need.

Jabra explains that return needs the fight of both pen and rifle. He writes that "Art alludes to the liberation of a man at the time of creative impulse" which gives people the feeling of freedom (250). The "lips and pens" which Walid believed in provide creative art but they are only an illusion of freedom. Art, though merely an abstract thing, excites

people by allowing them to hope for change. When Walid's location is no longer known, his friends speculate that he joined the Fedayeen when his beloved Wisal states that he is alive in Palestine. Walid leaves this life and starts a new one (284). Whether in the afterlife—since Wisal's news was not certain—or in the struggle against Zionism, he realizes that he needs to do something more than the talking that his friends are engaged in. Remarkably, Dr. Jawad Husni is convinced by her feeble proof of Walid's life. The fact that Dr. Jawad believes her connotes the hope that something is changing. It is possible that Dr. Jawad will engage in the fight using his writing and clearly, Wisal is joining the fight. Both of them are driven to do so because of their relation with an exile who showed a zeal for life as well as his land.

The mention of the Fedayeen and the protagonists' eagerness to join them is a topic addressed to the reader as one of the ways of fighting. Equally significant is that literature itself is a form of resistance as stated by Harlow. In "The Arabic Novel between Aesthetic Concerns and the Causes of Man", Mejcher-Atassi explains this as "a shift in the relationship of aesthetics and politics", making Jabra's novel part of resistance literature (149). Jabra expects the modern intellectuals in the Arab world to play a part in the fight for freedom. He believes that albeit the tragic experience of exile, the Palestinian intellectuals have gained something that empowers them and "transform[s] them into [a] leavening force in their new host societies" ("Wandering Dreamer", 159). I mentioned in the introduction that many Palestinians chose to be writers and poets to feel that they are part of something ("Reflections on Exile" 177). As intellectuals with influence living abroad, like Said, or in the Arab world, like Jabra, they become this "leavening force." They play their part in

fighting back against the powers that want to deny Palestinians a narrative as mentioned in the introduction. Jabra himself believes in the power of the word. His critique of the intellectuals who talk and party in the novel is a reminder that nothing can be achieved without action or without actually using a weapon, be it a rifle or a pen. Jabra's portrayal of Walid as a strong individual who is capable of living a prosperous life, as well as motivating his group of friends to get involved in the movement to free Palestine or have a better Arab future is his contribution to resistance literature.

Jabra's trust in the intellectual's influence came as a result of his exile. He believed in the Palestinian exile who raises his voice in anger ("Palestinian Exile", 87) and so by linking the Arab to the Palestinian, he makes their fight one fight. He acknowledged the pain of the Arab world, which he described as, "slippery and shaky, filled with terror, murder, hunger and hatred" (3) in his novel, and from both this pain and his pain as an exile emerged new movements in modern Arabic literature.

The shattered hopes after 1948 led to political and artistic movements. The increase in cosmopolitanism and influences from the West excited the younger generations thriving to rebel. The change in the mode of life caused a change in literature both in form and content. The writers of the time were committed to writing about Arab issues ("Modern Arabic Literature and the West" 81, 86 & 88). As such, we can see the theme of the collective defeat and loss in Jabra's novel. This is a theme adopted by Arab writers after the 1967 defeat—the sense of collectiveness being the difference between classical and modern Arabic literature (*Writing Melancholy*, 10-11). Jabra's exile only intensified these feelings:

I preached change, unashamedly. We had been cheated and betrayed by a thousand years of decay, I said. We had been victims of our beautiful inane rhetoric. We lost Palestine because we had confronted a ruthless modern force with an outdated tradition. Everything had to change and change had to begin at the base, with a change of vision. A new way of looking at things. A new way of saying things (“Palestinian Exile” 82).

Jabra’s novel came at a time when all these feelings were at their peak. He was a Palestinian exile and since the destiny of Palestine was that of the Arabs, all Arabs were exiles in a way or another. All art created at the time became art influenced by exile. The political theme was not new, but this was a modern age influenced by Western authors who “provide[d] our authors with a sharper equipment for their task” (“Arabic Literature”, 87). The ‘task’ involves expressing their agony and using aesthetics to excite the reader to join the fight. When Walid relies on his pen and rifle instead of “lips and pens”, he fulfills this task. He relied on speaking only but later took action. Jabra’s action, however, is his novel and literary work.

As mentioned in the introduction, the choice of expressing oneself through the novel is one of the best ways to express one’s exile. The protagonist being a product of “estrangement from the outside world” is applicable to both Jabra and Walid as they are both estranged from their homeland. Lukacs explains that the novel allows for “a purely human understanding between the tragic characters’ souls...” (56). Prose is the only genre that can “encompass the suffering and the laurels...” while “with equal power, embrace the fetters and the freedom” of the meanings in world” (58). This can be applied to Walid’s

'balance' in life discussed earlier. Jabra radiates through Walid not only "the suffering and the laurels", but also "the fetters and the freedom" of his protagonist as an exile who is able to find the balance in life between the desire for homecoming, which causes him pain, and the need to live a prosperous life that makes him embrace it. Lukacs also addresses the form of the novel where he says:

the inner form of the novel has been understood as the process of the problematic individual's journeying towards himself, the road from dull captivity within a merely present reality – a reality that is heterogeneous in itself and meaningless to the individual – towards clear self-recognition (80).

The novel allows for a full expression of the reality of life and a form that allows a troubled person reach self-recognition as I mentioned in the introduction. The exile can reach self-identification in the novel. Lukacs calls the heroes of the novel "seekers" (60). In other words, they are wanderers trying to reach somewhere. The word "seekers" is applicable to Walid, who seeks to find a way to engage in the struggle for his country. He starts by writing but his future is left open. In death, he could be a martyr, while in life, he could be a Fida'i. Either ending excites the reader to think of Walid as a participant in the fight and of Jabra as a partaker in resistance literature. This open ending says that the completeness sought for throughout the novel can be different for different people. It is a rebellious ending, and perhaps this is what Jabra wanted his contemporaries and readers to be rebellious.

Jabra himself was a rebel and an intellectual fighter, at least when it comes to making changes in literature. I mentioned earlier that he was experimental in his writing.

The modern era allowed novelists to “employ the stream of consciousness, the flash-back, the interior monolog, the “intellectual” dialogue, the multi-angled presentation of an event, the undercurrent of symbolism,” says Jabra (“Arabic Literature” 89). Jabra’s novel accomplishes to use all of these. The tape recording is completely disoriented. It engages a stream of consciousness, a flashback of ideas, and an interior monolog (12). The novel also contains poems (202), a letter (105), and is itself prose. The use of different media to deliver a story to the reader makes this novel an insurgent. In “The Unfolding of Modern Fiction and Arab Memory” (1990), Elias Khoury says that “a new literary form was discover[ed]” “which put together the language of the past and the experience of the present” which he described as “formless prose” (4).

The novel is fragmented and disoriented. It has many forms of writing within it making it formless. These factors allow the novel to mark its place within modern Arabic literature, defying restrictions of form. What creates a form for this formless Arabic novel is the continued use of the Arabic language, while what makes it new is the rupture of the form, i.e. the formless content mentioned above. Khoury states that the Palestinian and Lebanese dilemmas influenced many writers to change (6). For Jabra then, his exile is the rupture which makes him want to create a different and more rebellious Arabic novel. In Jabra’s early writing, he used the English language but later determined to write in Arabic (Boullata). His use of the Arabic language allowed him to carry and display the Arabic heritage, and his writings influenced many Arab writers (Boullata). The latter facts make clear how Jabra’s exile deepened the need to change. His melancholy was personal and his fight was for the Arabs and himself. He was an intellectual who used art to engage in the

fight and influence others to do the same. His art was novel in its form, rebellious in form and content and liberating in the ideas it spread and the audiences it reached. *In Search of Walid Masoud* might have gained acclaim in the Arab world when it was first published in Arabic. However, it took twenty-two years for this “gripping novel”—as described by its translators—to be translated into English and allow it to reach a Western audience.

C. An Act of Resistance through Writing

The movement of translating Arabic literature into other languages is fairly recent. In “PROTA: The Project for the Translation of Arabic” (1994), Allen explains how translation became more promising around the 1970’s with a number of presses translating in hope that people abroad and around the Middle East would be interested in Arabic literature (165). This was also the time when PROTA started to take shape with its aim to spread “Arabic culture and literature abroad” (166). Jabra’s book is one of the projects translated by PROTA. There are a number of reasons that helped create a worldwide interest in Arabic literature, and therefore increase the need for translation, one being that we are living in “the age of the refugee, the displaced person, the mass migration” (“Reflections of Exile” 174).

Exile has for long been a common experience because of the huge number of émigrés worldwide. Modern Western culture and literary work have been enriched due to the large number of refugees in the West (*Culture and Imperialism* 173). Add to this globalization and the Internet — revolutions that allow more exposure to world problems. The internet has allowed diaspora people, emigres, refugees etc. to be involved in the resistance movements for the homes they care for (Victoria Bernal 2005, Nima Naghibi

2011). Conflicts in the Middle East such as the Gulf war⁶ (1990-91) and Iranian Islamic revolution⁷ (1978-79) aroused international involvement, specifically from the West (US and Europe). These events were widely advertised in global media (Encyclopedia Britannica) and put a spotlight on the Middle East. They help explain why the world audience has become much more willing and enthusiastic to know about the literature from these locations and why it has become more in demand. These events have increased the process of translating the literature of the Arab world.

Translation is one way in which a work of literature can circulate and travel abroad. It has allowed Jabra's work to circulate more. Jabra's novel in its original language, Arabic, might have been considered part of Palestinian and Arab literature, but once translated into English, it became part of world literature. I mentioned in the introduction that when a narrative is created or circulated outside its national borders, it becomes part of world literature. Damrosch states that "All works cease to be the exclusive products of their original culture once they are translated; all become works that only "began" in their original language" (527). When the novel is being read by people of a different culture, it becomes culturally diverse.

This diversity is not new. Literature has for ages worked as a network. In *Islam Translated* (2011), Ronit Ricci states that "[l]iterary networks connected Muslims across boundaries of space and culture, and they helped introduce and sustain a complex web of prior texts and new interpretations that were crucial to the establishment of both local and

⁶ Conflict between Iraq and Kuwait that aroused international intervention from the US and Europe.

⁷ The Islamic revolution that toppled the monarchical rule and turned Iran into an Islamic republic.

global Islamic identities” (1-2). Translations help these networks form and evolve, while exile helps them spread more, and currently, the Internet allows an instant circulation of texts and therefore a wider range of readership and a diversity of readings. What is interesting about Palestinian literature—something that also applies to Said’s and Barghouti’s works — is the notion that the Palestinian wanderer has replaced the former Jewish wanderer, which also adds to the significance of Palestinian literature in today’s world. More importantly, I stated in the introduction that the Palestinian narrative was being covered up by those in power. In “Permission to Narrate,” Said states that this led to a privileged “Western master narrative, highlighting Jewish alienation and redemption – with all of it taking place as a modern spectacle before the world’s eyes.” “To top it all, Palestinians are expected to participate in the dismantling of their own history at the same time” (258), making their struggle to spread their story of major importance.

This is significant for Jabra’s novel because unlike Said’s memoir that was directly published in 2000, in part, because of his place in the West, and Barghouti’s narrative that was originally written in Arabic in 1997, then published in its English translation in 2000 (only three years later), it took Jabra’s novel twenty-two years after its first publication in Arabic to be translated into English and published in 2000. This speaks directly to the prohibition of the Palestinian narrative by Western and Israeli powers. Yet, the changes I discussed above, that brought the Arab world into the spotlight and come years after Said wrote his article in 1984, tell of the possibility that the Palestinian narrative will overcome the restrictions trying to deny it a place in the world.

Another factor that makes Jabra's novel all the more interesting and appealing to a world audience is that the generation of exiles that Said mentions share the experience of resistance – something that Harlow makes clear through the numerous writings and genres she mentions in her book, all of which tackles the same topic, resistance. The simple fact that since the 1930s, 84.6% of the globe has at a point in time been occupied (Loomba 15) is evidence that many in the world understand the meaning of resistance. Exile and resistance are experiences lived by many around the world, and the use of literature to involve oneself in the struggle for the nation is a method that many around the world have used to spread their stories and encourage people's involvement in the struggle. Jabra's novel is a narrative that exceeds expectations in its ability to send a message not only to the people of Palestine and the Arab world, but also to the people of the world. It is world literature in its circulation and translation, and more so in the content of the novel—exile and resistance—that many around the world can relate to.

Jabra's experience of exile, described through Walid in his novel, exemplifies an understanding of the enriching nature of exile without negating the torment that comes with it. His ability to live in harmony on a land different from that of the homeland allows him to prosper in his life and break free from the exile's "single story." It allows him to focus on being an intellectual who speaks for those who cannot speak instead of directing his efforts on homecoming only. He gives the Arab intellectual a place in the struggle for Palestine and the Arab world. As an intellectual, he also participates in raising the status of the Arabic novel, freed from the constraints of form, to reach a global audience that was denied a Palestinian narrative for a long time. This was aided by projects like PROTA.

Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* confirms its commitment to the Palestinian cause but informs the exile of the need to live in harmony with the cultures and people surrounding him. This neither makes him less 'national' nor less of a fighter; instead, it enables him to live life to its full potential while still fighting for his land. After all, the fight is ongoing for as long as the exile seeks a return. Mourid Barghouti, unlike Said and Jabra, is able to return to Palestine. He fulfills the dream by reaching the utopian goal that is embedded in every exile's consciousness (as said by Alegría); the dream of return. Yet, his homecoming is different from what he had dreamed of.

CHAPTER III

ALIENATION IN RETURN

“Are you you? Am I me?/ Does the stranger return to where he was?/ Is he himself returning to a place?” (55)

- Mourid Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*.

Above are a few simple questions that leave a powerful impact on the reader. They speak of the dilemma of the returnee, as described by Hammer in the introduction: the inability to recognize oneself, the impossibility of recognizing one's home, and the difficulty of once again being part of the homeland that had turned to no more than a memory described in words and images, in Barghouti's case, for as long as thirty years. *I Saw Ramallah* narrates his journey of return to Palestine whilst taking us in flashbacks to his life in exile, his estrangement and distance from his homeland. The autobiographical narrative recounts Barghouti's return to Ramallah whilst reminiscing and recalling his memories of the place he is unable to recognize, or as the questions infer, unable to identify with.

I Saw Ramallah was described by Said as “one of the finest existential accounts of Palestinian displacement that we now have” (vii). It was enthusiastically received in the Arab world when it was first published in Arabic and won the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature in 1997. Its translation into English by Ahdaf Soueif is considered more than convincing and astonishing. This came naturally for an “important Egyptian novelist and critic,” as Said described Soueif (viii). It has been said that Barghouti went easy on Israel in

his account, yet, it is his focus on the emotional aspect of return and lack of concern with the politics that address the occupation that makes this autobiographical account so genuine to what the returnee really feels (*I Saw Ramallah, Forward x*).

I Saw Ramallah found local and international accreditation and acclaim in the original Arabic version, as well as in its translation into English. This is made evident by the number of authors and writers who use it as a reference in their papers. These papers address many of the issues associated with the return like its pain, the continued disillusionment, and the reality shock. It is also referenced in studies about similar types of autobiographical writings and to describe the prose poetry style of writing that Barghouti uses (Christopher Harker; Githa Hariharan; Ilana Feldman; Khaled Furani; Lynne D. Rogers; William Parry). Unfortunately, little has been done to study the narrative thoroughly. In “Washing words: The Politics of Water in Mourid Barghouti’s *I Saw Ramallah*” (2012), David Farrier concentrates on the idea of environmental politics and the importance of water in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He compares Barghouti’s writing style to the fluidity of water, but focusses his paper on how Barghouti’s narrative addresses the water crisis in Palestine. Alternately, in “Who would dare to make it into an abstraction: Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*” (2007), Anna Bernard explains how Barghouti’s narrative proves that there cannot be a unified Palestinian identity which “complicates both Palestinian nationalism and the idea of a Palestinian national literature” (666). My study focuses on Barghouti’s relationship with his homeland and how his return impacts his self-identification. I also shed light, similar to Bernard, on his relationship with those who stayed inside Palestine and whether he can, after his return, become one of them. In this

process, I examine how his identification with his homeland has impacted the place of the narrative in world literature.

Barghouti, the returnee, is uncertain of who or what really changed—him or his homeland. He left Palestine when they were both young. He was born in 1944, at the time when Western colonialism came to an end, when people across the world were aspiring for independence, and at the time when the term ‘nation-state’ began to matter. Palestine is one of these places. While many nation-states were born and allowed to rise and prosper, Palestine’s growth was—and still is—hindered by occupation. Thirty years later, he returned a different man with new experiences while she was forcefully destroyed. He returned to his memory of her, but she welcomed him with her reality, a reality different from what he had expected. Neither can be blamed for this; rather, it is the consequence of an exile that forces the exiled into believing in a utopian return to the homeland.

His narrative explores both pain and happiness. Barghouti has fulfilled the ‘ultimate’ desire for the exile, which is return. He allows us to see its importance, and at the same time sheds light on its reality, i.e. whether it really provides the sense of belonging the exile hopes for. I argue that homecoming does not provide the solace the returnee seeks; rather, it reminds him of the estrangement and its pain. Nevertheless, return remains to be a must for the exile because it provides the assurance that the land of origin will forever be the exile’s homeland.

I previously mentioned that the desire to return is not only about the need for a homeland; rather, with the birth of nation-states came other implications. The nation-state provides its people legal rights and a representation – through embassies, for example. I

related in the introduction that Palestinians are still denied many civil rights. I also mentioned that I will treat the term nation as an “imagined political community” (Anderson) but that is not to deny that borders and official documents exist in life. In addition, Said explains that “nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage” (“Reflections on Exile” 176). This says that for a person to fully qualify as being part of a nation-state, there needs to be both a legal status stamped on a passport as well as an internal affiliation that exists within the person concerned. The two together are essential for the formation of an identity and by extension, the establishment of a national identity. Return is, therefore, part of the process for the fulfillment of nationalism. It resembles a declaration that this land is the Palestinian nation-state which, unfortunately, the Palestinians are denied access to due to lack of official documents to grant them that right. These papers are needed for border crossings, the passage that people take to move in and out of a place. Borders are a significant part of the Palestinian story and it is at “the al-Karama crossing” (10), referred to in English as the Allenby bridge⁸, that Barghouti starts his return journey.

A. Crossing into Uncertainty

The narrative starts on “The Bridge” connecting Jordan to Palestine, which is the title of the first chapter and the term his mother uses for the crossing (10). It speaks of the significance of a bridge as a place that connects, but also separates two places. I discussed in the previous chapter that the bridge is a passage that connects two places. This positive

⁸ The bridge was first built in 1918 over the remainders of an old Ottoman colonial era bridge by the British general Edmund Allenby (Johann Bussow 448).

connotation, however, can be reversed because it is also the passage that separates places, which is the case for Palestine. Barghouti's feelings as he crosses the bridge are eloquently described. Like the bridge's double meaning, Barghouti has multiple feelings. In the beginning, he seems happy when he says: "Behind me the world, ahead of me my world." This excitement is made blurry by the heat that causes him to sweat and therefore, he is neither able to clearly see nor remember his past (1). Although the words "ahead of me my world" imply an optimistic beginning, they also hint to a separation from the world. Barghouti changes his tone and we get into the nostalgia of exile. He relates a flashback of the first time he passed this bridge while leaving Palestine to pursue his undergraduate studies in Cairo. He recalls the time when Ramallah fell into the hands of the occupation. It was a hot summer day and he was in the examination hall hearing sounds that he assumes to be explosions. He turns out to be right and for the first time in his life, he encounters the pain of being called displaced or '*naziheen*' as is stated in the book. "Displacement is like death" (3), he says. Due to displacement he "lives hours in every moment" (4). This is followed by his chain of thoughts on the matter, a come back to the reality of today, before we are introduced to a new topic (5).

The flashbacks and unsettled style of writing that Barghouti uses, similar to Jabra's novel, can be identified with his identity as an exile. He moves from narrating his current experience to his memories and flashbacks within the first three pages of the book, clearly displaying disorientation. The form of the narrative is fragmented, starting with the present while anticipating the future, moving to the past and back to the present. The reader can

recognize the tantalizing impact of exile on Barghouti—an experience that we are able to sense from the structure and content of his narrative.

His words at the sight of the land of Palestine—the supposed moment of pleasure—are blunt and abrupt. He asks: “what is so special about it except that we have lost it?” at once indicating his own skepticism about its importance. He answers: “It is a land, like any land” inferring to the reader that he realizes the triviality of the land itself. In the first chapter, I conclude by saying that Said has lost his love for land, while in the second chapter, I explain that Jabra was able to belong to a group of people in Iraq, instead of land. I mention this because it raises questions about the importance of a land, similar to what Barghouti is asking. What would be the value of Palestine if they had not lost it? This is a question that I cannot answer, but Barghouti is faced with. He shockingly adds that they “sing for it only so that [they] may remember the humiliation of having had it taken from [them]” (6–7). These statements are different from the expected expressions of happiness that one imagines should accompany the exile moments away from his awaited return.

Barghouti angrily describes how something as inconsequential as a wooden bridge could have been the reason for generations of Palestinians not being able to return to their homeland (9). He projects feelings of contempt towards the occupier, and he is angry because he realizes how close the land is, and how short the border crossing is. The journey which he had dreamed of for the past thirty years turns out to be an easy journey. To him, this is upsetting. Instead of feeling content, he feels disgrace and defeat—probably caused by the realization that until this day, Palestinians have not been able to return, and the only thing stopping them is a wooden bridge and a single soldier (9).

The frustration in this scene seems to be aided by nature where it is “very hot” (1) because “the sun is a scorpion” (8), “the June air today boils” (11) and he is “struck by displacement” (4). This part is reminiscent of Ghassan Kanafani⁹ and his novel, *Men in the Sun* (1999), himself a renowned writer and political activist who is mentioned by Barghouti in the narrative. In Kanafani’s *Men in the Sun*, the protagonists are crossing the border from Iraq to Kuwait. They are, similar to Barghouti, crossing a border but they are hiding inside an empty water tank in the boiling hot desert that is supposedly their bearer to a better life in Kuwait. They die at the crossing. Barghouti’s scene resembles the same hell that Kanafani describes in his novel as if saying that even the border crossing that leads to his homeland resembles a type of hell. Every crossing the exile goes through generates its own pain.

When Barghouti mentions Kanafani, he is remembering the dead—like Kanafani’s dead protagonists—his grandmother, father, his brother Mounif, then comes Kanafani followed by Naji al-‘Ali¹⁰, a political cartoonist and another Palestinian icon of resistance (15-17). Mentioning these men alongside his family members speaks of the influence they had on Barghouti. He places them at an equal rank to his family but this also explains the important role they played in his life as a writer fighting for the Palestinian cause. At the

⁹ A famous Palestinian journalist, novelist and writer whose work was deeply embedded in the politics of resistance in Palestine and the Arab world. He was the person who coined the term ‘resistance literature’. He was assassinated in 1972 by the Mossad (Israeli agents) in a car explosion (Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation).

¹⁰ An influential political cartoonist who created the character ‘Hanthalah’. His drawings commented on the political situation in Palestine and the Arab world. He was assassinated in London in 1987 by an unknown sniper (Arjan El-Fassed).

same time, he is remembering the people who were unable to cross this border back to Palestine, the way he is.

Jabra's protagonist Walid, who disappears at a border crossing, is another example that calls into question the significance of these borders. In "The Arabic Novel between Aesthetic Concerns and the Causes of Man," Mejcher-Atassi says: "Similar to a black hole in which the novel's protagonist disappears... the border crossing... is the very opposite of the exile's idealized homeland" (149). This is not only the place that allows exiles to step into their homeland but it is also a place of suffering for Palestinians. Like Kanafani's protagonists who died there and Walid who disappeared there, many Palestinians were denied entry into Palestine on "The Bridge." In *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (1997), Rashid Khalid says that crossing borders is "the quintessential Palestinian experience" that reinforces Palestinians' identity as exiles and reminds them of it (1). Every movement can be painful, including the return journey back home. This brings to the fore Said's statement that "homecoming is out of the question" ("Reflections on Exile" 179). Although the exiles desire to return, achieving it does not mean that it is necessarily a happy one.

Scholarly works on exile remind us of the necessity of return for the exile. It is part of the "single story" of exile explained earlier. I mentioned Alegría's statement, which says that return is part of the exile's consciousness. It is astonishing, therefore, that the reaction Barghouti displays is the first thing he feels when he has just fulfilled the dream for the exile. It makes one question whether this really is the exile's ultimate desire. Said asks a similar question in *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986) where he says:

All of us speak of awdah, “return,” but do we mean that literally, or do we mean “we must restore ourselves to ourselves”? The latter is the real point, I think, although I know many Palestinians who want their houses and their way of life back, exactly. But is there any place that fits us, together with our accumulated memories and experiences? (33).

Said raises another interesting point, which is the restoration of the self. This is The belief that in return, the exile will get back to his/her real life, but if life is real in the homeland only, then what should the years of life outside the homeland be considered? This paradox in ideas is what Barghouti goes through as he returns to Palestine. He is uncertain of his land and its value, and his happiness is incomplete. He is “not a victorious soldier kissing the earth” of his land. He “did not kiss the earth.” He “was not sad and [he] did not weep” (12). According to Hammer, this is one of the possible reactions for the returnee at the time of crossing, while the other can be a reaction of joy or also a mixture of both (127). The “single story” is no longer valid here because each exile experiences a different kind of exile, and a different return (if he returns). Reality is what prevails at the moment of return, and the “single story” of a homelessness that can be cured on the homeland becomes a myth.

His confusion is intensified when a “feeling of depression” (24) – instead of joy – is what Barghouti senses when his “country carries” him (23) because the place is filled with Israeli flags. Even when he reaches the part of the country with Palestinian flags, he starts to question the place and himself. Barghouti says:

I used to tell my Egyptian friends at university that Palestine was green and covered with trees and shrubs and wildflowers. What are these hills? Bare and chalky. Have I been lying to people, then? ... Did I paint for strangers an ideal picture of Palestine because I had lost it? I said to myself, when Tamim [his son] comes here he will think I have been describing another country (28).

It is no surprise that Barghouti says: “Even what I am doing now is not clear to me” as he journeys the bus towards Jericho (26). The place and its features have changed. Like an aging human being, his homeland has changed. I stated in the introduction that the exile clings to the nation due to the disconnectedness he encounters in his exile (“Reflections on Exile”). Barghouti’s words show evidence of his attachment to the nation. He talks about it to his friends and his son by recalling his memories of it as illustrated in the quote above. Yet, what is more prevalent is his confusion that distances him from the country to the extent that he thinks he was “describing another country” (28).

Barghouti’s description and memory of Palestine are not false because the landscape has, in fact, changed due to the brutality of the occupation. In “Preparing for the Harvest” (2012), William Parry quotes a passage from Barghouti’s narrative saying, “For the Palestinian, olive oil is ... the reward of the autumn, the boast of the storeroom, the wealth of the family across centuries” (58). He moves on to explain how the Israeli state burns and vandalizes olive groves yearly to deny Palestinians their connection with the Palestinian land and kill the autumn tradition of harvesting these groves. They also deny them access to their lands so the olives are left to die. The Israeli state does this to affirm its

own story of reviving a barren Palestinian land. Israelis burn and destroy the nature only to rebuild and regrow the way they want. The issue of environmental politics is tackled by Farrier, who explains the significance of water in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, “In 1953, 1,250 million cubic meters of water flowed annually beneath the Allenby bridge; in 1994, three years before Barghouti’s return in 1997, this was reduced to between 152–230 million cubic meters” (189). This withdrawal is caused by the Israeli state in their attempt to “make the desert bloom” (190), as I have stated earlier.

Barghouti’s astonishment at the condition of the land and his nation-state seems natural considering what the land has been through. He is not alone in this situation. A number of intellectuals who returned or came for visits have experienced the same cognitive dissonance as Barghouti. In his article “Homecoming” (1995), Noman Kanafani, a professor and research director at the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute in Ramallah, says: “There was nothing special in the smell. I always thought that a homeland smelled differently. Nor did I feel the landscape as part of my body, although I thought it would be” (40). Similarly, in “The 1948 Exodus: A Family Story” (1994), Ghada Karmi, another intellectual and novelist, says “I stayed for a long time, trying somehow to absorb what remnants of my history still lingered there, but no use. The place for me was desecrated and spoiled” (40). The feelings these exiles express are genuine. The damage caused by their absence for decades cannot be cured within days of arrival, which is something that Ilana Feldman in “Home as a Refrain: Remembering and Living Displacement in Gaza” (2007) asserts to as she goes through the memoirs of a number of Palestinian writers including Barghouti (11). Hammer says a similar statement: “You do

not arrive unchanged at the moment of joy dreamt of for so long across the years. The years are on your shoulders” (72). Their uncertainty and inability to recognize their homeland is genuine and their questions about their own happiness at the moment of return start to make sense.

B. Experiencing Difference

Barghouti’s uncertainty at the time causes him to alienate himself from the people around him where he says: “These are my people. Why do I not talk with them?” (28). In fact, the majority of the narration is Barghouti soliloquizing. He is self-contained in a circle of thoughts and it is evident from a number of questions he relates in the narrative that he spent much of his time thinking about exile and return. In one of the passages, which extends a little more than a page that thoroughly explains this, he says:

What do your people know of you now? ... What do they know of your language? ...the language of your mind, of your speech, of your silence and isolation ... They have not watched your hair turn gray ... They do not know the bad traits you rid yourself of ... They think you were not that upset about the cutting down of the fig tree. ... They do not know all that has happened to you in their (your?) absence. ... You too do not know the times they have been through. ... Cutting [the fig tree] down must have been necessary at a particular moment that I do not recognize because I was there and she was here ... (85).

I explained in the introduction that exiles feel a constant connection to the nation. However, when Barghouti is amongst his people, and within the land that should be his center of gravity, he is more alienated than ever. He does not know them, and they do not know him. They are different. He “chattered an entire lifetime to [him]self while [his] guests thought [he] was silent” (182). He is irritated about the cutting down of the fig tree because he wanted to come back to the same place he left, but that is not possible. Bernard tackles the issue of the lag that occurs between those who stayed, even if displaced within Palestine, and returnees, where she explains that this gap in time makes him anxious (679). She explains instances like the passage above as shedding light on the difference in perceptions for Barghouti, who left after 1967, and explains what it really means to be a Palestinian who stayed. She adds: “it is Barghouti’s responsibility not to condemn those decisions without trying to comprehend them” – here referring to the cutting down of the fig tree (679). While exiles thought of Palestine as a memory, residents lived it as a reality. The years and experiences shaped them differently and the land and people that the exile thinks are still his, are not really his.

The difference between the two extends to their perception of the occupier. Barghouti notes that the soldier standing at the border checkpoint is nothing more than a “mere employee” (12). He is confused about whether the way the soldier is standing is intentional, given his position as a Zionist who is responsible for Barghouti’s exile, or whether Barghouti himself wants to believe the perception he sees of the soldier. It is the stereotypical look on an Israeli soldier. For some returnees, this stereotype decreases when they speak with a soldier who turns out to be nice or even apologizes for the delays at

checkpoints (Hammer 126). It is another perplexing experience for the exile to realize that the ‘enemy’ is still human. In his play, *The Rape (Al-Ightisab)*, written in 1990, the playwright and critic Sa’adallah Wannous¹¹ “broke down the barrier to broaching the subject of Israel: he was able, for the first time in the history of Arab theater, to present multifaceted Israeli characters on the stage” (xi). He presents an Israeli doctor who is “more human than the image depicted by the machinery of the regime” The play sparked much controversy because it questioned the possibility of negotiations between the two parties leading somewhere (*Doomed by Hope: Essays on Arab Theatre* 2012, Eyad Houssami 80). When the soldier or the Israeli citizen believed to be a monster turns out to be human, then there is a possibility that many of the thoughts and memories about the home of origin and return to it are in reality different.

The exiles live, feel, and see the situation of Palestine through media outlets and stories exchanged by different people. I mentioned in the introduction that Western powers inhibited the spread of any information related to Palestine. Palestinians are therefore likely to hold on to any piece of information they have on Palestine whether negative or positive. Unlike those inside Palestine, the exiles are unaware of the daily encounters with the enemy, whether good or bad. The interference of media and politics further increases the lag between the exiled and those inside. Barghouti does not provide a description of how the inhabitants of Palestine view the occupiers, but I am trying to emphasize the point that

¹¹ Wannous (1941-1997) is of Syrian decent. He was committed to politicizing theatre and treated the theatre as a public forum where people could engage in debates. Amongst his other works are *Evening Party for the Fifth of June (Haflat Samar min ajl al-Khamis min Huzyran)*, *The Adventure of Mamluk Jaber’s Head (Mughamarat Ra’s al Mamluk Jaber)*, *The King is the King (Al-Malik Huwa Al-Malik)*, and *The Drunken Days (Al-Ayyam Al-Makhmura)*.

the exiled and the ones inside will always have different perspectives. It is noteworthy that the first person speaker and one-side view in the narrative is, as I stated in the introduction, This is expected in an autobiographical essay because it is a genre that focuses on the self; it describes its author's emotions without taking the surroundings into much consideration.

But on examining real life, which Hammer tackles, we are able to see what the other side thinks. The inhabitants of Palestine are not all as welcoming as Barghouti portrays them. Returnees are envied for being wealthy due to their work outside, for being provided with jobs at the PLO—probably because of their education—and for being aided by the Palestinian government through home and school provisions (98). This takes me back to the point stated by Said: “But is there any place that fits us, together with our accumulated memories and experiences?” Can the Palestinian nation across diaspora and within Palestine still be part of one country or has exile made the exiles wanderers who can never fully belong to any one place? The exiles who returned continue to write poetry about return although many of them have experienced the disappointment of returning to a land that is different from that of their dreams (Hammer 84). Although the homeland is not the same home they picture and describe in their poetry, the idea of return remains to be the quintessential necessity for the exile. Said clearly says in his foreword to the narrative that “despite its joy and moments of exuberance this narrative return at bottom reenacts exile rather than repatriation. This is what gives it both its tragic dimension and its appealing precariousness” (xi). Barghouti is not fully capable of finding his place within his home because return does not lead to ultimate happiness. Said said: “homecoming is out of the

question.” Still, Barghouti awaits the day when Tamim, his son, will return with him to Palestine (182). No matter how much the homeland has changed, it remains home.

C. Breaking Rigidity through Writing

Barghouti attempts “to envision a Palestinian unity that does not rely on a narrative of shared identity”, which is what Bernard says (666). Barghouti realizes that he and the people in diaspora are different from those who have remained in Palestine, but they remain a nation in their commitment to take back their homeland. This explains that there is no criteria to specify who can or cannot be Palestinian, or who does or does not belong to Palestine. The official documents, I mentioned in earlier, grant people a citizenship but they do not deny people like Barghouti the Palestinian nationality. He wants to break free from the rigidity that the world has imposed on many people, especially refugees, allowing a piece of paper to decide for a person where or what they belong to. These rules and rigidity are imposed everywhere in Palestine, including the landscape and language. Speaking about language, Barghouti says:

The prolonged Israeli occupation has brought sclerosis to our language. Our poems have been more pulverized than our streets. Yet, the majority of us are aware of the fact that we must resist military meter, simplistic imagery and *khaki poems*” (qtd. in Furani 301).

This rigidity can be seen in the occupation’s attempt to “make Palestinian spaces into abstractions” (“Spacing Palestine through the Home” 328), the barred structuring of the Palestinian geography in the form of dividing Palestine into different zones, and the

building of the separation walls and road blocks (Farrier 189). It can also be seen in the occupiers' attempt to limit the use of the Arabic language inside Palestine, which Kanafani addresses in *Al-Adab Al-Falastini Al-Muqawim: Tahta Al-Ihtilal (1948-1968)* (1968) (*Palestinian Literature of Resistance: Under Occupation 1948-1968*). Kanafani explores how the Israeli state uses terror and seduction to either deny the Arabs of Israel a decent Arabic education or to completely stop them from pursuing an education.

Barghouti fights this rigidity in both the content and form of his autobiographical account. In "Rhythms of the Secular: The Politics of Modernizing Arab Poetic Forms" (2008), Khaled Furani says that modern Arabic prose poetry, which is what Barghouti uses in his narrative, breaks borders. He refers to Muhammad Zakariya, who describes it as "melting" (301). Alternately, Farrier calls Barghouti's narrative "fluid" and liquid-like (189). Barghouti includes short episodes of poetry within his prose and expresses personal feelings. The intermixing of prose and poetry breaks down the rigid form of the narrative and allows the two to melt into one another. Furani considers this a form of resistance against the stiff militant structures (301). This view on Barghouti's work allows it to be part of Harlow's "arena of struggle" in the sense that it brings the fight to the form of the text which wants to break the borders of the occupier. His choice of writing in the Arabic language makes it all the more powerful a weapon to engage in the fight because it resists the Israeli authority's attempts to deny Palestinians from using their Arabic language.

Barghouti's engagement is very personal because it takes the fight to the homeland. He is able to write from within Palestine, and better yet, his work was translated into English three years after its original publication, allowing his story to circulate readily.

Barghouti's work ensures that another part of the Palestinian reality gets a "permission to narrate." In this way, Barghouti's work finds a place for itself in world literature. Yet, Barghouti's work belongs to Palestine and its diaspora before anything else. This narrative is personal to the Palestinian exile more than anyone else. It is filled with memories of Palestine, it speaks of the land of Palestine, and it tackles the pain that remains to exist as long as the occupation prevails. He mentions the figs and olive trees that are very precious to Palestinians (58-59), he mentions Ghassan Kanafani and Naji Al-Ali (16-17), and the list which is specific to Palestinians can go on. He explicitly condemns Arab writers who seek the translation of their works, "as though he wants the English to read them so that the Arabs know him" and considers this to be "funny and sad" (121). These ideas reinforce the specificity of the book towards a Palestinian audience.

Unlike Jabra's novel and Said's memoir, Barghouti has returned, and he expresses his view on return, which might cause some to blame him or others to consider him a returnee who does not fit in this place. Yet, the Palestinian nation extends across the world and those who aspire to return are still many. Hammer explains that even those who returned for visits after long periods of exile did it to establish their identity as Palestinians because it is something that they never wanted to let go of even if they chose to live abroad eventually. Regardless of how they feel about the country, they continue to write their songs, poems, and narratives about it. Through Barghouti, they will read of a different reality. The pain of knowing that the country has transformed and deteriorated and that the pristine memory or idea of Palestine is not the same might urge more people to continue the

struggle that will lead them to return. The place for the Palestinian exile it seems remains to be in the world as a writer and a wanderer, even if he does return to Palestine.

Barghouti's determination to return home and his love for his country radiate from the pages of his narrative. His agony and even embarrassment for not being able to identify with his homeland are his way of expressing his affection for Palestine. His strong emotions of frustration at his inability to recognize Palestine take the emphasis away from the fact that he does not recognize the Palestine of today, turning his search for homecoming into the narrative's main focus. His search highlights the importance of home and homecoming for Barghouti, even as he returns to Palestine, and foregrounds his identity as a Palestinian intellectual.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I have examined three narratives by Palestinian writers living in exile abroad (in the United States), within the Arab world (in Iraq), and in Palestine. Their lives in different locations resulted in the creation of different identities and national affiliations. Said lived his whole life outside Palestine, with very brief exceptions in his childhood, but remained committed to it in his writing. In studying Said's memoir, I argue that he is not only a victim of exile from the homeland, but he is also the victim of a life lived under colonial rule, engulfed by his family's cocoon, and the victim of discrimination that reminded him of his difference. His feeling of isolation and restlessness were the result of years of constant movements and wanderings. Said's exile is significantly different from that of the Palestinian refugees for whom UNRWA camps were established—the same can be said about Jabra and Barghouti. Nevertheless, he displays the same traits of an exile as described in "Reflections on Exile," which I quoted in my introduction. His exile made him, as I mentioned in chapter one, the perfect wanderer who lost love for all places as stated by Hugo of St. Victor, but it did not make him abandon Palestine. He was never able to find a place for himself in the world, but he found peace in accepting his role as a writer in the struggle for Palestine. His exile aided him in addressing the Palestinian cause from an influential position due to his prominent role as a public intellectual and a Professor at Columbia University, one of the best universities in the US.

While Said wrote about his personal experience of exile in his memoir, *Out of Place*, in his novel, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, Jabra chose a fictitious character albeit with autobiographical traits. His protagonist Walid Masoud lived a prosperous life in Iraq,

and like Jabra maintained a strong bond with Palestine through resistance literature. Using Bhabha's notion of hybridity and life in an "interstitial space," I show that Walid, and by extension Jabra, is capable of living a life in between two homelands, Palestine and Iraq, represented by Walid's absence at a border crossing, i.e. between two different lands. I argue that the "single story" — the concept by Adichie—that depicts exiles as living for the fetishized idea of return only, and considers exile "a jealous state" that makes the exiled envious and isolated as a myth ("Reflections on Exile" 178). Walid enjoyed a fruitful life in Iraq, had friendships, and multiple relations. He found a home in Iraq. His desire to return did not diminish but it was not fetishized; rather, it pushed him to become a better writer, an intellectual and an influence both in Iraq and Palestine, and in fact, the Arab world and beyond.

Barghouti's autobiographical essay, *I Saw Ramallah*, chronicles the first time he went to Palestine after thirty years in exile. Instead of feeling happiness in return, he had to "coax joy" into his heart (34). Barghouti feels as isolated as ever. He can neither relate to nor understand the people who stayed inside Palestine. He cannot identify with the landscape because time and occupation have changed the land and with it, the people of the land. Here, I conclude that the myth of a utopic return is shattered by the reality that the exile cannot belong to a place that he does not recognize within moments of his return. Utopia is turned into dystopia. His return is catastrophic because it comes with alienation and a realization that there cannot be a utopian return, which Said realizes when he says that "homecoming is out of the question" ("Reflections on Exile" 179). Still, narratives on dystopia remind us that these places should be restored to their original glory. Barghouti is

shocked by the truth, but he still has hope for Palestine. He remains committed to the nation-state as his choice to live there and bring his son back the show. Nevertheless, the “single story” of return that grants the exile solace is not viable. What remains is the exile’s need to return because Palestine remains his home.

The three narratives are part of resistance literature because of the topic they address and the fact that they tell the stories of Palestinians whose very existence was being denied by Israel and the West, as I explained in my introduction. Said’s memoir sheds light on the dilemma of constantly feeling out of place and eventually finding peace in it. His place in the West gave him much access to a Western audience and allowed a better circulation of his work. Jabra’s novel gives the readers more hope and explains the role of the intellectual in the Arab world in maintaining the fight for Palestine. Its reference to both the pen and arms as means of resistance, which I explained in chapter two, calls on people to write and ensure that the Palestinian cause is not forgotten, but it also raises questions about armed resistance. The translation of his novel into English twenty-two years after it was first published in Arabic shows that interest in Arabic literature is growing and that Palestinian voices are gaining ground. The change in attitude towards Arabic literature is made clear by the fact that Barghouti’s *I Saw Ramallah* was translated from Arabic into English only three years after it was first published.

Books, contrary to their authors, do not need a home. However, we live in a world that categorizes its inhabitants. This extends to humans as well as their creations. I suggested earlier that the narratives by Said, Jabra, and Barghouti belong to the world of wanderers, similar to their authors because they are part of exile literature. Yet, their

categorization cannot be limited to this group only. Their literary texts can be categorized under world literature provided that they circulate outside their national boundaries or are born beyond them. At the same time, as Damrosch says, books need to be categorized under a given national literature before their circulation can begin (“World Literature, National Contexts” 513). Said’s memoir is part of world literature according to Damrosch’s definition. However, it is not born as part of Palestinian national literature in the first place – as Damrosch says it should – because Said did not consider himself as part of one place. His memoir is world literature from the moment of its birth before being part of national literature.

In its translation, Jabra’s novel speaks to a world audience is also part of world literature. However, in its original Arabic version, *In Search of Walid Masoud* was part of both Palestinian and Arabic literature before having circulated as world literature. Unlike Said’s memoir and Jabra’s novel, Barghouti’s autobiographical essay is deeply embedded in Palestinian literature because it explains the specific predicament of the Palestinian ‘returnees.’ The narrative is clearly oriented towards a Palestinian audience with its reference to oil and olives, the mention of Palestinian resistance heroes and Barghouti’s unappreciative look on Arab authors who seek the translation of their texts to be appreciated by Western audiences. Still, *I Saw Ramallah* becomes part of world literature in its translation and circulation.

Brian T. Edwards, in his article, “The World, the Text, and the Americanist” explains how the digital age has transformed and profoundly influenced the circulation of texts. Their historicization and contextualization in order to categorize them have become

increasingly difficult (231-232) because unlike humans, books do not need travel documents that restrict their movement. Books, even if censored, still find a way to seep into new cultures. This allows Palestinian narratives to travel and find a place in the world despite Israeli occupation. It also enables many books to become part of world literature even if not officially recognized as such.

A similar predicament is faced by the Palestinians whose nation-state has been occupied, except that they cannot cross borders as easily as books. The digital age which made it easier for books to circulate also made it easier for Palestinian exiles across the world to communicate, perhaps making their estrangement less painful, but also allowing them to be more in touch with the people inside Palestine. This change could make the exile experience lived by people of the twenty-first century very different from the experiences narrated by Said, Jabra, and Barghouti. Each of the authors described and lived a predicament very unique to his location and time, whose impact can also be seen on their books. Their experiences break down the “single story” by simply proving that no exile lives a life like the other, but what they do share is the hope and dream of one day returning to their homeland.

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