I am neither there, nor here:
An Analysis of Formulations of Post-Colonial Identity
in the Work of Edward W. Said and Mahmoud Darwish
A Thematic and Stylistic Analytical Approach

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2015

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School of Arts, Languages and Cultures
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the work of two of the twentieth century’s foremost cultural figures, the Palestinian-American literary critic Edward Said (1935-2003) and the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), and focuses specifically on the formulation and representation in their respective work of the theme of identity. It explores the depictions of this concept in their writing; comparing and contrasting their personal viewpoints on the various facets of their own identity as Palestinian Arabs and cosmopolitan global citizens expressed through their chosen literary medium, prose for Said and poetry for Darwish. At the same time, this analysis of the creative writing of these two authors will serve to shed light on the complex and ongoing process which is involved in identity formation and maintenance, and conceptualization of the self. Said and Darwish’s multi-conceptualisations of self-identity take place in Chapter Three, which is divided into seven zones of self-identity. Their understanding of self-identity is observed through the spaces of their names, language, family relationships, friendships, ethnicities, nationalism, hybrid identities, and cosmopolitanism.

The concept of post-Nakba and Naksa literature maps the critical developments in evaluations of Arabic literature and, more particularly, Palestinian literature. The understanding of Palestinian cultural context requires an adequate assimilation regarding the impact of Nakba and Naksa in Palestinian literature, linked strongly with the general impact of Nakba in all Arab literature. The thesis begins by establishing the major socio-political, cultural and historical contexts which shaped the lives and work of Said and Darwish. Then using an innovative theoretical framework which draws on elements of post-colonial theory Said’s own contrapuntal technique and close textual analysis, the thesis explores a number of key facets pertaining to identity construction which it can be argued are of particular relevance to the Palestinian case. These include trauma, collective cultural memories, displacement, the Diasporic experience and the dream of return. At the same time, the thesis reveals how whilst both Said and Darwish remained dedicated to the Palestinian cause they adopted a cosmopolitan identity which was reflected in their respective work and its identification with diverse groups of oppressed peoples.
Declaration

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# Transliteration Chart

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I must also thank my dear friends Dr Ahmed Bassam Sai, and Dr Ahmed Meliebary who originally guided me towards pursuing research and who provided helpful advice when needed.

I also wish to offer my heartfelt thanks to my father for his courageous decision to let me pursue my education abroad alone, even though this is still a rare thing in my culture. The decision was a difficult one for both of us, not least because it meant a long separation from my parents who have been greatly missed.
Dedication

For all those friends, relations and teachers who supported me to achieve this goal, I shall remain very grateful.

This thesis is dedicated to
the displaced, the exiles, the Diaspora,
and to all those who, like the Palestinian people,
dream of the return.

But we
Did not leave, of our own free will
Choosing another land. Nor did we enter
Into a land, to stay there, if possible for ever.
Merely, we fled. We are driven out, banned.
Not a home, but an exile, shall the land be that took us in.
Restlessly, we wait thus, as near as we can get to the frontier…

Bertolt Brecht, “Concerning the label Emigrant”
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Focus of this Research

This thesis examines the work of two of the twentieth century’s foremost cultural figures, the Palestinian-American literary critic Edward W. Said (1935-2003) and the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), focusing specifically on the representation in their respective work of the theme of identity. It will explore the depictions of this concept in their writing, comparing and contrasting their personal viewpoints on the various facets of their own identity as Palestinian Arabs expressed through their chosen literary medium. At the same time, this analysis will serve to shed light on the complex and ongoing process which is involved in identity construction and conceptualization of the self.

Whilst each chose a different literary medium of expression, the two writers shared a common interest in exploring the theme of identity, a concern which was prompted by their personal experiences of enforced separation from their Palestinian homeland, the experience of living as exiles outside the land of their birth throughout most of their lives, their continuous travel to different countries and their dream of return to Palestine. In addition to the similarities in their personal stories as natives of Palestine, Said and Darwish enjoyed a long-lasting friendship as Said recounts in his article “On Mahmoud Darwish”:

I first met Darwish in 1974 and we have remained close friends ever since. He edits Karmel, a quarterly literary and intellectual journal published in Cyprus, in which several of my own essays have appeared.¹

His comments also indicate the creative links which existed between the two men, and the extent to which they were aware of each other’s work. The depth of this friendship was most eloquently expressed in Darwish’s poem (قراءة طبقيّة لأدوارد سعيد)¹ Edward Said, “On Mahmoud Darwish”, Oblivion, 48, 1994, p. 112-115, p. 113.
“Edward Said: A Contrapuntal Reading” in which he laments Said’s death and provides a penetrating insight into his friend’s complex identity as an individual and a writer:

And I am neither there, nor here,
I have two names which meet and part...
I have two languages, but I have forgotten
By which one I used to dream.
I have an English Language for writing,
Yielding phrases
And a language in which Heaven and Jerusalem converse,
With a silver cadence,
But it does not yield to my imagination.2

Perhaps as a result of their shared personal experiences, a number of common features can be found in their respective writings. Firstly, both appeared to be acutely aware of the multi-dimensional nature of the human character, of mankind’s capacity for both good and evil, which added a particularly humanitarian perspective to their representation of identity. Both Said and Darwish espoused an attitude of tolerance and co-existence throughout their personal lives, advocating, for example, the need for peaceful coexistence between Palestinians and Jews in Palestine/Israel, and this was reflected in their literary outputs and critical work.

Secondly, although both remained passionately attached to the land of their birth and to their dreams of returning to their homeland, this did not prevent them from becoming active members of their host societies and giving generously of themselves to humanity as a whole.

Thirdly, in their work both writers viewed the notion of the homeland as an essential condition for their human existence, yet both ultimately rejected the increasingly militant nationalistic tendencies which emerged amongst their fellow

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Palestinians, arguing in favour of the need to explore all possible alternative means of achieving a lasting peace based on an equitable settlement. In works such as *The Question of Palestine* (1979) and *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986), Said argued for the right of Palestinians to return to their place of origin instead of living as refugees scattered throughout the world, viewing Palestine as an occupied state. His vindication of the rights of Palestinians was informed by his own academic research drawing from various disciplines including history, sociology, political science and theology in his defence of the Palestinian cause. Part of this research involved revealing the ideological bias and misrepresentation in accounts of the history of the region, particularly those of the Zionists, and analysing the ways in which this discourse has negatively impacted not only on Palestinian territorial claims but also on their sense of identity as a nation.

Frequently acclaimed as the greatest poet of the Palestinian resistance, Darwish shared Said’s goal of raising awareness of Palestinian issues with national identity remaining as a recurrent theme throughout the various stages of his trajectory as a poet. He alludes to Arab and Palestinian history, drawing poetic parallels between the problematic Palestinian present, and past Arab defeats. He equates, for example, the historical loss of Al-Andalus (1492) and the subsequent expulsion of Muslims from Spain with the contemporary loss of Palestinian territory and the expulsion of his compatriots. In Darwish’s view, the similarities are strikingly obvious.

As an intellectual and a poet, Darwish did not blindly defend Palestinian issues but, like Said, delved into history to unearth those underlying structures in historical discourse which had served to distort the contemporary reality of the Arabs. From the final catastrophic fall of Granada in Al-Andalus to the colonisation of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Algeria, Darwish highlighted the historical sense of calamity which
existed in the collective consciousness of the Arabs and persisted in the contemporary reality of occupied Palestine.

However, it must be stressed that neither Said nor Darwish limited themselves to focusing solely on the issue of Arab or Palestinian identity. Instead, whilst each wrote from the positionality conditioned by his own unique identity, they both endeavoured to depict a more universal representation of the human condition, unconfined by the limitations of race or nationality, which examines themes such as the need for acceptance, tolerance of difference, and forgiveness. Moreover, although they have tirelessly advocated for raising awareness of identity issues in the Arab world, especially with regards to the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they never ignored the rights of Israelis, for example, to live in a peaceful world.

This thesis examines the theme of identity in the work of Said and Darwish and their conceptualization of this by analysing two types of primary sources consisting first of the autobiographical writings of Said and Darwish, texts which articulate their personal views towards human identity in their own words and provide a clearer understanding of their individual ego, as an expression of self which was formed by the collective zeitgeist of Arab culture, history, and their personal struggles with the trauma of displacement and violent conflict. Said’s scholarly works and the poetry of Darwish form the second primary sources for this thesis, and these will be analysed in order to explore their evolving construction of the concept of identity and to reveal how one individual’s self-perception can serve as a reflection of the collective human experience. In this sense, the concept of identity revealed by the autobiographies and the works of Said and Darwish seems to offer what many might consider an idealized philosophy of the individual and collective human experience of identity.
1.2 Rationale for this Thesis

Self-identity among Palestinians has been extensively studied by researchers from a broad range of academic disciplines, but to the best of my knowledge, there has been no major publication that has specifically focused on the self-identity of Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish. This thesis aims to fill this gap in knowledge by examining their understanding of the concept of self-identity and how this was affected by memory, trauma and the Diasporic experience, by analysing their respective work and also the links between the personal experiences of these two writers.

1.3 Aims of this Thesis

The principal aims of this thesis are:

1. To explore the notion of identity as a literary construct, by focusing in particular on the representation of self-identity in a selected corpus of works by Mahmoud Darwish and Edward Said which highlight the concepts of ethnic and national identities.

2. To critically evaluate different approaches to and definitions of identity by analysing a range of relevant sociological and psychological theories of identity and exploring the influence of post-colonial literary theory on the study of identity, with specific reference to the cosmopolitan Diasporic Palestinian identity represented in the work of Said and Darwish.

1.4 Research Questions

This research will address the following questions:

3 The bibliography on “Palestine and the Palestinians” Available online at: http://www.mideastweb.org/palbib.htm gives a good overview of the astonishing breadth of publications in this area.
1. What does a close textual reading of the works of Said and Darwish reveal about their respective conceptualizations of identity and more specifically, about their understanding of the construction of Palestinian identity?

2. To what extent can theories of post-colonial hybrid identity be used to inform the reader’s understanding of the work of Said and Darwish with its multiple affiliations to homeland, ethnicity, and cosmopolitanism?

3. How do Said and Darwish represent the theme of identity in crisis in their respective works, with specific reference to the trauma of displacement and Diasporic exile experienced collectively by the Palestinian nation post-1948 and post-1967?

4. What does the work of Said and Darwish tell us about the links between personal and collective memory and the importance that this plays in the formation and maintenance of self-identity and collective identity?

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This **Introduction** outlines the focus of the thesis and its rationale and then presents the aims of the research and the questions it addresses. It then provides a chapter by chapter overview of the structure of thesis followed by an explanation of the methodology and theoretical frameworks which will be used to approach the work of the authors studied in this thesis. The chapter concludes with a brief biographical sketch of Said and Darwish and presents their main works.

**Chapter Two**, the Literature Review, is intended to contextualize the work of the authors studied here, by examining the historical events which conditioned their lives and their work and the critical and theoretical frameworks within which their work has been read. The chapter begins by reviewing work relevant to the history of Palestine, the context which conditioned both the development of
Palestinian literature and the identity of Said and Darwish. Like so many aspects of Palestinian culture, it is necessary to consider literature pre-and post-Nakba since the events of 1948 dramatically impacted on how writers viewed their role and the review here considers post-Nakba literature as both an act of resistance and an expression of love for the homeland. Critical writings on the work of Said and Darwish are then reviewed and the chapter ends by critically reviewing previous work on post-colonial identity which is considered to be of direct relevance to the Palestinian case.

In Chapter Three, the focus shifts to the detailed analysis of the work of Said and Darwish, focusing specifically on an examination of how these writers choose to represent themselves in relation to self-identity. Some key notions from post-colonial theory are used to shed light on how Said and Darwish conceptualise their self-identity in relation to a model devised for this research which envisages seven different spaces of self-identity, beginning with the most personal and intimate narratives concerning naming and language. The following sections consider their representations of relations with family and friends. Next, ethnicity and nationality are discussed, the latter category looking at two different concepts of nationality as valid in the Palestinian case: national identity within the homeland and national identity outside it, as experienced in exile. The chapter concludes by considering self-identity in the global space of cosmopolitanism.

Three key themes in the work of Said and Darwish relating to Palestinian identity, all directly resulting from the Nakba, are analysed in Chapter Four namely, displacement, Diaspora, and the dream of return. The analysis of Said’s work focuses mainly on Out of Place: A Memoir (1999) and After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives (1986). In the case of Darwish, these themes are examined in a
selection of his poetry from all three phases of his work, which allow us to trace the development of his understanding and expression of the concept of Palestinian identity in relation to his personal experience of displacement, Diasporic exile and the dream of return.

Palestinians were subjected to an enforced separation from their ancestral homelands by the twin traumatic events, known as the Nakba 1948 and the Naksa 1967, which irreparably altered Palestinian identity. Chapter Five explores how an understanding of theories related to trauma can be used to provide an insight into the impact of these events at the level of both national and individual identity and also into their textual representation in the work of Said and Darwish. After examining some of the different ways in which ‘trauma’ has been defined and tracing its historical development as a concept, the focus then shifts to an analysis of the representation of trauma and its consequences in the Palestinian context in the work of Said and Darwish, focusing on the loss of homeland and the threat that this poses to their sense of belonging to the Palestinian nation.

Chapter Six focuses on the representation of memory in the work of Said and Darwish, and begins by examining the work of Halbwachs and its reformulation by Assmann, using their concepts of ‘cultural memory’ and ‘communicative memory’ to explore how both Palestinian writers use memory to support their people’s claims to rightful ownership of a territory now inhabited by others. It will also discuss how Said and Darwish recount memories from their personal past, using these simultaneously to both narrate the collective past of the Palestinian people and help shape their present identity. Consideration is also given to representation and reinvention of memories and how these can be the source of conflict. The chapter
concludes with an extended analysis of memory, landscape and identity in the poetry of Darwish.

Chapter Seven presents the research findings and limitations, and suggests possible areas for future exploration.

1.6 Methodology

1.6.1 Theoretical Framework

This thesis focuses on two Palestinian writers who both lived an in-between existence and explored post-colonial identity in their respective work. It is argued, therefore, that the approach to the analysis of their texts should itself be an interdisciplinary one, which lies at the interstices of various disciplines and borrows freely from them to interrogate the various facets of post-colonial identity. The approach could not help but be heavily influenced by Said’s own concept of contrapuntal reading, a close and deep reading of text which reveals the effects of colonialism and imperialism on individuals and nations. This often means looking for what is *not* overtly said in order to make important connections. These connections can bring new meaning to imagery or metaphors within a text or point to relevant historical or biographical intertexts which bring to light repressed textual memories, marginal discourses or silenced voices.

Given that this research focuses on the conceptualization and construction of identity in the work of the Palestinian writers Said and Darwish, post-colonial theories of identity, in particular the concept of hybridity, seem to offer a useful framework for approaching this aspect of their work. It can be argued that the fate of both men, and to a large extent the trajectory of their literary output, was determined

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by the aftermath of British colonial ambitions in Central Asia. For these led to the re-
drawing of the map of the region commonly referred to by Western powers as the
Middle East and ultimately to the displacement of the Palestinian population from its
ancestral homeland. As the literature review will demonstrate, post-colonial theory
has made a valuable contribution to the field of identity study, providing useful tools
with which to analyse old and new forms of colonialism, the psyche of the coloniser
and that of the colonised, and the shift in identity which accompanied the mass
migrations of the twentieth century from the developing countries of the South to the
industrialised North.

In addition, identity as a topic has been widely studied in multiple disciplines
including psychology, sociology, religion, and anthropology to name but a few, all
of which have offered particular insights into the importance of identity formation
and maintenance, both on an individual and a collective level. This thesis will draw
specifically on useful insights by researchers in these fields whose work has focused
on self-identity, political identity, and cultural identity, using these to gain a deeper
understanding of the development of personal identity during childhood and in the
formative events of adult life and their relevance to the conceptualization and
representation of identity in the work of Said and Darwish. Such theories will shed
light on the role of trauma and memory in transforming self-identity and on the ways
in which they documented these transformations in their work.

As polyglots, both Said and Darwish were acutely aware of the crucial role
which language played not only in their professional lives but also in the formation
and construction of their respective identities. This highlights the need, then, in
analyzing their work to pay particular attention to the discourse which they employ
to achieve their goals as writers and to deliver the appropriate and effective meaning.
Whilst it is not proposed to conduct an in-depth stylistic analysis of all aspects of these texts, it is useful to identify certain linguistic features which reflect the choice of language made by Said and Darwish to express their perceptions of identity. Studying the relationship amongst different components of a literary text “can show tenaciously the writer’s world view or scheme of things.”\(^5\) As Hassanpour and Hashim point out:

Through the lexico-grammatical lens, discourse analysts can examine the language to find lexico-grammatical choices where a special linguistic feature is foregrounded or diverted. It is like breaking the convention (linguistic system of wording) or structure where the words with semantic loads are highlighted or emphasized.\(^6\)

Badran notes that Modern Arabic literary analytical readings still concentrate on literature as the product of literary genius which prevents literary texts from being analysed using different disciplinary theories.\(^7\) In his study *Arabic, Self, and Identity: A Study in Conflict and Displacement* (2011) Yassir Suleiman concurs with Badran approaching language in what he claims is a novel manner for the Arab world.\(^8\) His analysis focuses on the notion that language is a significant part of identity. He thus places a large amount of emphasis on the symbolic system of language, arguing that language plays an essential role in symbolizing community identity during times of conflict. Suleiman emphasizes that the study of identity through language is a key means of understanding various topics such as politics, sociology, anthropology, literary expressions, social psychology, and critical analysis. For example, in his extended analysis in *Arabic, Self, and Identity*, he analyses the symbolic significance


\(^{6}\) Ibid.


of the sense of identity and displacement expressed by Said, Leila Ahmed and others.

Some specific features merit particular attention, the first of which are metaphors. Whilst metaphor was traditionally considered to be a purely decorative style, a technique that assists in achieving a persuasive effect for audience and readers, Lakoff and Johnson⁹ argue that our conceptual system plays a central role in identifying our daily reality, and since our conceptual system is almost metaphorically conceived, therefore, it influences how we think and our everyday lived experience. According to Hamilton,¹⁰ metaphors also allow us to see the world differently in a refreshing new light because they make new connections between ideas which were not previously connected and may change our perception of issues.

Repetition is a second characteristic stylistic feature used by both Said and Darwish and scholars such as Ibrahim Muhawi¹¹ and Youssef Yacoubi¹² have recognized and analysed its significance in relation to self-identity, national identity, and rewriting the history that has been erased by the Israeli occupation. In addition, close attention will be paid to the usage of particular linguistic phenomena such as deictic pronouns of person, place/space and time since these not only indicate a point of reference but also represent a viewpoint. To briefly illustrate the importance of deixis, consider the repeated usage of the personal pronoun ‘we’ (or equivalent linguistic marker in Arabic) by Said and Darwish to reflect the collective ego of Palestinians, and their role in communicating ideas on behalf of their community. Interestingly, some critics have taken the fact that Darwish’s use of this “we”

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reduced significantly during the third phase of his poetry to be evidence of his diminishing nationalism, while others refer to this as marking a new trend in a more cosmopolitan sense in his literature.\textsuperscript{13}

As Ibrahim Muhawi, the translator of \textit{Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982} noted, irony is also a particularly strong element of Darwish’s work since it was “the only available answer to the overstatement of the bombs falling on the city during the siege [of Beirut], a response that pits one kind of power against another.”\textsuperscript{14} Said himself saw irony as being an essential component of Palestinian identity and history, and this linguistic form of resistance will also be carefully examined as relevant.

One final aspect of the works to be analysed in this thesis is intertextuality. Although it is generally accepted that the term intertextuality was coined by the influential post-structuralist and feminist theorist Julia Kristeva in 1967 the idea that writers are influenced by reading the works of other writers is not a new one as Michael Worton and Judith Still illustrate, showing this dating back to Ancient Greece and was a well-established practice in Classical Arabic poetry.\textsuperscript{15} According to Kristeva every text “is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, in which several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another.”\textsuperscript{16} Kristeva was herself influenced by the ideas of the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, who likened texts to polyphonic music, in that they were composed of different discourses or ‘voices’ representing multiple ideologies.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{17} Worton and Still, \textit{Intertextuality}, pp. 15-18.
\end{thebibliography}
There is an interesting parallel here with Said’s notion of contrapuntal reading, also originally inspired by a musical comparison.

Although Kristeva coined the term, it is perhaps Roland Barthes, another French literary theorist, who brought the term into more popular usage within the academic community. Barthes argued that:

A text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.18

With specific reference to intertextuality and poetry, one other name deserves to be mentioned here, that of Michael Riffaterre. He argued that the various meanings of a literary text such as a poem can only be fully appreciated when readers are aware of what he called the ‘obligatory’ intertext, that is, the allusions and references to other texts which the author has inscribed in the text for them to discover. In his detailed textual analyses, Riffaterre shows how these hidden meanings can be accessed by readers to enrich the original poem by seeking out the ‘clues’ which the author has left in the text.19 The model of intertextual reading of poetry proposed by Riffaterre will be employed when seeking to identify and analyse intertextual allusions and reference in Darwish’s work. A good example of this can be seen in the later analysis of Darwish’s poem (كشم يد في معلقة شاعر جاهلي) “Like a hand tattoo in a Jahili poet's ode,” where a quote from a Classical *qasida* (ode) points to a series of parallels between the Palestinian poet’s work and his Arab predecessors.

Therefore intertextuality refers to the process by which every text intersects, recalls, and quotes with other literary texts by entering into dialogue with them. It is a

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19 Worton and Still, *Intertextuality*, pp. 56-78
widely applied technique in literature and the arts; it takes diverse forms and is used for various functions. References to other texts are not limited to the literary sphere and can include, for example, historical narratives or religious scriptures. Intertextuality is one of the fundamental characteristics of Darwish’s writing which he used increasingly frequently in the second and third phases of his work. His intertextual allusions are wide-ranging and demonstrate the breadth of his literary and cultural knowledge, not only of the Arab world but also of elsewhere. In his collection (جدارية) Mural, he directly or indirectly evokes many famous poets from Arabic literary history, such as 'Imru’u Al-Qais, Tarafa ibn Al-‘abd, and Al-Ma‘arri.

Furthermore, Darwish intertextualises through references to many other writers, quoting from both Arabic and non-Arabic sources, which reflects his passion for deepening his vision to include other poets’ works from across the world. Jäber ‘Aşför argues that this drawing on the repositories of the cultural wealth of world literature brings an originality to Darwish’s linguistic style and thematic approach because he benefits from the influences of diverse poetic traditions ranging from the sixth-century odes of 'Imru’u Al-Qais to the twentieth-century Modernist masterpieces of T.S. Eliot.20

There is also evidence that he read and was influenced by the work of philosophers such as Theodor Adorno and Martin Heidegger among others.21 His intellectual engagement with the epistemological approaches of various non-Arab intellectuals is also intertextually referenced in his writing, one notable example being the poem, (فكر بغيرك) “Think of Others” in which he reminds readers to “think of

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others who lost the right of speech.” This verse can be linked to both the title and the

topic of Gayatri Spivak’s well-known essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?.”

Although Spivak focuses on the subaltern status of Indian women, her ideas are applicable to all

those colonised, marginalised, and subaltern nations silenced by the dominating forces

in their countries, whether by speaking or writing, as in the case of the Palestinians.

1.6.2 Selection of Works by Said and Darwish

Since one of the key arguments of this thesis concerns the hybrid and

cosmopolitan identities of Said and Darwish, whether in terms of how they viewed

their own self-identity or in their broader perspective concerning the collective

identity of human beings, it is worth briefly exploring here the roots of universalism

and cosmopolitanism in the Arab tradition of Sufism.

In his book, Beyond the Arab Disease, Riad Nourallah traces the historical

roots of this tendency towards universality in Arabic literature by examining the

work of five well-known Sufi Arab writers who adopted this vision, namely al-

Ghazali, al-Suhrawardi, al-Qushayri (d. 1072), Ibn al-’Arabi, and Mulla Sadra. The

concept of harmony between self and others features prominently in both Said’s

construction of cosmopolitanism and in Sufism. Nourallah’s starting point in his

informative analysis of the relationship between Sufism and cosmopolitanism is the

Islamic notion of harmony “between the one (Allah/God) and the many (al-khalq/the

creation).” This ideal of unification in Sufism thought was reflected in the notion of

unification of human experiences.

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22 G. C. Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, Marxism and the


23 R. Nourallah, Beyond the Arab Disease: New Perspectives in Politics and Cultures, London and


24 Ibid., p. 104.
At the same time, the Islamic Empire encompassed a vast cultural network in which different ideas came into contact with each other, leading to creative tension in the discourse of Sufi poets and impacting significantly on the development of Sufism. As Nourallah notes, this was: “A diversity that went into the very growth and later development of Sufism as it interacted with (and attempted, as in Sadra, to synthesize) Greek, Hermetic, Kabbalist, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and other traditions.”

Two main points Sufism merit discussion here due to their similarity with the contemporary thought of Said and Darwish. The first of these is the hybrid essence of human character, reflected in the poetry of Sufism, and the unification of human experience, which intersects with cosmopolitan thoughts. Secondly, there is the historical and political circumstances of the Sufi authors mentioned above, which effectively created a link between the power of Islam at that time and the ability of individual Muslim thinkers to adopt a vision of universality which embraced otherness. When drawing such parallels between the Sufism of the Middle Ages and the modern Western cultural discourse of globalisation, universality, and cosmopolitanism, it is interesting to speculate about the context which saw the rise of this openness to other cultures and ways of thinking. Did it stem from a more tolerant interpretation of Islam, an open-mindedness which has also at times characterised both the other monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity? Or was it a product of a historical period when the lack of perceived threats to power, either external or internal, led to a more positive mindset, allowing discourses of tolerance and peaceful coexistence to flourish?

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26 Granada, the Spanish city which features in so much of Darwish’s later poetry, was itself once a site of such co-existence amongst peoples of different faiths during the Caliphate of Cordoba. See M.
Having briefly introduced the relationship between the classical tradition of Sufism and the modern Arabic cosmopolitan outlook found in Said’s and Darwish’s writings, it is important to focus on Said’s and Darwish's works on identity.

In order to allow an in-depth exploration of the issues raised by the research questions, this thesis will focus only on a selection of the two authors’ works. In the case of Said, one of the principle sources regarding self-identity is his autobiography *Out of Place: A Memoir* (1999) which, amongst other things, highlights the significant role which his mother played in his upbringing and identity formation, as emphasized in many of his publications. This work, together with a number of other articles which relate directly to Said’s self-identity will form the core of the material used to examine this aspect of his identity. More specifically, with regards to his Palestinian identity, Said’s book *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986) can be seen as an essential document charting the transformation of this, both within Palestine and beyond from 1948 until the 1980s. An earlier work, *The Question of Palestine* (1979) also makes a valuable contribution to understanding Said’s personal emotional dilemma concerning the occupation of his homeland whilst his *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary Essays* (2001) can be read as more of an exploration of his ongoing feelings of exile and their impact on his identity. His ground-breaking study *Orientalism* (1978) and his other publications that evaluate Arab and Islamic positions on Arab/Palestinian identity will also contribute to the discussion.

In the case of Darwish, a representative selection of poetry relating to the theme of identity covering the entire span of his work will be analysed. Darwish did not write an autobiography as such, stating on numerous occasions that his poetry

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would be his only written memoir. However, one of his works, a prose-poem entitled (يوميات الحزن العادي) *Journal of an Ordinary Grief* (1973) clearly contains personal reflections on Palestinian life under occupation. This makes it a harder task to identify key elements in his personal life which proved influential. However, the Mahmoud Darwish Foundation\(^\text{27}\) provides a biography which combines quotations from the poet with general details about his life.

For the citation of Arabic and English quotations of Darwish’s poetry, it will be mostly quoted in English except a few verses have not been translated into English. As not all of Darwish’s poetry collections have been translated into English, the Arabic verses of Darwish’s poems which have not been translated into English or I have not found the English translation of them will be written in both Arabic and English. For the poetry collections that have been already translated, I will cite them in English only.

### 1.7 Said: His Life and Work

#### 1.7.1 A Brief Biography

The Palestinian-American Edward Said was born in 1935 in Jerusalem but spent the majority of his life living in either Cairo or New York. Although Said liked Beirut, he found himself “unresolved, unreconciled, perhaps finally unassimilated” when he stayed there.\(^\text{28}\)

Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, Said was known as a key thinker at a decisive moment in the post-colonial era, contributing to the pervasive theories of the time with *Orientalism*, which remains his best-known and most cited work which interrogates the ways in which


Orientalists and the West in general view and represent Eastern/Oriental subjects. His ideas have also been widely applied in the field of International Relations governing West and East in relation to the misrepresentations of Eastern countries by Western political institutions during and after the colonial period.

With his academic publications, public talks and University lectures, Said contributed greatly to issues affecting Palestine, and devoted much of his work to analysing the developing world’s inferiority complex toward the West, both in colonial and post-colonial times. Western and Eastern scholars alike have acknowledged his influence. Homi Bhabha, for example, developed the central concept of hybridity from Said’s ideas in *Orientalism* whilst Gayatri Spivak used elements from the same book to explore domination of the Other in her article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gender studies have also benefited greatly from Said’s use of Michel Foucault’s theories regarding power and knowledge as Said portrays the intentional misrepresentations of Arabs and Islam in the Western academic world.

Others have been critical of his views and sometimes waged fierce campaigns against them, including Bernard Lewis who originally responded to the publication of the book in a scathing article in the *New York Times Review of Books* entitled “The Question of Orientalism” whilst Sadik Jalal Al-‘Azm in his article “Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse” accused Said of essentializing the West in the same way as he had accused Westerners of essentializing the Orient.

Said died in 2003, twelve years after being diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia.

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1.7.2 Key Works by Edward Said

Said’s publications are rich and varied, and reflect his philosophical approaches to a number of fields in the humanities. His academic publications can be divided into two broad categories in terms of these approaches: his literary and musical critique can be placed in one group whilst his work on the politics of post-colonialism, and specifically his extensive publications on Palestinian issues can be placed in the other. Said also addressed the theme of identity both explicitly and implicitly in various works. This section will present Said’s key works which focus explicitly on identity, whether in the context of post-colonial theory or in the context of Said’s self-identity.

1.7.2.1 The World, the Text, and the Critic (1983) and Representations of the Intellectual (1996)

Said’s main argument in his book The World, the Text, and the Critic relates to what he calls secular criticism which, in its most basic meaning, entails linking texts to the conditions they refer to in the external world, drawing parallels between what is inside and outside the text. As Said explains in the introduction of the book, his approach: “affirms the connection between texts and the existential actualities of human life, politics, societies, and events.”34

This book can be understood as a critique to the prevalent trend in literary theory in American academia at the time which emphasised an approach to literary criticism that considered textuality as isolated from all external circumstances, or a series of textual readings drawing on other textual representations. As Ashcroft and Ahluwalia observe regarding Said’s stance in this book:

While Said agrees that we should resist the assumption that the text is limited to the book, he goes further to say that to treat literature as an inert structure is to miss the important fact that it is an act located in the world.\textsuperscript{35}

However, Said also shows throughout the book that he has a solid grasp of American and European critical and literary theory, engaging with and evaluating the ideas of some of the key figures of critical theory including Foucault and Derrida. Secular criticism, which Said uses widely in his critique of various issues in literature and music, is one possible alternative approach to critical theories which focus purely on textual analysis.

The book of \textit{The World, the Text, and the Critic} is integrated with the main argument of the book of \textit{Representations of the Intellectual}. Indeed, Said was interested in critically analysing the role the intellectual should play in political, academic, and social life and as a revolutionary thinker and viewed himself as a resilient intellectual. Said radicalised his concept of educated persons to include those who use their knowledge to serve political institutions, or to stand on the side of the oppressed. His concept of the intellectual was influenced by the work of Antonio Gramsci,\textsuperscript{36} the Italian Marxist revolutionary thinker, who thought that there were two types of intellectuals in society. According to Gramsci, the first type, traditional intellectuals, included teachers, priests and administrators, and these tended to isolate themselves from being concerned with social issues and usually did the same thing from one generation to another. The second type he labelled as organic intellectuals, whom he describes as courageous individuals who actively engage with society and instead of merely observing matters, they try to change the reality of their fellow humans.

In *Representations of the Intellectual*, Said widely offers a variety of images of intellectuals and their roles, drawing on Gramsci, as well as insights from Julien Banda’s treatise *La Trahison des Clercs* (1927), and Foucault’s concepts of knowledge and power, previously explored in Said’s book, *Orientalism*. Said also distinguishes between two types of intellectuals: the real intellectual, who adopts a focus upon telling the truth and fighting injustice, and the unreal intellectual, who behaves indifferently towards oppressed peoples. It is useful here to refer to a quote from the first of the BBC Reith Lectures which Said delivered on June 24 1993 in which he considered the definition and role of the intellectual at the end of the twentieth century, for this can tell us a good deal about his personal relationship with his work as an academic and his identity as an intellectual:

The central fact for me is, I think, that the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public, in public. And this role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose raison d’être is to represent all those people and issues who are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug.  

Said was originally made an outsider by circumstances beyond his control but he consciously cultivated this outsider identity as being the best place from which to challenge the status quo as he believed that speaking truth to power required an independent and therefore outsider position as a basis for criticism. With regard to the relationship between academics and universities, he argued that the intellectual’s view must be independent from the ideology of the university institution. However, Alissa Jones Nelson believes that even in this context Said had an insider/outsider

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academic status due to “his association with an academic guild that paid his salary and published his books, as well as his dependence upon an insider group against which to polemicize.”

In *Representations of the Intellectual*, in his discussion concerning the relationship between intellectuals and exile he considered this to be a positive one, believing that this puts a distance between oneself and any narrow adherence to ideologies which might prevent intellectuals from judging and observing issues objectively. In many ways, Said began life as an outsider, moved to insider status, and eventually ended up back outside. In his own writing, he remains a problematic insider/outsider character.

### 1.7.2.2 Orientalism (1978)

It is clear that Said has an enduring interest in the topic of identity and issues relating to this are addressed implicitly or explicitly in the majority of his works. For instance, his doctoral research examined the relation between exile and self-identity in the writing of Joseph Conrad, who like Said himself lived between cultures and languages. Raḍwa ʿāshor noted that, surprisingly, in his article “Reflections on Exile” (2000) Said declared that he had not thought about the similarities between Conrad’s experience of exile and his own until comparatively recently. This suggests that even though Said might not have been particularly interested in this topic when writing his doctoral thesis, it is his expression of his alienation and the bitterness of exile that dominated in his subconsciousness.

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Said wrote three major books dealing with Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian identity, namely *Orientalism, Covering Islam* and *The Question of Palestine*. The first of these is regarded as one of Said’s major contributions in the field of Oriental/Post-Colonial Studies. It presents a radical critique of Western studies of the East, particularly by scholars in Britain, France, Italy, Russia, and Germany. Said’s aim in this book was to reveal the organised misrepresentations of the East which still governed Western conceptualisations of developing world nations. According to Said, Westerners do not have access to images of real Easterners, instead they depend on unreal representations created by intellectuals; thus, the West tends to see the East through the eyes of Orientalists, who, according to Said, conveyed an ideological view of the East that was constructed by the colonial powers during colonialism.\(^{43}\)

Drawing on the concept of discourse, and more specifically on ideas concerning elements of the work of Michel Foucault *Power/Knowledge* (1980), Said applies his thesis to Western Orientalist discourse. Said argues that without considering the development of Orientalism as a discourse, it is not possible to understand how Western cultures succeeded in dominating the countries of the East politically, socially, culturally, scientifically, religiously, and militarily after the Age of Enlightenment. For just as Foucault posits that knowledge is a form of power, Said also concludes that Orientalism can be understood as an affiliation of knowledge with power, the power exercised by the West in distributing knowledge ideologically to serve its Orientalist ambitions.\(^{44}\)

It is important to highlight the varied responses to the publication of *Orientalism* in both the Western and the Eastern academic worlds. One of its most significant positive impacts was in drawing Orientalist scholars’ attention to the need


to be aware of the extent to which representations of Eastern others were, in fact, misrepresentations.\textsuperscript{45} It was widely praised as a forthright book and had a major impact on a number of other key thinkers in diverse academic disciplines. However, as noted earlier, his work also created considerable controversy with some scholars being highly critical of his views such as Al-‘Azm and others waging fierce and sustained campaigns against them, with the case of Orientalist and historian Bernard Lewis.

Another criticism directed at Said’s methodology is his ignorance of the works of feminist writers. Other scholars pointed out that some of the work conducted by Russian and German Orientalists in particular had not approached the study of the East from the same perspective, and Said addressed both these points in a later article entitled “Orientalism Reconsidered” and also in subsequent editions of the book he added firstly an “Afterword” in 1995 and later a “Preface” in 2003.

With regard to Said’s approach to the representation of the notion of identity in Orientalism, it is argued here that in writing this book, his aim was to refute Western misrepresentations of the Orient, in particular exposing some of the most problematic images which had become associated with the Arab Islamic world. According to Said himself, in Orientalism and in two subsequent publications, The Question of Palestine and Covering Islam, he attempted to “treat the modern relationship between the world of Islam, the Arabs, and the Orient on the one hand, and on the other the West: France, Britain and in particular the United States,”\textsuperscript{46} deconstructing mistaken Western ideas concerning Arabs and Islam.

1.7.2.3 Covering Islam (1997)

Covering Islam is the third book in which Said’s efforts are focused on defending real Arab and Islamic identity against intentional misrepresentations. Over the course of three chapters entitled “Islam as News”; “The Iran Story”; and “Knowledge and Power”, he provides a detailed analysis of the historical, political, and economic factors that help create a misleading vision of Islam.

It is useful to consider here the two senses in which Said uses the phrase ‘covering Islam’. Most obviously, in media terms, ‘to cover’ means investigating or reporting on a particular topic and it is American media coverage of Islam which forms the focus of this work. However, Said may also have used the word in one of its other sense ‘to obscure something’ meaning that perhaps media coverage also masks the reality of a situation, thus presenting a false representation. Said argues that the way in which Western, and particularly US media, approach Islam represents it as a violent religion and this coverage consequently spreads fear amongst Western consumers of this media. At the same time, this fear also provokes Western politicians to call for military action against terrorism to protect citizens from the dangers of what is framed as religiously inspired violence. According to Said, such images are intentionally manufactured to serve the political agendas of Western governments, particularly with respect to Middle Eastern oil-producing states. Western governments were wary of losing their supply of oil from Muslim countries who might break off trade as a result of their religious fundamentalism and the hatred they harboured towards the West.

In order to illustrate the inaccuracy of this insight regarding Islam, Said cites a number of non-specialist academic studies and texts that were published about Islam by journalists who can easily objectify Islam by writing in simplistic terms. Said
points to the media generally as a major source for propagating invalid discourse and constructing a vision of Islam which is based on poor quality investigation and lacks any professional academic judgment or objective rigour. In Covering Islam Said was particularly concerned with defending Islamic identity from the problematic images of Muslims as ‘terrorists’ which had become commonplace in the Western media. He argued that this was especially frequent and widespread in the case of Palestinians and he examined the damage these misrepresentations did in undermining their identity, leading them to be portrayed and viewed as stereotypes rather than individuals.

1.7.2.4 The Question of Palestine (1979)

In The Question of Palestine47 Said identifies and examines three key issues that are of specific relevance to an understanding of Palestine and Zionism and he concludes by making suggestions concerning possible solutions to the problem of achieving self-determination for Palestine. In the first chapter, he addresses the most basic but essential question: what is Palestine? tracing the history of this territory. In the second chapter, the focus shifts to examine what Zionism means from the standpoint of those who are its victims, being negatively affected by it. In the third and fourth chapters, Said traces the history of the movements for Palestinian self-determination and discusses possible future developments in this area.

In the first chapter, Said attempts to clearly define what is meant by Palestine and who the Palestinians are, in addition to explaining the circumstances which led to them being displaced from their homes and territory. This inevitably involves examining the history of Zionism and of the Israelis who Said also chooses to see as victims of an organised British colonialist agenda to create a Jewish state in Palestine.

Said criticised the popular phrase ‘Zionism is Racism’, arguing that this simplistic black and white approach to this movement is unhelpful and itself observes that “Zionism is Zionism”\(^{48}\) and needs to be critically approached within its own specific historical context.

Having thus analysed the historico-political and ideological roots of the Palestinian issue, Said dedicates the second half of the book to considering possible ways to finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Understandably, given his own background, Said clearly signals the priority of finding a solution which involves self-determination for Palestinians. The distinctive feature of Said’s approach in this book is that he does not address the Palestinian issue from a purely Arab Islamic viewpoint; rather he places the Palestinian matter in the context of Palestine itself, seeing both sides of the problem. From this double perspective, he sees the Israelis as victims and the Palestinians as the victims of the victims. By adopting this approach, he is able to reveal the nature of the prejudice that shapes attitudes towards Palestinians now and has affected the Jews throughout their history.

Examining the origins of the problem historically, politically, sociologically, and religiously, and also considering this in humanitarian terms, allows Said to avoid presenting a one-dimensional vision of an issue that fundamentally affects two nations. In this way, he is able to understand the reasons for the Israelis occupying Palestine, establishing a platform of mutual understanding. Yacoubi praises Said’s balanced vision which he believed was evident in both \textit{The Question of Palestine} and \textit{The Politics of Dispossession} (1995) which he thought “required an extraordinary

\(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 5.
power of single-mindedness, and a deep conviction inseparable from the very skin of Said himself.”

While *Orientalism* focuses on the sciences and on acts of imperialism, *Culture and Imperialism* concentrates on reading and interpreting Western and Orientalist art from the perspective of overlapping cultural relationships. Said elaborates a methodology based on the relationships between the dominant imperialists and the colonised culture exploring French and British experiences of colonialism during the nineteenth century. According to Said that century can be considered to be the height of imperial cultural production including opera and novels. According to Said, these artistic genres were intentionally sent to the East to establish the superior culture of the coloniser among the colonised. Using specific examples, Said clarifies how the West employed culture to maintain imperial institutions of thought in the East, and to ensure its continuity.

1.7.2.5 *Parallels and Paradoxes* (2003)

One important aspect of Edward Said’s valuable contribution to the cultural field is his professional engagement with music as an accomplished pianist. Said gained this interest from his mother and the Western-oriented cultural atmosphere in Egypt during his early childhood and he developed this later in parallel to his other cultural and literary interests. He wrote many articles on music, musicians, and their crucial role in society. Mention should be made in this context firstly of Said’s book *On Late Style* as a controversial debate concerning the late style of major cultural figures, including musicians ranging from Beethoven and Richard Strauss to

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Glen Gould. Said was interested in the extent to which their later work was affected by the often limited choices they faced as artists as a result of the processes of ageing and the recognition of their own mortality. Said starts his book by highlighting the relationship between physical decline and artistic creation:

The relationship between bodily condition and aesthetic style seems at first to be a subject so irrelevant and perhaps even trivial by comparison with the momentousness of life, mortality, medical science, and health, as to be quickly dismissed.\(^5^2\)

Just as *On Late Style* combines Said’s twin interests of literature and music, his earlier work *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*\(^5^3\) also discusses the nature of music itself and its links with literature, politics and society. The book takes the form of a series of dialogues between Said and the Argentine-Israeli conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim with whom he established the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra which brings together young musicians from Israel, Palestine and other Arab countries.\(^5^4\) The work explores the role which music can play in building human character and creating a harmonious relationship between warring factions within society. To a certain extent, it echoes themes from Said’s more known work *Representations of the Intellectual*,\(^5^5\) in which he also explores the role of musicians in society, arguing that they should side with the oppressed in society and never show their total allegiance to any political regime or party.

The fact that both Western and Eastern societies view music as having a lower priority than other cultural fields—reflected most obviously in the educational system which tends to ignore the crucial role music plays in self-identity construction—formed the basis of Said and Barenboim’s critique of society. In

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\(^5^4\) West-Eastern Divan Orchestra http://www.west-eastern-divan.org
Barenboim’s opinion, “The study of music is one of the best ways to learn about human nature.”

Although this jointly authored work makes many insightful points on music, it is worth focusing here on the intersection between music and identity, particularly the concepts of hybrid and cosmopolitan understandings of identity, which are the core interest of this thesis. Both Said and Barenboim espouse the idea of art bridging the gap between peoples and bringing nations together more effectively than politics. Said refers to Goethe’s understanding of art as being a journey to other cultures and notes the need to accept that in order to discover other identities we must first put aside our own identity, freeing the other from being imprisoned within the narrow perceptions of identity conditioned by our own conceptual system. Establishing a dialogue with other cultures is more likely to be achieved through the international language of music, which does not need any translation. He illustrates this by comparing the process of reading poetry and listening to music. The former requires an understanding of the language in which it has been written before it can be appreciated, while the second does not. It can act as an intermediary directly linking cultures and ethnicities.

1.7.2.6 Culture and Imperialism (1993)

Not far from music, in *Culture and Imperialism* Said first used the term ‘contrapuntal reading’ to interpret the relationship in canonical works of English and French literature, referred to by Said as “the cultural archive” between narratives which are set in the dominant colonial nations such as England and France, and the colonies upon which the great powers depended for their wealth, considering the perspectives of both the colonizer and the colonized. To read a novel contrapuntally

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means taking into account these intertwined histories and perspectives. As Said himself expresses it, contrapuntal reading involves “awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts.”

It is useful to note that the adjective “contrapuntal” is derived from the musical term “counterpoint” defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “the technique of setting, writing, or playing a melody or melodies in conjunction with another, according to fixed rules” and according to Ashcroft and Ahluwalia in their book-length exploration of aspects of Said’s work, his inspiration for the notion of contrapuntal reading came from his admiration for the Canadian virtuoso pianist Glenn Gould. As ‘abdul Nabī Isstīf notes, Said was also drawn to the idea that music is the only art that can say two things at the same time. Said re-reads these canonical literary texts “not univocally but contrapuntally.”

For Said, the term ‘contrapuntal reading’ refers to a process of deep reading of any literary text in order to reveal its implications in relation to colonialism and imperialism, as well as with regard to the effects of these on colonised peoples and nations. In terms of technique, Said argues that contrapuntal reading demands that readers look for what is not said since this may be just as important as what is said, examining the significance of small plot lines and other marginal elements of the text to show how the submerged but crucial presence of the Empire can be read back into canonical texts. This approach is not only helpful, then, but may be crucial in order

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57 Ibid., p. 51.
59 Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, pp. 92-93.
61 E. Said, Culture and Imperialism, p. 59.
to make important connections within a novel and also with historical or biographical contexts.

A good example of Said’s use of this technique can be found in his analysis of Jane Austen’s novel, *Mansfield Park* (1814) in *Culture and Imperialism*. The novel is largely set on an estate owned by the Bertram family whose wealth is derived from sugar plantations on the island of Antigua. However, as Said notes, the novel contains virtually no mention of this Caribbean location, despite the fact that in a structural sense the story depends on it because without these assets in the colonies the Bertrams would not have amassed the wealth which they have, nor would family members be obliged to spend so much time away from the estate, thus opening up the narrative possibilities the novel explores. Said’s contrapuntal strategy of interpreting Austen’s novel in the light of this structural dependency, allows the forgotten other to be read back into the text.62

This contrapuntal perspective can be particularly beneficial when examining Said’s treatment of Palestinian issues and his self-penned reflections on his own identity. In the case of the former, Said considered the broader picture, examining the history of the Jews in the Middle East and their experiences of struggle, persecution and marginalisation within European societies, with the Holocaust in particular being considered as a key event for reading the history of Jewish oppression. Thus, in the light of this contrapuntal reading, Said developed his concept of Palestinians as victims of victims.

This concept was not simply a tool for analysing texts, but is relevant when attempting to understand Said’s concept of his own self-identity as that of an individual living between two places and being conscious of both these realities.

simultaneously. When Said died, Darwish wrote one of his most well-known poems, an elegy entitled “Contrapuntal Reading of Edward Said,” in which he reflects the multiple strands which characterised the intellectual concepts of Said as an academic and his identity as a man, a life lived between two languages, and across many different places, some of which became a home of sorts.

1.7.2.7 After the Last Sky (1986)

*After the Last Sky* offers a detailed, subjective examination of Palestinian lives using various approaches including sociological, geographical, political, economic, and religious. The contemporary reality of Palestinians is documented in the photographic images provided by Jean Mohr. Said’s commentary links the moment captured in each photograph with the specific circumstances in which it was taken to highlight its profound significance, and relate it to the historical and sociological context in which it was produced.

Said notes that his aim in working together with Jean Mohr in producing this book was to approach the topic of Palestine from a new and inspiring angle, combining photographic images and written work “to say something that hasn’t been said about Palestine.” He also draws readers’ attention to the benefits of combining photographs and text, suggesting that this offers a kind of double documentary regarding the situation of Palestinians both inside and outside Palestine. According to Yacoubi, Said tells Rushdie that Jean Mohr’s pictures used in the book represent “a number of stories, one of them being how Palestinian identity resides in constant movement and restless self-making.”

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64 Ibid., p. 4.
Another essential theme of *After the Last Sky* is to highlight the intense emotional feelings, often compared to a wound, which Palestinians continue to experience concerning their exile whether in Palestine or elsewhere. Whilst on one level some Palestinians may appear to lead normal lives, working in various forms of employment and carrying out their social obligations both in their own society and in host societies, they face a constant identity struggle:

Exiles at home as well as abroad, Palestinians also still inhabit the territory of former Palestine (Israel, the West Bank, Gaza), in a sadly reduced circumstance. They are either ‘the Arabs of Judea or Samaria’, or in Israel, non-Jews. Some are referred to as ‘present absentees’. In Arab countries, except for Jordan, there are special cards identifying them as ‘Palestinian refugees’ and even where they are respectable engineers, teachers, business people, or technicians, they know that in the eyes of their host country they will always be aliens.66

As Salman Rushdie confirms, the exile of Palestinians “is not literary or bourgeois” but is “a mass phenomenon.”67

Said describes in detail the everyday life of Palestinians, encouraging readers to understand what this entails, making them more sympathetic towards their extraordinary plight. Said also examines the role played by Palestinian intellectuals within their society, recording their disappointment and bitterness, drawing on the work of Hanan Ashrawy, Darwish, and Ghassan Kanafani, to put into words the frustrations felt by their compatriots. He concludes that the current image of Palestine is “exile, dispossession, the inaccurate memories of one place slipping into vague memories of another, a confused recovery of general wares, passive presences scattered around in the Arab environment.”68

Said took the title for this book from a verse of Mahmoud Darwish’s poem “The Earth is Closing on Us”:

Where should we go after the last frontiers?

Where should the birds fly after the last sky?69

Said uses the quote from Darwish to reflect the despair of Palestinian refugees in a war-torn region, exiles who all too often, post-Nakba, have made for what they thought was a safe haven only to find themselves forced to move on again as a result of being caught up in yet another conflict. The verses also express a deep yearning for stability rather than the perpetual odyssey which marks the lives of too many Palestinians.

At the end of the book, Said calls for a wide-ranging introspection and suggests that there can be no solution without returning to the past, and analysing Palestinian failures and successes. He calls for a full and frank assessment of the complex and varied circumstances that help to bind Palestinians together as a people, arguing that when these have been addressed, they will be in the position to start building a future. Said fully understands that his fellow Palestinians want to achieve liberation, but believes that without learning from their mistakes they will not have the means to make the improvements necessary to reach the stage of self-determination.

1.7.2.8 Out of Place: A Memoir (1999)

*Out of Place*70 is one of the most interesting contributions to autobiographical studies because it reveals in an honest way the inner world of the great critic, Said. He writes about both his personal and academic life and explores the details that in some cases had remained hidden in his memory until he wrote his memoir.

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Before discussing the key threads in his memoir, it is worth reflecting on the reasons why he might have chosen to use this word to describe the book rather than autobiography. McCarthy suggests the reason possibly lies in the differences which Said perceived between these two terms:

It is suggested that autobiography makes a claim to comprehensive, objectivity, and accuracy, while ‘memoir’ is more modest, self-consciously impressionistic, without aspiration to rigour or historical status.  

Perhaps, then, this was deliberately chosen by Said to indicate his approach in relating his personal story, a desire to free himself from the formal expression of self, choosing to focus on those events and individuals that were important to him personally, rather than necessarily being of interest for their broader historical significance. This was not to be a meticulously referenced academic exercise in self exploration but a subjective account of a personal meditation on identity. McCarthy asserts that ironically it is this lack of academic rigour that gives this particular work by Said its authenticity as an unofficial personal remembrance.  

With regards to the memoir itself, Said initially focuses on his early childhood, discussing his personal attitudes towards his father’s firm discipline that he believed had affected his personality in a negative way. In contrast to his father’s inflexible approach to his upbringing, Said’s mother was strongly supportive, and understanding both his parents’ approaches provides a useful insight into some of the contributing factors to his identity formation. Said notes how his parents helped to form his personality by exercising their power over their children’s behaviours, persuading each of them about what was good or evil depending on their particular view of life. At various times in his memoir he discusses his mother’s method of

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72 Ibid., p. 6.
raising him, explaining in detail her clever ways of making him behave as she wanted him to.

Said also highlights the relationship between his parents, in the process of exposing his mother’s passivity towards her husband despite her strong personality. This reflects both the status of women in his family as followers of men, and at the same time, can be said to portray the inferior position of women in Arab culture.

In telling his personal story, Said remembers both the positive and negative influences on his life, as well as those that shaped the history of his family and nation. He does not make a clear separation between events which occurred in the personal sphere and those which took place in the history of his home country, and on numerous occasions in the book, he reflects on the changes which relate to the Palestinian issue by analysing the supporting and dissenting positions regarding Palestine. All of this reflects his close relationship with his homeland and shows the reader his great efforts to defend both Arab and Palestinian positions. His thoughts apparently roam freely between people and places in his personal life, jumping from one to another as he tries to bring to mind those memories which have been strewn across time and space, recapturing some of those that had gone astray, failing to summon up others.

The places he remembers are described as real geographical locations, thus it is possible to recognise the distinctive features of the cities of Cairo and New York, but he relates to these places emotionally and it is possible to identify the ones which he liked or disliked in terms of the impact which they left on his memory. He often connects happy places with sad events that occurred there, giving readers an insight into the way in which he deals psychologically with place and time and their influence on his character.
In short, Said’s memoir is more than the personal memories of an intellectual; rather it seems to be a clear reflection of the times he lived through and the places he lived in, and of his recollections of relatives and friends.

1.7.2.9 Reflections on Exile (2000)

The book Reflections on Exile is a collection of 22 articles written by Said about various topics, with the majority of them relating to issues surrounding Arab politics, literature, and locations, such as the piece he wrote about Cairo.

However, two essays within that collection specifically address the notion of identity. The first one is titled “Reflections on exile” like the collection itself, and takes the form of an academic essay about the concept of exile in literature written by exiles. In contrast, the other article is a personal reflection on Said’s self-identity. “Reflections on exile” explains to readers why Said shifts from talking about a personal problem to a general topic that discusses the experience of immigrants in a broader sense. This article theorises about the concept of exile, beginning by a definition of the word and ending by addressing its features. In addition, this article attempts to make meaningful distinctions between exiles, immigrants, refugees, and the homeless. As is typical of Said’s writing, he refers to other exiled theorists and writers such as Adorno, and Darwish. Moreover, Said offers a profound insight into the exile’s feelings:

Exiles look at non-exiles with resentment. They belong in their surroundings, you feel, whereas an exile is always out of place. What is it like to be born in a place, to stay and live there, to know that you are of it, more or less forever?74

In this article Said repeatedly expresses the notion of being out of place and the title of his autobiography appears to indicate that Said thought of himself as an

74 Ibid., p. 143.
individual who was always as he entitled his autobiography “Out of Place,” a self-designated outsider. However, in reality, as Alissa Jones Nelson notes, Said’s insider/outsider status was subject to change and he was able to “move repeatedly across the permeable boundary that separates insider from outsider” and “inhabit these seemingly separate spaces simultaneously.”

At certain times in his life, he was both an academic and a political insider.

As previously noted, although Said was a Palestinian by birth, having been born in Jerusalem, he spent most of his formative years in Egypt. At the age of sixteen, he travelled to the United States to complete his education. After gaining his doctorate in 1963, Said took up a lectureship at Columbia University and, it was only with the outbreak of the Six-Day War in 1967 followed by the Naksa that Said started to become politically conscious, and this awareness began to impact on his academic life and work. As a supporter of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), he was considered a political outsider by many Americans. By the 1980s, Said had become an important and active insider in the Palestine National Council (PNC). Later, his outspoken criticism of the PLO and eventual break with this organization after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 meant he became, in many ways, an outsider in official Palestinian politics. He provoked the anger of his compatriots for pushing the boundaries between insider and outsider.

At various times Said has been labeled as an academic outsider and considered himself as such, but he cannot be fixed exclusively in this category.

The second important article in Reflections on Exile, entitled “Between two worlds,” was written by Said in the latter stages of his life after discovering he had

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75 A. Nelson, “Job in Conversation with Edward Said”.
77 Ibid., pp. 20-24 and 31-32.
the fatal disease lymphocytic leukaemia, and in it he returned to the subject of his
doctoral thesis, Joseph Conrad, comparing his exile with that of the novelist. This late
discovery of the similarities between the experiences of the two exiled intellectuals is
the main significance of the topic in Said’s essay. Whilst Conrad was a Polish
immigrant novelist, Said was an American-Palestinian who had the right to American
citizenship because of his father’s immigration. In this article, Said, first shows the
reader the links between him and Conrad, and then compares and contrasts their
relationship to each other. As a result of Said’s complex situation of being both
Palestinian and American, he felt that the bitterness of this feeling towards his own
exile was deeper than that of Conrad.

1.8 Darwish: His Life and Work

1.8.1 A Brief Biography

Mahmoud Darwish was born in 1941 in the Palestinian village of Al-Birweh. When the Israeli invasion forced them out of their home, he and his family fled to
Lebanon temporarily before once again returning to Palestine and settling in Haifa
for ten years. He then began an exploration of various cities around the world
including Moscow (he was a member of the Israeli Communist Party), Cairo, Beirut
and Paris. Moscow turned out to be a source of great disappointment for Darwish, as
his idealized vision of the Communist Party was shattered by experiencing the reality
of living under such a regime. Darwish notes:

I have lost my ideals of communism, but I have not lost the confidence in
Marxism. There is a huge contradiction between what we imagined; what is
portrayed by the Soviet media about Moscow, and the truth about people’s
lives, which are full of deprivation, poverty and fear. The latter aspect
strikes me the most. When I spoke with Russian people I felt they spoke in
extreme secrecy. Besides the fear, I had a feeling that the government was
omnipresent everywhere. This transformed the city of Moscow from an

Further information concerning Darwish’s life and work are available at the Darwish Foundation
See: http://www.darwishfoundation.org/atemplate.php?id=799
ideal city to an ordinary city.\textsuperscript{79}

Although he became a member of the executive committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), he tried to keep away from factionalism and later resigned over the 1993 Oslo Agreements between Israel and the PLO which he thought were too uncertain.

Darwish wrote twenty-six themed poetry collections and eleven books of prose covering a range of issues but mainly revolving around the theme of identity. His complete works have been translated into twenty-two languages and circulated around the globe as the voice not only of a Palestinian poet longing for a lost homeland but also as the spokesperson for oppressed peoples across the globe. Darwish died in 2008 in the United States of America as a result of complications from open-heart surgery.\textsuperscript{80}

1.8.2 The Poetry Collections of Darwish

Darwish’s poetry is considered to have made an important contribution to the Palestinian literature of resistance, an anti-colonialist movement which was initially established in 1938 by several Palestinian writers, all of whom became known as Resistance Poets or the Poets of the Occupied Land. Ibrahim, Abd Al-Rahīm Hamūd, and Abd Al-Karīm Al-Karamalī formed part of the first generation of poets, who were the predecessors of Darwish and his second literary generation which included Yūsīf Al-Khatīb, and Hārūn Rāshid as its key figures.\textsuperscript{81} Fadwa Tuqan’s output spanned both these generations.

\textsuperscript{80} Mahmoud Darwish’s Official Site is Available at: http://www.darwish.ps/dpoem-126.html Accessed 23/11/2013
The work of the post-Nakba literary generation displayed a number of common features and themes. As the Egyptian critic Rajā’ al-Naqqash notes:

In this year [1948], sorrow, and misery began to appear in Palestinian Arabic poetry. For, after this date the defeated poets began to express in their work emotions of bitterness and desperation, and the theme of the lost Paradise.\(^{82}\)

The first of the three stages of Darwish’s poetry coincided with the immediate post-Nakba period in which, as al-Naqqash suggests, the overwhelming atmosphere in the Palestinian literary sphere was one of desperate disappointment. These sections will examine the chronological trajectory of Darwish’s poetry, considering the extent to which it is possible to discern different phases in his poetic output and to identify their characteristic features in terms of leitmotivs, stylistic devices and recurring themes.

It is argued here that by exploring these transformations in his work in the context of his changing life circumstances useful insights are provided into the broader shifts which occurred within Darwish’s personal identity and creative persona over the course of the decades. More specifically, this analysis will serve to trace the impact that the poet’s post-colonial experience of exile as part of the post-Nakba Palestinian Diaspora has had on his understanding of the nature of identity and how he chose to represent those insights in his poetry.

A number of literary critics including Būliṣ, Barahmeh\(^ {83}\) and Jubran, have proposed a tripartite division of Darwish’s poetic oeuvre, arguing it can be divided chronologically into three main stages. Būliṣ maps what he perceives to be literary and intellectual shifts in Darwish’s work against significant transformations in the poet’s personal circumstances and thus identifies three distinct phases in Darwish’s

\(^{82}\) Al-Naqqash cited in ibid.

output. The first of these stages, which Büliş refers to as the Homeland Stage, covers his earliest period of writing, the years when, for the most part, Darwish was still resident in his occupied homeland. This ended in 1969. Büliş sees a significant shift in the second stage with the appearance of exile as a major theme in his poetry. This phase starts and ends with a departure, the first being his change of residence from Palestine to Lebanon in 1973 in the wake of the Naksa, the second being his enforced exodus from Beirut in 1982, following the outbreak of conflict there. According to Büliş, in the third and final phase of his poetry, it is possible to discern a change in emphasis from his overtly political Palestinian themes towards work which has a more personal focus and foregrounds issues relating to self-identity. The start of this final stage was marked by his migration to Paris where Darwish settled until his death in 2008.

Although this tripartite division is the one most commonly used by critics, Nāhīd Zaggūt proposes a more complex seven-phase division which places more emphasis on the varying literary influences on Darwish’s work and their intertextual resonances in terms of language, imagery and themes. Thus in Darwish’s earliest pieces, for example, in (عصافير بلا أجنحة) Birds without Wings, this critic sees evidence of the influence of Nizār Qabānī’s poetry whilst in its second stage, the Palestinian poet’s output is more influenced by the Shu‘arā‘ Al-Mahjar especially in its romantic outlook. Zaggūt then views the third stage as a rebellion against the romanticism of his previous stage, reflected principally in four of his poetic collections: Lover from Palestine (آخر الليل) (1966) The End of Night

86 Whilst Mahjar is the general term used for Diasporic Arabs around the world, Al-Mahjar was also the term used by Arab writers in the United States who founded the Pen League of Arab Poets literary society to promote Arabic literature.
Doves Die in Al-Jaleel (1970) and My Beloved Awakes from Her Sleep (1970). In Zaggūt’s schema, the fourth stage (1972-1977) was considered to be a period in which the theme of exile was the most prominent whilst he sees the fifth stage as marking a shift towards Darwish’s use of the epic poem as a form, over a period of time which lasts from 1982 until 1989. The sixth and penultimate stage identified by Zaggūt covers a three-year period from 1990 to 1993 whilst finally, in the seventh stage, which lasted until his death, Darwish’s work focused on identity and the search for the self.

Despite the fact that Zaggūt’s seven-stage periodization emphasises a critical approach to Darwish’s work which highlights literary rather than personal influences there is some overlap between these in that both view Darwish’s departure from Beirut as a significant event and thematically, both highlight the importance of exile and the search for the self as being of key importance.

In this thesis, greater attention is placed on the tripartite model in relation to Darwish’s poetry because this places more emphasis on how significant transformations in the poet’s personal circumstances proved to be a catalyst for a shift in the content of his work.

1.8.2.1 Phase One: Homeland and Resistance

Four poetry collections comprise the bulk of Darwish’s production during this phase, namely (عاصفیر بلا آجنحة) Birds without Wings, (عاشق من فلسطين) Lover from Palestine, (أوراق الزيتون) Leaves of Olives and (آخر الليل) The End of Night. This poetry has a number of characteristic features in terms of its linguistic style, themes, and interest in the depiction of personal identity which mark them out as a coherent grouping.
Although Darwish’s work started to appear in Palestinian journals when he was just twelve years old,\(^\text{87}\) (عصفور بلا أجنحة) \textit{Birds without Wings} was the author’s first complete poetry collection and was published when he was nineteen. His choice of the title (عصفور بلا أجنحة) \textit{Birds without Wings} intentionally evokes the vulnerability of the Palestinians. Wingless birds are defenceless – they cannot fly from danger or move elsewhere.

Būliṣ has argued that the thematic and linguistic level of the poems in this collection reflect the fact that he was still a novice at the art of poetry writing and his work lacked sophistication as a result of his limited experience in composition. Būliṣ criticises his rather pedestrian literary expression, arguing that his language is overly explicit and lacks subtlety. He also finds his ideas very limited in their scope, whilst his poetic imagery is still largely based at this stage on tropes found in traditional Arabic rhetoric.\(^\text{88}\)

However, despite the reservations expressed by Būliṣ concerning the literary simplicity and naivety found in this collection, perhaps due to the very artlessness of Darwish’s writing, in these poems he does, nonetheless, succeed in communicating the rawness of his emotions. It is worth remembering that at this stage of his life the memories of the traumatic displacement not only of his own family but of whole Palestinian communities would still have been fresh in his mind. He manages to convey a range of feelings prompted by his fate which give us an insight into his sense of identity at this time. Thus we find evidence of his worries about what the future will hold for him, his loved ones and his compatriots. The poems in this collection also bear witness to the depth of his bitterness at suffering the loss of his


home, in both the literal sense in reference to the family house and land in Al-
Birwah, but also in a more metaphorical sense, the loss of his homeland. However, in
addition to these negative sentiments, there is also a more positive assertion of
Palestinian identity already visible in the young poet’s declaration of the rights of the
Palestinian people over the lands from which they have been displaced.

In one respect, then, Darwish was already beginning to take on the role of
spokesperson for the Palestinian nation, voicing not only his personal feelings but
those of all of the Palestinian refugees who were affected after the Nakba of 1948.89
His political resistance is also clearly evident in even his earliest poetry.

Darwish’s chief influence in this collection came from Nizār Qabānī, and the
stylistic and thematic ties between their work is obvious. However, Darwish’s work
suffers by comparison with Qabānī’s originality and remarkable style. In an
interview, Darwish confessed that he wanted all his early work to be omitted from
his oeuvre, commenting that he considered ninety percent of his work as a whole
unworthy of inclusion.90

Darwish’s second poetry collection (أوراق الزيتون) Leaves of Olives has been
considered by critics as a critical moment in his work because it marked a significant
development in his form of poetic expression, showing his ability of producing
poetry of high quality. In this collection, there is evidence of greater emotional depth,
real linguistic flair, and the emergence of themes which were to become quintessential elements of his work. In terms of the collection’s emotive force, he
expresses his own innermost feelings in a profound manner, exposing his own
vulnerabilities whilst also displaying his humanitarian principles.

89 A. Al-"Ustah, “Mahmoud Darwish: ‘Aṣāfīr bilā ajnihah”, (Mahmoud Darwish: Birds without
90 A. Wāzin, “Dafāṭir Mahmoud Darwish”, (The Notes of Mahmoud Darwish, in an Inclusive
10/10/2013.
At this stage, mindful of his role as a Poet of Resistance, Darwish was clearly aiming his work at the general Palestinian public, and he tends to avoid complex symbols or literary techniques, in order to convey his message, often using non-literary vocabulary.91

With regards to themes, the notion of identity is foregrounded in this collection from the very outset, with the first poem being entitled “Identity Card”, a work which went on to become one of his best known pieces. In what was to become a trademark of his early style, Darwish takes an everyday experience encountered by Palestinians, the need to confirm their identity whenever challenged by Israeli soldiers or officialdom, and transforms this into a proclamation of resistance in the face of the occupation of his ancestral homeland and the denial of his rights.

The theme of resistance against the continuing occupation of his homeland and the many forms that this can take also comes to the fore in (عاشق من فلسطين) A Lover from Palestine, the title of his third poetry collection. In particular, Darwish focuses on challenging the negative stereotypical images of Palestinian identity popularised by Zionist Israelis in various forms of propaganda which represents Arab Palestinians as backward barbarians. The theme of the united family is also prominently represented in this set of poems, with Darwish using his own family to symbolise the Palestinian people. In these poems, there is also frequent use of imagery involving female figures and feminine attributes linked to a diverse range of themes including love in its various forms, motherhood, and home.

In the thirty poems which make up (آخر الليل) The End of Night, Darwish reveals his innermost feelings concerning his loss of his home/homeland and the spiritual

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dimension to this. Inclusion of references to and images using characteristic flora and fauna of the Palestinian landscape feature frequently in this collection; olive trees, in particular, begin to appear as a positive fundamental metaphor of Palestinian life, with connotations of longevity and deep-rootedness, they come to symbolise the Palestinian people’s intimate connection to the soil of their homeland.

As with the previous three collections, Darwish’s tone at this time is generally confident, determined, and optimistic. He reflects the general atmosphere of the late 1960s with other poets in Arab countries, producing politically-committed literature which was influenced by the new widespread trend towards left-wing ideologies originally promulgated by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Thus, in this collection a particularly prominent place is given to themes of political resistance, focusing specifically on the freedom fighter’s discourse of death in preference to capitulation to the enemy. It is clear that at the time he was writing the poems in this collection Darwish was very much interested in the prevailing trend of Arab socialism and had great hopes in the strength of Nasser’s ideology. Furthermore, analysis of his work suggests that he was also committed to guerrilla warfare, condoning the use of violence if this was thought to be the only solution in the struggle against the enemy.

One of his final collections of this stage is the volume (العصافير تموت في الجليل) Doves die in Galilee, 92 published in 1969, which contains twenty poems. It largely continues with the same themes addressed in his earlier collection. One change is the prominence given to images of women in three pieces: (“Rita... Love Me”, “A Beautiful Woman in Sedoum”, and “A

Reading of My Lover’s Face.” Females in Darwish’s work are both real, reflecting the many loves in his personal life, and symbolic, representing the beloved homeland. The Jewish woman he referred to as Rita was clearly Darwish’s first love and becomes a major presence in his work. She also symbolises Darwish’s exploration of his relationship with “the enemy” that would be developed in later work.

At this stage Darwish’s expression of self-identity was totally tied to his homeland and he was optimistic about the possibility of return to the family home; this enthusiastic tone in his poems gradually disappeared in his later phases.

1.8.2.2 Phase Two: Into Exile

Darwish had begun to earn a reputation as a Poet of Resistance which brought him to the attention of the Israeli police. The pressure of daily questioning and the possibility of imprisonment forced Darwish to leave his occupied homeland to finally settle in Beirut, where he discovered the problematic situation of Palestinian refugees who were settled in tents on the borders of Lebanon.

Exile played a critical role in the development of his poetic voice. The collection (حبیبتي تنبض من نومها) My Lover Awakes from her Sleep published in 1970 consists of seven poems which are longer than previous pieces and their themes explored in more depth. Some of his poems at this stage are of epic length including (أمّ أنام الزعتر) “Ahmad al-Za’tar”, (بيروت) “Beirut”, and (مديح الظل العالي) “A Compliment of the High Shadow.” Their tone is also more pessimistic as they address the feelings of the poet in exile: loneliness, frustration, and disappointment.

During this stage, his use of imagery became more abstractly symbolic and added complexity to the construction of his poetry. In terms of technique, he experimented aesthetically by borrowing from other literary genres. Drawing on

theatre, he would suggest dialogue between voices in the poem to provide different viewpoints.⁹⁴

“Sarhan Drinks Coffee in the Cafeteria” clearly shows the developments in Darwish’s artistic style and epistemological approach as he creates a poetic language, with a polyphony of voices, in contrast to the single voices of previous collections.

What is your name?
And what is your father’s name?
I forgot
And that of your mother?
I forgot
Did you sleep last night?
I slept for ages
Did you dream?
Of what did you dream?
I’ve dreamt of things that I have not seen in my life.

Alia Sālih argues that this introduction of narrative style was in evidence as early as the 1961 poem, (الحديقة النائمة) “The Sleepy Garden.”⁹⁶ Darwish also began to

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⁹⁵ M. Darwish, Uhibbuk aw lā uhibbuk (I love you; I love you not), Beirut: Dār Al-‘Awda, 2013, pp. 93-94.
incorporate historical narrative and myth into his texts more frequently than ever before.\(^97\)

### 1.8.2.3 Phase Three: The Search for the Self

Forced to leave Beirut due to conflict, Darwish moved to Paris and, much later, to Jordan. Darwish’s loneliness in Paris gave him an opportunity to think deeply about the inner world and his relationship with other people. He also benefited intellectually from encounters with Western epistemological approaches, such as postmodernism and humanism. He was particularly influenced by the work of German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who believed that if people want to understand their existence, they must seek to know about the self and that language mediates this process of self-discovery for: “Language is the house of the truth of being.”\(^98\)

Whilst in the initial stages of his poetry, Darwish clearly positioned himself as Arab and Palestinian, his later work expresses various senses of identity based on the cosmopolitan view of human identity. He also shifted from an essentialist concept of identity to a post-colonial view of non-fixed, transformable identity, reflected in his poem “You, as of now, are another”: “I am not embarrassed about my identity because it is still in the process of being invented.”\(^99\)

Darwish began to suffer serious health problems in Paris, which motivated him to read and write more because he wished to leave a poetic legacy\(^100\) and the theme of mortality and death becomes a leitmotif in his verses in this era. The poetry

\(^{97}\) Ibid.


\(^{100}\) Ibid.
collections he produced during this phase are (أثر الفراشة) The Butterfly’s Burden;\textsuperscript{101} Unfortunately, it was Paradise; (لماذا تركت الحصان وحيدا؟) Why Did you Leave the Horse Alone?, (في حضرة الغاب) In the Presence of Absence, (جادارية) Mural, and (سرير الغربية) The Bed of a Stranger. Three of these are particularly pertinent to identity.

\textit{Mural}\textsuperscript{102} is an epic poem written whilst he was awaiting major heart surgery. Facing the possibility of death made him reflect on the will to survive in the face of adversity. The poem addresses the death of language, loss of identity, and futility of existence but counters these with the strength of the desire to live. The poem is a rich intertextual tapestry of religious, literary, social, philosophical, and political allusions that allow him to express his concerns and pain. The dominant theme of the work is resisting death through creation, whatever form this may take, and in this poem, Darwish references examples of individuals who have survived beyond death due to their literary creations including Gilgamesh, Homer, and many others.\textsuperscript{103}

Darwish was also inspired to preserve his life story by writing elements of this into (لماذا تركت الحصان وحيدا؟) Why Did you Leave the Horse Alone?,\textsuperscript{104} but as Darwish explained in an interview, it is not simply a memoir: “I record what is like autobiography, and rewrite my past.”\textsuperscript{105} In this prose-poem, a combination of poetic and narrative technique, he uses temporal flashbacks and spatial shifts, scene-cutting

\textsuperscript{101} Its correct translation is (The Trace of the Butterfly), but because I use the English translation of the collection I prefer to refer to the title as it is in the English translation.

\textsuperscript{102} M. Darwish, Mural, in Unfortunately, it was Paradise, translated by M. Akash and C. Forche, Berkeley, Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2003.


and interior monologue. In addition, as in much of his later work, there is evident irony, which in Padel’s opinion was a reaction to the absurdity of life in the face of sometimes unbearable grief and regret.  

According to 'Ubîd, the poems in the collection entitled (سریر الغربیہ) Bed of the Stranger have been structured into three key parts and this collection is a good example of the complexity of the thematic structuring of his work. The first of these is influenced by Derrida’s ideas and focuses on the deconstruction of boundaries between woman and man, exile and home, division and unity. There is no fixed significance given to any image which opens up multiple readings for this text. The second part consists of six subsections, arranged in groups of three poems, except for the sixth one, which contains six. In the second part Darwish focuses on famous mythical lovers in diverse places and times including Ancient Rome, Damascus, and Sumer, evoking works by Homer and the Umayyad poet Qays Ibn Al-Mullawah. The third part consists of the final poem of the collection, entitled “Damascus Dove Collar” focuses on love and yearning for both place and beloved, in which Damascus symbolises Al-Andalus.

According to Subhi Hadidi, in (جدارية) Mural and (سریر الغربیہ) Bed of the Stranger Darwish also “addresses the universal existential tensions of our postmodern times from the specifics of his experiences”. This cosmopolitan attitude clearly appears in many poems, including “I Have No Throne except the Margins” and “The Kurd has Only the Wind.” Mattawa notes that for Salma Khadra Jayyusi, the leading critic of Palestinian literature, Darwish’s

109 K. 'Ubîd, ibid.
110 Kh. Mattawa, When the Poet is a Stranger.
success as a poet mainly resulted from the fact that he was able to: “transcend the political expediency of his earlier work,” committing himself to experiment artistically whilst remaining loyal to the Palestinian cause.\textsuperscript{111}

With regard to Darwish’s language, ʿAlia ṣāliḥ observes how he was constantly renewing this, absorbing the traditions of medieval Arabic styles whilst at the same time creating a modern style.\textsuperscript{112} His choice of words was always deliberate, often deviating from the typical usage in Arabic. Whilst his earliest poems employed direct everyday terms to convey his point, in his later work he avoided the common lexicon of Arabic poetry\textsuperscript{113} but he still retained the ability to use simple direct expression as he did in (كزىهر اللوز أو أبعد)\textit{Almond Blossoms and Beyond}.

Mohammad Shāhīn, the translator of (كزىهر اللوز أو أبعد)\textit{Almond Blossoms and Beyond}, summarises Darwish’s poetic achievements thus:

Through his abundant creativity [Darwish] has been able to realise two things: he wrote genuinely popular poetry at a time when Arabic poetry and its readership were both in decline; he preserved the spirit and values of poetry while renewing and refining them, as no other writer was able to do. It has, perhaps, been his controversial popularization and originality that have made him “the Poet”, one not to be confused with any other.\textsuperscript{114}

\textbf{1.9 Conclusion}

After outlining the focus of the thesis and its rationale, this introductory chapter presented the aims of the research and the questions which it intends to address. It also mapped out the structure of the thesis and the methodology and theoretical frameworks to be used as tools of analysis. The chapter concluded by presenting

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 209.
\textsuperscript{112} ʿA. ṣāliḥ, “Al-lughah wa al-bināʾ fi jidāriyat Mahmoud Darwish”, (Language and Formalisation in Mahmoud Darwish’s \textit{Mural}).
\textsuperscript{113} H., Būlūš, “Thulāth marāhīl li shiʾr Mahmoud Darwish”, (Three Stages of Mahmoud Darwish’s Poetry).
details about the life of Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish, identifying their key works, and tracing their development as writers.

The next chapter presents a review of the literature which is intended to contextualize the work of the authors studied here, examining the historical events which impacted significantly on their lives and their work and the critical and theoretical frameworks within which their work has been read.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to contextualize the work of the authors studied here, by briefly examining the historical events which to a large extent conditioned their lives and their work and also considering the critical and theoretical frameworks within which their work has been read. The chapter begins by reviewing work relevant to the history of Palestine, the context which to a great extent determined both the development of Palestinian literature and the identity of Said and Darwish. As with so many aspects of Palestinian culture, it is necessary to consider literature pre-and post-Nakba since the events of 1948 dramatically impacted on how Palestinian writers interpreted their role and the review here considers post-Nakba literature as both an act of resistance and an expression of love of the homeland. Critical writings on the work of Said and Darwish are then reviewed and the chapter ends by critically assessing previous work on post-colonial identity which is considered to be of direct relevance to the Palestinian case. Further critical literature relevant to the field of identity studies, trauma and memory is also incorporated into later chapters of this thesis as relevant.

2.2 The History of Palestine

In order to contextualise the detailed analysis of the works of Said and Darwish, it is important to broadly discuss the disputed territory which was the birthplace of both authors. For the contested history and geography of their homeland was to shape the lives, work and identity of both men.
The most significant event in Palestine’s contemporary history is the 1948 Nakba (literally, ‘disaster’, ‘catastrophe’ or ‘cataclysm’). Sa‘di and Abu-Lughod aptly explain the key importance of this event in terms both of Palestinian history and collective memory when they refer to it as “the demarcation line between two qualitatively opposing periods” since post-1948 “the lives of Palestinians at the individual, community, and national level were dramatically and irreversibly changed.”

As Sa‘di and Abu-Lughod note: “The 1948 War that led to the creation of the State of Israel also resulted in the devastation of Palestinian society.” According to them, some 80 per cent of the Palestinians living within the borders of Palestine were rendered refugees. A minority of Palestinians (estimates vary between 60,000 and 156,000) became nominal citizens of the newly established state of Israel.

In After the Last Sky, Said begins his exploration of the question of Palestinian identity by noting that in general, it is understood as being related to “who we are, where we come from, what we are.” He goes on to highlight the difficulties which Palestinians face when attempting to maintain their relationship with where they come from and thus preserve an essential part of their identity when so many of them have lived a diasporic existence for most or all of their lives. In order to fully understand the traumatic effects of the Nakba, referred to by Said as “the great Palestinian dispossession,” and the role which it played in re-shaping Palestinian collective identity after 1948, Said traces the history of the Palestinian

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116 Ibid., p. 2.
117 Ibid., p. 3.
118 Ibid., p. 16.
119 Ibid., p. 16.
120 Ibid., p. 19.
people within the region in order to understand their close ancestral ties with this land.

Starting with the original name and location of Palestine, in *The Question of Palestine* Said refers to a late tenth century manuscript which contains the following passage in Arabic:

Filastin [sic] is the westernmost of the provinces of Syria. In its greatest length from Rafh to the boundary of Al Lajjun (Legio) it would take a rider two days to travel over; and the like time to cross the province in its breadth of Yafa (Jafa) to Riha (Jericho). Zugar (Segor, Zoar) and the country of Lot’s people (Diyar Kaum Lot); Al Jibal (the mountains of Edom) and Ash Sharah as far as Ailah − Al Jibal and Ash Sharah being two separate provinces, but lying contiguous one to the other − are included in Filastin [sic] and belong to its government.¹²¹

This passage clearly substantiates the claim that a territory known as Palestine (Filastîn) was already in existence in the tenth century, and asserts it was an Arab possession, belonging to Syria. This description also means it can be geographically located. To be precise, Palestine is the name given to a territory situated in the southern province of *Bilâd Al-Shâm* (the name given to region of Syria during the early Caliphates), and in the middle of the Red Sea coast.¹²²

From the historical point of view, ancient Palestine was originally conceived as the birthplace of religions. While the Jews governed Palestine for four centuries between 1000-586 BCE, Muslims held power there for twelve centuries between 636-1917 CE, apart from the period during which the Christian Crusaders ruled over the Holy Land (1099-1187).¹²³ For Muslims, Palestine is a holy land according to the verses of the Qur’an, and Jerusalem was the original direction of Muslim prayer prior to Mecca. The Al-Aqsa Mosque is regarded as the third most important mosque.

¹²³ The Crusaders briefly recaptured Jerusalem twice during the period 1229-1244 CE.
in Islam. Moreover, according to Islamic teachings, Prophet Mohammed ascended on a physical and spiritual journey from Jerusalem (known in Arabic as the Isra’ and Mi’raj). As Said observes, “In 1516, Palestine became a province of the Ottoman Empire, but this made it no less fertile, no less Arab or Islamic,” affirming that Palestinians share the same ethnic and religious affiliations as other Arabs.

In his book *The Question of Palestine*, Said was preoccupied by the idea of documenting the long history of the Palestinians as a reaction to the trauma of the dispossession of their land and the need to prove their historical ties with the place since ancient times. He notes:

> According to Israeli sources, in 1822 there were no more than 24,000 Jews in Palestine, less than 10 per cent of the whole, overwhelmingly Arab population. For the most part, it is true, these Arabs were usually described as uninteresting and undeveloped, but at least they were there.

Said’s irony, which is one of the characteristic features of his writing style, attempts to undermine the Western narrative of Arabs and Muslims, as he first provides proof of the existence of Arabs in Palestine during that time citing Jewish sources, and then comments on the nature of their representation as “uninteresting and undeveloped.” In works such as *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), he adopts the position of an Orientalist who tirelessly attempts to reveal and rectify the misrepresentation of developing world nations.

In order to obtain a clearer understanding of post-*Nakba* diasporic Palestinian identity and the transformation which this wrought, it is important to understand Palestinian identity prior to this watershed event. Prior to the 1917 British invasion of Palestine, this territory was geographically split into two parts. The northern areas of Acre and Nablus were governed by Beirut, whilst the southern area comprising

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126 Ibid., p. 9.
independent Jerusalem was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. According to Said, in the 1880s, most Palestinians were Sunni Muslims with significant Christian, Druze, and Shiite Muslim minorities, all of whom spoke Arabic as their first language, and Palestinian identity at that point in time had achieved a sense of maturity. Sa‘di and Abu-Lughod claim that pre-1948 Palestinian identity for the most part shared many of its attributes with the Arab identity of neighbouring territories, namely a common language (Arabic) and similar cultural practices, both also inextricably linked to a particular religion, Islam. Palestinians have maintained these characteristics of Arab identity but newly constructed features have been added to their consciousness of a distinctive national identity as a direct result of the Nakba.

However, other authors, such as Khalidi, suggest that prior to the Nakba, Palestinians had constructed multiple and complex forms of national identity, articulated with the tribal, ethnic and religious identity and cultural heritage of specific communities. However, as Sa‘di and Abu-Lughod note, despite these many and various forms of identity, Palestinians had “a sense of themselves as Palestinians.”

After the Nakba, there has been a radical shift in the ways of looking at Palestinian identity, by both Palestinians and non-Palestinians, which has been most obviously influenced by the emergence of the Palestinian Diaspora. Sa‘di and Abu-Lughod point to the fact that the Nakba in all its various dimensions not only

\footnotesize{127} Ibid., p. 9.
\footnotesize{128} Ibid.
\footnotesize{130} Sa‘di and Abu-Lughod, p. 4.
determined the lives of all Palestinians “but has since then become the key site of Palestinian collective memory and national identity.”

From the 1948 Nakba to the 1967 Naksa, the emergence of the Pan-Arabism movement inspired a dream of uniting Arab countries and liberating Palestine. However, as Yousef Barahmeh notes, the Six-Day War in 1967 not only saw Arabs lose many of the Palestinian territories but also put an end to their hopes of Arab union.

Darwish, Said, and many other Arab writers were deeply affected by this event, reflecting this in their writings. Darwish, for instance, started a new phase in his poetry that mourned Palestinians’ loss of a collective self, choosing as Barahmeh put it, to “eloquently [resurrect] past tragic events to present the catastrophic loss of Palestine and the unattainability of the right of return.”

Said describes this critical period of change as producing both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, “Palestinian nationalism arose as an independent force in the Middle East,” on the other hand, as a negative outcome of the disappointment caused by the Naksa. Fundamentalism surfaced in Arab and Palestinian politics, leading some religious groups to choose to adopt a jihadist ideology and fight against Israel by means of terrorism. Said has always seen his own role in the Palestinian issue as being to defend his nation from the forms of misrepresentation that saw his people constantly portrayed as either murderous terrorists or pitiful refugees whilst not failing to acknowledge the existence of

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131 Ibid.
133 Ibid., p. 18.
134 E. Said, After the Last Sky, p. 20.
135 Ibid., p. 19.
sectarian groups that are unrepresentative of the opinions of the majority of tolerant and moderate Palestinians.

2.3 Palestinian Literature

2.3.1 Post-Nakba Literature: An Act of Resistance

Before the Nakba, Palestinian literature shared many similarities with literature from other parts of the Arabic-speaking world in terms of the topics that it focused on, which reflected elements of a shared culture, religion and language. According to the Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani:

Palestinian literature, up to this tragic fall [the Nakba] had been part of the mainstream of the Arab literary movement which flourished during the first half of the century. It had got its sources from and had been influenced by Egyptian, Syrian, and Lebanese writers who led the literary movement then. However, after 1948 a new movement in Arabic literature was born, which was heavily influenced by Palestinian writers and others. Kanafani also highlights the problematic issue of the centre versus the margin within Arabic literature, with writers from certain cultures, particularly Egypt and Lebanon, being thought of as superior in literary terms.

Khaled Mattawa makes the case for Palestinian literature being regarded as a minor literature in the positive sense in which this term is espoused by the French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari. They argue that minority literature written from the margins is political, even revolutionary, and its authors speak on behalf of the national consciousness, individuals who speak in a collective voice or as they put it:

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137 Kh. Mattawa, When the Poet Is a Stranger, p. 221.
“The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating in it.”

In this context, it is important to highlight Said’s valuable contribution in this area, in his article entitled “Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948.” Said was originally interested in the impact of the Nakba and Naksa on Arabic prose, since both events prompted a reaction of cultural resistance, a search for a new collective identity and a new approach to Arab history. Said observes that after Nakba, the majority of Arab writers became engaged in exploring the political and historical impact of Nakba in their ideational projects, despite the undeniable existence of a small percentage of Arabs who produced literature of poor quality. Said also notes how the influence of Nakba spread beyond Palestinian writers to other Arabs even though they may have been ideologically distant from the political events of Palestine. He argues that there are deep-rooted cultural, ethnic, and linguistic affiliations that link other Arabs to Palestine, and these were affected by what they saw as the success of Zionism and the defeat of their fellow Arabs. Said argues that the cultural elite had a key role to play in the wake of the Nakba, this being: “to articulate the present in the precise historical and realistic terms which [...] the disaster threatened with obliteration” and refers to the book by Syrian intellectual Constantin Zurayk The Meaning of Disaster (1948) as a pivotal example of this practice.

140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
Analysing the impact of the *Nakba* on literature, Said notes that: “The large theme of most Egyptian novels after 1948 was, as Shukri observed, the near-tragic conflict between a protagonist and some ‘outside’ force.”\(^{142}\) Moreover, Said quotes Raja al-Naqqash’s letter, to the well-known Iraqi poet Nazik al-Mala’ikah, “Writing was not and could not be free: it had to put itself at life’s service,”\(^{143}\) to reflect the conceptualisation of the role of writing during that time. According to the Egyptian critic Ghali Shukri, writing itself was acknowledged to be an act of resistance, especially after the 1967 *Naksa*.\(^{144}\)

Focussing on narrative techniques adopted by Arab writers, Said sees the existential situation of Arabs reflected in the separation of the discretely shaped scenes of Jabra’s novella, *Screaming in a Long Night*, arguing that each entrance and appearance by a character in the work plays a significantly ontological affirmative role whereas existence itself connotes death or extinction.\(^{145}\) According to Said’s analysis of Jabra’s novella, the act of speech, or telling the narratives themselves, is proof of existence.

Said examines another example of Arabic literary prose, the novella *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani, to point to the transformation of literary scenes from being limited in depicting the problem of historical existence to achieving contemporaneity in its most problematic form. Said notes that, ironically, while the three male characters had striven to leave Palestine to live in Kuwait, at the end of the novella they left to die. In this case, the scene can be read as an act of incitement:

For Kanafani a scene is centrally the convenience given to the writer by the general novelistic tradition; what he uses in order to present the action, therefore, is a device which, displaced from the tradition that can take it for

\(^{142}\) Ibid.
\(^{143}\) Ibid.
\(^{144}\) Ibid.
\(^{145}\) Ibid.
grant, ironically comments on the rudimentary struggle facing the Palestinian.146

Tracing the various changes within the themes of Arabic prose by his close textual analysis of several examples of the literature of the period, Said concludes that what distinguishes the writings after the 1967 Naksa is a deep feeling of disappointment and frustration.

Focussing on literature of resistance, the term ‘literature of resistance’ became inextricably linked with post-Nakba Palestinian literary output because resistance became the essential mode of existence for Palestinians as a whole, with all citizens in the society striving to defend their homeland however they could. Whilst it is common for the media to portray resistance in terms of dramatic images of armed struggle, in the Palestinian case resistance is seen as something which involves the whole nation from political activists through to academics and literary writers.

Although ordinary Palestinians have traditionally resisted by throwing stones (leading to their popular designation as “the nation of stones”), for poets and scholars like Darwish and Said, the act of resistance involves writing as a tool that is used to defend their homeland. According to the Irish poet, Seamus Heaney, every poem is an act of resistance, “a statement of solidarity with the doomed, the deprived, the victimized, the under-privileged”147 whilst in this context, a witness is “any figure in whom the truth-telling urge and the compulsion to identify with the oppressed become necessarily integral with the art of writing itself.”148

146 E. Said, Reflections on Exile.
As Nezhād\textsuperscript{149} clarifies, in the Palestinian context, resistance is a kind of reaction against the prevailing political, social and cultural reality of the nation which views itself as being under attack. A key element in this act of Palestinian resistance involves researching the cultural and historical context to reveal the hidden reality, by making reference to the unspoken and overlooked history and culture of Palestine. This kind of literary creation can be thought of as “a writing back into history of what has been deliberately erased.”\textsuperscript{150}

Thus, both academics and creative writers have explained that Palestinian literature of resistance rejects Zionist attempts to erase Palestine’s presence and its Islamic culture from history.\textsuperscript{151} The Palestinian writers of resistance looked again at how their own history as a people had been represented and deconstructed in order to prove their existence in Palestine before the occupiers, claiming their ancestral right of belonging to Palestinian territory. In this context, it is also relevant to note the spread of Israeli misrepresentation of Palestinians as terrorists within the global media, whilst Palestinian writers attempt to reveal the truth about the Israeli occupation.\textsuperscript{152} Said developed the contrapuntal reading as a technique for rethinking the unspoken and the unsaid in relation to the dominated narrative of Western Orientalists and colonisers, and he provides ample examples of this in his analysis of various texts written by literary Orientalists which feature in Orientalism (1978) and Culture and Imperialism (1994).


\textsuperscript{150} A. Ḥamdān, “Al-bunyah al-sardiyah ”, (The Narrative Structure).

\textsuperscript{151} R. Nezhād, “Al-mugāwamah fī shīr Fadwa Tuqān wa simātihā ”, (Resistance in the poetry of Fadwā tuqān, and its attributes).

\textsuperscript{152} E. Sa‘id, After the Last Sky.
The second key purpose of Palestinian literature of resistance is to document the daily life of Palestinians and bear witness to the suffering caused by the loss of their homes and their experience of prolonged exile. As Tahrir Hamdi explains, “bearing witness” can be thought of as a literary sub-genre, providing a reflection of what has been suppressed by the dominant narrative of the more powerful group.153

Thirdly, this form of writing revives the history of the tragedy and alerts readers to the origins of the struggle. With specific reference to the qualities of Palestinian poetry of resistance, Kanafani stresses that it possesses “an astonishing revolutionary spirit completely free from a sad and tearful tendency.”154 Thus he emphasises that this type of writing is not an expression of self-pity in the face of trial and tribulation but rather evidence of strength and determination in adversity.

The Palestinian literary critics, ‘Adil Al- 'Usta and Hussein Marwa,155 note that the early works of post-Nakba resistance poetry share a set of common characteristics. They observe that:

A special relationship with the homeland as well as a feeling of solidarity with their own people can be clearly discerned in this poetry. However, it does not show evidence of any anti-Semitic tendencies towards the Israelis and their religion.

In addition, they note that works produced by the poets of resistance tend to be inextricably linked with their authors’ own lives. The third tendency is that they are also evidence of external political influences in particular Pan-Arabism and Nasserism: “Most of the Palestinian poets of resistance adopted Marxist principles that fuelled their enthusiasm and stirred up their emotions towards Israeli imperialist actions.”156

In terms of nationalism, Palestinian writers such as Fadwa Tuqan, Rashed Hussein, Samih Al-Qasim and, of course, Darwish himself all used their creative writing to openly express their feelings of loss concerning their homeland and to assert their Palestinian identity. Tuqan, for example, who belonged to the first movement of the poets of resistance, is a key figure in Palestinian poetry, and in her work she raises issues such as the selling of Palestinian territory to Jews, the lack of awareness elsewhere in the Arab world concerning the threats posed by Zionism, the concern at factional conflicts amongst Palestinians themselves, and Palestinian men fraternising with Jewish women. She also describes the joys of celebratory occasions amongst Palestinians.

In his highly articulate memoir, *I saw Ramallah* (1997), Mourid Barghouti conveys the bitterness and pain of being a Palestinian in exile by revealing the details of the political, social, psychological and economic life of his compatriots whilst writing about his own experiences from his personal viewpoint. He also highlights other problems of being Palestinian, including displacement, diasporic exile and separation from loved ones. The title refers to Barghouti’s visit to Ramallah after thirty years in exile, which serves as a symbol for “achieving the impossible”. This also illustrates the peculiarity of the Palestinian situation in which a visit to a city located at only a short geographical distance away (since Barghouthi was travelling from Jordan to Ramallah) takes on the symbolic importance of an epic journey to a mythical location, filled with desire and yearning.

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158 M. Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, Cairo: Dar Al-Shorouk, 1997. (include the name of translator from the Arabic, Ahdaf Soueif)
2.3.2 Pan-Arabism and Nasser

Palestinian writers also embraced the trend of Pan-Arabism or its more specific version Nasserism, showing that despite their isolation on one level, they shared some common concerns with their fellow Arabs. It is useful at this stage to discuss briefly the impact of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) who was a key figure in the Arab world where even today his influence and ideas are still evident because of his profound understanding of the real needs of Arabs in terms of political and sociological matters. He also actively promoted political unity among all Arabs and succeeded in creating the United Arab Republic consisting of Syria and Egypt which lasted for approximately three years (1958-1961). In Nasser’s political perception, pan-Arab unity was the ideal state and as such remained high on his political agenda for the countries of the Arab world.

Many Arabs had a strong belief in Nasser’s ability to act as the guardian of Arab interests, as the Egyptian president was a profoundly committed supporter of pan-Arab unity. More specifically, Nasser was a strong supporter of the liberation of Palestine and since he favoured self-determination for Palestinians, he was instrumental in the formation of the PLO in 1964.

Assessing the factors needed for general recovery and modernisation in Arab societies during the 1950s and 1960s, Riad Nourallah identified the need for:

A collective vision, supported by will and effort, in addition to the necessary educational, legal, civil, democratic, economic, scientific, and other institutions and instruments to see that recovery through.

Nasser tried to create these conditions in Egypt and the Arab world, hoping this would serve as a practical example for others. Particularly concerned by the plight of

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the poor, Nasser attempted to create increased employment opportunities for Egyptians, as well as introducing unprecedented access to numerous other social and educational benefits.

Turning to Nasser’s foreign policy, the Pan-Arabism trend led him and many other Arab politicians during the same period to regard the Palestinian question as a crucial step toward peace in Arab countries, which in turn led Palestinians to dream of their homeland being returned as a result of the combined might of Nasser’s military power with that of the national armies of Jordan and Syria. However, in the Six-Day War or *Naksa* 1967, the Arab forces were defeated and bitterly disappointed. Such feelings were reflected in Arabic literature generally and in poetry particularly, which is referred to as *Adab Al-Naksa*, the “literature of defeat” which infinitely grappled with the causes of the Arab rout. The Egyptian writer Salah Jahin wrote about and reflected on this disappointing moment for Arabs in his post-*Naksa* poems as did Darwish. From that moment in time, the notion of Pan-Arabism has been passed fundamentally through the question of the true validity of successfully liberating Palestine and achieving strong unification in the Arab world.

Whilst the majority of Arabs admired Nasser, the Muslim Brotherhood and other conservative groups considered him an enemy of Islam and misrepresented him as a communist due to his enlightened thoughts and socialist ideas that ushered in modernity in the Arab world.

Jayyusi argues that there is a basic unity of culture and spirit amongst Arabs, which has sprung from their common heritage. This is particularly reflected in Arabic literary achievements since “the hopes, dreams, adversities, and failures that

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161 In the Arab world Communism has been misrepresented as being synonymous with atheism, which led the Muslim Brotherhood to use this label to destroy Nasser’s honourable image in the Arab world. See C. Nedelec, “The Legitimacy of Nasser’s Ideology during the Eisenhower Administration”, *Euro-Atlantic Studies*, 7, 2002. Available online at: [http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/StiintePOL/euro-atlanticstudies7-2004/cuprins.htm](http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/StiintePOL/euro-atlanticstudies7-2004/cuprins.htm) Accessed on: 05/06/2014.
afflict one Arab country are shared by the rest of the Arab world, which stretches from the Arabian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean.\(^{162}\) This trend was once firmly entrenched in literature written in Arabic since the Palestinian Nakba in 1948, the 1967 Naksa and subsequent loss of Palestinian territory served to unite Arabs around the Palestinian cause. However, in the closing decade of the twentieth century many Arab writers were profoundly disillusioned by the implications of the conflict which involved Arab ‘brothers’ fighting against each other in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. This disillusionment has had a negative influence on Arab writers, reducing the Pan-Arab tendency within their work.\(^{163}\) Both Darwish and Said wrote at great length concerning many issues occurring elsewhere in the Arab world, and specifically touched upon the issue of Arab identity and shared consciousness.

The third approach of Palestinian literature of resistance which developed later is Universalism, which in its simplest sense means adopting an attitude towards the issue of Palestine which sees this not in political or religious terms, as a conflict between Muslims and Jews, or Arabs and non-Arabs but a power struggle between oppressor and oppressed.

Tuqan, for example, demonstrates her Universalist approach by following a similar strategy to Darwish and drawing parallels between the oppression suffered by the Palestinian people and that of other groups and nations throughout history. Thus, she and other poets choose to depict a more abstract notion of oppression in order to comment on inhumane and unjust behaviour in a general sense. Said’s famous idiom coined in respect of the Palestinians as “victims of victims” expresses this kind of


universality, in its reference to passing the chains of oppression on from one nation to another, with the same narrative of the oppressed nation now applying to Palestinians that previously applied to the Jews during the Second World War. According to Darraj, Darwish has also penned various poems that adopt a distinctive universal vision by using abstract depictions of roles such as victim, killer, and marginalized individuals.164

Katja Garloff’s book *Words from Abroad: Trauma and Displacement in Postwar German Jewish Writers* shows that there are interesting parallels to be drawn between the role of Palestinian writers and that which Jewish authors played in bearing testimony to the history of oppression and the persecution of their nation by the Nazis. In the face of the Holocaust, Jewish writers acted as the voice of an oppressed people that had been both geographically and culturally displaced.165 Garloff also sees literature as a means of coming to terms with the experience of Diasporic exile.166 Palestinian writers have therefore benefited from adopting the ideas of Jewish testimonial writing with regard to bearing witness in response to the *Nakba*.

When considering the notion of resistance in respect to Darwish and Said, it is impossible to try to separate their writing and their political position, because they were equally committed to resistance. In terms of political activism, they demonstrated their opposition to the occupation by engaging with the PLO as members of the Palestinian Parliament, making their opinions and their political stance clearly known.167 In their literary and scholarly activities, they made

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166 Ibid., p. 5.
significant efforts at writing back into history what had been deliberately erased and effectively narrating the modern Palestinian story, which is shaped by the suffering of loss and displacement. Many of their writings focus on the Palestinian trauma, and this has led to Darwish in particular being heralded as the Poet of Palestinian resistance, by Jayyusi, Jubran, Mattawa, and many other writers. Jayyusi makes an important point when she affirms that:

> It has become impossible now to think of Darwish without thinking immediately of Palestine, and of the terrible tragedy that has beleaguered its suffering people, the poet among them. The same consistency applies to writings on him, where no separation is possible between the poet and his country.

Jayyusi draws attention firstly to the inseparable links which exist between Darwish, his homeland and its people past and present, a relationship which the latter saw as so fundamental that he talked of “the poet’s own flesh being fused with that of his land.” The second important point highlighted here by Jayyusi is that critical writing about Darwish’s work is that it also invariably views the poet as the voice of Palestine.

This deep bond with his home country was evident in Darwish’s work from the outset, and although many aspects of his poetry evolved over the course of his life, the land of Palestine remained fundamentally entwined with his work, acting as a theme to which he repeatedly returned, either explicitly or implicitly.

In one of Darwish’s most famous poems “Diaries of a Palestinian Wound to Fadwa Tuqan,” he accurately articulates the role of the ‘poetry of resistance’:

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170 Kh. Mattawa, *When the Poet is a Stranger*.
172 Ibid.
O, my sister! For twenty years
We have not been writing poems;
Rather, we have been fighting.
In this poem, he repeats the theme of the unification between the nation and their land in different verses.

Thus Darwish and his peers do not write purely for themselves, but see writing as a means to defend their country. This poem belongs to the first phase of Darwish’s poetry in which, according to Jubran, his work was more in the realist vein, describing the harsh realities of everyday life for Palestinians. The critic also notes that Darwish “was influenced by Marxist doctrine, which considers poetry as a revolutionary tool.” From their perspective, each word of discourse penned by Palestinian writers reflecting on their everyday reality is like a missile hurled at the enemy or a carefully aimed bullet, intended to defend their right to exist, an act of defiant resistance.

2.3.3 Post-Nakba Literature: An Expression of Love

Whilst much has been said about literature as an act of resistance, it is useful here to also consider literature as an expression of love, since the technique of representing the homeland using symbols of femininity has been used widely in literature written in Arabic, particularly that written by Palestinians.

Arab writers have frequently personified the homeland as female, expressing their patriotism by using feminine characteristics of beauty to describe their homeland. Their devotion to their native country is often described in language and imagery suggestive of an intimate relationship with the beloved. Darwish and other

173 M. Darwish, ḫābībatī tanhāda min nawmihā (My lover awakes from her Sleep), pp. 40-41.
Arab poets such as Nizār Qabānī have chosen to represent their homeland symbolically as a woman.

According to Mohammed Nasser, Arab poets historically addressed the homeland directly in their writing by using the second person pronoun (anta). In more modern poetry, however, this traditional practice has been replaced by a tendency to describe the homeland by using adjectives usually associated with woman in Arab culture. This practice may have linguistic origins, since the word which is commonly used in poetry to denote ‘homeland’ literally means ‘earth’ (ard) and is classified as a feminine noun. Another feminine noun (balad) is also used to convey ‘homeland’. In linguistic terms, then, poets writing in Arabic have no option but to employ feminine forms in reference to such words. Ahmed Ḥyadarūsh notes the practice in various ancient civilisations of naming cities after females such as Athena or addressing them using the feminine form. Ḥyadarūsh argues that this illustrates a symbolic relationship between the land and femininity, with numerous cultures employing the concept of the motherland.

Some female authors including Su‘ād Al-Sabāḥ, Lamī‘a ’Abbās ’Omārā, and Nāzik Al-Malā’ika have used the masculine noun (watan) when expressing the concept of homeland since this allows them to equate this love to an intimate relationship of lover and beloved. However, there does not appear to be any concrete evidence of a consistent gendered difference in usage of terminology in reference to the ‘homeland’ in the Arab world as Darwish’s poetry illustrates.

176 A. Ḥyadarūsh cited in Ibid.
177 Ibid.
When addressing this issue from the perspective of colonialism, the colonizer is typically connoted by masculine traits, whilst the colonized land is described in feminine terms, producing a symbolic connection between homeland and woman. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin note, feminism is considered to be of crucial interest to post-colonial discourse on the grounds that:

Both patriarchy and imperialism can be seen to exert analogous forms of domination over those they render subordinate. Hence the experience of women in patriarchy and those of colonized subjects can be paralleled in a number of respects, and both feminist and post-colonial politics oppose such dominance.¹⁷⁸

Hence, both post-colonialism and feminism share the same objective of offering a critique of the dominance of power and deconstructing its discourse.

It has been argued that the symbiotic link between homeland and the feminine gender is largely linked to what Robert Young calls “colonial desire”. The authors of *Post-Colonial Studies* explain how Young reaches this conclusion:

The idea of colonization itself is grounded in a sexualised discourse of rape, penetration and impregnation, while the subsequent relationship of the colonizer and colonized is often presented in a discourse that is redolent of sexualized exoticism. Thus, even the positive features of colonial attitudes in discourse, such as Orientalism, reflect an eroticized vision that is fundamentally reductive.¹⁷⁹

This explains why the colonized homeland is sometimes compared to a woman who has been violated, since the colonizer sees the colonies as a source of pleasure and eroticization. Expressions of this type are not only used by Palestinian writers, but by Arabs in general, who consider their countries to be beloved women who have been abused by their dictatorial governments, a common theme in many of Nizār Qabānī’s poems.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 89.
With respect to the image of women in the works of Darwish and Said, 'Abd Al-Hādī notes that many references are made to women in Darwish’s poetry, including mother, beloved, grandmother, and sisters.\textsuperscript{180} The female lover was an important feature of Darwish’s poetry, in which he reflects his attitude toward women. Creswell notes that one woman’s name in particular recurs in his love poems: “Over the years, Rita became a leitmotif in Darwish’s poetry. She returns again and again, like… an obsession.”\textsuperscript{181}

Creswell argues that when Darwish describes Rita, a Jewish woman of Polish-Russian descent, he uses the same type of attributes which are typically used to refer to the beloved in Arabic erotic poetry: “Her eyes are honey-coloured, she sleeps a lot (because languor is sexy), her hair is thick and heavy like a horse’s tail, and she is always somewhere else.”\textsuperscript{182} These traits do not allow readers to identify Rita as a non-Arab woman, until Darwish makes that distinction himself by referring to her as an Israeli army combatant. Rita is conceptualized by Darwish, then, in all respects, as the other.

It is perhaps possible to speak of two Ritas: one a poetic symbol, the other a real woman. In the former case, when Darwish describes Rita, she is frequently evoked in terms of the physical characteristics of beauty traditionally attributed to Arab women in Arabic literature and culture. She is an idealised literary construct. However, when he conceptualises Rita elsewhere as ‘other’, this is a reference to her real identity as the Jewish woman with different cultural attributes, who was both his lover and his ‘other’.

\textsuperscript{180}M. 'Abd al-Hādī, “Tajaliyāt ramz al-mār’a fī shī‘r Mahmoud Darwish”, “The Appearances of the Symbol of Woman in Mahmoud Darwish’s Poetry”.


\textsuperscript{182}Ibid., pp. 18-19.
Darwish and Said both refer to their strong love for their mothers. Darwish mentioned her in a number of his verses, such as (أحن إلى خبز أمي) “I am yearning for my Mother’s Bread”. According to Jubran, the poet’s relationship with his mother as portrayed in his work mirrored the one he had in real life:

The image of his mother did not change over the years, and [she] remained more or less the same beautiful and loving feminine figure that she always was.\(^{183}\)

Said also discusses his loving relationship with his mother in *Out of Place*, openly framing this in terms of very spiritual connection between them as he declares:

“She was the first person to whom I needed to tell my story.” The feeling I had of both beginning and with my mother, of her sustaining presence and, I imagined, infinite capacity for cherishing me, softly, imperceptibly, underwrote my life for years and years.\(^{184}\)

In contrast, both writers express negative feelings towards the notion of fatherhood. Said openly criticizes his real father as someone who exerted patriarchal power over his family, commenting that “this might be symbolic of the connecting similarity between the discourse of colonialism and patriarchy.”\(^{185}\) Darwish’s representation of fatherhood in his poetry is not a stable one just as his own relationship with his father seems to have changed over the course of time.

Critics ‘Abd al-Hādī and Khaled Mattawa have noted that Darwish constantly shifts between images of the women he loves and his homeland in a way that often makes it difficult for readers to differentiate clearly between these. For example, in his poem (النزول من الكرمل) “Coming down from Karmil”, he freely mixes descriptions of the females he has loved with descriptions of the countries he has

\(^{183}\) S. Jubran, “The Image of the Father in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish”, p. 84.


\(^{185}\) Ibid., p. 12.
known. Leaving Karmil (his home) and subsequently living as an outsider in permanent exile meant that he encountered various women and countries and was prevented from settling in one home. Darwish makes it clear in his work that although he loved all these women and places, none of them came close to bringing him the pleasure he experienced when living in Karmil. Thus, it is evident that his love for Palestine will always remain the greatest love of all.186

Analysis of (النزول من الكرمل) “Coming down from Karmil” shows that it lacks many of the stylistic features of the literary language commonly found in his other poetry and makes relatively sparing use of metaphor. However, he does make effective use of repetition in this poem as the following example demonstrates:

تركت الحبيبة لم أنسها
تركت الحبيبة

I left the beloved, and I did not forget her,
I left the beloved,
I left…

This repetition of the phrase (I left) succinctly captures his process of separation both from the beloved and from Karmil (his homeland). Initially, the focus is on the joy of remembering the beloved, then on the wrench of leaving the beloved and finally the entire focus shifts to the pain of realising he is an exile. At the end of the poem, he uses repetition again employing the phrase (take me) four times pleading with his homeland as one might plead to be taken back by a lover:

خذني تحت عينيك
خذني لوحه زيتية في كوك حسرات
خذني آية من سفر أساتني
خذني لعبة... حجرا من البيت

Take me under your eyes
Take me as an oil painting, in a hut of sorrows.
Take me as a verse from my journey of tragedy.
Take me as a toy... as a stone from the house

This repetition captures his yearning to be in Palestine, without being concerned about the fate that might await him there. According to Reigeluth, repetition is a common feature in Palestinian literature generally, and in the work of Darwish, ideas, symbols, and meanings are repeated by the poet to indicate his deep feelings of nostalgia.\textsuperscript{189}

As might be expected, in his academic texts, Said rarely, if ever, has recourse to addressing his homeland symbolically in a deliberately gendered manner. However, in his autobiographical and more subjective writing which is freed from the formal constraints imposed by critical and theoretical discourse, Said explains how the memorable figure of his Aunt Nabiha helped to create his awareness of his homeland and served to cement his relationship to Palestine. In \textit{After the Last Sky}, Said talks about Nabiha’s role in the Palestinian community living in exile:

They remembered my aunt- the mother of Palestine, she was called –more than did her brother, although my father never, so far as I knew, turned her down for anything.\textsuperscript{190}

By the powerful metaphor of “the mother of Palestine,” Said refers to her efforts in generously offering aid of various kinds to her fellow Palestinians living in Egypt, helping them with problems which they faced, for example, regarding the costs for schooling and health treatment.\textsuperscript{191} In \textit{Out of Place}, he acknowledges that his


\textsuperscript{190} E. Said, \textit{After the Last Sky}, p. 119.

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., p. 118.
political consciousness regarding the plight of Palestinian refugees originally came from learning about the assistance she gave to her compatriots.

2.4 Critical Work on Said and Darwish

This review of critical work on the two authors studied in the thesis is structured in the following way. Firstly, it examines those works which make direct links between the works of the two writers. It then looks at the issues of translation of their works. A review of studies on the works of Said and Darwish respectively is then presented in the sections which follow.

2.4.1 Linking the Work of Said and Darwish

To date there has not been any extended piece of work which combines analysis of identity in both Said’s academic writing and Darwish’s creative work, although several studies have explored the relationships between Said’s theoretical texts and Darwish’s poetry, often using the former to interpret elements of the latter. The first of these was Rebecca Dyer’s “Poetry of Politics and Mourning: Mahmoud Darwish’s Genre-Transforming Tribute to Edward W. Said.” Taking as her starting point “Tibaq” (counterpoint), the elegy which Darwish composed in honour of Said, Dyer’s study touches upon the long-lasting friendship between the two Palestinian intellectuals and their shared political ideology. She argues that Darwish uses this work to comment on Said’s politics, in the process borrowing his late friend’s own critical method of counterpoint. Although she highlights some of the links between Said’s short essay “On Mahmoud Darwish” and Darwish’s poem which was translated as (قراءة طبقية لإنوارد سعيد) “Edward Said: Contrapuntal Reading,” Dyer’s chief focus was on Darwish’s transformation of the elegiac genre known as marthiya in Arabic literary tradition, the origins of which lie in the pre-Islamic era. She concluded that:
Darwish’s use of Said’s contrapunntal method and his reiteration of Said’s critical ideas within the elegiac poem point to the ways in which the acclaimed Palestinian poet is effecting a convergence of the Arabic tradition with the style and critical approaches of Said’s voluminous and Western-influenced body of work.  

In other words, it could be said that Darwish produces a literary text which exhibits the same kind of hybrid identity as did Said, a fitting tribute.

Patrick Williams’ article “‘No Aesthetics outside my Freedom’: Mahmoud Darwish and Late Style” also reads Darwish through the work of Said, taking as its starting point the academic’s elaboration of the concept of Late Style which appeared in his posthumously published book of the same title. Williams uses Said’s concept to analyse one of Darwish’s ‘late’ works, the epic (حالة حصار) “State of Siege”, and argues that the poet’s final collections of work serve to confirm some aspects of Said’s model of lateness whilst challenging others.

Rehnuma Sazzad also attempts to interpret Darwish with the help of Said’s work, using the concept which the theorist developed of the ‘amateur’, a term which the academic employed to refer to an intellectual who remains steadfastly committed to truth and justice regardless of the areas in which s/he engages. Sazzad notes that according to Said:

The ‘amateur’s’ relentless task is to ‘speak truth to power’, like Gramsci’s ‘organic intellectual’ or Benda’s ‘cleric’, challenging hegemonies through advancing progressive ideas and opposing all kinds of subjugation and aggression.”

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Her paper explores what happens to the concept of the ‘amateur’ when poetry and politics become inextricably intertwined as in the case of Darwish. She maintains that when Darwish, the poet turned into a Palestinian political spokesman due to his passion for speaking truth to the occupying Israeli power, he blurred these boundaries, meaning that whether he wanted it or not, politics thus became an integral part of his artistic project.

A further attempt at using Said’s theoretical concepts to read Darwish’s poetry can be found in Robert Bowker’s piece on “Palestinian Refugees: Mythology, Identity, and the Search for Peace.” Using concepts from Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*, Bowker explores the complex use of poetry, identity, myth, and history in Darwish’s work viewing these as a subaltern method of resistance. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said posits that in literature, postcolonial resistance manifests itself by rejecting pure separatist nationalism and embracing a more integrative view of society. In Said’s opinion, this produces writing that is liberating for human rather than narrowly tied to a specifically nationalist agenda. After analysing Darwish’s use of identity, myth, and history, Bowker claims that the poet epitomises Said’s hypothesis since by creating a collective Palestinian voice in his work, he not only rejects separatist discourses through his poetry but also resists the hegemonic structures imposed by Israel and by the West more generally.

It is noticeable that the first three of these articles highlight the in-between status of Darwish’s work, which remakes genres, challenges theoretical frameworks and breaks boundaries, refusing to be neatly categorised rather like the poet himself and his good friend, Said.
2.4.2 Said and Darwish in Translation

For both Said and Darwish, language, the medium in which they wrote about their self-identity, was of crucial importance and although both were polyglots, each made a different choice about how they preferred to express their thoughts: English for Said and Arabic for Darwish. The fact that Said wrote in English immediately made him more accessible to Western academics, meaning that more attention has been given to his ideas. In addition, his groundbreaking study *Orientalism* and his development of contrapuntal reading have guaranteed that he is constantly referenced in books, articles and theses given his crucial contributions to the debate on Postcolonial theory. Ironically, it took some time before his works about the Arab world became well known there. Equally, it is only comparatively recently that most of Darwish’s acclaimed work has become readily available in English, resulting in a much wider audience for his work and increased academic interest in his poetry.

It is not surprising, then, that the process of translation of the two men’s work, Said’s from English into Arabic and Darwish’s from Arabic into English, has been of interest to researchers. In his doctoral thesis, Mahmoud Al-Herthani\(^{195}\) focuses on how Said’s intellectual legacy in the Arab world has been mediated largely on the basis of translations of his work, some of his texts having been translated three times by different individuals. Using narrative theory, the concept of framing and the French literary theorist Gérard Genette’s work on paratexts (those elements which serve to frame the main text such as images, blurbs, prefaces and introductions) Al-Herthani analysed Arabic translations of *Orientalism, Culture and Imperialism* and *Covering Islam*. He concluded that due to the sensitive nature of historical and

cultural interaction between the West and the Arab world, Said’s discourse was differently narrated and framed by those translators and publishing houses who mediated his presence in the Arabic-speaking community.

It is also worth making a general point here that much of the work published by English-speaking academics on Darwish is dependent on translation, and Al-Herthani’s work reminds us that it is important to consider that what they are analysing is, in fact, already the translator’s interpretation of Darwish’s original text further mediated by paratextual elements. As Robyn Creswell perceptively notes in her piece about the poet’s work in translation: “The Darwish that has come into view for English language readers is, of course, quite different from the one his Arab audience is familiar with.”

Two of Darwish’s translators, Fady Joudeh and Ibrahim Muhawi have also produced commentaries and perceptive analyses which accompany collected editions of his work.

2.4.3 Previous Studies on Said’s Work

Clare Callaghan has produced a useful bibliography which not only lists Said’s works in their entirety, but also provides coverage of relevant theses, book-length studies, journal articles and reviews of his work. Here the discussion centres on those works which have a link to self-identity.

Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia’s study on Edward Said also offers a comprehensive review of Said’s academic oeuvre and his journalism, introducing his
major works, such as *Orientalism, Culture and Imperialism* and *The Question of Palestine*, using a thematic approach to reflect his multiple interests in writing, and his philosophical underpinnings. Whilst there is no specific chapter on Said’s approach to identity, they do examine this topic in some detail in the chapter on Palestine which charts, as they put it, Said’s “transformation from a university teacher into a Palestinian activist” as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict which had “shaken the very foundations of the world as he knew it.”

Given that much of Said’s self-identity was intrinsically linked to his role as an academic and an intellectual, Joseph Massad’s article “Affiliating with Edward Said,” in the volume entitled *Edward Said: A legacy of emancipation and representation*, offers a helpful examination of how he defined and performed these roles, and how he sought to link theory with practice in his personal life. Massad explores Said’s metaphorical identification of exile which he viewed as being not merely a physical distance between an intellectual and his home but as a space between the self, and a set of convictions and given absolutes that could prevent scholars from engaging with issues in an objective way. As Massad notes, this meant that in one sense, Said viewed exile as being beneficial for scholars.

Massad was personally acquainted with Said who had acted as his academic mentor. Nadia Gindi also knew Said personally as a friend and neighbour and in her article “On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said’s *Out of Place*,” she records her impressions about his character. The importance of her reading is, in my opinion, the relationship between how she describes Said’s identity and what the author himself postulates about his own inner psychological world in his memoir. In her opinion of *Out of Place*:

The prose bristles with personal passion: it breathes Edward—those of us who have known Edward since his childhood would agree that *Out of Place* mirrors his personality: tempestuous, forceful, uncompromisingly outspoken to the point of rudeness, relentlessly restless, theatrical and always very funny.  

Gindi’s observations underline two key points. Firstly, that Said’s relationship with his father was a fraught one, although he adored and was adored by his mother; and secondly, that even as a young boy, Said had a duality in his personality which she summarised as: “Taciturn and aloof but also the kindly, smiling Santa Claus figure.” This type of duality may possibly explain or reflect his hybrid identity and his feelings of being in between.

In 2005, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* published a special issue dedicated to Edward Said’s cultural and critical contributions entitled *Edward Said and Critical Decolonization*. This issue included articles by both Western and Eastern scholars interested in Said’s works, half of which were written in English and half in Arabic, as *Alif* is a bilingual journal. The articles covered a wide range of topics and themes, which can essentially be divided into three key areas.

The first group of articles focused on the ways in which key thinkers influenced Said’s own ideas. These include a very eclectic mix from the Italian Enlightenment thinker Giambattista Vico, whose impact on Said’s work is discussed by Ferial J. Ghazoul, to Michel Foucault, the leading French intellectual of the twentieth century. Said’s view of the French post-structuralist is examined in Ruben Chuaqui’s article “Notes on Edward Said’s View of Michel Foucault.” Faysal Darraj explores the links between the ideas of Antonio Gramsci and Said in his contribution, whilst Anwar Moghith discusses “Said, Marx, and Orientalism.”

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201 Ibid., p. 290.
A second set of articles are more oriented towards critical practice, engaging with Said’s concepts, such as contrapuntal reading and what remains his most famous work, *Orientalism*. Terry Eagleton examines the links between Cultural Politics and Critical Theory in Said’s work whilst Nehal Mohamed El-Naggar focuses on “Cultural Resistance and Power: Said and Bakhtin.” Two further articles on related topics are “Edward Said, Humanism, and Secular Criticism” by Yumna Siddiqi, and “Said, Orientalism, and Japan” by Daisuke Nishihara.

The third and final theme explored within the collection, and of direct relevance to the topic of this thesis, is Said’s conceptualisation of identity, both self-identity and national identity. Faten Morsy’s piece, “The Pleasures and Perils of Exile in Some Works by Edward Said,” provides a wide-ranging discussion which links Said’s view of identity, language, memory and loss, and his sense of homelessness, all of which were comprehensively expressed in his memoir, *Out of Place*. Morsy concludes that Said was not only reconciled with the concept of exile but gained pleasure from being an “intellectual exile” who opposed any negative forces of power within society.

Hassan Nafaa presents another side of Said’s national identity in “Edward Said and Palestine” and articulates a number of important points regarding Said’s affiliation with Palestine. He argues that Said’s interest in the Palestinian issue was never purely academic but was an issue that deeply affected Said on a personal level throughout his whole life. This Palestinian affiliation was reflected not only in the books he wrote but also in his own cultural practice as well. In short, there was a

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high degree of internal and external consistency in the structure of his intellectual discourse and in his personal stance toward the Palestinian issue.

However, Nafaa makes it clear that Said was not a political activist, but an elite thinker who was able to analyse the conflict between Palestine and Israel in the same way that he analysed other problematic issues of his time, including imperialism and exile. According to Nafaa, this means that in order to fully understand Said’s project in Palestine it is necessary to have an awareness of Said’s overall perspective.

In the opinion of Nafaa, the true value of Said’s writing about Palestine can be attributed to the importance of Said himself as an academic figure, to his own particular way of speaking and acting, and to the intellectual elite who constituted his audience.

In his article, “Edward Said, Eqbal Ahmad, and Salman Rushdie: Resisting the Ambivalence of Post-Colonial Theory,” Youssef Yacoubi explores Said’s personal, intellectual and political affinities with writers Eqbal Ahmad and Salman Rushdie. He focuses on Said’s book After the Last Sky to highlight the complexities of Palestinian identity documented in this book. Yacoubi also highlights the paradoxical and ironic side of the academic’s personality, a further indication of the duality engendered by Palestinian identity:

Said embodied a life of severe paradox and irony. He, in fact, personified irony as a point of view. This position of paradox is well defined on the first page of Said’s memoir which ingenuously states that “There was always something wrong with how I was invented and meant to fit in with the world of my parents and sisters.”

Whilst Yacoubi’s research is a useful exploration of Palestinian exile in general, it does not endeavour to fully address the influence of exile in Said’s life and writing in particular.

2.4.4 Previous Studies on Darwish’s Work

To date, the most substantial critical study of the poet’s work is to be found in the book *Mahmoud Darwish, Exile’s Poet: Critical Essays* which grew out of a panel at the Middle Eastern Studies Association conference. This collection of 12 critical essays exploring various aspects of the evolution of Darwish’s poetry also closes with an interview with Darwish about his work originally conducted in 2005. The volume also provides a range of secondary sources and an extensive bibliography of cited works. Since many of the contributors to the collection have been involved in translation, they explicate the complexities of the original Arabic which is particularly useful for anyone unable to read Darwish in his original language. In her foreword, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, acknowledges Darwish as a poet who not only represented Palestinian identity but also shed light on universal human experience. She also highlights the importance of exile in his work and concludes that it is poetry’s fragility as an art form that allows it to provide “a space of possibility for those historically silenced.”

Using a variety of theoretical approaches, the varied articles in the volume showcase Darwish’s talents as a poet addressing a broad range of issue regarding how his work rewrites the narrative of the homeland and exile, examining the complex connections between poetry, myth, lyric, prose, and history. The studies in this collection also highlight the fact that the poet’s later work consciously shifts away from his earlier depictions of identity, home, and his role as a poet.

The first essay by Bassam K. Frangieh contextualizes Darwish’s poetry within the frame of modern Arabic poetry, identifying the major themes and motifs used by Arab poets and also examining the continuing social and political role which poetry

plays in the Arab world. Two papers also provide close readings of Darwish’s works, namely “Do Not Apologize for What You Have Done” (Sinan Antoon), and “State of Siege” (Jeffrey Sacks) whilst Stuart Reigeluth compares the motifs of repetition and return in Darwish with those found in I Saw Ramallah by Mourid Barghouti, a fellow Palestinian writer. Exploration of Darwish’s use of intertextual allusions forms a major strand of the analyses including his use of historical narrative and biblical figures (Reuven Snir, Angelika Neuwirth, Ipek Azime Celik). Najat Rahman’s analysis of Darwish’s poetry after the Israeli siege of Beirut in 1982 leads her to the conclusion that eventually for the poet home was no longer constituted by the physical space of nation or connections with his people but the multiplicity of voices in literature itself. Sulyamān Jubrān traces the development of the symbol of the father over the course of his writing whilst Subhī Hadidi focuses on his love poems.208

In the context of artistic identity, Faysal Darraj’s article, “Transfiguration in the Image of Palestine,” chronologically charts Darwish’s evolution from the young romantic nationalist poet to a mature writer desirous of peace and reconciliation with a cosmopolitan outlook. He notes that:

The principle of forgiveness for which the diwan [his final published collection] calls leads to the principle of multiplicity, opening the forgiving self up to the infinite: humans, birds, roses, colours, silent and spoken places, or “an orange scared of a hungry mouth.”209

Darraj’s analysis also highlights the shifts in Darwish’s self-identity which took place due to his experience of exile.

The cosmopolitan Darwish spent the years of his exile living in both Arab and

208 In his article “Exceptional States: The (Bio)politics of Love in Darwish’s A State of Siege, Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge, 7 (5), pp. 69-82,Tom Langley takes Hadidi’s article as the starting point for his own exploration of Darwish’s love poetry, arguing that the act of writing love poetry during a time of siege is, in fact, a radically political act.
European cities, and Hala Nasser’s examination in the edited volume of his metaphorical use of these cities to reflect his yearning, his disillusionment, and his search for self reflects a major strand which has developed in studies of Darwish’s work: the analysis of the relationship between place and identity.

In a special issue of the journal Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge which was dedicated to Darwish, Erica Mena explores the concept of post-colonial post-national identity as a political and social construct, using the Palestinian poet’s work as a means of illustrating the concept of the universal community since his poetry “contains a universality born from specific suffering that reaches across the boundaries of language and nation to inscribe the national within the universal.”

Post-national identity, then, is not based on the limited identities of nationality but on chosen affiliations across boundaries of space and time. This was a starting point for her exploration of post-colonialism from a poetic perspective. Her analysis of Darwish’s oeuvre demonstrates that the geography of his poetry is not only concerned with the geography of Palestine; rather it deals with what might be called the geography of humanity, a trait which is especially evident in his late collections such as Unfortunately, It Was Paradise.

An article which Ben White wrote some five years before Mena provides a good example of Darwish’s affiliations across space and time. In his “Dispossession, Soil, and Identity in Palestinian and Native American Literature” he explores the links which Darwish establishes with the narratives of Native American history.

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210 This special 2009 issue in honour of the memory of Darwish was dedicated to the theme “If I touch the depths of your heart”: The Human Promise of Poetry in Memories of Mahmoud Darwish.


212 Ibid.
arguing that there are fascinating comparisons to be made between contemporary Palestinian and Native American writers attempting to articulate and come to terms with the collective trauma experienced by their peoples. He notes that in particular they are connected by means of their common love and identification with the soil of their ancestral homeland.\footnote{B. White, “Dispossession, Soil, and Identity in Palestinian and Native American Literature” \textit{Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture}, 12 (2&3), 2005, n.pp. Available online at:http://www.pij.org/current.php?id=39. Accessed on: 05/05/2015.}

Land and identity is also the topic tackled in the innovative eco-postcolonial reading of a selection of Darwish’s Poems by Ahmed et al.\footnote{H. Y Ahmed, R S Hashim, Z M. Lazim, R Vengadasamy “Identity and Land in Mahmoud Darwish’s Selected Poems: An Ecopostcolonial Reading”, \textit{International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature}, 1 (6), 2012, pp. 7-19.} Their approach, known as ecocriticism, focuses on symbols expressing the interconnectedness of the search for identity and land, and produces an interesting analysis of the natural landscapes in Darwish’s poetry, interpreting these as a form of resistance to the occupiers of the poet’s homeland. The researchers also argue that studying poetry in this way creates a new awareness of the multiple connections of human identity and the natural environment.

Taking a more traditional approach which employs close textual analysis of metaphors, in “Reflecting on the Life and Work of Mahmoud Darwish,” Munir Ghannam and Amira El-Zein also focus on Darwish’s symbolic recreation of his homeland, in which:

The poet blends myth and history to show that Palestine is a confluence of many cultures, mythologies and histories that unite, more than ever, land to poem and open it up to tolerance.\footnote{M.Ghannam and A. El-Zein, “Reflecting on the Life and Work of Mahmoud Darwish”, \textit{CIRS Brief}, 3, 2009, p.8.}

As later analysis will show, Darwish uses historical narrative and myths in his poetry to counter Zionist discourse suggesting that Palestinians were recent arrivals.
on the disputed territory and had no land rights there since it was not their ancestral homeland. He also uses historical references and mythical allusions to emphasise that in the past Palestine was a tolerant place, where different peoples of various ethnicities lived peacefully together, and that this coexistence could also be possible in contemporary times for Israelis and Palestinians.

Like Ben White, Ghannam and El-Zein also draw parallels between Native American elements of identity and Palestinian belonging, and point to further intertextual parallels between Darwish’s work and that of other writers who have been interested in identity.

### 2.5 Identity and Post-Colonial Theory

Post-colonial theory evolved as a reaction to the negative impact following the end of the era of colonialism, emerging during the 1960s in the post-independence period in a number of countries formerly colonised by European powers. As an academic discipline, post-colonial studies focus on analysing, revising and criticizing colonial practices or their negative impact on colonised nations either in their homeland or in their host countries.

The work of some of the key post-colonial theorists will also be outlined including Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi and Said himself, along with some of the responses they provoked.

The term post-colonialism is a general and wide-ranging term which has impacted on Literature, Art, Philosophy, Architecture, Cultural and Literary Studies to mention but a few of the fields where its influence has been felt. Post-colonialism plays a role in reviewing previous decades of colonial rule aiming to achieve a clear assessment of the theories and perspectives on colonialism and the post-colonial era.
not only in the last century but up to the present moment, while also tackling issues of neo-colonialism.

The meaning of the phrase ‘post-colonial’ in a theoretical context is defined by Ashcroft et al. in their book *The Empire Writes Back* as follows:

We use the term ‘post-colonial’ [...] to cover all culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.\(^\text{216}\)

Thus, post-colonial theory focuses on investigating the effects of canonicalization on cultures and societies, as originally used by historians after the Second World War to address the post-independence period. Since the late 1970s, the term has been used in literary criticism discussing the various cultural consequences of colonization.\(^\text{217}\)

Thus, colonization and its effects was the fundamental focus of the works of post-colonial theorists. Scholars representing both the colonisers and the colonised aim to articulate the effects of colonization on both sides of the process by which European nations colonised non-European nations. The colonised nations suffered greatly from the intentional fragmentation of their identities under the power of the colonisers’ imperial institutions. In contrast, European writers and artists were often attracted to the spectacle of the exoticised Other and rediscovered themselves as ‘authorities’ on colonised countries.

Jacques Derrida’s method of critical analysis of texts, deconstruction, *On Grammatology*\(^\text{218}\) as one clear example of his deconstructive practice, has also been utilised by post-colonial theorists in their application of the concepts of Centre and Margin, the two binaries practiced amongst the world’s dominant powers. Rowe

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\(^{217}\) Ibid.

defines margin in Derridean terms as: “that which has been left out, excluded from the dominant forms of discourse.” Derrida’s contribution opened the world’s eyes to the sharp distinctions and divisions between the European centre and the nations on the margins. This division is visible in the distribution of powers of the Western countries which controlled the dependent countries in the developing countries that were colonised and marginalised from the 1500s to the mid-twentieth century, having suffered from the centre’s practice of power.

As Stuart Hall observes, the Centre creates its Margin and he contends that the West sees its societies as the ideal pattern for the rest of the world, noting:

European society, it assumed, was the most advanced type of society on earth, European man was the pinnacle of human achievement. It treated the West as the result of forces largely internal to Europe’s history and formation. On the other hand, the West has given various historical, cultural and economic classifications to the Rest of the World including the Far East, Africa, India, Latin America, Indigenous North America, The Middle East, Australasia and others.

However, in order to seek out and understand the hidden practices of the colonizer who passively shaped their identities, some post-colonial theorists argue that it is important to return not only to the era of colonialism but also to that of pre-colonialism. It is challenging to cover the many frameworks which have been adopted by post-colonial theory. Consequently, this chapter will refer only to those well-known scholars who are considered to be the main contributors to post-colonial theory, beginning with Frantz Fanon who was one of the first writers to propagate post-colonial theory in his psychological study of how the colonial powers affected

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221 Ibid., p. 280.
the colonies. Fanon’s efforts in this field can be divided into three stages. In the first, he examined black identity. In the second, he criticised the forces of colonization and finally, he examined the need to remove the influences of colonisation.

In his work on black identity, Fanon wrote *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) using Freudian and Lacanian psycho-analysis to critically analyse the political theory of colonization. He notes that when colonisation promoted white skin, it created a deep practice of racial division and alienation in the identity of the colonised nations. For instance, in colonial times, the history, culture, language and dress of the coloniser were considered to be of superior standards and quality which consequently perpetuated feelings of inferiority amongst marginalised entities. Consequently, colonised nations imitate the superior culture to compensate for their feelings of inferiority.222

In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) he argues that violence is an important means of achieving decolonization since this does not happen accidently; rather it is a historical stage that occurs between two opposing powers.223 He identifies another attribute which betrays the psyche of the coloniser who used to deal with the colonised as a passive subject, reflecting the practice of binaries of superiority and inferiority. Fanon told the French philosopher and novelist Sartre: “A colonised person must constantly be aware of his image, jealously protect his position.”224

Fanon’s contribution was to explain how the coloniser negatively affected the image of the colonised nations, and how colonised countries build new, developed societies which depend on the economic and technological support of their ex-

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colonisers: “The nuclear arms race must be stopped and the underdeveloped regions must receive generous investments and technical aid. The fate of the world depends on the response given to this question.”

Like Fanon, the Tunisian Jewish writer, Albert Memmi, also produces powerful, profound and critical insights exploring the damaging psychological effects of colonialism on colonised and colonisers alike in his book *The Colonizer and the Colonised*. Said considers Memmi to be one of the few elite thinkers who “managed to bridge the gap between the colonised and coloniser during the colonial times.”

Memmi radically criticises the colonised psychic nature of perpetually falling into the vicious circle of self-pity, through reading and interpreting history in such a way to propagate excuses for failures. He does not deny history, instead he wants the colonised to avoid escapism, and he justifies this by stating: “They will be able to correctly analyse their condition and act accordingly.”

In fact, Memmi’s criticism profoundly highlighted the aspects necessary to become a liberated and modern society after the era of colonialism. For him, independence does not just entail driving the coloniser out of the colonised country; it must also lead the colonised to renew themselves and develop their language, culture, freedom, employment and education. This is what Memmi had not seen occur in the liberated colonised societies during the decolonisation period.

Memmi’s criticism of the Arab practice of democracy seems to be widely accepted due to his radical approach to the nature of the Arab way of thinking. He

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225 Ibid., p. 61.
highlights their weaknesses as colonised nations because although they won their political freedom they are still reliant on Western political institutions to supply them with everything they need in terms of developed technology, industry, and other tools that recently liberated countries need. In this light, he profoundly wonders: “Why has decolonisation not succeeded in separating the religious from the profane?” Memmi additionally generalizes that all religions are intolerant, exclusive, and restrictive, and sometimes violent as well. Based on the famous expression “moderate Islam,” which was coined after the colonial period, he reacted by stressing that there are no moderate religions. It could be argued that Memmi’s perception appears too general to be the only valid interpretation for analysing the causes of problems in an under-developed Muslim world. However, he does identify the reasons for many historical, political, and sociological factors which have prevented Muslims from engaging with modernity in the same way as other developed countries in the world.

In reality, it is not religions which restrict free-thinking, but the understanding of religion, which reflects peoples’ systems of thinking. There is also a need for appropriate political, cultural and sociological conditions including the means to practise freedom of thought and an educated environment which encourages humans to be free to share ideas and thoughts about stereotyped notions.

In Orientalism, Said challenges the concept of ‘Orientalism’ by rediscovering the discourse of Western Orientalists whose essential approach was a tendency to differentiate between East and West. He contends that with the commencement of European colonisation, the Europeans came into contact with the lesser developed countries of the East. He argues that they found these civilisations and countries very exotic; hence the discipline of Orientalism arose, which was the study of the people

229 Ibid., p. 21.
from those exoticised locations. Thus, the East is not just a marginal place to Europe; it is the wealthiest and most backward place where the majority of European colonies are situated.\(^{230}\)

Additionally, it is the major supporter of its modern movement. According to Said, Orientalism is another vision of the forgotten part of the image of the West. In this sense, the East is discerned as complementary to the West. Indeed, one of the salient points made by Said’s *Orientalism* highlights the misconstruction and misinterpretation of the East’s images and the damage which this entails to its real existence.

With the development of the theory of post-colonialism, discussions on ‘hybridity’ have arisen as one area of influence on colonialism. This term appears briefly in Said but it belongs to Homi Bhabha more than any other author. Bhabha posits that immigrant scholars see themselves situated between two cultures, two senses of belonging, two spaces and so forth.\(^{231}\) He embraces the concept of hybridity studies, deconstructing the romantic notion of national identity and its relationship with imperialism. Therefore, he argues that there is an opportunity to create a unique concept: a new perception of an identity which is constructed in the third space composed of a sense of multiple affiliations. The third space according to Bhabha can be defined as an *ambivalent* site where cultural absorption and representation have no “primordial unity or fixity.”\(^{232}\)

Hybridity is an important aspect of the cosmopolitan identity of both Darwish and Said and is a dominant phenomenon in their writing due to life spent in exile which forced them to embrace a hybrid identity, in the light of their affiliation with


\(^{231}\) In his book *Representations of the Intellectual* (1996) Said writes about exile as the essence of the scholar and a feature of his factual existence in that he refuses to ignore or live without it. He believes that exile is a condition of a permanent search regarding identity without stability.

\(^{232}\) H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. 

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two spaces: their home country and their host country. Both of them travelled widely and settled for various lengths of time in many different countries around the world, including Egypt, Lebanon, England, France, America, and Palestine. With regard to their literature on hybrid identity, Darwish and Said wrote explicitly about their own association with hybrid identity in many of their published works such as Darwish’s collection, *(ٌلأقف، وبٔذ اٌفؽظٚـ)* Unfortunately it was Paradise (2003) and Said’s autobiography, *Out of Place: A Memoir.*

Ultimately, all post-colonial theorists were interested in working on deconstructing the power of imperialism and colonialism as an initial priority, and then redefining the colonised nations which were and still are facing deep neglect from Western political institutions.

### 2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that without taking into consideration the historical context of the events of 1948 and the broader context of intellectual and social movements in the Arab world such as Nasserism, it is impossible to fully understand the development of Palestinian literature and its core identity as a literature of resistance and of love of homeland. I have reviewed a relevant selection of critical texts on the works of Said and Darwish which makes it possible to appreciate the many different approaches which have been taken to interpret this to date and to evaluate their usefulness in relation to this current research. Critically exploring previous work on post-colonial identity is of crucial importance in order to understand the degree to which this is applicable in the Palestinian case.

In the next chapter some key notions from post-colonial theory are used to shed light on how Said and Darwish conceptualise their self-identity in relation to a framework consisting of seven spaces of self-identity.
Chapter Three: “In the process of being invented”:
Spaces of Self-Identity in the Works of Said and Darwish

3.1 Introduction

The issue of self-identity takes a prominent place in the works of Said and Darwish. Said has written a memoir and much of his academic work is also closely linked to his identity as a Palestinian American. Darwish has also produced semi-autobiographical prose poems which clearly draw on his personal experiences of exile and has declared on numerous occasions that his poetry is a mirror of his personal life and self-identity. In addition, both men have explored their own personal life stories in television programmes.

Whereas the other chapters focus on how Said and Darwish have represented the impact of major socio-political and historical events on Palestinian identity, examining displacement, trauma, and memory respectively, this chapter will focus specifically on examining how Said and Darwish choose to represent themselves in relation to seven spaces of self-identity. These spaces are represented, onion-like, in Figure 2.1 beginning with the most personal and intimate narratives in the innermost layers which concern naming and language, then moving outwards towards family and friends. The next layer expands to cover ethnicity and then nationality. The latter category is examined in two subsections in order to cover national identity within the homeland and national identity outside the homeland, when experienced in exile. The outermost layer involves self-identity in the global space of cosmopolitanism.

Some key notions from post-colonial theory are used to shed light how Said and Darwish conceptualise their self-identity in relation to these seven spaces of self-identity.
One of the key post-colonial theorists, Stuart Hall,\textsuperscript{233} has compared the traditional fixed, given, and stable discourse of identity with that proposed by post-colonial theory in this contemporary era. He argues that previously the conceptualisation of identity was associated with a kind of referencing to a secure origin that created the impression of fixity and stability. Essentially, this traditional vision of identity was based on the notion that “an individual can remain the same person over time, whatever his life experiences may be.”\textsuperscript{234} As Cherki Karkaba argues in his article “Deconstructing Identity in Post-colonial Fiction,” in post-colonial discourse, identity is understood to be lack of fixity, to be constructed by the individual him- or herself and to be forever in a constant state of becoming. He observes, post-colonial theorists stress the importance of considering identity to be the relationship between oneself and the other, arguing that “without others, there


would be no self" as the existence of the other constructs the meaning of the self. Hence, Hall describes identity as a shifting and incomplete product, “an unsettled place or unresolved question.” According to Hall, this incomplete quality of identity complicates issues even more when colonised states seek clear answers to problematic questions regarding belonging, home, rights, and politics.

Rajchman highlights that if we believe we live in “a self-enclosed universe of identity discourse,” in a social system from which the other (as an individual or as a group) is excluded, then, differences between one’s self-identity and the identity of others can be perceived negatively, as a possible source of threat or danger affecting their existence.

In Culture and Imperialism (1994), Said refers to the mixing and shifting of identity and it is clear that he views instability as a major characteristic of identity. For him, identity is always in progress, fluctuating between differences, shifting beyond Manichean thought, undergoing an endless process of challenge. Identity is changeable and not a given at any one time because it depends on power relations and “some relations of power are more over-determining than others.”

Said attempts to describe his own perception of his personal identity, in the revealing final paragraph of Out of Place:

I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. These currents, like the themes of one’s life, flow along during the waking hours, and at their best, they require no reconciling, no harmonising. They are “off” and may be out of place, but at least they are always in motion, in rhyme, in place, in the form of all kinds of strange combinations moving about, not
necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one central theme.  

The title which Said chose for his memoir, the metaphorical expression ‘out of place’, intentionally reflects his feelings of not wholly belonging anywhere and of possessing a fractured identity without any final resolution. As the above quote suggests, the theoretical approach to identity which Said develops in his academic writing appears to have been inspired in part at least by his personal experiences.

Said’s understanding of identity, both in a theoretical and personal sense, is similar to Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity in which there is no pure identity. Bhabha refers to the self having an inherent diversity and argues that this condition “places identity in an in-between interval” which he designates as “a third space.”

3.2 Naming and Self-Identity

Benedicta Windt-Val makes an important point when she notes that our identity is “closely and intimately related to the names and name-like designations that are given to us by ourselves or the people surrounding us.” A personal name is the result of an intentional choice and an occasion of choosing and functions as a carrier of aspects of our socio-cultural identity, revealing, for example, our class or religious identity. Moreover, Yasir Suleiman notes that particularly in Arab countries where tribal affiliation has traditionally been of immense importance, names “operate at the level of the individual (self) and the group identity in society.” Windt-Val observes that psychologists such as Allport and Dion have both concluded that “our given name is the focal point around which we organise our

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242 E. Said, Out of Place.
243 Ch. Karkaba, “Deconstructing Identity in Post-colonial Fiction”, p. 93
246 Ibid.
personality” and can impact positively or negatively on the development of individuals. It is perhaps not surprising then that given their respective interest in matters of identity, both Darwish and Said wrote at some length about their own names.

Darwish, who lived in exile for most of his life, was deeply affected by the sense of being an outsider who possessed nothing but his name. The following verses appear in his well-known poem (جادارية) in which Darwish presents his life as a continuous circle of remembering pain, deprivation, orphanhood, remorse, and exile:

And my name mispronounced with its five horizontal letters
My name… is mine.
**mim** of lovesickness, of the orphan, of those who complete the past
**ha** of the garden and love, of two muddles and two losses
**mim** of the rake, of the lovesick, of the exile prepared for a death foretold.
**waw** of farewells, of the central flower, of fidelity to birth whenever it may be
and of a parent’s promise
**dall** of the guide, of the path of tears, of a studied galaxy and
a sparrow who cajoles me and makes me bleed
This name is mine…

These verses were written as Darwish awaited heart surgery in the United States, letting out a profound sense of the poet contemplating his own mortality (the exile prepared for a death foretold, farewells) and at the same time, looking back over both his life and his work which have made him who he is. Darwish plays linguistically with the five Arabic letters which form his name (**mim**, **ha**, **mim**, **waw**, and **dall**), linking each one to a series of words which all begin with the same letter, an effect which has not been fully reproduced in the English translation. Darwish uses the letters of his given name, Mahmoud, the elements which it could be argued literally make up who he is, to reflect on various events and circumstances, both

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positive and negative, which have occurred in his life and how these have impacted on his identity (both love and losses).

At the same time the verses can be read as a reflection on how these events have been transformed into some of the key themes of his work, for as Darwish suggests by the spelling out of his name, he is also a man of letters, literally and metaphorically who has spent his life transforming love and losses into poetry. He has completed the past by connecting his work with that of Arab writers from centuries past; the two losses reflected in his poetry are those of the Nakba but also the historical Arab loss of Al-Andalus.

Since the poem refers throughout to dispossession, Darwish’s repeated assertion that “This name is mine” is all the more striking, suggesting that this at least cannot be taken away from him. However, he also refers to “my name mispronounced,” a telling recollection from someone who has spent time living and travelling in so many non-Arabic-speaking countries. As Windt-Val perceptively comments; “People generally resent the mispronunciation of their name because mispronunciation amounts to a distortion of their identity.”249 With this small detail Darwish tells the story of a lifetime of exile, of leaving behind his identity originally rooted in the village of Al-Birwa and having to recreate himself again and again in other languages and other cultures. This also perhaps explains why “Mural” concludes with the poet’s triple repetition of the phrase “I am not mine,” echoing the paradoxical double-talk used by Israelis to describe the situation of Palestinians as internal refugees in what was their own homeland: “present-absent alien.”250 Such ironies were essential features of Darwish’s post-colonial identity.

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249 Windt-Val, “Personal Names and Identity in Literary Contexts”.
250 In the television series The Presence of Absence Darwish recounts that an officer in a passport-issuing agency refused to accept his application due to the poet’s indefinite citizenship to which he replied: “I am neither citizen, nor resident, so I do not exist”.

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With regard to Said’s conceptualisation of his name, and its relationship to his identity, his full name, Edward Wadie Said, clearly bears the traces of linguistic and cultural duality. He is a being at the interstices between two worlds: Arabic-speaking Palestine and English-speaking America. Said highlights the connection between his hybrid identity and the duality of his name in the opening paragraph of his autobiography *Out of Place*:

> It took me about fifty years to become accustomed to, or, more exactly to feel less uncomfortable with, “Edward”, a foolishly English name yoked to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said.  

This sensation of being out of place is reflected in the fact that a number of editions of the book carry an image of Said as a young schoolboy which is not centred on the front cover as one would normally expect in classic design.

Commenting on the links between personal names and identity, Windt-Val argues that: “the way we use our name constitutes an important part of the impression we want other people to form of ourselves.” Another extract from Said’s memoir illustrates how he used his names to express different facets of his identity;

> For years, and depending on the exact circumstances, I would rush past “Edward” and emphasise “Said”; at other times I would do the reverse, or connect these two together so that neither would be clear.

Said reports that his own father changed his name from Wadie to William, presumably because he thought this was more in keeping with his identity as an American citizen. Said writes at great length in the opening pages of his autobiography about his attitude towards his name but also uses this as a means to meditate more generally on the complexities of the cultural and linguistic mix of the familial environment in which he was raised, in which both of his parents seemed to

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251 E. Said, *Out of Place*, p. 3.  
252 Windt-Val, “Personal Names and Identity in Literary Contexts”.  
have hybrid identities. In contrast to Darwish’s painful recollections of his mispronounced name, for Said, hearing his Arabic-speaking mother mispronouncing his English name as “Edwaad” brought him intense pleasure.254

3.3 Language and Self-Identity

Both men were multilingual and both could speak Arabic, English, Hebrew, and French. However, despite his linguistic abilities in other languages, Darwish always preferred to write his poetry and articles only in his mother tongue, Arabic, as though to tie himself to his Arab cultural roots. There is perhaps reference to the fact that exile is often, by force, a multilingual experience:

لا تذكرنا
حين نفلت من يديك
إلى المنافي الواسعة
إنا تعلمنا اللغات الشاسعة.255

Do not mention us
When we disengage from your hand
To the large exiles
We have learned the vast languages

However, at the beginning of his autobiography, Said reflects on this duality between Arabic and English: “The two have always been together in my life, one resonating in the other, sometimes ironically, sometimes nostalgically, most often each correcting, and documenting on, the other.”256 In his own perception, Said was clearly truly bilingual, the intimate relationship of his two languages making it impossible for him to think in terms of a first language.257

According to Mena,258 since Darwish was deprived of what might be referred to as a rooted existence in one place, language was his only way of achieving meaningful connections to the Palestinian and Arab community. Darwish confirmed

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254 E. Said, Out of Place, pp. 4-5.
256 E. Said, Out of Place, p. 4.
258 E. Mena, “The Geography of Poetry: Mahmoud Darwish and Postnational Identity”.

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this deep-rooted special relationship with Arabic as his language in the following lines:

This is my language and my miracle... a magic wand.
My first identity, my polished metal, the desert idol of an Arab
Who worships what flows from rhymes like stars in his abaya,
And who worships his own words.²⁵⁹

Darwish also alludes to his close relationship with his mother tongue in the poem (أنا لغتي) “I am my Language” whilst elsewhere in one poem he repeats the phrase: “My home is my new poem” three times in total, drawing a direct link between his poetry/language and his notion of belonging.

Language represents both ‘home’ and ‘self’ for Darwish because it has the power to record and restore those places and memories which are of special relevance to us and which have been damaged or even obliterated by others. Like a magician, with language as a magic wand he is able to conjure up memories across time and space at will. In this sense, as Saith explains, Darwish’s poetry “gives power to the tired and forlorn, to revive, restore, and relive the imagined mobile space called home.”²⁶⁰

The importance of language as part of his identity is highlighted in (جدارية) Mural, in which he expresses his extreme fears of losing his language:

I am fearful for my language
Leave everything else as it is
But bring life back to my language.²⁶¹

Darwish thus sees language as his homeland, his identity, and also his power. Since as previously established, the poet cannot exist outside of his language; this means his identity is inextricably linked to this. In his interviews, he constantly

²⁶¹ Ibid., p.145.
stressed that he made concerted attempts to develop his language and his poetic style, as evidenced by the fact that each of his poems seems to reject its predecessor in terms of its linguistic and epistemological style.262

3.4 Family and Self-Identity

According to psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, childhood is a crucial stage in establishing the identity of individuals and both view the oedipal complex as an important means of understanding how the relationship between the child and the other is structured. Therefore looking at the family relationships of Said and Darwish may prove enlightening when considering elements which have helped to shape their own identity and how they perceive these in their work, although no direct connection is made here between the theme of post-colonial identity and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical perspectives.

In addition, it can be argued that in the case of both writers, their families exerted a strong influence on their process of identity building in a number of ways. Firstly, the home in which they grew up introduced them to cultural elements which would have a lasting impact for both men; secondly, family members played an important role in creating in them an early political awareness of their country’s loss.

Darwish and Said had very different childhoods. Darwish was the son of a peasant farmer, raised in the Palestinian village of Al-Birweh, and grew up in an extended family in a village community but his life there was brought to an abrupt end when the Nakba saw his family forced to leave their home. Since Said spent his childhood living a largely urban existence with his middle-class family in Cairo, spending summer vacations in Lebanon and Palestine, he never suffered the physical

262 Kh. Mattawa, When the Poet Is a Stranger.
displacement that haunted Darwish for the rest of his life, the sense of bitterness he felt at losing his home, or the insecurity of being moved on from place to place.

Darwish appears to have had few conflicts with his parents as opposed to Said who openly commented on his struggles with his father, who was a strict disciplinarian who used physical punishment to enforce his rules. For Said, the father-son relationship was fraught and openly hostile and it is tempting to see in this the foundations of the writer’s hatred of the unequal power relations exerted by colonialism and imperialism. In his memoir, Said provides his own psychoanalytical reading of his relationship with his parents, declaring that this was the result of an Oedipus complex, and attributes his distancing himself from his father and his closeness to his mother to this.

Darwish’s relationship with his family is reflected in his poetic writing in various ways. Some of his poems directly refer to family members and have been influenced by memories of them, for example, he proudly depicted images of his mother and father in poems such as (أحن إلى خبز أمي) “I am yearning for my mother’s bread.” On a more symbolic and metaphorical level, Darwish sometimes used a father figure negatively when critiquing colonialism whilst the mother figure was often used as the embodiment of the beloved homeland.

Both men had a guiding person in their family who awakened their political consciousness. For Darwish, it was his paternal grandfather who encouraged him to resist the loss of his home by creating poetry. He provided classical and modern poetry for the young Darwish to read and helped interpret some of their meanings for him.264 In Said’s case, as previously mentioned, his Aunt Nabiha’s role in assisting

263 S. Jubran, “The Image of the Father in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish”, examines the development of fatherhood as a symbol in Darwish’s poetry, seeing three distinct stages of its use in his poetry themes.

264 The television series  In the presence of absence.
Palestinian refugees in Egypt motivated him unconsciously in his later political engagement.

In short, for both Darwish and Said, their early experiences within the family can be said to have influenced the formation of their personal and creative identities generally, and to have helped to establish their political attitudes towards colonialism and oppression.

3.5 Friendship and Self-Identity

As William Rawlins has observed, even though they vary in closeness, intensity and type of context, friendships may help to shape important aspects of an individual’s self-identity, particularly when that friendship is a long-lasting one, built on mutual interests.265 As noted earlier in this thesis, Said and Darwish had a number of intellectual and personal links with some of their meetings being recorded in their respective works. When Said first met Darwish in New York,266 he told him that he had often been intrigued by his ideas.267 Said used quotes from Darwish’s poetry to refer to situations that were common to the two writers and all Palestinians. Darwish describes his first meeting with Said in the following terms:

I met Edward, thirty years ago, the time was less wild then [...] We both said: If the past is only an experience, make of the future a meaning and a vision. Let us go, let us go into tomorrow trusting the candour of imagination and the miracle of grass.268

Dyer argues that “the two men initially spoke with the same voice about how to face their lives in exile,”269 adopting a similar intellectual approach to combating the Israeli occupation and Darwish’s use of “We both said” and the repetition of the

266 E. Said, “On Mahmoud Darwish”.
267 In the Presence of Absence.
269 Ibid.
phrase “let us” suggests a commitment to a common vision on various issues. As later analysis will show, they did in fact share many ideas about themes such as exile, hybridity, and universality in literature.

Both men also maintained close relationships with many other Palestinian intellectuals, including Ghassan Kanafani, Samih Al-Qasim, and Rashid Hussein. In the case of Said, as Ashcroft and Ahluwalia note, his personal political stance affected not only how he felt about his own work and that of others, both critical and creative writing, but also impacted on how he viewed Palestinian identity:

We cannot separate this political concern for the state of Palestine, this concern with his own identity and the identity of Palestinians in general, from the theoretical and literary analysis of texts and the way they are located in the world.270

Said and Darwish united their efforts in fighting oppression against their Palestinian compatriots and more generally, in speaking out for humanitarian causes. This strong connection between them will be examined in depth in this chapter, specifically in terms of viewing how loss and dispossession influenced their respective work and in many cases impacted on their vision of identity, in particular the notion of belonging and homeland.

Both Darwish and Said were aware that colonialism and living in a post-colonialist era was an issue of major concern regarding their Palestinian identity. Memmi271 argues that the identities of both coloniser and colonised are mutually dependent, in terms of the binary opposition existing between them both.272 Margaret Majumdar notes:

Memmi emphasised the reciprocity or interdependence that is integral to the colonial relationship, as well as its inevitable tendency to disintegrate. The

271 A. Memmi, The Coloniser and the Colonised, pp. 73-74.
characteristic features and behaviour of both coloniser and colonised are mutually defined and determined by this relationship.\footnote{273} In the framework of post-colonial discourse, Palestine is effectively still colonised, with both Arabs and Israelis trying to build a new community away from their previous homes. There is no connection between the territory they now occupy and the place they used to live in historically. For this reason, Mena argues that the concept of post-nationality as posited by Darwish is necessary and referring to Darwish as a post-colonial author is a mis-categorisation, as his works focus on building a community isolated from its linear historical progression, which is different from the Palestinians who simultaneously fight against colonialism:

While the establishment of a physical Palestinian nation is a central concern for Darwish within his work, it is no less his concern to establish concomitantly a community that moves beyond geography and nation. Darwish said: ‘I want, both as a poet and as a human being, to free myself from Palestine. But I can’t. When my country is liberated, so shall I be.’\footnote{274}

The identities of both Darwish and Said have been created by the formative experience of losing their homes as a result of the machinations of colonial power in the West. Their biographical writing and other publications record the fundamental tie between the loss of their homeland and the representation of identity in their work. In all their experiences of living inside their own homeland, travelling to neighbouring countries, and finally living in exile in western countries, both writers have represented their continuous struggle to be reconciled with their own identity and to feel a sense of belonging.

Fully understanding self-identity requires us to consider personal affiliations relating to socio-spatial concepts such as home and nation. Both Darwish and Said were profoundly affected initially by the circumstances which led to them losing

\footnote{274}{E. Mena, “The Geography of Poetry: Mahmoud Darwish and Postnational Identity”, p. 114.}
their family homes and living in exile. Later, they also suffered experiences of loneliness and isolation which penetrated to the deepest level of their subconscious and resonated throughout their lives. It is clear that in some cases, these have ultimately resurfaced in their writing, manifesting themselves as a significant component of their texts.

3.6 Ethnicity and Self-Identity

The extent to which one chooses to identify oneself with a particular ethnicity is considered to be a fundamental factor in the formation of one’s identity. Both Darwish and Said described themselves as Arabs, took pride in their origins as Arabs and embraced the philosophy of Pan-Arab nationalism, identifying themselves with other people on the basis of a common ethnicity, language, and mindset formed by specific geographical and cultural similarities. Another factor which is pertinent to the formation of Arab identity includes an awareness of a common history and how this has impacted on the present reality of Arabs. In their work, both writers reflected upon and critiqued the past failures of the Arabs, with a view to attempting to remedy these in the present and to provide a better future.

In one of his earliest poetry collections, Darwish staunchly defends his Arab identity in the face of the destruction of the Arab presence in Palestine. This Arab affiliation is perhaps most clearly stated in (بطاقة هوية) “Identity Card,” which became one of his best known poems:275

Put it on record!
I am an Arab
I am a name without a title
Patient in a country
Where everything lives with a whirlpool of anger.
My roots
Were entrenched before the birth of time

And before the opening of the eras
Before the cypress, and the olive trees
And before the grass grew
My father is from a family of ploughmen.
Not from the nobles.
And my grandfather was a peasant.
Without a line or genealogy!
He teaches me the highness of the sun before reading books.
My house is a watchman’s hut.
Made of sticks and reeds.
So does my status please you?
I am a name without a title.

Put it on record.
I am an Arab.
Colour of hair: jet black.
Colour of eyes: brown.
My distinguishing features:
On my head the ‘iqal cords over a keffiyeh
Scratching him who touches it.
My address:
I’m from a village, remote, forgotten,
Its streets without name
And all its men in the fields and quarry.
What’s there to be angry about?\(^{276}\)

Darwish himself commented on the inspiration for and the popularity of this poem in the following terms:

Put this in your record: “I am Arab”- I said that to a government employee whose son might now be piloting one of these jets. I said it in Hebrew to provoke him. But when I put it in a poem, the Arab public in Nazareth was electrified by a secret current that released the genie from the bottle.\(^{277}\)

In this poem Darwish uses a scene well-known to his fellow Palestinians, the frequent confrontation with an Israeli official demanding verification of identity, and parodies the discourse of officialdom to proclaim his Arab affiliation: *Put it on record*. By not making any mention of Palestine or Palestinian he also critically comments on the Israeli denials of the existence of either his country or nationality. Palestinians are officially referred to as ‘Israeli Arabs’. It is also tempting to see this


poem as Darwish’s declaration of Pan-Arab sentiments, as he allies himself with the wider Arab community, but his own comments on the poem suggest he was specifically interested here in constructing himself as the alien other in official Israeli discourse and he refused to recite “Identity Card” in front of Arab audiences, explaining:

The Jews call the Palestinian an Arab, and so I shouted in my torturer’s face “Record I am an Arab!” Does it make sense then for me to stand before a hundred million Arabs saying: “I am an Arab”? It does not make any sense. I’ll not read the poem.278

In the same poem, he also responds to the Israelis’ refusal to accept that his people have inhabited the Palestinian homeland since time immemorial (before the birth of time).279

Darwish’s list of distinguishing features here can be interpreted in various ways. On the one hand, this list of physical features comprising jet black hair and brown eyes could be considered a realistic description of the physical attributes of the Palestinian Arabs but at the same time the format in which this is presented, as though being recorded by an official, eerily resembles the type of racial stereotyping which was used against the Jews and other groups by the Nazis and is perhaps intended to serve as an ironic reminder of this similarity. In the poem, Darwish also seems to be making a broader point about the notion of racial and ethnic identity and power, for he stresses that his father was “not from the nobles” and that his grandfather was “without a line or genealogy.” He thus rejects the traditional Arab obsession with tribal origins which remains influential in Arab societies, as anthropologist Daniel Martin Varisco notes:

In expanding the Islamic empire, to nations far from Arabia, it was the tribal connections that often legitimized political and social status. Even the most

278 Al-Qaisi cited in Mattawa, When the Poet Is a Stranger, pp. 213-214.
urbane medieval poets were lured into the supposed glory days of past tribal deeds of noble Arabs. The situation is not altogether different today.280

Darwish is more interested in establishing that his family’s ancestral rights to the homeland are based on their intimate connection with the soil of Palestine itself: they are not a nomadic people.

His reference to the wearing of the keffiyeh headdress kept in place by the headband of ‘iqal cords also serves a double purpose. The keffiyeh was traditionally worn by Palestinian farmers as a practical means of dealing with dust and sweat when labouring in the fields. It was also later adopted by by Palestinian nationalists in the Arab Revolt during the 1930s. However, by the time Darwish was composing these verses the keffiyeh had been adopted by Yasser Arafat and was fast becoming a symbol of the Palestinian resistance movement. Darwish’s reference here then to this item of apparel links him to both the land of Palestine as the traditional peasant headdress but also signals his political sympathies.

Said’s awareness of belonging to the Arab world can be noted in much of his academic work, most obviously Orientalism. He spent much of his childhood in Egypt, a country which had also been subjected to colonialism and which later, under President Nasser, would become the centre of the Pan-Arabism movement. Cairo, where he lived and studied, was seen as being at the forefront of developments in the Arab world and was also home to many different communities of refugees. Said noted in his memoir that although he held American nationality in Egypt, he was never socially assimilated into the British primary school where he began his schooling, suggesting that perhaps he felt himself to be more Palestinian Arab than American, and in many of the articles which he penned for the English

language Egyptian weekly, *Al-Ahram*, he expressed his yearnings for many places in Egypt and Palestine.  

3.7 Nationality within the Homeland and Self-Identity

It is argued here that socio-political and historical developments in the Arab world and in relation to the Palestinian cause, in particular the events which followed the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict and the *Naksa*, also impacted on the concept of Palestinian self-identity constructed by Darwish and Said which can be seen to change quite markedly in both men over the course of time. Their original staunch support for the Palestinian cause and their unshakeable belief in the possibility of change was challenged when sharp divisions emerged between Palestinian political organisations such as Fatah and Hamas. Moreover, their optimism that Arab countries would rapidly develop in the post-colonial era when they cast off the burdens of colonialism also faded when all too often one oppressive regime was replaced by another. It can be argued that these successive disappointments led both of them to seek a less narrowly defined self-identity, reorienting themselves as humanitarian global citizens embracing cosmopolitanism rather than solely resistant Palestinian nationalists.

One of Darwish’s closest friends, 'Amjad Nāṣir, reports that the day after the Gaza reversal in 2007, the poet commented in a tone of resigned frustration: “We are a disappointment, O 'Amjad.”  

This can be contrasted with Darwish’s early feelings of rage which Mattawa sensed in his early work found in *Birds without Wings*, and *Lover from Palestine*: “Where did this anger

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come from, the poet asks, and why was he burdened with it?" The simple phrase reported by Nāṣir is a telling statement on the ongoing shift in Darwish’s outlook from the optimism and righteous anger of the youthful resistance poet to the more pessimistic vision of the political veteran, all too aware of the increasing socio-political complexities of the Palestinian issue and of his burden as the unofficial national poet and voice of Palestine.

It is noticeable, then, that both Darwish and Said became increasingly critical in respect to Palestinian political identity, echoing a theme that is now prevalent within Palestinian literary and critical studies. Their work no longer offers a romanticised perspective of the homeland identity, simply because their goal is to build a strong community and they believe radical criticism of this identity is necessary to improve Palestinian society. Moreover, they both came to the realisation that this goal is also dependent upon understanding that the past is unfinished.

Lena Jayyusi explains that when the past is considered to be unfinished, we are able to benefit from a social understanding of time:

Not time abstractly moving us forward, ever away from the past, but rather the time of social agents working their plans, visions, and desires, appending the present to the past, potentially mortgaging the future.284

Thus, this concept of an incomplete past highlights the necessity of critiquing the historical understanding of Palestinian identity in order to potentially influence the future positively. Said, Darwish, and many other Palestinian writers such as Barghouti have critically addressed Palestinian reality in their work relating to state-building. Whilst Darwish and Said might be accused to a certain extent of

283 Kh. Mattawa, When the Poet Is a Stranger, p. 208.
essentializing and mythologizing Palestinians in their very earliest works, they soon realised the need to represent Palestinians objectively and truthfully, which on occasions involved criticising their compatriots harshly, as Barghouti has done. This has led to all three writers facing criticism from some Palestinian scholars or their work being denigrated by other individuals.

Said has criticised both Palestinian politicians and activists, as well as some distinguished scholars and writers in his work, and he thinks it is particularly relevant to make a distinction between opinions voiced by members of the Palestinian Diaspora living outside the homeland and those residing inside the borders of Palestine.285 In After the Last Sky and The Question of Palestine, and in many published articles, Said has attempted to critically evaluate the actions of Palestinian politicians, viewing Arafat’s achievements in the Oslo Accords as a failure. He has also commented extensively on the issues raised by the sharp divide in the Palestinian community between Hamas and Fatah.

In an article published in Al-Ahram entitled “The Challenge of Israel: Fifty Years On,” he reflects on how the state of Israel has responded positively to the challenges that it has faced in achieving its objectives since its foundation in 1947. In the same article, he questions why Palestinians have made so little progress in working towards their goal of statehood and wonders whether their desire to change their current reality is strong enough:

The challenge of Israel is the challenge of our own societies. We are now unequal to the task because we are still chained to methods and attitudes that belong to an earlier time. The struggle of the twenty first century is the struggle to achieve self-liberation and self-decolonization. And then Israel can be properly addressed.286

285 E. Said, After the Last Sky.
With regards to how peace can be achieved, Said suggests that this requires recalling the past in a tolerant way, as a means of opening up a possible space for coexistence in the future and with regards to changing the Western vision of Palestinians, he believes that Israel has learnt that the real battle that must be won is the battle of opinions.

Darwish also emphasises the need for reflection on the past in his poem (وصينا متأخرين) “We Arrived too Late”:

As we look behind us to see where we stand in relation to ourselves and reality, we ask: How many mistakes have we made? Have we come to wisdom too late?287

Darwish notes the need for Palestinians to collectively review the progress they have made as a nation but more importantly to reflect on their past mistakes as citizens or formal political groups. The last phrase suggests that Darwish is perhaps contemplating the dreadful death toll of the years since the Nakba, and also thinking about the many lives, his own included, which were so radically changed by post-Nakba developments and can never be re-lived. There is also perhaps something here, of the older Darwish reflecting on his own life and its achievements and at the same time interrogating his personal identity. As Randall notes, as we age and look back on our life story, through narrative reflection;

We become more aware of the lives we haven’t lived: our ‘unlived life’ […] we become more curious about those sides of our selves we haven’t yet explored, about our possible selves of ‘possible lives’ […] We are also our memories of who we could have become.288

Looking critically at Palestinian society, Said notes that a truly developed society not only needs to establish civic institutions such as universities but also to produce academics who can conduct and write academically reliable studies. Said is

287 M. Darwish, A River Dies of Thirst, p. 41.
particularly critical about the methodologies and approaches that have been taught and used within the field of Palestinian literature.

Darwish also addresses the issue of the need for good quality education, making a serious point by seemingly joking that Palestinians seem incapable of differentiating between University and the Mosque:

And as we don’t recognize the difference between mosque and university since they share the same linguistic root, why do we need a state, when both it and the days are heading to the same destiny?  

As far as Darwish is concerned, despite any linguistic similarities, these spaces have very different functions. The university is an open, liberal and secular space, while the mosque is a closed space used to promote religious education. Darwish mocks and criticises those Palestinians who appear to be incapable of distinguishing between the roles which each of them should play. He blames this ignorance for being one of the key causes of the undeveloped democracy in Palestine.

Said was particularly critical in his reactions to the outcome of the negotiations which led to the Oslo Accords, arguing that this would effectively divide Palestine up in such a way that it would be impossible to unite the current Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza. Said argued that Israel had intentionally planned this agenda since fragmenting the Palestinians would prevent any possible emergence of a single viable state for them, and would also allow for a clear distinction between Jews and non-Jews. Like many other Palestinians and Arabs, Said directed his sharpest criticism towards Yasser Arafat, claiming that: “After the Oslo Accords were signed in September 1993 the conditions for Palestinians steadily worsened.”

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291 Ibid.
As far as the propaganda of Palestinians as terrorists is concerned, Said in particular has worked hard to try and expose the damaging effects of the propaganda images which label all Palestinians as terrorists and portray them as violent people. In *Covering Islam*, Said argues that since the media filters and interprets information, it selectively determines the information that Westerners receive about Islam and the Muslim world. As a result, it is able to create a culture of fear by propagating a dominant narrative which highlights the emergence of powerful Arab Muslim countries with oil-rich economies, and claims that these will attempt to exercise control over other states and force people to accept Islam. Thus, Islamophobic fears continue to fuel a war against Islam, and the Palestinian issue lies at the heart of this narrative.

Darwish can be said to approach this issue somewhat differently as a creative writer. One of his poetic strategies is to create images which deliberately challenge preconceived ideas about the identity of Palestinians. Thus in his poem entitled (مأساة النرجس، ملهة الفضة) “The Tragedy of Narcissus, The Comedy of Silver,” Darwish presents a whole series of images which imagine peaceful coexistence between former enemies:

We will teach our enemies the homing of pigeons, if we can teach them. And we will sleep in the afternoon under the shade of the grapevine trellis. While the cats around us sleep on the drizzle of light.292

In this poem, although Darwish never explicitly mentions the words Palestine/Palestinian/Arab or Israel/Jew, the narrator’s use of the pronoun “we” is clearly the voice of Darwish, engaging in wishful thinking about his people. Darwish is still the poet of Palestinian resistance but in this work he eschews physical combat against the enemy in favour of a poetic discourse which aimed to

represent a new image of the Palestinian people and their history. This clearly shows that they are not the aggressors as portrayed in the Israeli narrative.

In contrast, Darwish presents the image of a peaceful and tolerant nation. The mention of the homing pigeons is carefully chosen, for these birds have an innate ability to return to the place they were raised, just as the Palestinian exile would like to return home. The image of being able to sleep in the afternoon suggests a land at peace where there is no need for constant vigilance for fear of attack. Elsewhere in the poem, Darwish uses the image of planting peppers in soldiers’ helmets, which seems intended to bring to mind the well-known biblical verse: “And they will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation. And never again will they learn war.”

Darwish has also used his work on occasion to condemn Hamas, an organization which adheres to a form of political Islam and advocates violence as a means of achieving liberation. This is clearly in contrast to mainstream Islam which denounces the use of violence in this way. Hamas has been considered as a dangerous movement in the Middle East that is negatively affecting democracy because it relies on the exclusion of the other. According to Darwish, the only language Hamas speaks is the “language of blood” and he has expressed his disappointment and frustration with their terrorist activities by stating in his work: “You, as of now, are Someone Else!” Darwish has strongly criticized the brutality of Hamas in Gaza writing about the enmity which has emerged amongst various Palestinian groups and thus put an end to the concept of solidarity and national unity. The poet recalls the Arabic proverb which says: “My brother and I stand against my cousin and my cousin and I stand against the

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stranger,” emphasising how allegiances can shift between different groupings depending on the nature of the threat. In the case of the traditional saying, however, there is a kind of logic underlying the strategic alliances against otherness based on bonds of kinship. Reflecting what he sees as the chaotic new order in Palestine and beyond in the Arab world, Darwish produces a new version of the traditional saying:

The stranger and I will join forces against my cousin. My cousin and I will join forces against my brother. My Sheikh and I will join forces against me.295

Darwish attempts to capture the seemingly endless random permutations in the power struggles which take place when political factions and terrorist organizations put an end to any form of solidarity, making it impossible to make sense of the situation in terms of the traditional logic of kinship. He subverts the traditional saying, as the logic here initially appears to be “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” However, even this logic breaks down in the final phrase “my Sheikh (greybeard) and I stand against me,” suggesting that in such a chaotic situation, everyone is ultimately a loser. Darwish is clearly dismayed by this new principle which is shaping Palestinian national identity, sowing discord and violence amongst Palestinians themselves and seriously damaging the peace process.

3.8 Nationality outside the Homeland and Self-Identity

As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, have noted in The Empire Writes Back296 the dominant feature of post-colonial literature is the issue of place and displacement. Post-colonial theorists are concerned with the crisis of identity seeing it as a direct consequence of the displacement from one’s homeland. According to D. E. S. Maxwell a dynamic sense of self-identity is usually decisively influenced by the sense of dislocation which may be the result of immigration, enslavement, or ‘voluntary’

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295 Ibid., p. 41.
removal for the purposes of indentured labour. The same kind of dislocation is felt whether this was caused by “a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two.”

Andrew Gurr, however, thinks it is necessary to distinguish between the notion of exile, which is involuntary, and the idea of expatriation, which suggests a voluntary act or state. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin concur with Gurr’s notion of exile and further argue:

If the term [exile] is restricted, as Gurr suggests, to refer to those who cannot return to the place of origins, even if they wish to do so, then exile becomes a characteristic of a number of different colonial conditions. For example, it helps to account for the tension involved in constructing a distant place as ‘home’ by native-born colonizers.

Said and Darwish also view exile in different ways. As an academic and literary theorist, Said evaluates the notion of exile positively. Darwish, however, has a perhaps more realistic and existential vision of exile based on his own first-hand experiences of the reality of enforced exile, and this term appeared consistently throughout his poetry during the whole of his career. However, its meaning in Darwish’s poetry has changed dramatically from the earliest most simplistic visions to a profound, philosophical absorption of this.

Even though Said did not personally experience the disastrous enforced displacement of Palestinians from Palestine as Darwish did, nonetheless he remained deeply affected having seen its effect on his fellow compatriots physically and psychologically and also assess their memories of this in their literary writing. Barbour notes that in his autobiography Out of Place Said writes of his constant yearning to belong to a specific homeland, yet paradoxically at the same time he

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297 D. E. S. Maxwell cited in ibid., p. 23.
298 Ibid., pp. 23-24.
wants to cross over to other places, both geographical and metaphorical.\textsuperscript{299} Ashcroft agrees, arguing that Said “persistently locates himself as a person who is dislocated, ‘exiled’ from his homeland.”\textsuperscript{300}

In his essay on the aesthetics of Darwish’s later poetry, Patrick Williams analyses the notion of exile in the poet’s work, positing that for Darwish exile represented a more complex condition because when he had the opportunity to pay a visit to his home after two decades of exile, he discovered that the village where he had been born and raised had been destroyed. Furthermore, he was not allowed to return to his Palestinian past since the Israeli government would only allow him to live in Ramallah, a part of Palestine which he was not familiar with. So, for Darwish there was no home to go back to, making his exile permanent.

Said admits that it is difficult to be fully aware of one’s identity in exile because it refers to something unspoken, connecting with who we are, from where we came, and what we are. In these questions, Said indicates the problem of constructing an actual sense of identity in exile, especially for those who lost their land. He refers to the collective identity of Palestinians living in exile in different circumstances. In the worst case scenario, some have become permanent refugees, the situation satirised in the lines of Darwish’s poem which he entitled ( أغنية سانحة عن الصليب الأحمر) “A Superficial Song about the Red Cross”:

فأعجبني، يا أبي، أنت أبي
أم تزال صرت ابنا للصليب الأحمر?! \textsuperscript{301}

Answer me my father: You are my father
Or have I become a son of the Red Cross?!


\textsuperscript{300} B. Ashcroft, \textit{Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{301} M. Darwish, ‘\textit{ākhir al-layl} (The End of Night), p. 24
In the best case scenario, Palestinians have become migrants or half-citizens of a host of different countries, with which they often share few or no cultural or ethnic links. For this reason, Said describes Palestinians as a nation of letters, symbols, and glimpses, and because their own homeland is occupied, they represent something of an embarrassing puzzle for the international community. His description is similar to Hannah Arendt’s description of Jewish refugees who were so traumatized by their experience they found it easier to try and ignore their real identity and to be something else: “Whatever we do, whatever we pretend to be, we reveal nothing but our insane desire to be changed, not to be Jews.”

Hybridity is a key concept in the work of those post-colonial theorists who were central to the formation of this approach. The term originated from the work of Said himself and that of Bhabha, but it is generally ascribed to Bhabha. As immigrant scholars, both men found themselves living in two cultures, with two affiliations, two languages, and multiple homes. In his book *Representations of Intellectual*, Said declares that exile is to be considered the essence and existence of the scholar and thus explicitly view this as a positive experience in intellectual life. According to Said, exile is a point of a continuous search of identity without fixity.

Bhabha, however, considers the notion of hybridity in somewhat different terms as he deconstructs the inherited romantic national concept of the nation as pure and original, an idea delivered by the imperialistic conceptualization of other nations. Like other post-colonialists, Bhabha rejected this fixed and narrow notion of nation-belonging, offering an alternative vision which is based on hybrid identities. These mixed affiliations of immigrants and other residents merge

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together, constituting a unique concept of a new kind of identity which is built on the notion of a third space. According to Bhabha, this third space is an *ambivalent* site where cultural senses have no “primordial unity or fixity.”

When applying this concept to the self-identities of Darwish and Said, it is clear that their identity is fundamentally founded on the features of hybridity. They both hold hybrid identities due to the fact they have been living in exile for decades of their lives. Their identities only exist in the third space, in the in-betweenness of cultures, belongings, cities, and languages. Neither of the men considered themselves to be purely Palestinian. Said had a hyphenated identity, Palestinian-American, whilst Darwish initially made a second home in exile in Beirut, only to have to move again when war broke out in Lebanon.

In terms of their belonging to a homeland, they both belonged deeply to Palestine; this did not prevent Said from also feeling American. Said noted that he did not situate himself purely on one side. On issues relating to Palestine, he was staunchly pro-Palestine. However, in other political matters, he would defend America as passionately as Americans do. Said situated himself in-between these places, and, for him, it was very difficult to grasp the notion of belonging in the singular. In his poem “Contrapuntal Reading of Edward Said,” Darwish expresses Said’s duality and his American-Palestinian in-betweenness, between two names and two languages. The distinctive feature of Said’s voice in this poem, as the writer explained to Darwish, is that his identity is multiple. His unstable and unfixed identity is an example of his refusal to be marginalised and to live his life on the basis of one norm of identity.

Darwish also saw himself as belonging to many of the places that he lived in

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304 H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. 

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but unlike Said, he never felt the same sense of national allegiance to another state. Rather, in his later years, he wrote in many of his poems that he belonged to the whole of humanity. For instance, in (أنا من هناك) “I Belong There,” he writes “I belong there. I have many memories. I was born as everyone is born.” Here, he mentions his problematic belonging to “there,” which reflects his sense of displacement, for “there” could be anywhere other than “here” or it could be Palestine, which no longer exists for him. However, Darwish complicates the matter even further in “Another Road in the Road,” where the narrator comments “I am from here, I am from there, yet I am neither here nor there.”

Perhaps rather than Said’s hybrid identity it might be truer to say that Darwish has multiple fragmented identities, formed from memories gathered from different places and perhaps, most importantly, memories, as what is normal is that individuals have one memory. Darwish ponders the issue of his identity in (غبار كثيف على الجسر) “Dense fog over the bridge.” The central image of the poem is the bridge, one of the liminal or non-spaces which for Bhabha are symbolic of the post-colonial identity. Drawing on Bhabha’s concept and on the passage from German philosopher Martin Heidegger which inspired this, Mark Taylor explores the meaning of the bridge:

> The space of the bridge is a non-space; its site a non-site. The bridge is suspended along a border, margin, boundary, in an interval, gap, cleavage. The place of the bridge is the non-place of the between where here and now are suspended. This between, which is forever oscillating, brings together what it holds apart and holds apart what it brings together.

The bridge, then, is an apt image for a poem in which Darwish reflects on the nature of his identity in exile and the multiple spaces and places which have helped

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305 M. Darwish, *Unfortunately, it was Paradise*, p. 7.
306 Ibid., p. 4.
307 H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

to form it: there (Palestine/the past) and here (wherever he is/the present). Darwish himself is the bridge that is both here and there, now and then. But in this poem, the mist is so dense on the bridge that from one side the other side cannot be seen and the narrator ponders on what it means to live in-between:

I am two in one,
or I am
one who is shrapnel in two.
O bridge, bridge!
Which of the two dispersals am I?309

It is also important to reflect on the role which literature played for him as this constituted what might be termed the third space for Darwish, the textual realm in which he felt truly at home, as a citizen of what might be called the Republic of Letters.

3.9 Cosmopolitanism and Self-Identity

The final aspect of identity in the works of Darwish and Said is universality, or cosmopolitanism. Said preferred to use the term ‘cosmopolitanism’ rather than ‘universality’, believing this to be a less ideologically loaded term. According to Delanty, in its simplest meaning, a cosmopolitan is a “citizen of the world”310 who adopts an identity which indicates a sense of rejection of the closed world of particularistic attachments. The Brazilian anthropological scholar Lins Ribeiro states that this idea originated from Ancient Greece, and he defines cosmopolitanism as:

A western notion that epitomizes the need social agents have to conceive of a political and cultural entity, larger than their own homeland, that would encompass all human beings on a global scale.311

Delanty distinguishes three types of Cosmopolitanism. The first of these,

309 M. Darwish, If I Were Another, p. 163.
moral cosmopolitanism, concerns itself with the universal ethics of humans, as reflected in the philosophy of Plato. The second type is referred to as political cosmopolitanism, which indicates a belief that the processes of democracy can be achieved in the light of globalization and transnationalism; and finally, there is cultural cosmopolitanism, which addresses the relationship between local and universal culture and reduces the sharp distinction between these.

The cosmopolitan concept of identity has been widely recognized in the experiences of Said and Darwish, who embraced a different understanding of universality. They did not believe in a universality that correlates with globalization, which they perceived it to be an American concept that served a specific political agenda. However, they believed in a cosmopolitan understanding of identity. Such a concept of universality begins at the level of national identity and progresses toward the global themes of human identity, respecting both local and global perspectives. Thus, cosmopolitanism does not entail ignoring one's own culture, but interacting with other cultures while still preserving unique aspects of their national culture. Both Said and Darwish celebrated the idea of coexisting with other nations and cultures and this sense of universality reveals itself throughout Darwish’s poetry.

The other interesting aspect of their understanding of universality is their use of concepts such as tolerance, forgiveness, and acceptance. They both dealt with many different nationalities, seeking out similarities in the harmony of interaction between cultures rather than conflicting binaries. As one concrete example, Israeli citizens in Israel are represented in the work of Said and Darwish in order to underline all the causes of the Palestinian problems, and they believe that it is necessary to deal with this subject by putting oneself in the position of the other even though the other may be an enemy. Indeed, their famous expression “victims of
victims” emerged from applying this vision. Thus as Najat Rahman observes, adopting this position meant that the Palestinian struggle:

Must be based on the understanding that the Jewish people are here to stay. The struggle must strive towards a settlement that will enable coexistence based on human dignity, a settlement that will capture the world’s imagination.312

In her memoir, Said’s sister, Jean Said Makdisi, believed her brother did not support Palestine in a narrow sense as purely a nationalist cause, but in a broader sense as representative of all human beings who suffer: “To embrace Palestine means to embrace all other places suffering injustice and to proclaim one’s faith in the eventual restitution of right.”313 She stated that Said referred to universality as being the most suitable solution to the Palestinian struggle, which means achieving “a secular, democratic state for all its citizens” in which all religious ethnicities Christians, Jews and Muslims can live together as equals.314

Whilst resident in Israel, Darwish lived with Jewish nationalists and learned to view them as individuals rather than simply “the enemy.” He also fell in love with a Jewish woman referred to as Rita and dedicated his most beautiful love poems to her. This emotional expression of love exemplifies all concepts of tolerance and forgiveness with others, even when these others are constructed as the enemy.

Darwish has also universalised the oppression of Palestine, presenting this as a theme which sadly resonates with many other similar situations in the world. This sense of universality was discussed by Erica Mena in her article “The Geography of Poetry: Mahmoud Darwish and Post-National Identity.” Mena explains how aspects

313 J. S. Makdisi, Teta, Mother, and Me, London: Saqi, 2005, p. 161
314 Ibid.
of Darwish’s work have a universal human approach. Analysing one specific line of his poetry, she argues:

Though even that one line could stand deeper explication, its urgent despair for home is readily apparent and universally significant. Rising as it does from Darwish’s experience of exile, of homelessness, it addresses not only the Palestinian people’s disarticulation (both literally and figuratively), but that of all displaced persons.\footnote{E. Mena, "The Geography of Poetry: Mahmoud Darwish and Postnational Identity", p. 112.}

Thus, she argues, in his work “Darwish is conveying the ‘repeated tragedy’ of not only his experience, and the Palestinian people's experience, but that of anyone who has been displaced either spatially, linguistically or temporally.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 115.}

Darwish and Said have dealt with the themes of tolerance, acceptance of others, and coexistence positively, and both veered away from using the discourse of hatred in their work. In the whole of his poetic oeuvre Darwish, never mentions the words ‘Israel’ or ‘Jews’ explicitly, despite the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. He describes the attributes of the enemy, whoever that may be but he never names the enemy.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored seven facets of the self-identity of Darwish and Said and where relevant has related these to post-colonial theory which understands the identity of colonised individuals to be non-fixed and incomplete. The analysis revealed that although the personal narratives of the two writers differ in many significant respects, they share common approaches to how they conceptualise their self-identity. It is also clear that although the intention here was deliberately to focus on the personal rather than the political events which helped to shape their self-identity, for Darwish in particular, the experience of displacement meant these were inseparable for the rest of his life.
Chapter Four: Out of Place: Displacement, Diaspora, and the Dream of Return in the Work of Said and Darwish

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, three key themes relating to Palestinian identity, all three directly resulting from the Nakba, will be analysed in the work of Said and Darwish, namely, displacement, Diaspora, and the dream of return. With respect to Said, the focus will be mainly on Out of Place: A Memoir (1999) and After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives (1986), a collaborative work which was illustrated with images created by the Swiss documentary photographer Jean Mohr. In the case of Darwish, this theme is examined in a selection of poetry from all three phases of his work, allowing us to trace the chronological development of his understanding and expression of the concept of Palestinian identity in relation to three key concepts which affected both his personal life and his writing and which are generally recognised to be important aspects of contemporary Palestinian identity. All three directly result from the Nakba, namely, displacement, Diaspora and the dream of return. With regards to methodological approach, this chapter adopts a thematic approach to the works of these two writers, placing specific emphasis on the use of close textual analysis to reveal the most dominant motifs related to Palestinian identity displayed within the framework of their work. It also analyses Darwish’s use of historical narrative as intertext.
4.2 Palestinian Displacement

One direct impact of the Nakba was the physical displacement of Palestinians from the territories which they used to inhabit, thus transforming them into an internally displaced people. Ashcroft et al. explain this condition in the following terms:

Internally displaced peoples (IDPs) are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disaster, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.\(^\text{317}\)

In the case of the Palestinians, this internal displacement involved their removal from their traditional homelands to resettlement in refugee camps without crossing borders and this had a crucial impact on the form of self-identity which links a people’s memory to their ancestral homeland. Ashcroft et al. note that the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council highlights eight major effects of displacement: “Landlessness; joblessness; homelessness; marginalisation; food insecurity; increased morbidity and mortality; loss of access to common property; and social disintegration.”\(^\text{318}\)

As articulated above, displacement represents a physical separation between people and their nation, homes, villages, and their fellow inhabitants. By the terms of Ashcroft et al.’s definition of displacement, most Palestinians form part of a displaced nation and have suffered traumatically as a result of this. Liana Badr notes that: “Displacement has become an imposed norm for the refugees who were dispossessed of all their belongings and thrown away to live in camps. This new


\(^{318}\) Ibid.
norm gradually led to a new refugee identity.”  

Unsurprisingly, this displacement or separation from the homeland has become a major theme in Palestinian literature and the focus of literary criticism attempting to decode the images of post-displacement Palestinian identity, and it features prominently in the works of both Said and Darwish.

**4.2.1 Displacement in Said’s Work**

Like Darwish, Said tells of the displacement of his own extended family and that of his friends in his memoir *Out of Place* (1999) and *After the Last Sky* (1986), conjuring up images to portray the reality of the *Nakba* for displaced Palestinians. In the earlier of these two works, he explores the wider meaning of Palestinian displacement whereas in his autobiography, Said recalls more intimate memories of his own family’s displacement. For instance, his Aunt Nabiha’s personal story of displacement again appears in his memoir, with Said recounting how she was gradually forced to leave Jerusalem, with the fall of the neighbourhood of Talbiya to the Zionist forces whilst her grandson Joseph left for Upper Bakah.

In Chapter Two of *After the Last Sky*, Said explores aspects of life inside Palestine and Israel where, according to him, Palestinians are “Exiles at home as well as abroad.”  

The exiled Palestinian inside Palestine is the major topic of this chapter, entitled ‘Interiors’, in which he elaborates on the two senses of displacement, physical and psychological, reflecting on the transformations which have been wrought in Palestinians’ daily life.

Regarding the physical sense of displacement, Said points out:

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The stability of geography and the continuity of land—these have completely disappeared from my life and the life of all Palestinians. If we are not stopped at borders, or herded into new camps, or denied re-entry and residence, or barred from travelling from one place to another, more of our land is taken, our voices are prevented from reaching each other, our identity is confined to frightened little islands in an inhospitable environment of superior military force sanitized by the clinical jargon of pure administration.\textsuperscript{321}

Here, Said describes the ever-changing fragmented map which shapes the lives of displaced Palestinians inside Palestine “confined to frightened little islands.” Crucially, he links the discontinuity of Palestine’s history with the lack of stability of its geography of constant displacement. Said discovers that the cluster of villages that the members of his extended family had lived in areas such as Haifa, Nazareth, and Acre, had been transferred to the Israeli authorities. Similarly, when he pays a visit to the village where he grew up, instead of the native Palestinians he remembers, he encounters new inhabitants, American and German immigrants that he does not recognize, who prevent him from entering to take a quick glance at his childhood home. He finds that Western Jerusalem has become a totally Jewish city, with its previous inhabitants expelled forever midway through 1948.

Said uses Israel’s expulsion of Haifa’s Arabs to exemplify the fact that the displacement led by the military has left Palestinians holding “the keys and the deeds,”\textsuperscript{322} a potent symbol of their dream of return, despite the fact that the houses that they left behind are now owned by someone else.\textsuperscript{323} Furthermore, after the displacement, place names have been changed, in the process gaining a new Israeli identity, and those who were once insiders have become outsiders.

The psychological impact of this physical displacement, along with Israel’s playing fast and loose with the map, has left Palestinians not only doubting their

\textsuperscript{321} Ibid., pp. 19-20.
\textsuperscript{322} Ibid., p. 14.
\textsuperscript{323} Ibid., p. 38.
sense of themselves as Palestinians but also the very geography of the Palestinian state, as Said articulates:

We, too, have lost the sense of space. We think of Palestine not as ‘an extensive Palestinian state’ but as a small, extremely congested piece of land from which we have been pushed. Every effort we make to retain our Palestinian identity is also an effort to get back on the map, to help those *fil-dakhil* to keep their precarious foothold.\(^{324}\) Said’s words suggest that the only way of retaining Palestinian identity is resistance inside Palestine against the displacement operations since displacement is the reason for them having lost their sense of place, and with it their conceptualization of themselves as Palestinian. Resisting attempts at separation and further dispersal is seen as a strategy for retaining a sense of national identity that otherwise threatens to dissolve.

In writing about the fragmentation of the Palestinian nation after displacement as a result of Israeli power, Said expresses himself in typically contrapuntal terms:

Continuity for them, the dominant population; discontinuity for us, the dispossessed and dispersed. The circle is completed, though, when we Palestinians acknowledge that much the same thesis is adhered to by Arab and other states where sizeable Palestinian communities exist. There too we are in dispersed camps, regions, quarters, zones; but unlike their Israeli counterpoints, these places are not the scientific product of “pure planning” or “political planning”. The Baqa’, a camp in Amman, the Palestinian quarter of Hawaly in Kuwait, are simply there.\(^{325}\)

Palestinians have settled in these places outside Palestine as a result of having been forced to leave their homes when land was displaced from the Palestinian Authority to Israeli possession as a result of the *Naksa* in addition to the first—and largest—loss of Palestine itself in the *Nakba*. Consequently they have become a fragmented and Diasporic people. As Abraham\(^ {326}\) notes, it is this experience that led Said to view geography as being transformable, like identity, since the map of

\(^{324}\) Ibid., p. 62.  
\(^{325}\) Ibid., p. 20.  
Palestine as a territory is unstable and lacks continuity. This sense of fluidity in which both geography and identity are in flux is reflected in his statement: “Slowly, our lives—like Palestine itself—dissolve into something else.”

This displacement has had not only a psychological impact but also a political impact on Palestinians. Said notes, the fact that Palestinians are moved from one place to another within Palestine and Israel, to refugee camps like the one in Jordan, and on to various destinations throughout the Arab world and beyond prevents them from remaining in contact with each other as a people. He says: “We [Palestinians] can’t hold to the centre for long” as this fragmentation and dispersal weakens their connections as a community and impacts on how they are perceived collectively as a nation. By implication, this prevents them from speaking with a unified and unifying voice in articulating their rights and demanding political recognition.

4.2.2 Darwish’s Perspectives on Displacement

Unlike Said, Darwish suffered the harshest form of displacement at first hand, as he and his family were expelled from their village and their lands confiscated, an experience which caused him to depict this event in his work originally as a personal narrative of displacement and later to transform it into the representation of a collective Palestinian narrative. This shift from the personal to the collective is explored here.

In (يوميات الحزن العادي) Journal of an Ordinary Grief (1973), part prose poetry and part diary, Darwish describes how Israelis justified their policy of physical displacement of Palestinians as follows:

The Israelis used the departures of the Arabs as an excuse to claim that it shows the absence of attachment to the homeland therefore they are unworthy

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327 E. Said, After the Last Sky, p. 32.
328 Ibid.
to have one as they could easily leave it behind.\(^\text{329}\)

Using the ironic style typical in this work, Darwish highlights the twisted logic employed by the Israelis to justify displacement. Having forced Palestinians to make an impossible choice between leaving their own villages and living, or staying and facing death, the Israelis then claimed that since the Palestinians had readily abandoned their homes, they obviously had no real ties to their native soil and therefore did not deserve to keep it. According to Darwish, compelling people to leave their land was a planned ideological Zionist strategy centred on owning as much Palestinian land as possible before Israel was established, during the war and afterwards in order to prove their right to Palestine. Even so, many Palestinians stayed, although the limited possibilities for decent living conditions could have forced them to escape from this traumatic life.

4.3 The Diasporic Experience

4.3.1 Towards a Definition of Diaspora

In popular usage, the term ‘Diaspora’ is generally employed to refer to either:

1. The exiled Jews outside Palestine or the new state of Israel, or
2. Groups of people who live outside their homeland in a foreign country and share the same culture.\(^\text{330}\)

As Julie Peteet notes: “The term Diaspora conjures up parallels with a paradigmatic 3000-year-old Jewish Diaspora and the more historically recent Armenian Diaspora.”\(^\text{331}\) However, according to Agnieszka Weinar\(^\text{332}\) the term diaspora has recently begun to be used with a much broader sense, to refer to


almost any population on the move without specific references to the context in which they exist. It is useful, then, before examining how Said and Darwish frame the notion of Diaspora in the Palestinian context, to clarify what it is that identifies a Diaspora or Diasporic people.

In his article “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” William Safran attempted to identify a number of features which specifically characterise Diasporas as opposed to, say, immigrants, expatriates, refugees, guest-workers, exile communities, overseas communities, and ethnic communities. He argued, firstly, that in all cases, the term ‘diaspora’ can be said to carry a sense of geographical displacement. A Diasporic people finds itself separated from its national territory and ancestral homelands (its centre) and are then subsequently scattered or dispersed over a larger geographical area (the periphery) for whatever reason. He notes that the twentieth century in particular saw countless millions forced to leave their homeland in search of more secure living conditions in other parts of the world, as a result of various political, economic, sociological and religious factors. However, Safran emphasises that these Diasporic movements are not a purely modern phenomenon and throughout history there have been many mass dispersions of an involuntary nature, one of the best known examples being the transatlantic slave trade of African peoples during the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.333

It should be noted that whilst for certain disciplines such as Diaspora Studies and Post-Colonial Studies the term Diaspora often carries particularly negative connotations, relating to forced resettlement which has been caused by expulsion,
slavery, racism, or conflict, particularly of a nationalist type, Sarfran does not attempt to address the degree to which the original movement was voluntary or forced, focusing simply on the effect of the movement.

According to Safran, the second distinctive feature of Diaspora groups is that they maintain a collective memory or a mythic discourse relating to their homeland. In particular, they tend to focus on remembering its physical location, even if as an entity it no longer appears on maps. They also preserve a historical narrative about it and take pride in remembered achievements.  

Moreover, the members of Diaspora groups continue to regard their ancestral homeland as their true home, and usually entertain the hope, or at least a desire that they or their descendants will be able to return to there at some point in the future, if it still exists in any meaningful sense.

Finally, Diasporic peoples continue to maintain a particular relationship with their homeland to the extent that it can be said to shape their identity or as Sarfran puts it: “their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.”  

One negative aspect of this relationship can be that the members of Diaspora feel that their host society does not and never can fully accept them, meaning that as a group they remain “alienated and insulated from it.”  

In her study “Between the Exilic and Diasporic Labels: A Lebanese Novel,” Naguib considers the possible differences between the exilic and the diasporic experience. Both terms indicate displacement or geographical separation from the

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334 Ibid., p. 83.
335 Ibid., p. 84
336 Ibid., p. 84
homeland but imply different types of experiences. Exile is essentially an individual experience when someone leaves his/her home for reasons which may be of a personal, social, and/or political nature. The diasporic experience, however, is a collective one, which is often the result of dramatic even catastrophic changes, caused by man-made disasters such as wars or natural disasters that force them from their homes. For Naguib, then, various dimensions can shape how the experience of displacement from home is perceived. Firstly the degree to which this is seen an individual or collective experience; secondly, the degree to which the displacement is viewed as being voluntary or enforced and thirdly, the degree to which this is understood as a human act or a natural disaster/act of God.

In terms of how writers choose to represent their experiences of displacement, Nico Israel also distinguishes between exile and Diaspora. He agrees with Naguib that the former is an individual experience and that in terms of textual representation this tends to produce a “coherent subject” who may have “a limited conception of home.”

When the Diasporic experience is related, writers often document “a stronger link to minority group solidarity” and their work often interrogates notions such as “cultural dominance, location and identity.”

4.3.2 The Palestinian Diaspora

Peteet comments on the fact that one of the elements that makes the Palestinian people’s experience of displacement a particularly ironic and tragic one is that “the midwife [for the birth of the Palestinian Diaspora] was the homecoming of the Jewish Diaspora.” In other words, in a dreadful symmetry, the formal

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338 N. Israel, Outlandish: Writing Between Exile and Diaspora, Bloomington: Stanford University Press, 2000, p.3.
339 Ibid., p. 3.
announcement of the foundation of the state of Israel and the return of the Jewish Diaspora marked the departure of the Palestinian Diaspora. For the most part, the Palestinians who lost lands and homes and were forced from their territory as a result of the 1948 Nakba remain scattered in various locations, outside of the land that constitutes historic Palestine.\footnote{J. Butler, “What Shall We Do without Exile?”}, p. 31. As a result of this unique set of historical and political circumstances, ordinary Palestinians were faced with an agonising dilemma and forced to choose between what they perceived to be the lesser of two evils: either internal displacement which would entail taking up residence in the Israeli occupied territories, or external displacement which would mean opting for a Diasporic existence outside the homeland, unsure of where they would eventually end up.

As a result of the displacement of the Nakba in 1948, the Naksa in 1967 (precipitated by the Six-Day War) and a series of subsequent conflicts in the region, the Palestinian people as a nation can now be divided into four main groups.

The first of these are the Palestinians who live inside the territory that was formerly Palestine and they can be sub-divided into two isolated societies. The so-called ‘Arab-Israelis’ are those Palestinians who settled in Israel and even though they are living in what was formerly their homeland, it has been argued that they still suffer from the effects of the internal displacement, since they are treated as second-class citizens and they are deprived of their basic rights in areas such as education and health services.\footnote{N. Luz, “The Politics of Sacred Places, Palestinian Identity, Collective Memory, and Resistance in the Hassan Bek Mosque conflict”, \textit{Environment and Planning D: Society and Space} , 26(6) 2008, pp. 1036-1052.} In this respect, as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin observe: “the history of Palestine has turned the insider (the Palestinian Arab) into the outsider.”\footnote{Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, \textit{The Empire Writes Back}, p.130.}
Darwish expresses this situation in a line of verse which appears in (عاشق من فلسطين)

*Lover from Palestine:*

ولكني أنا المنفي خلف السور والباب

But I am the exiled behind the wall and the gate.

The second group of Palestinians remaining in their former homeland live in what remains of the Palestinian cities after the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict. They also endure harsh living conditions in their country, but refuse to leave as they seek to defend their right to exist in their homeland. Both of these groups are given a specific designation of *min al-dakhil,* as Said explains in *After the Last Sky:*

The phrase *min al-dakhil,* ‘from the interior’, has a special resonance to the Palestinian ear. It refers […] to the region of the interior of Israel, to territories and people still Palestinian despite the interdictions of the Israeli presence. Until 1967, therefore, it meant the Palestinians who lived within Israel; after 1967 the phrase expanded to include the inhabitants of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights, and since 1982 it has also meant the Palestinians (and Lebanese) of South Lebanon.

In their writings, Said, Darwish and many other Palestinian authors have expressed the frustration of Palestinians who must struggle to travel, either between locations within Palestine or to places outside of Palestine since movement is controlled by the Israelis or by officials from neighbouring countries. According to Said, this theme was richly explored in Elias Khoury’s novel *Gate of the Sun* (1998).

Darwish depicts the restrictions encountered by many of his fellow Palestinians which he has also been subjected to personally. This lack of free movement creates difficulties for those wishing to see relatives or to find employment, simply because they did not obtain the permission to travel from Israeli authorities. When Darwish was living in Palestine, he was not authorized to move

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346 E. Said, *After the Last Sky,* p. 16
between the city where he was living and his family home elsewhere. Mansson explains that the poet was once imprisoned for travelling to Jerusalem to participate in a poetry recital without the correct travel document.\(^{347}\)

The third group of Palestinians are those externally displaced members of the Diaspora who are refugees in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, or have settled in other Arab countries such as Egypt or the Arabian Gulf. Although Palestinians were originally welcomed by their Arab brothers and sisters, they still experience profound feelings of loss and exile, and as refugees they are often treated unequally and have not been granted full citizenship. In many cases, they are prevented from exercising their political rights within the host country and at best, they are treated as ‘eternal guests.’

Many of these Palestinian refugees have been affected by subsequent conflicts in the region. Thus, for example, when Saddam Hussein’s forces invaded Kuwait in 1990, the late Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, supported Iraq. Therefore, when their country was liberated in 1991, Kuwaitis reacted against Palestinians living there by terminating their residency.\(^{348}\) Other mass expulsions have also taken place from Libya (1996), Iraq (2003) and Syria (2011) and various internal displacements within Lebanon.\(^{349}\) As Jayyusi poetically expressed it, the Palestinian Diaspora are scattered to “wherever the winds of politics drive them.”\(^{350}\)

The final group consists of those Palestinians residing in Western countries in Europe, America and elsewhere. Members of the Diaspora in this grouping enjoy a higher level of education, job opportunities and political rights in their host

\(^{347}\) A. Mānsson, *Passage to the New Wor(l)d; Exile and Restoration in Mahmoud Darwish’s Writings 1960-1995*, Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2003, p. 59.

\(^{348}\) E. Said, *After the Last Sky*.


countries. However, the majority of them do not tend to settle permanently in these new countries as they consciously still desire and embrace the belief that they will eventually return to their motherland.

It is important to note, that Palestinians in all four of these groups usually view their current status not in terms of permanent exile but rather as a temporary absence from their homeland. Thus, the dream of return forms a fundamental part of the Diasporic Palestinian consciousness, which inadvertently prevents their whole-hearted assimilation into their host society and can be interpreted as a lack of allegiance to their host country.

Said summarised the complex situation in which the Palestinian Diaspora find themselves thus:

They are either ‘the Arabs of Judea and Samaria,’ or in Israel, ‘non-Jews’. Some are referred to as ‘present absentees’. In Arab countries, except for Jordan, they have special cards identifying them as ‘Palestinian refugees’ and even where they are respectable engineers, teachers, business people, or technicians, they know that in the eyes of their host country they will always be aliens.351

4.4 From Displaced Persons to Palestinian Diaspora

According to Said, “the quintessential Palestinian experience [...] takes place at a border, an airport, a checkpoint” because for Palestinians the “truest reality is expressed in crossing over from one place to another” and displacement has become “the deep essence of their identity.”352 This is reflected in Darwish’s own life when having already been displaced twice from Palestine, like thousands of his compatriots he moved to Lebanon, but then the siege of Beirut in 1982 “resulted in another displacement of the Palestinians: not from their original home but from their

351 E. Said, After the Last Sky, p.12.
352 Ibid., p. 164
place of refuge.” A line in his poem “To Fadwa Tuqan”, a fellow Palestinian poet, seems to reflect both a weariness and an anger at a life of constant displacement:

アナ ليست مسافر و وطني ليس حقيبة سفر

I am not a traveller and my homeland is not a suitcase.

Thus, despite the fact that he has been displaced so many times, Darwish makes the point that he is a not traveller, because travel is normally motivated by free will, not by the force of invasion and its consequences. Most importantly, he stresses that his homeland is not a suitcase as though he needs to affirm to the reader and to himself that he has a physical homeland that he is waiting to return to. Ironically, though, his very denial of his travelling status only serves to highlight the reality of his status and that of his fellow displaced Palestinians as refugees forced to live outside their own country.

The moment of displacement, as Palestinians leave their homes and communities unsure of what will happen to them, is a recurrent image in Darwish’s poems. The text of “Sarhan Drinks the Coffee in the Canteen” describes this instability as follows:

 His city does not sleep. It has no lasting names.
Houses change their inhabitants, and stars are pebbles.
And five more windows, and ten more windows leaving a wall.

These verses can be interpreted as a reference to the act of displacement that specific moment in time when the new inhabitants (the Jews) entered the region and the

354 M. Darwish, habiba’i tanhada min nawmihā (My Lover Awakes from her Sleep), p. 41.
355 Ibid, p. 98.
original Palestinian inhabitants left. Sirhan’s city (Jerusalem) is unable to sleep because the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians does not allow any sense of security and also because everything is in a state of flux. Place names which act as points of reference are changed from the original Arabic into Hebrew. The original Palestinian inhabitants of houses are replaced by Jewish settlers. As is often the case with Darwish’s poetry, the reference to “windows leaving the wall” can be interpreted in multiple ways, all of which speak of destruction or absence. This could perhaps mean that the lights which were seen in windows were extinguished, visible signs of the collective departure of the original inhabitants. When combined with the rather enigmatic phrase “And stars are pebbles,” this conjures up the image of pebbles being thrown through glass windows, leaving the distinctive jagged shape, reminiscent of a star-shape. Again, the image speaks of destruction and abandonment. The third possibility is that this is Darwish’s accurate recollection of the looting which often accompanied the displacement process, when Jewish settlers would dismantle any elements they could from Arab homes to rebuild their own dwellings, with windows and doors being particularly valued. 

In (النزول من الكرمل) “The Embarcation from Karmel,” a second-phase poem, the image of the departure continues to appear:

و كانت شهادة ميلاد أمي قابلة للنقاش
و كانت أناشيد أهلي العرب
و ترتيت أمتعة اللاجئين.
و تبني جسور العبور.
و صارت فلسطين أقرب.
فاختلفت اللاجئون على موسم الفصل والبرتقال.

My mother’s birth certificate was open to discussion
And chants of my Arab family

357 M. Darwish, Mühawïlå raqåm sab’a (Attempt Number Seven), online Access: http://www.darwishfoundation.org/atemplate.php?id=854
Pack the refugees’ luggage
And build bridges of the transit
And Palestine became closer
Then the refugees argued about the season of wheat and oranges

Again, the focus is on leaving one’s place of origin and moving on elsewhere, dealing with officialdom, carrying one’s belongings but still thinking about home. Familiar sounds (chants of my Arab family) bring back memories of home, building a bridge between here and there but already the refugees are beginning to forget aspects of their previous life. Peasant farmers, tied to their land, measure time in cycles of planting and harvest, of dry and rainy seasons. Cast adrift as refugees, they have lost this connection and are now unsure about when wheat and oranges would be harvested, striving to remember what used to be special occasions for their community.

In “The ‘Red Indian’s Penultimate Speech to the White Man,” Darwish draws parallels between the treatment of the indigenous American tribes by white settlers and the fate of his own displaced people. For just as the indigenous peoples of North America once roamed their ancestral lands freely but were then displaced and corralled into reservations, so the Palestinians were displaced from their homeland into the enclaves of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. His poem can also be read as a more general comment on the displacement of peoples and the loss of their cultural memories which occurs when the coloniser exerts power over the colonised.

This forms part of Darwish’s creative strategy which as Sinan Antoon explains he began to implement his second phase of his work, especially after his enforced departure from Beirut, when he started:
…to address a variety of historical experiences, narratives and myths in order to place the Palestinian saga within the broader context of post-colonial tragedies that have occurred since 1492.  

The words of the tribal leader, Chief Seattle, pleading for his own people to be given a share of the land that they had inhabited for thousands of years becomes Darwish’s voice, making the case for fair treatment of the Palestinians:

لَكُمْ ما لَكُمْ... ولَكُمْ ما أَلَنَا مِنَ هَوَاء وَمَا
لَنَا مَا لَنَا مِنَ خَصْصٍ... ولَكُمْ مَا لَكُمْ مِنَ حَدِيدٍ
تَعَالِ لَنْقُسْمَ الْصَّنْوَا فِي قُوَّةِ الْظُّلِّ، حَدًّا مَا تُرْيِدُ
مِنَ الْلَّيْلِ، وَاتَّرَكْ لَنَا مُحْتَتَ نَلْدِنَ أَمُواتُنَا فِي الْفَلَكِ
وَحَدًّا مَا تُرْيِدُ مِنَ الْبَخْرِ، وَاتَّرَكْ لَنَا مُحْتَتَ لَصِيدِ السَّمَكِ
وَحَدًّا دَزْبَ الأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسِ، وَاتَّرَكْ لَنَا أَرْضَ أَسْمَاتُنَا
وَعَدْتُمْ بِالْأُهَلِّ، إِلَى الْأُهِلِّ... وَأَبْحَثُ عَنَ الْهُندِ.  

You have what is yours... and you have what is ours of air and water. We have what we have of pebbles... and you have what you have of iron. Come, let’s split the light in the force of shadow, take what you want of the night, and leave two stars for us to bury our dead in their orbit, take what you want of the sea, and leave two waves for us to fish in, take the gold of the earth and the sun, and leave the land of our names and go back, stranger, to your kin... and look for India.

There is an immediate recognition that this is an unequal struggle in terms of power and also evidence of the parallels being drawn by Darwish in the phrase “We have what we have of pebbles... and you have what you have of iron.” This can be interpreted specifically as a reference to the stone-throwing traditionally used by Palestinians as a form of resistance against the superior power of Israeli guns and tanks. It is, however, in more general terms a comment on the unequal struggle which has always persisted between coloniser and colonised. This phrase also clearly signals that if there is to be a negotiation, then, the terms of the agreement are unlikely to be fair ones. There is recognition too, that the colonisers are not interested in the land because it has symbolic value as it does to his people being the

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land where their ancestors are buried or because it can supply the daily necessities to sustain life; they are interested in exploiting its riches (*the gold of the earth*) and expanding their territory.

Chief appears to be asking only for the bare minimum, promising there will be no resistance to their exploitation of all the resources the land and sea have to offer. However, in the final lines, there is a realisation that these are not negotiations, for the stronger party will take all they wish. His final words then become a plea: “leave the land of our names, and go back, stranger, to your kin… *and look for India.*”

Again here, Darwish makes reference to the re-naming of places, the obliteration of cultural memories carried in language, a practice carried out by many colonisers historically to symbolically represent their ownership of territory, a form of cultural displacement. This also serves as a reminder of the Arabic place names which have been replaced by Hebrew ones in Palestine, each change also marking the physical displacement of a Palestinian settlement.

In (مطار أثينا) “Athens Airport,” Darwish both reflects the reality of the refugee experience and also captures the essence of a life lived in exile by the Palestinian Diaspora:

> Athens Airport disperses us to other airports. Where shall I fight? asks the fighter. Where can I deliver your child? a pregnant woman shouts back. Where can I invest my money? asks the officer. This is none of my business, the intellectual says. Where did you come from? asks the customs’ official. And we answer: from the sea! Where are you going? To the sea, we answer. What is your address? A woman from our group says: My village is my bundle on my back. We have waited in the Athens Airport for years. A young man marries a girl but they have no place for their wedding night.

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360 M. Darwish, *Eleven Stars*, p. 71. In the historical context of the original arrival of European colonisers in the Americas in 1492, Christopher Columbus was actually looking for a sea route to the Far East (India).
He asks: Where can I make love to her?
We laugh and say: This is not the time for that question.
The analyst says: In order to live, they die by mistake.
The literary man says: Our camp will certainly fall.
What do they want from us?
Athens Airport welcomes its visitors without end.
Yet, like the beaches in the terminal, we remain, impatiently waiting for the sea.
How many more years longer, O Athens Airport?361

On one level, Athens Airport is a real place used to send Palestinians onwards to their next destination and Darwish describes the usual officialdom to be found there. Questions about departures, destinations and addresses make sense in the usual context of travel but for refugees and exiles these are as meaningless as the replies they attempt to give: start point and end point are the same shifting and uncertain location – the sea. As Ian Chambers eloquently states:

To travel implies movement between fixed positions, a site of departure, a point of arrival, the knowledge of an itinerary. It also intimates an eventual return, a potential homecoming. Migrancy, on the contrary, involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain.362

The Palestinian refugees in the poem have no address to specify since like the woman carrying her village on her back they have no homes. The description of the village woman here brings to mind an image which Darwish uses elsewhere, in (غبار غبار غبار) “Dense fog over the bridge”363 where the exile is likened to a tortoise, lumbering along with all his worldly possessions – a home of sorts – on his back:

I shall carry my house on my shoulder and walk like a slow tortoise.364

The difference is, that at least the tortoise, however slow, has a sense of progress. For those in transit at the symbolic space of Athens Airport, living in permanent exile outside Palestine, like the characters in Samuel Beckett’s famous

363 M. Darwish, If I Were Another.
364 M. Darwish, “Exile”, in If I Were Another, p. 165.
absurdist drama *Waiting for Godot* (1953), there is only waiting… All of the Palestinian Diaspora remain “like the beaches in the terminal […] impatiently waiting for the sea.” The ‘beaches’ Darwish describes are merely vast expanses of wasteland at the airport – just as the tide will never reach them so the exiles will remain permanently stranded.

Never having experienced displacement and exile at first-hand, Said was somewhat overwhelmed when trying to imagine what the *Nakba* meant in human terms for individuals: “Exile is a series of portraits without names, without contexts. Images are largely unexplained, nameless, and mute.”

In *Athens Airport,* however, Darwish’s exiles are nameless but not mute and each has a story to tell in one sentence, of a life put on hold: the fighter who no longer has a country to defend; the mother-to-be who does not know where her baby will be born; the businessman who does not know what to do with his money; the intellectual who wants to retreat to his ivory tower; the peasant woman who has no village to go back to; the young man, eager to consummate his marriage.

In the desperation of the young newly-wed, Darwish also suggests something of the longing of the exile. His feelings are both physical and spiritual. He longs for the pleasure of union with his young bride but this is deferred indefinitely. This image has connections with Darwish’s other references to Palestine as a lover, and elsewhere in “Coming down from Karmil,” he describes his exile from the homeland in the same terms as one might the painful parting from the beloved.

The influence of exile on Palestinian identity is comprehensively expressed in the poem, “A Seat on a Train”:

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In every pocket, keys to a house and a family photograph. All the passengers return to their families, but we do not return to any home. We travel in search of nothing, so that we may obtain the rightness of butterflies. Windows, but not for us, to exchange greetings in every language. Was the earth any clearer when we rode the horses of the past? Where are these horses? Where are the maidens of the songs? And when in us are the songs of nature? I am distant even from my own distance.366

As he did previously in (مطار أثينا) “Athens Airport,” here Darwish overlaps the finely observed details of real railway stations and train travel with the metaphorical journey of Palestinian refugees who “do not return to any home [and] travel in search of nothing.” Elsewhere in the poem, Darwish makes much of the fact that as locations of departure and arrival, railway stations are also sites of tearful farewells and happy reunions with families and lovers. However, the Palestinian refugees have no-one to bid them farewell and no-one to welcome them as their journey is an unending one. Hence the train windows serve no purpose since they have no one to exchange greetings with. However, in the midst of the interminable journey, all of them dream of return, as Darwish alludes to with the verse “In every pocket, keys to a house and a family photograph.”

The keys mentioned here function as a symbol of both the losses of the past and of the future dream of return, an image which thus combines two of the key themes of Darwish’s poetry. They are a tangible connection with the life the exiles once lived – the keys to their homes. Ownership of the keys also represents ownership of the house and the land upon which it stood; it serves as proof of their right to return and reclaim what is rightfully theirs.

Palestinian anthropologist Khaldun Bshara has examined the symbolic importance of the keys in Palestinian Diasporic culture, explaining:

366 M. Darwish, Unfortunately, it was Paradise, p.180.
It is after the Oslo agreement (1993) that it became the Palestinian refugees’ tradition to take to the streets and commemorate the Nakba. In these ceremonial demonstrations elders hand over the artifacts left from their original homes to the younger generations. The original old keys, in particular, gained a special status. They have become one of the most potent elements in the Palestinian collective memory in general and the Palestine refugees’ identity in particular.\footnote{K. Bshara, “A Key and Beyond: Palestinian Memorabilia in the Economy of Resistance”, Working Paper, Centre for Global Peace and Conflict Studies, University of California Irvine, 2010. Available online at: \url{www.cgpacs.uci.edu/files/docs/2010/Bshara_WorkingPaper.doc}. Accessed on: 05/05/2015.}

Bshara notes this literally key scene in the poem (لماذا تركت الحصان وحيدا؟) Why did you leave the horse alone? by Darwish which represents the moment of displacement from the family home:

Where are you taking me to father?

- To the direction of the wind son… We will return when the soldiers return to their relatives, in the far away. […]
- Who will live in the house after us father?
- It will remain as we left it son.
  He caressed his key the way he caresses his limbs, and relaxed.[…]
  -Why did you leave the horse alone?
- So the house won’t feel lonely, son. Houses die if their inhabitants leave.[…]
- When will we return?
- Tomorrow. Perhaps in two days son.\footnote{M. Darwish, Why Did you Leave the Horse Alone?, pp:28-30.}

In a scene that may be reminiscent of the displacement which Darwish himself experienced at first-hand, the father holds on the key lovingly, as though this desire will be sufficient to ensure their return.

Darwish uses a religious intertext, a reference to the story of Hajar (Hagar), the mother of Ismael, to set up a series of historical and contemporary resonances in his poem (الخروج من ساحل المتوسط) “The Departure from the Middle Coast”:

With Hagar’s tears, the desert was setting on my skin  
The first tear on the earth was an Arab tear  
Do you remember the tears of Hagar - the first woman who cried in  
A migration which does not end?\footnote{M. Darwish, Muhāwala raqam sab’a (Attempt Number Seven).}
Hagar’s story is told in full in the Old Testament Book of Genesis. She is also referenced in the Qur’an in her role as the wife of Abraham. She is therefore known to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. Cast out into the desert with her infant son Ismail (Ishmael) by Abraham’s first wife, after searching frantically for water and weeping copious tears, she is saved by divine intervention and the discovery of a well spring.370

This extract from Darwish’s work captures the moment of departure, and in these verses the Palestinian narrator’s own tears at being displaced by the Israelis form a historical parallel with the story of Hagar the Arab – exiled by Sarah, her heartless Jewish mistress. Darwish draws out the similarities between two stories of victimization and exile to prove that these are repeated themes in the history of Arabs and of Palestine, since the original biblical narrative is set in Canaan, one of the ancient names for the region. Hence the narrator’s direct ironic comment to Hagar, from one victim to another:

O Hagar, celebrate my new migration.371

Darwish is no doubt also aware of the symbolism of Hagar as a figure, for she is viewed in heroic terms by both Muslims and Christians, and according to the feminist theologian, Susanne Scholz, her story has been used repeatedly in literature and art to demonstrate “that survival is possible even under harshest conditions.”372 Given that Darwish often personified his homeland of Palestine as a woman, Hagar here also serves as a representative of the Palestinians as a nation whom, he thus implies, will survive whatever hardships they have to endure.

370 Hagar’s story is also commemorated in the rituals of the Muslim Hajj which involve pilgrims walking between the hills of Safa and Marwa (sa’y) and drinking water from the Zamzam spring.
371 M. Darwish, Eleven Stars.
In his article exploring the importance of Hagar’s narrative in contemporary Islamic culture, Robert Crotty, an expert in comparative religion, confirmed the symbolic importance which this female figure has acquired across the Islamic world:

Hagar has […] become for some modern Arabs and even some Israelis the embodiment of the spirit of the Palestinian Arabs, displaced by the Israelis from their homeland. Some Israeli nationalists even see Hagar as the symbol of future reconciliation between the Israeli State and the Palestinians or the Arab world generally.373

It is unclear if Darwish also had the latter symbolism in mind when he originally penned these verses but they might be read in this way by future audiences, eager to interpret these lines as a plea for rapprochement between ancient adversaries.

Darwish, like Said, viewed the Oslo Accords, the culmination of a seemingly interminable peace process, as a negative development in Palestinian history. Whilst he did not see the agreement which was eventually reached in quite the catastrophic terms as the Nakba and Naksa were viewed, he thought it as “flawed and unworkable, likely to escalate the conflict rather than produce a viable Palestinian state or a lasting peace.”374 He resigned from the executive of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation the day after the signing.

His Poetry collection (أصدع عزر كوكا) Eleven Stars, published in 1992, commemorated the date of Christopher Columbus’ voyage to the New World which was to spell the end of a way of life for the indigenous peoples of the Americas and also saw the end of Arab rule over Al-Andalus, the last remaining outpost of Islam in Iberia. It also captures something of Darwish’s pessimism concerning the outcomes

of the latest round of peace talks. As with his use of the historical figures of Hagar and of Chief Seattle, the poet deliberately drew parallels between the Nakba experience of Palestinians and the leaving of Spain by the Arabs. As Barahmeh notes:

For Darwish and almost every single Palestinian, the frustration, despair, and the far-reaching goal of returning to their homeland [...] collectively resembled the Muslims’ ‘lost legacy’ of Andalusia five centuries before.\textsuperscript{375}

Darwish gives up and says goodbye to the golden history of Palestine in the poem called (أٔب ٚازع ِٓ ٍِٛن إٌٙب٠خ) “And I am One of the Kings of the End”:

As I told my old friends, and no love can redeem me.
for I’ve accepted the “peace accord”, and there is no longer a present left
To let me pass, tomorrow, close to yesterday. Castile will raise
Its crown above God’s minaret. I hear the rattling of keys
In the door of our golden history. Farewell to our history! Will I be
the one to close the last door of the sky, I, the last gasp of an Arab.\textsuperscript{376}

In order to fully understand the cultural significance of the loss of Granada in the Arab world, it is worth quoting at some length here from Nazeer Ahmed’s account of The Fall of Granada taken from The History of Islam:

To this day Andalus evokes among Muslims nostalgia for a golden age when the hills resonated with the sound of prayer every morning and the name of the Prophet Muhammad was honoured every day. No other country was contested between Muslims and Christians as bitterly as was Spain. The struggle lasted for 500 years. When the battles had ended and the last adhan [Islamic call to prayer] was said from the ramparts of Granada in 1492, Muslims had lost the crown jewel of the Maghrib. Soon, they would be tortured and expelled, along with the Jews, from a land they considered the garden of the west. Their monuments were razed, their mosques destroyed, their libraries burned and their women were sent as slaves to the courts of Europe; it was a turning point, a milestone and an event that profoundly and fundamentally changed the flow of global events.\textsuperscript{377}

\textsuperscript{375} Y. Barahmeh, The Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish: A Study of the Three Developmental Phases of his Poetic Career, p.17.
It is not surprising then that Darwish should choose to highlight what he saw as the clear parallels between the *Nakba* and the fate of the Palestinians and the departure of the Arabs from Al-Andalus.

Nazeer Ahmed’s account above focusing on the demise of Al-Andalus does not mention another relevant contemporary parallel which Darwish appreciated. Many historians have speculated that the end of the Arab presence in Spain was not simply the result of the superior military power of the Christian forces but that political in-fighting amongst the Arabs themselves was also a major contributory factor since it greatly weakened the state or as Hillgarth comments: “Succession struggles ensured that Granada was in an almost constant low-level civil war.” Darwish would also have been aware when writing this collection of poems of the increasing tensions between Fatah and Hamas which would eventually spill over into full-scale violence between the two factions. He later commented on what he saw as a further chapter in the Palestinian tragedy with his usual wry irony: “We became independent. Gaza became independent of the West Bank, and for one people, two countries, two prisons.” This may also explain why Darwish focuses so intently in his evocation of Al-Andalus on the consequences of surrender, not the events which led up to this.

The narrator looks to the actual moment when the victory of Queen Isabella of Castile and King Ferdinand of Aragon will become visible for all to see, in the highly symbolic raising of the standard of the Catholic Monarchs on top of an Islamic minaret. In the historical context, the reference to the “peace accord” is the Treaty of Granada which was effectively the document detailing the terms of the Arab surrender. There is also perhaps here an intertextual reference to what is

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generally believed to be an apocryphal story concerning the Arabs’ departure. As Terry Flower explains:

In the mountains of Granada is a low sandy peak called “El Último Suspiro del Moro” – the Last Sigh of the Moor. It was upon this low hill that Boabdil, on his way into exile in Africa, gazed for the last time upon the Alhambra Palace. [...] And then came the cruellest cut of all, for as Boabdil turned away weeping, and began his long journey into exile, his redoubtable mother sneered: “Weep like a woman for what you could not hold as a man!”

His ending of the verse with the phrase “the last gasp of an Arab” evokes this exhalation and perhaps also the choking back of tears, as in the story. This may also remind readers of the exiled Hagar’s tears, another layer of resonance. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this poem is how Darwish intertwines elements of the Nakba displacement, contemporary events relating to the Oslo Accords and the historical narrative of Al-Andalus, linking these together by the reference to “I hear the rattling of keys/In the door of our golden history.” In terms of the historical reality, Boabdil did actually hand over the keys of the citadel of Granada to the Catholic Monarchs as part of the formal surrender ceremony although mention of “the door of our golden history” also points to a metaphorical meaning, for this is the end of a golden era in Islamic history drawing to a close. In the context of the Nakba, of course, as previously noted, the image of keys serves as a symbol of lost possession, a literal and metaphorical reminder of the loss of the home/homeland. As Said points out in his analysis of the poem, when this image is viewed against the events taking place at the time of the composition of the poem, namely, the PLO’s decision to enter the US- and Russian-sponsored peace process, it serves as a warning to then Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to remember the lessons from history and not to hand over the keys, in all possible senses.

380 T. Flower “El Último Suspiro del Moro”, My Telegraph, September 18 2010, Available online at http://mytelegraph.co.uk/ariel/ariel/5345293/5345293/#disqus_thread. There have also been numerous artistic representations capturing this famous scene.
It is not surprising, then, as Said notes that:

When the poem was originally published in *Al Quds*, a Palestinian daily edited in London, the poem’s melancholy disaffected tone was instantly read as an allegory and critique of Arafat’s political exhaustion […] the verses have a tone of dispirited lassitude and defeated fatalism that for many Palestinians captured the extraordinary downward spiral of Palestine’s fortunes which like Andalusia’s went from a grand cultural apex to a terrible nadir of dispossession, both in actuality and metaphorically.\(^{382}\)

This poem serves as a good illustration of Darwish’s gift for capturing the mood of his Palestinian compatriots in his work.

Many Arab literary critics are of the opinion that when Darwish started the third phase of his poetry, his work became increasingly introspective and he deliberately chose to ignore the Palestinian issue and his nation’s struggle. Mattawa strongly disagreed with this opinion believing that Darwish had no intention of forgetting about the plight of his fellow compatriots but instead sought to bring Palestinian culture from the periphery to the centre “on the basis of its engagement with aesthetic concerns and universal questions.”\(^{383}\)

It is significant to note that in his late style Darwish uses historical intertexts to explore themes of exile and oppression. Whilst some of these are drawn from Islamic narratives, for example, the expulsion from Al-Andalus, others deliberately connect with narratives from the history of the Middle East, which point to shared cultural heritage, such as the story of Hagar. Still others universalize the plight of Palestinians by linking this across time and space to historical examples of victimization. This is particularly well illustrated in his use of the references to the cultural history of the Native American Indians, using Chief Seattle as the voice of not only his tribe but of all those who have been oppressed as a result of colonialism.

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\(^{383}\) Kh. Mattawa, *When the Poet Is a Stranger*, p.143.
In this way, Darwish universalizes human suffering in his poetry, by making connections of this type amongst oppressed people, including Palestinians, thus writing them into a much greater historical discourse of oppressor and oppressed.

Darwish, as Shukrī al-Māḍī explains, transferred from the ideology of politics to the ideology of poetry by adopting various humanitarian issues rather than choosing to simply focus on one particular agenda such as the Palestinian issue. His ultimate purpose in using themes of this kind was to free his verse from a narrow vision of the world, to become a free poet in the realm of poetry. In the 1990s he criticized his own earlier work on the grounds that it “lacked cultural understanding of the relationship between poetry and reality.” He argued that a true understanding of the cultural role of poetry means that the poet does not necessarily see his/her work as a direct reflection of a particular social reality.

For Darwish, Palestinian poetry needed to be more than inward-looking, about mourning the loss of a family home or focusing narrowly on political grievances, as some of his fellow writers of Palestinian resistance literature believed; rather he thought it should be exploring bigger issues of oppressor versus oppressed, themes which are common throughout the history of all mankind.

4.5 The Dream of Return (Al-‘Awda)

In his article “Diaspora, Exile in Arabic and Palestinian Poetry,” Saddik Gohar notes that the theme of returning to Palestine is one collective sense in Palestinian literature, and accurately states: “These poets, who belong to the community of the dispossessed, have a firm hope that they will one day achieve the

dream of returning to their villages and cities after the resurrection of Palestine.\textsuperscript{386}

The dream of return is a key theme articulated in Palestinian literature as a result of the original displacement and violent separation of Palestinians from their homeland, as will be examined in this section. As the editors of Writing across Worlds: Literature and Migration observe, this dream of return also forms a frequent feature of literature written by Diasporic peoples “Amongst all the literatures of migration the highest proportion deals in some way with ideas of return, whether actualized or remaining imaginary.”\textsuperscript{387}

Said argues that in reality this notion of return can mean quite different things to different people as he explains in After the Last Sky:

Thus, although to Palestinians today the word ‘return’ is crucial and stands at the very heart of our political quest for self-determination, to some it means return to a Palestinian state alongside Israel, yet for the others it means a return to all of Palestine.\textsuperscript{388}

Noting that return (al-\textsuperscript{389}awda), is one of the central concepts of Palestinian ideology and life, Juliane Hammer identifies two interrelated but distinct elements involved in this idea. The first is the right of return which, she specifies, is “a subject of international law, Palestinian demands and Israeli rejections.”\textsuperscript{389} However, the dream of return:

Has a highly symbolic and almost mythical meaning for Palestinians. It relates their exile, suffering and homelessness to the place in which they have their roots, and it concentrates their life’s efforts on returning to that place of origin, thus finding the stability and context missing in their Diaspora experiences. For Palestinians inside Palestine it relates to reunification with family members and the end of decades of longing to close relatives in person again.\textsuperscript{390}

\textsuperscript{388}E. Said, After the Last Sky, p.52.
\textsuperscript{390}Ibid., p. 85.
This dream of return is constantly evoked in both the discourse of Palestinian politics and literature, and has a special place in the hearts of ordinary Palestinians. It is “never abandoned but incorporated into daily life in diverse ways” because it reflects their strong optimism and belief that they will return to their homeland at some time in the future. Jean Said Makdisi, Edward Said’s sister, confirms that the majority of Palestinians cannot overcome their fundamental ties with the homeland. Regardless of the individual and collective difficulties they encounter, as a people they still continue to dream about al-‘awda and these dreams are reflected in the work of numerous Palestinian artistic forms.

This desire for home binds Palestinian identity closely with futurity, the belief that one day they will return home, and if they themselves do not realise this dream, then their children or their children’s children will. Instead, this idea of building a homeland for future generations motivates them not only to maintain a Palestinian national identity but also to work towards re-building the homeland. This means researching their history to establish their right to ownership of their ancestral land and to return to their homeland. It means striving to obtain political recognition for occupied Palestine within the United Nations organization and establishing well-organized political and social institutions.

Consequently, Palestinians do not necessarily pin their hopes and desires on integrating themselves into their host countries which can mean that Palestinians living in the Diaspora face a problematic and challenging situation, as Khalidi points out. Many do not form attachments with their new host countries, insisting that their residence there is only temporary. In their hearts and minds, these Palestinians continue to exist in Palestine but they are aware of the difficult conditions which

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391 Ibid., p.74.
would await them if they were to attempt to return home, in light of the strict regulations that have been issued by the Israeli government to prevent Palestinian return. The reality of knowing they are unlikely to be able to return there, leaves them stranded in a kind of limbo which makes them feel permanently stateless, another form of homelessness.

Social anthropologist Julie Peteet has hypothesised that there is a significant difference between how Palestinians living in close physical proximity to their former homeland and those living in Diasporic communities at a much greater physical distance choose to view al-‘awda. Exploring the narratives of the dream of return expressed by Palestinians living in Canada and their compatriots in refugee camps in Jordan, she concluded:

As distance from home increases, as in the Canadian case, community ties ease and relations with place shift to a more imaginary level; the proximity of Amman [the Jordanian capital], which facilitates periodic visits, allows for closer social relations and sentiments of belonging.394

In the light of Peteet’s hypothesis, it is interesting to speculate if in Darwish’s case, the fact that he found himself further from home, both in the geographical and the temporal sense, influenced his choice in his later poetry to increasingly situate his experience of exile and his dream of return in relation to mythical or historical intertexts which referenced narratives of exile without closure: the exile from Paradise, the fall of Granada and expulsion of the Arabs from Al -Andalus, the tribulations of Hagar. Perhaps the poet realised that as his friend Said predicted, the Palestinian dream of return would be “indefinitely postponed.”395

In reference to the representation of return in texts by writers who have lived

394 J. Peteet, “Problematising a Palestinian Diaspora”, p. 634.
in exile, King, Connell and White comment that this is often described in literature in terms of disappointment or deception:

Return has both a temporal and a spatial dimension. For the individual returning to their ‘own’ past and place it is rarely fully satisfying: circumstances change, borders in all senses are altered, and identities change too.\(^{396}\)

Shelly Walia comments that in Journal of an Ordinary Grief, Darwish tellingly reports how “on one of his visits [to Palestine] he found the topography changed, the roads no longer with familiar names, villages completely disappeared and friends and people he once knew departed.” This suggests that although Darwish realized that he might be able to physically go to the land where he was born, he could not go back to the homeland he had lost and this accounts for the melancholy with which his later poetry is imbued. He realized that his poetic gaze of longing would be forever the glance over his shoulder, backwards into history, destined to repeat not only that of the last Arab rule, Muhammad Abu Abdallah, leaving Al-Andalus for ever, but also that of his own grandfather who “died with his gaze fixed on a land imprisoned behind a fence.”\(^{397}\)

Whilst it is true that Darwish did live in Ramallah, a Palestinian city, before he died, this was still not a real return to the homeland for the poet, for his strongest memories and those he constantly recalled in his writing, remained those of loss and exile from his village of al-Birweh. The fact that this no longer existed meant he could never truly return to a time and place he continued to long for, his childhood home. In one sense, then, his final return to Ramallah was not the glorious, longed-for homecoming for it brought him face to face with the painful reality of an ever-more politically divided Palestinian people. Essentially, then, it did not disrupt the three-


\(^{397}\) M. Darwish, Memory for Forgetfulness, 1982.
phase categorisation which has been used in this thesis to examine Darwish’s poetic
development. It did not markedly change his writing style or allow him to feel more
‘at home’ with himself. He retained his understanding of identity as a hybrid and
evolving construction and he continued to view himself as a cosmopolitan citizen of
the world rather than entrenching himself as a narrowly nationalist poet, looking
simultaneously inwards to his own soul and outwards to the universe.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined three key elements of Palestinian identity and the ways
in which they are represented in Said’s writing and the poetry of Darwish. For Said,
the experience of displacement would remain essentially something which he learnt
about at second-hand, either via accounts from others or via representations of this in
texts or images. For Darwish, however, this was something he had encountered
personally and his recollection of this would mark the whole of his poetic oeuvre and
would also inspire him to connect his own intimate experience of suffering
intertextually with diverse narratives of exile, thus bringing a universal dimension to
his work. Although both men were members of their Palestinian Diaspora, Said’s
personal narrative is not the repeated exilic displacement of Darwish. As an
academic, Said appeared to find the Diasporic experience a genuinely stimulating
one in intellectual terms which had more positive than negative features. In this
respect, he resembles other post-colonial writers such as Homi Bhabha and Salman
Rushdie who have relished their exilic displaced status, or being as Said put it in the
title of his own memoir “Out of Place.” Possibly, all three would also agree
wholeheartedly with Stuart Hall’s much quoted phrase: “Migration is a one-way trip. There is no ‘home’ to go back to.”

Darwish himself appears to have ultimately reached a similar conclusion, reflected in his later work. The dream of return for him personally was to remain like, that of the Arabs exiled from Al-Andalus, an unrequited yearning for an unattainable homeland. However, he never stopped believing that the dream of return would continue to inspire Palestinian people, for “As long as the struggle continues, the paradise is not lost but remains occupied and subject to being regained.”

The next chapter will examine how the twin traumatic events, the Nakba of 1948 and the Naksa of 1967, irreparably altered Palestinian identity, and it will explore how an understanding of theories related to trauma can be used to provide an insight into the impact of these events at the level of both the national and the individual identity and also into how these are represented in the work of Said and the poetry of Darwish.

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398 S. Hall cited in Chambers Migrancy, Culture, Identity, p. 9
Chapter Five: No ordinary grief: Representing the effects of Post-Nakba and post-Naks trauma on Palestinian Identity in the works of Said and Darwish

5.1 Introduction

The reconfiguration of their national identity is a topic which is of central interest to Palestinian writers because of the enduring sense of belonging that the Palestinian people have towards their homeland and the Arab world. In the Palestinian case, the concept of national identity has acquired added layers of complexity that mean it cannot be readily analysed as a product of the influences of its colonial past as might be the case for some other independent Arab countries in the Middle East or North Africa that were previously occupied by British or French colonialists. For Palestinians, unlike Arabs in the neighbouring states, were subjected to an enforced separation from their ancestral homelands by the twin traumatic events, known as the Nakba 1948 and the Naks 1967, which irreparably altered Palestinian identity. These events and their traumatic effects have been reflected in the creative work of Palestinians in areas as diverse as cinema, literature and critical writing, photography, and the graphic arts.

This chapter will explore how an understanding of theories related to trauma can be used to provide an insight into the impact of these events at the level of both national and individual identity and also into their textual representation in the work of Said and Darwish. The chapter begins by examining some of the different ways in which ‘trauma’ has been defined and then traces its historical development as a concept from Sigmund Freud’s theory of hysteria to more contemporary reframing of trauma in the context of the aftermath of conflict. The focus then shifts to an analysis of the representation of trauma and its consequences in the Palestinian
context in the work of Said and Darwish, focusing on the loss of homeland and the threat that this poses to their sense of belonging to the Palestinian nation.

5.2 Defining Trauma

The concept of trauma can serve as a useful means of understanding the negative impact of the Nakba and the Naksa on Palestinian identity, and this introductory section introduces the psychological discipline of trauma and the pioneering efforts of Freud and his fellow researchers to establish this field of study. In its original Greek form, the word ‘trauma’ referred specifically to a physical wound, a meaning which it still retains today in the medical domain. However, as Rodi-Risberg notes, as a term, ‘trauma’ is now strongly associated with the field of psychoanalysis being used to refer to: “a reaction to an overpowering event resulting in psychological damage.”

Human beings have been exposed to tragedies and disasters, both natural and man-made, throughout history but trauma was first recognised and referred to as a psychological condition in Freud’s work on hysteria. Through his patients’ stories and dreams, Freud collected their psychological histories to understand their narratives by discovering the significant and complicated tools of defence they had used in their early lives. According to Freud’s perspective, Jewish history hides the fact of traumatic origins, while Jews express in their narratives the mysterious story of Jewish salvation. In his co-authored research with Josef Breuer, Studies on Hysteria (1893), Freud suggests:

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We must point out that we consider it essential for the explanation of hysterical phenomena to assume the presence of dissociation, a splitting of the content of consciousness. The regular and essential content of a hysterical attack is the recurrence of a physical state which the patient has experienced earlier.\textsuperscript{402}

Thus, Freud was concerned with the psychological influences of past harmful experiences that people passed on through themselves, using dissociation as a form of splitting the realm of consciousness.

Significant developments in clinical studies of trauma were made after World War I as a result of the large numbers of psychological problems suffered by returning combatants. As the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies notes on its website:

By 1968, the cumulative historical events involving war, civil violence, nuclear war, etc. produced more trauma, killing, mass destruction and death in a limited time frame that at any prior time in recorded history.\textsuperscript{403}

Even so, it was not until 1980 that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was officially recognised. As a consequence of the newly acquired understanding of the significance of trauma in the post-traumatic stress disorder era, some specific discourses have emerged for understanding different kinds of traumas, such as mass murder and threats of war, which is addressed in the work of Judith Herman and the edited collection by Miller and Tougaw.\textsuperscript{404} Since then there has been increasing interest in this concept across a number of academic areas, and scholars have used ideas from psychoanalytical theory and philosophy in particular to examine trauma and its impact in fields such as history and literature, leading to an interdisciplinary


\textsuperscript{403} International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, \url{https://www.istss.org/about-istss/history.aspx} Accessed on 04/04/2015

\textsuperscript{404} N. Miller and J. Tougaw (editors), Extremities: Trauma, Testimony and Community, Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, 2002.
approach known as Trauma Studies.\textsuperscript{405} Works like Katja Garloff’s \textit{Words from Abroad: Trauma and Displacement in Postwar German Jewish Writers} and Dominick LaCapra’s \textit{Writing History, Writing Trauma}, are representative of this approach.\textsuperscript{406} As far as historical events of trauma are concerned, many researchers have studied the influences of the Holocaust and its aftermath on Jewish society. Theodor Adorno is one important member of the so-called Frankfurt School of critical theory, and amongst other elements in his work was interested in restoring the reactions of resistance and mourning.\textsuperscript{407}

Cathy Caruth, who is considered to be one of the leading figures in Trauma Studies, makes the following important point: “The traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time.”\textsuperscript{408} Caruth’s observation highlights that the impact of the original event which caused the trauma is not directly experienced at the same time and place this incident takes place; rather it is remembered at a later time and often in an incoherent fashion, as the analysis of trauma in the writing of Said and Darwish undertaken here will show.

In addition to identifying the essential psychological features of trauma and its links with memory, Freud also discusses the concept of mourning the dead as an important need both for human society as a whole and for the individuals within it. As Awwad notes, Freud considers mourning to be a healthy reaction to the loss of a loved one or a valuable object (such as one’s homeland or one’s personal freedom)

\textsuperscript{407} K. Garloff, \textit{Words from Abroad: Trauma and Displacement in Postwar German Jewish Writers}, p.19.  
\textsuperscript{408} C. Caruth, \textit{Trauma: Exploration in Memory}, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 1995.
that has contributed to an individual’s awareness or has occupied an important place in someone’s life.\textsuperscript{409}

Hence, analysis which uses trauma theory follows the impact of a traumatic event on an individual’s experience and focuses particularly on those symptoms that stay with someone after the original shock-time and cannot be easily conveyed after the event in a coherent narrative. Terr distinguishes between two types of trauma. Type I events refers to a short term traumatic experience which usually lasts anything from a few minutes to a few hours and is a single occurrence, whereas Type II is repeated and chronic trauma involving ongoing exposure.\textsuperscript{410} In the Palestinian case, the second type of trauma is more likely applicable as Palestinians have been caught up in the same cycle of loss and injury for over sixty years, experiencing conflict, poverty and exile.\textsuperscript{411}

Said refers to what he calls the “extraordinary fate” of Palestinians: “to have been exiled by exiles”\textsuperscript{412} although according to Kohlke, this exile could be considered to be less a matter of fate and more “a deliberate provocation along these lines.”\textsuperscript{413} Israel and Zionism are unwilling to be tolerant of the Palestinians, forcing them from their homes into exile and a Diasporic existence, just as they themselves (the Jews) once were.\textsuperscript{414}

\textsuperscript{410} L. Terr, “Childhood trauma; An outline and overview”, \textit{American Journal of Psychiatry}, 148, 10-20, 1991. Terr’s categories are commonly cited in the context of trauma research.
\textsuperscript{412} E. Said, \textit{Reflections on Exile and Other Literary Essays}, p. 178.
\textsuperscript{414} Ibid.
5.3 Said’s Narration of the Palestinian Trauma

Given that the *Nakba* involved the violent expulsion of the Palestinians from their ancestral homelands, this event has been recognised as a trauma by many historians and one of the cultural reactions to this, resistance writing, can be considered to be a form of trauma literature. The sections which follow will engage with the characterisation of Palestinian trauma as it is presented in Elia Awwad’s study “Broken Lives: Loss and Trauma in Palestinian-Israeli Relations,” in which he uses observations from B. E. Carlson’s (1997) guide to clinical assessment of trauma to examine individual perceptions of the *Nakba* in terms of its negative impact, its unexpectedness, and the lack of control over one’s own destiny.415

From the opening pages of *Out of Place*, Said addresses many aspects of both his own personal trauma and the collective trauma of Palestinians in relation to the *Nakba*. The return to childhood as a starting point for his autobiography is an attempt to reconstitute his earlier self and create a hybrid Arab-western culture, opening up a dialogue between them in which the latter plays a crucial role in helping him to recall his Arab culture.

It was a traumatic event in Said’s current life, a sudden attack of leukemia and the diagnosis of what was to be a terminal illness, that influenced his decision to reflect on the past and write his autobiography, strongly motivating him to leave a record of his personal life, interwoven with the Palestinian grand narrative. Said acknowledged the difficulty of attempting to write a linear chronological history of Palestine, given that this was to be forever fragmented and distorted by the *Nakba*, and therefore chose to concentrate in his narration of self on the description of

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415 E. Awwad, “Broken Lives: Loss and Trauma in Palestinian-Israeli Relations”.

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places. He also creates a series of parallels between the transformations which take place in his own identity and those which occur in Palestinian identity.

Hence the starting point in his narration of trauma is Said’s growing awareness of traumatic features in his family life. Using the technique of flashback in his memoir, he recalls incidents that he witnessed as a child but was not then capable of comprehending until in his later life, with the benefit of adult hindsight, he is able to recognise the relevance of these episodes and to view them as aspects of the ongoing Palestinian trauma. Generally said, traumatic events are often narrated belatedly after a space of time, and this is what occurs with Said’s narrative which starts approximately thirty years after the Nakba.

Said connects his personal trauma with the collective trauma of Palestinians in the first instance. One clear indication of this is Said’s linkage of the date of his birth with the date of the Balfour Declaration which confirmed the support of the British government for the establishment in Palestine of a “national home” for the Jewish people, referring to this as “the darkest day in our history.” Significantly, however, there is, in fact, no exact parallel between the date of Said’s birth, 1 November 1935, and the date on which Balfour wrote to Lord Rothschild, then leader of the British Jewish community, 2 November 1917, showing that Said is perhaps thinking in more symbolic terms about his own entry into the world and the historical fate of Palestine.\footnote{It is possible that in using this linkage, Said had in mind another symbolic parallel between his date of birth and the fate of two nations decided by the British government which was used as a literary device by Salman Rushdie in his novel \textit{Midnight's Children} (1981). The protagonist and narrator of the story is born at the exact moment India becomes an independent nation but the partition of India and creation of Pakistan led to great violence and mass cross-border migrations by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.}

Said makes further links between his personal story as a Palestinian and the broader sweep of the traumatic events in Arab history including major political
defeats such as the 1948 Nakba and the Six-Day War in 1967. The story of his own family’s repeated attempts to seek stability and security also provides an insightful reflection into the impact of war on life in what was a very troubled period in Middle Eastern history. Said notes that conflict was the ever-present backdrop to his childhood and adolescence, beginning with the Second World War, the events of 1948 and the establishment of Israel, the Egyptian Revolution and the fall of King Faruk in 1952, and in the same year, the coup d’état in Lebanon, which became known as the Rosewater Revolution. This gave him a feeling that all of his family were in danger and this memory remained in Said’s recollections of this period.

It is important to note that in the memoir, there are two kinds of representations of his understanding of the Nakba: one is his past awareness of this event narrated as “I was”, or “Edward was”, while the second is his adult understanding, presented by the use of the present tense and temporal expression such as “now.” These two representations are not detached but continuously present the same Palestinian narrative from this dual perspective of youthful ignorance and mature understanding. He does not experience the Nakba at first hand but rather witnesses the impact of it when, as a boy in Cairo, he noticed the signs of sadness and deprivation on the faces of middle-class Palestinians living outside their homeland.

Moreover, as the third-person narrator of his Aunt Nabiha’s story of trauma, Said draws on her detailed descriptions of Palestinian sufferings as she speaks about the humiliation which followed the Deir Yaseen massacre (9 April 1948) when Israeli soldiers took naked Palestinian women to their camp on trucks. Said comments on his aunt’s own narrative, analysing the impact of this and noting that she focused on the shame that those women felt in front of the men rather than any
of the other horrors committed during this atrocity. He also reflects on his own
reaction to this event and his inability to recall it. This raises the issue of how some
traumatic events which provoke a sense of shame can be repressed, causing amnesia
or blanks in the memory, and also meaning that some stories of Palestinian suffering
will always remain untold. In their contribution to the book by Sa’di and Abu-
Lughod (2007) which attempts to reclaim untold and forgotten memories of the
Nakba, Laleh Khalili and Isabelle Humphries examine, for example, how Palestinian
women’s memories of certain traumatic aspects of the Nakba, sexual violence in
particular, have “silenced and circumscribed by multiple dominant
discourses.”417 By recounting his Aunt Nabiha’s memories, Said helps to rescue
these from oblivion whilst also becoming conscious of his inability to remember
certain past events as a result of trauma in his own past.

In After the Last Sky Said worked with the award-winning photographer, Jean
Mohr, to provide evidence of the ongoing effects of the Palestinian trauma in writing
and images and document Diaspora and displacement. In the introduction to the
book, he considers the impact of the historical circumstances that have helped to
condition the contemporary reality of Palestinians and their collective absorption of
this trauma as a sort of misfortune:

   Although every Palestinian knows perfectly well that what has happened to
   us for the last three decades is a direct consequence of Israel’s destruction of
   our society in 1948, the question—both political and perceptual—remains
   whether a clear, direct line can be drawn from our misfortunes in 1948 to our
   misfortunes in the present.418

   Focussing on Said’s use of modality in this extract, he moves from a high
degree of certainty (every Palestinian knows perfectly well) to a degree of

418 E. Said, After the Last Sky, p. 5.
uncertainty (the question […] remains whether a clear, direct line can be drawn), juxtaposing discourse of Palestinian received wisdom of a univocal truth that Israel is responsible for the main deconstructive event in the Palestinian narrative, namely, the *Nakba*, with his own more equivocal assessment of the aftermath of this. It can be argued that Said’s repeated use of the noun ‘misfortunes’, which in the first case at least is heavily ironic, suggest a sense of history repeating itself but by questioning the existence of a direct line between 1948 and the present, Said rejects the idea of Palestinians as permanently and inevitably passive victims. Misfortune also suggests something that happened by chance, whilst the *Nakba* was clearly the product of a particular set of historical circumstances and politically motivated actions.

Said later comments on his own refusal to see Palestinians’ present personal identity as conditioned purely by one incident in their collective past, explaining that: “no clear and simple narrative is adequate to the complexity of our experience.”419 For Said, the experience of violence is one of the core components that have helped to shape Palestinians’ traumatic and traumatised identity:

> The violence of our uprooting and the destruction of our society in 1948, the violence visited upon us by our enemies, the violence we have visited upon others, or, most horribly, the violence we have wreaked on each other.420

However, as with his previous refusal to accept any simple direct correlation between the *Nakba* and the current situation of Palestinians, he also rejects any attempt to cast his people in the role of passive victims, unable to escape an eternal cycle of violence which sees the original violent trauma of the *Nakba* endlessly replayed. The language in which he frames his response also reflects what he later goes on to identify as a particularly Palestinian mode of trauma identity which is based on what might be labelled a *la’am* logic of both/and rather than one of

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either/or: “Yes, we have been victimized and our identity had been threatened, but no, we have been neither passive nor innocent.”

He sees this yes, but no complexity as being perfectly captured in the title of Emile Habibi’s novel Almutasha’il. Habibi combines the two Arabic adjectives meaning pessimistic and optimistic to articulately express the collective traumatic sense of Palestinian reality, which lies between hopefulness and hopelessness, and Said wonders if this is a more telling statement on the nature of Palestinian identity itself:

Is Habiby’s jamming-together of words – mutafa’il and mutasha‘im into mutasha’il, which repeats the Palestinian habit of combining opposites like la (‘no’) and na’am (‘yes’) into la’am – a way of obliterating distinctions that do not apply to us, yet must be integrated into our lives?

Said highlights the essential in-betweenness of the Palestinian existence artfully captured in Habibi’s neologism which depicts the need for a psychological approach allowing the individual to pragmatically combine apparently irreconcilable binary oppositions: hopefulness and hopelessness, positivity and negativity, the need to forget the past, the need to remember it. It is this la’am logic as a psychological mode which forms the cornerstone of reading Palestinian identity as a traumatic identity. To quote but one example, the Palestinian author, Liana Badr admitted: “I spent most of my life trying to forget things dearest to me in order to cope with their loss.” She now consciously combats an insidious “urge to forget” by means of her writing.

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421 E. Said, After the Last Sky, p. 5.
422 Famed for his irony and humour, Habibi’s novel was translated into English in 1982 by Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Trevor Le Gassick as The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-fated Pessoptimist: A Palestinian who Became a Citizen of Israel, New York: Vantage.
425 Ibid.
Said points to the particular difficulties of representing the complexities of Palestinian identity and concludes that to do this adequately requires what he refers to as “hybrid forms of expression.” He referred to After the Last Sky as his “personal rendering of the Palestinians as a dispersed national community” and again in his attempt to describe post-Nakba Palestinian hybrid identity, he resorts once again to the use of la’am logic in structuring some elements of his list of the diverse aspects of Palestinian identity: “acting, acted upon, proud, tender, miserable, funny, indomitable, ironic, paranoid, defensive, assertive, attractive, compelling.”

The pairings of acting/acted upon, miserable/funny and defensive/assertive that Said mentions are all indications again of the author’s refusal to cast Palestinians as solely hapless victims “dogged by our past,” preferring to focus instead on the fact that this community has also “created new realities and relationships that neither fit simple categories nor conform to previously encountered forms.”

It is interesting to note that this Said’s use of la’am logic appears to be a particularly strong stylistic feature of After the Last Sky, since his language was much less nuanced and more pessimistic when writing elsewhere of the negative impact of trauma. Thus, for example, he observed in an article entitled ‘Punishment by Detail’ which appeared in the English-language version of the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram:

Hope has been eliminated from the Palestinian vocabulary so that only raw defiance remains, and still Sharon and his sadistic minions prattle on about eliminating terrorism by an ever-encroaching occupation that has continued now for over 35 years.

426 E. Said, After the Last Sky, p. 6.
427 Ibid.
428 Ibid.
429 Ibid., p. 5.
Although in *After the Last Sky*, Said wanted to actively avoid framing violence as simply part of an inevitable cycle of repeated trauma, he cannot help but ironically note the need “to dot i’s and cross t’s, to be clear about who is responsible”\(^{431}\) when referring to massacres in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, one on 16 September 1982, the other on 30 May 1985. He meticulously highlights the differences in the political affiliations of the forces attacking the Palestinian residents of the camp but concludes that ultimately many of the same atrocities were committed.

Other Palestinian writers have emphasised that it is the repetitive nature of the violence to which their community is subjected which is the key source of the continuing trauma, producing an open wound which is not allowed to heal. The novelist Liana Badr, for example, referred to the massacre at the Palestinian refugee camp Tel el-Zaatar in north-east Beirut on 12 August 1976, as “the catastrophe traumatically repeated, [a] Palestinian Stalingrad.”\(^{432}\) The camp had been the original settlement place for many Palestinians in the immediate aftermath of the *Nakba* who thus had a direct recollection of the traumatic events of 1948’s exile and dispossession. The comparison with the epic Second World War battle links this event with a broader discourse of heroic resistance but also the trauma of conflict.

### 5.4 Palestinian Trauma in Darwish’s Poetry: An Extended Analysis

Darwish appears to have chosen to represent trauma most widely during the initial phase of his works, which focuses on the homeland more than either of the other two. This may be the result of Darwish’s physical connection to his homeland at that time as he captures the daily reality of Palestinian oppression at first hand. However, Darwish does not stop writing about the trauma of Palestinian life under


\(^{432}\) M. Kohilke, “Blood and tears in the Mirror of memory”, p.46.
sies in his later work when in exile but rather explores the symptoms of Palestinian trauma, the wound which re-opens during times of conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis.

As a narrator of the *Nakba*, Darwish repeatedly narrates the fragmented remembrances of the traumatic past in many of his collections. As Caruth confirms on many occasions in her study, long-buried traumatic memories can rise unbidden to the surface, usually being experienced via links with seemingly forgotten times and places and often as flashbacks caused by sensory perceptions: taste, smell, etc. Caruth’s valuable critical insight explains that such instances of remembering are often not easily located or narrated directly. Thus Darwish’s memories of traumatic events persist throughout the three stages of his whole poetic oeuvre, written in different times both when physically present in his Palestinian homeland and whilst in exile elsewhere. According to Felman and Laub, his poetry articulates the fact that “although the traumatic past remains radically unfinished and unknown, it continues to act on, in, and through present events in ways that elude or surpass conscious understanding.”

In the first stage of his poetry, Darwish seems to reflect the visible signs of national trauma in post-Nakba Palestine as he still remains in his homeland and acts as an eye-witness, bearing testimony to the traumatic events of everyday existence in the occupied territories and to their violent aftermath which he and his fellow Palestinians continue to experience.

Poems from the first phase of Darwish’s work focus on the themes of death, mourning and resistance. The theme of death appears to be most significant during this initial period, with Darwish representing many horrific images of the dead in

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various violent and shocking situations. There is also evidence of images of Palestinian resistance.

“He Returned in a Winding-Sheet” is taken from the poet’s first collections, entitled (أوراق الزيتون) Leaves of Olives and published in 1964 when Darwish was just 22. The narrator here directly addresses the mother of a dead young man (marked by the vocative ‘O’ in the English translation), urging her to keep some tears back as these might be needed to mourn future family martyrs or the young man’s friend (possibly Darwish himself or his poetic alter ego):

يا أمه!
لا تقطع الدموع من جذورها
خلي بئر دمتعين!
فقد موت في غد أبوه.. أو أخوه
أو صديقه أناً.435

O his mother!
Do not rip tears from their roots
Leave in a well two teardrops!
As his father or brother might die tomorrow
Or his friend, I.

The awful implicit sense of continuity and inevitability here – that more women will weep because more men will die – marks the poem with a darkly pessimistic tone. This pessimism is perhaps heightened further by the fact that the only uncertainty about the situation appears to centre on who might be the next to die, caught in the unending cycle of violence and political struggle.

The loss of home is another key theme throughout his whole first collections. This is an obvious reflection of the physical displacement caused by the Nakba and the ongoing psychological consequences of this trauma. In the poem entitled “An Allegory” he depicts the image of the poet and his nation mourning for the loss of

the homeland, starting the poem by addressing his father’s trauma at losing his home, even though this is not mentioned directly.

The image of a rigid dead body lying surrounded by a flock of carrion crows appears in the poem “A Letter from Exile”, in which he asks the vegetation to hide and protect his body from the crows. The choice of lexicon for the poem betrays an intertextual allusion to the biblical story of the first fratricide, Cain and Abel. This single verse reproduces an all too common image resulting from the carnage of war, when scavenging birds will feed off the unburied dead, whilst simultaneously evoking a timeless story of betrayal and murder of one brother by another, asking the reader to draw parallels with the Palestinian-Israeli case:

Will you keep my dead body safe from the attack of the crows?

In another poem, Darwish depicts the image of the homeland in his poem by ironically asking:

O home, repeated in songs and massacres,
Show me the source of death.
Is it a dagger or a lie?
O home, dispersed in files and surprises,
I want to draw your shape.
O home, volatile as fragments of bombs and birds’ wings,
I want to draw your shape.
But the sky steals my hand.

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In this verse and many of his other poems, Darwish deliberately juxtaposes words and images which would normally jar against each other and would not be typically collocated such as: songs and massacres, fragments of bombs and birds’ wings. This might be interpreted as suggesting the effects of trauma since, as previously noted, repressed traumatic memories can often re-surface when they are triggered as flashbacks caused by characteristic sounds, smells, images or tastes. Here these extraordinary pairs of images are noticeably linked to the evocation of home and the desire to draw its shape which would mean remembering what it looked like.

The previous example suggests that perhaps the traumatized memory sometimes cannot cope with the heavy burden that remembering entails for Palestinians, and that one of the strategies Palestinian writers use is to resort to expressing their deepest emotions by ‘borrowing’ the words of other writers, using intertextual allusions to serve as the voice of the Palestinian community, as shown in the following examples.

Another early poem (أزهار الدم) — “The Flowers of Blood,” which appeared in the 1967 collection (آخر الليل) — The End of the Night, has a title which is reminiscent both of Baudelaire’s well-known poetry collection Les Fleurs du mal (The Flowers of Evil 1857) or the play by Spanish author García Lorca Bodas de sangre (Blood Wedding 1933). In the poem Darwish depicts the scenes after the Kafr Qāsim massacre on October 29 1956 when 49 civilians were killed by the Israel Border Police but chooses to deliver his vision through the voice of a singer who survived

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the bloody event and imagines tormented figures of the dead. The opening lines of the poem present the village as a place of peace:

كفر قاسم
قرية تحلم بالقمح، وأزهار البنفسج
وبأعراس الحمائم

Kafr Qāsim
Is a village which dreams of wheat and violet flowers,
And weddings of doves.

In Darwish’s poem, the sole surviving witness of the massacre is a singer, although in reality the surviving villagers were agricultural labourers. All of them had been working in the fields when a curfew was imposed and unaware of this, they had returned to be gunned down as they arrived back to the village on trucks. Darwish has the surviving singer express his disappointment at not having had enough power to fight the enemy. Again, the reality was more prosaic, as one survivor Jamal Farij, recalled:

We talked to them [the Israel Border Police]. We asked them if they wanted our identity cards. They didn’t. Suddenly one of them said: “Cut them down” and they opened fire on us like a flood.440

The telling detail here is Farij’s recollection of the words used by the police, words which Darwish also clearly remembered hearing, probably from contemporary newspaper accounts or word of mouth retellings of the event, and he incorporates the police officer’s command into his own poem:

439 M. Darwish, ‘ākhir al-layl (The End of Night).
440 For further information see Shira Robinson, “Local Struggle, National Struggle: Palestinian response to the Kafr Qāsim massacre and its aftermath, 1956-1966”, International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 35, 2003, pp. 393-416, p. 394. She also notes that although the actual count of villagers massacred was 48 and included men, women and children old enough to work in the fields, the figure given is always 49 since one of the victims was pregnant.
Darwish’s triple repetition of the command “cut them down” is quite literally overkill, emphasizing that the reason for the attack was not self-defense or simply a mistake but an intentional desire to butcher Palestinian civilians. The fact that the massacred individuals were returning from harvesting in the fields to “a village which dreams of wheat” gives an added symbolic frisson to the use of the verb, suggesting that they were simply mown down, being able to put up no more resistance than the crops they themselves had been reaping.

The traumatised singer-survivor who has narrated the event now yearns for the words of poetry with real power which will act like weapons:

والغائر يقول:
ليتني أعرف سر الشجرة
ليتني أفن كل الكلمات الميتة
ليت لي قوة صمت المقبرة

And your singer says:
Oh I wish that I know the secret of the tree
I wish that I could bury all the dead words
I wish that I had the power of the silence of the cemetery.

The closing verses are again addressed to the village, but the singer, like the village, has been transformed by the massacre. His songs now will be songs motivated by hate and the officer’s command to “cut them down” has indeed reaped a harvest: “the hatred that grows in my heart a bramble.” Darwish’s choice of

442 Ibid.
vegetation here is a deliberate reference to a plant that has strong roots and grows apace. The repeated references here to wounds evoke the massacre but also trauma, the open wound that will not heal. It is highly likely that the singer whom Darwish has in mind here is himself, setting his heart against reconciliation or bargaining with an avowed enemy, and ready to endure the long struggle: “And I walk, Then I walk, And I resist!”:

Kafr Qāsim
I have returned from death to live, and to sing
Let me borrow my voice from a wound that flared
And help me to have the hatred that grows in my heart a bramble
I am a delegate of a wound that does not bargain
A hurt of the flagellant has taught me to walk on my wound
And I walk
Then I walk
And I resist.

Barahmeh claims that Darwish’s first phase of poetry including the collections such as (وراق الزيتون) أُناقِش مِن فلسطين (Leaves of Olives) (1964) and (الموت مجانا) أُلَوْى مِن فلسطين (A Lover from Palestine) (1966) which were published during turbulent times for Palestinians “made his early poems radiate with disobedience as well as rebellion against Israeli imperialism.”

In another scene in the same poem entitled “Death Costs Nothing,” Darwish boldly states that death is free of charge and raises no political or legal

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443 Ibid.
questions. Having been traumatised, Darwish loses his power to narrate the shocking story because he could not come to terms with the event once he knew about it:

The autumn was passing through my flesh like a funeral of oranges…
A coppery moon that fragmented by stones and sands
And children have fallen in my heart on souls of the men
All the silence is the destiny of my eye… It is not possible to say everything...
The honour of childhood is that it is
A danger to the tribe’s security.

The poet is rendered speechless by the trauma of the indescribable event: “It is not possible to say everything.” Here, Darwish condemns the killer through dark irony by showing the uselessness of killing weak and innocent people. In his point of view, the Palestinian children who were killed have the honour of representing a danger to the killer. In spite of this tormented voice, the poet announces at the end of the poem that the Palestinian resistance will continue its role and that Palestinians are here to stay in a place of light and words.

One of Darwish’s most important works is (يوميات الحزن العادي) Journal of an Ordinary Grief, which is a kind of prose-poem autobiography which records many details of his early family life and touches on other Palestinian experiences of displacement and trauma. In this work, written during his second poetry phase and published in Beirut in 1973, Darwish recalls the story of his family’s displacement from their village and laments the bitterness of having to leave their home, especially for his grandfather. The most traumatic aspect of the Nakba for his family and for all Palestinians was the eventual recognition of the impossibility of returning to their

445 M. Darwish, ’ākhir al-layl (The End of Night).
homes or villages. In a series of flashbacks, Darwish describes the trauma suffered by his grandfather:

When my grandfather realized that our presence in Lebanon was not going to be a vacation or a picnic, the war had ended with the loss of everything. And he realized that fruits in the orchards which he had planted, were now being eaten by the Jews, and had turned into a card for receiving food relief, he became aware that our departure had been a mistake. He saw that his absence from the land was now exile, and set about replacing hopes invested in [Arab] armies with the need to regain his ownership of the land through his actual presence on it. The shock created by defeat due to dependence on others, with justice as one’s sole weapon.446

Here, Darwish reflects on his grandfather’s traumatized uncomprehending reaction to this event, believing that he simply needed to prove his family’s right to own their home, land, and trees, even as the law caused them to be considered intruders rather than citizens, or what Darwish repeatedly calls ‘the absent presence.’ Marder notes how some individuals can respond to traumatic events as a sort of absence, which illustrates Darwish’s family failure to locate this traumatic event in time and place:

A traumatic event is, therefore, a strange sort of an event because once it is understood as a belated consequence of a “missed encounter,” trauma itself must be understood in terms of “absence” – the absence of something that failed to be located in time or place – rather than a “positive” presence.447

More significantly, in broader terms this is the story of the majority of Palestinians who experienced trauma and faced feelings such as remorse and heartbreak because these sudden decisions affected their future lives, including their sense of Palestinian citizenship.

In 1992 during his third phase of writing, Darwish published the collection entitled (أعز ػهؽ وٛوجب) Eleven Stars which he described as a lyric-epic sequence focusing on two key events of 1492. The first was Christopher Columbus’ arrival in the Americas, an encounter which was ultimately to destroy the way of life of all the

447 E. Marder, “Trauma and Literary Studies: Some ‘Enabling Question’”. p.2.
indigenous peoples there. The second key event was the expulsion of the Arabs from the former Islamic power of Al-Andalus by the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella. Darwish was clearly drawn to these twin themes of catastrophe, seeing obvious parallels with the process of displacement and exile set in motion by the Nakba for his fellow Palestinians.

The poem which he entitled “‘Red Indian’s’ Penultimate Speech to the White Man” is written by a now mature Darwish, still fascinated by the idea of the ‘absent presence’ and by the longer term effects of the Nakba trauma which had occurred over forty years before. Whilst this poem makes broader points about the devastating effects which imposing ‘civilization’ has had on the way of life of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and on the environment they had nurtured, in the final verse, the narrator, Chief Seattle of the Duwamish tribe, reflects on the nature of the somewhat uneasy relationship which will exist between the settlers and his ancestors “peaceful as your rifles left them”:

There are dead who sleep in rooms you will build there are dead who visit their past in places you demolish there are dead who pass over bridges you will construct there are dead who illuminate the night of butterflies, dead who come by dawn to drink their tea with you as peaceful as your rifles left them, so leave, you guests of the place, some vacant seats for your hosts… they will recount to you the terms of peace… with the dead!

On one level, the Native American chief addresses the new European inhabitants who settle on what were his tribe’s homelands, reminding them that they will continue to share it with his ancestors, an idea which Darwish introduces in the quotation accredited to the Native American Chief Seattle which prefaces the poem:

448 M. Darwish, Eleven Stars.
449 M. Darwish, If I were Another, p. 77.
Did I say, The Dead? There is no Death  
Here, there is only a change of worlds.\textsuperscript{450}

On another level, the chief’s observation also functions as a commentary on the situation of Israeli settlers who occupied the Palestinian homeland post-\textit{Nakba}. The absent Palestinian ‘hosts’ continue to make their presence felt amongst the Israeli ‘guests.’ Darwish’s implication is clear: Israeli Jews will never enjoy what does not belong to them because they will always live in fear, imagined or otherwise, of the hosts returning. At the same time, however, the Palestinians themselves are haunted by the spectre of their former lives: the perfect metaphor for the traumatic memories which populate their psyche. As Sa’di and Abu-Lughod assert:

For Palestinians, the places of the pre-\textit{Nakba} past and the land of Palestine itself have an extraordinary charge. They are not simply sites of memory but symbols of all that has been lost and sites of longing to which return is barred. Palestinian attachments to places are both physical and imaginative.\textsuperscript{451}

5.5 Trauma and Existential Crisis

The \textit{Nakba} and \textit{Naksa} and their traumatic impact can also be said to have created an existential crisis for Palestinians which takes different forms in the work of Said and Darwish. Said focuses on the self-doubt which affects Palestinians concerning their own political and national identity whilst in his poetry, Darwish explores broader issues concerning the loss of belief in things that were once certain.

In \textit{After the Last Sky}, Said examines the debate concerning the political existence of Palestinian, and asks: “Do we exist? What proof do we have?”\textsuperscript{452} Certainly, loss of documents can pose major problems for Palestinians in some territories of Israel and Palestine since on the legal and administrative level, at least, such papers can be said to prove one’s existence and the fact that one belongs

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{450} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{451} Sa’di, and Abu-Lughod, \textit{Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory}, p.13
\item \textsuperscript{452} E. Said, \textit{After the Last Sky}, p.34.
\end{itemize}
somewhere. Nor should it be forgotten that Palestine only finally gained official recognition of itself within the United Nations as “a non-member State having received a standing invitation to participate as observer in the sessions and work of the General Assembly and maintaining permanent observer mission at Headquarters” on 29 November 2012.\footnote{“Q&A: Palestinians’ Upgraded UN Status”, BBC News Middle East, 30 Nov. 2012. Available online at: \url{http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-13701636} Accessed on: 20/5/2014.} Said’s question, which would be judged unnecessary in the case of most nations, highlights the abnormality of Palestinian existence and raises the precariousness of the survival of Palestinian identity due to displacement and exile. According to Said: “Palestine is exile, dispossession, the inaccurate memories of one place into vague memories of another, a confused recovery of general wares, passive presences scattered around in the Arab environment.”\footnote{E. Said, \textit{After the Last Sky}, p.30.}

In his poetry, Darwish reflects the sense of the precariousness of existence which many Palestinians experienced post-\textit{Nakba} and post-\textit{Naksaa}, when everything that they had previously taken for granted about their existence abruptly changed, transforming them into homeless and stateless exiles. For many Palestinians, this devastating loss of their homes, personal possessions and their whole way of life caused an existential crisis, causing them to question all manner of once unshakeable truths including their faith in a beneficent and just God.

In the poem (الموت في الغابة) “The Death in the Forest,” which was written during his earliest phase of work, the figure of God is depicted as being unconcerned about the fate of the Palestinians:

\begin{quote}
نامي!
فعين آله نائمة
عنا... وآسراب الشحارير
\end{quote}

\footnote{M. Darwish, \textit{\'Awrāq al-zaytūn} (Leaves of Olives), p. 5.}

\textbf{Sleep!}
For the eye of God is sleeping
Concerning us ... and the flocks of blackbirds.

Although it is not possible to convey this in the English translation, the opening Arabic word clearly shows the poem is addressed to a woman. However, it is more likely here that Darwish is addressing his homeland or mother country, since as Mattawa has noted, the poet typically refers to the nation of Palestine using feminine linguistic forms. When this interpretation is applied, his reference to *us* can be understood as the nation of Palestinians. The implication then is clear: as long as God the Judge, the Giver of Justice, and Divine Arbitrator is sleeping, Palestinians will continue to suffer injustice. Darwish’s image still implicitly posits the existence of God who has not actively turned his back on them in anger but currently seems unconcerned about their fate. In this respect, then, within the context of a society which still clings to its belief in God, this image is perhaps, if anything, a more deeply unsettling one.

Whether intentionally or not, Darwish’s reference here to God being asleep at a time when his help is desperately needed also echoes a commonly voiced ironic reaction from members of the Jewish community in response to questions concerning the lack of divine intervention during the Holocaust.

As previously mentioned, one of the key historical references in his collection (*أزع ػهؽ وٛوجب* Eleven Stars which was published in 1992, was the capitulation of Boabdil (Emir Muhammad XII) to the Catholic Monarchs following the Battle of Granada in 1491 to be followed by the expulsion of the Arabs from Al-Andalus in 1492. For Darwish, the enforced exodus of the Arabs from Spain serves as a historical parallel to the experiences of the Palestinians in 1948 Nakba and the Arab world as a whole in the 1967 Naksa with the loss of territories during the Six-Day

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456 Kh. Mattawa, *When the Poet Is a Stranger.*
War. It also evokes for him the personal losses of homes, firstly, his family home in Al-Birwa in 1948 and then his home in Beirut in 1982. As mentioned above, for those who were forcefully displaced, the traumatic loss and suffering led to feelings of disorientation and the sensation of their world being turned upside down. However, in “Truth has Two Faces and the Snow Falls Black” Darwish approaches his usual theme from a somewhat different angle:

Truth has two faces and the snow falls black on our city.
We can feel no despair beyond our despair,
And the end ~firm in its step~ marches to the wall,
Marching on tiles that are wet with our tears.
Who will bring down our flags: we or they? And who
Will recite the “peace accord,” O king of dying?

The opening line of the poem, which also serves as its title, immediately presents two disturbing images: truth is personified as being two-faced and therefore a liar, and the snow which should be white has been turned to black. This description also adds to the air of pessimism of the poem, with its references to our despair and our tears. The city evoked here – still referred to by Darwish as our city i.e. belonging to the Arabs – is Granada where real snow may well have been falling in January 1492, when Emir Muhammad XII and his forces finally capitulated to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Darwish includes other telling details that point to the poem’s setting as Granada: the wall surrounding the city, last stronghold of the Arabs in Iberia, and the tiles referring to the exquisitely decorated palace interiors of the citadel-fortress of the Alhambra.

The reference in the original Arabic to what Darwish calls “the treaty of despair,” in the historical context is the agreement known variously as The Treaty of

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Granada or the Capitulation of Granada which guaranteed a set of rights to the Muslim inhabitants of the city, including religious tolerance and fair treatment in return for their surrender. Interestingly, in his English translation Agha Shahid Ali chooses to render the original Arabic as “peace accord” and thus raises the suggestion of a different set of past-present parallels which can be read into Darwish’s poem.

Whilst Darwish was working on this collection, in the wake of the end of the First Gulf War in 1991, the news broke of an international Peace Conference due to take place in Madrid and set to focus on an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal. Was this the trigger for Darwish to remember with a sense of despair and déjà-vu previous declarations, resolutions, agreements and accords which related to Palestine? The Balfour Declaration which had set in motion the Nakba; UN Security Council Resolution 242 (November 22 1967) which effectively led to the Naksa; the Camp David Accords (September 17 1978) which dealt with the Palestinian Territories but were written entirely without participation of the Palestinians…

It is noticeable that in the opening of this poem Darwish focuses on a specific moment in the fall of Granada and the Andalusian tragedy, for the Islamic standards are still flying over the city and have yet to be replaced by those of the Catholic Monarchs. In the midst of all the turmoil, Darwish’s narrator asks, as though musing to himself: Who will bring down our flags: we or they? This kind of telling detail – apparent concern about the correct diplomatic etiquette for surrender– not gives the poet’s evocation of the historical scene an added vividness but also shows that the focus in this poem is not yet on the mass expulsion which was to follow but the formal political process which preceded it and the signing of what for the Arabs was

a “treaty of despair,” not only because it handed over Granada but also because this agreement was soon to be over-turned and its carefully negotiated conditions decreed invalid.

By focusing on the Alhambra as the seat of power, and on the preparations for the signing of the treaty, Dawish is perhaps asking readers to draw two parallels between past and present. Firstly, that now, as then, those with political power and vested interests will sign treaties which will ultimately prove life-changing for ordinary citizens who will not have any control over their own destiny and trauma will continue to blight the lives of those affected. Secondly, too many agreements are simply not worth the paper they are written on.

Samīḥ Al-Qāsim, another Palestinian poet, addressed his poem entitled Now There Is No Dialogue with you, Only Another Explosion to Darwish who was a close friend of his. In his work, he voiced a similar sense of cynicism regarding the ability of big political players to do anything which would ultimately improve the standard of life for ordinary Palestinians:

There is no security in the UN Security Council, my friend.
The UN Security Council is a neutral land, my friend.
And we are the torment of roads,
And the irritation of directions.
And we are the dust of nations. \(^{460}\)

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the twin traumas of the Nakba and the Naksa have impacted on Palestinian identity and how the effects of this have been explored in the writing of Said and the poetry of Darwish. The chapter suggested how some

theoretical perspectives on trauma can help to shed light not only on how this phenomenon has affected the lives of ordinary Palestinians but also how both Said and Darwish have drawn on their own experiences of trauma to voice the repressed memories of the Palestinian people and to rescue these from oblivion by means of their work. As Caruth notes: “The traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time.”

Using different techniques, both Said and Darwish make those connections and is so doing succeed in describing the indescribable.

Said viewed his role as a writer as being to convey the essential hybrid in-betweenness of the traumatic identity of Palestinians, the peculiar laʿam logic of the need to forget the past and yet to remember it, by recounting the “fragments, memories, disjointed scenes, intimate particulars” that constitute Palestinian identity. His compatriot, Darwish, commented on what he thought his task as a Palestinian poet was in a poem that first appeared in 1969, entitled “The Lost Voice in the Voices”:

فدعونا نتكلم
ودعوا حنجرة الأموات فينا

Let us speak
Let the larynx of the dead inside us
Speak.

For both men, then, writing was a means to give voice to those whose own voices had been silenced by trauma, those who have been witnesses of the

461 C. Caruth, Trauma: Exploration in Memory. pp. 8-9.
462 E. Said, After the Last Sky, p. xi.
unspeakable. At the same time, it enabled both of them as individuals to explore their own identity, to recover and cope with painful memories, to heal the invisible wounds inflicted by personal and national trauma, and most of all, to gather the strength needed to resist.
Chapter Six: A Memory for Forgetfulness?

The Representation of Memory in the Work of Said and Darwish

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the representation of memory in the work of Said and Darwish, who emphasised the importance of preserving Palestinians’ collective memories of their homeland and of their past knowledge and experiences as an essential means of forming and maintaining Diasporic Palestinian identity post-
Nakba.

The theoretical starting point here is the work on collective memory by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, one of the most prominent figures in the field of memory studies, whose work has been widely applied in various academic fields since it was originally published in 1950. It will also draw on Jan Assmann’s re-formulation of Halbwachs’ original ideas into the related concept of ‘cultural memory’ and ‘communicative memory.’ Both theorists were interested in the mechanisms which help to shape memory, the role which memory plays in forging a unique sense of cultural identity for individuals and societies, and also in the effects of historical disaster on memory.

The chapter will analyse the role of memory in the work of Said and Darwish, exploring the different ways which both writers use this as a means to support Palestinian claims to rightful ownership of a territory now inhabited by others. It will also examine how they use their work to recount memories from their

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464 Assmann acknowledges that he developed this concept in collaboration with his wife, Aleida Assmann, and they published a number of joint works on this topic.
personal past and at the same time narrate the collective past of the Palestinian people, helping to shape their present identity.

The present chapter will also examine how memory has been represented and reinvented, and crucially how two sets of memories, namely those of the Israelis and those of the Palestinians, can be the source of conflict. The different devices which can be deployed for preserving memory will be considered, comparing Said’s use of written text and photography with Darwish’s poetic imagery. The chapter concludes with an extended analysis of memory, landscape and identity in the work of Darwish, drawing on relevant examples written throughout his career, to demonstrate, as Ken Taylor has argued, that “Landscape is a cultural construct, a mirror of our memories and myths encoded with meaning which can be read and interpreted.”

6.2 Memory and Culture

In his examination of the role which memory plays in the formation and maintenance of identity, the psychologist Shoemaker notes that: “Persons have in memory a special access to facts about their own past histories and their own identities, a kind of access they do not have to the histories and identities of other persons and other things.” This emphasises that every individual has a unique set of personal memories based on their own perceptions of events which they do not share with other people, what Halbwachs referred to as ‘autobiographical memories.’ It is clear that no single set of memories can preserve the past of a whole people and yet the memories of some events persist long after those who originally experienced

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them have perished. Halbwachs suggests that this is because societies use different ways of organizing their knowledge of the past in order to preserve their memories of this. Thus, he argues, autobiographical memory is supplemented by collective memory and historical memory.

According to Halbwachs, collective memory relates to the retelling of events by individuals to other members of a group or society and thus acts as a mechanism for retaining and distributing memories. Historical memory, on the other hand, is the shaping of the past by professional historians given the task of documenting events judged to be of significance. He observes that history “can be presented as the universal memory of the human species. But there is no universal memory. Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time.”

Historians, then, could be said to construct unified histories of particular groups, societies or nations. Halbwachs draws a clear distinction between collective memory and history in terms of temporality, noting that:

It [collective memory] is a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive. By definition it does not exceed the boundaries of this group.

In his article “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” the Egyptologist and cultural anthropologist Jan Assmann builds on some of Halbwachs’ original ideas regarding collective memory and the role which it plays creating a unique sense of cultural identity for individuals and societies, to elaborate on the mechanism by which collective memory is able to convey cultural knowledge.

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468 Ibid., p.140.

Assmann also focuses on the temporal dimension to collective memory, distinguishing between long-term memory which he suggests can last up to 3000 years and communicative memory which is based on everyday communication, in which each individual composes a memory as a result of social contact with other groups in society. This has a limited time span, lasting between 80 and 100 years. Assmann notes that communicative memory is closely connected to cultural identity and therefore distinguishes a third type of collective memory which is capable of transforming communicative memory into long-term memory, and he refers to this as cultural memory. It is this, he posits, which “preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity.” He stresses that this is not simply a means of retaining information but rather a force that can shape cultural identity and allow cultures to respond creatively to both the challenges of everyday existence and catastrophic changes. Assmann establishes the distinctive characteristics of cultural memory and explores the means by which cultural memory both embeds narratives of the past into actual and contemporary situations and is articulated with group and individual identity.

The formation of cultural memory begins by “identificatory determination”, we identify ourselves positively or negatively with a particular cultural group, noting that we share similarities or have differences, and the degree to which we perceive these similarities and differences as relevant establishes “those who belong and those who do not” which leads individuals to distinguish the cultural community with which they identify. In language, this is often marked simply as ‘we/us’ and ‘they/them’ as we recognize our own self in the mirror of others as a means of classification.

471 Ibid.
472 Ibid.
According to Assmann, this communicated meaning and collectively shared cultural knowledge must undergo objectivation or crystallization before it can become part of the heritage of a society and this means that it must be recorded in linguistic, pictorial or ritual form by “the bearers of cultural memory.” In Assmann’s model, thus, writers play a special role in structuring cultural memory and its symbolic representation. However, he notes that buildings, monuments, cities or even landscapes can all function as important elements of cultural memory, referring to the latter as “topographically organized cultural memory.” As later analysis of the works of Darwish will show, this last type of cultural memory has played a significant role in post-Nakba texts.

Assmann argues that it is the process of cultural crystallization or objectivation which is the most powerful means of stabilizing the cultural memory of a people, explaining that:

Cultural memory has its fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communications (recitation, practice, observance). We call these ‘figures of memory’.

Halbwachs’ had also previously stressed the importance of the written word in ensuring the preservation of memories in the case of tragedy: “The only means of preserving such remembrances is to write them down in a coherent narrative, for the writings remain even though the thought and the spoken word die.” Said himself made a similar point when he reminded his readers of the importance of Palestinians
rewriting and recording their own story because what he referred to as “oral memory” (in Assman’s term communicative memory) alone would not serve. Assmann concludes his discussion by clearly elaborating the linkage which in his opinion exists between memory and cultural identity:

Cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images and rituals specific to each society in each epoch whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilise and convey that society’s self image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.  

6.3 Palestinian Cultural Memory and the Role of the Poet

If, as Sa‘di and Abu-Lughod argue “Palestinian memory is, at its heart, political,” then the events of the Nakba can be said to form the major focus of the autobiographical, collective, historical and cultural memories of the Palestinian people. According to Said: “Each of us [Palestinians] bears fragmented memories of experiences of the generation whose culminating tragedy was dispossession in 1948.” From the Palestinian perspective, then, a specific collective memory begins from the historical interruption in 1948, which the later generations of Palestinians did not see or experience at first hand, but which had a crucial and direct influence on the 1948 generation.

The Nakba events form the key ‘figure of memory’ in Palestinian cultural memory and authors such as Said or Darwish, who have the ability to crystallize or objectivise these fragmented autobiographical memories in textual form, have transformed them into a powerful collective cultural memory by constantly referring to and recalling this historical moment in contemporary Palestinian narratives.

477 E. Said, After the Last Sky, p.75.
480 E. Said, After the Last Sky, p. 83.
As Assmann notes, is it common to find that societies will have a preferred type of “bearer of culture” who is able to “cultivate” their cultural memory. As Yvette Neisser notes, in Palestinian society, as is generally the case in Arab societies, the poet plays a pre-eminent role:

Not only does poetry maintain a central role in Palestinian society as the time-honoured art form of the Arabs, but also Palestinian poets carry the additional role of being spokespersons, who must articulate the struggles, desires, and political views of the people.\(^{481}\)

Since Darwish was one of the poets who captured and rendered the post-

\textit{Nakba} trauma he clearly contributed to the formation of national Palestinian narrative and cultural memory and Angelika Neuwirth refers to him as a “founder of discursivity” (in the Foucauldian sense): “that is, one who plays a major role in producing a discourse.”\(^ {482}\)

Darwish himself also displays an awareness of the crucial role that he plays as a “bearer of cultural memory”\(^ {483}\) referring to this both implicitly and explicitly in his work. Mena notes that in the poetry collection \textit{Unfortunately it was Paradise}:

Darwish expresses his obligation towards his community to work […] through their words, to be a voice for the voiceless (and to create a state for the stateless, if only in abstraction). Darwish writes later in the same poem: “We— who are capable of remembrance—are capable of liberation” (Darwish, \textit{Unfortunately} (150) It is the poet who remembers for the people, and who makes possible the liberation of his community.\(^ {484}\)

Her final comment here highlights the role of the poet as keeper of collective memories for the Palestinian people.

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\(^{483}\) J. Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity”, p.131.

Elsewhere, in *I Love You, I Love You Not*, Darwish expresses his role as poet not only in terms of safeguarding the collective culture of the Palestinian people but also preserving the memories of their ancestral homeland itself:

The trees of my country master the greenery growth  
And I master reminiscence

His choice of the poet/tree comparison is significant. For these trees are rooted in the soil of Palestine; they draw from it the water and nutrients which sustain them and as a result they become fruitful and flourish. With his repetition of the verb ‘master,’ Darwish creates a parallel between poet and tree, suggesting he too was attached to the soil of his homeland and absorbed its memories and those of his people. However, now he can no longer be physically present in his homeland, he needs to “master remembering” for he must work to keep those memories alive, not only his own but the cultural memory of the Palestinian nation by sharing them in his poetry.

6.4 A Struggle between Two Memories

From Halbwachs’ perspective, the *Nakba* provides a good example of how a historical event is framed in diverse, varied and subjective ways even by professional historians. A joint research project under the aegis of the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation looked at the Jewish-Israeli and the Palestinian historical narratives concerning the events of 1948 and produced a book entitled *Two Sides of the Coin: Independence and Nakba 1948 Two Narratives of the 1948 War and its Outcome*. After examining accounts by both Jewish and Arab historians the historians Motti Golani and Adel Manna concluded that:

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485 M. Darwish, *'Uhibbuk aw là 'uhibbuk* (I love you; I love you not), p. 23.
The narratives of 1948 may be based on history, may live history, and may suffer or rejoice because of history, but are no by no means concerned with historical research... [their purpose] is to express reality that is extremely contemporary.\textsuperscript{486}

In his article “Invention, Memory, and Place,”\textsuperscript{487} Said also examines how cultural memories and historical narratives can be used to serve a contemporary political agenda. He draws on the concept of the ‘invention of tradition’ from the book of the same name, edited by historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger.\textsuperscript{488}

As Said explains, in the introduction to the book, Hobsbawm and Ranger argue that many traditions which appear or are claimed to be old are often quite recent in origin and some have, in fact, been entirely invented. As Said notes, this is often be linked to the methods used by political leaders to make claims in relation to nationhood and to promote feelings of nationalism:

[T]he invention of tradition was a practice very much used by authorities as an instrument of rule in mass societies when the bonds of small social units like village and family were dissolving and authorities needed to find other ways of connecting a large number of people to each other. The invention of tradition is a method for using collective memory selectively by manipulating certain bits of the national past, suppressing others, elevating still others in an entirely functional way. Thus memory is not necessarily authentic, but rather useful.\textsuperscript{489}

Said labels this process of selection and manipulation of collective memory “pragmatic memory” and examines how Zionist ideology has produced a narrative of Jewish history which is based on the omission or misrepresentation of other people’s history. He also refers to Tom Segev’s (2000) book \textit{The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust} which analyses how the Holocaust impacted on Jewish national identity and the political ideology of the Israeli government.


\textsuperscript{488} E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), \textit{The Invention of Tradition}, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

\textsuperscript{489} E. Said, “Invention, Memory, and Place”, p. 179.
From the Palestinian perspective, the Nakba originally led the Diasporic spread of Palestinian minorities around the world, and the Naksa and the Oslo Accords represent narratives of defeat and loss, whilst from the perspective of most Israeli Jews they are remembered as narratives of victory, marking the return of the Diaspora and restoration of national identity. Darwish comments on this irony in one of his most overtly autobiographical books (٠ِٛ١بد اٌسؿْ اٌؼبظٞ) Journal of an Ordinary Grief:

The declaration of the birth of Israel is at the same time the declaration of the death of the Palestinian nation. No - it is not a form of Arab Zionism to remember the assassination of your homeland. At this rupture/paradox in history the tears of the opposites converge. You cry over a lost homeland, and they cry over those who were lost in search of a “homeland” that has just been born. ⁴⁹⁰

On one level, Darwish’s language appears to mirror the absolute split in historical narratives “declaration of the death” and not even a natural death but “assassination”. However the odd collocation of Arab + Zionism suggests that the poet is interested here in contradiction and paradox and indeed he notes that opposites converge in memories of mourning: Jewish tears spilled in remembrance of past trauma, Palestinian tears spilled over a dark present and possibly even darker future. Ultimately, then, here he recognizes narratives of historical memories which point to both difference and similarity. The repeated use here of the word homeland reflects the fact that for both the Israelis and the Palestinians a significant part of their cultural memory is “topographically organized” since it relates to the land itself ⁴⁹¹ but in this case, too, they have conflicting narratives concerning ownership and belonging, both of which are based on long-term memory.

Darwish then highlights that collective cultural memory is the source of conflict between Palestinians and Israelis:

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 37.
It is a struggle between two memories!

Jewish memory is one of the basic components for the claim to a right in Palestine. Yet it is incapable of admitting that others also possess the sense of memory. Israelis refuse to coexist with Arab memory. They refuse to admit the existence of this memory, even though one of their sayings is: “We will never forget”. One of the basic elements in Israeli education, and a primary topic in the order of Zionist priorities, is to keep general awareness permanently focused on memory as a way of mobilizing nationalist sentiment. They always say: “I shall forget my oath if I forget you, Jerusalem.”

Darwish acknowledges here that cultural memories of both the recent past (“We will never forget” is a reference to the Holocaust) and the distant past (the Jews historical claim to Palestine and the quotation from Psalm 137:5 “If I forget you, Jerusalem…” are of central importance for the Israelis. At the same time, Darwish also illustrates that although he is a Palestinian Muslim he is still aware of the significance of those fateful events and sites in the Jewish past (the Holocaust, the Babylonian exile, Jerusalem) that act as their ‘figures of memory.’ Balraj Dhillon’s observation on Darwish’s use of references to the Holocaust elsewhere in his work is also pertinent in this case: “Darwish invoking the Holocaust is not only humanizing the Israelis and acknowledging their past, but uses this past to encourage them to humanize Palestinians.”

Moreover, he indicates the connection between cultural memory and identity since both the educational and political systems actively draw on cultural memory to forge feelings of nationalism. His statement that “Israelis refuse to coexist with Arab memory” is a telling one for it seems to suggest that the problem is not the Palestinians themselves but their cultural memories, which both threaten to contradict

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493 Psalm 137 also provides a link with Darwish’s previous mention of tears shed over the homeland since it begins “By the rivers of Babylon we [the Jewish people in exile] sat and wept when we remembered Zion”.
the official Israeli version of history of the landscape and also to reinforce the national identity of the Palestinians as a people.

Darwish once again presents a series of ironic contradictions: the Israelis base their claim to land ownership on long-term cultural memory but will not accept claims made on the same basis by others (Palestinians). They are adamant that remembrance of past traumas which have been inflicted on them is of crucial importance but have forgotten that they have inflicted trauma on others: to build their own society, they destroyed someone else’s.

Moreover, as Darwish comments, the Israelis are not content to passively ignore the Palestinians’ possession of cultural memories:

But you are forbidden to remember or to call upon your memory. The assault on this memory, then, has become a goal and a national demand of the first order. 496

They want to go one stage further by imposing a ban on Palestinian cultural memory, even attacking it as though it were the enemy. Darwish’s observation here emphasise the central importance of cultural memories in the Arab-Israeli conflict regarding Palestine as a homeland.

In his essay “The Nakba in Palestinian Memory in Israel,” Umut Koldas talks about the repression of Palestinian collective memory within the state of Israel by the Israeli government. He argues that the collective identities of the Israeli and Palestinian communities are in a dialectic process which depends on the negation of the other, based on the undermining and delegitimization of narrative memory. As a result, the dominant political discourse in Israel demands that the Palestinian community disassociate from their collective memory in order to prove their loyalty to the state:

Within this discursive framework, any signs of a collective identity for Palestinians living as citizens of Israel were, in general, either ignored or avoided in the public and political debates of Israeli political and civil societies until the late 1990s. Thus, the Palestinians (and their essence) have been either absent or under-represented in the dominant Zionist discourse.\textsuperscript{497}

Therefore, documenting the past and present of the Palestinian community inside Israel is not allowed because it is understood to be a dangerous sign threatening the continuity of Israeli narrative. Moreover, any attempt to link the collective memories of the Israeli and the Palestinian, whether in the West Bank, Gaza, or beyond in the Diaspora is seen as directly threatening the political discourse of Israeli identity.

\textbf{6.5 Fear of Forgetting, Fear of Being Forgotten}

In his narration of the events of 1948, Elias Sanber, a Palestinian historian, explicitly links past and present:

The contemporary history of the Palestinians turns on a key date: 1948. That year, a country and its people disappeared from maps and dictionaries […] ‘The Palestinian people does not exist’, said the new masters, and henceforth the Palestinians would be referred to by general, conveniently vague terms, as either ‘refugees’, or in the case of a small minority that had managed to escape the generalised expulsion, ‘Israeli Arabs’. A long absence was beginning.\textsuperscript{498}

At the same time, he highlights the unnerving ease with which a whole culture and way of life can apparently cease to be. Palestinians were erased, expunged, renamed, expelled, rendered absent… Not surprisingly, then, one crucial aspect of the expression of Palestinian collective and cultural memory is the fear of forgetting, since if they forget who they are, the physical places of their homeland, the cultural spaces represented by events, language and traditions, then who else will remember?

Much of Said’s work has focused explicitly or implicitly on this particularly Palestinian fear of being written out of history, erased from history books just as they

were from removed the map, and he has attempted to ensure the persistence of Palestinian memory by creating a coherent historical narrative which confirms their right to exist and belong to the land of Palestine.

As a “bearer of culture” Said’s autobiographical memory carries an added weight and serves also as part of the cultural memory of the Palestinian people. Like Darwish, he seems to be aware of his privileged status as keeper of memories and declares that the aim of his memoir Out of Place is to function as: “a record of an essentially lost or forgotten world.” His aim in writing the book is to link the self-narration of his autobiography with the collective memory of Palestinians and he carefully documents the precise impact of the Nakba in his personal life and that of his community by relating the effect of these events on the lives of his family and friends as well. In writing the memoir he also intends to attempt to document a time and place. Interestingly, Said noted that remembering the past allowed him in a way to forget the traumatic present in his personal life: “My memory proved crucial to my being able to function at all during periods of debilitating sickness, treatment, and anxiety.”

According to Gindi, Said's intention in this autobiographical writing was to try to restore as many missing elements as possible from his family’s personal narrative over the course of three generations, as if in some way he was attempting to create wholeness from what he had once referred to as the fragmented memories of the post-Nakba generation, making his contribution to keeping the memory of a lost time and place alive.

499 E. Said, Out of Place, p. xiii.
500 Ibid., p. xvi.
501 Ibid., p. xiii.
Said uses repetition frequently in this writing, as though it functions as an aide-memoir to help him in his attempts to restore from oblivion the missing and forgotten elements from his personal past, his close family members and dearest friends, and also the past of an ancestral homeland he barely knew. In addition to this, his memoir records the significant changes in both his self-identity, and Palestinian identity, which are fundamentally correlated, even though he refers to official events related to the history of Palestine as a “fugitive presence” glimpsed only occasionally in the background to his own personal narrative.\footnote{N. Bayoumy, “al-thukūrah wa al-‘unūthah wa qalaq al-hawiyah: qirā’ah fi sirat Edward Said”, (Edward Said: Masculinity/Femininity and the Anxiety of Identity: A Reading in Edward Said's Personal Biography), Available online at: http://www.bahithat.org Accessed on 09/10/2014.}

Fear of forgetting about their former way of life and fear of being forgotten can be said to be essential notions that form the current Palestinian identity. In particular, as communicative memory fades, with the death of those who experienced the events of the \textit{Nakba} at first hand, the task of recording their memories in order to keep these alive as part of Palestinian cultural memory becomes crucially important for the post-\textit{Nakba} Diasporic Palestinian generation. Halbwachs highlighted the threat to collective memory pose by the loss of contact with community elders.\footnote{M. Halbwach, “The Collective Memory”, p.142.} In this context it is useful here to introduce Marianne Hirsch’s concept of post-memory for although Hirsch was focusing specifically on the collective memories of second-generation Holocaust survivors, her ideas have a broader relevance.

In her article, “Past Lives: Post memories in Exile”\footnote{M. Hirsch, “Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile”, \textit{Poetics Today}, 17 (4) 1996, pp. 659-686, p. 669.} Hirsch begins by noting the particular difficulties which remembering creates for Holocaust survivors, for whom memory is always ambivalent and bittersweet. It is not only an act of recalling times past but also one of mourning, and may evoke intensely negative feelings of
anger and despair. Although the children (and grandchildren) of Holocaust survivors live at a temporal and usually spatial remove from the world inhabited by their parents (or grandparents), they have grown up dominated by these narratives that preceded their birth. As a result, they too absorb something of those intense feelings and memories which were shaped by traumatic events that they cannot fully understand and cannot directly access. Hirsch calls this type of second- or third-generation memory, postmemory and argues that it: “is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation.”

The memoir written by Jean Said Makdisi, Said’s sister, entitled Teta, Mother and Me: Three Generations of Arab Women, engages with the topic of postmemory, examining how the lives of those Palestinian women that had gone before her affected her own life, self-image and identity. She specifically addressed the issue of the difficulties faced by the second and third generation Diasporic Palestinians attempting to write and speak about a homeland which is present yet absent in their memory. She argues that it is present as a historical homeland in the cultural memory of post-Nakba exiles yet strangely absent from their autobiographical personal memory, and specifically from their sensual memories. She argues that for the post-Nakba generations, the Palestinian homeland cannot be truly remembered, only imagined, particularly as the possibility of interaction with those older people who are the repository of memories of pre-Nakba life becomes increasingly limited.

Her observation concerning the impossibility of accessing a sensual memory of the homeland suggests that a literary form such as poetry, which is particularly rich

\[662\]
\[507\] J. Makdisi, Teta, Mother, and Me.
in imagery and sensually evocative, might play a vital role in filling this gap and may account for the popularity of this artistic medium amongst the Palestinian Diaspora.

Hirsch was also interested in how artists have attempted to capture the mixed emotions that characterize postmemory which she summarises as: “ambivalence and desire, mourning and recollection, presence and absence”\(^{508}\) and concludes that photography has proved to be one of the most powerful and eloquent medium in this respect. In her opinion, this is due to the fact that photographic images serve as “both icons and indexical traces, or material connections to the people who did not survive.”\(^{509}\) She saw it as “the medium connecting memory and postmemory”\(^{510}\) a means of creating a complete uninterrupted chain to the past. Roland Barthes made a similar point when commenting on the fascination which photographs hold for us, touching their viewers and influencing them directly because: “From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who I am here.”\(^{511}\)

Said acknowledged the valuable impact that photography can have by choosing to work with Swiss documentary photographer Jean Mohr in *After the Last Sky*, an imaginatively creative collaboration combining photographs and written text “to say something that hasn’t been said about Palestine.”\(^{512}\) Said also used the medium of photography as a means of capturing a way of life which was likely to be erased and used Mohr’s photographic images to preserve these for the collective memory. Yacoubi notes that Said has used various media to document the

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\(^{509}\) Ibid., p. 669.
\(^{510}\) Ibid.
remembrances of his homeland including a BBC documentary *In Search of Palestine: Edward Said’s Return Home* (1998).\(^{513}\)

Fearful of forgetting or being forgotten, as the direct connection to the past becomes very more tenuous with the death of the older members of the *Nakba* generation, many Palestinians scholars, artists and activists have undertaken to protect their cultural memory from oblivion and destruction. Various media have been used for capturing the cultural knowledge and experience of the older generation including film, theatre, painting, cinema, music, photographs, and various genre of writing.

It is interesting to note that when Assmann originally developed his theory about cultural memory in 1988, he gave a privileged position to writers as “bearers of culture” and to their ability to crystallize memories and as this analysis thus far has shown, scholars and poets like Said and Darwish played a crucial role in safeguarding and preserving cultural memories. However, recently Aouragh has observed in her book, *Palestine Online*: “The global space maintained and hosted by the internet offers a unique platform for dispersed communities.”\(^{514}\) Thus, Palestinians who were cut off from various connections in the past are now able to achieve a new form of connectivity and gathering, via the internet, in such a way that distances itself from any previous conception of Palestine as an isolated minority. Second- and third-generation members of the Palestinian Diaspora are increasingly turning to the Internet as a means of dealing with postmemory and ensuring that they will neither forget nor be forgotten.

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Perhaps the best known of these postmemory projects is Palestine Remembered (http://www.palestineremembered.com). The website hosts a substantial repository of photographs, video and audio testimonies, maps, and newspapers articles relating to the Nakba experiences of Palestinians both inside and outside of the occupied territories, including those in refugee camps. The website also incorporates the Nakba Oral History Project which aims “to document and retain the Palestinian refugees’ experiences and memories before, during and after al-Nakba.” The website gives its primary objective as being:

To make the best effort to painting [sic] a picture of the refugees’ towns before al-Nakba, such as description & location of the neighborhoods, neighboring villages and Zionist colonies, springs and wells, gardens, major roads, public places such as schools, mosques and churches, shrines, coffee houses, archeological sites, major roads and valleys, ... etc.

This extensive list shows the interest in attempting to recover a “topographically organized cultural memory,” to recreate virtually a landscape that no longer exists, as a means of rescuing this lost world from oblivion. On the website, even the smallest of villages has dozens of postings from the Palestinian Diaspora, some meticulously detailed, others the briefest of notes. But what this postmemory project clearly illustrates is that recovering this lost landscape is of immense importance, for as Ken Taylor explains: “Landscape and memory are inseparable because landscape is the nerve centre of our personal and collective memory.”

The final section of this chapter will consider the various ways in which Darwish represents these links between landscape, memory and identity in his poetry.

6.6. Landscape, Memory and Identity in the Poetry of Darwish

The Palestine which Darwish represents in his poetry takes many different forms but analysis shows that the landscape he describes is always “the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock.” Darwish himself expressed a similar idea linking place and memory when he noted in his (Journal of an Ordinary Grief): “A place is not a geographical area; it's also a state of mind; and trees are not just trees; they are the ribs of childhood.”

As Faysal Darraj notes, in his early poetry, Darwish presents a romanticized vision of Palestine as an ancient unspoiled land, “a harmonic, organic, complete and concordant world where all things have an ancient pure origin and where the poem/poet embodies everything.” The first example is taken from (بطاقة هوية) “Identity Card”, one of Darwish’s most well known and most frequently quoted poem, which was published in 1964. The poem is addressed to an Israeli soldier inspecting the narrator’s identity card. In it, Darwish contrasts a tedious and often demeaning feature of everyday contemporary life for Palestinians – the identity check – with a description of a landscape where he and his fellow Palestinians have existed since time immemorial.

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My roots were entrenched before the birth of time
and before the opening of the eras
and before the pines, and the olive trees
and before the grass grew.  

Although Darwish names some specific features of the landscape (pines, olive trees, grass) their function does not appear to be to provide local colour but rather to serve a more symbolic purpose. The narrator, and by extension, the Palestinian people had put down roots in this place before olive trees (a species famed for their longevity) had been planted or before grass had been cultivated. The implication, then, is that they had been settled and had worked on this land for millennia (before the birth of time, before the opening of the eras) before it was claimed by the Israelis.

In his poem (بِيتَقَة) “Passport”, Darwish explores the complexity of displaced Palestinian identity:

They did not recognize me in the shadows
That suck away my colour in this Passport
And to them my wound was an exhibit
For a tourist who loves to collect photographs
They did not recognize me,
Ah… Don’t leave
The palm of my hand without the sun
Because the trees recognize me
All the songs of the rain recognise me
Don’t leave me pale like the moon!
All the birds that followed my palm
To the door of the distant airport
All the wheatfields
All the prisons
All the white tombstones
All the barbed boundaries
All the waving handkerchiefs
All the eyes were with me,
But they dropped them from my passport
Stripped of my name and identity?
On a soil I nourished with my own hands?
Today Job cried out
Filling the sky:
Don’t make an example of me again!

Oh, gentlemen, Prophets,
Don't ask the trees for their names
Don't ask the valleys who their mother is
From my forehead bursts the sward of light
And from my hand springs the water of the river
All the hearts of the people are my identity
So take away my passport!

As is so often the case in his poetry, Darwish combines the specific lived reality of the Palestinian experience of displacement with wider themes of identity, belonging and steadfast endurance in the face of suffering. On one level, the passport is an official document which certifies not only the holder’s personal identity but also their citizenship. Its bearer is entitled to travel under its protection to and from foreign countries. The references here to “tourist,” “the door of the distant airport” and “all the waving handkerchiefs” may initially conjure up banal images of travel which are facilitated by the passport. However, the references to being “Stripped of my name and identity/On a soil I nourished with my own hands” reveal the eternal fate of Palestinians, outside or inside their place of birth, they remain essentially stateless persons.

The repeated use of the verb “recognize” and the lack of recognition which the Palestinians face by the authorities is juxtaposed to the fact that the forces of nature (the trees and the rain) do recognise them as belonging to their land. This theme reoccurs later, as the poet mockingly evokes the kind of questions regarding identity to which Palestinians are routinely subjected by the authorities, both in their homeland and as displaced persons, and suggests their utter pointlessness when identity is not determined by the correct documentation but rather by a deep

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521 M. Darwish, “Passport”. There are many different anonymous English translations of this poem. See, for example, this link: [http://www.arabicnadwah.com/arabicpoetry/darwish-passport.htm](http://www.arabicnadwah.com/arabicpoetry/darwish-passport.htm)
enduring connection to place: “Don’t ask the trees for their names/Don’t ask the valleys who their mother is.”

Intertwined with the theme of identity and belonging, are references to the suffering which the search for political recognition of the Palestinian state has brought: “All the prisons/All the white tombstones/All the barbed boundaries”. This litany of afflictions also links to the figure of Job (Ayub), a figure known to Jewish, Christian and Islamic religious traditions as an innocent man who was put to the test by God inflicting on him a series of dreadful misfortunes. Noegel and Wheeler note that according to Islamic tradition, in Heaven he will be the leader of the group of “those who patiently endured.”

Despite the sombreness of the poem, there is also a tone of defiant optimism from Darwish. The Qur’an recounts that Job’s sufferings eventually ended and he was rewarded by Allah with a spring of water gushing from the earth. This image may be evoked in the reference to “from my hand springs the water of the river” but it also echoes the previous links between Palestinians and place. In this image, they have become one. Manmade boundaries disappear as does the need for documentation: “All the hearts of the people are my identity/So take away my passport!.”

In these poems, Darwish can be seen to be responding to the Zionist slogan originally used to entice European Jews to emigrate to Palestine, namely “A land without a people for a people without a land” and also to the propaganda myth that Palestine was a wilderness which only blossomed under the cultivation of the Israeli settlers.

In the next extract taken from the poem (الأرض) *The Earth* which appeared in

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1977. In it Darwish evokes Palestine as a landscape which has been the home to different groups of people that can be said to have shaped Palestinian history:

O country of prophets: Come to your fruition!
O country of cultivators: Come to your fruition!
O country of martyrs: Come to your fruition!
O country of refugees: Come to your fruition!

Here, each grouping evokes a different period of Palestine’s history in chronological order and also stresses a different aspect of the Palestinian character. Firstly, Darwish depicts Palestine as the Holy Land for the three great Abrahamic religions, a land of prophets and a landscape of historical memory with the city of Jerusalem at the heart of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.\textsuperscript{525} Tracing the history of Palestine, Said notes that:

Palestine became a predominantly Arab and Islamic country by the end of the seventh century. Almost immediately thereafter its boundaries and its characteristics—including its name in Arabic, Filastin—became known to the entire Islamic world, as much for its fertility and beauty as for its religious significance.\textsuperscript{526}

Hence, Darwish also stresses that landscape of Palestine has always been a fruitful one. Moreover, by introducing the Palestinians as \textit{cultivators}, as in the previous poem, he is emphasising their settled status on the land and he is challenging the Zionist propaganda that Palestine was an uncultivated wasteland.\textsuperscript{527}

The third description is no longer a memory of an ancient historical landscape but a more contemporary cultural memory of the changing political landscape in which Palestinians have become martyrs, in the struggle to resist the post-\textit{Nakba}. Darwish’s final description portrays Palestine as the land of refugees which can be interpreted in two ways. The displaced Palestinians themselves have become refugees in their

\textsuperscript{524} S. K. Jayyusi, \textit{Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology}, p.149.
\textsuperscript{525} M. M. Šālīh, ‘\textit{Arba’īn haqīqāh ‘an al-qadhiyah al-filastīniyah} (Forty Facts about the Palestinian Issue).
\textsuperscript{526} E. Said, \textit{The Question of Palestine}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{527} Šālīh notes that archaeological remains suggest that Palestine had one of the earliest settled populations, with evidence of agriculture being practiced 11,000 BC. The Palestinian city known as Ariha is regarded as one of the oldest cities, having been established c.8000 years ago.
own land but in addition they have been displaced by a nation who were themselves refugees, namely the Jews, bringing to mind Said’s notion of the “victims of victims.”

In Darwish’s earlier poetry, then, he often looks back to what Palestine was, evoking memories of its past to refute Zionist myths of the present. However, a recurrent image in some of his later works suggests that the landscape is equated with the wounded body of the Palestinian people and is drenched in blood like his own memories. As Ken Taylor observed:

Landscape […] is not simply what we see, but a way of seeing; we see it with our eye but interpret it with our mind and ascribe values to the landscape for intangible – spiritual– reasons.  

“O Those who Pass between Fleeting Words” became one of Darwish’s most famous poems, in which he directly addresses the Israelis (you) as the enemy occupiers of his homeland and overtly tells them to go and leave his people in peace. Darwish here makes a direct link between the land and the Palestinians with his use of the descriptor bleeding:

And we have what you lack: a bleeding homeland of a bleeding people
A homeland fit for oblivion or memory.

The landscape here is like a living organism, and a symbiotic relationship has been formed between homeland and people: Palestine suffers in sympathy with the Palestinians. The poet’s observation that we [Palestinians] have what you [Israelis] lack is deeply ironic, for in terms of the contemporary geopolitical landscape, this territory clearly belongs to the Israelis. However, Darwish maps out an emotional and spiritual landscape in which the present incumbents can stay no claim. The very title of the poem suggests that unlike the Palestinians, their presence is merely transient,

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528 K. Taylor “Landscape and memory”.
not permanent; they are simply passing through. For the Palestinians of the post-
*Nakba* their homeland will always provoke contradictory emotions, for times past
must always be remembered but may be better forgotten.

It was this same paradoxical opposition of remembering/forgetting which
Darwish explored with such intensity in his sequence of prose poems in *(ذاكرة للنسيدان)*
*Memory for Forgetfulness*. As Zain Asgalan points out, in this collection, the
difficulty of living with memories became a central issue for him as he explored how
living in exile evokes the dream of return and the desire to return to a time and place
which has been lost. The more Palestinians remember the past, the more intense their
longing for the lost Paradise becomes. Thus, he suggests that perhaps in order to live
in peace in the present one must learn to forget the memories of a homeland that is
lost forever.

A number of Arab critics including Asgalan claim to see a significant change
in the treatment of memory as a theme in Darwish’s pre- and post-Oslo Accords
poetry, arguing that his crucial historical disappointment for the Palestinians in 1993
changed Darwish’s approach and that as a result of his loss of hope of returning to
his homeland he began to focus more on self-identity rather than national identity.

In *(حالة حصار)* *(State of Siege)* written in Ramallah, 2002, as the intensity of the
conflict between Palestinians and Israelis reached its highest level since the 1967
Six-Day War, his memory of the soil of his homeland is correlated with the smell of
blood as the following verse shows:

المكان هو الراشحة
عندما أتذكر أرضنا
أشم دم الراشحة
Place is a scent
When I remember a land
I smell the scent of blood
and I long for my displaced self

The mention of blood in relation to the landscape of memory in this instance seems very different from the poet’s more idealized image of the symbolic wounding in which the Palestinian homeland and people seemed fused together by a blood bond. Sacks believes that:

“State of Siege” betokens, strikingly and painfully, a specificity of place. It bears witness to the colonizing violence of the state and it also gives one to read the intimate inscription of a wounding upon the body of the poetic text.  

Thus, the image on the blood-stained land here evokes a much more directly personal memory of a man who has experienced the bloodshed of violent political conflict at first hand like so many Palestinians. Robert Fisk, a journalist who spent many years covering conflicts in the Middle East, including Palestine, commented:

Blood is not essentially terrible. It is about life. But it smells. Stay in hospital during a war and you will become accustomed to the chemical smell of blood. It is quite normal. Doctors and nurses are used to it. So am I. But when I smell it in war, it becomes an obscenity.

The journalist’s observation is an interesting one since it is more common in literary texts for blood to be evoked in terms of its vividness of colour rather than its smell but here in giving a documentary account of its impact on his senses Fisk summons up the carnage of war as an olfactory memory not a visual one.

530 M. Darwish, ḥalat ḥiṣār (State of Siege), p. 75.
In her exploration of the power of smell in her book *A Natural History of the Senses* Diane Ackerman argues that of all the senses this is most closely linked to human memory:

Nothing is more memorable than smell. Smells detonate softly in our memory like poignant landmines hidden under the weedy mass of years. Hit a tripwire of smell and memories explode all at once. A complex vision leaps out of the undergrowth.

Here imagery in referring to smell and memory, intentionally or not, also suggests something of the traumatic effect which smell can have on our memories. It takes someone back to a forgotten time and place almost against his or her will, as seems to be the case in these lines penned by Darwish. Here the mature poet realises that the soil of Palestine has been so saturated in blood that the only memories he can summon up when thinking of the earth of his homeland which he had celebrated so many times for its fertility is this all pervading smell of blood and he wishes this were not the case.

It is worth mentioning that Darwish returned to the theme of the blood-soaked homeland one year later in his elegy for Edward Said, where in the space of two sections of the poem he repeats the word ‘blood’ thirteen times in total, as though symbolically saturating his own land of words in the same way as the Palestinian homeland had been saturated.

One of the most emotionally charged features of the man-made landscape are houses, for it is these structures in which we invest so much of ourselves, transforming them into homes. In another striking image, seen here in two of his poems, he links memory (or rather its loss) and personal identity with a particular space and a specific action:

من كل نافذة رميت لب ذكريات كفكرة البطنَه.  

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From every window I have thrown away seeds of memories like a
watermelon's skin.

A strikingly similar image involving windows and memories is found in (تلك) "That is Her Image and this is the lover’s suicide":

رأيت الذكريات تقر من شباك جارتنا وتسقط في جيوب الفائنين.  

I have seen the memories escaping from our neighbour’s window
And falling inside the pockets of the newcomers.

Although these images appear initially similar, close analysis suggests
Darwish is expressing two quite different ideas, although both relate to the loss of
home and the memories associated with it.

The watermelon which Darwish mentions in the first example was commonly
grown in certain regions of Palestine, with Al Birwa, Darwish’s home village being
one location in particular that grew this fruit. On one level then, the act of preparing
a watermelon for eating can be interpreted as a simple reflection of an everyday
domestic action one can imagine Darwish remembering from childhood. Elsewhere
in his work, though, he specifically refers to this fruit in connection to his memories
of exile and the effect that this had on his grandfather who had spent his entire life
working the lands they were forced to leave behind:

My grandfather died with his gaze fixed on a land imprisoned behind a fence.
A land whose skin they [the Israelis] had changed from wheat, sesame,
maize, watermelon and honeydews to tough apples. My grandfather died
counting sunsets, seasons and heartbeats on the fingers of his withered hands.
He dropped like a fruit forbidden a branch to lean its age against. They
destroyed his heart.  

534 M. Darwish, 'Uhibbuk aw lâ 'uhibbuk (I love you; I love you not), p. 27.
535 M. Darwish, Tilka šuratuhā wa hadhā 'intihār al-'āshiq (That is her Image, and this is a Suicide
of the Lover), p. 10.
536 M. Darwish, Dhakirā lil-nisyaān (Memory for Forgetfulness), August, Beirut, 1982.
For Darwish, then, watermelons are linked quite literally to bittersweet memories: the recollected sweetness of the real fruit combined with the bitterness of what the loss of home represented for his grandfather and the unrequited longing associated with this. As expressed here, opening up every window in a house (the poet’s own mind, perhaps) and casting out what remains of his memories is not a casual act but a deliberate choice. Having taken all the sustenance from them he can, he throws away the core which remains, the means, perhaps, by which Darwish attempts to deal with unpalatable aspects of his past life.

In the second image, however, although some elements are similar – memories exiting in a house by the window – there is also a key difference. These memories are escaping and then being pocketed away, not by the occupants of the house, but by someone else. The implication is that the narrator’s neighbours were unable to hold on to their memories: they were taken away from them. Perhaps the other key difference here is the perspective in these images relating to memory and to home. The narrator in the first image is active – he casts away his memories from the windows –; he has reconciled himself to forgetfulness as the lesser of two evils. The narrator in the second image is a passive and helpless bystander: he watches memories escape and can do nothing to intervene.

Just as the first image can be tied to a time and a place in Darwish’s own past, the second could possibly have been inspired by a real traumatic incident remembered from his own past or possibly relate to accounts of displacement retold by other Palestinians. In a book of contemporary testimonies relating to Israeli attacks on Jenin in 2002, one of the women recounting her story remembers a small but telling detail: “The soldiers swept through the house, throwing all the belongings
out of the upper windows as sport.” This kind of wanton destruction is an all too commonplace scene in conflict.

Perhaps the most telling point in both these images is that when Darwish conjures up images of homes, these locations are associated with bittersweet memories or of memories stolen by others which will never be returned. For the Palestinian in exile, whilst the yearning for the homeland remains strong, feelings towards the concept of home are more ambivalent.

The final example explored here from Darwish’s work demonstrates how he uses intertextual allusion or memories evoked by previous texts to express his own memories and to create a landscape of longing. He helps the reader to spot the intertextual memories being evoked here by the rather striking title which he gives his poem: (كشمبد في معلقة الشاعر الجاهلي) “Like a hand tattoo in the Jahili poet's ode,” a phrase which reoccurs in the latter stages of the poem:

Place is the passion.
Those are our relics, like a hand tattoo
In the Jahili poets ode, they pass through us
and we through them- he, the one I once was, said to me
when I did not know enough words to know the names of our trees
or to call the birds that gather in me by their names.
I was not able to memorize the words to protect the place
From being transferred to a strange name fenced in
with eucalyptus trees. While the posters told us" You were never here. 538

At the more immediately obvious level, the landscape described here is the recognizable contemporary reality of the occupied territories. The former Arabic place names of villages and landmarks have been replaced by the strange, new Hebrew names they have received from the Israeli settlers. Said also comments on

538 M. Darwish, If I were Another, p. 173
this erasure of names and of Arab identity in “Memory, Inequality, and Power” noting:

Most of the names of the Arab towns cannot be found on the road signs. [...] A Jew traveling on the almost empty roads of the West Bank would think that there are no longer any Arabs.\textsuperscript{539}

Of more immediate concern for the narrator is the fact that he has begun to forget the specific Palestinian Arabic names which were used to refer to the native flora and fauna of his homeland. Elsewhere in his work, Darwish argues that “To hold on to your memory – that is homeland”,\textsuperscript{540} thus, this forgetfulness seems to suggest that the very environment of Palestine itself is threatened with disappearance which indeed appears to be the case. For the narrator also notes that there has been another change to the landscape: the place is now “hedged with eucalyptus.”

Here Darwish reflects a real concern for his fellow Palestinians: the Israeli policy of uprooting the ancient olive trees so closely associated with the region and replacing these by planting non-native species, usually conifers or eucalyptus. As well as destroying a valuable economic resource which was the basis of many traditional Palestinian businesses, olive trees have a particular place in Palestinian and Arab culture, and Darwish frequently uses their symbolism in his poetry, as we have seen. The most recent Israeli tree-planting project involves creating a 12 km strip of fast-growing eucalyptus along the edge of the Gaza Strip for defensive purposes. Previous tree planting schemes saw non-native pines planted to cover the ruins of decimated Arab villages and to change the composition of the native soil, rendering it unfit for future cultivation.\textsuperscript{541} This phrase from Darwish’s poetry is a

good illustration of how he can take a simple image and imbue it with multiple layers of meaning for a Palestinian reader.

For anyone with a knowledge of Arabic literature, however, as previously noted, the poem also reveals a dense tissue of intertextual connections with Arab poetic tradition. The key to understanding these is to be found firstly in the reference to the *mu'allaga* of the ancient poet. The *mu'allaqat* [often translated as the Hanging Odes] are the most famous examples of the *qasida* (ode), a form of pre-Islamic poetry which has gained iconic status in the Arabic-speaking world. The *qasida* follows a set tripartite structure (the *nasib*, or erotic prelude; the *rahil*, or chase; and the *fakhr*, or boast) and contains obligatory motifs, so the poet’s ingenuity was revealed in how he modified these elements creatively. The first of these set motifs, with which every one of the *Mu'allaqat* begins, is the *atlal* (ruins) which is intended to be an evocation of the abandoned encampment of the poet’s beloved. Only traces remain of her presence and for the narrator this is a landscape bringing to mind love and loss. As Gabriel Levin explains: “All that is needed is the faintest of signs, a token of an ancient passion, and remembrance ignites like a fuse.”

It now becomes clear why Darwish begins with the words: “The place is a feeling. Those are our remains.” He is emulating the *atlal* of the classical *qasida* and mourning an absence. Darwish provides a further intertextual link with his poetic ancestors by inserting an image which is used in at least two of the poems: (کوشش ید) “like a hand tattoos.” Firstly, the opening lines from the version by Tarafa:

542 As R. A. Nicholson explains, in *A Literary History of the Arabs*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, legend tells that before the rise of Islam, seven poems were transcribed in golden letters on banners of Egyptian linen and hung from (hence *Mu'allaqat*) the Ka’ba during the Sacred Months of Peace, when Bedouin tribes called a truce and gathered together at ‘Ukaz, near Mecca, to engage in poetry reciting contests.


There are traces yet of Khaula in the stony tract of Thahmad
Apparent like the tattoo-marks seen on the back of a hand;
There my companions halted their beasts awhile over me
Saying, “Don’t perish of sorrow; bear it with fortitude!” (my emphases)

And secondly from Zuhair:

Are there still blackened orrs in the stone-waste of Ed-Darráj
And El-Mutathallam, mute witnesses to where Umm Aufá once dwelt?
A lodging where she abode in Er-Rakmatán, that appears
like the criss-cross tattooings upon the sinews of a wrist.545 (my emphases)

However, Darwish’s inclusion of the quote from the traditional qasida only
serves to highlight the fact that whilst in the original atlal scenes the indelible
remains of what was the encampment bear witness to a former presence, in his own
version no traces of the beloved [Palestine] remain: “The signs say to us/You were
not here.”

Darwish thus masterfully intertwines references to a contemporary
Palestinian landscape shaped by politics with motifs borrowed from ancient Arab
poetry but this is more than mere literary allusion for effect. As Levin notes, the atlal
itself “should perhaps be read not only in terms of personal loss but as a kind of
communal memento mori,” since it has been interpreted as a poetic response to the
loss of an entire way of life, as the Bedouin gave up their formerly nomadic
existence for the sedentary lifestyle.546 Thus, Levin argues:

The motif of the paradisal lost garden lies at the heart of the nasib [the
opening section of the qasida of which the atlal forms the major part],
embedded in the poet’s sifting over the vestiges of his beloved’s encampment
and in the ensuing resurgence of memories. […] a wistful backward glance at
the briefest, yet most intoxicating, of earthly paradises, swathed during the
short spring in a carpet of delicate blooms.

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http://parnassusreview.com/archives/408
For this reason the evocation of the *qasida* also allows Darwish to tap into a wellspring of Arab collective cultural memories of loss and nostalgia which prove to be the mirror image of those of the Palestinian people in the wake of the life-changing *Nakba*. Their shift from being a settled people to nomadic refugees is a startling reversal of the original cultural memory and their backward glance is even more melancholy, for the remains of their former existence have already been entirely obliterated.

### 6.7 Conclusion

As Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish illustrate in their respective work, memory is much more than a recollection of what has transpired. It provides access to our perception of past events, and in the case of Palestine the struggle between conflicting historical memories has made a significant contribution to the current political struggle between Palestinians and Israelis, since it also shapes their perception of present lived realities. Personal and collective memories also play a crucial role in the identity formation of individuals and communities, since they serve to represent the past as a coherent narrative that creates continuity between it and the present. In ancient times, before the written codification of Arabic, the Arab poet served as the repository of memories for his tribe. As a Palestinian poet, Darwish viewed one of his key roles as being the narration of memories relating to Palestinian cultural identity in order to prevent these from being erased from the nation’s collective memory and consigned to oblivion. In documenting the details of their previous way of life and in recording their intimate remembrances of particular places, Darwish also uses his work as a means of authenticating their right to belong.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Research findings

This final chapter will endeavour to outline the findings of this research in relation to the original aims of this thesis and the questions which it sought to address.

This thesis had two stated aims, namely:

1. To explore the notion of identity as a literary construct, by focusing in particular, on the representation of self-identity in a selected corpus of works by Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish which highlight the concepts of ethnic and national identities.

2. To critically evaluate different approaches to and definitions of identity by analysing a range of relevant sociological and psychological theories of identity and exploring the influence of Post-colonial literary theory on the study of identity, with specific reference to the cosmopolitan Diasporic Palestinian identity represented in the work of Said and Darwish.

The hybrid methodology which was chosen to interrogate the various facets of post-colonial identity deliberately lay at what Kim de Vries, an Identity Studies scholar called “the messy borders between disciplines” and borrowed freely from areas which are themselves hybrid areas, such as Diasporic Studies, Trauma Studies and Memory Studies. Said's deep understanding of this art form led him to draw parallels between the essentially musical concept of ‘counterpoint’ and his ‘contrapuntal’ reading of the different ‘voices’ in literary texts, as previously noted. The thesis was then inspired by Said’s own contrapuntal technique of close textual

reading to make intertextual connections with relevant historical or biographical narratives. This proved to be an effective means of revealing possible new readings of imagery and metaphors within the texts which were analysed. In particular, analysing Darwish’s use of historical narrative as intertext, revealed multiple layers of meaning with respect to both the conceptualisation of self-identity and Palestinian identity. In addition, reading the texts of Said and Darwish against each other also gave new insights into the process of self-identity construction, particularly given that in the Palestinian case, the concept of national identity has acquired added layers of complexity that mean it cannot be readily analysed using a single theoretical model of post-colonial identity as might be the case for some other independent Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa that were previously occupied by British, French or Italian colonialists.

Four specific research questions were proposed in relation to the corpus of texts chosen for study:

1. What does a close textual reading of the works of Said and Darwish reveal about their respective conceptualizations of identity and more specifically, about their understanding of the construction of Palestinian identity?

2. To what extent can theories of post-colonial hybrid identity be used to inform the reader’s understanding of the work of Said and Darwish with its multiple affiliations to homeland, ethnicity, and cosmopolitanism?

3. How do Said and Darwish represent the theme of identity in crisis in their respective works, with specific reference to the trauma of displacement and Diasporic exile experienced collectively by the Palestinian nation post-1948 and post-1967?
4. What does the work of Said and Darwish tell us about the links between personal and collective memory and the importance that this plays in the formation and maintenance of self-identity and collective identity?

However, it is not possible to answer these as a series of individual questions since the issues which they point to are inextricably linked and, indeed, the adoption of an Identity Studies approach argues for a non-compartmentalized approach to the analysis of human identity. Therefore, the following thoughts are offered on the insight gained from this research.

The research began by exploring the historical context of Palestine because it is clear that attempting to understand how Said and Darwish conceptualised self-identity would be inconceivable without taking into consideration the circumstances which led to the unique tragedy which is Palestine. It was equally important to grasp the broader context of intellectual and social movements in the Arab world such as Nasserism, since this provided an understanding of how Palestinian writers such as Said and Darwish came to conceive of literature as both an act of resistance and an expression of love of the homeland. This also suggested that a particular approach must be adopted when reading Darwish’s poetry since as Ahlam Yahya states: “Poetry must attempt to have its whispers heard because its screams and shouts could never be heard in the midst of the loudness of violence.”

Understanding the concept of literature as resistance also highlights the links between the expressions of personal and Palestinian identity in Said’s and Darwish’s writings and those of other Palestinian authors in terms not only of their themes and affiliations but also in how they situate themselves in relation to their cosmopolitan approach to identity.

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An attempt was made to construct a model of the spaces of self-identity visualising this as a series of onion-like layers with naming at the centre since this can be viewed as how we construct our selfhood, distinguishing ‘I’ (Edward Wadie Said or Mahmoud Darwish) from ‘you’ (family and friends), or affiliating ourselves as ‘we’ (Arabs, Palestinians, humans) and situating ourselves in relation to the Other. Analysis of these spaces of self-identity revealed that although the biographies of Said and Darwish differ in many significant respects, they share significant similarities in how they conceptualise their self-identity as being a work in progress. Darwish captured the essence of postcolonial identity in this line from his aptly entitled poem (منذ الآن أنت غيرك) “From now on you are somebody else”: “Identity is what we bequeth, not what we inherit, what we invent, not what we remember. Identity is the distorted image in the mirror that we must break the minute we grow fond of it.”549 He argues that identity is not something that we simply inherit; it should not be dependent on our family and upbringing, nor should it be dependent on the version of history which the community and nation in which we are raised likes to tell itself. Rather our identity is what we choose to make of it: we are our own creation, in a constant state of becoming.

Whilst living in exile, Said and Darwish attempted to approach this challenge positively, using it as an opportunity to engage creatively with the issue of identity, exploring the multiple strands which are woven together in its construction, and the consequences, both psychological and emotional, which result when these connections are lost or torn asunder. Like other post-colonial writers such as Homi Bhabha and Salman Rushdie, Said appeared to find the Diasporic experience or being “Out of Place,” a genuinely stimulating one in intellectual terms.

549 M. Darwish, A River Dies of Thirst, p.156.
For Darwish, the experience of repeated exilic displacement marked the whole of his poetic oeuvre, inspiring him to connect his own intimate experience of suffering across time and space with diverse narratives of exile, thus bringing a universal dimension to his work. In doing so, he gave voice to the millions of otherwise voiceless individuals from economic migrants to displaced indigenous peoples who live a Diasporic existence, the “paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition” according to literary theorist Homi Bhabha.550

With regard to how the twin traumas of the Nakba and the Naksa have impacted on Palestinian identity and how the effects of this have been explored in the writing of Said and the poetry of Darwish, it was suggested that theoretical perspectives on trauma can help to shed light not only on how this phenomenon has affected the lives of ordinary Palestinians but also how both Said and Darwish have drawn on their own experiences of trauma to voice the repressed memories of the Palestinian people and to rescue these from oblivion by means of their work. Using different techniques, both Said and Darwish make those connections and in so doing succeed in describing the indescribable.

The novelist Jeanette Winterson551 has highlighted the role that literature can play in helping traumatized individuals to find a voice:

All of us when in deep trauma, find we hesitate, we stammer; there are long pauses in our speech. The thing is stuck. We get our language back through the language of others. We can turn to the poem. We can open the book. Somebody has been there for us and deep-dived the words.

For those who have been witnesses of the unspeakable and those silenced by trauma, writing can give a voice; it can help individuals to recover and cope with

550 H. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 9.
painful memories, to heal the invisible wounds inflicted by trauma at the personal or community level. It can provide them with the strength needed to resist.

Scholars of Memory Studies such Halbwachs and Assmann are clear that memory is not simply a means of recollection. Personal and collective memories also play a crucial role in the identity formation of individuals and communities, as we use them to construct a narrative that creates continuity between past and present, thus shaping who we think we are. It is not surprising then that the work of Said and Darwish should highlight the importance of cultural memories, and the stories that nations tell about their past, for in the case of Palestine the struggle between conflicting historical memories has helped to shape Palestinian and Israeli perceptions of present lived realities.

The analysis also revealed an interesting strand in Darwish’s work which related to the particular relation he creates between memory, landscape and identity, an area which is producing very interesting readings of his work. The novelist Margaret Drabble eloquently expressed the importance of the link between landscape and identity when she wrote:

> The landscape […] is a living link between what we were and what we have become. This is one of the reasons why we feel such a profound and apparently disproportionate anguish when a loved landscape is altered out of recognition; we lose not only a place but ourselves, a continuity between the shifting phases of our life.\(^{552}\)

This is exactly the sentiment voiced by Darwish when he considers the changing landscape of Palestine for not only do the man-made modification by the Israelis break the link between his own remembered past and the present, it also puts

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into question the cultural memories of the Palestinian people, which are bound up with their ancestral homeland.

Said highlighted that he believed his role as a writer was to convey the hybrid in-betweenness of the traumatised identity of Palestinians by recounting the “fragments, memories, disjointed scenes, intimate particulars”\textsuperscript{553} that constitute Palestinian identity, to convey what was referred to as \textit{la’am} (no/yes) logic: the desire to forget the past and simultaneously the fear of forgetting it. It is this same logic reflected in Darwish’s own tribute to his departed friend, a description apt for both their personal experiences of Palestinian identity: “And I am neither there, nor here.”\textsuperscript{554}

7.2 Limitations of this Research

One of the key limitations of the model proposed for conceptualising self-identity is that it only deals with seven spaces of self-identity when there are many more significant spaces waiting to be explored. Some of the areas that it omits are considered to be of crucial importance in identity studies. The most obvious of these is gender and sexuality in the work of these two men, and particularly Darwish, as there appears to be very little research currently in this area, possibly because these areas may be considered taboo by some in an Islamic context. The mode of masculinity which these two men adopted and their relationship with significant male others, most notably his father in Said’s case and his grandfather in Darwish’s, were clearly of key importance in their formation of self-identity and would merit further investigation.

\textsuperscript{553} E. Said, \textit{After the Last Sky}, p. xi.
\textsuperscript{554} M. Darwish, \textit{If I Were Another}, p. 185.
A second category which was not fully explored was age and self-identity. Scholars of Identity Studies are becoming increasingly interested in how aging affects our perception of ourselves and of how we narrate ourselves in terms of our memories. To a certain extent, Said’s concept of Late Style begins to address this area in terms of artistic creativity but there is clearly much to be said, particularly in relation to the Diasporic Palestinian communities, about how national identity and affiliations are affected when the Dream of Return fades in the face of continued disappointment.

One other area which could potentially be explored for both writers is how illness impacted on their self-identity. Certainly it motivated Said to produce his autobiography and the spectre of mortality haunts many of Darwish’s later works as he awaited or recovered from heart surgery and it would be interesting to see if close intertextual reading would reveal other aspects of the representation of this.

A further limitation of this thesis could be said to be the celebratory vision of Palestinian memory recall since it draws the reader’s attention to the negative impact of recalling post-Nakba Palestinian memory. This reading may be perceived as one-sided, ignoring the fact that the remembrance of violent events might create antagonism between Palestinian and Jewish memories. It is useful here to consider the perspective of Daniel Barenboim. In quoting the Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz: “The cruelty of memory manifests itself in remembering what is dispelled in forgetfulness,” Barenboim highlights the dilemma that remembering violence may in turn create an intolerant atmosphere, which perpetuates negative feelings between peoples such as Palestinians and Israelis, and Jews and Germans. As he so

eloquently notes, “Certain matters require the generosity of forgetfulness, and others demand the honesty of remembrance.”556

Finally, one area which merited much greater attention was that of online identity and the formation and maintenance of Palestinian identity. As the brief mention of this in the chapter concerning cultural memory showed, exploration of this area could be a particularly fruitful one, with Aouragh’s book on Transnationalism and the Construction of Identity on the Internet highlighting the potential of studies in this field.557

Both Said and Darwish espoused an attitude of tolerance and co-existence throughout their personal lives, which was also reflected in their literary outputs and critical work.

556 Ibid., p. 169.
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