

## **Narrative Anxiety and Representations of Contrapuntal Vision in Exile Literature: A Reading of Edward Said's "Out of Place" and "Reflections on Exile"**

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### **Abstract:**

Research into the subject of exile demonstrates that the process of consciousness—which transcends the framework of immediate reality—is what shapes the intellectual expression of exile. It presents an exceptional and authentic vision held by the exile toward their experience and ordeal in a foreign land. Through his autobiography, "**Out of Place**," and his collected essays in "**Reflections on Exile**," Edward Said represents a model of the Palestinian intellectual with an original and profound perspective on exile as a complex concept and a harsh experience. In this context, suffering and deprivation become a catalyst for writing and creativity, and a rich space that allows the exiled intellectual to question freely; it serves as an opportunity for deep reflection and the creation of an alternative to confront unjust practices.

**Contrapuntal exile** formed a complex relationship within Edward Said's imagination. His **Contrapuntal Perspective** relies on dismantling contradictions and moving beyond a monocular (one-sided) view. This creates an opportunity to read "the Other" and deal with the differences and contradictions produced by hybrid identities and those formed in diaspora and exile. To Said, counterpoint represents a state of creative, linguistic, and intellectual liberation where horizontal voices become no less important—aesthetically or stylistically—than vertical voices.

Through the phenomenon of counterpoint, the process of understanding differences in identity, history, and culture becomes more meaningful and an inescapable existential necessity. Consequently, the humanization of literature becomes an urgent necessity for the reader, critic, and writer alike. In this way, **contrapuntal reading** evolves into an epistemological critical tool for dismantling the contradictions between the Self and the Other amidst a multiplicity of voices, narratives, and discourses of all colors, spectra, and races.

**Keywords:** Exile, Narrative, Contrapuntality, Identity, The Other.

## Introduction

Following the 1948 Nakba, which shook the foundations of Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims at large, and the subsequent displacement of thousands into the diaspora and exile, forced banishment left a profound impact on the psyches of the writers and intellectuals of the "Negative Land." It affected their lives, their futures, and consequently, their mindsets, visions, and creative outputs, which later became known as **Exile Literature**. The ordeal of exile birthed painful and difficult questions within the Palestinian collective consciousness regarding the **anxiety of identity and belonging**, the concept of **home**—which remained ever-present in the consciousness of the displaced—and the nature of **being, existential angst**, and the state of **fragmentation** suffered by a disjointed Arab world.

Palestine formed a pervasive and deeply rooted presence in the development and personality of the intellectual and critic **Edward Said**. This presence helped crystallize his perceptions and positions toward the theme of exile and its facets, such as the formation of identity and the blurring of belonging and truncated existence. It is no wonder that Said's experience in exile as a Palestinian intellectual, far from his homeland, adds depth to exile as both a concept and a vision within the context of the various societies and cultures he inhabited. This occurred amidst constant migration and the instability he endured, much like all exiles in alien environments that were sometimes characterized by a hostility that hindered their integration and harmony within the world of exile.

Therefore, we have chosen to make this study an attempt to examine the **problematic concept of exile** in Edward Said's vision through his experience as an exiled intellectual and academic. It explores how this tragic experience becomes an incentive for writing and creativity among exiles, and to what extent his unique cultural background—in which East and West merged—contributed to the crystallization of his global orientation and **contrapuntal thinking**.

### 1. The Chronology of Compound Negation in Edward Said's Experience

The Palestinian writer and thinker **Edward Said** (1935–2003) lived the experience of exile par excellence. As soon as he reached the age of thirteen, his Jerusalemite family fled to Egypt following the **1948 Nakba**. His was a Christian family consisting of a Palestinian father who held American citizenship and a Palestinian mother who, at a later stage in her life, obtained Lebanese citizenship. There (in Egypt), as the son of an American businessman, Said was educated in American schools under foreign administrations, studying primarily in English and secondarily in French.

His parents lived intermittently between Palestine at times and Egypt and Lebanon at others. Consequently, his upbringing as a child and adolescent was characterized by a **duality of living** between the Talbiya neighborhood in West Jerusalem at one stage and the Zamalek neighborhood in Cairo at another, not to mention their periodic travels to Lebanon, specifically the "Dhour El Choueir" area.<sup>(1)</sup>

Said attended Victoria College in Cairo, and in 1951, his father sent him to a school in Massachusetts, USA—an elite preparatory boarding school from which he graduated in 1953. In 1957, Said earned his undergraduate degree from **Princeton University**, followed by a Master's degree (1960) and a Doctorate in English Literature (1964) from **Harvard**

**University.** He subsequently began teaching at **Columbia University** in New York, which became his academic home for the remainder of his intellectual career. New York City later became his place of exile and residence until his death. In America, he obtained American citizenship and held positions as a visiting professor at universities such as Harvard, Stanford, and others.<sup>(2)</sup>

Said remained isolated from the Middle East until the late sixties, specifically until **1967**, when the war between the Arabs and the Jews uprooted him from his primary focus on English and Comparative Literature. This sparked a "second birth" for him as a Palestinian and an Arab, reconnecting him with the Arab world. Thus, he found himself thinking and writing **contrapuntally**, driven by his Arab and American experiences.

"The event that influenced his thinking was the Six-Day War in 1967. This was a confrontation that undoubtedly left Egyptians and Palestinians in a state of humiliated defeat. Edward Said's family was residing in Cairo while he had been living in the United States since 1951, and he had not yet adopted a political perspective before 1967. After this date, he decided that his existence involved two entirely different levels: at the university, which was his professional world, he never referred to his Palestinian origins and studied European or American authors; outside the university walls, however, he became increasingly involved in the affairs of his plundered homeland. Said joined the Palestinian National Council in 1977, which was the parliament-in-exile for his non-existent homeland".<sup>(3)</sup>

In 1992, Said visited Palestine with his family after an absence of forty-five years. His visit to the old house where he spent his childhood was deeply moving—a shock through which he experienced an intense emotional reconnection.

Said was exiled from his culture at least three times:

1. **First**, as a Palestinian expelled from his land and branded with the status of "refugee" wherever he went.
2. **Second**, because it is not easy to be of Arab origin and culture in a West dominated by groups hostile to Arabs and their culture.
3. **Finally**, he was exiled to some extent by his own kin for frequently "singing outside the flock" (dissenting).

In addition to **geospatial exile**, Said faced exile in a **political and cultural sense**. He was not spared from accusations and charges of treason at times, nor from misreadings of his thought and writings at others, whether by Westerners in Europe and the United States or by Arabs and Palestinians.<sup>(4)</sup>

Edward Said lived his life through a series of exiles, traveling between Jerusalem, Cairo, Beirut, and America, and between Arab and American environments. He attempted to build a bridge between these two contradictory cultures in an effort to bridge the vast chasm of loss between his homeland and his exile—between East and West, and between his old original world and his new surroundings. Perhaps what heightened the intensity of cruelty and schizophrenia in Said's experience of exile was the **multiplicity and repetition of the act of banishment** at different stages of his life and on various levels affecting his identity as a Palestinian, an Easterner, and a political activist. Consequently, his exile became a **complex, multifaceted exile**.

## 2. On the Concept of Exile

### 2.1 Characteristics of Exile

The theme of "exile" was dominantly present in the life and concerns of Edward Said, as well as in his intellectual and critical output. He famously said of his own life: "Geography was at the center of my memories... especially the geography of travel, of departures and arrivals, farewells, exile, longing, nostalgia for the homeland, and belonging, not to mention travel itself".<sup>(5)</sup>

Said undermined the prevailing stereotypical concept of exile, which reduced its meaning to negative connotations limited to dispersion, banishment, expulsion, deprivation, marginalization, and exclusion. He provided it with a specific, multi-angled significance inspired by his own experience as an exiled Palestinian thinker. He states: "Exile is a fracture and a forced exclusion: it is the irreparable rift forced between a human being and their native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted".<sup>(6)</sup> That sadness, born from a sense of estrangement and isolation, was described by Said as "anomalous," resulting from the state of wandering, loss, and helplessness that the exile suffers in their ordeal. "The pathos of exile lies in the loss of contact with the solidity of the earth and the sustenance and satisfaction it provides: hence the fact that returning home can never be a matter of doubt".<sup>(7)</sup>

However, despite this steadfastness and the unshakeable hope for return, what reinforces the exile's grief is the permanence of their suffering, the continuity of their estrangement, and the impossibility of returning home. Exile is an inescapable destiny. Said asks: "Is it not true that the view of exile in literature, and even in religion, obscures what is terrible and horrific in its reality: that exile is incurably secular and intolerably historical; that it is produced by human beings for other human beings; and that, like death, but without the final mercy of death, it has uprooted millions of people from the source of tradition, family, and geography?".<sup>(8)</sup>

Perhaps the most difficult part of this question is Said's admission that uprooting a person from their roots, land, and community is akin to death—or rather, more horrific. Death grants its subject rest and puts an end to their suffering; exile, however, is death with continuous torment, a death without rest. It is the eternal rupture between the exile and what they knew and were familiar with in their original life. While waiting for life to return to this "dead" person through their return to the homeland and reconnection with their identity (tradition), society (family), and land (geography), their punishment remains ongoing, endless, and ceaseless.

Even more difficult is for a person to feel estranged and unable to integrate with their origins and heritage even if the dream of return is realized and they rejoin their first homeland. They are neither able to return to exile and integrate with the alien culture they fled from, nor have they succeeded in achieving harmony and identification within their original culture. What loss and what estrangement is endured by one who has lost their homeland after both have disowned each other?

Said says "about Rashid Hussein," the Palestinian intellectual who lived a life of exile in New York: "...and in 1972 he returned to the Arab world, but he stayed there only a few months, after which he returned to the United States: he felt like a stranger in Syria and Lebanon, and miserable in Cairo, and New York took him in again...".<sup>(9)</sup> It is no wonder that the man lost the

compass of his belonging, to the point that it seems this is exactly what oppressive powers intend to be the fate of exiles as a result of their exclusion and banishment.

The demand for choosing the margin was always the thread connecting the intellectual and the exile for Edward Said. However, his assessment of the situation lived by exiles was conflicting. He said at the same time that "exile is the harshest of fates," and that it invites contemplation because "exile for the intellectual is a restless state that calls for constant movement and never settles, and it also disturbs the comfort of others." If the intellectual is that individual who is always ready to question the forms of their existence, then any intellectual is considered exiled, in a sense, from their place of birth.<sup>(10)</sup>

Yet, the distortions and scars that exile leaves on the character of the displaced—whether an intellectual or not—go beyond the simple, flat image of the act of banishment to something deeper and harsher. It is a sharp rift that does not heal, a schizophrenia with no mending, and a loss without return; it is death itself. For a person without identity is a being without existence. Therefore, Said views the act of exile as a harsh punishment and an inevitable fate; it is "a type of contemporary political punishment".<sup>(11)</sup>

And "it is, in its essence, a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are uprooted from their roots, from their land, and from their past... Thus, exiles feel that urgent need to reconstitute their shattered lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a renewed people. Crucially, a state of exile devoid of this triumphant (optimistic) ideology—designed to gather the scattered parts of a broken history of exile into something new—is a state that is ultimately intolerable, and ultimately impossible in today's world. Look at the fate of Jews, Palestinians, and Armenians".<sup>(12)</sup>

Thus, the characteristics of exile in Edward Said's conception as an exiled intellectual and immigrant—according to his experience, deep complex philosophy, expertise, and intellectual openness—were a forced, unbridgeable chasm between the human being and their original home, and between the soul and its true homeland. The sadness resulting from this rupture cannot be overcome. Whatever the exile's achievements, they are always subject to the sense of loss. At the same time, it is an occasion for contemplation because it is both an exceptional and forced state, a life outside the familiar order and outside stability, tranquility, and contentment.

## **2.2 Between the Exile, the Immigrant, and the Refugee**

Exile in general is a tragic amputation of roots and human bonds. Although everyone displaced from their land and everyone barred from their homeland is considered an exile, we must establish some distinctions in our definition of "exile", "refugee", "expatriate", and "immigrant", which Said clarifies by saying: "The exile finds their origin in very ancient expulsions, and once expelled, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, branded with the stigma of being an outsider. As for refugees, they are the product of the twentieth-century state. The word 'refugee' has become a political word, referring to large swarms of innocent and bewildered people who need urgent international assistance, while the word 'exile,' as I see it, carries a touch of solitude and spirituality".<sup>(13)</sup>

To distinguish between the immigrant and the exile, Jan Abdul Mohamed says in his analysis of Edward Said's status as an exiled intellectual classified among "border intellectuals" (taken

from his study titled: *Worldliness Without World, Exile as Homeland: Toward a Definition of the Neutral Border Intellectual*, from the book: Michael Sprinker, *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p. 96): "While both the exile and the immigrant cross the borders between one national or social group and another, the exile's attitude toward the host culture is negative, while the immigrant takes a positive stance toward that culture... The nostalgia specific to exile usually drives the individual to be indifferent to the values and characteristics related to the host culture; the exile chooses, if they can choose, to live in an unwelcoming context, a context that resembles "home".<sup>(14)</sup> Jan Mohamed concludes that Said "is not entirely an exile, nor is he exactly an immigrant."

This ambiguity in his status as an exiled intellectual is due to the fact that Said writes for the Western reader, not the reader in his mother culture, and to the specificity of the state of exile itself among exiles in general. This is because the border zone connecting cultures, races, and peoples actually involves a state of overlapping and ambiguous distinctions. This makes exile, as a concept, a complex and strange mixture of baffling contradictions to a great extent. It refers, on one hand, to the importance of the psychological dimension in this experience, and on the other, to the idea that exile in its essence is an acquired identity residing on the borders of cultures. It teaches the self and the "other" to respect the overlap between cultures and the proximity between peoples and races. It sharpens the exile's vision, broadens their horizon, and deepens their sense of detachment and impartiality, which enhances the function of exiles in removing barriers in thought and experience through their success in crossing cultural borders. The idea of exile always emphasizes the absence of "home"—the absence of the cultural fabric that forms the identity and culture of the individual self. Hence, it is a concept that involves an involuntary and forced rupture of the relationship between the collective self of that culture and the individual self forcibly separated from it.

While Said bestowed a romantic-mystical touch upon the experience of the exile ("a touch of solitude and spirituality"), he conversely focused on the freedom of choice and the voluntariness of departure and expatriation enjoyed by the "immigrant" and the "expatriate"—a freedom and will that the "exile" is inevitably deprived of by the act of expulsion and forced banishment.

### **2.3 Edward Said and Renewed Exile**

The act of exile may be repeated and renewed. Perhaps the strangest fate among the fates of exile is to be exiled by exiles—for the process of uprooting to be actually renewed at the hands of exiles. "No Palestinian remained in the summer of 1982 without wondering what hidden motive drove Israel—which had previously uprooted Palestinians in 1948—to continue expelling them from homes and refugee camps in Lebanon. It is as if the reconstructed Jewish collective experience, as represented by Israel and modern Zionism, cannot tolerate another experience of dispossession and loss existing alongside it. This intolerance has long been reinforced by Israeli hostility toward the nationalism of Palestinians, who suffered most severely for forty-six years as they gathered the fragments of a national identity in exile".<sup>(15)</sup>

The exile of Palestinians is a repeated exile with specificity and uniqueness. The Palestinian experience includes many types of forced distancing, violent exile, and sometimes alienation from the homeland, because political, social, and cultural conditions pushed Palestinians

outside the motherland under extremely complex circumstances during the ongoing Palestinian journey of dispersion (Diaspora). Although the Palestinian is considered the "exile par excellence," countless shades and numerous contexts of exile surround the Palestinian experience. This situation also applies to a large number of emerging diaspora communities, resulting from specific political or economic conditions and extending to most parts of the world in modern times, leading to the complexity of the concept of exile and the necessity of looking at it from different aspects without sufficing with the linguistic meaning of this term with its negative connotations.<sup>(16)</sup>

Stranger than the multiple, renewed exile of Palestinians—which is a strange case of exile—is the experience of Said himself, which is even stranger and more complex. He is exiled as a Palestinian by the Zionists who were themselves exiles scattered throughout history. He was exiled to the United States (because it was most suitable for his studies in his parents' view) by other "exiles," namely his family. The act of exile was also practiced against him on an intellectual and political level by his own kin—the exiled Palestinians themselves—as a result of his ideas and political positions that did not please many of them. This places us before a very special case of exile, accurately described by the term "complex exile."

#### **2.4 The Association of Exile with Nationalism**

Nationalism is "intimately" associated with exile, as Edward Said describes it. Nationalism is "an assertion of belonging to a place, a people, and a heritage. It asserts the homeland created by a group sharing language, culture, and customs, and by doing so, it staves off exile and fights to prevent the ruin it brings. In truth, the interaction between nationalism and exile is like Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave, where each of these opposites dictates and shapes the other. All nationalisms in their early stages develop from a state of estrangement. The struggles fought to gain independence, for the unification of Germany and Italy, and for the liberation of Algeria, are the struggles of those national groups that were distanced or exiled from what they consider their proper way of life".<sup>(17)</sup>

It is impossible to discuss exile and nationalism in a neutral and separate manner without one referring to the other. Both expressions encompass everything from the most collective of collective emotions to the most private of private feelings, such that there is hardly any language sufficient for both. What is certain, however, is that nothing regarding general and comprehensive national ambitions touches the core of the exile's predicament. This is because nationalism is a semi-permanent state, while exile constitutes a discontinuous state of being. Nationalism is founded on one's connection to their heritage, homeland, and land, whereas exile represents a definitive rupture of all those roots and bonds. Nationalism also differs from exile in an important essence: nationalisms are a matter of the group, whereas exile is a solitude lived outside the group with an extremely acute sense, where forms of deprivation are felt because one is not with others in the shared homeland.<sup>(18)</sup>

The exile's lack of group solidarity and the sense of nationalism and shared life breeds negative feelings, most notably jealousy and self-withdrawal. "What you achieve is exactly what you do not wish to share with anyone, and by drawing lines around yourself and your compatriots, you bring out the worst aspects of the state of exile: that excessive sense of group solidarity, and

that burning hostility toward those outside it, including those in the same predicament as you".  
(19)

Nationalisms revolve around groups, while exile revolves around the absence of the situational group located in an original homeland. How can one overcome the isolation of exile without falling prey to the language of national pride, collective emotions, and group feelings? The exile possesses very little, and for this reason, they cling to what they have and defend it fiercely. Thus, feelings of introversion, exclusivity, and solidarity grow within the small group. From here also arises that extreme condition of exile climates: the suffering of exile at the hands of a group that is already exiled. (20)

Palestinians, like other displaced exiles, know that their sense of national identity grew in the midst of exile, where everyone to whom they are not related by blood is an enemy, where every sympathizer is an agent for this or that opposing power, and where the slightest deviation from the accepted group line is the most hideous act of treason and departure. (21)

Undoubtedly, as Said strives to clarify the relationship between exile and nationalism, he proceeds from his own experience and based on the accusations of treason directed at him as a result of his strong opposition to the 1994 Oslo Accords, as well as his call for Arabs to recognize the Jewish Holocaust within the framework of his universal humanistic view of cultures and civilizations. His reference to the exclusion by Palestinians and exiles in general of anyone who disagrees with the group's opinion—and accusing them of treason and threatening the interest and goals of their nationalism—is an allusion to what he suffered from his fellow citizens due to his bold and frank positions, which did not align with the national political orientation of Palestinian public opinion at that time.

The relationship between exile and nationalism is complex and blurred. As much as these two terms are close and overlapping, they diverge and separate in essence and direction. Nationalism arises from the state of estrangement which is the core and facade of exile, and the thing the exile lacks most in their estrangement is their nationalism and belonging. However, nationalism contradicts exile in ambitions and in the meanings each refers to: exile involves connotations of exclusion, isolation, and the cutting of bonds, while nationalism refers to the meaning of connection, gathering, and sharing. Just as nationalism reinforces the power of group members through their unity and solidarity, exile deepens the isolation of the expelled person and their sense of weakness and loneliness.

### **3. Exile: A World of Non-Belonging and Unreality**

Exile produces many thorny issues, problems, and unfamiliar sensations that confront the exile in their new environment. The obsession with belonging is one of the most significant matters pressing upon them in their ordeal, troubling their conscience and distressing their life, while raising major questions about their future and the fate of their identity. The space of exile can be described as a zone of non-belonging and being "out of place," where the exile is lost in the boundaries separating two different and perhaps contradictory worlds. Thus, they remain within a circle of non-belonging and a refusal to take sides, finding themselves stuck in a gray area that is neither black nor white. Everything the exile achieves in estrangement, in terms of

feats and accomplishments, remains nothing more than efforts to transcend banishment and overcome the sorrow of alienation and the sense of loss.

Edward reclaims his status as an exile in both the political and cultural senses, explaining to his foreign reader how he and his family became exiles from the homeland. He clarifies this situation for himself and other Palestinians, stating in his book *After the Last Sky*:

"The stability of geography and the continuity of the land have evaporated from my life and the lives of all Palestinians. Even if no one stops us at the borders, herds us into new camps, or prevents us from entering, residing, or traveling from one place to another, our lands are being occupied, and others interfere arbitrarily in each of our lives. Our voices are prevented from reaching one another; our identity is restricted, imprisoned, and besieged in small, fearful islands within an inhospitable environment governed by a supreme military power that uses the jargon of a government administration believing in pure ethnic purity".<sup>(22)</sup>

The exile's new world is an unnatural one, resembling the unreality that characterizes the world of fiction and imagination... No matter what successes exiles achieve, they always remain those eccentric outsiders who feel their difference (even as they often exploit it) as a kind of orphanhood. Anyone truly displaced considers the habit of seeing strangeness and aloofness in everything modern as a type of affectation and a pretense of following the current fashion. The exile, clinging to their difference like a weapon to be used with unyielding determination, jealously insists on his or her right to refuse to belong.<sup>(23)</sup> Exiles look at non-exiles with a gaze of resentment and indignation; for the latter belong to their environment, while the exile is a permanent stranger. What does it mean—Said asks—to be born in a place, to stay and live in it, and to know that you are of it, for nearly an eternity?<sup>(24)</sup>

Said lived this bitter experience—the experience of being split between two worlds, the Arab-Oriental and the Western-American. He says in his book *Culture and Imperialism*:

"I grew up, for objective reasons beyond my control, as an Arab with a Western education. From the earliest moment I can remember, I felt that I belonged to both worlds, without being entirely an organic part of either... However, when I say 'exile,' I do not mean what is sad or deprived; on the contrary, belonging to both sides of the imperialist fault line allows you to understand them both more easily".<sup>(25)</sup>

The Palestinian poet **Mahmoud Darwish** says of Edward Said in the poem "Counterpoint" (*Contrapuntal*).<sup>(26)</sup>

"I am from there,  
I am from here and I am not there,  
And I am not here I have two names that meet and part..  
And I have two languages,  
I have forgotten in which of them  
I used to dream  
I have an English language for writing,  
With yielding vocabulary,  
And I have a language from the dialogue of heaven With Jerusalem,  
Silver in its tone but it does not obey my imagination."

Belonging, therefore, is the exile's primary dilemma and their most intractable problem. They attempt to overcome this dilemma through innovative methods dictated by the circumstances and specificities of exile. Among these methods is the exile's pretense of following the prevailing lifestyle in their place of banishment to reduce the intensity of their difference and isolation in the new environment. However, this remains fraught with danger: the habit of pretense is both exhausting and nerve-wracking. Exile is a life lived outside the usual order—a migratory, contrapuntal life without a center. No sooner does a person become familiar with it and grow accustomed to it than its destabilizing forces erupt anew.<sup>(27)</sup>

The most common method, which imposes itself by force, is the pressure exerted on the exile to join parties, national movements, and the state, where a new set of affiliations is presented to the exile and they develop new loyalties. However, a great loss accompanies this in terms of critical perspective, intellectual discernment, and literary courage.<sup>(28)</sup>

It was not the nostalgia for returning to the motherland that ignited Edward Said's commitment; after all, he was a global intellectual who found his niche in New York: the most cosmopolitan city in the world. Rather, it was the constant threat to his identity—which was considered non-existent—along with a sense of historical injustice that were the causes.<sup>(29)</sup> Undoubtedly, returning to the origin is human nature, but the paradox of belonging for Said appears clearly in the plurality of identity. This is manifested in his being "a Palestinian political activist holding an American passport, and in his speaking to Americans and Westerners in general in their language and with a style of supreme intelligence and cultural and political mastery, despite his Arab-Palestinian origin".<sup>(30)</sup>

It seems that Said's sense of this paradox of belonging began at an early age when he started to realize his estrangement in Cairo schools. He says: "I was in Egypt but I was not Egyptian; I was an Arab but I was not a Muslim; I was a Christian but I was a Protestant and not a Catholic; I was English-speaking but I was not English; and I was an American who had never been to America".<sup>(31)</sup>

Tzvetan Todorov (who was a friend of Edward Said) comments on the state of identity loss that distressed his life, saying: "All immigrants have multiple personalities because they have experienced a rift between a before and an after, each experiencing them in their own way. Edward Said's experience was particularly complex, and he carried its traces in his name, which was half-English and half-Arabic. Edward Said came from a non-existent country, was exiled to Egypt, and was educated in schools intended for Egypt's elite, teaching in English but with a spirit of contempt or rejection for the culture of the original country. He was exiled again to the United States, where he was accepted by the most prestigious universities, yet the foreign national policy of his adopted country irritated him to the point where the man could not say whether Arabic or English was his mother tongue, or whether he spoke the language of the colonizer or the language of the ruling class".<sup>(32)</sup>

Exile relates to the existence of the original homeland, the love for it, and the attachment to it; it is an escalation of national or regional borders. But what is real in every case of exile is not the loss of the homeland and the love for the homeland, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of the homeland and the love for the homeland.

Said discusses the concept of home through his narrative of the experiences and views of the German-Jewish philosopher and critic Theodor Adorno, which were expressed through the pages of the autobiography he wrote in exile, titled *Minima Moralia*, with the subtitle "Reflections from a Damaged Life." There, he "relentlessly opposed what he called the 'managed' world, and saw that life as a whole had been compressed into ready-made molds, or into pre-fabricated 'homelands'... What dictates Adorno's reflections is the belief that the only home truly available now, despite its fragility and damage, is in writing... Home has become part of the past... These (homelands) are no longer suitable except for temporary use, after which they are discarded like empty food cans. In short, as Adorno says with bitter irony, it has become part of ethics not to feel at home even in one's own home".<sup>(33)</sup>

Exile, then, is not a position of privilege that allows the individual stability and the practice of self-reflection. If the exile chooses to refrain from practicing deep criticism and contents himself with licking his wounds on the sidelines of life, then it is his duty to develop a deepened sense of self, the kind that Theodor Adorno did in his important work *Minima Moralia*. This German philosopher—and Edward Said as well—saw that life is compressed into ready-made, pre-fabricated homelands, and moral duty dictates that one should not feel settled in any station. This is the intellectual task undertaken by the exile.

Todorov points to the idea of the fragility of homelands in Said's conception, saying: "I have a sense that Said valued the status of the exile more over time—the status of the individual without a homeland, as I call it. He found the idea of existing within a national or ethnic identity to be an intolerable proposition. He turned something that could have been a curse into a professional path. He told his friend Daniel Barenboim in 2000: 'I have come to consider the idea of feeling at home over time to be an exaggerated idea; the idea of the motherland hardly stirs any feelings in me; I prefer to wander more.' He was a tenant of an apartment, in line with his choices, rather than owning a permanent residence".<sup>(34)</sup>

As a result of the mixture of overwhelming isolation, deprivation, and estrangement that the exile suffers, his greatest fear and grandest obsession is to die alone in a harsh society that does not understand him and is indifferent to his condition. For there is no exile who "does not fear that scene which he was destined never to stop imagining: the scene of his death alone—that scene which is illuminated, so to speak, only by eyes that show no response and exhibit no communication".<sup>(35)</sup>

Exile is a forced ordeal and a fragile world lacking stability, as it lacks peace and tranquility. The exile lives it with anxiety, a lack of trust, and loss, punctuated by the suffering of the belonging complex, the fear of persecution, and the danger of annihilation. Through this fragile world, the exile develops an excessive awareness of subjectivity, through which he achieves his independence and separation through work, achievements, and successes. Through these, he proves to himself his ability to persist and succeed by his individual efforts, dispensing with the support and solidarity of the group. Through this, he creates an alternative homeland in a world where homelands have become temporary, transient, and unstable. Therefore, according to Said's vision, the exile must live his experience of banishment in a style that allows for the revival of identity and the revival of life itself, elevating both to a more complete and meaningful state.

### **5. Exile and Creativity – Alternatives to Transcend Alienation:**

Said was affected by the experience of exile and interacted with its dilemmas in a positive, creative way. Instead of exile becoming a place for sadness, self-pity, and withdrawal into the self for him, his thought and creativity took flight in exile, and he created for himself spaces of a balanced vision of the self and the other, and of exile and the homeland. Said emphasizes the importance of the intellectual activity of exiles and their prominent contribution to reviving the modern cultural movement in the West, thanks to what they distinguished themselves with as exiles—an original vision and cultural richness. However, he always criticizes the ignoring of the idea that exile remains an ordeal and a destructive torment, and a heavy loss that the pleasures of the new environment and its alternatives cannot compensate for. For the exile spends most of his life compensating for a disorienting loss by creating a new world over which he extends his authority. Thus, it is not surprising to find among exiles many novelists, chess players, political activists, and intellectuals, for all these professions require only a minimum of investment in things, as they place movement and skill in the first position.<sup>(36)</sup>

While it is true that literature and history are full of heroic, romantic, glorious, and even triumphant events that occurred in the life of exile, these incidents are no more than efforts intended to overcome the paralyzing sorrow of estrangement. The feats of exile are incessantly undermined by the loss of something one has left behind forever. But if true exile is a state of terminal loss, how could it so easily turn into a powerful, even fertilizing, stimulus of modern culture? Said answers this question by saying: "We have become accustomed to looking at the modern era as an orphaned and spiritually alienated era, an age of anxiety and estrangement... and modern Western culture is, in large part, the product of exiles, immigrants, and refugees. Academic, theoretical, and aesthetic thought in the United States did not reach what it is today except thanks to those who took refuge in it to escape Fascism, Communism, and other regimes built upon the suppression and expulsion of dissenters".<sup>(37)</sup>

Edward Said celebrates a prominent group of people based on their status as model exiles who transformed the experience of forced exile into creative energy and great achievement. Among them is the German-Jewish critic Erich Auerbach, who authored his famous book *Mimesis* during his exile in Istanbul in the 1940s, without having many sources and references related to Western literature. Due to the pressure of exile on his consciousness and his distancing not only from the motherland but from European culture—which he considered his true home—Auerbach was able to write an incomparable classic work of criticism. Exile was the stimulus and provocation to accomplish that work. Said believes that Auerbach transformed exile from a challenge, danger, or a state of assault on his European self into a true missionary task.<sup>(38)</sup>

Exile for Said means that you will always be marginal and that what you do as an intellectual or a creator must be created, because you cannot follow a specific path due to your lack of that path and that guiding compass. This is a result of the difference in environment and ideologies between exile and the homeland, or between the values and principles the exile inherited and the counterparts he clashes with in exile, which sometimes almost reach the point of contradiction and conflict.

To think of the benefits of exile as a catalyst for human stance and creativity does not mean diminishing its great torments. Exiled creators bestow dignity upon a condition that was

primarily intended to deprive them of dignity. Said never used the word "exile" in the context of expressing grief and sadness; on the contrary, he usually criticized simplification when it came to discussing exile. Exile for him is a geographical state and a principled position. "Most people possess an awareness of one culture, one environment, and one country, but exiles, in contrast, know at least two cultures. The fact is that an experience of this kind achieves for them an awareness of the existence of simultaneous dimensions. For the exile, the habits of daily life and patterns of expression and activity within a new environment inevitably clash with memories related to the same habits and patterns of movement in another environment. The old and new spaces express their reality and influence, and are thus established in a state of counterpoint".<sup>(39)</sup>

This is what Edward Said succeeded in achieving through his exceptional experience in exile: to live contrapuntally and think contrapuntally. This is what Todorov reveals through his valuable testimony about Said's personality and thinking and his admiration for his brilliant contrapuntal mind, saying: "By the time I met him, Edward Said had found a way to combine the two different threads of his existence and merge them together. Edward Said, the analyst of Western literary works, and the Palestinian exile found common ground when he took it upon himself to study the Western discourse about the East that we know as the Near East and called it 'Orientalism.' This was the title he took for his book published in 1978, which left its mark on the stage that followed (i.e., after 1967) his personal journey. Since then, his existence and his professional work became one thing. After translating the book into no less than thirty-six languages, the work left a deep impact on the study of cultural relations between host countries and their colonies".<sup>(40)</sup>

Strangers, exiles, and refugees from diaspora groups coming from the Third World—as products of the horrific experience associated with colonial war and economic expansion—have no choice but to organize themselves in a new environment. Here, creativity in all its colors and types forms the strongest cultural shapes of resistance and defiance against those who call for their possession of a pure and great culture, and who plant in the souls of others the sense that they are either slaves, inferiors, or Orientals unworthy of attention and consideration. Studying the creations and literatures achieved by exiles, immigrants, and refugees allows us to see how exile and the crossing to a new land and culture push toward the formation of standards, symbols, and models other than those they worked according to in the motherland.

## Conclusion

After reviewing the concept of exile from a Palestinian perspective through the insightful intellectual vision of the migratory writer Edward Said within this study, we conclude with the following results:

- The sense of exile never left Said's imagination, his writings, or his various interventions at many universities. Over time, this feeling became a more complex and profound structure, far removed from the simple, familiar concept of exile. Undoubtedly, this thinker's experience in exile as a Palestinian far from his homeland added depth and richness to this complex meaning, especially as Said conveyed through

his own experience the impact of forced displacement on Palestinians since the 1948 Nakba, and how this shaped not only the works of Palestinian writers but also the definition of exile as a permanent experience.

- According to Said's vision, exile constitutes a complex phenomenon and an exceptional state characterized by a clear paradox; despite the bitterness and cruelty of this experience, it transforms into an asset, as it forms a favorable opportunity that opens a new dimension for thought and creativity. Instead of exile becoming for him a place for self-pity and withdrawal, his thought and creativity took flight in exile, creating spaces of a balanced vision of the self and the other, and of exile and the homeland. Despite this, he refuses to ignore the ordeals and torments within exile that the pleasures and alternatives of the new environment cannot erase.
- The obsession with belonging is one of the most important issues pressing upon the exile in their ordeal, troubling their conscience and posing major questions about their future and the fate of their identity. The space of exile can be described as a zone of non-belonging and being "out of place," where the exile is lost in the boundaries separating two different and perhaps contradictory worlds. Thus, they remain within the circle of non-belonging and the refusal to take sides, finding themselves stuck in a gray area. Everything the exile achieves in estrangement, in terms of feats and accomplishments, remains nothing more than efforts to transcend banishment and overcome the sorrow of alienation; writing—as in Said's case—becomes an alternative homeland for that which was lost after the Nakba.
- Said pointed to the idea of the fragility of homelands; as life is compressed into ready-made, pre-fabricated homelands, moral duty dictates that one should not feel settled in any station. This is the intellectual task undertaken by the exile. Exile cannot be a position of privilege that allows the individual stability and the practice of self-reflection. If the exile chooses to refrain from practicing deep criticism and contents himself with licking his wounds on the margins of life, then it is his duty to develop a deepened sense of self. This is the function of exiles that Said valued and emphasized, as it primarily aims to remove barriers in thought and experience through their success in crossing borders between cultures.
- Said highlighted the importance of the activity of exiles and their contribution to reviving the modern cultural movement in the West, thanks to their original vision and cultural richness. Strangers, exiles, and refugees from diaspora groups coming from the Third World—as products of the horrific experience associated with colonial war and economic expansion—have no choice but to organize themselves in a new environment. Here, creativity in all its forms constitutes the strongest cultural shapes of resistance and defiance against those who claim possession of a pure and great culture, and who plant in the souls of others the feeling that they are either slaves, inferiors, or Orientals unworthy of attention and consideration.
- Said always represented a model for the global intellectual. He called for the necessity of openness to the "other" and advocated for achieving cultural hybridity or what is known as "contrapuntal thinking"—the art of coexistence between dissonant identities.

By doing so, he undermined everything that is "authentic" and "pure," considering that all human cultures exist in an in-between zone; they are intertwined and open to their counterparts, taking from one another due to many factors, most notably migration and colonial wars. According to him, cultures are not contradictory or conflicting but rather convergent and overlapping, in a permanent dialogue supported by diversity in religion, language, and culture, achieving identification between cultures and the ability to understand and interact positively.

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