UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF Arts And HUMANITIES

<u>English</u>

Reading Egypt after Edward Said

A Study in the Worldliness of Secular Criticism

by

Islam Aly El-Naggar

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2019

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

<u>ABSTRACT</u>

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This thesis aims to extend and mobilize Edward Said's critical thought through a reading of three contemporary Egyptian novels: Bahaa Tahir's *Love in Exile* (1995), Radwa Ashour's *Granada* (1998), and Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999). Whereas previous accounts of Said's critical corpus have focused mainly on Said's affiliation with Foucauldian theories of knowledge and power, this thesis considers how Said's secular and humanist philology, his reflections on lost causes, contrapuntal reading, worldliness, and the public intellectual provide a more nuanced critical frame of reference through which varied modes of essentialism can be identified and challenged. More specifically, these readings trace how concepts such as human subjectivity, political agency, and cultural resistance are mediated in and through the narrative conventions and generic codes of these three Egyptian novels. By bringing these novels into conversation with Said's critical thought, my readings seek to identify the limitations, as well as the strengths of Saidian reading, particularly (though not only) in respect of considerations of literary form.

The introductory chapter of this thesis presents an overview of the rationale behind rethinking Said's Orientalist critique and the selection of the literary texts. Chapter Two considers how Radwa Ashour's *Granada* registers the multiplicity of the secular traces of the Islamic past as it is refracted through multiple interpretations of cultural loss. Continuing my concerns with the importance of secular modes of tracing/reading the past *contrapuntally* with the present, chapter three considers how Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* stages an extended critical dialogue through the writing of an English woman (whose letters and notes disclose many features of colonial Egypt) met by the reading of an Egyptian woman after the passage of more than ninety years. Finally, chapter four considers how Bahaa Tahir's *Love in Exile* uses the conventions of narrative fiction to represent the struggles of the Egyptian public intellectual to 'speak truth to power' in the codified language of print journalism. In the conclusion, I try to draw out the wider political implications of these Saidian readings of contemporary Egyptian fiction and suggest ways in which they might also allow us to better understand the challenges of imagining national solidarity and political agency in post-revolutionary Egypt.

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Academic Thesis: Declaration Of Authorship

I, Islam Aly El-Naggar declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Reading Egypt after Edward Said: A Study in the Worldliness of Secular Criticism

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Parts of this work have been published as: an article in the postgraduate journal *Emergence,* (Volume IX, Winter 2017)

Signed: ....

Date: ....

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my most incalculable debt goes to my supervision team. I am particularly indebted to Professor Stephen Morton (my first doctoral supervisor) for his immense knowledge, academic guidance, and understanding which was so pivotal to the production of this thesis. My sincere gratitude also goes to Dr Ranka Primorac (my second doctoral supervisor) for all the support she has given. In addition to my supervisors, I would like to thank my upgrade examiners: Dr Lisa Bernasek and Dr Devorah Baum (University of Southampton) for their insightful comments and encouragement which motivated me to expand my research further by developing specific critical concepts throughout the thesis. I would like also to express my special appreciation and thanks to Professor Mohamed Enani, (English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University), the first academic figure who motivated me to develop an interest in Edward Said. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr Lindsey Moore (University of Lancaster) and Dr James Jordan (University of Southampton) for agreeing to examine this thesis. Last but not the least, I would like to thank my husband, my mother, and my children for bearing with me and sharing the hard times writing my PhD thesis.

Chapter 1 Introduction

How has the contemporary Egyptian novel addressed the legacy of imperialism and the politics of religion and nationalism in the Arab world? And how might the secular-critical thought of Edward Said help to shed light on the narrative and rhetorical strategies that contemporary Egyptian fiction employs to mediate these topics? Through close readings of three recent Egyptian novels, this thesis considers how Said's thought can help to make sense of the ways in which the history of imperialism and nationalism in Egypt and the Arab world informs and inflects our understanding of the worldliness of Arab writing. In doing so, it claims that Said's critical thought offers a set of conceptual tools that question and challenge the essentialist assumptions which have shaped predominant narratives of religious nationalism in the Arab world. I address and question how Arabs map their political present and future by scrutinising such conceptual maps in three Egyptian novels: Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999), Bahaa Tahir's *Love in Exile* (2001)[1], and Radwa Ashour's *Granada* (2003).[2] This is not to suggest that Said's critical thought has the status of a master discourse. On the contrary, by reading these novels after Said, I also consider how the formal composition of these texts also raises questions about the limitations of Said's approach to literature and culture.

1.1   Essentialism, Arabic Literary Criticism, and the Legacy of Orientalist Critique

Essentialism and anti-essentialism are not generally thought of as privileged terms in Said's critical lexicon. Yet, towards the end of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said criticises different forms of nativism, in particular narratives of anti-colonial nationalism, on the grounds that they reproduce fixed colonial stereotypes of a racial or cultural essence. In his article 'Yeats and Decolonization', reprinted as a chapter section in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said spells out the problems with nativism and the assumption that this is 'the only choice for a resisting, decolonizing nationalism':

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[1] This translated version is based on the Arabic edition, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā (dar al-adab/*the House of Arts, 1995).

[2] This translated version is based on the Arabic edition, Granata, which is volume 1 out of Thulathiyat Gharnata (The Granada Trilogy), Beirut (*Al-Muassassa al-arabiyya lil-dirasat wa al-nashr/*The Arabic Institutions for Studies and Publication, 1998).

> [...] to accept nativism is to accept the consequences of imperialism, the racial, religious, and political divisions imposed by imperialism itself. To leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essences like négritude, Irishness, Islam, or Catholicism is to abandon history for essentializations that have the power to turn human beings against each other; often, this abandonment of the secular world has led to a sort of millenarianism if the movement has had a mass base, or it has degenerated into small-scale private craziness, or into an unthinking acceptance of stereotypes, myths, animosities, and traditions encouraged by imperialism. Such programmes are hardly what great resistance movements had imagined as their goals.[3]

As Said makes clear here and later in *Culture and Imperialism*, this essentialist form of thinking was one of the legacies of imperialism: 'Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or black, or Western or Oriental'.[4] Reading Said's work recursively in light of such claims, we can begin to see how Said's critique of Orientalist systems of thought and representation, his critical reflections on secularism, and of nationalist narratives that romanticise a certain idea of a pre-colonial past raise profound questions about the essentialising of memory, place and culture in the Egyptian national imaginary. How has the contemporary Egyptian novel contested fixed Orientalist stereotypes of Egypt and the Arab world? In what ways has the novel's use of narrative techniques, including shifting focalization and certain kinds of narrative constructions of space, and time, altered our ways of thinking about the historical experience of imperialism, oppression, and resistance in Egypt and the Arab world? And how might considerations of literary form, genre, and figurative language in recent Egyptian fiction challenge fixed modes of thinking about history, place, and culture in ways that speak to the current political conjuncture in Egypt and the Arab world?

This thesis seeks to intervene in critical debates in Anglophone postcolonial literary studies in the United States and the United Kingdom, which have expanded the scope of the field to include Arab literature. Arab literature has, until recently, 'occupied a marginal position in postcolonial scholarship', as Lindsey Moore has argued.[5] Moore also emphasises the importance of understanding 'the

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[3] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. 276.
[4] Ibid, pp. 407-408.
[5] See Lindsey Moore, *Arab, Muslim, Woman: Voice and Vision in Postcolonial Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 3.

Arab world' for the contemporariness of postcolonial studies—a scope of interest that 'requires comprehensive analysis, not dismissal'.[6] As a case in point, she asks: 'How do Arab uprisings challenge our understanding of "the postcolonial?"'.[7] The Egyptian novels I focus on in this study do not stand for the literary representations of Arab Spring. Yet, my reading of these novels *after* Said can enhance our understanding of the dynamics of Egyptian revolutionary discourses and/or the discourses of resistance that shape the agency of the Egyptians as political subjects. As we will see in the conclusion, the mass rebellion in January (2011) and its aftermath can be examined, traced, and reflected upon in terms of the varied Egyptian national trajectories and the cultural spheres that they underpinned. For now, suffice to say that by submitting Said's secular critique as well as other Saidian concepts such as 'contrapuntal criticism', 'inventory', and 'lost causes' to a sustained geopolitical critique, this thesis attempts to shed light on the nature of the Egyptian collectivity and the ethics of solidarity, national politics, and the political imaginary of the masses as well as the Egyptian national elites. In doing so, '[w]e can transvalue Said's reconnection of a canon to its occluded engagements and attachments by using postcolonial methodologies to reveal Arab "structures of attitude and reference" and thus "newly activated, reinforced" histories'.[8]

Said's contribution to Arabic literary criticism has not yet been traced in a detailed scholarly study. Many Saidian scholars focus instead on Said's engagement with the European writings of Austen, Camus, Conrad, Kipling, Yeats, and the critical thought of Auerbach, Vico, Foucault, Spitzer, Gramsci, and Williams. However, I argue that Said's contribution to Arabic literary and cultural criticism should not be underestimated. It is true that Said was primarily a critic of European literary culture, who used the conceptual tools of Foucauldian discourse analysis, Gramscian-inspired Marxist criticism, and a Vicovian-inflected philological humanism to question the claims of orientalist and neo-orientalist discourse. Yet this approach was informed by his position as an Arab intellectual who systematically defended and critiqued Arab causes, particularly the plight of Palestinians living under military occupation. In this regard, by tracing Said's

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[6] Lindsey Moore, *Narrating Postcolonial Arab Nations: Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon, Palestine* (Routledge, 2017), p.2.
[7] Ibid, p. 2.
[8] Ibid, p. 7.

extended critique of Orientalist discourse as an asymmetrical relationship of power/ knowledge between the West and the East, Christianity and Islam through to his writings on Palestine, and his more recent critique of fixed ideas of cultural and religious nationalism, one can also develop a Saidian critique of such modes of religious nationalism both in Egypt and in the Middle East. By focusing on the anti-essentialist ethos of Said's mode of interpretation, this thesis traces connections between Said's criticism of imperialism and of the essentialism of anti-colonial and religious nationalism(s), particularly Arab nationalism.

Said's intellectual legacy has been partially understood in terms of identity politics in Western cultural thought. In a similar vein, Said's influence on Arabic literary and critical thought is partly based on a misunderstanding of the nuances of his thought. As Sabry Hafez explains, '*Orientalism* was the book that introduced Said to the Arab world. Unfortunately, it was badly translated'.[9] As a consequence, Said's critique of the politics of representations are misconceived and mistranslated as identity politics among Arab readers and intellectuals alike. Thus, as Hafez explains, 'instead of seeing Said's seminal work as exposing (and undermining) the basis and motivation of the orientalist discourse, they [Arab readers] considered it the latest in a series of diatribes against the misrepresentation of Islam in European discourse'.[10] In this way, 'Said's implicit call for the orient to represent itself and purge its culture of the traces and sedimentation of the orientalist legacy was lost'.[11] Against this limited reading of Said's orientalist legacy, Said's critique of some seminal Arabic fiction signals the

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[9] Sabry Hafez, 'Edward Said's Intellectual Legacy in The Arab World', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 33.3 (2004), pp. 76-90, (P. 81). As Hafez explains, 'The Arabic translation of *Orientalism* is confused, ambiguous and suffers from many problems, the most obvious of which is the transformation of a lucid and enjoyable book into a difficult text laden with incomprehensible terminology.' It was Adonis who introduced one of his disciples to Said, who translated *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. With Said's wider involvement in the Arab intellectual scene, he came to realize the negative repercussions to his work and distanced himself from this group; his subsequent work had a different translator into Arabic. The book was translated into Arabic by Kamal Abu-Deeb as *Al-Istishraq: al-Ma'rifah, al-Sultah, al-Insha'* and published in Beirut in 1981. See also Radwa 'Ashour, "Hikayat Edward," *Al-Kutub Wijhat Nazar* 85 (November 2003), p. 14. Ashour also criticizes the translation of Orientalism and explains its negative impact on the Arabic readership.

[10] Ibid, p. 81.

[11] Ibid, p. 82. As Hafez maintains, 'It is ironic that they [Arabs] saw a text so radically at odds with their own approach as an extension of their attack on the work of the orientalists—an attack which in their case had been historically motivated by religious convictions and a belief that the orientalists' aim had been to undermine Islam and distort its image.'

beginnings of the 'growing sophistication of Arab critical discourse'.[12] It is this transformation that Hafez demarcates as a pivotal turning point for 'a wider appreciation' of Said's critical corpus.[13] Such a new turn provides an important intellectual context for this thesis.[14] By reading three Egyptian novels *after* Said, I also attempt to consider how Arabs *represent* themselves and to what extent they are responsible for the distortion of their national and cultural image either as a part of or *apart from* the colonial legacy. In doing so, I also investigate how some Arab nationalist histories are grounded in metaphysical ideas of the past.

When compared with other literary genres, the Egyptian novel in particular can be seen to 'both reflect and construct national and cultural politics. In this respect, the genre of the Egyptian novel exemplifies the discourse of modernity in the Arab world more broadly.[15] As Hoda Elsada argues, 'the rise of novelism in Western culture, or the institutionalization of the novel as "the characteristic expression . . . of western modernity" [...] also became a measure of the attainment of modernity, and modern writing in both Arabic and Persian literatures [...]'.[16] By considering Said's thought in relation to the development of the Egyptian novel, then, we can gain a better understanding of how Said's critique of orientalism relates to his critique of the condition of Arab modernity. As Hafez argues, it would be 'simplistic to reduce Said's re-engagement with the Arab world to this [the

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[12] Ibid, p. 84. In a recent paper submitted to a conference on History and the Text organized by the Faculty of Letters and Humanities of Kairoun University, Tunisia, 2003, Radwa Ashour enumerates the projects inspired by Said's approach undertaken by young researchers in Egyptian universities. In addition, a recent example of the book's impact was the fact that the January 2004 conference
organized by the Egyptian Society of Literary Criticism took as its main theme "cultural criticism," or *al-Naqd al-Thaqafi*, the term increasingly used for the critical approach associated with Said.

[13] Ibid, p. 84. In a recent paper submitted to a conference on History and the Text organized by the Faculty of Letters and Humanities of Kairoun University, Tunisia, 2003, Radwa Ashour enumerates the projects inspired by Said's approach undertaken by young researchers in Egyptian universities. In addition, a recent example of the book's impact was the fact that the January 2004 conference organized by the Egyptian Society of Literary Criticism took as its main theme "cultural criticism," or *al-Naqd al-Thaqafi*, the term increasingly used for the critical approach associated with Said.

[14] See Samia Mehrez, *Egypt's Culture Wars: Politics and Practice*, (Routledge, 2008), p. 3. Such a new turn in Said's critical legacy—even unsustainable—provides a proliferative premise through which we can understand 'the Egyptian cultural field' that Samia Mehrez sees as 'understudied'.

[15] See Hoda Elsada, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel: Egypt, 1892-2008* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. xiii. The first is that the canon of Arabic literature, particularly the novelistic canon, both reflects and constructs the ideas of nation and national identity in the modern period. As Elsada goes to illustrate in (p. xv), 'Arab cultural critics have pondered the reasons for the ascendancy of the novel in the Arabic tradition and the relative decline in the status of poetry, the artistic genre that had maintained its high status until the modern period. Jabir 'Asfur, professor of Arabic literature at Cairo University and prominent cultural critic and columnist, contended that the twentieth century, particularly its second half, was the age of the novel, *zaman al-riwaya* (1999).

[16] Ibid, p. xv.

Palestinian cause], for it was a lengthy process [...]'.[17] When Said reads the Arabic fiction of Ghassan Kanafani, Naguib Mahfouz, Ahdaf Soueif, and Yusuf Al-Sibai among others, he was practising a kind of cultural and national critique that goes beyond the Palestinian cause and its exegesis.[18] Said's reflections on secularism, for instance, and his account of the secular time of the novel as a 'world abandoned by God' foregrounds how he locates Arabs on the geopolitical map in the age of global modernity. Considered in relation to this Saidian model of critique, Ayman El-Desouky's analysis of Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley*[19] exemplifies the secular approach to Egyptian modernity that informs the readings presented in this thesis. In common with Mahfouz, the novels I examine in this thesis frame Arabs in general and Egyptians in particular in terms of their secular conception of colonial and capitalist modernity.[20]

In a small, yet significant way, then, Said initiates a groundbreaking approach to Arabic literary studies when he uses Arabic fiction as a mediating tool for interpreting Arab political cultures in the aftermath of the 1948 War, the 1967 War, and the Arab national movements of liberation in the 1950s and the early 1960s. In so doing, he points towards a new way of reading contemporary Arabic fiction and Egyptian fiction, which this thesis attempts to develop further. Such a project seems particularly important at the current moment, for reasons that I now attempt to elaborate.

Since the second intifada in Palestine (2000) and the wars of terror in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the global literary marketplace has witnessed a burgeoning of translations of Arabic literature into English, especially fiction. In the aftermath of the social revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Syria in 2011, moreover, critical interest has grown in Arabic literature in translation, and Egyptian fiction in particular. The recent Arab uprising in the Middle East known and described in the global mass media as the 'Arab Spring'[21]

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[17] Hafez, 'Edward Said's Intellectual Legacy in The Arab World', pp. 67-90 (p. 81).

[18] Ibid, p.77. As Hafez explains, 'The adoption of Western models also affected the cultural sphere, resulting in the genesis of modern Arabic narrative genres such as the novel, the short story, and drama'—the core of Said's critique of Arabic Fiction.

[19] Ayman A. El-Desouky, 'Heterologies of revolutionary action: On historical consciousness and the sacred in Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley*', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47.4 (2011), 428-439.

[20] For further explanation of how the colonial discourse shapes the way of narration in Egyptian fiction, see Moore, *Narrating Postcolonial Arab Nations*, p. 10.

[21] See Elisabeth Jaquette and Nariman Youssef, 'The "Arab Spring," Five years on', *Words Without Borders,* (January 2016) <https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/january-2016-captivity-the-

has 'refocused attention onto Arabic arts and literature as a prism through which various scholars sought to understand ongoing social changes'.[22] To speak of a literature of the Arab Spring is to risk falling back on a neo-orientalist media stereotype of specific social struggles, as Merlijn Geurts acknowledges.[23] Yet in the wake of such social movements and their turbulent political aftermath, the need for a nuanced critical vocabulary that can account for the role of art and literature in renewing a critical understanding of national culture, religion, memory, and identity seems particularly urgent.

Said's critique of Orientalist modes of thinking and the fixed cultural representations that they engender is particularly helpful for thinking about such a new vocabulary. The Orientalist systems of knowledge that Said attributes to the colonial past did not disappear with the national movements of liberation in the 1950s and 1960s; on the contrary, such modes of thinking shaped and informed ideas of the past, of Arab identity, and Arab narratives of cultural nationalism. The same can be said with respect to the 'Arab Spring' in the twenty-first century. This thesis seeks to extend Said's criticism of the essentialist tendencies of pan-Arab nationalism to investigate the ways in which religious nationalism have informed and inflected the recent Arab revolutions. The novels I am reading problematize religion as a broad metaphor for neo-orientalist forms of representation; such forms of representation are problematic because of the ways in which they shape and influence ideas of history, collectivity, and the very idea of the 'Arab' itself.

Methodologically, the thesis both mobilises and augments Said's critical preoccupations with secularism, critical humanism, philology, contrapuntal reading, lost causes, worldliness, and the public intellectual through detailed close readings of three recent Egyptian novels. These readings also seek to explore the

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arab-spring-five-years-on> [accessed 15 December 2017]. In this issue, editors Elisabeth Jaquette and Nariman Youssef define post-Arab Spring literature as reflecting the aftermath of a historical moment—whether it's the turmoil of war, chaos of proliferating paramilitary groups, or mass repression of coups and transition governments.

[22] Nahrian, Al-Mousawi, 'Literature after the Arab Spring,' *Middle East Institute,* 5 (February 2016). <http://www.mei.edu/content/article/literature-after-arab-spring> [accessed 18 December 2016] (para. 1 of 16).

[23] Geurts Merlijn, 'Toward Arab Spring Narratives: The Politics of Translated Arabic Literature in the Wake of the 2011 Arab Uprisings', (RMA thesis, Comparative Literary Studies, Utrecht University, 2014). Aware of the problematic implications of the term 'Arab Spring'—a term primarily used in the Western world to refer to the 2011 Arab uprisings, Merlijn Geurts used the term in a very restricted way. In this context, he agrees with the many scholars and critics who have a pointed to the Orientalist nature of the term 'Arab Spring' for example, Rami G. Khouri, 'Drop the Orientalist Term "Arab Spring"'.

ways in which religion and nationalism are worldly historical inventions. Such an approach seeks to shed light on the ways in which essentialist ideas of political subjectivity, the Islamic past, cultural memory, and nationalist struggle are both registered and contested in the narrative and generic strategies of the Egyptian novels that I read *after* Said. Yet the selected novels are also historical fictions that work to foreground real events in Egypt's (neo)colonial history.

The history of imperialism and national liberation in the Arab World is a recurring concern in much contemporary Arabic and Egyptian fiction. One might consider, for instance, historical fiction written by prominent Egyptian literary figures like Sonallah Ibrahim, Ibrahim Abdel-Meguid, Alaa Al Aswany, Youssef Ziedan, Youssef al-Qaeed among others. However, I have preferred to limit the geographical scope, historical focus, and range of literary texts in this thesis by focusing on three Egyptian novels. Two of these novels are Egyptian texts translated into English (Bahaa Taher's *Love in Exile* and Radwa Ashour's *Granada*), and the third is an Anglophone novel (Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*). These novels exemplify what Caroline Rooney aims at by publishing her paper in response to the symposium at Cairo University (April 2010)[24]. She illustrates 'how literary culture serves to define and advance social change and an ethics of the collective in terms of locally determined forms of modernity'.[25] My reading of these novels—drawing upon Said's orientalist legacy as reframed via the entirety of his secular project—attests to how the 'literary realism' as represented in these three Egyptian novels codifies 'a matter of an awareness of the present continuous or of modernity as a continual entering into history'.[26] The way such novels are conceived speaks to a continuous process of misconception or at least a limited critical consciousness among Arab readers. If the selected novels in this study are

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[24] Caroline Rooney, 'Egyptian Literary Culture and Egyptian Modernity: Introduction', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47.4 (2011), 369-376. This special issue is the outcome of a symposium on 'Egyptian Literary Culture and Egyptian Modernity' that took place in April 2010 and which entailed a collaboration between postcolonial and Middle Eastern studies academics based at universities in the UK and academics in the Humanities at Cairo University. The symposium was co-organized by a committee of the English Department at Cairo University, headed by Nadia El Kholy and Sahar El Mougy, and by the Centre for Colonial and Postcolonial Research at the University of Kent as part of an ESRC/AHRC research project led by myself. This conference derived from an earlier collaboration that took place at Cairo University at the English Department's "Cairo at the Crossroads" conference in November 2008. This took the form of a special panel, consisting of Ayman El-Desouky (SOAS), Stephen Quirke (UCL) and Caroline Rooney (Kent), that was convened in order to explore the role of the intellectual in relation to the mobilization of the people.
[25] Rooney, pp. 369-376 (p. 372).
[26] Ibid, p. 370.

translated into English[27], being Arabic texts[28] has a peculiarity of significance that cannot be underestimated. Such novels, especially Radwa Ashour's *Granada,* have been conceived by Arab readership as a 'national allegory' standing for a nostalgic inclination to a glorious past/golden age. Against Frederic Jameson's contention that all the literary production of the Third World can be read as a 'national allegory,' I examine how these novels address with particular clarity the political agency of the Arabs in particular historical circumstances.[29] These works not only best exemplify how the conventions of the novel mediate different aspects of Arabic national culture, memory, and identity; they also use fictional conventions to contest and challenge essentialist forms of thinking about the nation. Such literary innovations correspond in interesting ways with Said's account of the Arabs as political subjects, who are responsible for the political situation of their nations.

The thesis examines the possibilities of a Saidian-inspired critical reading in three different contexts of imperial history with respect to time and space: Medieval Spain under the Christian reconquest (in Ashour's *Granada*), Egypt under British rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries (in Soueif's *Map of Love*), and the Arab-Israeli conflict (in Tahir's *Love in Exile*). Moreover, these novels imaginatively render historical events in ways that lend themselves to particular Saidian reading (even if the terms of Said's critical thought are not always sufficient to account for the formal operations of the texts). A rationale for the selection of literary texts is presented in more detail at the end of this chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that the close readings presented in the thesis have broader implications for understanding the importance and value of Said's thought

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[27] Two of the selected Egyptian novels for this study are originally Arabic texts translated into English except for Soueif's *The Map of Love*, which is the only one among her novels available in Arabic. Fatma Moussa, professor emeritus of English literature at Cairo University and Soueif's mother, translated *The Map of Love* along with a selection from her two volumes of short stories, *Aisha* (1983) and *Sandpiper* (1996).

[28] Although Soueif's novel was originally an English text, the Arabic version has assimilated the Arab reader's taste. This is partially owing to Soueif's English text itself that acts not only as a 'transnational', but also as a 'translational' literary work. In order to understand Soueif's novel guided through the distinction between the two terms, read for instance Mohammed Albakry and Patsy Hunter Hancock, 'Code switching in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*' *Language and Literature*, 17.3 (2008) & Waïl S Hassan, 'Agency and Translational Literature: Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*' *PMLA*, 121.3 (May 2006).

[29] Jameson's 'theory of cognitive aesthetics of third-world literature' essentializes the differences between civilizations, homogenizes diverse histories and trajectories of development, and, more importantly reduces third-world history and social dynamics to one experience, namely the experience of colonialism and imperialism.

for evaluating Arab traditions of thought, as well as for making sense of the form and meaning of the novels themselves as we will see.

1.2   Rethinking Said

Until recently, much of the critical reception of Said's work in the Anglo-American academy has focused on Said's application of the Foucauldian nexus of power and knowledge to colonial discourse as it was manifested in nineteenth and early twentieth-century European literary and cultural representations of 'the Orient'. As a consequence, relatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which Orientalist patterns of representation have in turn shaped and defined (however negatively) essentialist formations of Arab nationalism and religion during and in the aftermath of European imperialism. Considered in relation to the terms of Said's critique of colonial discourse in *Orientalism*, moreover, the study of recent Egyptian fiction would seem to offer a powerful challenge to fixed stereotypes of the Orient. And yet there are aspects of such Orientalist patterns of representation that continue to endure in predominant Arab nationalist narratives.

This thesis seeks to open up new horizons in Said's critique of orientalist discourse by foregrounding his secular humanism and humanist philology as critical and interpretative tools for reading Arab cultural narratives. Said's philological humanism provides a useful method of reading the ways in which the narrative and generic conventions of these novels shed light on the limits of essentialist thinking. More precisely, the thesis investigates and questions essentialist modes of Arab thought that are constituted in and through the orientalist conception of a predetermined and immutable culture or race that Said systematically critiques in *Orientalism*.

1.2.1   Rethinking Orientalism: Humanist Philology in Said's Thought

Prior to discussing Said's humanist philology, it is important to emphasize two axiomatic but nonetheless important points about Said's criticism that are crucial for understanding his work, and my engagement with it. First, Said's voice

was mainly and 'ultimately literary'.[30] Timothy Brennan makes this point well when he says that if Said's intellectual legacy is understood as political, this is always also achieved in the field of literature: '[Said] consistently relied on literature and the tropes of literary criticism to express his political and social imagination during his *anni mirabili* (1975–92)'.[31] Second, Said's critical engagement with national cultural politics in the Arab world cannot be separated from his sustained project of 'critical secularism'. Considered in relation to the politics and culture of Egypt and the Arab world, this term is profoundly ambivalent. On the one hand, it could be taken to refer to the ways in which critical thought is inherently secular and worldly; on the other hand, it could be taken to denote the ways in which the category of secularism is itself bound up with the legacy of European imperialism. My reading of Egyptian fiction is informed by Said's explanation of the political present of the Middle East with reference to what he once termed 'secular culture.'[32] This is not to suggest that the import of Said's works is restricted to the fields of literary or secular culture. But it can help to clarify how Said's humanist philology provides an analytical perspective through which specific histories and political crises in the Arab world are understood in the terms of 'secular culture', and the worldliness of representation rather than through fixed ideas of a glorious Muslim or Arab past. To put it another way, Said's philological humanism can help to shed light on how Egyptian fiction contributes to a new way of thinking about history, time, and space in the Arab world.

To further clarify this point it is important to consider what exactly philological humanism means, and the importance of the colonial encounter for understanding Said's own engagement with this tradition. Philology is defined in *Webster's Dictionary* as 'the study of literature and of disciplines relevant to literature or to language as used in literature', and 'the study of human speech especially as the vehicle of literature and as a field of study that sheds light on cultural history'. Said's own reflections on his work in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* seem to echo this concern. He describes his approach to literature and

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[30] See Timothy Brennan, 'The Critic and the Public: Edward Said and World Literature', in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation,* ed. by Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), pp.102-120 (p. 102).

[31] Ibid.

[32] See Edward Said, 'Andalusia's Journey', *Travel + Leisure* (Dec. 2009) <http://WWW.travellandleisure.com/articles/andalusias-journey> Said uses the term 'secular culture' to discuss Arabs' crisis of historicity in the Middle East [accessed 12 October 2016] (para. 5 of 30).

politics as 'a life-long attentiveness to the words and rhetorics by which language is used by human beings who exist in history'.[33] Said's encounter with the humanist tradition in philology was mediated in part by the intellectual influences of scholars such as Eric Auerbach and Leo Spitzer, who studied literature on the margins of Europe in Istanbul to escape from Nazi persecution. It is not difficult to see how this exilic perspective on European literary humanism might have shaped Said's own marginal perspective on the culture of European liberal humanism, coming as he did from an Arab context, at a time when the hegemonic influence of European colonial power was still plain to see. Indeed, Said's brief reflections on Fanon's radical decolonial humanism in *Culture and Imperialism* suggest that Said's philological humanism is not humanism as it is conventionally understood in the European context, but a critical humanism that has been shaped by the European colonial encounter and subsequent struggles for national independence.

Yet it is also important to consider how Said's thought draws on the insights of philology in order to criticise certain aspects of Arab cultural politics and predominant modes of thought. Such a philological emphasis in Said's work appears clearly in his reflections on Arabic prose fiction, particularly his appraisal of the form and meaning of realism in Arabic fiction in two articles: 'Arabic prose and Prose Fiction After 1948',[34] and 'After Mahfouz'.[35] Beginning from the premise that history is a human construct, Said proceeds to consider how the formation of Arabs' political subjectivity and their sense of agency are often framed in terms of a particular mode of understanding historical time, which modern Arabic writers have attempted to register in their literary responses to the events of the *nakba* in 1948 and the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. Before exploring the implications of Said's discussion of Arab historical realism for this thesis in more detail, the following section offers a brief account of the place of secular and humanist philology in Said's critique of orientalist and neo-orientalist representations.

In early works such as *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1975), *Orientalism* (1978), *The Question of Palestine* (1980), and *Covering Islam* (1981),

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[33] Edward Said, 'The Return to Philology', in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 57-84 (p. 61).
[34] 'Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction after 1948' first published as the introduction to an anthology entitled *Days of Dust* in 1974, and subsequently reprinted in his collection of essays, *Reflections on Exile* (2000).
[35] 'After Mahfouz,' was published in Edward Said's collection of essays, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2001), pp. 317-326.

Said used the conceptual tools of humanist scholarship to challenge cultural and political (mis)representations of Islam, Palestine, and the Arab and Muslim world, and to highlight the political interests such (mis)representations serve. He has been 'painfully aware that discursive *deformations* justify the actual dehumanization and obliteration of his Arab roots'.[36] In *Orientalism*, for example, Said draws attention to what he calls 'cultural energies' that contributed to the execution of the imperialist project as embedded in the orientalist discourse. The treatment of these 'cultural energies', such as philology, literary aesthetics, specific modes of understanding of history, politics and lexicography 'come to the service of Orientalism's broadly imperialist view of the world'.[37] Said discusses the orientalist project pertaining to the philological studies as its central constituent. As Ashcroft and Ahluwalia put it, 'Orientalism, in Said's formulation, is principally a way of defining and 'locating' Europe's others'.[38] It was the systematic studies of eminent scholars such as Ernest Renan and Silvestre de Sacy that helped to generate the orientalist discourse which was based on 'the issue of national distinctiveness, and racial and linguistic origins'.[39] The works of such colonial philologists contributed to a pattern of thinking about difference and alterity that permeated most of the successive orientalist praxis. The tradition of knowledge that came into being as a result of such textual and philological practices aided and abetted the emergence of colonial discourse as a technique through which to control the Orient.

The colonial representation of Egypt—as frequently traced through Said's close analysis in *Orientalism*—is an exemplary case of such deformational cultural representations. Said indicated that many such representations drew upon the French scientific mission's *Description de l'Egypte* during the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt. Such representations shaped and determined later cultural representations of Egypt. As Timothy Mitchell explains: 'Later writers would then take themselves to the library of the French Institute in Cairo, and draw from and

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[36] Ferial J. Ghazoul, 'The Resonance of Arabic Islamic Heritage in the Work of Edward Said', in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* ed. Michael Sprinker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 157-172 (p. 157).

[37] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 15.

[38] See Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Routledge Critical Thinkers: Edward Said* (London and New York: Routledge: 2001), p. 50.

[39] Ibid.

add to this body of description'.[40] Following the same pattern, the *otherness* and cultural inferiority of the Egyptian people that was presented in contrast to the cultural, economic, and social superiority of Europe were also anchored in what Said calls a 'platonic essence'.[41] By comparing Orientalist representations to Plato's suggestion that the form defines the essence or truth of a thing, Said suggests that the Orientalist representation defines the truth or essence of the Oriental world it describes.

1.2.2 Challenging Neo-Orientalist Modes of Representation in Narratives of Arab Nationalism: Said's 'Philological Heroism'

In a rather different vein from traditional readings of orientalist cultural representations, the production of Orientalist knowledge embedded in the Arabs' narratives and their textual analysis of their cultural heritage known as '*turath'* can be read as a reproduction of essentialist assumptions and beliefs derived from Orientalist thinking but reframed in nationalist terms. If *turath* denotes a certain imaginary ideal of a timeless cultural tradition, it may also be understood as a form of loss or melancholia in times of political crisis. Yet if *turath* is a product of the colonial encounter, which constructs an idea of a glorious Arab past in response to the threat of colonial conquest or dispossession, such an idea of the past can hardly be said to be an authentic expression of a fixed or essential Arab culture outside of history. The 'false images and simulacra of the Arabs'[42] come to define the ways in which the forefathers of the nation, the family ancestors, and the cultural legacy left behind these figures are understood. A consideration of *turath* is crucial to the readings of the three Egyptian novels discussed in this thesis in part because it sheds further light on the importance of Said's criticism of Arabs' nationalist and religious narratives, but also because it helps to clarify how the commemoration of certain memories and sites of history works to justify and shape Arab national versions of the past, and to identify how these narratives work to construct a sense of political agency and/or defeat.

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[40] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley & Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1991), p. 31.
[41] *Orientalism*, p. 38.
[42] Ghazoul, 'The Resonance' in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* ed. by Michael Sprinker, pp. 157-172 (p. 159).

At times of political and social upheaval, social revolutions, day-to-day resistance against colonial forces, disasters and emergencies, it is a truism to say that the people living through such turbulent events tend to recall their past experiences. They might, for instance, memorize stories that register difficulties and challenges with which their ancestors struggled in order to draw parallels between the past and the present. When such collective memories are transformed into a form of nostalgia, however, they can also work to distort and fix the past by idealising it. Through close readings of the narrative evocation of memory and the past through the focalizing consciousness of particular characters in three recent Egyptian realist novels, this thesis considers how such literary techniques work to challenge such a nostalgic and romanticised view of the past. Each of the novels discussed in this thesis relay a sense of political crisis, but they do so in ways that also question the role of collective memory and nostalgia in the formation of national consciousness.

Against an ahistorical mode of interpretation, Said suggests that all beginnings are both intentional and invented points of origin that take place in a secular time frame. Therefore, narratives or texts that memorize unquestioned *beginnings* or beginnings that are framed as transcendent, such as the Biblical account of the origins of the universe in *Genesis*, might be regarded with suspicion. To clarify this point, Said invokes the example of a literary critic, who presents their own starting point as if it were already self-evident in the text itself rather than a beginning that the critic constructs to legitimate their own reading:

> A literary critic [...] who is fastened on a text is a critic who, in demonstrating his right to speak, makes the text something that is continuous with his own discourse; he does this first by discovering, then by rationalizing, a beginning [...] the beginning resembles a magical point that links critic and work criticized. The point is the meeting of critic and work and it coaxes the work into the critic's prose. In finding a point of departure invariably in the meeting of his criticism with the text criticized, is the critic merely refinding his vision, his biases, in another's work?[43]

It is perhaps difficult to see from this quotation how Said's reflections on whether the origins of literary meaning reside in the text or the critical reader might be translated into the terms of debates about the genesis and temporal structure of national or religious narratives. Yet in a later essay, by applying the

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[43] Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1975), p. 71.

secular-critical tools of philological reading to an extract from the *Qur'an*, Said highlights the origins of hermeneutics in Islamic jurisprudence. As he puts it:

> [In] the Islamic tradition, knowledge is premised upon a philological attention to beginning with the Koran, the uncreated, word of God (and indeed the word 'Koran' itself means reading), and continuing through the emergence of scientific grammar in Khalil ibn Ahmad and Sibawayh to the rise of jurisprudence *(fiqh)* and *ijtihad* and ta'wil, jurisprudential hermeneutics and interpretation, respectively. Later, the study of *fiqh al lugha,* or the hermeneutics of language, emerges in Arab-Islamic culture as possessing considerable importance as a practice for Islamic learning. All these involve a detailed scientific attention paid to language as bearing within it knowledge of a kind entirely limited to what language does and does not do.[44]

Said's reference to the Islamic genealogy of hermeneutics and the science of reading in 'The Return to Philology' is particularly important for this thesis because it can help us to understand the importance and value of secular critical reading and philological humanism for reading and understanding the worldliness of Arab writing and the place of Islam in that textual world. Said contends that the 'science of reading' is central to the practice of human knowledge either in medieval Islam or modern Western societies. Moreover, he draws an analogy between the progressive and revolutionary interpretative humanism that occurred in Judaic traditions in Andalusia, North Africa, the Levant, and Mesopotamia and the later development of philological humanism in Europe inaugurated by Giambattista Vico's *New Science* (1744). In this regard, Said underscores 'a consolidation of the interpretive sciences that underlie the system of humanistic education which was itself established by the twelfth century in the Arab universities of southern Europe and North Africa, well before its counterpart in the Christian West'.[45] In this way, as Marrouchi puts it, 'Edward Said, with his fresh, irreverent approach to literature, criticism, and meaning itself, proposes nothing less than *a reinvention of reading* (works of art) *from the ground up*'.[46]

The novels I focus on in this study do not only speak to Said's anti-essentialist ethos, but also are good examples of tackling and addressing the gaps in Said's geopolitical secular critique. In addition of being texts that speak to the varied Egyptian national trajectories, they also use fictional conventions to contest and

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[44] Said, 'The Return to Philology', pp. 57-84 (p. 58).
[45] Ibid.
[46] See Mustapha Marrouchi, *Edward Said at the Limits* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 2.

challenge essentialist forms of thinking about the nation. My reading lends itself to a special reading of a gendered construction of the nation.[47] More specifically, my reading complicates the patriarchal legacy of essentializing the nation and the national imaginary by tackling the male focalizing characters' national consciousness in the selected novels against the female secular traces. As I am going to extensively explain throughout the whole thesis, the female figures are best read as philological heroines who have sought to construct a national vision via a female lens.[48] Now, suffice to mention, the female focalized characters in each chapter challenges fixed modes of understanding the nation which are not only essentialist, but also patriarchal.[49] The feminist secular traces as well as modes of reading supersede the male figures' national (af)filiations since they unravel a more nuanced, more palimpsestic, and yet a cosmopolitan interpretation of concepts of nations and nationalism in terms of the global world order (colonial and capitalist modernity).

Said's criticism of the Arabs' *worldliness* is mainly approached in the present thesis through Said's philological humanism—the mode of historical, worldly, interpretative, exilic, and of course cosmopolitan and oppositional humanism that Said embraces as a critical approach to address the Arabs' crisis of historicity that is immanent to the world-historical forces of the post-imperial order. He describes the peculiarity of human intellectual endeavour as 'philological heroism'[50]—a term that he ascribes to Vico and to the Marxist intellectual and philologist Antonio Gramsci. As Ned Curthoys explains in an essay on Said's philological project, 'Said's humanist ethos draws on the German tradition of *Bildung*, a cultural and educational ideal of self-formation that combines reason and sensibility,

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[47] See Hoda Elsada, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel*, p. xiii. As Elsada explains the scope of her book, 'The book sheds light on and interrogates representations of femininity and masculinity in modern Arabic fiction in order to explore their implications for the project of nation building and the imagining of subjectivities in the modern period.'

[48] Ibid, p. xiv. Elsada explains how the gendered perspectives informs her analysis and critique of Egyptian nationalism as follows: 'Revisiting the modern Arab literary tradition from a gender lens interrogates […] At the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, we witness the rise of new writing that engages with/interrogates established dictums in the national canon, as the scene of literary production becomes more diverse and more inclusive, and as they continue to engage with neocolonial discourses in the global world order.'

[49] See Moore, *Narrating Postcolonial Arab Nations*, p. 11. As Moore contends, 'Both colonialism and neo-imperialism in the Arab world have been channelled through nationalist patriarchal elites.'

[50] Said, 'The Return to Philology', pp. 57-84 (p. 58).

philosophical breadth and characteristic individuality'.[51] Said's affiliations with philologists like Auerbach and Gramsci in particular are indicative of a mode of criticism that is enlightened by the historical traces of an exilic mind working through fragmentary knowledge.[52] Indeed, such an endeavour is particularly significant as it helps to elucidate the 'detective' and 'formative power' of philology that Said outlines in his attempt to read the past from various vantage points in the present.[53]

In *Orientalism,* Said draws on the historical materialist premises outlined in a fragmentary form in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* and the *Letters from Prison.* Mustafa Marrouchi (2004)[54] highlights the significance of Said's contrapuntal reading when thinking about history by drawing attention to Gramsci's focus on 'fragmentary form'. Moreover, he extends his analysis of Said's contrapuntal reading of narratives as grounded in what Gramsci claimed as the 'territorial, spatial, and geographical foundations of life'.[55] For Marrouchi, Said's conception of history is one of an exiled mind that is preoccupied with the territory of the 'in between,' or a peripheral space, which also inflects the temporal scrutiny of the past memories that 'keeps Said looking forward by always looking back'.[56] In a similar vein, Curthoys discusses Said's reprisal of Auerbach's concept of *Ansatzpunkt*, or a critical point of departure that involves historical inquiry to make sense of the present.[57] The present-past dialectics embedded in this reconsideration of the past is connected with 'the metaphor of "re-story-telling"

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[51] Ned Curthoys, 'Edward Said's Unhoused philological Humanism', in *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, ed. by Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Publishing, 2007), pp. 152-175 (p. 156).

[52] Auerbach and Gramsci produced *Mimesis* and *Prison Notebooks* respectively while they were exiled. Therefore, it was difficult to produce a coherent piece of written work In *Orientalism* Said borrows the term inventory from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* to describe the critical task of the intellectual. In Gramsci's thought, the term inventory itself is somewhat tantalising and underdeveloped, written as it was in the difficult circumstances of Mussolini's prison regime.

[53] See Curthoys, 'Edward Said's Unhoused Philological Humanism", in *The Legacy of a Public Intellectual,* ed. by Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Publishing, 2007), pp. 152-175 (p. 158). As he discusses, 'In positing the alterity of human origins and the intuitive detective powers required to understand them, Vico granted philogical reading a formative power of recomposition and disruption of normative assumption that, Said argues [in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*], is "paramount for humanistic knowledge."'

[54] Marrouchi, *Edward Said at the Limits,* p. 122.

[55] Ibid, p. 12.

[56] See Marrouchi, 'My Homeland, the Text', in *Edward Said at the Limits*, pp. 107-144 (p. 109).

[57] See, *Curthoys and Debjani, 'Introduction',* in *The Legacy of a Public Intellectual,* pp. 1-17 (p. 8). *Curthoys and Debjani* discuss Said's reprisal of Auerbach's concept of *Ansatzpunkt* or a critical point of departure, suggesting an intellectual initiative that is passionate about intervening in the present by asking resounding questions of the past, sustained by active and individual research that is not limited to one field of specialisation.

that lies hidden in the predicaments of exile'.[58] Such approaches are certainly compelling, but it is important to remember too that Said's secular and cosmopolitan views of history were quite unusual. As Marrouchi puts it, Said is considered 'foremost among those who pushed this quest [for historical meaning] forward beyond nationalism and post-colonial statehood, crossing boundaries to interpret the world and the text'.[59] In this respect, Said views philology 'as a particular kind of *intention,* "a double effort of memory and of intellect"'[60] whereby individual subjects reread and recover their national stories.

1.2.3   Searching for a New Secular Vocabulary in Saidian Thought

This thesis draws on the insights of Said's anti-essentialist mode of literary and cultural interpretation to trace the articulation of a post-secular humanism in the signs and codes of contemporary Egyptian fiction. By questioning the historical forces that have shaped the binary opposition between the religious and the secular, the thesis can be seen to question the legacy of Orientalist representations, and the ways in which these have in turn informed ideas of a pan-Arab national culture. Yet the thesis is also careful to distinguish between Said's philological humanism, which emphasises a 'more "neutral" pursuit of knowledge', oriented towards that 'non-coercive knowledge produced in the interest of human freedom'[61] and the Foucauldian ideas of knowledge and power with which he is sometimes aligned. Neil Lazarus has suggested that the critique of essentialist modes of representation 'struggle to find expression'[62] in Said's survey of the orientalist models of literary representations when they are viewed exclusively in terms of Foucauldian discourse. This may have to do in part with the anti-humanist nature of Foucault's work, which Said viewed as 'largely [disposing] of humanism's essentializing and totalizing modes'.[63] Rather than drawing on a more

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[58] Curthoys, 'Edward Said's unhoused philological humanism', in *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, pp. 152-175 (p. 164).

[59] Marrouchi, *Edward Said at the Limits*, (p. 10).

[60] See Said, *Beginnings,* p. 70. Said stresses the work of intellectual to interpret memories, 'In his [Spitzer] preface to *Les Mots anglais* Mallarrne described a formal willingness to do philology as a particular kind of *intention,* "a double effort of memory and of intellect."'

[61] Said 'Secular Criticism', in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), pp. 1-30 (p. 29).

[62] See Neil Lazarus, 'The Battle over Edward Said, in *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp. 183-203 (p. 193). As Lazarus contends human sentiments 'struggle to find expression' if they 'are channelled through the Foucauldian category of "discourse" which is essentially 'anti-humanist.'

[63] Said, *Humanism,* p.10.

conventional (and indeed partial and superficial) Foucauldian reading of Said, the thesis approaches Said's philological historicism and decolonial secular humanism as methodological tools for addressing Arabs' essentialist modes of thinking as they are mediated in recent Egyptian fiction.[64]

1.2.3.1 Narrative, Nationalism, Religion, and Secularism: A Tension in Said's Thought

The crisis of historicity in Arab cultural nationalism is manifested in those stories that draw on specific national memories designed mainly to provoke an atmosphere of national resilience at a time of political crisis. The danger of these memories lies in the tendency to uncritically reproduce stories narrated across successive generations. One consequence of such a repetition is that it can reproduce a fixed political response regardless of the temporal or spatial contextualization of the story being narrated. As Marrouchi contends, 'The principle Saidian narrative and nonnarrative tell of the usurpation of a history, a home, a text'.[65] National solidarity is structured and sustained across geographical, as well as imaginary ethical bonds. In this regard, Said addresses criticism and solidarity as interactive forces in the larger process of political engagement when he declares, '"solidarity before criticism," means the end of criticism'.[66] Also, in *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994), he concisely asserts, 'Never solidarity before criticism is the short answer'[67] to resist any form of political action that foregrounds national patriotism and collective ensembles. Said consistently describes nationalism and religion and any primordial loyalties that dictate a stereotyped action as 'gods that always fail'.[68]

Recent scholarship on Said's thought has re-assessed his corpus of literary critical writings in order to make sense of his ambivalent position on religion, secularism, and nationalism.[69] Said's writings on Arab nationalism and the

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[64] Lazarus, 'The Battle over Edward Said, in *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, pp. 183-203 (p. 189). Lazarus pinpoints Timothy Brennan's claim that 'Said's historicist project [...] was lost on an audience that saw racism in large letters' such as Arab-Israeli conflict, urban and Afrocentism.

[65] See Marrouchi, 'My Homeland, the Text', in *Edward Said at the Limits*, pp. 107-144 (p. 122).

[66] Said, 'Secular Criticism', in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp. 1-30 (p. 28).

[67] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: the 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1996), p. 32.

[68] *Ibid*, pp. 103-121.

[69] See Mathieu E. Courville, 'Voyages In', in *Edward Said's Rhetorics of the Secular* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), pp. 1-21. Representations of the religious and the secular [...] in Edward Said's oeuvre are not 'Manichean' and thus, 'not radically dualist.'

question of Palestinian self-determination are an exemplary case of such ambivalence. If Said has persistently championed the Palestinians' right to self-determination, he has also been critical of predominant narratives of Arab nationalism. He is *both* an outspoken critic of European and American imperialism *and* of the failures of Arab nationalism. Considered in relation to such different critical positions, Said's humanistic philology and democratic alternatives could provide an indication of how to productively inhabit what might otherwise appear to be a contradiction in Said's thought. Said's 'philological humanism' can provide us with a more nuanced vocabulary—attained via his critique of Arabs' national narratives—to think through and beyond the tension between religion and secularism on one hand, and between religion and nationalism on the other. Curthoys, for example, suggests that Said's post-national humanism is best thought of in terms of 'a philological *ethos* alert to the necessity of critically intervening in contemporary idioms and political languages'.[70] Such an approach can also help to elucidate the ways in which the representational codes and conventions of contemporary Egyptian literary realism both inhabits and questions the temporality of nationalism and religion, as we will see.

1.2.3.2   Secular History, Religion and Nationalism

As mentioned above, recent critics of Said have claimed that Said's reflections on orientalist patterns of representations are hampered by the Foucauldian conception of discourse as a nexus between knowledge and power. The difficulty with this approach is that the discourse of the Orient *qua* western discursive projection comes to stand in for the culture and history of the Arab world before and after European imperialism. Mitchell expresses this problem well when he says:

> Like Vico, Said wants to see all these myths and images as human productions [...] accessible to rational understanding, because man-made in the first place. But to inhabit a regime of these images is precisely to be beset by the irrational, by the mysterious forces of the alienated productions of the human imagination—the

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[70] Curthoys, 'Edward Said's unhoused philological humanism', in *The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, ed. by Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly, pp. 152-175 (p. 153).

> 'tyrannical feedback system' that Said found diagnosed and (he hoped) resisted in the work of Foucault.[71]

The point for Mitchell here is that Foucault's account of power and knowledge helped Said to articulate the ways in which Orientalist discourse works to stabilise colonial formations of power, but it also suggested that any notion of a 'real' Arab world was inextricably bound up with its colonial or neo-colonial discursive projection.

The difficulty of trying to disentangle colonial knowledge, discourse, and power becomes even more pronounced in Said's reflections on religion. If we approach Said's secular criticism as a form of philological humanism, however, we can begin to see how Said provides a set of terms and a critical frame of reference through which to question authoritarian national and religious texts and cultural narratives using the resources of those very same texts. In my analysis of the three Egyptian novels, fictional form and narrative techniques are mobilised to question fixed and timeless ideas of national and religious solidarity and political agency that are attributed to authoritarian texts and narratives.

'Secular criticism' can also help to shed light on the post-Christian structures of European historicism, which are often subordinated to empirical or non-divine interpretations of materialist world forces. If Said's 'secular humanism' is a 'style of thought', it also raises questions about the poverty of a secular historicism, which is unable to recognise the cultural and historical forces that shaped its own emergence.[72] In a related discussion, Talal Asad examines the specific mode of secularism that might help 'to make sense of'[73] nationalism. As Asad asserts, 'neither the supporters nor the critics of secularization thesis pay enough attention to the concept of the "secular," which emerged historically in a particular way and was assigned specific practical tasks'.[74] Contextualizing the word 'secular' and its

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[71] W.J.T Mitchell, 'Secular Divination: Edward Said's Humanism', in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation,* ed. by Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 490-498 (p. 497).

[72] See Mathieu E. Courville, 'Voyages In', in *Edward Said's Rhetorics of the Secular* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), pp. 1-21. E. Courville's views Said's Secular humanism as 'an emergent way of life' and thus it 'aims to reconcile divisive identities with one another, seeking to reconcile human agents and agencies with realities such as modernity, modernism, and postmodernism.'

[73] Talal Asad, 'Secularism, Nation-State, Religion', in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 196-97 (p. 193).

[74] Ibid, P. 183.

antonym 'religious'[75] as employed by Said in his corpus could help to identify these 'specific practical tasks' with more precision. Indeed, Said's project of secular humanism could be extended to consider the worldly historical formation of the religious as a transcendental category that is framed as prior to the emergence of secular time from a historical position that is also immanent to secular time. This conception offers a more nuanced account of the secular than the more limited, common sense understanding of 'secularism' as a non-divine formation, and thus might open a new space for rethinking the place of religion in the historicity of Arab nationalism. As Talal Asad explains:

> For nationalism the history of Islam is important because it reflects the early unification and triumph of the Arab nation; in that discourse the 'Arabian Prophet' is regarded as a spiritual hero. This is an inversion of the classical theological view according to which the prophet is not the object of national inspiration for an imagined community, but the subject of divine inspiration [...][76]

As Asad suggests here, the political uses of the 'history of Islam' in narratives of Arab nationalism reveal how religious believers have always framed the 'subject of divine inspiration' as a transcendental cause for a belief that is performed through ritual and prayer in a secular time frame. Yet, it is important to remember too that the emergence of this secular conception of time and the world is itself a product of a western, post-Christian world view that came into being during and after the era of European colonial expansion. Said did not address the question of secularism in exactly the way suggested by Asad. Yet Said's reflections on Arabic fiction do suggest methods of reading that anticipate those of Asad.

1.3   World Literature, Comparativism, and Said's Secular Criticism

The critical reception of Said's thought and its contribution to the fields of global comparativism and world literature can help to further elucidate the significance of his critical thought for understanding the Arabs' crisis of historicity during and after the era of colonial modernity. Said's critique of the national culture of Arab societies is articulated in his appraisal of the prevailing narrative techniques as well as the thematic foci of Arabic literature in the

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[75] See Said's concluding discussion of 'secularism' as he explains in 'Conclusion: Religious criticism', in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), pp. 290-292.
[76] Asad, 'Secularism, Nation-State, Religion', in *Formations of the Secular,* pp. 196-97 (pp. 196-97).

'post-national era'.[77] In this way, he also approaches the recent history of imperialism and nationalism in the Arab world through a secular frame of reference in order to clarify the historical and geopolitical forces that have shaped and continue to shape social and cultural life in Egypt and the Arab world.

1.3.1 Said's Critique of Literary Representation in Arab National Narratives

Against readings of Said that define his critical thought exclusively in terms of the Foucauldian methodology elaborated in the early pages of *Orientalism*, more materialist readers, such as Timothy Brennan, have suggested that Said's critical thought is best compared to that of György Lukács. Such a suggestive comparison helps to clarify with more precision the significance of Saidian concepts such as contrapuntal reading, secular criticism, and worldliness. Indeed, like Lukács, Said was a broadly thematic critic, who considered the ways in which imperialism was figured at the level of story, plot, and character. Such an approach is useful for understanding how Said's literary-critical thought might also help to make sense of the mediation of history and the crisis of historicity in recent Arab fiction, even if Said did not explicitly address such questions in a sustained way.

Against the historical backdrop of pan-Arab nationalism, Said wrote two influential essays on Arabic literature and popular culture to address the role of Egypt in his reflections on the struggle for Palestinian self-determination. In 'Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948',[78] and 'After Mahfouz', Said takes on the aesthetics of literary narratives to discuss the Arabs' engagement in their political history—a literary theme that Said did not pursue in his own work. 'Arabic prose and Prose Fiction After 1948' addresses the ways in which the legacy of the Palestinian disaster of 1948 is mediated in the works of Arab novelists, dramatists, and critics like Ghali Shukri and Constantine Zurayk. In order to clarify the form

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[77] Curthoys, 'Edward Said's unhoused philological humanism', in *The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, pp. 152-175 (p. 152). As Curthoys goes on to illustrate, 'as an ethicist of cosmopolitan humanism, Said renews the historical and interpretive principles of comparative literature for a multicultural and post-national era.'

[78] 'Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction after 1948' was first published as the introduction to an anthology entitled *Days of Dust* in 1974, and subsequently reprinted in Said's collection of essays, *Reflections on Exile* (2000).

and context of Arabic fiction, Said draws parallels between the Arabic novel and European historical realism. To develop this point, he draws an analogy between the Eastern and Western backgrounds of the rise of the modern novel. Said's historical survey of both the Arab and European trends are inextricably bound up with a 'consciousness of time' as manifested in the historical forces of class, period, and perspective. In this regard, Said holds the European novel in high esteem when compared with the Arab model. In contrast to the European tradition of realist writings such as those of Dickens, Eliot, Flaubert, Balzac, Stendhal, and Dostoevsky, he suggests that Arab nationalist fiction does not imitate life. However, among Arabic writers, Said praises Mahfouz as an emblematic figure whom he likens to Hugo, Dickens, Galsworthy, Mann, Zola, and Jules Romaine. In Said's account, Mahfouz's style reflects a 'Flaubertian dedication to letters' that corresponds to the modernist trajectory. More importantly, Mahfouz's novels speak to an 'anxiety of influence'[79] that he consistently takes on to address the contemporary problems of Egyptian society.[80]

Apart from Mahfouz's fiction and Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun,* Said contends that the conventions of literary fiction in Arabic narratives after 1948 fail to deliver a conscious interpretation of the political situation in the modern Arab world. Addressing time in particular binds the Arabs' understanding of their political present in terms of an imaginary world that does not attend to the politics of their secular world. Against the predominant narrative modes that fail to address temporal conventions like duration, periodicity, and contemporaneity, both Mahfouz and Kanafani deploy what he calls 'the scenic method',[81] to address such a distortion in the recurrent modes of representations. Drawing an analogy with the theatrical convention of *mise-en-scene*, Said suggests that Arabic writers create a series of loosely connected dramatic scenes or episodes in their fiction to evoke an emergent sense of historical consciousness about the contemporary. Said's discussion of the melodramatic scene in Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*,

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[79] Edward Said, 'After Mahfouz', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays*, (London: Granta Books, 2001), pp. 317-326 (p. 320).

[80]*Ibid.* Said explains that Mahfouz's novels 'tend to speak of something socially and politically actual. Anxiety is at work not only in determining what was possible for Mahfouz in a fundamentally settled and integrated society such as Egypt, but also in determining what, in a fractured, decentred, and openly insurrectionary place, is maddeningly, frustratingly *not* possible.'

[81] The scenic method avoids an episodic and short stories that affects the continuity of the events in the fiction. Both Mahfouz and Kanafani managed to recall a sense of immediacy to the Arabic novel through this narrative technique.

wherein the character of Abu Qais finally realises the implications of Israel's conquest of Arab lands in 1948 several years after the event, is an exemplary case in point. That such an emergent historical consciousness is bound up with the historical experience of dispossession and the failure of a coordinated act of political resistance is significant here, for it signals how recent Arabic prose fiction used the conventions of melodrama to articulate the idea of what Said calls Arab contemporaneity at the very moment it was 'threatened with obliteration'.[82] Said's analysis of the scene in which Abu Qais finally comes to terms with the meaning of the historical event of the *nakba* and the dispossession it symbolises also points to another dimension of Arab fiction more broadly, which is implicit in Said's argument. That is, the religious modes of understanding historical time work to hamper an understanding of worldly historical events and the possibilities of coordinated political action. By examining how recent Egyptian fiction both inhabits and critiques these idealist ways of knowing the past, which underpins Arab nationalist narratives, this thesis suggests that Said's secular criticism has important implications for understanding the Arabs' crisis of historicity.

1.3.2   The Worldliness of Arabic Narratives and the Political Agency of Arab Subjects

Building on Said's critique of Arab historicism as an essentialist form of anti-colonial nationalism, the thesis considers how recent Egyptian realist fiction helps to reimagine the worldliness of the Arab world.

As I have suggested earlier in this introduction, the three Egyptian novels I am reading after Said foreground the importance of individual agency, creativity, and critical dialogue as a means to challenge such predominant narratives of religion and nation. However, the thesis also extends Said's broadly thematic approach to reading literary texts by considering the ways in which specific formal techniques, such as focalization, as well as narrative representations of space and time contribute to a secular critical approach to literary texts. From varied vantage points in the present, different focalising characters draw on individual and collective memories to re-evaluate past events, political decisions and actions. In this way, the narrative distance between the narrator and the focalising characters

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[82] Said, 'Arabic prose and Prose Fiction After 1948', in *Reflections*, pp. 41-60 (p. 48).

invite readers to question fixed, essentialist ways of thinking about the past and cultural memory before and after the colonial encounter, and to reflect on the problems inherent in these essentialist habits of thinking.

The rationale for the selection of novels discussed in this thesis is partly informed by Said's own insistence—*contra* the ahistorical, quasi-scientific and text-centred approach of American New Criticism—that the worldliness of texts is informed by the intellectual agency of individual authors. This is not to valorise individual authorial intention as the exclusive source of meaning, but it is to say that the historical traces that shape an individual author's imaginative vision can help to make sense of a novel's worldliness. The correspondences between the historical traces shaping the imaginative geographies of each of the three novels discussed in this thesis also correspond in interesting ways with that of Said's critical thought.

In different ways, the literary works of Radwa Ashour, Ahdaf Soueif, and Bahaa Tahir explore recurrent patterns of thought associated with Arab narratives of memory, identity, and nationalism. As previously mentioned, each chapter of this thesis uses the critical tools related to narratology and genre criticism and relates them to Said's thought in order to investigate how the narratives featuring Arab characters in the selected novels make sense of their political present through collective, linear, fragmentary, and culturally (dis)oriented representations of their historical past from different political vantage points. In my argument, Saidian concepts such as secular criticism, contrapuntal reading (also a mode of criticism), worldly traces and critical mobility provide interpretative tools for identifying and critiquing fixed, essentialist ways of thinking about belonging, cultural memory, and identity. For example, when the secular critical category of worldliness is applied to predominant narratives of Arab nationalism, it can help to elucidate the constraints that such narratives place on political agency: whether individuals are dynamic political subjects who can contribute to changing the course of history or passive cultural objects of a fixed and transcendent historical narrative with a predetermined future.

To address formal concepts such as the narrative construction of the subject, memory, identity, and the self-creation of an exilic mind, I develop my reading of Said by putting his critical thought in dialogue with some other seminal texts. In Ashour's *Granada*, I draw on Patricia Tobin's *Time and the Novel: The*

Genealogical Imperative (1987) to address the impact of time as a central and an independent agent which structures the complex and contested ideas of survival and continuity from the standpoint of a Muslim family that witnesses and lives through the Spanish Reconquista. Tobin's argument is helpful to examine the varied political positions as represented by the members of such family in accordance with their understanding of secular/ colonial time in opposition to a sacred religious past. A similar approach is adopted in the second chapter on Soueif's *The Map of Love*. Here, I supplement Said's reading of Conrad's letters and fiction with discussions of Linda Kauffman's approach to contemporary fiction, which make use of letters and notebooks in her *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes* (1992). In so doing, I suggest that Said's early book on Conrad does not only prefigure his later philological humanist approach to texts; it also provides a useful way of reading the assemblage of letters, notebooks, and diaries in *The Map of Love* as methods of history construction. Finally, in the third chapter, I attempt to read the figure of the public intellectual in Tahir's *Love in Exile* with specific reference to Said's reflections on the intellectual during the period between the end of the Cold War and the start of the war on terror. By supplementing Said's discussion of the public intellectual with Rob Nixon's account of slow violence, I suggest that *Love in Exile* offers a sophisticated account of the challenges facing Arab intellectuals, who seek to find a public platform in the mainstream media to bear witness to persecution and speak the truth to power.

1.4   Mapping the Thesis

In Chapter One, I read Radwa Ashour's novel *Granada* (2003) with reference to four articles by Said: 'Secular Criticism', 'Arabic prose and Prose Fiction After 1948', 'Memory, Invention, and Place' (2000), and 'Andalusia Journey' (2008). I use these articles in particular to examine and question how the novel's focalizing characters variously interpret the meaning of Islam in the face of the dispossession, displacement, and religious persecution that was wrought by the Catholic reconquest of Andalusia. Ashour's novel provides a kind of documentary as well as chronicle representation of the aftermath of a cataclysmic historical event in Muslim Medieval Spain: the fall of Granada. Abu Jaafar's family is read as microcosm of Granada; indeed, the stories of each family member testify to the experience of dispossession, and the various possibilities of resisting the new order imposed on the city by the Castilian forces in the final episodes of the Reconquista.

Through the narrative technique of multiple focalization, the novel records a gradual change in the historical consciousness of the family across generations. This shift from a nostalgic view of a glorious Islamic past to something like a secular understanding of the present conditions facing Granada's Muslims after the reconquest is registered in and through the genealogical structure of this chronicle novel — a structure which is grounded in the voice of the deceased father, Abu Jaafar. To address the broader aims of the thesis, the final section of the chapter reads Ashour's *Granada* in the light of Said's materialist reading of Andalusia as an 'animated' historical site. With reference to his late essay 'Andalusia's Journey', I consider how the novel constructs particular narrative sites to evoke the multi-layered history of Muslim Andalusia.

There are many Arabic literary works on Medieval Spain, which focus on nostalgia as a central theme to address the end of the Islamic regime in medieval Andalusia. In this regard, Ashour's *Granada* is not an exception. Yet, the novel also signals a break with the nostalgic mode of representing the fall of Al-Andalus. As a chronicle novel, Ashour's *Granada* registers a subtle change across three generations from the religious to the secular stage whereby the Granadans' daily life is disrupted by the experience of colonial modernity. It is through a secular assessment of the past—and the legal constraints placed on Arab customs and religious rituals in the public sphere by the new Catholic political order—that the family begin to make sense of their new historical circumstances. By critiquing 'the politics and poetics of nostalgia', in other words, the focalizing characters of Ashour's *Granada* exemplify a secular critical approach to history, which the critic William Granara has likened to a 'new historicism'.[83]

Chapter Two traces the construction of an inventory in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*. In *Orientalism*, Said borrows the term inventory from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* to describe the critical task of the intellectual. Said's reflections on the importance of Conrad's letters as a resource for making sense of the ways in which Conrad was shaped and formed by specific political and economic conditions also shed some light on what precisely constructing an inventory might entail. Moreover, Said's methodology of reading Conrad's letters

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[83] William Granara, 'Nostalgia, Arab Nationalism, and the Andalusian Chronotope in the Evolution of the Modern Arabic Novel', Journal *of Arabic Literature*, 36.1 (2005), pp. 57-73 (p. 63).

as an inventory has important implications for my analysis of *The Map of Love*. The plot of Soueif's novel is constructed through episodic narratives and fragmentary stories. The novel can be contrapuntally read as three intermingled and extended stories of three women across three continents in two different temporal contexts. The main line of thinking in the novel is originated and developed through the letters and diaries written by Anna Winterbourne, an English woman who visited Egypt in the first decade of the twentieth century. It is Isabel Parkman—the American cousin of the narrator, Amal al-Ghamrawi—who brings these letters to her in a trunk in 1997. Amal then re-narrates and interprets Anna's fragmentary notes.

Rather than illustrating Anna's 'state of mind at a given moment', the novel gradually discloses the complex history of colonial Egypt embedded in her testimonial experience. For Amal, Anna's letters provide a documentary archive that sustains a relative degree of historical credibility. Thus, Amal's constructive reading of Anna's letters, diaries, and relics uncovers multiple layers of the Egyptian national struggle. This process of reading sheds light on the history of the modernization of Egypt and the significance of oppositional movements such as Islamic fundamentalism and anti-modernization for understanding that history. The narrator's late-1990s perspective on the formation of Egypt's rising nationalism in the 1960s works to challenge the nostalgic national consciousness of a whole generation that witnessed that period.

Previous readings of Soueif's novel focus on the Anglophone form of the text, and its translation from the Arabic. Primarily, such studies provide a detailed account of how Soueif mastered the linguistic tools of two languages so that she could 'de-territorialize'[84] the language of an Arabic context mediated by an English voice. Thus, one can observe the recursive analysis of narrative structure and technique in many critical readings, such as those conducted by Amin Malak (2000); Susan Muaddi Darraj (2002); Mohammed Albakry and Patsy Hunter Hancock (2008); Vivek Gupta (2009); Mohamed El-Feky (2012) and others.[85]

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[84] Waïl S. Hassan, 'Agency and Translational Literature: Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*', *PMLA*, 12.3 (May, 2006), pp. 753-768 (pp. 16-17). Hasan explains that Soueif's text attends to "cultural translation in the original itself, translational literature at once problematizes the notion of the original and stages what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe, in the context of minority literature, as the "de territorialization of language."'

[85] Amin Malak, 'Arab-Muslim Feminism and the Narrative of Hybridity: The Fiction of Ahdaf Soueif,' *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 20 (2000), pp. 140-83; Susan Muaddi Darraj,

Some other studies read the novel as a form of travel literature.[86] In the second chapter of this thesis, I examine how both the language of the novel (by which I mean the language of the letters written by the English narrator) contributes to unravelling the original story for the Egyptian narrator. Further, I will also trace how the narrator re-reads the contemporary Egyptian site against a historical background of colonial Egypt as it is mediated in the letters of Anna Winterbourne. In this act of re-reading, the narrator also redraws the map of Egypt's recent political history. This narrative technique facilitates a second-order knowledge of national history and historiography, which uses the personal letters of Anna Winterbourne to identify the lacuna in official nationalist histories, and to make sense of the intertwined histories of England and Egypt in the period between 1900 and 1914.

Although some feminist readings approach the novel as an endeavour on Soueif's part to 'subvert'[87] the orientalist representations that Said castigates in *Orientalism*, I claim that such a reading of the novel as a mere subversion of the orientalist stereotypes of Arab women in the twentieth century is rather limited. Instead, I will pay particular attention to the protagonist's analysis of the self-conscious style of Anna's letters in order to trace the ways in which the letters work through and interrogate orientalist forms of knowledge and power in the context of early twentieth-century Egypt under British occupation. While the letters certainly have a gendered dimension, they also highlight affinities between the position of a white upper middle-class English woman in a patriarchal colonial society and an emerging anti-colonial nationalist movement in early twentieth-century Egypt.

In chapter three, I read Bahaa Tahir's *Love in Exile* (2001) with specific reference to Edward Said's *Covering Islam* (1981) and *Representations of the*

'Writing Relocation: Arab Anglophone Literature of the Last Decade', *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies,* 2 (Fall 2002), pp. 123-30; Mohammed Albakry and Patsy Hunter Hancock, 'Code switching in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*', *Language and Literature*, 17.3 (2008), pp. 221–34; Gupta, Vivek, 'Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* as "Translational Literature"', *Washington University Undergraduate Research Digest,* 4.2, (2009), <http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/vol4_iss2/11>; Mohamed El-Feky, 'Discovering the Self and the Other: Narrative in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*', *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities,* 3.1 (2012), pp. 141-169.

[86] See Shao-Pin Luo, 'Rewriting Travel: *The Map of Love* and Bharati Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 38.2, pp. 77–104.

[87] Katherine Callen King, 'Translating Heroism: Locating Edward Said on Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love',* in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation,* ed. by Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom (Berkeley, CA, USA: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 142-158.

Intellectual (1995). By choosing this particular novel from Tahir's literary corpus, I intend to broadly discuss the voice of Arab intellectuals and examine the public role of journalism as a language and interpretative tool for framing and questioning reality. Further, I consider how the language of journalism provides a critical tool for emancipating the self from the shackles of predominant narratives of nationalism and religion. Among Said's works, *Covering Islam* and *Representations of the Intellectual* in particular are central to his critique of the intellectuals' role in challenging the hegemonic power of the state and religion. Said's reflections on the limitations of the intellectuals' power to challenge authoritative voices are closely related to my examination of the political agency of the Arabs and Arab subjectivity as it is represented in Bahaa Tahir's *Love in Exile*.

Love in Exile addresses the overlapping political implications of two themes. Love and exile, as the title of the novel suggests, are mediated via the political vocabularies of Arab nationalism and an emerging Islamic fundamentalism. The novel explores how the conflicts in the Middle East and the world as a whole influenced the private lives of the characters. The protagonist is an Egyptian journalist who is forced to work as a correspondent for his newspaper in an anonymous European country. His exile is connected to his persistent commitment to Nasserist beliefs at a time when al-Sadat's new polices presided over all the civil organizations in Egypt, including the media. In this way, the novel explores how the protagonist's private life is inextricably bound up with the political situation in Egypt. Just as the changing political situation in Egypt in the 1970s has affected the protagonist's private life in the 1970s and caused his divorce from his ex-wife and his exile, so the Israeli war on Lebanon in the 1980s aborts the redemptive power of his late love experience with a younger Austrian woman.

In this final chapter, I examine the boundaries of the protagonist's relationship with his professional institution and his new worldly affiliation in opposition to his past commitments. By reading *Love in Exile* with and against Said's conception of the public intellectual in *Representations of the Intellectual* and his late essay, 'The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals' (published in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*), I argue that Tahir's novel draws attention to the challenges of intervening in the increasingly globalised space of the public sphere through the medium of print journalism. In so doing, it also raises questions about the institutional and political constraints that are placed on Arab

intellectuals who seek to speak truth to power on a national and/or international stage.

The novel addresses human rights associations as a new form of solidarity that is premised on non-aligned political affiliations. My reading of the novel attempts to show how the protagonist and his youthful colleague try (and often fail) to find a place from which to speak. Their exilic experience institutes another beginning which stands in contrast to their early affiliations. Their worldly affiliations are, therefore, rather explained in the light of the changing geopolitical and economic order.

Previous studies of the novel have analysed the themes of love and exile in the terms of psychoanalytic and social approaches to literature. In her paper, 'The extensibility of psychoanalysis in *Ahmed Alaidy's Being Abbas el-Abd* and Bahaa Tahir's *Love in Exile*',[88] for instance, Julia Borossa (2011) explores the impact of the constraining power of the superego on freedom and authority by framing them in the non-Eurocentric methodology of psychoanalysis. In the same vein, Evangeline Jemi (2016),[89] reads Tahir's novel in terms of psychosomatic disorders and post-traumatic stress.[90] Her paper 'Silhouette of Ordeals in Bahaa Taher's *Love in Exile'*, analyses the protagonist's response to the current global conflict in the reductive terms of obsessive-compulsive disorders. Other studies extend this psychological perspective by foregrounding the political implications of a defeated love and the redemptive power of love in terms of an intellectual's responsibility towards global conflicts. Yet these studies do not account for the intellectual's public function in helping to make sense of these conflicts. For example, Lorenzo Casini (2008) and Line Reichelt Føreland (2011)[91] read the love experience and the intellectual duty of the protagonist in terms of a 'moral dilemma'. While Føreland pays considerable attention to the role of the Arab intellectual as a global citizen,

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[88] Julia Borossa, 'The extensibility of psychoanalysis in Ahmed Alaidy's Being Abbas el Abd and Bahaa Taher's *Love in Exile'*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47.4 (2011), pp. 404-415.

[89] Evangeline Jemi is an assistant Professor of English, Scott Christian College (Autonomous), India.

[90] Jemi, Evangeline A, 'Silhouette of Ordeals in Bahaa Taher's *Love in Exile*' (2016), <http://ijellh.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/48.-Dr.A.Evangeline-Jemi-paper-final.pdf?cec7d6>.

[91] See Lorenzo Casini's published his paper, 'Beyond Occidentalism: Europe and the Self in Present-day Arabic Narratives', EUI Working Paper RSCAS, 30 (European University Institute: Italy, September 2008) & See Line Reichelt Føreland 'Love versus Political Commitment: An Arab Intellectual's Dilemma as Portrayed in Bahāʾ Ṭāhir's al-Ḥubb ff l-Manfa (Love in Exile)' a thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts in the field of Arabic language, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo, (June, 2011).

his reading also approaches the novel's love affair as an allegory of the political relationship between the West and the Arab World. Even those studies, which address the fictionalised socio-political perspectives articulated in the novel, are limited to a consideration of confrontations between Europe/the West and the Arab world. Furthermore, such studies attend to these literary representations, which epitomises this confrontation by locating the Western woman at the centre.[92] Against these readings, I suggest that Said's reflections on the function of secularism and humanist philology in instructing and informing the political performance of intellectuals, provide a more appropriate vocabulary for reading the figure of the intellectual in Tahir's novel.

Through its focalization of the voice of an Egyptian journalist—who is also the first-person narrator of the novel—*Love in Exile* foregrounds the protagonist's point of view. Readers are therefore encouraged to identify with his political views as he debates with other characters on the function of press agencies and other mass media organisations. Through a close analysis of this narrative technique, I examine how journalism as it is represented in the novel can shape and inform political action. By using the very technical language of the press, the novel foregrounds how newspaper articles can provoke certain kinds of public and personal responses. The novel also underscores the responsibility of the intellectual reader in decoding the implications of this professional language in order to construct a counter-narrative to those reduced, diluted, and jumbled parts of an original story. In this way, the novel attests to the importance of Said's interest in humanist philology as a basis for the self-formulation of an intellectual subjectivity. By drawing attention to the limitations imposed upon press agencies and publishing houses, the novel echoes Said's unremitting critical position on the indispensable role of intellectuals in opposing predominant and authoritative voices that seek power via those institutions. In the light of Said's *Covering Islam* (1978) and *Representations of the Intellectual* (1995), I consider how the intellectual's individual responsibility towards interpreting predominant national narratives exceeds the remit of a specified act of professionalism. The novel condemns such professionalism and specialization as 'a kind of general instrumental pressure' that hinders real or immediate political action. It prevents

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[92] For further exploration of the nature of the Arabs' colonial encounters with the West, read Rashid El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

many voices in the novel from speaking truth to power, but in the act of foregrounding these proscribed voices the novel also suggests that writing has the potential to challenge such forms of censorship.

1.5   Concluding Remark

This thesis, then, seeks to offer an original contribution to the field of Anglophone postcolonial studies in three key ways. First, by mobilising the Saidian concepts of secular criticism, contrapuntal reading, and worldliness to read three contemporary Egyptian novels, and tracing the ways in which recent Egyptian fiction in English (or English translation) challenges fixed, essentialist ideas of national culture, memory, and religious identity. Second, by offering distinctive secular-critical readings of three Egyptian novels that augment recent critical scholarship on Arab fiction in translation and Anglophone Egyptian fiction in postcolonial literary studies and world literature studies. Third, by outlining a new contribution to the ongoing debate on Edward Said's thought in postcolonial studies by demonstrating how Said's essays and studies of Arabic Literature; Joseph Conrad; the public intellectual; Secular Criticism; invention, memory and place; Lost Causes; and Andalusia provide a rich critical resource for reading contemporary Egyptian and Arabic fiction that also extends the focus of Said's critical thought.

Chapter 1

Chapter 2 On Edward Said's 'Lost Causes': Sites of Memory and the Genealogy of the Dispossessed in Radwa Ashour's *Granada*[93]

2.1   Introduction

Al-Andalus is a thought-provoking site of memory that questions the distinction between Europe and its others. For the Egyptian novelist Radwa Ashour in *Granada*, Al-Andalus is a particularly complex space for exploring the limits of nostalgia as a mode of historical invention, which speaks to the limits and possibilities of political agency in the colonial present as well as the past. Ashour's assessment of the meaning of the Catholic reconquest of Granada in 1492 in her eponymous historical novel offers an interesting example of what Edward Said has called a 'lost cause', a cause in which one continues to believe even in the face of a military defeat, occupation, or setback. In the case of the fall of Muslim Granada, the dawning realisation that a cause or an idea is lost can be a slow and painful process, which unravels in time and space, but it can also be foreclosed through nostalgic appeals to an idealised myth of a glorious Islamic past and future which is pre-ordained by the will of God.

This chapter approaches *Granada* critically as a 'paradigmatic novel,' a chronicle novel that is 'performed by Time'.[94] More specifically, it examines and explores how the temporal structure of the novel registers the historical understanding of dispossession that the reconquest symbolises. Time functions as a 'process' that foregrounds the transition from the eternal present of Muslim Spain to the unprecedented historical crisis of the Reconquista and the secular time it inaugurates. Among the temporal changes that time discloses are the adopted strategies of constructing time in itself, and the way different characters interpret the very historical moment they are living through. Through the use of multiple plot lines and focalisation, Ashour's narrator evokes varied modes of

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[93] Radwa Ashour, *Granada: A Novel*, trans. by William Granara (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003).
[94] Patricia D. Tobin*, Time and the Novel: The Genealogical Imperative* (Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 5.

consciousness to convey the different ways in which individual characters construct the historical moment they are living through. How they initially evaluate the Castilian's arrival in their city and how their early strategies changed over time will be central to my analysis in the first section in this chapter. The second section will be mainly dedicated to illustrating the impact of this time construction as well as the historical consciousness building upon different characters' understanding of this temporality on the spatial dislocations that occur in public and private spheres. In the same vein, strategies of resistance adopted by varied characters—that are embedded in these temporal and spatial constructions—will be crucial to the argument presented in this chapter.

Throughout the course of the novel, the passage of time unfolds a multi-layered awareness of the current historical moment the Granadans are living through. In *Granada*, Ashour uses narrative techniques associated with the realist conventions of historical fiction to convey the experience and understanding of the Reconquista from the standpoint of an extended Muslim family who lives in Granada. The use of a third-person omniscient narrator and multiple focalisation works to gradually disclose the varied ways in which different characters understand and respond to this colonial encounter. Moreover, by framing this historical event using the generic conventions of a serialised chronicle novel, Ashour explores the impact and legacy of this colonial encounter on the social structure and values of a Muslim family, particularly in respect of differences in generation, gender and social status.

Granada is also a chronological fiction. The representation of the daily practice of varied customary traditions throughout different generations foregrounds the impact of time as a central and an independent agent. Such practice does not merely disclose the (dis)continuity of each character's own past, but it is also enhanced and even formulated through the agent of time. As Patricia Tobin writes in a related discussion: 'Like the *Bildungsroman,* the plot of any novel we deem 'realistic' will always enact and prove, in Edward Said's apt phrase, the "wedding" of "a mimetic, verbal intention to time"'.[95] As Tobin makes clear in the footnote to this sentence, it was one of Said's significant critical contributions to the study of literary realism to consider the mimetic function of plot in relation

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[95] Ibid, p. 5.

to the temporality of narrative. Said's conception of the mimetic function of narrative time in *Beginnings* can also help to clarify the ways in which the family time that structures the narrative of *Granada* complicates the predominant meaning of Granada as a lost cause for the Muslim population that was forced to either convert to Christianity or to leave the city. Thus, time in the novel acts as a 'central' constituent element that structures the events of the novel. The complex and contested ideas of survival and continuity, which construct the very concept of resistance in the novel, have wide-ranging implications across time and space.

By refracting this historical experience through the multiple perspectives of Abu Jaafar's family, readers gradually come to terms with the multiple ways in which the historicity of the Reconquista is understood. The family stands as a microcosmic structure of an entire community at the time of the Castilian invasion of Granada. Although the family structure can strongly represent varied political stances in terms of age, race, class and gender, this does not necessarily mean that the family's pluralized political stance is one that is shared by all Granadan families. Nonetheless, one can draw inferences about the religious, the socio-cultural, the historical, the political, genealogical formations and the pragmatic or the secular responses that come into being through 'web-like'[96] relationships among the members of this extended family and through the details of their everyday lives and social relationships.

To write a historical novel about the Reconquista from the perspective of a Muslim family in Granada is also to raise important questions about the way in which the literary form of the chronicle novel can give expression to what Walter Benjamin called the history of the oppressed.[97] What does it mean to survive in Granada as Muslims under the new conditions of Catholic hegemony? Can this new mode of life be interpreted as a form of cultural degeneration for the Muslim population of medieval Spain, as a sign of an 'injured culture' or a new adopted form of cultural dignity? How might Ashour's chronicle novel of the reconquest of Granada shed light on Said's dialectical formulation of the history of the oppressed

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[96] William Granara, 'Nostalgia, Arab Nationalism, and the Andalusian Chronotope in the Evolution of the Modern Arabic Novel' *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 36.1 (2005), 57-73 (p. 68). Granara pinpointed that 'Mahmouud Amin al-Alim has suggested that an accumulative, linear, and even cyclical structure to the plot give way to a web-like (shabaki), multi directional structure that carries the many meanings of the text.'

[97] See Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, ed. by Walter Benjamin and Hanna Arendt, (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp.245-258.

as a lost cause? And if, as Patricia Tobin has suggested, the genre of the chronicle novel and the linear conception of time that underpins this literary form has its roots in Christian conceptions of time and the patriarchal family, what are the implications of borrowing the resources of such a dominant cultural form to articulate the history of the Reconquista from the standpoint of a Muslim family?

2.2   The Genealogical Narrative Structure of Ashour's *Granada*

In a discussion of the relationship between the construction of literary character and the passage of time in chronicle fiction, Patricia Tobin writes of how 'the novelistic character [coasts] down the river of flux and change, afloat among the fragmented multiplicity of events and the unstable proliferation of details, passing through a random before/after temporal sequence that is ultimately devoid of order and intelligibility'.[98] Such a metaphor seems particularly apposite to describe the historical crisis in *Granada*. After the flight of Granada's Muslim scholars and religious men from Catholic forces, the narrative invites readers to consider how the city's remaining Muslims make sense of their historical defeat. Specifically, it suggests that some of the novel's Muslim protagonists, such as Abu Jafaar, attribute symbolic significance to particular events in order to understand the current situation. The Granadans watched as their princes converted to Christianity. They also witnessed 'the flight of entire families among the nobility and elite'.[99] The collective consciousness that is manifested in Granada's immigrant leaders and intelligentsia and which is able to unite people has, therefore, been replaced by multiple voices and traces of the events that led to the current status quo. Nevertheless, their conclusions are always drawn while being governed by a primordial divine creed, which stands as their own *telos*.

Abu Jaafar, the male head of the extended family through which all the events of the novel are narrated, strongly represents this initial temporal consciousness. He stands for this family's authoritative father and their 'first cause'. After his death, his family members follow the traces of his own interpretation of the Reconquista; however, each in their own way. Read in these terms, Abu Jaafar's family members may seem to exemplify Tobin's genealogical reading of the serial chronicle novel. This is not to suggest, however, that the

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[98] *Tobin, Time and the Novel,* p. 4.
[99] *Granada*, pp. 20-21.

different generations interpret or act in ways that simply repeat or mirror the historical understanding of their father. On the contrary, by attending to the differences between the characters of different generations, one can become aware of what is going behind the walls and the closed doors of this Muslim household as distinctive secular interpretations of history, which in turn inform different ideas of resistance.

In the novel, the narratives of individual characters act as reflecting prisms that gradually reveal a spectrum of varied modes of historical consciousness. In this way, the narrative also explicates and measures how temporal and spatial processes are constructed. Moreover, the Granadans' narratives—like the mechanisms of time construction—also inform the strategies of resistance. Those narratives both constitute and represent the multiple meanings of resistance as they are formulated in the minds of individual characters, and the pragmatic responses that follow from this thinking. In most cases, the development of this complex and multiform political consciousness takes place on a daily basis. Drawing on Tobin's Saidian approach to reading narrative time 'in the absence of any conspicuous formality,' I will examine these narratives as independent determinants of the characters' construction of temporality.

At the same time, the narratological techniques used in *Granada* work to question the partiality of historical consciousness and the value of nostalgia as a meaningful response to colonisation and dispossession. In a related discussion, the novelist and journalist Robin Yassin-Kassab reflects on the sense of 'loss mingled with pride and resentment' that 'every Muslim must feel' on seeing 'the Christianising of the mosque in Cordoba' or 'the larger defeat of Islam in Andalusia'.[100] Against this predominant structure of feeling, Yassin-Kassab attempts to evaluate spaces such as the mezquita in Cordoba or the streets and buildings of Granada from a critical distance. Yassin-Kassab's reflections correspond in quite interesting ways with the feelings of nostalgia and lament that frame the early pages of *Granada*, filtered as they are through the consciousness of the city's Muslim elders – the generation who knew and experienced the city's glorious Islamic past. Rather than simply reinforcing this melancholy lament for Al-Andalus before the Reconquista, however, Ashour's narrative strategies invite

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[100] Robin Yassin-Kassab, 'The Jasmine Breeze', *Critical Muslim* 6 (2013), 3-24 (p. 30).

readers to reflect on the meaning of religious identity and faith in the shadows of Catholic hegemony. If the Reconquista is understood as an example of what Edward Said has called a 'lost cause' from the standpoint of contemporary readers who identify as Muslims, Ashour's novel also raises profound questions about what it means to live as a Muslim in Christian and post-Christian Europe, and about the ways in which Europe has always been more Arab than Orientalist modes of thinking have perhaps suggested.

2.3 The Historical Consciousness of the Early Generation

In the fictional world of Ashour's *Granada*, the social and cultural impact of the Reconquista on the city's Muslim inhabitants is gradually registered through the loss of a collective memory of Al-Andalus – the Arabic name for Andalusia. A shared construction of reality has become an impossible task especially after the first and the second wave of immigration that the city inhabitants witness. The first wave was an immediate reaction to the signing of the Granada Treaty while the second was after the Castilian's public announcement of the enforced compulsory conversion to Christianity. The situation becomes even worse due to the exodus of the city's intelligentsia. A later meeting held in the Albaicin Mosque discloses this fact when it turns out that the imam(the mosque leader) who led people in the dawn prayers was among the city's populace. It is explicitly stated in the text that he 'wasn't one of the usual prayer leaders of the mosque, not one of those senior jurists who packed their bags and fled the city only a few days after the treaty was signed. This time the imam was an elderly carpenter known to only a handful of congregation'.[101] In the presence of the city's leaders, the people of Granada could find their way to the understanding of the current events with much ease. With a noticeable curiosity, Abu Jaafar as well as other men kept following what is going in Alhambra meetings among Abu Qasim Ibn Abdel-Malik, Yusuf Ibn Kumasha, the two ministers appointed by the young king Abu Abdallah Muhammad to negotiate with De Safra, the representative of the king of Aragon and the queen of Castile. They build their conceptual ordering of events not out of the conceptual resources of their religious belief, but rather through the interpretation of fragmentary *worldly traces*:

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[101] *Granada*, p. 51.

The people of Granada always kept their ears to the ground and were prone to gathering as much information as possible. Whenever the town crier announced an item of news, or the imam at the mosque ascended the pulpit before the Friday prayer to expound upon a given subject, whether to explain or defend it, they listened out of a need for reassurance or for something to hold on to, and they were quick to fill the gaps left by any missing information from these public pronouncements.[102]

In this extract, the narrator suggests that the 'people of Granada' look for guidance and information about the imminent invasion from different sources. Yet the emigration and conversion of Granada's leading political and religious figures make it increasingly difficult for the people to make sense of the current political situation. In the face of the mass exodus of the religious intelligentsia and the conversion of Granada's princes to Christianity, the narrator proceeds to suggest that the quasi-divine voice of Abu Jaafar gradually takes the place of other figures of authority, such as an eminent religious scholar, a jurist or an imam – figures who might have been able to offer advice and counsel had they not already fled the city. As a bookbinder and a highly esteemed old man in his seventies, Abu Jaafar's opinion is highly valued by the Granadan people. As an elder figure among the old generation of Albaicin that witnessed the Castilian invasion, Abu Jafaar embodies the collective memory of Muslim Granada before the reconquest. Indeed, to understand why Abu Jafaar is so highly regarded among the Muslim community in Granada, it is worth emphasising that most authoritative voices have become distant memories, especially after the Granadans watched the conversion of their princes to Christianity.[103] Any sense of collective political struggle or opposition to the Reconquista is presented as a vague and distant fantasy – as remote as the possibility of military assistance from Morocco or Egypt.

An undertone of *scepticism* can be detected in the responses of the adults and old men, such as Abu Jafaar among the early generation that witnessed the preliminary signs of the Castilian invasion. Signing the Granada treaty and the subsequent appearance of a huge silver cross over the top of Alhambra tower stand as two critical historical moments that announce the Castilians' reconquest of the city. In response to this event, the adults and old men among the first generation in this chronicle novel waver between certainty and disbelief. '*Tyrah*,' which means

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[102] Ibid, p. 5.
[103] See *Granada*, p. 21. It is clearly stated in the novel that Saad and Nasr, the sons of Sultan Abu Hasan, now called themselves Duke Fernando de Granada and Duke Juan de Granada.

ill omen or pessimism in Arabic, has been shaping their thinking. As a consequence of this uncertainty, no definite judgement is drawn. With the benefit of hindsight, the narrator suggests that this vacillation turns out to be a misleading error of judgement. As I am planning to discuss later in the chapter, this same undecidability becomes quite problematic when it extends to the succeeding generations. This undecidability triggers multiple ideological positions among the members of Abu Jaafar's family especially when they read the colonial modernity of the present from a very specific vantage point in the past.

The response of the adults of the early generation that witnessed the initial penetration of the Castilians into the city can be read in the light of what Edward Said has described as a 'surreal crisis'.[104] The characters who represent this generation, such as Abu Jaafar, his neighbour Abu Mansour, and his brother-in-law Abu Ibrahim are not able to substantially grasp the reasons for their current defeat. Instead, they keep arguing about the credibility of the current situation. The voice of a third-person, omniscient narrator incessantly comments on what is going on within these characters' minds in order to externalize their beliefs. In the following extract, the narrator describes how Abu Jaafar is haunted by the image of a drowned woman – a ghostly apparition he sees while walking near the Genil River:

> The day went on and the *phantom* of the young woman remained fixed in his mind. He was disturbed and saddened by it, but it was not until the following day when he heard the news of the meeting at the Alhambra that a foreboding unease took possession of him [....] Could the naked woman then be a credible sign, he wondered, like a vision or an omen? [....] Abu Jaafar continued his walk until he found himself at the bank of the River Genil. He stared into its waters and the phantom of the naked woman appeared as though coming out of the water toward him. He fixed his gaze more closely, and this time could only see the ripples of the water. Then she reappeared on the surface of the water, ivory-like, growing bigger in death, until she covered the entire surface of the river. He stood motionless and began to sweat profusely.[105]

One might wonder whether the phantom of this naked woman bears any affinities to the imaginary woman that Ashour describes while watching the

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[104] Edward Said, 'Andalusia's Journey', *Travel + Leisure* (15 May, 2009) <http://WWW.travellandleisure.com/articles/andalusias-journey> [accessed 12 October 2016] (para. 5 of 30).
[105] *Granada,* pp. 3-7, (*emphasis is mine*).

bombardment of Baghdad on television during the first Gulf War of 1990-1991. Through this feminine figure, Ashour pronounced a tide of terror that overwhelmed her while writing *Granada*. As Ashour herself had proclaimed, 'I was so scared. I wanted to know if I was facing my own death'.[106] The novel begins with a view of a similar 'naked' woman, walking down the hill towards Abu Jaafar: a figure that suggests correspondences to the mental image of the woman Ashour herself has created. This is not to say that the two figures are identical or to suggest a reductive biographical reading of the meaning of this textual figure in *Granada*. Rather, I read Ashour's comments on her feelings of terror as a way to make sense of the signs of ill omen or *tyrah* in the novel, and the connections they imply between the colonial past of the Reconquista and the colonial present in the contemporary Arab world in which Ashour was writing this historical novel.

2.3.1   (Mis)understanding Temporality: Outside Forces, Imaginary Communities, and the Deferral of Judgement

In the face of the imminent fall of Granada to Christian forces, and the new relations of power that the Reconquista symbolises, these characters view the future in the catastrophic terms of a fatal defeat and ineluctable humiliation. At the same time, they attempt to deny the implications of the fall of their city by drawing on wide hopes of salvation and survival. In certain respects, the historical understanding of the early generation is muddled and even hindered by a transcendental belief in the intervention of a foreign power from distant Muslim lands. These two historical standpoints act in concert with a firm belief in a predestined decree of either defeat or hopes of triumph. Abu Jaafar's standpoint strongly exemplifies this attitude. In the following extract, Abu Jaafar tries to downplay the significance of the coming Reconquista by drawing on other historical parallels:

> He was telling himself that this ill-fated king was not their first and wouldn't be their last, and that Abu Abdallah would go away and that no one else, ill-fated or not, would replace him except Christian kings [....] Everything changes except the face of Almighty God. Hadn't Sultan Yusuf al-Mul concluded a more humiliating treaty with

[106] Caroline Seymour-Jorn, 'Radwa Ashour: Fiction Writing as a History of the Subjective', in *Cultural Criticism in Egyptian Women's writing* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), pp. 109-129 (p. 114).

> the Castilians, and hadn't Sultan Aysar then come along, abrogated it, and declared war on them? And hadn't Sultan Abu Hasan at first agreed to pay the poll tax, then reneged when he dispatched his enemies to inform the king and queen of Castile that our treasuries would only be minting swords these days? And that ill-fated pubescent, didn't he begin his rule by fighting them until he was captured? Who knows what will happen tomorrow? He's not the first of them, nor the last. They've all come and gone, *may Granada remain safe and sound, with God's permission and will, he intoned*.[107]

By setting these events against the backdrop of earlier attempts to conquer the city, and suggesting that the fate of the city is in God's hands, Abu Jaafar tries to assure himself that the reconquest is a temporary affair that is doomed to fail just as previous conquests have done in the past. Such assurances may seem delusional when considered in relation to the symbolic announcement of the Castilians' actual rule over the city represented by the silver cross, the hoisting of the Castilian flag, and the raising of the banner of Santiago over the watch tower of Alhambra Castle. And yet, while Abu Jaafar's *uncertainty* about these events carries remarkably pessimistic connotations, it also places hope in an as yet unknown and unknowable future beyond the present tragedy.

Regardless of the historical causes of the loss of Granada, the adults among the people of the city continue to *defer* judgement about the reconquest. For them, identifying the nature of the Castilians' presence in their city has always been problematic as long as they continue to draw on a divine understanding of their sovereign right to the city. Even after the Castilians' breach of the ratified treaty with the Granadan leaders, this identification is still enigmatic. When the political leaders representing Granada's 'newly elected government'[108] gather to make up their minds about the Castilians' existence in the city—as their realization as real enemies is yet to be grasped—their judgement is always deferred and their response as well. One among those leaders firmly states 'We must resolve *today* to work together and put our affairs in order, with sound planning and judicious counsel. For failing to do so will lead us to drink from the cup of bitterness and live a life of agony until the day we die'.[109] Nonetheless, as the third-person narrator puts it: 'Several moments of silence passed before the people stood up [...] they

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[107] *Granada*, p. 6, (*emphasis is mine*).
[108] Ibid, p. 57.
[109] Ibid, p. 52, (*emphasis is mine*).

huddled in conversation from the time the dawn prayer finished until the noon prayers began'.[110]

Silence and moments of interruption represented by ellipses in the text —as I am going to explain—occupy considerable space in Ashour's account of the Granadans' daily narratives. The third-person omniscient narrator comments in detail on these gaps of time to signal their distance in space and time from the mindset of the people. Such a metafictional device also invites contemporary readers to reflect on their own distance between the history and historicity of the Reconquista as it was experienced and understood by the people of Granada, and their own historical perspective on this event.

Indeed, the adults and old people among the early witnesses of the fall of Granada, foreground the temporal structure of *waiting* for assistance either from the divine providence or from an *imagined* Islamic *community* within the Ottoman Empire in Egypt, Syria and North Africa. Even as Abu Jaafar tries to identify the origin of the current defeat and question his own position, he is still obsessed with hopes of salvation. He is preoccupied with the two axiomatic poles of defeat and triumph. This temporal structure of waiting is framed in the terms of a *Qur'anic language* of providence that interrupts the secular understanding of time.

In *Granada*, the lived historical experience of the Reconquista through the eyes of the Muslim characters of one generation defines and informs the ways in which subsequent generations try to resist the effects of domination and conquest. Characters such as Abu Jaafar, Abu Mansour and Abu Ibrahim, Maryama's father, offer partial yet profound reflections on the presence of the Castilians in the city, and this longer historical perspective informs the ways in which characters from subsequent generations understand their agency and fate. An immediate or a unified act of resistance cannot be the only historical possibility in such a new political condition. The narratives fashioned by Ashour in the novel unravel these multiple evaluations and address the (im)possibility of the socio-cultural continuity of Muslims across four successive generations.

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[110] Ibid.

2.3.2   Seeds of Religious and National Essentialism in the Narratives of Muslim Granada

Through its focus on time, the novel registers the slowly dawning realisation of loss and dispossession amongst Abu Jafaar and his family. Some of the characters among the adult Muslims of Granada narrate stories from which the main concepts that govern each stage can be inferred. The temporal structure of *waiting* is a case in point as it implies their refusal to accept or acknowledge an ultimate defeat and a suspension of any pragmatic response. They either show a feeling of superiority or victimization with respect to their religious interpretation of the meaning of triumph and defeat. In such stories, especially those in the form of lyrical songs commemorating the comrades of the Muslims' Prophet, memories are collectively recalled while centralizing Muslims as *God's chosen people* who are pledged to a timeless divine covenant of victory. Otherwise, on other occasions, the Castilians are *stereotypically* demonized. In the light of this mindset, the narration process falls back on an *a priori* axiomatic conception that lacks any reference to a real confrontation with the Castilians. Abu Ibrahim, Maryama's father and Hasan's father-in-law exemplify this mode of narration.

If the many strands of narratives in *Granada* stand for different historical lines, they also help to address the difficult question that Said proposes in his essay 'On Lost Causes': 'are timeliness and conviction [of a lost cause] only matters of interpretation and feeling or do they derive from an objective situation?'[111] Both Saad and Abu Ibrahim function both as characters and as *homodiegetic* narrators who present a second level of narration to supplement the omniscient narrative voice. Nonetheless, while the third-person narrator retells rather than comments on most of the stories Saad exchanges with his wife Saleema, this literary function is limited to a commentary role in Abu Ibrahim's narrative about the chivalry of the Prophet's comrade, Khaled Ibn al-Waleed. Additionally, Saad's narratives draw upon a spatio-temporal or a 'pseudo-temporal' consciousness which differs from Abu Ibrahim's temporal consciousness of the events of the story that he narrates and belongs to a far distant past. The third-person narrator also comments on Abu Mansour's melancholic reminiscence over his 'lost' bathhouse, which also

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[111] Said, 'On Lost Causes', in *Reflections,* pp. 527-553 (p. 527).

elaborates on a spatio-temporal awareness of the object of loss – a point I will explore in more depth later in the chapter.

The mode of nostalgic narrative that Abu Ibrahim's *inshad*[112] represents also helps to clarify how the Granadan Muslims depicted in the novel respond to the Islamic cultural tropes of defeat and victory. This is not to say that defeat and victory are polarized concepts; rather, they are *relative* concepts grounded in a religious-based interpretation of loss and triumph. According to this line of thought, Granada's military defeat becomes their 'abandoned cause' for the sake of a 'new cause,' which is discussed in the novel as being a 'religious,' a 'moral' and a 'cultural' cause. This peculiarity of interpretation, as reflected through such narratives, shapes the Granadans' strategies of defense against the Castilians' disruptive series of interventions that have sought to destabilise the Islamic cultural hegemonies, challenge its normalities, and impose a new cultural hierarchy.

The storytelling process that Ashour deploys in the novel explains and anticipates how Abu Jaafar's family members interpret and understand the impact of the Reconquista on their daily lives in different ways as part of a shared history of loss. The third-person omniscient narrator contextualises the ongoing process of storytelling as if a stage director is designing many juxtaposed scenes to delineate the psychological states of many characters at the same time. This contextualization is apt to unravel an emblematic representation of a larger dramatic scene of the city. The narrator invites the readers of the novel to cast their eyes over varied scenes that unfold simultaneously—a process that sheds light on the characters who are also narrators, rather than being mere narratees who witness the storytelling. All of these narratives unfold gradually as dialogues between residents of Granada with what seem to be sympathetic but ineffectual interlocutors.

The *inshad* that takes place in the wedding ceremony of Hasan, Abu Jaafar's grandchild, exemplifies the very nature of a nostalgic mode of narration. Despite the fact that Hasan's father-in-law, Abu Ibrahim makes a decision to sing at the eve of his daughter's marriage as a gesture of defiance against the Castilians' strict

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[112] Inshad refers to the lyrical songs in the form of storytelling that are accompanied by music especially by playing tambourine.

regulations that prohibit the Arabic songs, this same act also highlights the dominant narrative style at that time especially among the mature adults and old people. The third-person omniscient narrator states Abu Ibrahim's inner feelings as he begins to sing, 'At that very moment he made up his mind, cursing the Castilian to hell with their laws and orders, to sing at his daughter's wedding fest, knowing in his heart of hearts that in so doing *something magic* would come out of it'.[113] The nostalgic-yet-utopian dimensions of such narratives are unprecedented in the whole novel. Such an extravagant, seemingly contradictory effect endows these narratives with a specific peculiarity. Not only does the talent of the storyteller create an atmosphere of a climatic 'rapture' in Abu Jaafar's house, but also, the readiness of the audience to listen to such stories contributes to it. Even before Abu Ibrahim thoroughly gives the exposition of his chosen story of Khaled Ibn El-Waleed's championship with King Muhalhal Ibn El-Fayyad[114], the guests at Abu Jaafar's house show a tremendous feeling of rapport with the song simply by virtue of his praising the Muslims' Prophet and his comrades.

Ashour brings into play a narrative within a narrative as a technique to highlight the cultural as well as the political function of *al-mahgazi* literature[115] that prevailed at the time of the Reconquista in order to delineate and criticize the politics of nostalgia employed in this very specific mode of Islamic narrative. The story of Khaled Ibn El-Waleed that Abu Ibrahim sings draws on an *epic* form. As he recalls a far-fetched epoch of Islamic glory, he also produces a state of historical amnesia whereby his auditors gradually withdraw to a glorious past. His voice dazzles the listeners until '[t]heir faces, like the waters of the river that flow in ripples, were shiny mirrors that reflected at once the sunlight and their own reflected images'.[116] The Granadans among the guests attending Hasan's wedding ceremony seek a 'self-staging' in the projection of an idealised and remote past that is first evoked by the voice of Abu Ibrahim and subsequently registered through a visual metaphor of collective narcissism, which is incommensurate with the present political situation. The story time of Abu Ibrahim's *epic* (the novel's second

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[113] *Granada,* p. 89, (*emphasis is mine*).

[114] Among all his disciples the Prophet choses Khaled Ibn EL-Waleed to carry his message to King Muhalhal.

[115] A collection of epic tales of unknown author, which recounts the events of some of the conquests of the early Muslim generations, which takes Ali bin Abi Talib as its focal hero. *Maghazi* stories or *sira* as it is titled in Arabic had been written in the sixteenth century. However, the writing of these tales by the Moors in the sixteenth century does not negate the pre-existence of oral versions.

[116] *Granada*, p. 93.

narrative level) is out of joint with the story time of the novel's first narrative that is temporally marked in Ashour's text as the aftermath of the fall of Granada. As a result of the temporal lapse between these two historical lines, readers are invited to consider how the performance of Abu Ibrahim's song, and the triumphalist story of the glorious Muslim past it rehearses produces a feeling of nostalgia among the wedding guests that is strikingly incommensurate with the beleaguered plight of Muslims in Granada after the Reconquista.

Ashour's framing of nostalgia in *Granada* also raises questions about the politics of narrative form that are pertinent to Said's reflections on worldliness, secularism, and lost causes. Said elaborates on George Lukács' differentiation between the classical epic and the modern novel as two distinct modes of narration to explain his critical position on secularism. He explains that 'According to Lukács, the novel, unlike the epic, expresses the predicament of a world abandoned by God, in which time is felt as irony, and in which the individual hero strives for what he can never achieve, a correspondence between his idea and the world'.[117] Said develops this conceptualization to reflect upon the contemporary world in which the novel 'replaces the epic'[118] as evidence for his critical view of *secularism*. If for Said the literary text entails a direct reference to the world, it is also possible to argue that narrative temporality can help to make sense of the *secularism* and *worldliness* of the literary text—especially when the secular world is understood as marking the ambivalent consciousness of a lost cause. Such consciousness is ambivalent because while a lost cause necessitates the recognition that something has been lost and is therefore not worth defending, the consciousness of that loss also keeps alive the hope and possibility that the lost object could be recovered at some point in the future.

As Said explains in the essay 'Lost Causes,' the judgement of a lost cause often happens '*seriatim*'; in other words, the representation of a lost cause takes account of the different events that precipitated the lost cause in a linear sequence, even if that cause is also pre-judged to be hopeless from the standpoint of a belief in an overall narrative of power, which also deems the political cause of the oppressed and the dispossessed to be predestined, or a *fait accompli*. In this sense, the ending of the story of a lost cause is pre-defined by the beginning. The

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[117] Said, 'On Lost Causes', in *Reflections,* pp. 527-553 (p. 533).
[118] Ibid, p. 543.

temporal logic of *Granada* could be seen to interrogate the pre-dominant narrative causality of the lost cause in order to recall the Muslim past of Granada. As a storyteller, Abu Ibrahim uses *ellipses* that ignore 'Beginnings, endings, middles … the narrative periods or termini at which judgements of victory, success, failure, final loss, hopelessness are made'.[119] His auditors, consequently, trace their political present through this *elliptical*, discontinuous narrative structure.

Abu Ibrahim's storytelling produces disjointed gaps of time that interrupt the smooth sequence of narrative episodes that form the novel's linear representation of the fall of Granada and the suggestion that the future of Al-Andalus is a lost cause. As a consequence, the wedding guests are unable to create a sense of historical continuity from out of the fragments of a fallen city. The course of events in Abu Ibrahim's chosen story resonates with Abu Jaafar's religious interpretation that God's providence will embrace his chosen people, and its implied temporal structure of *waiting* for a transcendent power on earth to fulfil God's eternal promise of sustaining his worshippers—a triumph which can be fulfilled through sudden turns of fate.[120] As the *sira* of Khaled Ibn al-Waleed has been narrated in an epic form, Khaled jerks to the upcoming trajectories of his adventure all of sudden.

Abu Ibrahim commences by singing that Khaled had been chosen by the Prophet to carry his message to King Muhalhal; he goes on to assert that Khaled's adventure was not an easy errand. Abu Ibrahim continued his singing: '*until he [Khaled] reached deserted hostile terrain. The one who enters it is lost, and the one who leaves is reborn. It was a land devoid of water and cultivation. His horse fell from severe hunger and thirst …. He found his horse with eyes closed and in the throes of death'.[121]* Khaled, confidentially, orders Azrael[122] to leave and not to sever the soul of his dying horse: *"'O, Angel of death don't you know that I'm carrying a message from the Prophet of God?" Leave my horse be and depart! Stand up my beloved horse!'* No sooner had these words reached his lips than the angel of death disappeared and the horse stood up on his fours, tapped the

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[119] Ibid, p. 529.
[120] See M.M. Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays,* ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University Of Texas Press, 1981), pp. (3-40).
[121] *Granada*, pp. 91-92.
[122] 'Azrael' is the angel who severs the soul from the body at death In Jewish and Islamic Mythology.

ground with its hooves, and started to move'.[123] At another moment in the story, thousands of King Muhalhal's equites seized Khaled. Abiding by the king's orders, they put him to death by burning him alive. At the moment of burning, Khaled '*[...] raised his eyes to the heavens and looked at the stars ... a breeze from the west blew in his direction, and he began to chant ...*' .... '*It was Ali who heard the voice and who came to save Khaled*'.[124] Abu Ibrahim does not say anything to fill in the gap of time between Khaled's invocation of God and the sudden arrival of Ali[125] to save him. Since ellipsis shapes the structure of the song, it is perhaps difficult to know with certainty how each of the discrete episodes forming the narrative relate to each other; and yet, the messianic intervention of Ali stands as a determinate sign of religious salvation in the final instance.

In his book *Beginnings* (1975), Said discusses how 'the form of novelistic narration *begins* from certain historical needs and epistemological conditions' and with the passage of time, 'that novelistic form was displaced by a later form in which discontinuity, dispersion, and rarefaction are the essentials'.[126] In *Granada*, this discontinuous mode of storytelling forms the predominant style of narration. The generic conventions of *al-maghazi sira* may seem to reproduce a stereotypical narrative pattern that does little to counter the predetermined framing of Al-Andalus as a lost cause—a frame that also forms the overarching narrative of *Granada*. Yet by drawing on the generic resources of the stories of heroism attributed to the Prophets' comrades, the Granadans also construct a literature of resistance in the ongoing struggle against the Castilian forces. The stories about the Alpujarra revolution are a case in point; for in retelling these stories of the Islamic epoch, the Granadans question the triumphalism of the Reconquista, and raise questions about whether the lost cause of Al Andalus is completely lost.

Yet, such national myths often fail to achieve their instrumental purpose. They rather work to divide societies into clashing sects, and endow each sect with the false assurance of redemption at some indeterminate point in the future. If this triumph is not immediate, it is often represented as a future that is yet to come. One of the problems with the transcendental structure of such 'invented' stories is that they ignore how the gesture towards an event of redemption or liberation at

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[123] *Granada*, p. 92.
[124] Ibid, p. 93, *(ellipsis here is original).*
[125] Ali Ibn Abi Talib was the cousin of the Muslims' Prophet.
[126] Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), p. 282.

some indefinite point in the future aids and abets ethno-nationalist conflict in the secular time of the present.

In the face of such escalating ethno-nationalist conflicts, Said questions the legitimacy of an authentic collective memory. Far from being authentic, Said argues that such nationalist myths of collective memory rely on an 'invention of tradition'—a phrase that Said borrows from the historians Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger in a book of the same title. For Said, the 'invention of tradition' denotes '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'.[127] By using words such as 'functional' and 'useful', Said clearly signals how both history and geography are invented fictions that serve political ends. Referring specifically to the invention of an Arab tradition in the context of Israel-Palestine, for example, Said writes that: '[...] ours has become an era of a search for roots, of people trying to discover in the collective memory of their race, religion, community, and family a past that is entirely their own, secure from the ravages of history and a turbulent time'.[128] According to Said's extended reflections on 'the very fraught nature of representation,' the stories that any nation tends to invent during times of war, civil unrest, or even national revival do not draw upon authentic moments;[129] rather, they fall back on 'selective memories'. Such a partial and reductive invention of 'roots' also constructs a simplified idea of historical causality that ignores the multiple ways in which ethno-nationalist versions of the past overlap and intersect. Similarly, in political uses of religion and the invention of religious traditions, selective and partial readings of religion are marshalled in order to stage and legitimate a particular representation of the political present.

To further clarify this approach, it is worth pausing to consider Said's critical reflections on religious narratives that are grounded in interpretations of highly mediated and unreliable memories of the past. In 'Invention, Memory and Place', Said turns his critical attention to the authority of both the Islamic 'Sunnah' and the 'Christian Gospels' as two modes of 'orthodox tradition', which draw on bygone events and far-fetched Islamic and Christian sites that no longer exist in the

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[127] Said, 'Invention, Memory, and Place', *Critical Inquiry*, 26.2 (2000), 175-192 (p. 178).
[128] Ibid, p. 177.
[129] For the 'authentic fallacy', see Jerome de Groot, 'Literary fiction and History,' in *The Historical Novel* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 93-108.

present world. The choice of these two examples is certainly consistent with Said's comparative approach to questions of culture and politics. Yet for the purpose of the critical reading of Ashour's historical fiction that forms the subject of this chapter, I am particularly interested in what Said has to say about the invention of an Islamic tradition. For Said, one of the pitfalls in the invention of an Islamic past lies in the striking historical gap between two worlds: that of the Prophet and his comrades' and *our* own contemporary world. As he puts it:

> In the Islamic world, how one reads the orthodox tradition (*sunnah*) is being debated, as are the questions of how one interprets stories about the Prophet, which are, basically, memories reconstructed by disciples and friends, and how one can derive an image of contemporary Islamic codes of behavior and law that is consonant and in accordance with those precious, early, in fact aboriginal, memories.[130]

Said's reflections on the political use of Islamic tradition, and the ways in which epistemological questions about the historical reliability of such traditions are often foreclosed has important implications for understanding Ashour's staging of the Islamic past in *Granada*.

In the Granadans' day-to-day narratives discussed above, the narrated stories do not refer to *the Granadans'* world, but to the world of the Prophet's comrades. This dislocated mode of consciousness—as it unfolds in such conversations—may not correspond to *the world* in which the Granadans belong; yet it provides a palliative against the challenges of the present. As a consequence, the characters of the older generation defer their judgement of Granada as a 'lost cause' and suspend any plans for *immediate* action. The implication here is that any such plans are unnecessary. By staging this use of the Islamic past as a form of collective self-deception, Ashour's narrator also draws attention to the limits of nationalist narratives, which invoke religion as a source of authority to legitimate a certain view of the past and the future.

Such a self-staging draws attention to broader crises of legitimacy in Arabic narratives that Said has also discussed in a related essay on 'Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction after 1948' (2000). In this essay, Said identifies a crisis within Arabic literary narratives in general after the disaster or *nakba* of 1948, when over 700,000 Arabs were displaced as a consequence of the formation of the state of

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[130] Said, 'Invention, Memory, and Place', 175-192 (p. 177).

Israel. In Said's account, this event had profound implications for all Arabs and not just for Palestinians. Central to Said's thesis here is Constantine Zurayak's book *The Meaning of the Disaster,* which 'advances an interpretation of the Zionist victory as a challenge to the whole of Arab modernity'.[131] But Said also identifies another symbolic dimension in the play between *nakba*, or a 'deviation, a veering out of course, a serious deflection away from a forward path', and *naksa*, 'which suggests nothing more radical than a relapse, temporary setback as in the process of recovery from an illness'.[132] The tensions between the idea of a disaster as a profound historical turning point or watershed and a temporary setback that does little to alter the normal course of a particular nationalist history is one that also frames Egyptian literary responses to the contemporary, as Said goes on to explain. Citing the Egyptian literary critic, Ghali Shukri, Said notes how Egyptian writers after 1948 wrestled with what he calls 'the problematics of Arab contemporaneity'. In a tantalising account of Shukri's critical reflections on the Egyptian novel, Said states that the political crisis of the present is mediated in 'the near-tragic conflict between a protagonist and some "outside force"'.[133]

Such reflections have important implications for reading Ashour's fictionalisation of the Arab response to the Reconquista in *Granada*. In the previous two examples of narration discussed above – of Abu Ibrahim and the Granadans' talk about the Alpujarra revolution – the divine providence for God's chosen people is embedded in Islamic anecdotes of geographical expansion and even the Qur'anic verses that people choose to recite. If the manifest function of these stories is to arouse a sense of collective pride in being Muslim and Arab, and to revive hope for the possibility of an imminent triumph or redemption from the experience of colonial conquest, however, the narrator's staging of such stories also suggests a rather different outcome. The recurrent nostalgic tone of such stories implies a 'set-back' rather than calling for collective political action to create the 'historical possibility' for ending the current political oppression and the cultural rupture it inaugurates. To put it in Said's terms, these interlocutors use a certain reading of the *Quran* to interpret the current situation of the Reconquista (or

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[131] Said, 'Arabic prose', in *Reflections,* pp. 41-60 (p. 47).
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid, pp. 48-49.

nakba) in the terms of an episodic crisis (or *naksa)*. In so doing, they are unable to grasp the meaning of the disaster.

Wen-chin Ouyang in *The Politics of Nostalgia in the Arabic Novel* (2013), provides a detailed account of how nostalgia mediates the relationship between the past and the future in Arab literary narratives.[134] More specifically, Ouyang considers the way in which the relationship between narrators and protagonists in Arabic literary narratives mediates readers' understanding of the relationship between Islamic tradition and the political dilemmas of modernity in the Arab world, particularly after the *nakba*. As Ouyang contends, 'The split between the past—the protagonist—and the present—the narrator—serves as the premise of the story [...]'.[135] He, thus, addresses Arabs' crisis of historicity by investigating the narrator-narratee relationship and how the narrative itself is constructed. As he maintains to argue, the form of Arabic narratives is encoded in its recurrent *misuse* of the two terms, 'truth' and 'past'. Both terms stand for interconnected concepts. This mode of understanding in Arabic narratives can only be conceived through the observation of the emotional response of the narratee rather than the narrator as far as 'as the narrative moves from the beginning–searching for truth to the end–finding the truth–the protagonist becomes one with the narrator'.[136] In this past-present dialectics, nostalgia powerfully acts towards a construction of teleological narrative whereby the narratee shares the narrator a sense of certainty about the denouement of the story being narrated. 'The dialectics between past and present' as practised by both the narrator and the narratee or the listener abets the construction of such a teleological and or/metaphysical narrative that refuses self-staging and rectification by any other secular/worldly narratives (such as narratives of power). Considered in relation to Ashour's *Granada*, the auditors in the Granadans' daily narratives play a focal role in the narrating process, but this seems less valuable than the function of the storyteller and the narrator, who stages the limits of nostalgia. However, the listeners' engagement in the events of the narrated story discloses and reinforces their indispensable function when one tends to read for 'truth' and 'past' as two recurrent terms in such narratives. The reader of Ashour's novel can identify the limits of nostalgia by examining the way

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[134] Wen-chin Ouyang, *Politics of Nostalgia in the Arabic Novel: Nation-State, Modernity and Tradition* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013).
[135] Ouyang, *Politics of Nostalgia in the Arabic Novel*, p. 36.
[136] Ibid, p. 35.

these two concepts are represented. The outcome of such scrutiny helps the reader to understand not only 'the politics of Arabic nostalgia' represented in the novel; it also paves the way to their understanding of its effect on the secular act of critical interpretation and the varied modes of resistance that might come into being as a future consequence of such critical secularism—even though such actions lie beyond the time frame of the narrative.

The way the Granadans represent their present is quite misleading. They do not follow the linear structure of their own past to identify what Barbara Harlow describes as 'conscious resistance strategies for the present and the future.'[137] Instead of tracing a past that is embodied in 'the symbolic heritage' as their invented technique 'to open up the possibilities of the future,'[138] they create a split between the crisis of the political present and an idealised notion of the past. On the one hand, they fail to imagine the future possibilities of collective action by invoking a romanticized idea of Islamic history, which is incommensurate with the political realities of the present. On the other hand, they ignore the recent past, which could offer important signs and clues about how to organize and act collectively to resist the Reconquista in ways that could work to bring about political change. Rather than taking on the urgent intellectual and political task of making sense of the specific historical determinants that have led to their 'paradoxical present',[139] they seek solace in specific Qur'anic verses that early Islamic generations had firmly embraced.

Said suggests that any attempt to reclaim this lost sense of historical continuity is often thwarted by a mythical divine or transcendental mode of narration. He itemises some 'narrative forms' of Arabic Islamic prose that represent this mode, such as '*qissa, sira, hadith, khurafa, ustura, khabar, nadira, and magama.'[140]* Said outlines the main features of its deficiency by reading it against the 'European Prose' that 'sees reality as radically incomplete, authorising innovation, and problematic' whereas its counter Arabic Islamic prose 'views

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[137] Barbra Harlow, 'Narratives of Resistance,' in *Resistance Literature* (New York & London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 75-116 (p. 82).

[138] Ibid.

[139] Said, 'Arabic prose', in *Reflections,* pp. 41-60 (p. 49). Said references the internal political conflicts in the Middle East as 'paradoxical present,' which is manifested in many national and religious sects in the Arabic states. Said mentions but a few in this context: the Syrian Nationalist party and the Ba'ath.

[140] Said, 'Arabic prose', in *Reflections,* pp. 41-60 (p. 44).

reality as plentiful, complete, and divinely directed'.[141] Said observes in these types of narration the seeds of 'euphoric nationalism'—the mode of narration that is constituted through a 'pantheon of founding fathers, texts, events strung together in a triumphalist story'.[142] Thus, he criticizes such narratives for their inability to foster an attitude that is capable of addressing and confronting the present loss among the victims of historical events such as wars, occupations, and invasions when they attempt instead to recall the suppressed traces of their past. For Said, the nostalgic emphasis of such 'triumphalist' stories does little to advance the political cause of national sovereignty or self-determination.

In *Granada,* the temporal rupture of the Reconquista is registered via the many ellipses, which accentuate the historical momentum of the siege of Granada, and suggest that the outcome of the Reconquista is a *fait accompli.* It is only by reading these ellipses against the grain of the recited stories of the glorious Muslim past that readers can begin to make sense of Ashour's use of narrative irony in *Granada.* The role of the reader in making sense of such narrative techniques may bear certain superficial similarities to the development of European fiction. Yet this is not to suggest that the development of Arabic fiction is simply a pale imitation of modern European fiction, as Said points out in his essay on Arabic prose. Referring to the relationship between European prose fiction and critical reflections on prose fiction in the work of Fielding, Sterne, Stendhal, Balzac, Proust, and Joyce, Said contends, 'readers of fiction through the years of its maturity have played almost as great a role in the form's flourishing as have the writers'.[143] Such a tradition may not have an exact analogue in modern Arabic prose fiction; yet the staging of individual responses to historical events in Arabic literary prose, especially after 1948, can also tell us something profound about the symbolic dimensions of contemporary Arabic fictional responses to the Reconquista. In a later reflection on Arabic literary responses to Andalusia that echo his discussion of Arabic prose and prose fiction after 1948, Said argues that this Arabic literary tradition 'serves only to accentuate the conditions of decline

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[141] Ibid.

[142] Said, 'Nationalism, Human Rights and Interpretation' in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2001), pp. 411-35 (pp. 530-31).

[143] Said, 'Arabic prose', in *Reflections,* pp. 41-60 (p. 44).

and loss that have so diminished modern Arab life—and the conquests that have dominated it'.[144]

The grey area of the gradual decline is entirely absent in this literature since writers, their readers, storytellers and their audience are not able to comprehend the 'rift' that splits their present disturbance from a far distant past of political and socio-cultural stability. It is a significant irony that the victims of this 'disaster' or rupture seem to be cognitively unable or unwilling to recognise that such a historical event has taken place, precisely because of the historical amnesia caused by a mode of narration that frames the *nakba*, or disaster, as a *naksa*, or temporary setback. Yet by foregrounding the limits of nostalgia, novelists such as Ashour also encourage readers to reflect on the conditions of possibility for collective political change. In this respect, Ashour's fiction can be seen to exemplify what Said has elsewhere called a 'rift' 'between Idea and actuality'.[145] The idea in *Granada* is the Arabs' sense of 'historical continuity as people' and its actuality is 'the very possibility' of asserting this sense of historical continuity by political means or by force if necessary.[146] It is with the possibility of 'historical continuity' of Muslims' lives in Granada after the Castilian conquest that the second part of this chapter is mainly concerned.

2.3.3 Lost Causes, Mourning the Nation and Pan-Arabism in *Granada*

Said condemns a similar political consciousness adopted by the Palestinian national movement for its incapability to evaluate the persistent shift in power relationships on national and international levels. In 'On Lost Causes,' Said explains the changing political position that influenced the Palestinian cause, which becomes no longer part of Pan-Arabism or Arab nationalism. Said did not deny the validity of Pan-Arabism at a specific moment in the history of Palestine, yet he also attributes 'an advance in Palestinian consciousness' to the international recognition of the Palestinian cause as a struggle for justice that was made possible by 'a whole network of institutions' and by the first *intifada*.[147] Following the failure of the first *intifada* to end the occupation of Palestine, Said considers how

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[144] Said, 'Andalusia's Journey', (para. 6 of 30).
[145] Said, 'On Lost Causes', in *Reflections,* pp. 527-553 (p. 533).
[146] Said, 'Arabic prose', in *Reflections,* pp. 41-60*,* (p. 47).
[147] Said, 'On Lost Causes', in *Reflections,* pp. 527-553 (p. 547).

Palestine came to be regarded as what he calls a 'lost cause' in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords. In Said's account 'the great Arab cause of Palestine was so diminished that it became a bargaining card in the hands of countries like Egypt and Jordan'.[148] The implication here is that the Palestinian political cause of national sovereignty or self-determination was subordinated to the exigencies of favourable relations between Egypt, Jordan and the US in the aftermath of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

The history of Andalusia that Ashour's novel addresses—that of the last chronicle of the Reconquista—focuses on a rather different transnational bloc that is confined to those 'imagined communities' of Morocco, Egypt and other Ottoman Emirates. And yet despite the historical distance between contemporary Palestine and medieval Andalusia, there are significant parallels. In the mindset of some of *Granada*'s elder protagonists, the 'mighty armies' of 'faraway places [such as] Morocco, Egypt, and Istanbul [...] are imagined and anticipated as saviors'.[149] Yet, as the third person narrator makes clear, such hopes prove illusory as military assistance never comes. In *The Contest of Christian and Muslim Spain 1031-1157* (1995), Bernard F. Reilly provides a more detailed account of why these 'imagined communities' had failed Andalusia's incessant demands for military assistance. The Moroccan courtiers failed the Granadans' invocations to save the besieged Granada as well as the other Andalusian *tawai'f* kingdoms due to their engagement in geographical expansions in North Africa. Almohad kings were interested in Algeria and Tunisia while abandoning the Islamic community in medieval Spain to the humiliation of dispossession and religious persecution. Muslim Andalusia was always treated as a low priority as a consequence of this geographical ambition among Almohad kings.[150]

Ashour's *Granada* is one among many Arabic novels that incarnate the moment of the fall of that city as a momentous time for the Muslims living in

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[148] Ibid, p. 549.
[149] Granara, 'Nostalgia, Arab Nationalism', 57-73 (p. 68).
[150] See Bernard F. Reilly, *The Contest of Christian and Muslim Spain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 215-216. Even in the two years prior to the final demise of the Murabit North African empire in 1146, the Muwahhid emir, Abd al-Mumin, had begun to receive delegations from the Muslim of Iberia requesting his assistance. He had received them all politely and had offered assurances of his interest, but his essential concerns lay south of Gibraltar. A modest expeditionary force was dispatched in 1146, but for the present he was preoccupied with consolidating his position in newly conquered Morocco. Then when he did feel strong enough to undertake again a course of conquest, Algeria was to be the target ... Even when the Muwahhid emir was sufficiently strong to begin another extension of his empire, the target was to be Tunisia, not Iberia.

Andalusia. However, if we assess such historical narratives in light of Reilly's account of the political priorities of the Almohad kings, it becomes possible to understand Ashour's narrative irony as a comment on the lack of political will to support the cause of Muslim Iberia. Indeed, the ostensible failure of Abu Jafaar to understand the grave consequences of the Reconquest relates to a collective belief in an informal alliance among Arab nations, which continued to govern Andalusia until the actual time of the Christian Reconquest. In *Granada* the tacit assumption of international solidarity between Muslim Iberia and other Muslim nations such as Morocco, Egypt or the Ottoman Emirates is registered through Abu Jaafar's incessant hopes and invocations of such distant forces: 'If we reject the treaty and hold our ground, then help will come to us from the shores of North Africa, from Egypt, and even from the Ottoman Turks.'[151] Some Granadans deny this historical possibility by drawing upon an up-to-date secular reading of Andalusia's new relations of power, which is epitomised in the assertion: 'Nothing of the sort will come!' By contrast, Abu Jaafar repeatedly invokes the historical alliance among Arab nations: 'Never, they won't leave us alone to defend ourselves'.[152]

Saad's stories, when compared with the other predominant Granadan narratives in the novel,[153] provide readers with an alternative archive through which to make sense of Granada's past.[154] Saad's narrative does not recall the early epochs of Muslim ancestors when they were at their pinnacle of power as the other Granadan narratives do; rather, he registers the history of Moorish Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[155] In this respect, Saad does not fall prey to the language of nostalgia, but articulates the loss of Islamic political unity across the medieval world in light of the political decline of Muslim Iberia.

In the mind-set of the figures of the early generations of Ashour's serial novel, the religious frame of reference that defines the political alliance between the

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[151] *Granada*, p. 11.

[152] Ibid.

[153] See Fletcher, 'An August Pomegranate*', in Moorish Spain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 171-175 (p. 174). Fletcher elaborates on the notion that Muslim scholars adopt 'the romantic interpretation of Andalusia History' and that 'The traffic was all one way' when they attempt to read their past.

[154] See Fletcher, 'Convivencia' in *Moorish Spain,* pp. 131-156 (p. 134). Fletcher explains that 'the history not simply of an Islamic state or collection of states in al-Andalus, but of Muslim communities under Christian rule in the expanding monarchies of Aragon, Castile and Portugal.'

[155] See Fletcher, 'An August Pomegranate*', in Moorish Spain*, pp. 171-175 (p. 172). Moorish Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was more often a land of turmoil than it was a land of tranquillity.

Muslim community of the Iberian Peninsula (North and Southern Andalusia) and that of North Africa forecloses a consideration of other non-religious bonds and affiliations within the Iberian Peninsula. This limited secular reading of the Andalusian site hampers the possibility of a coordinated resistance to the reconquest of Granada.

By presenting the religious ethos through which the Granadans structure their daily narratives and implying that such rituals do nothing to change the imminent political crisis of the reconquest of Granada, Ashour's narrator also suggests that the utopian vision of a Pan-Arab nationalism to come is founded on an imaginative geography that is also imaginary. The day-to-day narratives of many Granadans do not address the shifting relations of power. Instead, they reflect an absolute reliance on other imagined Islamic forces and communities. Noel Rivera emphasizes the consequences of such narratives when he states: 'Although imaginative geographies are a collection of narratives and representations produced by individuals, they are not exclusively discursive. They also may have a performative dimension that has material effects on everyday life'.[156] If the daily chatter of the Granadans produces a utopian vision of the future grounded in an imaginative geography of Pan-Arab nationalism across the space of the Mediterranean, such a vision is also rooted in nostalgia for a golden age of Al-Andalus.

Barbara Harlow has suggested that, 'any kind of nostalgia invites the suspension of critical judgement'.[157] Harlow's observation is particularly pertinent to the narrative strategy that Ashour employs in *Granada*. By staging the limits of Abu Jaafar's nostalgia and foregrounding the ways in which his nostalgia variously informs the understanding of the fall of Granada among his family members, Ashour's narrator invites readers to compare different modes of historical understanding between different generations of the family. While some of the family members interpret the Castilian invasion as an episodic or a temporary setback, others regard it as a tragic or catastrophic event from which there is no turning back.

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[156] Noel Rivera, '*Al-Andalus as a Space of Coexistence: An Eventual Imaginative Geography*' (Diss, University of Wisconsin Madison, Ann Arbor: UMI, 2009), (WI 53706), p.5.
[157] Harlow, 'Narratives of Resistance,' in *Resistance Literature*, pp. 75-116 (p. 83).

2.4 The Emergence of New Modes of Understanding Secular Time among the Younger Generations in *Granada*

Rather than a sign of cultural colonisation, I contend that Ashour's use of the chronicle novel in *Granada* interrupts the secular conception of time that the crisis of the Reconquista seems to inaugurate. The patterns of this new life for the Muslim family living under conditions of Catholic hegemony in Granada after the Reconquista are marked by the traces of Islamic values, rituals, and beliefs which live on in the margins of the text. Although such codes do not always feature at the forefront of the novel, I argue that these marginal traces can help to make sense of the ways in which defeat, loss, and compromise are registered in the time frame of the novel. Moreover, by focalising the experience of the Reconquista through the eyes of different generations of Muslims, this chapter asks how the family time of this chronicle novel interrupts and defamiliarizes the secular time of colonial modernity.

The death of Abu Jaafar demarcates two different modes of temporal awareness: a religious understanding of time's infinitude as pre-ordained by God and a secular understanding of time. These two modes of interpretation continue to inform and influence his children's temporal consciousness even after his death. Abu Jaafar's realization that the reconquest is a permanent and decisive defeat for Muslim Granada rather than a temporary setback can simultaneously be understood as a secular understanding of historical change. Watching the books burning in front of him, Abu Jaafar finally recognises the reconquest for the irreversible catastrophe that it is. In a poignant and thought-provoking speech, Abu Jaafar articulates his feelings to his wife, telling her: 'I'm going to die naked and alone, because God has no existence'.[158] In the focalizing consciousness of Abu Jaafar, the symbolic act of book burning is experienced as a profound crisis of faith and hope. Yet, his family members never seem to experience the apocalyptic sense of religious crisis and dispossession that Abu Jaafar ultimately imagines in quite the same way. After the death of Abu Jaafar, his progeny are not able to identify with the ongoing cultural loss that Abu Jaafar anticipates, in part because of their ability to reconfigure the Islamic cultural legacy in the context of the new Catholic imperial order. Both the daily narratives and the socio-political construction of

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[158] *Granada*, p. 45.

space within Abu Jaafar's house might suggest a shift in perspective. And yet, despite the new mode of secularism, which the Muslims of Granada are forced to endure in order to survive under the new regime of Catholic hegemony, the continued practice of Muslim social and religious practices in the private sphere hints at the historical possibility of restoring their past.

Although Abu Jaafar's family members view time as 'linear and secular,' their 'sense of time' also seems cyclical.[159] The very same temporal structure of *waiting* that controls the early generations continues to inform the narratives of the later generations. Nonetheless, while Abu Jaafar's family members draw on his historical interpretation of the Castilians' presence in Granada, their historical understanding also varies according to their age, gender, and social status. Rather than simply repeating his historical line of thought, they become conscious and even critical of the challenges that hinder the implementation of his thoughts in the future after his death. Their preliminary political stance—to follow in his footsteps—keeps changing in response to the emerging repression and persecution of Granada's Muslim population by the Catholic authorities. The family's construction of loss varies in response to the experience of such a policy of religious intolerance. As the third-person narrator puts it, 'No matter how big or depressing life's *disasters* seemed, along came another one more intense and furious, making what seemed so horrific yesterday mild in comparison today, reducing it to a matter of insignificance that shrunk into a tiny corner of the heart'[160] The family members' self-conscious construction of loss endows Ashour's Granada with what Granara has called a 'new historicism'.[161] This term can be explained in the light of the ways in which the focalising characters of later generations come to terms with the new political conjuncture. Also the term addresses the shift in the family's nostalgic and religious mode of understanding political events in the present.

Against such a limited mode of historical understanding, which downplays the effects of the reconquest for Granada's Muslims, Ashour's narrator cites the

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[159] See Walder Denis, 'Introduction', in *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 1-21.

[160] *Granada*, p. 113, (*emphasis is mine*).

[161] Granara, 'Nostalgia, Arab Nationalism', 57-73 (p. 63). Granara views that 'Radwa Ashour's Gharnata presents a radical departure from the politics and poetics of nostalgia, assigning to Al-Andalus a new historicism.'

legal language of the Catholic decrees restricting freedom of expression, religious worship, movement and trade between Muslims:

> "It is forbidden for the newly converted to wear Arab clothing. It is prohibited for any tailor to weave this unlawful garb, and for women to wear their traditional veils." "A new convert may not sell his possessions to any one of Arab origin, like himself." "It is absolutely forbidden for anyone of Arab origin to sell his possessions. And those who violate the order will have their wealth confiscated and will be subject to a severe penalty." "Those Arabs come from Granada and its surrounding villages who possess books and manuscripts must submit them all, or else they will be tried and imprisoned. Those exposed for possessing an Arabic book after the date will have all of their possessions confiscated" …. "Whosoever shall depart from Granada and return shall have no legal rights to his former possessions, and he will be arrested and sold as a slave in public auction."[162]

By citing the language of the Catholic decrees, Ashour makes clear how the Catholic monarchy launched a systematic campaign to eradicate all the socio-religious practices of the Arab Muslims in Granada: they burn their books, close the bathhouses where they wash their bodies and celebrate their wedding ceremonies, prohibit Arabic songs and the wearing of traditional Arabic clothing. What's more, the ruling Christian monarchy forces the Muslims of Granada to assume Christian names to guarantee further control and supremacy over them.

Against this systematic attempt to transform the Muslim other into a Christian self through a process of forced conversion and dispossession, the family plot of *Granada* details the ways in which the focalising characters of later generations come to terms with the new political conjuncture. As the narrator puts it: 'the people of Granada and Albaicin had the choice of converting to Christianity or banishment from the kingdom'.[163] The family's collective agreement to remain in Granada follows a heated discussion about the persecution awaiting them in the event that they decide not to leave the city.[164] Indeed, their discussions articulate different feelings and positions that reflect polyvalent modes of *belonging*. The complexity of the family's nostalgia corresponds with multi-faceted modes of belonging, which are themselves filtered through layers of past memories. While

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[162] *Granada,* p. 115.
[163] Ibid, p. 113.
[164] See Fletcher, 'Convivencia' in *Moorish Spain,* pp. 131-156 (p. 136). 'The obligation to emigrate from the lands of unbelief will continue right up to the day of Judgement.' This was a legal ruling attributed to Averroes.

some of the family members are living through this cultural 'rift' for the first time, others have already gone through this 'rift' many years ago, and thus experience the reconquest of Granada as a normal part of the longer history of the Reconquista. Saad and Naeem exemplify the latter form of cultural disruption while the rest of the family stand for the former mode. Saad and Naeem are not Granadan citizens, and so their struggle for cultural continuity needs to be understood in different terms.

2.4.1 The Tradition of the Dispossessed and the Limits of Nostalgia

While the whole family is considering whether to stay or leave the city in the face of the new Catholic regime, Saad is certain about the coming repression because of the Castilian atrocities he witnessed in Malaga before he came to live in Granada. Saad is a *Mudejar*[165] and a new resident of Granada,[166] who comes to live in the city after living through the devastating experience of displacement from Malaga. By contrast, the rest of the family face this feeling of dispossession and displacement for the first time. As Guzmán puts it, 'the family is not portrayed as a solid unit' due to 'the many different paths taken by different members of the family'.[167] For Saad, new layers of loss, exile and distance are added to the accumulated layers of personal suffering in the past.

This is not to suggest that Saad is the only figure to break with conventional ways of thinking about Granada's Muslim past and the future of Granada's Muslims after the reconquest. Maryama's secular vision of resistance and belonging re-defines a sense of Islamic tradition under the new conditions of socio-political oppression. All the family members are astonished at her enlightened thinking when she asserts:

> Only god knows what's in people's hearts, and the heart lives only in its body. I know who I am, Maryama, and this is my daughter, Ruqaya. Would it make much of a difference if the rulers of this country forced me to take the name "Maria" and my daughter "Anna"? *I'll never leave* because the tongue doesn't disown its own language and the face its features.[168]

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[165] Mudejar is derived from '*al-mudajjar*', persons allowed to remain.
[166] See Fletcher, 'Nasrid Granada,' in *Moorish Spain*, pp. 157-158 (p. 158). Granada's 'population was swollen with Muslim immigrants from the Christian kingdoms.'
[167] María Constanza Guzmán, review of *Granada*, a novel by Radwa Ashour, trans. by William Granara, *The Arab Studies Journal*, 13 &14 (2006), 129-132 (p. 130).
[168] *Granada*, p. 114, (*emphasis is mine*).

Many of the family members unreservedly agree with Maryama's suggestion to remain in Granada, in spite of the emergence of *a second wave of immigration*.[169] Yet their emotional reactions suggest different political positions. Hasan approves of Maryama's proposal that they try to maintain their past lives and cultural practices, but in a clandestine manner. Similarly, Umm Jaafar decides not to leave, but out of a different motive: owing to her age rather than any sense of political conviction. The narrator clarifies that there is no hidden political motive behind her decision: 'since she did not have much longer to live. She told them 'I'll never leave my house nor will I leave Abu Jaafar alone to wait for me in vain. I want to stay and lay green leafy branches by his grave until God permits me to join him'.[170] On the other side, Saad murmurs, 'Departure is difficult, but [...]'.[171] Saad is perhaps the only figure to contemplate alternative solutions, but ultimately supports Umm Jaafar's commitment to Granada, 'Saad sat silently, thinking about Malaga, which was now so far away. When the boat carries him off to the shore of Morocco, Albaicin will seem distant and Malaga even farther.'[172] In spite of their different motives, the family's collective decision to remain is linked in part to a strong nostalgic impulse to hold on to past memories. The revocation of the more tolerant terms of the Granada treaty acts as a cataclysmic event that elicits the family's re-assessment of the meaning of loss and dispossession in the present.

Granada's critique of nostalgia as a productive political response to dispossession and displacement is perhaps most powerfully registered in the contrast between generations of parents and children. Umm Jaafar's voice explicates the extent to which the agent of time constructs the social meaning of loss when the complexity of memories is considered. Umm Jaafar's disclosure of her real motives for wanting to remain in this family meeting corresponds to another parallel scene of *the first wave of immigration*. In this scene, the agony of the adults is juxtaposed with the children's merriment. The third-person narrator describes these two conflicting feelings that are expressed in the same space and time: 'the children grew wild with excitement and jumped for joy, and the grown-ups moved eagerly to load their children and their possessions onto the ships [...] then became clouded by the memory of an olive tree they left behind and basil

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[169] NB: The first wave was in tandem with the beginning of the Castilian invasion of Granada.
[170] *Granada*, p. 113.
[171] Ibid, p. 114.
[172] Ibid.

stalks they'll never lay at the graves of their fathers'.[173] Ashour's narrator makes this variation in the conception of *home* and *loss* palpable through the feeling of Granada's children viewed alongside that of their parents at the very moment of departure to highlight the magnitude of loss constituted through these past images. The children of Granada perceive the same experience of exile quite differently when compared with the adults, as the superficial attachment to their homeland has not yet developed into a feeling of belonging, which is deeply rooted in the adults' consciousness. In a related discussion, Seymour-Jorn traces the sentiments of the adults and child characters in *Granada* as two distinctive groups. She observes that 'there is [...] a skilfully drawn tension between the prevailing melancholy of adult characters and the liveliness of children, whose needs, desires, and interpretations of their worlds often serve as a source of humour and who are portrayed as the ones who will continue the struggles of previous generations'.[174]

The children in the novel strongly echo the emergence of initial sounds of thinking across temporal and spatial borders and essence that echoes a different understanding of secular time from their ancestors especially when the complexity of memory rather replaces the old politics of nostalgia. For these child characters, their initial assessment of loss develops into a rather pragmatic construction of loss building on their history of dispossession and the real confrontations with the Castilians and not on imaginary historical possibilities derived from those imaginary ties that their ancestors once believed in.

Among the adults of the early generations, only Abu Jaafar was able to anticipate the revocation of the Granada treaty with reference to earlier episodes when the Castilians broke their own '*fueros*'[175] treaties in the other fallen Andalusian kingdoms (*twa'if*). Abu Jaafar regarded the Granada treaty as 'merely ink on paper', while the majority of Granada's Muslims continue to believe in the myth of the continuity of Al-Andalus.[176]

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[173] Ibid, p. 154.

[174] Seymour-Jorn, 'Radwa Ashour: Fiction Writing', in *Cultural Criticism in Egyptian Women's writing* pp. 109-129 (p. 110).

[175] Fletcher, 'Convivencia' in *Moorish Spain,* pp. 131-156 (p 137). Regulations for the administration of a newly conquered city were often committed to writing by the Christian authorities in a document known as a *fuero*.

[176] Ibid. These documents can furnish much information about the life of the Mudejar communities—provided one remembers that their content is normative rather than descriptive, that is to say they describe society as it was intended to be rather than as it actually was.

And yet, Abu Jaafar's children seem to lack this facility for critique and analysis. Unlike Saad, whose sense of belonging has already been disrupted by his experience of the fall of Malaga, Hasan and Saleema have never experienced dispossession or religious persecution. Saad is considered 'a born loser,' whose narrative[177] always accounts for his non-sceptical attitude when he evaluates the present political scene. As a *mudejar*, who had spent his early years of childhood in Malaga which was re-conquered before Granada, Saad's experience of Castilian atrocities is framed as a sign of the coming political crisis in Granada. Through this technique of multiple focalization, the narrative highlights the ways in which material circumstances shape and influence one's understanding of the historical conditions of conquest and dispossession. When Hasan and Saleema enjoyed Abu Jaafar's care, Saad was homeless and starving. Saad's experiences may not be given much space in the narrative, yet they serve to highlight the lack of historical understanding among many of the other Granadan characters in the novel. In the following extract, the third-person narrator uses Saad's experience to highlight the parallels between his experiences in Malaga and the current crisis in Granada: 'His mind drifted. To wander aimlessly about in the daytime and greet the night sitting in the corner of a mosque reeling from the pangs of hunger that only sleep could relieve, wrapped in a coarse woollen cloak, *what is new about that?*'[178]

On the night of their wedding, Saad tells his wife Saleema about his father Muhammad Abdel-Azeez, his grandfather, his mother Aysha, and his sister. For three nights —the narrator tells us— Saad 'recounted all the details of the siege of Malaga and its inevitable defeat after the horrendous cannon fire from both the land and the sea'.[179] Within this story, Saad provides Saleema with the political background of Malaga's fall and the capture of his mother:

> The Castilians rounded up as many citizens as they could lay their hands on, and proclaiming that the amount of ransom was not complete, they announced that every citizen of Malaga was to be treated as a servant to the king and queen of Castile and Aragon to do with them as they pleased. The royal couple agreed to exchange a third of them for Spanish soldiers held captive in Morocco. Another third was condemned to a life of hard labor to compensate for the expenses incurred by the Castilian treasury to

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[177] See Said, 'On Lost Causes', in *Reflections,* pp. 527-553 (p. 528). For Said, a 'loser's narrative is implicitly contrasted with the story of someone who either surmounted all the obstacles (triumph in adversity) or was born in favourable circumstances.'
[178] *Granada*, p. 12, (*emphasis is mine*).
[179] Ibid, p. 81.

finance the war [...] the remaining third were parceled out as gifts to the pope, European nobility, the Royal Court notables, and the military commanders. My mother was among this last third.[180]

Through Saad's act of witnessing and narrating what happened before the invasion of Granada in his home in Malaga, Ashour invites readers to regard the fall of Granada as part of a longer history of defeat and loss in Al-Andalus as a whole. It is through Saad's focalizing consciousness that readers are able to identify a 'continuum of what the city was before and what it became after 1492'.[181] Indeed, Saad is perhaps the only character that seems able to understand the reconquest of Granada as part of a worldly historical process. In other words, Saad provides readers with a historical narrative of dispossession that sheds light on the gaps and fragments in the consciousness of many of the other characters.

2.4.2 Mourning the Father, Mourning Granada

For many of the family members the loss of Granada is bound up with the loss of Abu Jaafar. The death of Abu Jaafar and the end of the culture he represents—that is symbolically registered by the Castilians' burning of books—precipitates a culture of mourning among his family members. The family attempt to come to terms with this loss by repeatedly referring back to Abu Jaafar's vision of a Granada free from religious and cultural persecution. Such a utopian vision of Granada is exemplified in the following extract:

> [...] it was impossible that God would abandon His servants and forget them as though they never worshipped Him nor build His abode with their hearts bursting with love for Him. He imagined days to come in which the Castilians would withdraw to the north and leave Granada to live in peace, in the security of the Arabic language, and in the comfort of the muezzin's call to prayer ... and that is now occupied by Hasan the Granadan, the writer, who burns both ends of the candle as he dips his plume into the inkwell and writes.[182]

Through the focalising consciousness of Abu Jaafar, the narrator evokes an idealised vision of Granada before the reconquest. Indeed, it is through a recursive reference to passages such as these that the family members of the younger

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[180] Ibid, pp. 81-82.

[181] María Constanza Guzmán, '*Granada*: A Novel by Radwa 'Ashour, William Granara, María Rosa Menocal', Review in *The Arab Studies Journal*, 13 & 14 (2006), 129-32 (p. 130).

[182] *Granada*, p. 36.

generations assert their right to remain in Granada by preserving a sense of genealogical continuity. To put it in the terms of Patricia Tobin's account of the genealogical structure of the historical novel, Abu Jaafar stands for the *arche* and *telos* of this extended family, where 'the individual member is guaranteed both identity and legitimacy through the tracing of his lineage back to the founding father, the family's origin and first cause'.[183] Abu Jaafar does not merely pass down his historical line of thought; he embodies a patriarchal 'legacy' that informs their cultural affiliation to Granada after the reconquest. In the genealogical structure of the narrative, Abu Jaafar provides the subsequent generations of his family with the 'collective memory of their race, religion, community, and family a past that is entirely their own, secure from the ravages of history and a turbulent time'.[184]

2.5   Secular Historicism: The Polyvalence of the Family's Secular Traces of Cultural Traditions

The family try to live a normal life as subjects of the new Castilian imperial order, yet they also seek to preserve their socio-religious and cultural traditions by commemorating Abu Jaafar's life and ethos. Each member in Abu Jaafar's extended family interprets their father's intellectual legacy and understanding of Granada's past and present in quite different and necessarily partial ways. While some of his children and grandchildren repeat his nostalgia for the glorious past of Al-Andalus unsullied by the Reconquista, others experience life under occupation as an existential crisis. On the one hand, Umm Jaafar—followed by Hasan and his wife Maryama— *reductively* re-frame Abu Jaafar's nostalgia for al-Andalus as a utopian vision of an end to the occupation of Granada: 'the Castilians would withdraw to the north and leave Granada to live in peace'.[185] On the other hand, Saleema is overwhelmed by existential questions about the meaning of life and death that echo her grandfather's dying vision of a Godless world following the burning of his books.

If Abu Jaafar once believed in the education of the children as a means of achieving salvation, he also thought of armed struggle as another means to

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[183] Tobin, p. 7.

[184] Said, 'Invention, Memory, and Place', 175-192 (p. 177). Said criticizes the Arabs' reactive response to 'the rapid social transformations in history' by reducing it to a mere search for their 'roots' when they were 'secure from the ravages of history and a turbulent time.'

[185] *Granada*, p. 36.

liberation from religious persecution. Once, Abu Jaafar 'harbored a fervent hope that Saleema would become like Aysha bint Ahmad'[186] and he wishes the same for Hasan when he foresees that he will become like Ibn-al-Khateeb.[187] Ironically it is Saleema, not Hasan, who has met the destiny of Ibn-al-khateeb—as I am about to explain—when she is burnt alive at the hands of the Holy Inquisition. And yet he does not ignore other strategies of armed resistance. He tells Hasan 'Granada has fallen, Hasan, but who knows, some day it may return to you, even by way of your own sword, or perhaps you will write its story and record its glories for all time'.[188] These two options—to take up arms against the Catholic forces or to write the history of Muslim Granada—are however mediated by a particular reading of Abu Jaafar's romantic understanding of the history of Granada and al-Andalus. The limits of this nostalgia are further accentuated by the contrast between Hasan's self-fashioning as the custodian of Abu Jaafar's legacy and the experiences of Saleema and Saad. While Saleema and Saad are conscious of their political dispossession in the present, Hasan harbours hopes that he might be able to realise some of Abu Jaafar's aspirations by inventing new cultural traditions that can replace the original Islamic traditions and synchronically function under the new imperial restrictions imposed by the Catholic monarchy on the Muslim population. These differing perspectives inform and inflect a debate between Saad and Hasan about the most effective means of political resistance.

2.5.1 The Limits of Secular Judgement: Hermeneutics and the Secular Interpretation of Religious Texts

By focalizing two distinctive perspectives on resistance through the consciousness of two of the novel's protagonists, Ashour's *Granada* invites readers to reflect on the conditions of possibility for collective political change in the future while evaluating the limits of nostalgia as a politically effective structure of feeling. Indeed, Hasan and Saad's argument can be read symbolically as a critical comment on the way in which nostalgia not only shapes narratives of resistance, but can also allow such narratives to ossify. A fruitful comparison can be drawn between Hasan's liberal political view and Saad's more radical position – a position that

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[186] Aysha bint Ahmad: The mother of Bobadil, who was commonly, referred to as *al-Hora*, the free woman.
[187] Lisan al-Din al-Kahtib (1313-74), a vizier at the Nasrid court, was an eminent belletrist and historian, but was later accused of heresy, exiled to Fes and murdered while in prison.
[188] *Granada*, pp. 34-35.

emerges in part from his personal traumatic experience with the Castilians in Malaga. Read in contrast to Saad's historical experience, Hasan's nostalgic desire for a golden era of Muslim Granada before Catholicism is imposed as the official religion[189] in Granada is quite problematic. For such nostalgia risks perpetuating the political passivity of the older generations – an approach that does nothing to alter the conditions of religious persecution and dispossession in the present.

Hasan's ethos of family protection is deeply grounded in a nostalgic desire to re-live the Islamic traditions of his ancestors in the relative safety of the domestic sphere, but Saad seeks another path by using force to terminate the current conditions of political oppression. Hasan reproaches Saad in the following way: 'I can't stop you from taking *the road* you chose for yourself, but I'm responsible for the safety of my family and I'll do anything to *protect* them'.[190] Both Hasan and his wife Maryama regard their desire to protect their family and to preserve a sense of cultural continuity as synonymous. Such a commitment has the force of 'a religious conviction'[191] which emulated 'the ideas of an old established social class that feels rooted in the continuity of a long tradition and sees this continuity threatened only by supernatural intervention, not by upheavals immanent in history'.[192] To legitimate his position, Hasan draws authority from a 'fatwa' issued by an eminent Maghrebi jurist who permits *Moriscos*, or converted Muslims, to use concealment and dissimulation to protect themselves and their children. He also justifies his clandestine religious rituals and pedagogical practices of teaching the Arabic language by providing a Qur'anic reference: 'But God wishes ease for us and not hardship, as the Quran tell us'.[193] Despite these claims, Saad views Hasan's arguments as self-defeating, and questions Hasan's claims to offer protection by continuing to practice one's religion and culture in secret: 'It's not protection you're giving, Hasan [….] If every one of us shut the door of his house and only

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[189] See 'Nasrid Granada' pp. 157-169 (p. 167). As Fletcher explains, After this date (1525), Spanish society was, at least officially, exclusively Catholic.

[190] *Granada*, p. 132, (*emphasis is mine*).

[191] Patricia Tobin, *Time and the Novel: The Genealogical Imperative*, Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 14. The medieval catholic Christian was more inclined to submit himself to God's will: God had preserved all creation in an abiding community of things in harmony, and He was guiding them all toward a completed perfection that would conform to His unknown design; therefore, medieval man was prepared not to resist.

[192] Theodor Schieder, 'The Role of Historical Consciousness in Political Action', *History and Theory*, 17.4 (Dec., 1978), 1-18 (pp. 9-10).

[193] The reference is to Quran 2 (The Cow) 'as God wishes ease and not hardship for you.'

cared for the safety of his family, we would all perish, once and for all'.[194] Saad's dispute with Hasan turns on the different meanings of 'protection'. While Hasan is primarily interested in taking care of his own family, Saad understands protection as a collective political process, which includes but is not restricted to the interests of any one individual or family.

Ashour's novelistic mediation of the debate between Hasan and Saad tells another story about the relationship between colonial modernity and the secular form of the novel, which Edward Said has discussed in his essay 'On Lost Causes.' For Said, the European novel represents 'a fallen world, which God has abandoned'. This 'fallen world' is more precisely a 'secular, historical world' to which 'all the great novelistic figures, from Don Quixote to Frederic Moreau, cannot really adapt themselves [...] because they are haunted by memories of what they have lost, searching in vain for self-realization and the success of a cause that cannot be maintained'.[195]

In a similar way, Ashour's protagonists are haunted by memories of the Islamic past, and continue to seek a solution to the current political crisis through a vain recourse to past victories and cultural traditions. Hasan in particular seems unable to grasp the secular world into which he has fallen, and seeks solace in different forms of nostalgia. It is Saad who draws readers' attention to the pitfalls of such a nostalgic view in his argument that Hasan's ethos of protection is not only flawed, but also self-destructive. Saad's concerns may reflect the anxieties of a very particular historical moment, but in their focus on the historical experience of a dispossessed group, they also anticipate Edward Said's reflections on the fate of the Palestinians after the Oslo accords. Said prophesies that the Palestinians will be forced to live through their 'own extinction',[196] a process whereby they will 'perish' and cease to exist as a people at a specific point in the future. These words also seem apposite to describe the dilemmas facing the second generation of Abu Jaafar's family in Ashour's *Granada.* Since the new Catholic regime declares Muslim Arabs to be *persona non grata,* the family would continue to live through its 'own extinction' as 'invisible' people or even 'nonpeople' if they submit to the systemic erosion of their religion and culture in Granada.

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[194] *Granada*, p. 132.
[195] Said, 'On Lost Causes', in *Reflections,* pp. 527-553 (p. 533).
[196] Ibid, pp. 527-553 (p. 545). Said views that 'to live through your own extinction, not permitted even the word 'Palestine' had the pragmatic effect of blanking out hope.'

For Granada's Muslim population, the new restrictions imposed by the Catholic authorities severely curtail the possibilities of cultural resistance and struggle. Against Maryam's idealistic view that it will still be possible to live as Muslims in Granada under the new Catholic imperial order, the narrative suggests something rather different in its evocation of the destructive effects of the new imperial decrees on the lives and cultural traditions of Abu Jaafar's family. Rather than the mere 'label' that Maryama imagines, the new Catholic political order exacerbates the divisions between an idealised view of Granada's Muslim past and the experiences of dispossession and the very real threat of persecution in the present. Indeed, the magnitude of cultural loss exceeds the limits of the family's expectations:

> It wasn't the simple matter of a name on a piece of paper replacing another name, as Maryama had thought, but a whole new life of accusations and mortal sins: the circumcision of young boys, contracting marriages according to Islamic law, celebrating the wedding feast with drums and songs, waiting for the new moon before and after Ramadan, chanting the prayers on the holy night of Laylat al-Qadr, the five daily prayers, Ramadan fasting, keeping Friday a holy day, using henna to dye young girls' palms and older women's hair [....] It all seemed like the wheel of Satan rolling along and the soul unable to keep pace with its terrifying speed.[197]

Some members of Abu Jaafar's family gain access to a new mode of historical consciousness that is perhaps best understood as a form of secular historicism. This process of coming to a secular historical understanding of the reconquest of Granada gives the novel a strikingly nostalgic tone, which also differs from the family's elder members, who incarnated the fall of Andalusia while celebrating the very nostalgic and even the melancholic tone of its mourners. The novel dedicates considerable space to the scrutiny and investigation of the Islamic cultural roots as part of an integrated process of deconstructing the cultural loss. It is the secular tracing of the cultural origins of those predominant Islamic traditions and customs of the Granadan Muslims that enhances the characters' assessment of their political dispossession after the Christian reconquest. As a consequence of such historical traces, the family conceives secular time 'as a progress through action to knowledge'.[198]

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[197] *Granada*, p. 114.
[198] Tobin, *Time and the Novel*, p.5.

2.5.2   The Maternal Body and the Family Trope in Ashour's *Granada*

Abu Jaafar's family members *initially* embrace the 'biological imperative of procreation' as an inseparable means of evaluating the magnitude of their cultural loss in the present until they free themselves from the shackles of what D. H. Lawrence has elsewhere called the 'demands of genealogy'.[199] Instead, they break away from such genealogical restrictions to 'conceive time as flux' via their observation of 'the natural cycles of growth and decay'.[200] As agents creating their own history and not passive subjects *waiting* for their destiny, a new secular mode of evaluating the current loss permeates the family's thinking—the evaluation process that opposes their ancestors' belief in the two extremes of *tyrah* and the unjustified ultimate hope.

If the novel focalizes the very different political stances of its two male figures among the new generation—one that foregrounds a possibility of collective change to advance the Granadan cause represented by Saad as *mujahid,* a freedom fighter or *jihadi* warrior and the other, an individualistic vision of protection stated above that Hasan represents—, it also gives equivalent space for the other personal endeavours of its female characters. In the following section, I will deal with the evaluation as well as the resistance of cultural loss from the perspective of the novel's most outstanding proto-feminist secular voices: Saleema and Maryama.

The serial and cyclical temporality of the family narrative in Ashour's *Granada* can simultaneously be read as a historical narrative for the dispossessed Muslims of Andalusia. Such a narrative device draws attention to the importance of the family as a trope for the reproduction of Muslim society and culture after the reconquest. In Ashour's novel, the future of Granada's Muslim population is connected to what Tobin calls the 'biological imperative of procreation'.[201] As the third-person narrator explains: 'In her heart of hearts, Umm Jaafar intoned, 'thanks be to God,' in the hope that God would continue to bestow his blessings on them and bring her grandchildren to fill the house with the raucous noise of

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[199] Tobin, 'The Cycle Dance: D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow',* in *Time and the Novel,* pp. 81- 106 (p. 106).

[200] Tobin, *Time and the Novel*, p. 13.

[201] Ibid, p. 9. The biological imperative of procreation of the Western family that served the biological imperative of procreation has been defined as the primary institution for the production and maintenance of children.

life'.[202] The narrator discloses a recurrent parallelism between Umm Jaafar and the other two female characters in the novel with regard to their understanding of secular time. If secular time is conventionally understood to be synonymous with the clock time of capitalist modernity, it also denotes the biological temporality of the human body from birth to maturity to death. Against the threat of persecution and forced migration, the reproduction of Abu Jaafar's family in *Granada* is framed as a means of preserving the life and traditions of the oppressed beyond the temporal crisis of the reconquest. Like Umm Jaafar, Maryama believes in a process of *genealogical* reproduction to implement their hopes of survival as a people at this critical time. We are told that 'Maryama did her best to cope with the times, and her days, although fraught with worries, were bearable and sometimes happy because her heart was strong and full of love for her children and husband'.[203] Saleema at an early stage in the novel takes on a similar role as mother of the dispossessed.

Such a representation of the mother as a resource for the reproduction of future generations of Muslims may fall prey to a rather narrow and conventional idea of femininity that is both patriarchal and essentialist. However, by framing Saleema as an intellectual figure, Ashour also complicates this reductive patriarchal trope. The death of Saleema's newborn infant engenders a real 'rift' in her own life—a personal event that helps to account for her subsequent acts of cultural resistance to religious persecution. For Saleema, this personal 'rift' triggers her construction of the meaning of loss. She begins to search for the 'roots' of *worldly* existence through her grandfather's *secular* understanding of colonial modernity after the fall of Granada. While Umm Jaafar views the death of Saleema's gazelle as a 'sign' or 'an omen' for this abrupt death of Saleema's newborn son, and suggests that 'the ways of God are inscrutable,'[204] Saleema approaches these two deaths as objects of scrutiny. If Umm Jaafar replicates her husband's early *sceptical* phase, where he relied on *tyrah* and signs of ill-omen such as the drowning woman in the River Genil—discussed earlier—Saleema repeats her grandfather's earlier *secular* investigations into theological questions such as God's primordial protection and sustenance of his worshippers. In this way, Saleema's act of mourning for the loss of her son works to question the

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[202] *Granada*, p. 110.
[203] Ibid, p. 146.
[204] Ibid, p.112.

meaning of loss itself. The third-person narrator focalizes Saleema's idiosyncratic response to the death of her son in the following statement: 'Only Saleema was beyond sadness and joy, consumed by burning questions: Was God so evil that He wished them destruction?'[205]

Saleema is the first member of the family to question the family tradition by refusing to take part in the rituals of both Abu Jaafar's and Umm Jaafar's funeral ceremonies. She abstains from the women's wailing, which forms an integral part of the funeral rituals. What is performed in these mourning rituals is the repetition of an *elliptical* story that is driven mainly by a nostalgic impulse. In such mourning ceremonies, 'the women cried together and rivalled one another with stories and anecdotes of the many fine qualities of the deceased'.[206] In so doing, they elided the shortcomings and negative aspects of the deceased. Among the funeral attendants, 'Saleema was the only one who didn't shed a tear nor utter a word to any of the mourners'.[207] By refusing this mode of *elliptical* narration, she raises profound questions about the efficacy of mourning and nostalgia as a productive emotional response to the political crisis.

In *Granada*, Saleema's intellectual project carries on the work of Muslim philosophers and scholars in medieval Andalusia. Saleema dedicates her life's work to reading the medical works of the most distinguished Muslim philosophers such as *The Epistle of Hayy Ibn Yakazhan*,[208] Avicenna's the *Qannun*,[209] and Ibn al-Bitar's *al-Jami*.[210] These books are considered the most significant embodiment of the Andalusian Muslims' intellectual contribution to the world of medicine. Initially triggered by the paucity of medical sources available to her, Saleema has the conviction that the mere reading of the materials in such encyclopaedias cannot be the sole path for her secular investigations. Such scarcity of medical sources can also be read as another cultural disruption in the novel where Saleema is not able to travel, as researchers would have done in the past. Later on,

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[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid, p. 45.
[207] Ibid.
[208] *Risalat Hayy Ibn Yaqazhan* is a philosopher romance about a foundling who grows up alone on a desert island, and, through the powers of an uncorrupted mind, attains the highest intellectual and spiritual levels. It was written by the Andalusian Muslim philosopher Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Malik Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185).
[209] Abdallah Ibn Sina (d. 1037), a philosopher of Persian origin who combined Aristotelian and neo-platonic theories with Islamic mysticism. His *Qanun* is a voluminous medical encyclopaedia.
[210] Ibn al-Baytar was born in Malaga and died in 1248. His work *al-Jami* is a medical compendium.

Saleema's initial conviction grows into a consistent approach of resisting the imperial forces rather than the personal intimidations of racial extinction throughout the course of the novel. Saleema attempts to perform chemical experiments in the hope that she might invent a medicine that defies the power of death.

Saleema's scientific experiments could be read as a subjective response to a constant fear of death, but they also foreground a wider concern to preserve and transmit the cultural and social life of Granada's Muslims. As Seymour-Jorn explains, 'Through an intertextual move, Ashour links Saleema with the power of the Arab medical and philosophical heritage'.[211] After the death of Abu Jaafar, Saleema embarks on the project of annotating and reading her late father's books and manuscripts, which he insisted on keeping for his children. She also borrows books from Naeem, who serves Father Miguel, one of the missionary priests in Granada, and writes notes on the margins of these books. Through her research and experiments, Saleema ultimately succeeds in creating her own chemical syntheses. The novel sheds light on Saleema's chemical syntheses not only as an idiosyncratic course of action which is noticeably different from the rest of the family, but this can also *metaphorically* read as Saleema foregrounding the necessity of creating new secular formations different from the traditional formations of the Andalusian Muslim ancestors.

As I am going to explain in the remaining part of this chapter, the reader can better evaluate the validity of Hasan's approach towards the Islamic traditions not in opposition to Saad's radicalism of his violent resistance, but when juxtaposed with the palimpsestic resistance approach of his sister and wife.

Saleema's specific treatment of the Arabic texts she reads is quite informative in a way that turns the reader's attentions to a deviation from the aboriginal image of the intellectual life that Abu Jaafar speculates for his grandchildren. Saleema's *intertextual* move through which she succeeds to create her own chemical syntheses in order to preserve people' natural lives and alleviate their pains is challenged and opposed through Hasan's *textual* move that is confined to a very limited scope of the cultural preservation of the original Arabic texts and

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[211] Seymour-Jorn, 'Radwa Ashour: Fiction Writing', in *Cultural Criticism in Egyptian Women's writing* pp. 109-129 (p. 124).

scriptures. Saleema's cultural goal is not only confined to the preservation of the cultural and the social life in Granada before the Christian reconquest, but it goes beyond the mere transference of knowledge to the successive generations via her *reproduction* of the knowledge available to her. Therefore, Hasan's cultural project designed for the preservation of the Arabic and Islamic roots of the Muslim ancestors in Andalusia is very limited when compared with his sister's palimpsestic project that adds new layers of secular formations to the original textual descriptions originally done by the Andalusian Muslim scholars.

The first part of Ashour's trilogy—which is the main subject of this chapter—ends with a scene in which Saleema pays the penalty for her intellectual dreams with her life. She is burnt alive at the hands of the soldiers of the Inquisition Offices. Saleema's death marks another cultural disruption that acts in parallel with the Castilians' burning of books in front of the public. During the scene of her execution, Saleema publicly affirms her devotion to the memory of her father, her people, and their tradition—the intellectual commitment that comes to its end by her death:

> Yes, I am Saleema bint Jaafar. I was raised by an honorable man who made books and whose heart fumed the day he witnessed the burning of the books and who walked away in silent dignity. But I did cry out, Grandfather, when they tortured me, that is correct. My mind and my body collapsed, but only for several moments, Grandfather. I never said anything you would be ashamed of. I studied the books as you taught me to do, I eased people's pains as best as I could. I even dreamt one day I would dedicate to you, Grandfather, a book I wrote from my own research and experiments. That was my dream, Grandfather, that I could have realized *had it not been for the prison of time*.[212]

Saleema's dying words function as a sovereign speech act over her body and her lineage: they serve to reinvent and reassert the world of Muslim Granada that she struggles to preserve in the face of her executors. By framing her death in relation to the intellectual legacy of her grandfather, moreover, Saleema rhetorically enacts a genealogy of resistance for subsequent generations of her family. Indeed, it is significant that Saleema's death is supplemented by another ending, which brings the novel to a close. At the time of Saleema's execution, Maryama has been telling Saleema's daughter, Aysha, a story. Maryama has been thinking that Saleema has already been sentenced to death, so 'She was at a loss at

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[212] *Granada*, p. 227, (*emphasis is mine*).

what to say.'[213] The novel ends with a short dramatic scene wherein Maryama resumes telling her disrupted story. She 'looked into the face of the little girl and she took a long deep breath. She let it out and continued the story'.[214] The implication here is that Saleema's acts of resistance to religious persecution will live on in the memories of subsequent generations of the family. It is also significant that this is a story passed on from mother to daughter about a female resistance fighter.

Saleema's metaphor of being thwarted from completing a book by the 'prison of time' is also worth noting here because it emphasises the way in which the finitude of secular time is understood as a space of confinement. Space, in other words, provides the grounds for the temporal ending of a Muslim past that is announced in the secular time of the Catholic reconquest. Yet this prison of time is not an abstract space; on the contrary, it provides a trope through which to understand how the lived spaces of Muslim Granada are framed as sites of memory for the dispossessed. It is to this spatial dimension of the novel's genealogical structure that the chapter now turns.

2.6   Spaces of Loss in Ashour's *Granada*

As an Arab intellectual with a sharp understanding of the politics and history of dispossession, one might expect Edward Said to approach Andalusia's past through a romantic or nostalgic lens.[215] However, Said's brief reflections on Andalusia's past suggest a rather more nuanced approach. Against the assumption that the reconquest was an exceptional event, Said suggests that conflict and power struggles were the norm in the Iberian Peninsula before and after the Reconquista: 'No harmony was stable for very long—too many conflicting elements were always in play'.[216] This sense of conflict as a permanent condition is registered in *Granada* in the way that Abu Jaafar's family mourns the disastrous fall of Granada—the historical defeat of Andalusia's last kingdom on January 2, 1492 that actually goes

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[213] Ibid, p. 229.
[214] Ibid.
[215] See Fletcher, 'An August Pomegranate*', in Moorish Spain*, pp. 171-175, (p. 172). Fletcher lays stress on 'the romantic interpretation of Andalusia History'. This typically resonates with what Said himself asserts in 'Andalusia's journey,' when he says, 'I wanted to discover what Andalusia was from my perspective as a Palestinian Arab, as someone whose diverse background might offer a way of seeing and understanding the place beyond illusion and romance.'
[216] Edward Said's 'Andalusia's Journey', (para. 14 of 30).

back to many decades before that date. A more detailed assessment of historical accounts of the multiple starting points that led to the fall of Muslim Granada, which can be traced back to a period before the start of the Reconquista campaigns, is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that Said's essay points us towards a more nuanced understanding of Granada's spatial history.

In his account of Andalusia's Muslim past, Said implies without explicitly stating that the streets and buildings of Andalusia function as crucial sites of memory. Of Granada's Alhambra, Said writes that this building is a 'monument to regret the passage of time'.[217] The word 'regret' is significant here. While it might suggest a sense of loss or grief, Said is careful not to simply replicate the Arabic discourse of nostalgia that frames predominant narratives of Andalusia. This position becomes clearer in Said's rejection of the romantic interpretation of the historical defeat of the last king of *al-twai'f* in Arab narratives of Andalusia. By referring to such discourses of commemoration as a form of 'idealized loss,' Said signals his disagreement with the terms of such narratives. This disagreement is made even more explicit in Said's reflections on the ways in which a traveller from the Arab world would be most likely to encounter the spaces of Andalusia:

> For a visitor from either North Africa or the Arab countries east of Suez, including Egypt, Andalusia is idealized as a kind of lost paradise, which fell from the brilliance of its medieval apex into terrible squabbles and petty jealousies. This perhaps makes a rather too facile moral lesson of the place.[218]

If the idealistic narrative of Al-Andalus as a 'lost paradise' from which Muslim society and culture fell after the reconquest offers little more than 'a facile moral lesson', what alternative mode of spatial-historical understanding does Said offer in this short essay? To address this question, it is important to emphasise that Said's short essay was written for a New York travel magazine that often featured contributions by novelists, poets, and critics. Considered in relation to the context of its production, the essay can be seen to offer educated, cosmopolitan readers of the magazine a novel perspective on how travellers from the Arab world might encounter the history, architecture, and culture of contemporary Andalusia, a perspective which also challenges a generalised western tourist gaze. This is not to say that the essay offers an in-depth account of Muslim histories of Andalusia. Yet

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[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid, (para. 7 of 30).

in its tantalising account of Andalusian historical sites as progressive, 'animated spaces', Said's essay does serve to challenge the predominant myth of Al-Andalus as a 'stable terrain' or a static space in time in predominant Arab-Muslim narratives of medieval Spain.

By focusing on the spatial history and material culture of Andalusia, Said tries to excavate the palimpsestic history of Al-Andalus. Said's reflections on Andalusia's most iconic structures, such as the Alhambra palace, the mosque-cum-cathedral of Cordova or *La Mezquita*, Seville's Alcázar, and Madinat al-Zahra (among others) could be understood as an example of what Bahktin called the chronotope, or the crossing of space and time in a specific rhetorical figure. Yet if the Andalusian space of Alhambra palace and *la Mezquita* or the mosque-cum-cathedral of Cordova are *chronotopic* in the sense that these medieval spaces tell another story about the past, the symbolic meaning of such buildings is ambivalent. On the one hand, they could be taken to represent the resilience of an oppressed people; yet, on the other hand these buildings also bespeak a profound sense of loss. The structures and spaces that once heralded the rise of Muslim Andalusia in the eighth century are the very same spaces that announce its decadence, decline, and defeat a few centuries later.

2.6.1   The Interpretation of Borders in Ashour's *Granada*

Said's reflections on the history of Andalusian architecture are crucial to my analysis of the shifting borders and centres evoked in Ashour's *Granada*. In Said's account, *La Mezquita* evokes this sense of 'almost imperceptible changes in perspective from one space to the next' – the same mode of recognition that the spatial dislocations and transfigurations in *Granada* incarnates. Yet, Said also describes *La Mezquita* as a symbol of 'inclusive sanctity and magnanimity of purpose' and a 'unity in multiplicity.' This reading of *La Mezquita* as a rich and layered historical site is also profoundly ambivalent: it could either stand as a symbol of a fallen empire or as a sign of future political possibilities of cultural continuity.

In this section, I consider how a process of cultural debate between Islam and Catholicism is staged in the spaces of Ashour's *Granada*. The persistent struggle of Abu Jaafar's family to maintain the social and cultural practices of Muslim Granada before the reconquest is constantly expressed in spatial terms. The way

they interpret the new borders of the city contributes to an understanding of the spatial politics of dispossession that parallels Said's reading of *La Mezquita*. The family's affective attachment to a particular understanding of Granada's spatial borders draws on an imaginary ideal of the Islamic community. Such an imaginary ideal is hinted at in Said's preliminary response to the spatial history of *La Mezquita*: rather than being 'the greatest and most impressive religious structure on earth,' Said described it as a 'cultural statement' by its founder, Abd ar Rahman II, in a new world.[219] By reading *La Mezquita* as a 'cultural statement', Said suggests that the building simultaneously declares and enacts a tradition of Islamic architecture. Yet if *La Mezquita* is a 'cultural statement', it is also a political statement about the space it occupies and the boundaries it demarcates.

In Ashour's *Granada*, the spatial history of the reconquest is registered through the spaces of the family house and the bathhouse. The space of the house demarcates the boundaries between the residual cultural formations of Al-Andalus and the dominant Catholic order after the reconquest. Before the reconquest of Granada, rituals such as praying, celebrating religious feasts, wedding ceremonies, and burial rituals took place in the public sphere; after the reconquest and the proscription of these rituals, these practices were performed secretly in the domestic sphere, beyond the gaze of the Catholic authorities. The family did not only turn to the private space to perform all these rituals clandestinely, however; they were also forced to practice the rituals of their new Catholic creed in the public sphere. In this respect, they can be seen to live through a double displacement.[220] For instance, in one spatial move, the whole family went to pray in the church on Sundays, a move which also required that they had to cancel their weekly excursions to the mosque on Fridays. Instead, these rituals are performed secretly at home. Hasan managed to force all the members of his family—except for Saleema—to go to church on Sundays to escape the surveillance of the Inquisition Offices. Similarly, they tended to speak the Arabic language inside home, and the Castilian language in the public sphere.

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[219] Ibid. [...] the mosque that he began in 785. Erected on the site of a Christian church, it was an attempt to assert his identity as an Umayyad prince fleeing Damascus, to make a cultural statement as a Muslim exiled to a place literally across the world from where he had come.

[220] See Fletcher, 'Nasrid Granada,' in *Moorish Spain*, pp. 157-158 (p. 167). Richard Fletcher in his explanation of the practice of *taqqiya* indicated that 'These 'New Christians' of sixteenth-century Spain outwardly conformed to the requirements of the church which they had been compelled to join while secretly maintaining allegiance to the Islamic faith of their ancestors.'

By drawing on Abu Jaafar's research into the family's history, and its strong affiliation with Granada, Hasan works to preserve the Arabic language from *inside* the home. In this sense, Hasan can be understood as a custodian, who tries to preserve the cultural heritage of Al-Andalus against the threat of extinction by the Catholic authorities. For Hasan, the Arabic language is a central medium for the preservation of the embattled culture, but this language can only be spoken within the home. The narrator clearly conveys the spatial constraints placed on the family's daily routine in the following quoted extract: 'At home they spoke Arabic and they lived their daily lives as their ancestors had lived. But on the street and in school they spoke Spanish, and they conducted themselves in the manner prescribed by the authorities and the Office of Inquisition'.[221] Whereas Hasan attempts to preserve Muslim society and culture against the threat of persecution by performing religious rites in the domestic sphere, Saad tries to gather people together in the public sphere in an attempt to change the public consciousness. In so doing, he also expands the spatial field of resistance to the public sphere and even to the mountains. It is to these different approaches to resistance that the chapter now turns.

2.6.2 Granada's Lost Community: Reading the Spatial Figure of the House in Ashour's *Granada*

Hasan's rigid demarcation between *inside* and *outside* is grounded in the language of the 'land of frontiers'[222] — a language that has already proved to be impotent during the life of the early generation. Saad's words stand as a sharp critique of Hasan's withdrawal from the public sphere of political action: 'It's not protection you're giving, Hasan …. If every one of us shut the door of his house and

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[221] *Granada*, p. 145.

[222] See Alessandro, Vanoli, 'The Borders of Muslim Spain', in *Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West,* ed. by Roberto Tottoli (New York & London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 21-37 (p.23). Vanoli pointed out that 'Al-Andalus was located at the periphery of the Islamic world. And as a land of frontier, it is perhaps possible to perceive in its formation a sense of insecurity, the sense of living on an island surrounded by the sea and by Christians. May be it was this condition of 'land of frontier' that facilitated trade with the West, and determined its relations with Islamic world.'
& See also Fletcher, 'Nasrid Granada,' in *Moorish Spain*, pp. 157-158 (p. 157). John Fletcher explained how the Granadan frontiers were not sufficiently fortified, 'The amirate of Granada was small and vulnerable. In the first place, it was economically weak. 'the Christians pushed the Muslims back to the seacoast and the rugged territory there, where the soil is poor for the cultivation of grain and little suited to growing vegetables […] Granada was not self-supporting in foodstuff.'

only cared for the safety of his family, we would all perish, once and for all'.[223] The door that Hasan viewed as an emblem of self-protection turns out to be an *imaginary border* when the two demarcated spaces of *inside* and *outside* overlapped, and even blurred.

Doors, walls, corners and roofs are recurrently used in Ashour's *Granada* as extended spatial metaphors that contribute to our understanding of the process of deconstructing borders, which are in themselves regarded as signs of the old hierarchy of the city before the Reconquista. By drawing attention to the limits of Hasan's attempt to preserve the cultural identity of Muslim Granada by reinforcing the spatial boundaries of the house, the narrator provides readers with a different spatial mode of understanding the historical process of cultural loss. We have already seen how Saad is perhaps the only character in the novel that seems able to understand the reconquest of Granada as part of a *worldly* historical process. Saad's historical consciousness of the reconquest draws on his experience of exile—an experience that is simultaneously about the loss of space, territory, and language. For Saad, the walls, doors, corners, or roofs that demarcate a physical sense of home are not essential to his sense of belonging. His spatial construction of *home* from a place of exile can be understood as a form of spatial and cultural autopoiesis[224] that is not dependent on private property or a physical place of belonging. Saad's invention of home from a place of exile also raises broader questions about the ways in which Arabic culture and language live on in Andalusia despite its ostensible prohibition. The attempt to preserve the Arabic language in Abu Jaafar's house is evidenced by the stories of Maryama and Saad, the pedagogical practices of teaching the children to speak at home and not in the public, and Saleema's use of Arabic books and scriptures to develop her scientific knowledge. Yet these practices seem futile in the face of an increasingly repressive Catholic hegemony, as exemplified by the regime's deviation from the terms of the Granadan treaty.[225] The Islamic community where the Arabic language played a

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[223] Vanoli, 'The Borders of Muslim Spain', in *Routledge Handbook,* pp. 21-37 (p. 132).

[224] 1960s. From auto- + -poiesis. In later use after Spanish autopoiesis; <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/autopoiesis>

[225] Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, 'The Converted Muslims of Spain: Morisco Cultural Resistance and Engagement with Islamic Knowledge', in *Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West*, ed. by Roberto Tottoli (New York & London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 38-54 (p. 38). The Castilians restricted the movement of the Arabs of Granada; therefore, those Muslims' belonging to a larger Muslim community across borders has been confined to their filiative belonging to their cities. As Garcia-

significant role in bringing those discrepant geographical territories together has been in a perpetual decline. As a microcosm of the embattled Arabic community in late medieval Catholic Spain, Hasan's house stages the experience of dispossession and the limits placed on Granada's Muslims to live as Arabic-speaking Muslims. To put it in the terms of Ashour's novel, Hasan is not able to live 'in the security of the Arabic language and in the comfort of the muezzin's call to prayer'[226], as his grandfather once imagined.

This is not to suggest that the traces of Muslim Granada do not continue to live on in the spaces of Andalusia. In 'Andalusia's Journey', Said's reflections on the mural features of Alhambra castle raise questions about the persistence of the Arabic language as a vehicle for resisting imminent cultural decline in Andalusia. At various points in his article, Said asks whether the Arabic language that is visually represented on the walls of the Alhambra and *alcasar* could preserve a colonised culture in ruins. Of the Alhambra, Said writes: 'In this, the calmest, most harmonious structure ever built by Arab Muslims, the walls are covered with dizzying arabesques and geometric patterns, interspersed with Arabic script extolling God and his regents on earth. The repetition of a basically abstract series of motifs suggests infinity […]'.[227] Said views the Arabic language as represented on these walls as a sign of resistance whereby the Arabs of Andalusia struggled to maintain the socio-religious values of their culture. As Said puts it, 'arabesque patterns *can seem* like a defense against mortality or the ravages of human life'.[228] The modifying phrase 'can seem' raises doubts about whether these traces of an Islamic culture in the architecture of Andalusia are meaningful in the aftermath of the systematic annihilation associated with the Reconquista.[229] Yet Said also suggests that the use of Arabic motifs in classical Mudejar art worked to codify the cultural history of Islamic Spain, even after its destruction: 'the Arabs who gave Andalusia its characteristic features generally used architecture to refashion and

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Arenal pinpointed, 'The Islamic sense of belonging of such individuals was linked to the notion of participation in a 'community of emotion' which identified with the Muslim world.'

[226] *Granada*, p. 36.

[227] Said, 'Andalusia's Journey,' (para. 1 of 30).

[228] Said, 'Andalusia's Journey,' (para. 25 of 30), *(emphasis is mine)*.

[229] See Garcia-Arenal, 'The Converted Muslims of Spain', in *Routledge Handbook,* pp. 38-54 (p. 39). From 1502 onwards, Islam was forbidden and therefore deprived of all legal or administrative support. Its institutions were dissolved, its religious elites converted or exiled, its mosques closed, its books destroyed. Circumcision ceased to be practiced except in Valencia [….] The Arabic language also disappeared everywhere except in Valencia […] the switch to Castilian Spanish was virtually complete by the 1560s.

enhance nature, to create symmetrical patterns that echo Arabic calligraphy'. The point here is that the ghostly remains of Islamic Spain return like a *revenant* in the culture and built environment of Andalusia, in spite of the Catholic Church's continued attempt to erase all evidence of the Islamic and Jewish past. As Said explains:

> Despite the richness of Andalusia's Islamic past and its indelible presence in Spain's subsequent history after the Reconquista, for years the Church and royalist ideologues stressed the purgation of Spain's Islamic and Jewish heritage, insisting that Christian Spain was restored in 1492 as if little had happened to disturb its ascendancy in the seven preceding centuries. Not for nothing has the cult of Santiago (Saint James) been highlighted in Catholic Spain: St. James was, among other things, the patron saint of the Spanish in their battles against the Moors, hence his nickname Matamoros, "Killer of moors." Yet, classical Mudejar art, with its typically florid arabesques and geometrical architecture, was produced after the Muslims were defeated. As far away as Catalonia, Gaudí's obsession with botanical motifs shows the Arab influence at its most profound. *Why did it linger so if Arabs had represented only a negligible phase in Spanish history?*[230]

As a historical novel, much of Ashour's *Granada* is preoccupied with the historical experience of the proscription of Islamic rituals and the razing of Muslim Andalusia from the standpoint of Granada's Muslim population. For this reason, it is perhaps rather difficult to see how the novel could imagine the ways in which the 'motifs' of Islamic culture 'linger' for centuries after the Catholic reconquest, as Edward Said does in the cited extract from his essay above. And yet the novel's reflections on the architectural ruins of Muslim Spain from the historical perspective of the early twenty-first century—like the Gaudi paintings of which Said speaks—suggest that something of this historical experience remains.

2.6.3   Reading the Spatial Trope of the Bathhouse in Ashour's *Granada*

One of the most striking spatio-temporal metaphors of dispossession in *Granada* is the razing of Abu Mansour's bathhouse or *Hammam*. Abu Mansour is Abu Jaafar's neighbour and a figure from an earlier generation with a memory of Al-Andalus before the reconquest. For Abu Mansour, the loss of the bathhouse is about so much more than an individual act of

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[230] Said, 'Andalusia's Journey', (para. 16 of 30).

dispossession; it is also bound up with the wider project of cultural imperialism in medieval Spain. The two-hundred-year-old history of the bathhouse that was left by Abu Mansour's great grandfather, Afeef, and passed on to later generations of his family, serves to exemplify how the bathhouse—like Abu Jaafar's house—becomes a placeholder for the genealogical structure of the novel. Yet it is only in the face of the reconquest, and the Catholic state's campaign to demolish Andalusia's bathhouses, that Abu Mansour begins to understand the important symbolic function of the bathhouse as a social space in which the presence of Granada's Muslim population in Spain was repeated across generations. As the narrator translates Abu Mansour's belated realization: '*Only now* he understood what his father had feared. It wasn't just a bathhouse but a family history, and he was the only one left preserve it'.[231]

Abu Mansour's *Hammam* was an informal place for Muslims' social gatherings, where daily narratives and anecdotes could be exchanged in the Arabic language, and where Muslim society could be reproduced. Just as Abu Jafaar's house symbolises the bleak future of Andalusia's Muslims, so the fate of Abu Mansour's *Hammam* symbolises the fate of Granada's Arabic-speaking community. Throughout the early part of the novel, it is suggested that Abu Mansour's bathhouse would continue to function as one among many social spaces in which Granada's Arabs have the right to congregate and exchange their daily narratives under the shadow of the new, supposedly tolerant, imperial power. However, this assumption of tolerance and co-existence is gradually questioned after the Catholic monarchy deviate from the terms of the Treaty of Granada (1491), which promised to guarantee the religious and cultural rights of Granada's Muslims. Through a systematic scheme to erase any cultural trace of the Islamic culture in Andalusia, the Catholic monarchy banned the use of those bathhouses. In Cordova, for example, no less than '900' bathhouses were demolished.[232]

For Granada's Arab population, the Hammams were more than places of cleansing and washing; they also acted as a place of social gatherings where the

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[231] *Granada*, pp. 107-108, *(emphasis is mine)*.
[232] Said, 'Andalusia's Journey', (Para. 13 of 30).

Granadans performed the religious rituals of ablution or *ghosl,*[233] and where they celebrated religious feasts and traditional ceremonies such as marriage. Throughout the course of the novel, it gradually becomes apparent that the closure of those Hammams influenced the daily life of the Granadans. The wedding ceremony of Saad and Saleema powerfully conveys the multi-layered functions of Hammams where women sing, talk, and tell stories. More generally, the Hammams become a counter-public space where Granada's Muslims are able to analyse and debate the changing socio-political events that follow the fall of Granada, and their significance for Granada's Arab community. By annihilating these social spaces,[234] the Catholic state also destroyed the sense of community and belonging that previously existed among Granada's Arab population. With the passage of time, the ability to recall this feeling of a shared collective past through the performance of traditional ceremonies in particular social spaces becomes impossible for the later generations of Granada's Arabs.

By attending to Edward Said's reflections on some of the most iconic architectural sites in Muslim Spain or Andalusia and their place in Arab collective memories of Al-Andalus, however, one can also begin to trace the significance of the textual ruins of Al-Andalus in Ashour's *Granada*. Reading between the lines of his essay, Said can also be seen to offer a criticism of Arabic narratives that represent Andalusia as 'a lost paradise'; and where the fall of Al-Andalus is depicted as if it were a non-expected event.[235] For Said, the last Arab king of Granada, the luckless Boabdil, 'became the emblem of what the Arabs had lost'. The problem with this historical understanding of the fall of Granada, and of Al-Andalus, in terms of the fate of Boabdil, Said suggests, is that it reduces the complexity and contingency of historical events and forces to the successes and

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[233] *Ghosl* means washing the whole body with water to get rid of its impurity out of a religious belief. In some cases both men and women should overwhelm their bodies with water after sexual intercourse and in some other cases such as after menstruation; just women perform this *ghosl*.

[234] For a more detailed account of the social and political function of Hammams for both the Islamic community and for understanding Europe's Islamic heritage, see Dumreicher, Heidi, Magda Sibley-Bahloul, and Richard S. Levine, eds., *Hammam Rehabilitation Reader* (Austria: Sonderzahl, 2012) <http://mimar-architects.com/wp-content/themes/mimar/research/Research-hammam-reader.pdf> [accessed 26 January 2015].

[235] See 'Andalusia Journey', (para. 6 of 30). As Said explains in 'A spate of recent Arabic and Muslim writing has redirected attention to Andalusia as a mournful, tantalizing emblem of what a glorious civilization was lost when Islamic rule ended. This literature serves only to accentuate the conditions of decline and loss that have so diminished modern Arab life—and the conquests that have dominated it.'

failures of one individual, and ignores the ways in which 'Andalusia's identity was always in the process of being dissolved and lost, even when its cultural life was at its pinnacle'. In so doing, Said enjoins readers to consider Andalusia's sites of memory in a more nuanced and critical way that questions the nostalgic framing of Andalusia's Muslim architecture as a fixed site of memory.

In a similar way, Ashour's representation of the bathhouse questions the way in which a nostalgic view of the past also presupposes that physical spaces of memory are fixed and static rather than dynamic and multiform. By framing Abu Mansour's understanding of the demolition of the bathhouse as cataclysmic, Ashour's narrator invites readers to question the ways in which a nostalgic idea of space as well as time can blind one to the pressing political realities of the present. *'This was the great-father's vision and what the builders did to realize it'*.[236] These are the words that the third-person narrator uses to comment on Abu Mansour's spatial reflections on the many surfaces in the bathhouse. He attempts to make sense of his fears through reflections on a very limited part of the bathhouse: *'the dark walls'*.[237] He cared only for 'the great-grandfather's vision' as it is reflected on the walls: a static image that Abu Mansour used as a mirror of his position in the present. The metaphorical relationship between walls and mirrors is highly suggestive in this context: 'opening the door that the carpenters worked on … that you immediately recognize as though you were seeing your own reflection in a mirror'.[238] Like the luckless Boabdil, Abu Mansour would have lived the rest of his life before the ultimate closure of his bathhouse 'through his own extinction'. Abu Jaafar's reflection on the walls *was* a mere static image of people who were always here, but now they no longer exist.

If Abu Mansour eventually comes to terms with the closure of his family's bathhouse and the cultural significance of its closure, he continues to see this space in static, one-dimensional terms. In contrast, the narrator relays how Afeef had built this structure in an attempt to compensate for another one that he left behind in Cordova after its fall. What is particularly striking about this building is its multiple architectural styles standing in for Afeef's imitation of many Arab countries. That Abu Mansour seems to miss the detail of these multiple styles, and

[236] *Granada*, p. 108.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.

their historical significance is important because it suggests that Abu Mansour's melancholia prevents him from understanding the cultural multiplicity embodied in the aesthetic style of the bathhouse, when it was first constructed, that contributed to the preservation of the building after his death. As the narrator intimates, Afeef erected a building with a design that had the artistic peculiarity of resisting absence and 'forgetfulness'.[239]

Said's reflections on Muslim architecture in Al-Andalus, particularly the mosque-cum-cathedral of Cordova, *La Mezquita*, can help to shed further light on the aesthetic and historical significance of Afeef's bathhouse. When Said postulated that the 'repetition of a basically abstract series of motifs suggests infinity,' inscribed on Alhambra walls, he was mainly concerned with examining the temporality of the Muslims' presence in the Iberian Peninsula in the medieval period. In so doing, he suggested that the history of Islamic Andalusia is inextricably bound up with its architecture. Said views *La Mezquita* as a symbol of 'unity in multiplicity', even at a time of defeat.[240] The style of *La Mezquita* tells another story about the changing cultural centres of the Islamic world during the medieval period. As Said explains:

> The mosque-cathedral, La Mezquita, stretches effortlessly for acres in a series of unending double arches, whose climax is an incredibly ornate mihrab, the place where the muezzin or prayer leader stands. Its contours echo those of the great mosque in Damascus (from which Abd ar-Rahman I barely managed to escape when his Umayyad dynasty fell), while its arches are conscious quotations of Roman aqueducts. So assiduous was its architect in copying Damascus that the Cordovan mihrab actually faces south, rather than east—toward Mecca—as it should.[241]

The worldly history of Afeef's construction of the bathhouse in *Granada* can be seen to echo the cosmopolitan style of La Mezquita in certain respects. Afeef's main objective was to reconstruct in Granada a more imposing building that would also endure as a material site of memory. Afeef's new-built bathhouse represented a collective vision that drew on multiple styles of architectural design and building

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[239] The beleaguered and insecure Boabdil used Alhambra palace as a place of 'perfumed forgetfulness.'

[240] See 'Andalusia's Journey,' (para. 17 of 30). Said explained this through his reflections on the literature that incarnated this period, the wars between Muslims and Catholics turn up again and again in literature, including of course the *Chanson de Roland* (in which Charlemagne's Frankish army is defeated in 778 by Abd ar-Rahman's men).

[241] Ibid, (para. 20 of 30).

materials gathered several countries in the Middle East. Indeed, Afeef's bathhouse in Granada strongly resonates with la Mezquita's multi-cultural centres:

> [...] he left his wife and children and travelled to Syria to see for himself if what they say is true, that the bathhouses of Syria are more beautiful than those of Cordova. He made the journey, he looked around and compared. He came back two years later. The ship let him off at Malaga from where he returned in a possession of five donkeys. He rode one, the Damascene architect he bought back with him rode another, and he loaded the three remaining with all things he bought to make a bathhouse from Damascus, Cairo, and Alexandria [...] Afeef began to build his bathhouse. He spent two years, day and night, supervising the construction [...] Afeef dreamed of all the beautiful doors he saw in Cairo, Syria, and Cordova.[242]

Ashour's description of Afeef's two-year research into the bathhouses of Syria and Egypt tell another story about the worldliness of Arab architecture in Andalusia that parallels Said's account of *la Mezquita*, and emphasises the importance of space as a placeholder for the history of the dispossessed.

2.6.4   De-essentializing Space: Maryama's Secular Reading of Shifting Borders and Centres

If the bathhouse is framed as a site of memory and mourning for the loss of Al-Andalus, the novel also suggests that the inhabitation of the public spaces of Granada after the reconquest provide an ambivalent site in and through which the signs and codes of Catholic hegemony are re-framed.

It is Maryama's traversal of the public spaces of the city that contributes to a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the ways in which Islam continues to live on within the hegemonic spaces, signs and rituals of the dominant Catholic order. All of Maryama's movements are oriented and structured in terms of her day-to-day activities in the missionary school, the market, and finally in the church. The ritual that Maryama performs at the feet of a religious statue in a Catholic Church could be read as a sign of her conversion to the Catholic faith. As the narrator explains:

> Maryama stood up and took two steps forward. She knelt and stretched out her hand to touch the two bare feet. It appeared as though she was going to ask for his intercession, but when she got near and touched him, her heart grew heavy and she

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[242] *Granada*, pp. 106-107.

murmured, 'There was peace on me the day I was born, and will be the day I die, and on the day I will be raised from the dead. This was Jesus, Son of Mary—a true account, they contend.' The two arms stretched out on the cross were like wings he spread out to her in love and mercy. Maryama asked for nothing, but opened her arms and wrapped them around his legs, and she tilted her head forward and kissed them.[243]

Yet it is also important to bear in mind that Maryama also recites Qur'anic verses in the church even as she embraces the statue of Jesus—a sign that Islam co-exists alongside Christianity in the same space and time. Rather than endorsing the nostalgia and mourning of predominant Arabic narratives of Al-Andalus, Maryama's ambivalent symbolic act can be read as a meta-commentary on the ways in which the novel reimagines the history of the Reconquista in the worldly terms of secular time, even as Granada's converted Muslims continue to practise the beliefs and rituals of Islam in clandestine and codified terms. I conclude with Maryama's passionate embrace of this Christian icon because it exemplifies the ways in which the novel's symbolic codes register a spatial history of the dispossessed that is immanent to the secular time of the reconquest of Granada.

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[243] Ibid, pp. 149-150.

Chapter 2

Chapter 3 An Inventory of Traces: Towards a Saidian Reading of Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*

3.1   Introduction

The multiple layers and political trajectories of modern Egypt's social and political history from the conquest of Napoleon in 1798 to the present make it difficult to speak of a singular national history. Ahdaf Soueif's novel *The Map of Love* (1999) provides both Arab and English readers with a rich and suggestive example of what Edward Said describes as 'an intertwined history' that is formed in the context of the colonial encounter and its aftermath. Amal al-Ghamrawi, the Egyptian female narrator of the novel, attempts to make sense of the national history of Egypt by re-interpreting Egypt's national past as mediated and recorded in the personal letters and notes of Anna Winterbourne—an English citizen and widow who visited Egypt in 1901. After that, she decided to stay there when she got married to an Egyptian aristocrat and a prominent nationalist leader who worked for the Egyptian Liberation movement in collaboration with other national figures in that period that marked the dawning of Egypt's nationalism as a systematic project. As far as Amal reads Anna's story, she unfolds for Isabel Parkman—the lover of Amal's brother and the American journalist who brings Anna's belongings to Amal contained within a trunk—the shared historical past of the three of them as embedded in Anna's record of her life in Egypt. The unfolding story of Anna's life in Egypt helps Amal to construct her own historical perspective of an important period in Egypt's national history. It is of course true that the two different historical perspectives of Anna Winterbourne and Amal al-Ghamrawi do not have the status of official records of Egypt's national past. However, if they are approached instead as hidden transcripts containing alternative histories, interpretations and versions of the past, such endeavours may help to facilitate a more inclusive, cosmopolitan historical consciousness in the present. Thus, through the use of a narrative technique which moves between the distinct historical perspectives of two homodiegetic, focalising female characters, Soueif foregrounds the ways in which Egypt's national history is not only subjective, but

also questions to what extent this national history might be nostalgic and romanticised especially when it is re-narrated from a vantage perspective in the present. In this way, the novel can be seen to facilitate a secular critical practice of reading and thinking, which is in *itself* capable of questioning and critiquing predominant narratives of Egypt's national past.

This chapter examines the individual endeavour to re-construct historical events by challenging the power and authority of dominant national and/or religious narratives of the past. In *The Map of Love*, reading and interpreting personal letters, ephemera, and material objects is framed as a serious attempt to construct a more nuanced idea of Egypt's past. As the novel's third-person narrator comments, 'A story can start from the oddest things: a magic lamp, a conversation overhead, a shadow moving on a wall. For Amal al Ghamrawi, this story starts with a trunk'.[244] As a critical reader, archival researcher, and interpreter, Amal interprets the traces of Anna's historical knowledge of colonial Egypt as they are embedded in her letters. Both reading and writing as such stand for a postcolonial encounter through which Egypt's history is narrated and constructed. Moreover, as I am going to explain, the narrator's philological analysis of these letters helps her to re-historicize Egypt's national narrative. This secular mode of reading history resonates with a particular methodology of reading that Said adopts in his early monograph, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966). This reading also corresponds with a more nuanced vocabulary on making an inventory of historical traces, philological historicism, and contrapuntal reading of historical events that Said develops through his later works.

3.2 A Saidian Reading of the Narrative Structure of Soueif's *The Map of Love*

This chapter draws on Said's critical approach to reading personal letters as outlined in his early monograph, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966) to read Soueif's use of letters and diaries in *The Map of Love*. Said's first book on Conrad[245] offers some suggestive ways of thinking about the status and significance of letters in reading fiction, even though his approach to Conrad's

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[244]Ahdaf Soueif, *The Map of Love* (Bloomsbury, 1999), p. 6.
[245] See Edward Said, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (Cambridge & Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966). *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* was Edward Said's submitted work for the obtainment of his Ph.D. thesis.

letters and fiction is clearly very different from the narrative framing of fictional letters, diaries, and notebooks in *The Map of Love*. To account for the formal singularity of *The Map of Love*, I have also supplemented Said's reading of Conrad's letters and fiction with discussions of Linda Kauffman's approach to contemporary fictions, which make use of letters and notebooks in her *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes* (1992)[246], and Said's later approach to the critical elaboration of an inventory (a phrase he takes from Antonio Gramsci). In so doing, I suggest that Said's early book on Conrad does not only prefigure his later philological humanist approach to texts; it also provides a useful way of reading the assemblage of letters, notebooks, and diaries in *The Map of Love* as the construction of an inventory. What Gramsci calls an inventory of traces has important implications for rethinking the ways in which colonial and nationalist histories are framed.

It is important to acknowledge also that the existentialist critical language that shaped Said's early reflections on Conrad's letters were gradually supplanted by an engagement with a philological approach to literature informed by Auerbach and Vico as well as the Marxist aesthetics of Lukács. Said's first monograph on Conrad does not refer to Gramsci, Vico, or Foucault, and nor does he invoke concepts such as secular criticism, contrapuntal reading, inventories, or critical elaboration. This is perhaps not surprising when one considers that Said's early intellectual formation was shaped by European philosophers and thinkers such as Sartre, Heidegger, and Karl Jaspers. That is perhaps also one of the reasons why the broad intellectual approach that Said adopted in his analysis of Conrad's letters was existential both in its orientation and critical idiom. Yet if Said's concern with individual human consciousness in Conrad's fiction and letters is reframed in terms of his later work on philological humanism, it becomes possible to see how this concern with the development of an individual human consciousness in Conrad's letters can help to shed light on wider questions of historical consciousness in postcolonial national narratives. Such a concern can be seen in the narrative form and structure of *The Map of Love*.

In the critical analysis of Soueif's use of letters, I do not simply adopt the existentialist and phenomenological approach that Said adopted in his early

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[246] Linda Kauffman, *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction* (University of Chicago Press, 1901).

response to Conrad — partly because such a response is marked by a specific intellectual-historical moment that has now passed, but also because this approach cannot account for both the political and historiographical significance of letters, diaries, and notebooks in Soueif's novel.[247] Instead, the chapter reframes the terms of Said's readings of Conrad's letters and fiction in light of his later work in order to develop my reading of *The Map of Love* as a work of world historical fiction that uses letters, diaries, and other found objects as its source material. By reading Soueif's *The Map of Love* in tandem with Said's reading of letters as historical traces of the past, the chapter seeks to identify how this idea of making an inventory can generate other alternative narratives which are also 'intertwined' with the official public histories of both Britain's imperial past and the rise of Egyptian nationalism. For example, Anna's conscious process of evaluating the extent of her assimilation into the Egyptian society is inextricably bound up with Amal's attempts to assemble the traces of Anna's experiences into a coherent narrative order. It is as if Amal offers a narrative elaboration of the inventory of traces she finds recorded in Anna's diaries and letters.

Such a process of evaluating historical events in ways that challenge predominant nationalist narratives speaks in various ways to the Arabs' crisis of historicity with which this thesis is more broadly concerned. For Amal, the assessment of the Egyptian way of life as recorded in Anna's letters does not help her to effectively meet the requirement of an orderly methodological reading. This might account for Amal taking on other strategies: historicizing Anna's repeated words in an attempt to understand her intellectual growth; reassessing the same places Anna visited in Egypt; and finally drawing out correspondences between Anna's material objects—found in the trunk Isabel brings to her—and her own words. Each of these strategies implies the possibility of a different narrative and is highly suggestive of what precisely making 'an inventory' might entail.

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[247] See Timothy Brennan, 'Edward Said As a Lukácsian Critic: Modernism and Empire', in *College Literature*, 40.4 (2013), 14-32 (p. 16). As Brennan highlights, 'The theoretical assumptions of the time were overwhelmingly phenomenological, drawn from interwar anti-humanist traditions later refined in the French postwar period—traditions with which all of the Marxist intellectuals [...] (above all Adorno) had been explicitly and doggedly at war'.

3.2.1 Letters, Historical traces, and Narrative Construction: The Epistolary Narrative Structure of Soueif's *The Map of Love*

Said's appraisal of the letter as a realistic mode of writing reflects the ways in which individuals experience and understand the challenges of daily life. A more detailed consideration of this aspect of Said's approach to the letter is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that Said admires Mahfouz's 'Flaubertian dedication to letters' and views this literary use of the letter as a modernist literary device for addressing the historical reality behind the Egyptians' sense of existence by speaking to what he calls the 'anxiety of influence'.[248] Such a valorization of the letter as a literary device might help to account for his earlier choice of letters as a means to understand Conrad's fiction. In a similar vein, Said praises Soueif's work, since 'Soueif, whose English and whose studiously unideological focus place her outside the main territory currently mined by her Arabic-language contemporaries'.[249] Unlike the writers in Arabic-speaking countries, Said claims that Soueif's fiction does not 'contend with a substantial tradition of modern Arabic narratives' which are 'defensively ideological' in their nature.[250] By writing in English, Soueif can be compared to other Anglophone postcolonial writers such as Ngugi, Achebe, and Naipaul (among others), who tend to 'reconstruct, revise and repossess experiences formerly either suppressed or denied them by colonialism.[251] Yet, Soueif's writing does not speak to 'the conflict with the West, and the attempts to rebuild the Arab world in fact as well as in theory'[252] in the same way that other Arab contemporary writers do in postcolonial fiction. The self/other dichotomy is always there in Arabic fiction, such as Ahlam Mosteghanemi's *Zakirat el-Jassad* (Memory of the Flesh, 1993; translated as 'The Bridges of Constantine',2013); Said Mikawi's *The Swan's Tweet* (2008), Sahar Khalifa's *Asl Wa Fasl* (Origins, 2008); Ali Badr's *The Tobacco Guard* (2008), and

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[248] Said, 'After Mahfouz', in *Reflections,* pp. 317-326 (p. 320).

[249] Said, 'Edward Said Writes about a New Literature of The Arab World: *Aisha* by Ahdaf Soueif', *London Review of Books*, 5.12 (1983) <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v05/n12/edward-said/edward-said-writes-about-a-new-literature-of-the-arab-world> [accessed 19 October 2017] (para. 6 of 8).

[250] Ibid. For in a sense the modern Arabic writer has had not only to defend against colonialism, but also to compensate for the absence of a functioning civil society, while minimising the overwhelming power of the sacred, traditional language common to religious authority and the modern writer.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Ibid. For an illustrated overview of the nature of the Eastern cultural encounter and confrontation with the West, See also Rashid El-Enani, *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction*, Taylor & Francis, 2004.

Yousef Al-Mohaimed's *The Dolphin's Picnic* (2006).[253] In addition, her writing cannot be categorized in terms of a 'descriptive realism' that functions as 'a consolidation of "national" life [...]'.[254] By mastering what Elias Khoury's terms 'formless works,'[255] Soueif's writing challenges the anti-colonial nationalist norms of much postcolonial literary fiction. [256] In a similar vein, Said praises the potential of Soueif's writing[257] to reproduce other historical alternatives to those generated via 'official consciousness'.[258] Extending Khoury's analysis of such formless works, I would add that *The Map of Love* can also be seen to introduce the reader to alternative historical versions of Egypt and England's national and colonial histories respectively.

Soueif's use of letters has its own peculiar resonance with Said's critical position on the use of letters, as I have already suggested. This is not to say, however, that this chapter is simply trying to emulate Said's critical approach to Conrad's letters in *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*. On the contrary, I refer to both Said's early work on Conrad and his later work on philological humanism in order to better understand the use and significance of Soueif's use of letters, annotations, and diaries as a literary device in *The Map of Love*. The interpretation and episodic framing of the letter is staged as part of the novel's realist historical conventions. However, Soueif's employment of letters is quite clearly distinct from the ways in which Said uses Conrad's letters.

In this chapter, then, I consider how Soueif's use of letters, diaries, and found objects in *The Map of Love* stages the act of writing and reading in such a way that facilitates a more sophisticated reflection on the gaps in both imperial and nationalist historical narratives. The narrative fashioned by Amal's reading

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[253] These novels are exemplary models that highlight the role played by the contemporary Arabic novel in representing different topics and issues, drawing on the complex patterns related to identity, power, hegemony, dualism and the cultural other. This creates a link to the individual and collective destiny and strengthens the tendency to acquire private history as a strategy to build identity and positioning to the world. Modes of cultural representations as such is what makes these novels speak to the existence of self and community, and the Western Culture inaugurated via the history of colonialism in Arab countries.

[254] Said, 'Edward Said Writes about a New Literature', (para. 6 of 8).

[255] Ibid. As Said explains, 'Formless works in Khoury's definition are autobiographical, episodic, often lyrical – two great examples are Taha Hussein's Autobiography and Tawfik al-Hakim's Diary.'

[256] Ibid. As Said explains, the literary function of "formless works," "Such works treat experience outside the tough and busy prescriptions of great novels and offer a rare intimate look at everyday life temporarily freed from prescription, moral imperative, official consciousness'.

[257] In this article of Said on Soueif, he speaks of Soueif's work in general, but his main focus is on her novel, *Aisha* (1983).

[258] Ibid.

unravels multiple traces of Anna's lived experience in Egypt and addresses the history of Egypt's dawning nationalism. Amal's secular modes of reading both constitute and represent the multiple stages of Anna's consciousness as they are formulated in Anna's letters and via Anna's words that speak to her worldly experience in Egypt. By Amal's gathering and interpreting of Anna's notes, the novel lends itself to a particular analysis and critique of epistolary modes of narratives (especially notes) that Linda Kauffman presents in *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes* (1992). More precisely, Kauffman's analysis and critique of the literary function of notes in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* may also in some senses be applied to Amal's multi-layered intellectual task of reading Anna's letters.

Differently from Said's approach to Conrad's letters, Kauffman considers the meta-fictional function of letters and notes in the modern and contemporary fiction of Viktor Shklovsky, Vladimir Nabokov, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Doris Lessing, Alice Walker, and Margaret Atwood. For Kauffman, the use of letters and annotations in literary fiction draws attention to the ways in which writing is transmitted and communicated; it draws attention to the ways in which writing miscommunicates or fails to communicate as much as it communicates; and it also draws attention to the fragmentary and partial nature of historical knowledge as it is documented in letters, diaries, and annotations. Kauffman's approach to reading the use and significance of annotations in contemporary fiction is particularly apposite to my own reading of the form and meaning of notes or annotations in Soueif's novel. *The Map of Love* foregrounds letters and notes as sources for historical interpretation that challenge predominant colonial and national narratives. *The Map of Love* does not fit the mould of the conventional epistolary novel, which uses both the form of the letter and the spatio-temporal networks of postal communication to mediate the plot of the story. Instead, Soueif's novel uses letters, diaries, and annotated notebooks from the past as documentary material for the construction of a historical narrative.

I argue that writing and reading as reciprocal intellectual processes which involve various modes of production and reception consolidate the unfolding narratives in *The Map of Love*. These intellectual processes provide a good example of how the construction of female subjectivity can be read as a critique of two dual discourses—England's colonization of Egypt and Egypt's anti-colonial

liberal national movement. Through Amal's mediation of Anna's notes and letters, *The Map of Love* provides us with a method of reading for reflecting critically on the colonial past. One can observe that the novel's narrative style foregrounds the subjectivity of historical traces as an *ineluctable* and a challenging intellectual path to either (re)construct or recover fragmentary and episodic narratives which stand for Egypt's emerging national past at a time of British colonial occupation. It is worth considering the following words from the opening lines of the novel, as they highlight the nature of Amal's intellectual project:

> [...] – and there, on the table under her bedroom window, lies the voice that has set her dreaming again. Fragments of a life lived a long, long time ago. Across a hundred years the woman's voice speaks to her – so clearly that she cannot believe it is not possible to pick up her pen and answer.[259]

As the two acts of Anna's writing and Amal's dialogic reading coalesce, they produce *contrapuntally* another version of Egypt and Britain's national past(s) respectively. In addition, such a sophisticated coalescence has the potential to open the possibility of a cosmopolitan view of the shared histories of these two countries. The traces of Anna's personal history cannot be simply interpreted as a self-evident truth about the national and the colonial histories of Egypt and Britain. After all, they are clearly witnessed from the standpoint of a liberal middle-class English woman who witnessed that colonial era. As I argue in this chapter, Anna's views of Egypt's nationalism and Britain's colonialism are generated via a nonaligned political position and against the formal authoritative voices representing the British Empire (particularly Lord Cromer and his men); however, they are also problematized. They reflect the views of a bourgeois woman who has a limited access to the Egyptian life. Rather than a direct contact with lower social strata in Egypt, Anna has merely gained access to the private sphere of the Egyptian aristocracy.

3.2.2 Said's Philological Historicism and the Construction of Inventory in *The Map of Love*

If Said endorses and invokes Gramsci's concept of making an 'inventory' of historical traces as an integral personal construction/interpretation of history, Said

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neither identifies a specific methodology nor does he explicitly say what exactly an inventory would tell us about history. By drawing on Said's engagement with Conrad's personal letters in his early monograph, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966), I suggest first that Said's engagement with the letter as a literary form expresses the inadequacy of the written word to convey the meanings of colonial modernity and its legacies. I also argue that such an engagement provides a method of reading which is particularly helpful for understanding the ways in which the writing of history is composed, interpreted, and reframed in *The Map of Love*. What's more, Said's frequent use of the term 'inner dynamics' marks his critical approach to Conrad's letters and short stories as a means of understanding Conrad's fiction in its entirety. By mobilising this Saidian term, I suggest that Said's mode of reading can help to shed further light on how the critical elaboration of an inventory of traces is staged in the formal structures of *Map of Love*.

We have already seen in the previous chapter on *Granada* how Ashour's narrator draws attention to the limits of nationalist narratives, which invoke religion as a source of authority to legitimate a certain view of the past and the future. The novel stages the misuse of the Islamic past (*turath*) in the Granadans' day-to-day narratives as a form of collective self-deception that shapes their strategies of resistance. In contrast, *The Map of Love* attempts to *stage* the act of writing and reading as a means of constructing a meaningful narrative out of historical fragments. By focusing on certain recurrent words and idioms, Amal identifies patterns and images in Anna's writing that might give an account of Anna's worldly history. And yet, she employs such patterns and uses them to demarcate different stages and turning points in Anna's lived historical experience in Egypt. Such a process of staging resonates with Said's emphasis on the importance of making an inventory for the sake of a personal construction of past events in the face of a potentially coercive official history.

3.3   Making an Inventory in *The Map of Love*

3.3.1   Amal's Preliminary Reflections

As stated in the introductory chapter, Said's affiliation with philologists like Auerbach and Gramsci in particular is indicative of a mode of criticism that is produced in and through an engagement with fragments of knowledge and

discourse. Such an approach is particularly germane to the readings of fragments of historical discourse that underpins the narrative structure of *The Map of Love*. We have already seen how Amal al-Ghamrawi, the female protagonist and at the same time the novel's narrator, re-narrates the story of a deceased English woman (Anna Winterbourne) who visited Egypt and settled in from (1901-1914) by gathering and interpreting past historical events via a pile of letters and four journals. In doing so, she practices a multiple-levelled reading process that resonates with Said's own approach to reading. In his early work on Joseph Conrad, Said emphasises how Conrad's self-conscious mode of narration foregrounds the irony of trying to represent the world in a language that is also inadequate to represent that world.[260] In this way, he makes clear how there is something inherently partial or fragmentary about Conrad's writing. The way Said makes use of Conrad's letters to read his short fictions also helps to make sense of what Said goes on to call in *Orientalism* (1978) the historical traces of the past that are deposited within every human subject. Said's reading of Conrad's letters brought to the fore what he calls the 'inner dynamics',[261] through which he attempted to discover Conrad's 'developing sense of himself'.[262] This chapter considers how the female narrator-historian of Soueif's novel pursues what might be understood as following a broadly Saidian mode of reading, in that it attempts to make an inventory out of the fragmentary knowledge of Anna's letters, notebooks, and found objects. Certainly, the novel can be read as a series of personal endeavours to make an order of a fragmentary knowledge as represented by Anna's letters and notes. Yet, this chapter also attempts to extend Said's later philological approach by elaborating on how the use of such fragmentary language can also function as a critical tool for interrogating both the gendered dynamics of anti-colonial nationalism and the condition of modern Egypt before and after colonialism. For Amal, Anna's writing is a rich historical resource, which allows her to tell another story about transnational networks of anti-colonial nationalism from the cosmopolitan perspective of an English woman who moves to Egypt and falls in love with an anti-colonial nationalist. Such a story also complicates monolithic patriarchal narratives of Egyptian nationalism, and can be seen to extend Said's critique of essentialist ideas of anti-colonial national culture.

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[260] Edward Said, 'Conrad: The Presentation of Narrative', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 7.2 (winter, 1974), pp. 116-132 (p. 116).
[261] Said, *Joseph Conrad*, p. viii.
[262] Ibid.

Since the interpretation and episodic framing of the letter is staged as part of *The Map of Love*'s realist historical conventions, the fragmentary nature of Anna's letters, notes, and diaries continues to inform and develop Amal's methodological reading. Amal's initial attempt to assemble and interpret Anna's 'project' is broadly commensurate with Said's attempt to create 'an organic' unity out of Conrad's unrelated group of letters. Differently from Said's reading of Conrad, however, Amal's reading of Anna's letters traces the ways in which these letters, notebooks, and found objects articulate her intellectual and political formation as an English woman who embraces the cause of anti-colonial nationalism. Since the arrival of the trunk, Amal has been overwhelmed with developing her own historiographical approach for understanding Anna's writings. Amal's first thought is to re-narrate Anna's story to Isabel Parkman as it is recorded in the letters and notes she finds in the trunk, which Isabel brings to her from USA. However, spending not that much time on exploring the contents of the trunk, Amal discovers that reading Anna's letters to which she committed herself–as her own 'project'[263]—is a multi-levelled intellectual task. At an early stage, Amal categorizes Anna's notes and letters according to the temporal marks and colour of journals and files in which the letters are enclosed; this detail sheds light on the subjective thought processes that constructing an inventory entails. Flipping through the letters and notes, it turns out that brown, green, blue and bright green are the colours of the journals that Amal decides she should read. This moment in the novel also addresses how Amal has been preoccupied with the preliminary technical difficulties that these writings provoke. Both the colour of the journals and the periodical entries of the letters and notes engender the possibility of a specific pace or rhythm for reading Anna's written material. Such a preliminary sorting testifies less to Anna's unfolding story than to Amal's feelings of uncertainty about the legitimacy of her interpretative method.

When Isabel brings the trunk that contains Anna's belongings and letters to Amal upon the recommendation of the latter's brother, Amal has initially underestimates the task assigned to her. Inwardly Amal is fully aware that she will at some point need to translate the Arabic scripts, books, and newspaper cuttings among Anna's possessions in addition to explaining to Isabel how Anna's notes

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[263] *The Map of Love,* p. 74.

also convey a sense of ambiguity and ambivalence for her as an outsider in modern Egypt. The following extract is Amal's inner monologue where she reveals her *preliminary* expectations of her task:

> It is the story of two women: Isabel Parkman, the American woman who brought it [the trunk] to me, and Anna Winterbourne, her great-grandmother, the English woman to whom it had originally belonged. And if I come into it at all, it is only as my own grandmother did a hundred years ago, when she told the story of her brother's love.[264]

Near the beginning of the novel, Amal declares: 'Across a century and across two continents, this trunk has found me'.[265] The construction of the trunk as the linguistic subject of the sentence foregrounds the agency of the trunk as a container for the letters, journals, exercise books, and objects contained within it. The contingent or accidental discovery of the trunk is syntactically presented as if it were a miraculous event, in which the trunk 'found' Amal. Certainly, the transmission of these private letters and archival materials across space and time is the condition of possibility for the narrative that follows. Yet, the secular temporality of the narrative emphasizes that the delivery of the trunk was nothing more than an accident, which provides the pretext for the use of a framing narrative for the historical novel that follows.

3.3.2   Searching for a New Beginning: Amal as a Critical Reader

Despite her *initial* expectations, the task that her brother assigned to Amal goes beyond a straightforward *narrative* role and implies other complementary intellectual tasks. We have already seen how Anna's letters are not organised in a linear form that would allow Amal to simply retell the story of Isabel's great-grandmother. Among Anna's belongings—in addition to her letters and diaries—Amal found other things too. The first thing that Amal is taken by was a wedding 'ring' dating back to 1896. The novel's third-person narrator comments on how Amal has been obsessed with Anna's possessions, and how she continuously inspects one thing after another:

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[264] Ibid, p. 11
[265] Ibid, p. 104.

> A large brown envelope held one writing book: sixty-four pages of neat Arabic ruq'a script. Amal recognized the hand immediately: the upright letters short but straight, the sharp angles, the tail of the 'ya' tucked under the body. The definite controlled hand of her grandmother [....] Some newspaper cuttings: *Al-ahram, al-liwa, The Times, the Daily News* and others. A programme from an Italian theatre [....] some sketchbooks with various drawings. Several books of Arabic calligraphy practice [...] a curious woven tapestry showing a pharaonic image and an Arabic inscription. There was also a shawl, of the type worn by peasant woman on special occasions: 'butter velvet', white [....] And there were other things too. Things wrapped in tissue, or in fabric, or concealed in envelopes: a box full of things, a treasure chest, a trunk, actually. It is a trunk.[266]

From the magnitude of uncatalogued material she finds in Anna's trunk, Amal conveys a sense of how the task of interpreting this material is a particularly daunting one. The miscellaneous things that are included in the trunk provide her with a hint or a clue through which she can understand the fragmentary information contained in Anna's letters. And yet they also demand more speculative methodologies of historical investigation. Indeed, it can be argued that Amal's reading of Anna's letters stages the act of constructing an inventory of historical traces from the letters, notebooks, and material objects she finds in the trunk.

By staging Amal's reading of Anna's letters, *The Map of Love* may also invite comparisons with the epistolary novel, a form that is commonly associated with Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* or *Virtue Rewarded* (1740) and *Clarissa* or *The History of a Young Lady* (1748). However, the metafictional form of *The Map of Love* suggests that comparisons with contemporary postmodern experiments with the novel of letters are more appropriate. In a discussion of the postmodern epistolary form, Linda Kauffman cites Doris Lessing's *Golden Notebook* (1962) as a paradigmatic example of a text that draws on the genre of the epistolary novel to explore the construction of female subjectivity. Kauffman's analysis of *The Golden Notebook* as a text that stages 'female subjectivity' in the context of letter writing, reading, and self-critique is particularly useful to my discussion of both Anna and Amal's narrative role in *The Map of Love* because it helps to illuminate the gendered implications of Amal's act of constructing an inventory in *The Map of*

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[266] *The Map of Love,* pp. 5-6.

Love. Kauffman interprets Anna Wulf's act of re-reading and the re-writing of her notes as a strategy of constructing 'female subjectivity' in discourse. In a similar vein, by gathering and interpreting Anna Winterbourne's notes, Amal suggests that Anna's intellectual and political formation is staged in her private writing. The common feature in both modes of reading forged by the female protagonists in these two quite different novels is a form of 'contested dialogue' that results from a serious engagement with a written text.

By reading Amal's interpretation of Anna's letters and notes with and against Said's reading of Conrad's letters and Kauffman's discussion of Anna Wulf, I consider how *The Map of Love* uses a postmodern epistolary form to question essentialist ways of thinking about gender and nationalism that have their origins in colonial representations of Egypt. Indeed, at one point in the novel, Amal herself falls back on what seems to be an essentialist mode of thinking about the gendered nation, when she refers to Egypt as a 'mother of civilisation, dreaming herself through the centuries'.[267] For Amal, this timeless and gendered ideal of the Egyptian nation is invoked as a sort of bulwark against the threat of sectarian violence and civil war that takes place 'next door but one'[268] in Algeria in the 1990s. And yet, the narrator suggests that the events of recent history in Egypt and the Arab world, including 'fresh news of land appropriations, of great national industries and service companies sold off to foreign investors, of Iraqi children dying and Palestinian homes demolished, fresh news of gun battles in Upper Egypt, of the names of more urban intellectuals added to the Jama't's hit lists [...] of raids and torture and executions'[269], raise profound questions about the efficacy of such an essentialist ideal of the gendered nation.

In his attempt to analyse Conrad's fiction, Said contends that there is a correspondence between Conrad's letters, 'spiritual life', and his fiction. He argues that his autobiographical writing that takes the form of personal letters 'pose[s] intricate problems [for] his fiction'.[270] On the one hand, Said's reading of Conrad's letters claims that there is an implicit relationship between Conrad's fiction and his life, and thus we find that he takes that claim seriously as a matter of sustained consideration in his thesis. On the other hand, he tries to verify this postulated

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[267] Ibid, 100.
[268] Ibid, p. 101.
[269] Ibid
[270] Said, *Joseph Conrad*, p. 11.

relationship through another parallel correlation—between Conrad's past and present as it is *verbally* reflected in his letters. A similar move can be traced in the narrative structure of *The Map of Love*. By examining the correspondences between Anna's written letters and her life-experience in Egypt, Amal observes how Anna's story begins to unfold in front of her through a series of documents that show how England is profoundly implicated in Egypt's colonial past and the postcolonial present. What's more, Amal's narrative function in the novel suggests that she is far more than a mere archivist of Anna's private papers and possessions; for, in trying to place these objects in a wider historical context through an intensive research process, Anna takes on the intellectual project of what Said (following Gramsci) went on to call critical elaboration. This project of critical elaboration is foreshadowed in Said's earlier account of the critic's role in his account of Conrad's letters. As Said explains:

> Between Conrad's life [...] and his fiction there exists much the same relation as between the two divisions (past and present) of his life. The critic's job is to seek out the common denominator of the two sets of relations. As Conrad's history of his past is to his present, so his historical being as a man is to his fiction. And the only way the relation can be articulated is [...] to identify certain dynamic movements or structures of experience (mechanisms) that emerge from letters.[271]

It is tempting to suggest a parallel between the critical reading strategy that Said elaborates in his analysis of Conrad and the reading strategy that Soueif stages in *The Map of Love*. Indeed, there may well be a superficial resemblance between Amal's concerted attempt to make an *inventory* of Anna's belongings and private letters and Said's account of the 'dynamic movements or structures of experience' that Said finds in Conrad's letters. When Amal begins to flip through and investigate Anna's private possessions, this interpretative act happens at the same time as two other significant movements of intellectual inquiry. First, she reads Anna's notes and letters simultaneously to find how they can inform each other. Second, she tries to build a relationship between what she is reading and the material belongings found in the trunk. In this process of interpretation, Amal attempts to find what Said calls a link between the author's letters and her life. Differently from the early Said, however, Amal also discloses the worldliness of

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[271] Said, *Joseph Conrad*, pp.11-12.

Anna's letters with respect to the nationalist politics of early twentieth-century Egypt.

To further clarify the differences between Said and Soueif's interpretation of the letter, it is worth considering Said's discussion of Conrad's letters in a little more detail. Said recommends that Conrad's letters should be 'taken in their available entirety'[272] in order to understand his character and his fiction; his reading also implies the singularity of each letter as an indication of its place among other letters and the structure that follows. Each letter might give a hint as to how Conrad's mind was working at a specific temporal point—a particular trace that can lead to other traces in his life-experience. The following passage highlights how Said has the conviction that each letter can contribute to the formulation of an integrated whole of all the letters, yet he also treats each letters as an independent subject:

> Each letter is an exercise of Conrad's individuality as it connects his present with his past by forging a new link of self-awareness. Taken in their available entirety, Conrad's letters present a slowly unfolding discovery of his mind, his temperament, his character [...] it is possible to view his letters in the essential, even simple, terms of their internal disposition.[273]

The Map of Love complicates the model of a dialectic between author and text that the young Said works with in his thesis. What's more, the pre-existence of the varied contents of the trunk demands a more sophisticated and nuanced approach to the letters than the early Said's model of reading suggests.

If Said focuses on 'dominant themes, patterns, and images' in an attempt to 'identify certain dynamic movements and structures of experience' in Conrad's letters, Amal has to correlate all of her research findings in Anna's letters to the other contents of the trunk. In addition, before Amal starts reading Anna's letters, she has neither a comprehensive vision nor a clear interpretative methodology. Differently from Said, who reads Conrad's letters in order to better understand his fiction, Amal reads Anna's private correspondence and papers in an attempt to understand the worldliness of her letters, particularly in respect of early twentieth-century nationalism in Egypt, and the implications of these letters for the political situation in contemporary postcolonial Egyptian society.

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[272] Ibid, p.5.
[273] Ibid.

As I have already mentioned, by classifying the letters and notes according to the date and colour of journals, Amal aims at creating an 'organic whole' out of Anna's fragmentary written material. What she has been doing at the beginning of her task can be understood as an attempt to 'develop a working relationship to the whole body of letters'.[274] This means neither that Amal has ignored the contents of each letter nor paid any of them detailed attention at this early stage of reading. And yet, every now and then, Amal glances quickly at the letters, notes, and the material belongings to decide on the next point that needs further investigation. Considered in the terms of Said's approach to the letter, in order to 'identify certain dynamic movements or structures of experience' in Anna's letters, Amal has to shuttle to and fro, from one item to another in the trunk. She rereads the letters and notes regularly to start over at a different beginning, but each time she becomes armed with excessive details gleaned from previous beginning(s). This question of different 'beginnings' is evoked through Amal's reading whereby—as I discuss in later sections—she constructs Anna's story from another spatio-temporal point of investigation: Cairo in 1997. In the following extract, Amal describes her first attempt to read the letters, and to make sense of the contents of the trunk:

> I've arranged them chronologically as much as I could; the undated sheets I've compared to dated ones and matched papers. They stand in twelve piles, one for each year – some years are more substantial than others. The journals stand alone. I have tried not to read through them, to read only one year at a time. But then I know how the story ends. I don't think that matters. We always know how the story ends. What we don't know is what happens along the way. Anna's objects I keep wrapped as I found them, in the trunk which now stands by the wall next to my dressing table.[275]

As the above extract highlights, Amal's need to construct Anna's story becomes her prior challenge especially after she realizes the complex nature of her role as both archivist and critical historian. The phrase, 'What we don't know is what happens along the way' is particularly significant here. It can be inferred from this statement that the *chronological* order that Amal imposes on Anna's written material is just a preliminary reading, which subsequently proves to be insufficient. Subsequently, Amal abandons this rigid adherence to a chronological order in favour of other, more sophisticated strategies of critical reading and

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[274] Ibid, p. vii.
[275] *The Map of Love*, p. 74.

historical interpretation. The following sections try to address these strategies by considering how the novel forges a dialogic relationship between Anna as a writer and Amal as her reader. In doing so, I also consider how this dialogue suggests varied interpretative approaches to the past.

3.3.3 Anna's Emerging Historical Consciousness: Anna's Notes in England

By coming to terms with the complexity of interpreting Anna's private letters, notebooks, and belongings, Amal—in addition to her initially expected narrative role which is limited to the mere retelling of a past story and translating the exotic words to Isabel—assumes the role of a 'critical reader' as Said understands it, but also extends that role. She becomes more engaged in Anna's 'lived experience' as represented by Anna's words in order to narrativize her own story. She works out Anna's notes to contextualize them against the exigencies of colonial and national philology.

The Map of Love opens with Amal reading Anna's personal diary, where Anna recorded her life in England just three years prior to her visit to Egypt. When Amal reads such notes dated back to 'English Autumn in 1897', she has been trying to find her own way through a pile of letters and notes. Amal singles out *the brown journal* as her own *starting point*. In this journal, Amal reads about Anna's early youth, and her husband's severe traumatic experience after he returns from serving with Kitchener's military forces in Sudan—an experience that culminated in his death. The notes also explain how Anna spent that period after her husband's death pondering the reality of his national mission. Amal approaches these notes because their entries stand for the oldest dates among all Anna's writing. However, the act of reading itself implies other new 'beginnings'. As Amal's reading explains:

> We are roughly in the middle of the journal, which has already moved
> some way from its girlish beginnings as Anna prepared to chronicle a
> happy married life – *beginnings* touching in their assumption of order,
> of predicted, unfolding pattern.[276]

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[276] *The Map of Love*, p. 12. (*Emphasis is mine*).

If the 'periodic entries' and the colour of Anna's journals help Amal to establish a chronological order through which she can trace Anna's historical experiences according to the dates of their occurrence, this preliminary order can be understood as Amal's first *beginning* among the other beginnings that she constructs for herself. In order to re-narrate Anna's story, she also extends her investigation by focusing on the significance of single words. As I try to explain below, both kinds of order contribute to Amal's building of an 'inventory' and her ultimate understanding of the meaning of those fragmentary pieces of writing. Amal dramatizes an extended life-story by reading through four journals (brown, green, blue, and bright green), and a pile of letters mainly written to her father-in-law and her friend Caroline.

The function of 'periodic entries' as temporal markers—as explained by Kauffman—is not only helpful in understanding Amal's role as archivist/ editor, as I have explained above. These periodic entries also help the implied reader of *The Map of Love* to come to terms with Amal's inventory of Anna's traces in England and Egypt as accumulative historical events.[277] As well as placing Anna's life experiences in a chronological sequence, Amal contextualises her private correspondence and life writing through a thick description of the events, places, and people alluded to in the journals. If the 'periodic entries' in both letters and notes suggest that Amal should adhere to a rigid method in following those historical events in Anna's personal record, Anna's language also expands this reading methodology, and accordingly, her narrative role. Amal works to contextualize Anna's writing by adopting several strategies:

> I am obsessed with Anna Winterbourne's brown Journal [...] I need to fill in the gaps, to *know* who the people are of whom she speaks, to paint the backdrop against which she is living her life here, on the page in front of me. I go to the British Council Library, to dar al-Kutub,[278] to the second-hand bookstalls [...] I even write to my son in London and ask for cuttings from old issues of *The Times*. And I piece a story together.[279]

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[277] Kauffman quotes the following from H. Porter Abott's *Diary Fiction: Writing as an Action*, 1984: '[...] the strategic decision that the author makes is not the decision to have periodic entries in letter form or in diary form, but the decision to create cumulatively the effect of a consciousness thrown back on its own resources, abetted only by its pen.'
[278] *dar al-Kutub* Literary means the house of books.
[279] *The Map of Love*, p. 26.

As the above extract indicates, reading Anna's notes involves Amal taking on several intellectual tasks: to be a narrator, a commentator, and an archival researcher. Her research even extends to archive visits in order to make sense of the social and political circumstances that Anna witnessed and to which she has given testimony prior to her visit to Egypt—a sojourn that later extends to permanent residence. All the above-mentioned modes of investigation underpin Amal's job as a 'critic', whereby she tends to contextualize Anna's words—the task that helps her to make an 'inventory' of Anna's traces in Egypt as they are represented in her own words. More specifically, Amal stages Anna's words to historicize her personal history against overarching and yet overlapping political and national histories of two countries at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In *The Map of Love*, Amal's reading of Anna's notes where she records the brutality of the British army in Sudan[280] is considered a new 'beginning' to comprehend Anna's developing consciousness. In the brown journal, she can observe a turning point in Anna's marital and intellectual life. Amal's reading of the brown journal elucidates Anna's feeling of loss over the death of her husband and blaming herself that she was not the ideal wife for him, yet the notes also articulate a feeling of pain in the idiom of imperialism and nationalism. The language Anna uses underpins her sense of scepticism and uncertainty about both the colonial and nationalist imperatives in Egypt and Sudan. Anna's desires to conjure up her own subjective political view of the current situation in Egypt and Sudan independently from Sir Charles inaugurates her search for her own vocabulary through which she can understand the British existence in Egypt as I am going to explain below. From this very specific point, Amal works to historicize Anna's life in terms of an intellectual crisis that can be explained and traced in the light of the historical moment that Anna has been living through.

The novel brings to the fore how the colonial and national narratives are constructed on an *intellectual* level via certain modes of humanist critique and yet it also underscores the importance of a (neo)colonial encounter in such a process. At the level of narration, Anna Winterbourne participates in a series of critical debates on the reality of British imperialism and its civilizing/modernizing mission

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[280] See Chapter Four, *The Map of Love*, pp. 34-35. In these pages, Soueif gives a comprehensive account on the brutality and barbarism of the English army in Sudan which is beyond the scope of this chapter. For instance, Amal provides the reader with minor details and statics on the war and the violent performance by General Kitchener.

in Africa where she acts as a passive interlocutor. During a polemical debate on the essence of the African nations that run between some British national elites such as Sir Charles and his political opponents (George Wyndham among others), Anna proves to be 'a creature devoid of reason'.[281] Anna is exasperated with the ways in which Christianity is used to justify the colonial campaigns in Egypt and Sudan, and wonders why the moral framework of Christianity is not invoked to criticize the rapacity of British colonialism. As Amal reads, 'Well, if you do not bring down a curse on the British Empire for what you have been doing, *there is no truth in Christianity*' [....] What had they done beyond taking the Soudan and restoring order? [...] I long to ask my husband what this means, for my instinct is that there is *a key* here to what ails him'.[282] As Anna suggests, the answers to these inquiries are grounded in understanding her husband's national and religious affilia2tions.

Anna's sense of uncertainty about Britain's colonial project, especially with regard to its military government in Egypt and its Orientalist framing of Egypt's national character continues to inform and inflect her writing process. By focusing on how Anna's language verbalizes her feeling of uncertainty as to whether her husband's complicity in the military campaign in Sudan was for a 'truthful' noble mission, Anna's notes brings to the fore the dynamics of national and colonial discourses. At this early stage in Anna's emerging historical consciousness, Sir Charles's opinions have provided the main frame of reference through which she tries to understand her husband's trauma. Despite the fact that Sir Charles is critical of the violence of British imperialism, his tone suggests an unshaken belief in a liberal ideal of England. He expresses to Anna feelings of protest against what he derisively terms a 'Cockney Empire,' and even entitles it an 'invention'; and yet, he also continues to believe in the superiority of England as a nation.[283] Sir Charles believes in a particular kind of elite British liberalism that is broadly consistent with the terms of a secular humanist critique.[284] The colonial narrative as such

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[281]*The Map of Love*, p. 13.
[282] *The Map of Love,* p. 31. (*Emphasis is mine*).
[283] Sir Charles castigates the British Empire as he entitled it as an "invention" and criticizes the political performance done in its name. 'This invention, the British Empire, will be the ruin of our position as an honest kingdom'. In a letter to *The Times*, Sir Charles's political agency that is manifested in addressing the times in protest against the violence in Sudan and the war atrocities which is beyond the scope of this chapter. For further details about the war atrocities in Sudan read chapter three, p. 34.
[284] See *The Map of Love,* p. 27. Sir Charles mentions to Anna that Sir William Harcourt has been replaced by a jingo imperialist, Sir Rosebery and Chamberlain in order to pinpoint the shift in the British nationalist policy.

recalls Said's ambivalent position on Palestinian nationalism, especially when national, religious, and imperial discourses intersect. The national character of the colonized and the civilising mission of the colonizer as represented in those debates provoke a sense of profound ambivalence for Anna, stricken as she is with concern for her husband's psychic pains following his involvement in the British military campaign in Sudan.

Among the opinions proposed, Anna admires the political positions of Sir Charles and his sole ally, John Evelyn, which express rational, liberal, cosmopolitan, and anti-essentialist thinking; these views serve to challenge the pro-imperialist views of Sir George Wyndham and his colleagues, who seek to justify the colonial strategies in Egypt and Sudan through essentialist ideas of Arab culture. Amal reads what Anna writes about John Evelyn: '[he] declared his intention to send son up to the Nile to "learn Arabic, keep a diary and acquire habits of observation and self-reliance and not to imbibe Jingo principles". I *wish* – if that is not too wicked a wish – I *wish* I were that son'.[285]

Understanding Anna's experience in Egypt would have been an impossible task for Amal if the latter had not been able to identify in the former's writing what Said refers to as 'mechanisms of existence'. What Said means by this phrase is made clear in his reading of Conrad's letters. On more than one occasion in *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, Said emphasizes that these 'mechanisms' are 'Conrad's very own' and that it is only by tracing his working mind through the meanings which his words disclose that he can synthesize the 'specific dynamic movements' or 'structures of experience' that dominate Conrad's writing.[286] A similar kind of knowledge becomes essential for Amal not only for understanding the context of words and their historical significance at a specific moment, but also for staging Anna's experience in Egypt as part of a longer continuum of historical events that occurs first in England and then in Egypt.

For Said, the continuity in Conrad's narrative (letters), 'is precisely his emerging individuality, and the measure of his absorption, and knowledge of, the

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[285] Ibid, p. 13.
[286] Said, *Joseph Conrad*, p. 12. In his *History and Class Consciousness*, George Lukacs has described structures similar to these: Lucien Goldmann calls them *significant dynamic structures,* because they maintain a context by which every human act preserves an individual's past evolution as well as the inner tendencies that that drive him toward the future.

mechanisms of existence'.[287] These mechanisms of existence are also part of the very mechanisms of an emergent anti-imperialist sensibility that Said went on to elaborate in his later writings. A similar connection is drawn in *The Map of Love*. Indeed, Anna's desires to learn Arabic and to immerse herself in the Egyptian society—the pragmatic means through which she endeavours to understand Egyptian culture as against the liberal Orientalism of Sir Charles and his opponents' more conservative visions—resonate with those very 'mechanisms' that Said addressed. Amal's reading attests to Anna's individuality as it is manifested in her ability to engage in critical/ humanist debates on the essence of the Egyptian character, where the agency of the language is ineluctable. She filters out Anna's notes and letters through a multi-levelled intellectual adventure that results from Anna's 'emerging individuality': to travel to Egypt, 'learn Arabic', 'keep a diary' and 'acquire habits of observation and self-reliance'. Amal's reading draws our attention to a noticeable shift from the brown journal to the green one, which Amal interprets as corresponding with Anna's narrative of self-development; for it is in this journal that Anna documents her emergent cosmopolitanism and her rejection of the English culture and society that Sir Charles symbolises. As Amal conjectures, 'Sir Charles stays in his rooms on Mount Street. The house he had left to his son and his son's bride stands empty. The gardener comes in once a week to keep the flowers in order. Anna starts another journal; a handsome, thick volume in dark green with a navy spine'.[288] Amal's reading here stages Anna's intellectual progress weighed up against Sir Charles's (and his opponents) political position: a *dynamic movement* in opposition to her father-in-law who is now positioned in a state of *dynamic equilibrium*.[289]

3.4 From Inventory to Critical Elaboration: Philological Historicism and Philological Heroism in *The Map of Love*

The Map of Love complicates Orientalist and neo-Orientalist ideas of Egyptian national culture through an extended reciprocal process embedded in Anna's act of writing met by Amal's critical reading. In the novel, the importance of a neo-colonial encounter for developing a subjective view outside the colonial

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[287] Ibid, p.9.
[288] *The Map of Love*, p.62.
[289] Dynamic equilibrium: Noun. I. e. A state of balance between continuing processes. < https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dynamic_equilibrium >

frame is generated via Anna's 'emerging individuality' as structured through Amal's multileveled reading process of Anna's letters. The two women's intellectual endeavours can be interpreted as personal traces through which they construct a subjective view of Egypt in opposition to predominant national narratives represented via public and official histories of these two countries. Amal constructs a peripheral national narrative that reframes and reshapes Anna's cosmopolitan narrative of colonial Egypt, which in turn challenges another one originated by the British nationalist elites who 'domesticate colonialist attitudes and aestheticize resistance in the service of the imperial center'.[290] Anna's letters to Sir Charles during her visit to Egypt can be read as a colonial encounter where Anna—on a textual level—interrupts and intervenes in a colonial narrative of Egypt, which in turn shapes and informs essentialist ways of thinking about Egypt's national culture. Amal, therefore, structures Anna's experience in Egypt in terms of an intellectual orderliness through which the latter builds up a different *idea of Egyptian national culture*. Such an epistemological shift is enabled by Anna's attempt to grasp the predominant language structures and cultural codes of the Egyptians—a form of cross-cultural understanding that is perhaps best compared with ethnographic fieldwork.

3.4.1 Anna's Letters from Egypt: a Neo-colonial Encounter

If, in novels such as *Aisha* (1983) and *In the Eye of the Sun* (1992), 'Soueif sends her female characters to the heartland of the British Empire', *The Map of Love* crystallizes the heroism of a British woman who decides to quit the centre and learn to learn from the periphery.[291] As a truth seeker, Anna's visit to Egypt at the start of the twentieth century comes as a serious attempt to set herself free from the shackles of colonial discourse. In this sense, Anna's letters are written against the grain, or the centre, and are written instead from an engagement with the language and culture of the margin/periphery. Yet they provide us neither

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[290] In Saighton (England), the language used resembles the oriental language used in the colonial centre, in Egypt. For more illustration, see Timothy Brennan, 'Edward Said As a lukácsian Critic: Modernism and Empire,' *College Literature*, 40.4, Fall 2013, p. 16.
&See also Mustapha Marrouchi's chapter, 'My Homeland, in Text' *Edward Said at the Limits* (Albany: State University of New York Press) 2004, p. 122.
[291] See Samia Mehrez, 'The Map of Writing: An Interview with Ahdaf Soueif', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 20 (2000), pp. 168-185.

'with new narrative forms' nor 'with other *ways* of telling'.[292] They merely replicate the narrative of the centre Anna got used to in England.

A consideration of how *The Map of Love* subverts orientalist clichés is not the only way to read the novel in the light of Said's critical corpus. If Said's early work on Conrad helps to critically frame Amal's early stage of gathering and detecting Anna's working mind and finally her emerging historical consciousness as embedded in her desire to have her own critical position, the idea of philological historicism in tandem with the idea of 'inventory' that Said develops in his later works are very useful here in explaining Amal's textual role. For the idea of inventory that Said briefly mentions in *Orientalism* becomes more nuanced if it is considered in relation to Said's later work on philology.

As I have suggested, the idea of 'making an inventory' is particularly germane for reading *The Map of Love*, especially when considering how the novel foregrounds the traces of Anna's historical experiences in Egypt as a resource for Amal's constructed narrative. At the same time, this idea of inventory is also problematized via the sophisticated textual role that Amal performs. If the letters presuppose a 'specific reader', this is only partially true in Anna's case. Amal's textual role as implied by her special engagement with Anna's words can be read as a particular form of philological historicism, or a mode of reading through which Amal stages, questions, and holds a dialogue with Anna's writerly self.

Upon Anna's arrival to Egypt, Amal reads the notes and the letters in the green journal where Anna starts to record her initial movements towards the construction of her subjective history. Amal's comments on Anna's developing sense of individuality at this stage are rendered in the following way:

> And so Anna arrives in Egypt and this, it seems, is her first letter; a little self-conscious
> perhaps, a little aware of the genre – *letters from Egypt, A Nile Voyage, More Letters*
> *from Egypt*. I assume that what I have is a copy of the letter she sent to Caroline.
> Perhaps she was thinking of a future publication. In any case, I forgive her the
> mannered approach as she feels her way into my home. What else does she know –
> yet? And I am glad that she has broken away – that the brown leather journal is put

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[292] Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2001), pp. 293-316 (p. 315). Said highlights the importance of 'Critical mobility' and crossing borders for the production/the possibility of 'a counter-narrative' by stating, 'Exile, immigration, and the crossing of boundaries are experience that can [...] provide us with new narrative forms or, in John-Berger's phrase, with other *ways* of telling.'

> gently aside. She did not draw a thick line under the last entry. She did not tear out and use any of the remaining pages. I flick through them, half expecting a note – a comment from later years on that early grief. But there is nothing. She simply left them blank.[293]

The above extract unravels more than one literary fact in Anna's writing that shape Amal's intellectual processes of making an inventory. If Amal has used Anna's notes to contextualize her words, she finds herself in a more complicated situation by coming across some rather tantalizing and fragmentary notes. The missing pages, the prevalent ellipses, and the absence of some periodical entries serve to obstruct her construction of a coherent narrative. In addition, Anna's reference in letters to the specific places she visits in Egypt and the pre-existence of her material belongings in the trunk complicate her role further. Amal is quite aware of how Anna's past experience in England continues to shape her views in the present, especially when she states: 'I forgive her the mannered approach as she feels her way into my home. What else does she know – yet?' In this way, *the brown journal* helps Amal to cumulatively construct Anna's story by contextualizing the letters she writes from Egypt (to Sir Charles and Caroline) against her previous experience in England; however, she can still see the importance of evaluating this phase in Anna's life apart from any preoccupation with the nativist/orientalist modes of representation she came across in England. Rather than being boxed in the literary genre of writing letters, Amal begins to re-examine Anna's writerly self by reframing her letters outside the exigencies of the epistolary mode of narration represented by the letters of Lady Duff Gordon[294] that Anna habitually reads at bedtime.

Some studies critique Amal's narrative role in the novel on the grounds that it confirms the Orientalist vision that assimilates the form of Victorian writing instead of challenging it. Noha Hamdy, for instance, argues that '[Amal's] focalization is paradigmatic of an orientalist voyeurism'.[295] Thus,—guided through

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[293] *The Map of Love*, p. 58.

[294] Lucy Duff Gordon and Sophia Lane-Poole are considered famous names in this genre of writing descriptive letters on Egypt. See also Letters from an Englishwoman in Egypt: (1842-1844) Book by Sophia Lane Poole, first published in 1844, these letters are the collected observations of Sophia Poole, who lived in Cairo from 1842 until 1849 with her brother, the well known Orientalist Edward Lane, and her two children.

[295] Noha Hamdy, 'Remapping Territories of Fiction in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love', in Locating Postcolonial Narrative Genres,* ed. *by* Walter Goebel, and Saskia Schabio (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 184–94 (p. 188).

Amal's literary voice—the reader of the novel is lured into 'Victorian ekphrasis and discursive narrative formations' dispersed throughout Anna's letters.[296] Anna's initial impressions, which she registered in her letter to Caroline Bourke on 29 September 1900 address such visual details that through an Orientalist lens.[297] Interpreting Anna's letters in this way provides the reader only with 'neo-colonialist/neo-orientalist paradigms of narrative representation which emanate from metropolitan centres'.[298] Against Hamdy's claims, I argue that Amal offers a counter-narrative to those forms of representation generated via the colonial rhetorics of narration. Instead of confining Anna's record of the Egyptian habitat/community as the observations of an orientalist (within a very limited period and limited access to cultural institutions), Amal's reading foregrounds Anna as a cosmopolitan truth-seeker (over a long time of residence) who yearns for a form of complete knowledge and understanding that is behind her beyond her grasp. Amal's careful reading foregrounds significant moments in the text where Anna begins to question and see through the rhetoric of national and colonial representations of Egypt.

The Map of Love can be read as a series of Orientalist images that can be explained in terms of Oriental philology, especially those chapters that tell Anna's first impressions during the early months she spent in Egypt. The novel is replete with such 'orientalist clichés'[299] which suggest that Egyptian culture is immutable or has a fixed identity. However, if Anna's first impressions are formulated through a limited orientalist gaze, her awareness of this limited vision gives another insight into her life-experience in Egypt. By reading and reflecting upon Anna's personal traces in the light of such developing historical consciousness, Amal provides the (implied) reader with an alternative cultural narrative that differs from other modes of narration that correspond with the terms of colonial discourse.

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[296] Ibid, pp. 184–94 p. 190.

[297] *The Map of Love*, pp. 56-58. Such a visual image that Anna draws comes as a result to a predetermined mental image about the African continent. As Anna describes the view she can see from her hotel window, she also explains that Captain Bourke warned her against a particular 'standard feature of life in Africa'.

[298] Hamdy, 'Remapping Territories', p. 189. As Hamdy claims, 'This model of transculturation, which is based on a code-switching aesthetics, is a function of the ambivalence and dispersal of colonial power and is dubiously complicit with neo-colonialist/neo-orientalist paradigms of narrative representation which emanate from metropolitan centres.'

[299] For further information on such 'Orientalist clichés' in the novel that represent the British visual culture. Read for example, Sabina D'Alessandro, 'Painted Orientalist Clichés', in *The Politics of Representation in* Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (Bern, CHE: Peter Lang AG, 2011), pp. 19-36.

'Representation', 'generic disruption and defamiliarization', and 'dialogism' are key motifs (among other four motifs suggested by Kauffman) that can help to explain Amal's textual role in interpreting Anna's letters from Egypt in terms of 'the process of textual production and reception'.[300] Each of these motifs imply a kind of 'modal transformation' whereby Amal could produce a distinctive perspectival narrative that is taken over by the orientalist philology/reading.[301] Amal develops a special pace of reading that corresponds with the varied historical trajectories that record Anna's attempt to set herself free from any previous orientalist modes of representation she came across in England. She elaborates Anna's story as an individual experience which is gradually conceived by Anna herself. When Amal tells Isabel, '"You don't even know the rest of the story yet. You don't know how it'll turn out", Isabel tells her, "It doesn't matter. I can see it. The way you describe it, I can see it"'.[302] Coming to terms with Anna's developing historical consciousness, Amal challenges those narratological limitations imposed by the generic conventions of the epistolary novel which work to frame Anna as an Edwardian traveller.[303]

In his discussion of Said's position on philology as a central constituent in making human history, Timothy Brennan highlights a considerable shift in the perspective of the constructing subject. As Brennan explains, 'In Said's essay on Vico, philology had already represented a 'topical' as distinct from a 'geometric' method of inquiry'.[304] Amal challenges a fixed way of narrating Anna's experience in Egypt as implied by the temporal sequence that the periodic entries of letters suggest. Amal as a postcolonial narrator does not merely consider how Anna works to 'subvert'[305] the orientalist representations that Said castigates in *Orientalism*

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[300] Kauffman, *Special Delivery*, p. xvii.

[301] Ibid. As Kauffman indicates, 'Rather than artificially imposing a foolish generic consistency, I emphasize each text's innovative contribution to modal transformation, focusing on the distinctive treatment of seven major motifs.'

[302] *The Map of Love*, p. 79.

[303] Hamdy, 'Remapping Territories', p. 188. Hamdy explains 'how Soueif's employment of Amal as a postcolonial narrator does not transcend Western Logocentric narratorial cognates which are predicated on a visibility/invisibility opposition.'

[304] Timothy Brennan, 'Places of Mind, Occupied Lands: Edward Said and Philology', in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Michael Sprinker (Cambridge & Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), pp. 74-95 (p. 80).

[305] See for example, Katherine Callen King, 'Translating Heroism: Locating Edward Said on Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love'*, in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation,* ed. by Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom, (Berkeley, CA, USA: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 142-58.

(1978); she also tries to interpret Anna's description of the Egyptian site and habitat either spatially, as a topos, or linguistically as is denoted by Anna's words.

In *The Map of Love*, Amal keeps a record of how Anna has been interested in the use of language as a means of representing her conception of reality. Her focus on Anna's language as such requires a special engagement with Anna's writings as texts that translate her experience at different, yet interconnected phases in her life. Below is Said's explanation of how the idiosyncratic reading of a critic can help to account for the purpose behind an emphasis given to the writer's (un)conscious use of language, which appeals to Amal's interpretation of Anna's letters:

> The literary critic is, I think, most interested in comprehension, because the critical act is first of all an act of comprehension: a particular comprehension of a written work, and not of its origins in a general theory of the unconscious. Comprehension, furthermore, a phenomenon of consciousness, and it is in the openness of the conscious mind that critic and writer meet to engage in the act of knowing and being aware of an experience. Only that engagement, made in the interests of literary and historical fidelity, can prevent Conrad's remark "I am living a night-mare" from being accepted (or dismissed) as a hyperbolic effusion, instead of as an authentic and intense fact of experience.[306]

Said places special emphasis on Conrad's words since he believes them to provide a rich resource for tracing what he calls 'literary and historical fidelity'. His analysis of the letters in which he highlights the importance of reading Conrad's words corresponds in interesting if unexpected ways with Amal's production of an integrated meaning and a continuous narrative out of Anna's letters and notes. The specific attention that Amal pays to Anna's use of certain words and phrases resonates with Said's detection of Conrad's consciousness. And yet, her reflections on Anna's cosmopolitan consciousness through her engagements with Arabic language and culture also serve to augment the critical process of 'philological historicism' that Said develops in later works.

3.4.2 Anna's Superficial Immersion: Writer-reader Reciprocity (Anna's Notes in Egypt)

In a discussion of Doris Lessing's *Golden Notebook*, Linda Kauffman argues that Lessing presents 'an acutely self-reflexive consciousness in Anna Wulf, and

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[306] Said, *Joseph Conrad*, p.7.

gives the addressee(s) independent active textual roles—including those addresses that are fragments of herself'.[307] In the light of Kauffman's analysis of Anna Wulf's 'textual role,' I suggest that Anna Winterbourne goes through an incessant dialogue with her 'multiple selves' or 'fragments of herself' that Amal seeks to dramatize through her reading. This is not to say that Anna has the same kind of 'schizoid' condition that Kauffman attributes to Anna Wulf in her reading of Lessing; rather, I argue that Anna is always judging her views of the situations she bears witness to in the historical present by setting them against parallel historical situations in the past. This critical historical sensibility accompanies Anna throughout each of the stages of writing in Egypt. Such a critical sensibility extends also to language, for Anna is very meticulous about the choice of single words and phrases she uses, and wonders if they could ever represent the reality and complexity of Egyptian culture as she conceives of it in English. In Kauffman's terms, Anna is considered to be a 'reader' of her writing, who always questions, revises, and 'edits' what she is writing while referencing an earlier experience or political views formulated in the past. More precisely, Amal interprets Anna's story as a worldly narrative just as Anna compares her own experience in Egypt to the truth claims of Orientalist narratives, which she learns about from her first husband and Sir Charles.

The 'outer' narrative that Amal forges through her reading is only constituted through another 'inner narrative'[308]—Anna's dramatic thread that emerges from Amal drawing the boundaries between the 'interior dialogues' Anna holds among her 'multiple selves'. Anna Winterbourne, like Anna Wulf in *The Golden Notebook*, writes notes that provide her addressee (the implied/Anglophonic reader) with a record of the historical events. Yet through her writing she is always referring back to previous events to make sense of the instant moment she is living through. Anna therefore becomes a 'reader'[309] of her writing through the 'inner' dialogue that she forges between her present historical being and what she has registered earlier in her notes.

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[307] Kauffman, *Special Delivery*, p. 134.

[308] Clarissa Burt, *'The Map of Love* by Ahdaf Soueif', *Feminist Review*, 69 (Winter, 2001), pp. 153-156 (p. 153). Burt refers to Anna's letters that Anna reads as the novel's 'inner narrative', while Amal's reading itself as 'the outer narrative.'

[309] Kauffman, *Special Delivery*, p, viii. As Kauffman argues, 'Dialogism is also crucial in representing the writer as *reader*.'

Anna's notes unravel her developing sense of subjectivity at varied stages in her life. Although Anna only cites Sir Charles's and Caroline's opinions in a very limited number of notes and letters in Egypt, this is not to imply that Anna writes through a 'retrospective mode', as Said's reading of Conrad's letters suggests.[310] Instead, Anna records her impressions and reflections on what she observes immediately as soon as she construes them in her mind. Nonetheless, it is only through Anna's verbal habit of referring back to earlier phases in her life that Amal can detect a state of 'dialogue' between Anna's past sceptical self and her emerging and developing sense of individuality. The dialogue runs underneath between 'younger and older selves, between roles, functions, insights, moods, and experiences' that constitute the novel's primary two narrative threads: Anna's 'inner narrative' and Amal's 'outer narrative' respectively. The novel—via Amal's reading—establishes Anna's 'older' Self as 'girlish', 'a creature devoid of reason', but also as a thoughtful character whose aptitude for rationalizing her feelings is undeniable.[311] In this way, '[t]he desire for exchange [between Anna's multiple selves] becomes 'the motor that drives the narrative' in *The Map of Love*.[312]

As Kauffman argues, 'The dialogue within the letter novel between letter writer and addressee is doubled by the dialogue between writer and reader'.[313] Through her reading of a series of confessions that Anna makes in her notes and her letters to Sir Charles and Caroline Bourke, Amal recognizes the limitations of Anna's private papers as a reliable historical resource and her inability to form a view of Egyptian society and culture without referencing Sir Charles's political opinions or those of his peers, whom she meets in Egypt. Anna writes about Mr Barrington and Mr Blunt 'who holds views identical to those of my beau-père'.[314] The first few months that Anna has spent in Egypt read as a replica of another parallel scene about which Amal has already read an account in *the brown journal*. Such scenes might be taken to stand for a series of formative *intellectual experiences* in the formation of Anna's critical historical consciousness. Reading these scenes recursively, it is possible to see how the scenes to which Anna is a

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[310] See Edward Said, 'Preface', Edward Said, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, Harvard University Press, 1966, p. viii. According to Said's reading of Conrad's letters, 'nearly every one of these tales is written in variations of what it can be called 'retrospective mode,' and that mode, also varied, is the very same one he uses in his letters.'

[311] See *The Map of Love*, pp. 12-13.

[312] Kauffman, *Special Delivery*, p. 135.

[313] Ibid. p. xix.

[314] *The Map of Love*, p. 70.

passive and silent witness also mark the beginning of an intellectual crisis, where she begins to question the authority and veracity of what she overhears. As she writes to Sir Charles on 10 March 1901: 'I attended a conversation (I say attended because my part in it was chiefly confined to that of a listener) which would have been of interest to you, and in which, unlike me, you would have had a great deal to say'.[315]

Amal is not only interested in the process by which Anna's historical consciousness is formed; she also questions whether Anna has been *aware* of this process—even though it is plain to see in Amal's faithful reconstruction of Anna's private letters and life writing. Through these confessions, Anna can be seen to articulate something similar to that which Said identifies in Conrad's letters as 'a history of conscience'.[316] For the early Said, Conrad's letters document 'the growth of the faculty that grants one a moral awareness of conduct'. Anna's letters, too, document the development of a moral sensibility that is increasingly critical of what passes for European knowledge and understanding of Egypt. And yet, differently from Conrad, Anna's early letters also foreground her gendered position in relation to the world of colonial and anti-colonial politics. She always underestimates the value of her observations and private opinions, partly because of her exclusion from the public world of imperial politics by virtue of her gender, which is signalled in her self-deprecating writerly style, but also because of her emergent awareness of how her ideas about Egypt are shaped by certain British colonial myths and stereotypes of the Orient. Anna writes to Caroline the following:

> I am hoping to learn a little more of native life here, although I must say I have no idea how to put that hope into actual form. But I feel it would be a little odd to come all the way to Egypt and learn nothing except more about your own compatriots [....] In any case I am very sensible that I knew very little of the country and must be content to try to educate myself until such time as I am equipped to form my own views.[317]

All of Anna's views that she mentions in her letters draw upon the elites' opinions among her fellow English citizens, the Egyptian aristocrats, and the most prominent national and religious figures. The vast majority of Anna's statements

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[315] *The Map of Love*, p. 95.
[316] Said, *Joseph Conrad*, p. 10. As Said explains, '[...] what it meant to write a history of conscience, to record the growth of the faculty that grants one a moral awareness of conduct.'
[317] *The Map of Love*, p. 71.

are descriptive rather than critical and are often proceeded by modifying clauses, such as, 'I hear …', 'Mr Barrington and Mr Blunt saying…', 'Mrs Blunt and Mrs Butcher informed me…', and so on.[318] Such clauses serve to distance Anna from the stated claims, and invite readers to question their reliability. All of the characters that Anna encounters during her early period in Egypt are framed in relation to her previous crisis in England, where she had been acting as a passive interlocutor.

Anna is painfully aware of the ways in which the English language limits her access to Egyptian culture and society. Indeed, this is perhaps why Anna decides not to transcribe mere impressions 'seen by the most superficial eye'.[319] In *The Map of Love*, both dress codes and linguistic codes play an essential role in Amal's staging of Anna's multi-levelled cosmopolitan experience in Egypt. Anna takes on cross-dressing and learning the Arabic language as 'mechanisms' to engage with Egyptian people. However, I am particularly interested in the significance of linguistic codes in the formation of Anna's critical historical consciousness. Amal's close reading of Anna's words invites readers to consider whether Anna's writerly self shows an awareness of how her personal experience is, at one and the same time, a worldly existence. Amal's specific focus on tracing how Anna learns and practices the Arabic language as her 'mechanism' of existence in Egypt resonates with Said's emphasis on 'a life-long attentiveness to the words and rhetorics by which language is used by human beings who exist in history'.[320]

In 'Islam, Philology and French Culture,' Said criticises the relative poverty of English 'New Philology', in comparison to the advanced state of philology as an academic field of scholarship in nineteenth-century Germany and France.[321] The English 'New Philology' that Said castigates is also responsible for generating orientalist discourse with its pseudo-scientific taxonomies that fix, name, and categorise the colonized nations in Africa and India. For Said, the immutable essence resulting from this orientalist appraisal emanates mainly from 'the

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[318] Here, the ellipses are original.
[319] *The Map of Love*, p. 61.
[320] Said, 'The Return to Philology', pp. 57-84 (p. 61).
[321] Said, 'Islam, Philology, and French Culture: Renan and Massignon', in *The World, the text, and the Critic*, (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 268-289 (p. 268). As Said explains, 'England never had a literary academy to watch over cultural effort, Arnold says, and this has been a blessing for the freedom of atmosphere it produced in English intellectual life, but also a drawback because it could not prevent vulgarity and triteness.'

absence, in this country, of any force of educated literary and scientific opinion, making aberrations … out of the question'.[322] He also claims elsewhere that 'language as an opaque and yet strangely abstract, ungraspable essence was to emerge as an object of philological attention'.[323] In Soueif's novel, the English characters that Anna meets in Egypt use an 'abstract' language that prejudicially works to fix the Egyptian character and assign to it a very restricted cultural meaning.

Anna has attended several social gatherings where she only meets her countrymen, who bring to her ears similar conversations about a fixed national character of the colonized (in this case, the Egyptians). In a certain sense, Anna's historical consciousness at this specific historical moment may seem to resemble that of Conrad when he 'felt, simply a man tortured by a finite number of intolerably fixed situations to which he seemed to return everlastingly, and the very fact had a curious pull on him'.[324] Yet her reflections on the Orientalist knowledge that is exchanged in this elite, male, colonial public sphere also anticipate Said's criticism of Orientalism in his later work, as I now suggest. In a party held at the Khedive's place and in the ballroom, Anna, accompanied by Mrs Butcher, meets some of Lord Cromer's consultants (Mr Rodd, the First Secretary, Mr Harry Boyle, and the Oriental Secretary among others). She also meets with Mr Douglas Salden and Mr George Young, who are writing books on Egypt, and Mr William Willcocks, who is responsible for the building of the great dam and reservoir of Aswan. As Anna records in her letter to Sir Charles, on 10 March 1901, the attendants argue about the 'reality' of the Egyptian character, and suggest that it has *a fixed essence*. Mrs Butcher remonstrates: 'the Ancient Egyptians […] were of so definite, so vivid a character that traces of that character cannot be completely lost to the Egyptians of today'.[325] While Mr Young 'expressed the view that the Egyptians do indeed have a national character, but they are not aware of it', Mr Salden contends that Egyptians have 'completely degraded' character.[326]

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[322] Ibid, p. 269.
[323] Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized', pp. 293-316 (p. 293). Said illustrates that literary historians like Earl Wasserman, Erich Auerbach, and M. H. Abrams hold the view that 'with the erosion of the classical consensus, words no longer comprised a transparent medium through being shone.'
[324] Said, *Joseph Conrad*, p.5.
[325] *The Map of Love*, p. 98.
[326] Ibid.

Anna writes on these essentialist/orientalist modes of thinking in her letter to Sir Charles:

> That is a term which I have often used to describe the Egyptian character. It is supported by the disquisition (which Mr S [Salden] now proceeds to set forth) on their subscribing to a system of Baksheesh, their propensity to falsehood, their ability to bend with wind. Even the Khedive exhibits these traits – and that is why Lord Cromer will not deal with him.[327]

The critical Eurocentric philology through which Cromer's men evaluate the Egyptians typifies Said's critique in *Orientalism* (1978). As he explains, "'Orientals' for all practical purposes were a Platonic essence, which any Orientalist (or ruler of Orientals) might examine, understand, and expose'.[328] Considered in the terms of this essentialist stereotype, Mr Salden's opinion comes to emulate Lord Cromer's account of Oriental character in *Modern Egypt*. As Said explains, in 'the thirty-fourth chapter of his two-volume work *Modern Egypt*, the magisterial record of his experience and achievement, Cromer puts down a sort of persona canon of Orientalist wisdom'.[329]

Mr Boyle's opinion of the Egyptian nationalists also serves to confirm Cromer's assessments. He describes them as 'talking classes' or 'the effendis' who merely talk and do nothing to develop their nation and change their political present.[330] Yet, Mr HB's opinion comes as a great exaggeration when he claims that those *effendis* or (the talking class) who constitute the rising nationalism in Egypt at the time are 'not real Egyptians and their opinions can be therefore be safely neglected'.[331] And even Mr Willcocks, who protests against the statement which approves of the Egyptian fellah's miserable conditions under Cromer's rule—implicitly if not directly stated—also typifies Cromer's radical opinions about the Egyptian character. Anna writes, 'he said he didn't believe we intended to leave

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[327] Ibid.
[328] Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 38.
[329] Ibid, pp. 38-39. Said gives a detailed illustration of how the Egyptian as an Arab character might look like in terms of such fixed essence: 'Orientals or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, 'devoid of energy and initiative,' much given to "fulsome flattery," intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; Orientals cannot walk on either a road or a pavement (their disordered minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately, that roads and pavements are made for walking); Orientals are inveterate liars, they are "lethargic and suspicious," and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race.'
[330] *The Map of Love*, p.79.
[331] Ibid, p. 98.

Egypt when we have finished reforming her – or we would be doing more to educate the people that they might be able to govern themselves'.[332]

All the above statements on a *fixed* idea of Egyptian character work to suppress the national liberation movement against the British colonial project in Egypt that was constituted by those 'effendis', and some other national and religious figures by denigrating the national character of the Egyptians. Said draws the attention of the readers of *Orientalism* to a colonial strategy that forecloses any form of national resistance by claiming the inferiority of 'the subject race', when he references 'Cromer's total opposition to Egyptian nationalism'. As Said goes to explain in reference to such historical examples:

> How much "serious consideration" the ruler ought to give proposals from the subject race was illustrated in Cromer's total opposition to Egyptian nationalism. Free native institutions, the absence of foreign occupation, self-sustaining national sovereignty. These unsurprising demands were consistently rejected by Cromer who asserted unambiguously that "future of Egypt … lies not in the direction of narrow nationalism, which will embrace native Egyptians … but rather in that of an enlarged cosmopolitanism".[333]

What is more, those critical and yet philological debates get Anna in a state of quandary and confusion about who or what makes an Egyptian. The national-religious discourse which informs the language used to describe the Egyptian character is the same critical vocabulary that she previously could not figure out in England.[334] In this way, the dividing line between the national and religious character of the Egyptians becomes blurred. As Anna writes:

> Mr S … there is no such thing as an Egyptian, he avows: it is only the Copts who can lay claim to being descendants of the Ancients, and they are few and without influence. For all Mohammedans, they are Arabs and are to be found in Egypt through relatively recent historical circumstance.[335]

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[332] Ibid, p. 99. See also *Orientalism*, p. 34. Said overstates Cromer's knowledge of Egypt as follows: 'England knows Egypt; Egypt is what England knows; England knows that Egypt cannot have self-government; England confirms that by occupying Egypt; for the Egyptians, Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs; foreign occupation therefore becomes "the very basis" of contemporary Egyptian civilization; Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation.'

[333] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 37.

[334] *The Map of Love*, p. 31. This recalls the situation in Sir Wyndham's house when Anna hears from Caroline Bourke that Sir William Butler tells General Kitchener upon his arrival to Dover, 'if you do not bring down a curse on the British Empire for what you have been doing, there is no truth in Christianity.'

[335] *The Map of Love*, p. 98.

A similar meaning is asserted by Temple Gairdner, an English missionary who works to convert the 'native Mohammedans in Cairo'. Anna concludes her writing on this English character by stating that both she and Mrs. Butcher would not have liked to go further on the argument concerning the essence of the Egyptians, and whether they are Mohammedans or of Christian heritage if this is viewed from a 'historical' perspective[336]:

> It all ended in a friendly enough manner, though, for he declined to enter upon a discussion on theology but contented himself with saying that even if we looked at the matter from a wholly historical point of view, the entire edifice of Mohammedan belief is "in the face of Christianity" and that his wish was to "reclaim" for Christ souls that were His.[337]

In this way, Anna feels entrapped within a 'theoretical environment' similar to Sir Wyndham's house in England, where usually white, male interlocutors of the colonial elite are 'discoursing animatedly in a handsomely appointed saloon'.[338] By recording these conversations in her letters to Sir Charles, Anna can be seen to mimic a predetermined orientalist lexicon about Egyptian culture. Yet such a strategy is limited in so far as it fails to imagine an Arabic philological tradition that might question the Eurocentrism of humanist thought.

Indeed, Anna's confessions of her limitations with respect to her use of language and contact with Egyptians constitutes the core of her 'literary and historical fidelity'. Amal, accordingly, develops her reading of Anna's descriptions of Egypt as a step towards a more panoptic gaze beyond the English and the Egyptian national elites[339] she meets in the Khedive's palace and at the Ghezirah's club. Anna feels that the real Egypt is an ungraspable *essence*:

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[336] This fictional situation can recall a specific section in my introductory chapter where I discuss Talal Asad's position on Said's nationalism and how 'secular historicism' can resolve the tension in Said's thought between nationalism and religion on hand, and between secularism and religion on the other.

[337] *The Map of Love*, p. 92.

[338] Said, 'Representing the Colonized', in *Reflections,* pp. 293-316 (p. 298). As Said illustrates, 'The other meaning for "interlocutor" is a good deal less political. It derives from an almost entirely academic or theoretical environment […] the domesticated result brings to mind a number of fashionable theoretical correlatives, for example, Bakhtinian dialogism and heteroglossia. Jurgen Habermas's "ideal situation or Richard Rorty's picture (at the end of Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature) of philosophers discoursing animatedly in a handsomely appointed saloon". Said's connotations here on the 'saloon' motif are rather negative since he describes those interlocutors involving in such debates as "caricatural."'

[339] The Native notables and the Ulama are (Men of religion).

> And yet – I sit here in my room at Shepherd's Hotel possessed by the strangest feelings that still I am not in Egypt […] I have climbed the Pyramids and danced at the Khedive's Ball. I have visited the Bazaar and the churches and the mosques and witnessed the processions of Religious Orders and played croquet at the club at Ghezirah. I know a few words of the language and I can mark many streets by the houses of people with whom I am not acquainted, but there is something at the heart of it all which eludes me – something an estimation of which I felt in the paintings, the conversations in England, and which, now that I am here, seems far, far from my grasp.[340]

As the above extract suggests, Amal seeks a historical justification for Anna's use of an oriental vocabulary at this early stage in the narrative. She interprets all of Anna's preliminary visions as grounded in an orientalist vocabulary/philology, yet she estimates this limitation in terms of her 'historical' and 'literary fidelity' rather than being restricted by an orientalist gaze. Amal, as the contingent 'addressee' of Anna's letters, forensically reads Anna's words in order to rescue values and meanings 'from a native obscurity too dark and confused for easy acceptance'.[341] If Anna writes about Lord Cromer and his 'Enoch'[342], Mr Harry Boyle, the Oriental secretary, she also mentions in her letters the name of Mr Blunt who is described by his fellows as 'gone over' for his critical views which oppose the Empire.[343] Mr Boyle and Lord Cromer's men only speak a vernacular Arabic that Mr Barrington considers as a stumbling block that hinders these English fellows from understanding the reality of the 'native character'.[344] This limited grasp of Arabic raises important questions about how this Anglophone novel tries to convey a sense of Egyptian culture through the work of translation. How can the linguistic, generic, and narrative resources of the novel engage readers in the philological project of re-reading nationalist histories in ways that think through and beyond essentialist ideas of the past? And in what ways might Said's project of philological criticism help us to move beyond Orientalist ideas of a native culture (including ideas shaped by Orientalist translations)?

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[340] *The Map of Love*, p. 102.
[341] Said, *Joseph Conrad*, p. 10.
[342] *Literary means: walking with the Lord.*
[343] *The Map of Love*, p.70.
[344] Ibid, p. 71.

3.4.3 Philological Heroism: Philological Training, Philological Historicism, and Translation

Timothy Brennan is one of the most incisive literary critics to have drawn attention to the philological dimensions of Said's intellectual project, and to have considered how this project might engender a more nuanced critical reading of orientalism as a mode of critique of Western humanism.[345] More recently, Said's preoccupation with the critique of (Western) humanism draws the attention of his readers to his interest in philology, especially those critical essays in *The World, the Text, and The Critic*.[346] The point that Brennan wants to underline is that Said's understanding of (Western) humanism is obstructed since such scholars did not pay attention to Said's philological project.[347] Hayden White, among others, failed to notice 'Said's almost desperate efforts to portray the framework of philology […] as a model of intellectual adventure'.[348] One possible reading of *The Map of Love*, which liberates it from the genre of romance/baroque novel and orientalist clichés, is tackling Anna's letters from Egypt as an 'intellectual adventure' where an upper middle-class woman writes against the grain. The implied reader of the novel can benefit from Amal's philological analysis of Anna's letters and private papers, whose reading can be seen to represent 'a portrait of the intellectual' that Said 'was forcing himself to become'.[349]

We can infer from this that Said's early reading of Conrad's letters is highly suggestive of such an 'intellectual adventure' that can also be read as a motif which explains how a writer as well as his (critical) reader can challenge any language that is grounded in nativist modes of thinking:

> The real adventure of Conrad's life is the effort to rescue significance and value in their
> struggling forms from within his own existence. Just as he had to rescue his experience
> for the satisfaction of his consciousness, to believe that he had put down the important

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[345] Brennan, 'Places of Mind' in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* ed. by Sprinker, p. 77. Many literary scholars override or at least overlook Said's debt to philology as a cultural critic. As Brennan contends, 'one notices only belatedly that many of the essay selections […] in the early 1980s were originally written as much as a decade earlier.'

[346] Brennan, 'Places of Mind' in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* ed. by Sprinker, p. 77. As Brennan pinpoints, 'this humanism in the mid- 1970s could have helped set up Said's evident political leadership at that time […].'

[347] As Brennan indicates, 'Said dedicated the last hundred pages of the book to explaining the conflictual understanding of the term.'

[348] Brennan, 'Places of Mind' in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* ed. by Sprinker, p. 77.

[349] Ibid. As Brennan argues, 'One could even say that most of Said's essays, poised on either side of the watershed year of *Beginnings* in 1975' […] 'were showing its excitement for philology.'

> parts of the truth he saw, so also his critic has to relive that rescue, without heroism,
> alas, but with equal determination.[350]

What Said elsewhere calls *philological heroism* can work as a critical term that positions Anna and Amal as a 'writer' and a 'reader who respectively benefit from an 'intellectual adventure'. Anna—through a historical consciousness of her limited critical vision on the Egyptian nationalism—and Amal—through her interpretation of Anna's dialogue with her own old self as a literary representation of her consciousness in the present—exemplify such 'intellectual adventure'. I argue that both Anna and Amal downplay the narration that is produced through the epistolary genre in an attempt to de-orientalize and/or de-essentialize those fixed and stereotypical cultural concepts generated in the first instance through colonial constructs, and subsequently through ideas of national culture that emulate these constructs.

It is tempting to read Anna's *life writing* and Amal's *writerly self contrapuntally* as two parallel modes that dramatize the transmission of writing, the act of reading, and the act of reading as re-writing across time and space. Yet if Anna and Amal's narratives are assembled in a *contrapuntal* relationship, this is not to suggest that they simply stand in opposition to each other. The literary voices of Anna Winterbourne and Amal al-Ghamrawi can be seen as complementary in the sense that both voices serve to criticise *fixed* ideas of the British Empire and the Egyptian nation respectively. Yet it is the discovery of Anna's letters that facilitates Amal's critical reading of Egypt's national past and its neo-imperial present. The narrative parallelism that is strongly implied in the act of placing the historically distinct narrative voices of Anna and Amal in *a contrapuntal* relationship is significant because it foregrounds how fixed ideas of religious and national cultural identity have been passed down across many generations.

Both Isabel's ethnographic research and Anna's observations on Egyptian conduct can be explained in terms of *a (neo)colonial encounter* that gives a historical, yet secular account of the passing down of essentialist modes of thinking and fixed cultural taboos across many generations since the beginning of the twentieth century. The new cultural narratives that are constituted through such

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[350] Said, *Joseph Conrad*, p. 10.

neo-colonial encounters can either provide the implied reader of the novel with a secular humanist critique of those old national narratives or merely reproduce neo-essentialist modes of thinking.

From a very specific point in the present, Amal draws an analogy between Anna's critical position and contemporary Americans, who are not able to synthesize a comprehensive vision of the Egyptians owing to linguistic restrictions and a lack of meaningful communication with Egyptian people:

> I read Anna's descriptions, and I read the memoirs and the accounts of these long-gone Englishmen, and I think of the officials of the American embassy and agencies today, driving through Cairo in their locked limousines with the smoked–glass windows, opening their doors only when they are safe inside their Marine-guarded compounds.[351]

Anna's description of the Egyptian way of life can be understood at its best in terms of a mere cartographic survey of a geographical landscape, rather than a rich, dynamic, and complex social space. Yet, against this fixed stereotypical image of Egypt drawn by an English woman as represented in her own edition of Thomas Cook's *Tourist Handbook*, Amal and Isabel's re-narrating of Anna's letters are interpreted as two postcolonial cultural encounters. Amal's mode of critical reading also stands in a relation of sharp contrast to Isabel's personal perspective, which seems to reinforce neo-orientalist modes of representing Egypt. While Isabel thinks 'in pictures'[352], Amal is preoccupied with Anna's words. The novel focalizes Amal's literary voice as a narrator who mediates Anna's visual modes of representation through her 'verbal habits', where the writing unravels more than one level of cultural representation. Unlike Isabel, who 'talks of making a film of Anna's life'[353], Amal objects to reproducing a fixed visual image that comes in Anna's copy of Cook's *Tourist Handbook*, as denoted by Isabel's mimetic oriental representation:

> The guidebook says at dawn its stones look like they're made of butter. It would be a great shot: a fairy-tale cake of a fort, creamy against the blue sea. You could even see it

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[351] *The Map of Love*, p. 70.
[352] *The Map of Love*, p. 16.
[353] Ibid, p. 64.

> from the sea to begin with, then swing around the boat docks-' [....] *I want to keep Anna for myself: I don't want her to be taken over by some actress.*[354]

Instead of projecting Anna's representation of Egypt in a series of one-shot cinematic images, as Isabel desires for her film, Amal gives different orders to Anna's life in Egypt. She mediates Anna's words in ways that exceed the linear order of a conventional narrative film script. She works to contextualize Anna's language at varied temporal occasions, and thus constructs the story for Isabel as multi-dimensional, as represented by the variety of Anna's found materials contained in the trunk. This mode of reading can also help to account for the ways in which Amal's philological historicism complicates the idea of making an inventory.

In a related discussion of contemporary epistolary narratives, Kauffman argues that 'the "specific reader within the correspondent's world" can be one of the writer's multiple selves. The exchange the writer desires may be with one (or more) of those selves, for epistolary narrative frequently fragments the self, and defamiliarizes the premises which have led us to conceive of it as fixed, unified, and coherent'.[355] In *The Map of Love*, this fragmentation of the self is used to stage wider questions about Anna's contestation of her past views (the national character of the Egyptians in correspondence with the idea of British Empire) that is revealed through her notes is also epitomised in her collection of Arabic and English newspaper cuttings, and a tapestry piece (A Pharonic image with a qur'anic verse in Arabic) that she weaves as her materialistic representation of her vision of Egypt. These historical traces provide Amal with varied sources for historical interpretation through which she constructs her own contemporary perspective on the Egyptian character.

Making an inventory as suggested by Anna's historical traces and as interpreted by Amal's reading methodologies seems particularly appropriate in a country like Egypt where multiple layers of history are deposited to form a coherent sense of national culture. Indeed, Isabel plans to visit Egypt to do her research on the Gregorian millennium where she believes it to be 'a really old country' when compared with the 'young' United States with the assistance of

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[354] Ibid, pp. 64-65; (emphasis is mine).
[355] Kauffman, *Special Delivery,* pp. 134-135.

Amal. The following quote emphasizes the appropriateness of the idea of 'inventory' for Isabel's research and Amal as her instructor and assistant:

> [...] Cairo is a city that doesn't force upon you some sort of already-existing totality [...] all kinds of histories, narratives, and presences intersect, coexist in what I suggest is a "natural" way [...] Cairo has come to symbolize for me, therefore, a much more attractive form of the way in which we can look at history, not necessarily to look at it as something neatly manageable by categories or by the inclusiveness of systems and totalizing processes, but rather through the inventory that can be reconstructed. Cairo requires a certain effort of reconstruction.[356]

As a native speaker of Arabic, Amal is positioned as a privileged focalizing character that is able to make sense of the different narrative threads that structure the novel. Amal seems to echo Isabel when she views Egypt as 'an exemplar of that tired phrase, 'the palimpsest that is Egypt'.[357] However, in contrast to Anna and Isabel, who are merely practising how to learn and use the Arabic language in order to be able to communicate with Egyptians, Amal's critical reading offers a palimpsestic perspective on Egypt's past and present by interweaving three stories: her own and those of Isabel and Anna. Moreover, as a native speaker of Arabic, Amal's ability to move between the cultural worlds of Arabic and English gives her a certain privileged insight into Anna's experience in Egypt. To further clarify this point it is helpful to consider Amal's role as a translator.

3.4.4   Philological Training: Anna as a Beginner

If Amal's conscious act of *narrating* Anna's story to Isabel entails the translation of the notes written in Arabic among Anna's belongings, such as those written by Layla al-Ghamrawi, Amal's grandmother, and Anna's sister-in-law, the very act of translation goes beyond the mere transference of the meaning of single words or phrases to Isabel. And if it is partially true that Isabel's poor Arabic is a central motive behind her quest of Amal's help, it is also true that the varied stages of Anna's writing and the variety of her belongings evoke a sense of complexity in Amal's task. Amal's understanding of Anna's words becomes as complex as the found objects she discovered in Anna's trunk:

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[356] Michael Sprinker and Jennifer Wicke, 'Interview with Edward Said', in Edward Said: A Critical Reader, ed. by Michael Sprinker (Cambridge & Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), pp. 221-64 (pp. 223-224).
[357] *The Map of Love*, p. 64.

> Day after day I unpacked, unwrapped, unravelled. I sat on the floor with Isabel [...] I
> translated for her passages from the Arabic newspaper cuttings [...] I took the journals
> papers into my bedroom and read and reread Anna's words. I almost know them by
> heart.[358]

As the reading of the above extract suggests, Amal's process of translation is
indeed essential for her assigned job. Nonetheless, her textual engagement
with the letters is not limited to providing Isabel with the literal meaning of
Anna's words. Amal translates for Isabel the notes and the newspaper
clippings that are written in Arabic. In so doing, she provides linguistic skills
that are indispensable for unravelling how Anna herself developed her skills
of learning the Arabic language. When Amal says, 'I almost know them by
heart,' she means that she gives such words a specific focus. She subjects
these words to an almost forensic level of analysis in order to 'know' and thus
reconstruct the personal history of Anna to Isabel. She observes the way Anna
calligraphes Arabic letters with a brush and ink on a 'bell-shaped candle-
shade of opaque glass'.[359] In the act of reading this time, Amal attempts to
stage Anna's development in her training to learn Arabic while the meaning
of the Arabic alphabets brushed on the lamp is presented as a subsidiary
matter. In this way, Amal tries to visualise for Isabel, and by extension for
readers of the novel, how Anna is making progress in learning Arabic:

> It was Anna's brush that, dipped in aquamarine ink, traced the cunning, curving
> letters: gliding with the stem of an "alef" bursting into flower, following the tail of "ya"
> as it erupts into a spray of fireworks that scatter the text with diacritics. She knew
> enough by then to make the characters, but she could not yet readily tell where one
> word ended and another began.[360]

The Arabic characters of the candle that Amal tries to figure out can stand for
Anna's material representation of her engagement in the Arabic language. Like
Vico, Amal follows a scientific reading model where she holds sway over every
detail in Anna's story. Accordingly, Amal's intellectual task can read as follows:

> [Amal] is able to postulate a primitive man who, like a child, made sounds that
> resembled his sense impressions as closely as possible. Each linguistic expression

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[358] *The Map of Love*, p. 11.
[359] Ibid, p. 80.
[360] Ibid, pp. 80- 81.

represents a beginning act of choice, of will, for in making a sound man is confirming a sense impression, becoming conscious of it.[361]

The language in which Anna writes her letters and notes also stages both the limitations and conditions of possibility for a cosmopolitan sensibility. In a discussion of Souief's use of Arabic in *The Map of* Love, Waïl Hassan contends that Soueif 'de-territorialize[s]'[362] the language of an Arabic context, as it is mediated by an English voice. In contrast, other critical readings[363] focus on the use of two languages as evidence for a form of linguistic hybridity that is generated and produced by Anna's engagement with the Egyptians. These studies approach the bilingualism in Soueif's text as a mode of hybridity engendered by 'transnational' rather than 'translational' literary representations. For instance, Albakry and Hancock (2008) claim that 'Soueif deploys Arabic in her narrative to possibly represent different aspects of linguistic and cultural norms of the Egyptian society'.[364] Waïl Hassan's study stands for a 'translational' approach whereby he categorizes The *Map of Love* as a kind of 'translational literature'. He goes on to explain that 'the language of these texts performs the act of crossing cultural borders. With regard to translation, this not only means that translation serves as a mode of communication, but the writer, him or herself, is a translator'.[365] Amal has attempted to facilitate Isabel's job by teaching her how 'roots' do work in the Arabic language; this form of linguistic pedagogy can also be read as a kind of 'reductionism', which Said criticizes in *Orientalism* (1978), and which generates an abstract language that seeks to fix a stereotype of Oriental character.[366] That is why Amal's critical reading supersedes Anna and Isabel's

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[361] Said, *Beginnings,* p. 364.

[362] Waïl S. Hassan, 'Agency and Translational Literature: Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love', PMLA*, 121.3 (May, 2006), pp. 753-768 ((pp. 16-17). Hasan explains that Soueif's text attends to 'cultural translation in the original itself, translational literature at once problematizes the notion of the original and stages what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe, in the context of minority literature, as the 'de territorialization of language."

[363] See for example, Amin Malak, 'Arab-Muslim Feminism and the Narrative of Hybridity: The Fiction of Ahdaf Soueif', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 20 (2000), pp. 140-183.

[364] Mohammed Albakry, and Patsy Hunter Hancock, 'Code switching in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love,' Language and Literature*, 17.3 (2008), 221–234.

[365] Waïl S. Hassan, 'Agency and Translational Literature: Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love,' PMLA*, 121.3 (May, 2006), p. 222.

[366] *Orientalism*, p. 150. As Said argues, 'What Renan and Sacy tried to do was to reduce the Orient to a kind of human flatness, which exposed its characteristics easily to scrutiny and removed from it its complicating humanity. In Renan's case, the legitimacy of his efforts was provided by philology, whose ideological tenets encourage the reduction of a language to its roots; thereafter, the

reading since the former draws upon a multi-layered history as it is embedded in the traces of Anna's life writing and found objects.

In his discussion of the position of philology in Said's critical oeuvre, Brennan contends, 'Formally and methodologically, Said observes that Schwab's philological training nudged him into the revelatory investigation of 'enormous unities' such as 'the Latin cultural *imperium*' and a tracing of their effects as they took textual body in subsequent ages'.[367] Brennan's account of Said's philological training has significant implications for my own reading of Amal's attempt to reconstruct Anna's intellectual formation in *The Map of Love*. Considered in the terms of this philological education, Amal's bilingualism helps her to literally dig up Anna's historical traces in Egypt as represented by the latter's understanding of the Arabic language; in the process of this archaeological/ philological inquiry, Amal's constructed narrative proves to be more palimpsestic than Anna's due to the agency of time. As Anna's notes on 10 February suggest, Anna shares her wish to visit her favourite church, *al-Mu'allaqat*, with Dean Butcher, who conceives the word as a signifier for the word 'Odes,' and thus interprets Anna's words as a desire 'to read the Mu'allaqat'.[368] Amal's comments on these notes are very significant for explaining her role as a translator who is quite familiar with Arabic. Amal gives Isabel the multiple meanings suggested via the root from which the word *al-Mu'allaqat* is mainly derived: "A, l, q": to become attached, to cling, also to become pregnant, to conceive, and in its emphatic form 'a, ll, q: to hang, to suspend, but also to comment'.[369] Here, Amal is of course challenging a fixed and yet reduced meaning, as suggested by the Arabic root of the word (which is the core of Said's criticism of the works of Oriental philologists). Nevertheless, her textual intervention with such a linguistic structure that Anna raises in her notes recalls additional cultural meanings. If Anna and Isabel show interest in learning Arabic—and even if it is a serious desire—only Amal as a native speaker could come to terms with

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philologist finds it possible to connect those linguistics roots, as Renan and others did, to race, mind, character, and temperament at their roots.'

[367] Brennan, 'Places of Mind' in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* ed. by Sprinker, p. 79.

[368] *The Map of Love*, p. 90. As Dean Butcher explains to Anna, 'Odes' or '*al Mu'allaqat*' are the most famous in Arabic poetry from the days before Islam.

[369] Ibid, p. 90.

the Egyptian character as it is embedded in the cultural codes represented by their use and misuse of language.

As a case in point, Amal focuses on what Anna mentions in her notes (25 January 1901) on the Virgin Mary and how the Egyptian natives (Muslims as well as Christians) have continued to conceive of her as an icon of protection and peace. Anna's testing of Mary's eyes comes about as part of her secular reading of that religious Christian icon. As Amal reads, 'the Virgin's eyes move to follow you wherever you go, but I put this to a practical test — as much as I felt was proper in church — and I did not think her eyes followed me'.[370] Amal comments on this practical test by stating that she also had done the same thing 'once on a school trip'.[371] In addition, Amal reflects further on the place by repeating what the tour guide had said: 'the wooden rafters of the ceiling symbolised Noah's Ark and the eight columns Noah's family [...] the thirteen marble columns supporting the pulpit were for Christ and the twelve disciples, and the one black column in their midst was Judas Iscariot. I felt then that I understood the building better'.[372] At the time of reading Anna's record, Amal considers the guide's explanation a mere 'starting point' that needs further investigation. Such awareness accounts for another methodology that Amal adopts to make an inventory of from the traces of Anna's writings. This method can be read as a form of 'metatextual travel,'[373] whereby Amal (re)examines the position of religion in the cultural Egyptian narratives as Anna observes, but this time from a contemporary perspective as her own 'point of departure' or 'beginning'.

In an attempt to (re)contextualize Anna's words through which she records her impressions on *al-Mu'allaqat* church, Amal accompanies Isabel to the same place that Anna visited in 1901. Both women repeat Anna's test of examining if Mary's eyes *really* follow them as an evidence of protection and guidance. After the passage of many years since Amal's first visit to *al-*

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[370] Ibid, p. 87.
[371] Ibid, p. 120.
[372] Ibid.
[373] See, Eda Dedebas Dundar, 'Haunted Past: Spatial, temporal, and Metatextual Travel in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of love*,' in *Adapting Shahrazad's Odyssey: The Female Wanderer and Storyteller in Victorian and Contemporary Middle Eastern Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 73-93. Dundar discusses Amal's revisting of Anna's places in Egypt in terms of a 'metatextual travel.'

Mu'allaqat, she discovers that the religious interpretation continues to dominate over the cultural narrative firstly as it is represented in the tour guide's talk to the students and secondly as his peer puts it in the second visit. However, as Amal distinguishes between the two sayings, the interpretation has been slightly transformed to cope with worldly political conflicts (such as racism). Amal retells and then interprets the tour guide's words:

> The pillars supporting the pulpit [...] are for the disciples. They are in pairs because Christ sent them out to preach the Word in pairs. And the black pillar in the middle is because the Word came to save black and white alike. Judas Iscariot has made way for political correctness.[374]

In this way, via her contemporary reading of Anna's letters and notes and via her reassessment of the place of religion in the contemporary cultural narratives, Amal comes to realize that religion has continued to shape the mindset of the Egyptians (Muslims and Christians alike). Since Anna at her early period of residence draws upon an English perspective that uses religion to know the reality of the Egyptian character, she comes across the Egyptians as fixed essence: either as 'Coptic' or as Arab 'Mohammedans' (as once suggested by Mr Salden). Only Anna's close friend Mrs Butcher shows that she is able to think beyond essences, especially when she emphasizes the 'similarities' of the religion of ancient Egyptians with 'Christianity'[375]. This is not only because she understands the Egyptian's religion as an ancient belief, but also because cultural rituals have been slowly transformed across the ages.[376] Mrs. Butcher's consciousness of the natives' national identity comes through their use of language[377] as cultural codes and not through religious essence. Only when the language that people use is kept safe from 'corruption' does the cultural meaning that words carry out continue to survive.[378]

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[374] *The Map of Love*, p. 120.

[375] Ibid, p. 89.

[376] Ibid. As Anna mentions in her letter to Sir Charles, Mrs. Butcher explains that 'The Ancient Egyptian, like the modern Christian, knew that he lived in the sight of God, and under the shadow of eternal wings'

[377] Ibid. Mrs. Butcher, as Anna writes to Sir Charles, has been living in Egypt for many years and that 'she speaks the language and appears to get on well with the native people and is quite free from any rigidity of mind that holds the most generous opinions.'

[378] Soueif, *Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground* (Anchor Books, 2004), p. 15. Soueif quoted the following: 'Almost 300 years ago Giambattista Vico pointed out that the first symptom of the barabarisation of thought is the corruption of language.' See also *Mezzaterra*, p. 16; As Soueif contends, 'As for hatred, a 'secular' Muslim cannot, by definition, hate a Christian on the grounds of religion.'

If it is partially true that Amal translates for Isabel some unfamiliar Arabic words (especially the use of vernacular words) such as 'imshi' and 'baksheesh'[379], which Anna uses repeatedly in her letters and notes, Amal's textual role goes beyond simply translating such exotic words to Isabel. Amal explains such words in terms of 'philological training' that Anna follows to understand Arabic as her vehicle to communicate with the natives and immerse herself in Egyptian daily life. Anna's philological training is correlated with her understanding of the cultural codes behind the new words she is learning. For instance, when she expressed her desire to learn how to 'bargain', which is not a mere linguistic skill to buy goods more cheaply than is usually expected, but it is considered an intrinsic 'cultural code' among the Egyptians.[380] As Anna writes to Sir Charles, 'I do not know the proper price of things and I have heard that you have to bargain and I have no experience in conducting that transaction'.[381] Thus, as John Mullan contends, translation 'makes the crossing between languages the very substance of the narrative'.[382] He argues that *The Map of Love* highlights 'this lexical exotica, the unfamiliar terms for unfamiliar clothes or food or cultural rituals,'[383] which can permeate the Anglophone novel. However, he also avows that Soueif's mastery of two languages and their cultural codes goes beyond translation from one language to another.

3.4.5   Anna's Deep Immersion: Linguistic Structures and Cultural Codes

Anna's marriage to Sharif Pasha al-Baroudi demarcates an essential stage in Anna's comprehension of Arabic, which is also synchronized with a nuanced understanding of the national character of the Egyptians via an encounter with the cultural codes of Arabic language as it is used by Egyptians. Anna's access to the Egyptian nationalist public sphere as represented by her husband's house—emulating Andrew Rubin's words—'involves what Said calls a critical

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[379] These words are the only recurrent ones in Lord Cromer's conversations with the Egyptians. They literally mean, 'go away' and 'tips' respectively.
[380] Brennan, 'Places of Mind' in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* ed. by Sprinker, p. 79. As Brennan pinpoints, 'only by giving authority to certain 'agreed-upon codes of understanding' the cultural critique can be fulfilled.
[381] *The Map of Love*, pp.67-68. Anna writes about this to Sir Charles on 8 November 1900.
[382] John Mullan, 'On *The Map of Love* by Ahdaf Soueif Week One: Languages', *The Guardian* (15 November 2008) <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/nov/15/the-map-of-love-ahdaf-soueif> [accessed 9 August 2017] (para. 1 of 7).
[383] Ibid.

consciousness and worldly knowledge of the historical contingencies of material and textual evidence and the authority upon which they depend'.[384] As the interpreter translates Sharif Pasha's words to Lord Cromer who protests against Anna's marriage from an Egyptian nationalist, 'The Basha [*sic*] is certain *the circles she will be moving in* will give her all the consideration due to her rank and to her position as his wife'.[385] From the first moment in Anna's marriage, she has been able to recognize a constellation of national Egyptian elites[386] that shapes Anna's critical consciousness of the Egyptian nationalism not as viewed by Lord Cromer and her English compatriots, but from an Egyptian perspective as embedded in the philological debates these national figures provoke. That is why Amal interprets Anna's literary historiography after her marriage as shaped not via the conventions of literary realism or colonial philology, but rather via the exigencies of an emerging national philology, which stands in opposition to what Timothy Mitchell has called the colonial 'machinery of truth'.[387]

At this particular stage of Anna's education in the language and culture of Egyptian society, she understands the dynamics of colonial philology but from an Egyptian national perspective. She understands it in terms of how the Egyptian nationalists resist the colonial claims discussed and explained in terms of 'the power to colonize'—the critical statement by which Timothy Mitchell introduces his study.[388] More precisely, Anna's notes at this stage attest to the place of modernity and of course religion in the critique of Egyptian nationalism. As the English ruler in Egypt at that period, Lord Cromer claims that Egyptians are not able to 'govern themselves', and that only British rule can show them the light of

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[384] Andrew Rubin, 'Techniques of Trouble: Edward Said and the Dialectics of Cultural Philology', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102.4 (Fall 2003), pp. 861-876 (p. 865). As Rubin discusses the function of philology in Said's works, 'Orientalism and Said's other works like Culture and Imperialism are thus not simply concerned with activating the cultural politics of these lapses and silences and thereby undermining the historical and cultural forces of the interdependent and dominating relationship between knowledge and power. Making these silences resonate is not merely a question of access to the institutions of public and social authority that help to enable it, but also involves what Said calls a critical consciousness.'

[385] *The Map of Love*, p. 322.

[386] Ibid, 331. Amal reads in her grandmother Layla al-Ghmarawi a List of famous nationalist figures who attended Anna's wedding: Mustafa Bey Kamel, Qasim Bey Amin, Muhammad Bey Farid, Sheikh Muhammad Abdu, Sheikh Ali Yusuf and sheikh Rashid Rida and many others.

[387] See Timothy Mitchell, 'The Machinery of Truth', in *Colonizing Egypt*, (Berkeley & Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 128-160.

[388] Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, p. ix.

secular modernity.[389] He thus castigates the political agency of the national movement or any aspect of armed resistance for being 'fanatical in nature'.[390] Being irrational or anti-modernist has been at the core of Cromer's evaluation of any political or social performance executed by the nationalists or 'the talkative class', as he calls them. However, against Cromer's representation of the Egyptians in general and/or the nationalists in particular, Anna's conception of the national character of the Egyptians demonstrates how the critical and philological debates among the nationalists who gather at her husband's house question and challenge the ideas that were promoted by Cromer's rhetoric of colonial modernity. These nationalist intellectuals mainly discuss the question of education, including the establishment of the Egyptian university and the provision for teaching girls. My focus here will be on establishing a school of art as an exemplary model of secular modernity that the colonial project claims to inculcate among the Egyptians before the British can leave Egyptians to face their destiny independently.

The way Anna approaches the Arabic language as it is used by the Egyptians helps her to develop a more nuanced vision of the Egyptian nationalism. Anna's notes disclose a series of discussions about the mechanisms of modernizing Egypt that is grounded neither in religious nor in secular philology. The national elites use a secular vocabulary that criticizes traditional modes of thinking as a regressive force that hampers the modernization of the Egyptian nation. And yet some of them still seek the guarantees of a fixed religious ideas that have been transmitted via religious texts and *fatwa*.[391] The division among nationalists—as Anna highlights in her letter to Sir Charles (30 December 1901)—hints at wider disagreements over socio-legal, textual, and historical conceptions of religious authority:

> [...] although all are united in their desire of the British, some believe it can be done now, while others believe it can be done gradually to get rid through a strengthening of the national institutions. And there are other divisions: people who would have tolerated the establishment of secular education, or the gradual disappearance of the veil, now fight these developments because they feel a need to hold on their traditional

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[389] *The Map of Love*, p. 405. In the epigraph to Chapter 25, Soueif overstates Cromer's opinion by quoting him directly as follows: 'The want of gratitude displayed by a nation to its alien benefactors is almost as old as history itself.'
[390] Ibid, p. 412. As Anna writes to Mr James Barrington on 15 May 1906, 'Cromer chooses to represent the political unrest [in South Africa] as fanatical in nature.'
[391] Fatwa, means a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority.

> values in the face of the occupation. While the people who continue to support these changes have constantly to fight the suspicion that they are somehow in league with the British.[392]

As the above extract implies, and against Cromer and his men's claims, the popular insistence on a religious interpretation among nationalist leaders is a political response to the British colonial occupation in Egypt and not vice versa. Yet, the secular idea is invoked as timely in order to challenge anti-modernist claims that have always acted as a pretext for the British occupation. As Talal Asad contends, secular thinking has a particular significance in the context of colonial Egypt. Asad is particularly concerned with 'cultural change and Islamic reform, and the importance of the modern state for [the articulation of] these developments'; early twentieth-century colonial Egypt provides a particularly useful case study for investigating these concerns because of 'the complex struggle for power between different kinds of agent—especially colonizing Europeans and resisting Egyptians'.[393] However, Asad's purpose behind selecting certain texts for his inquiry goes beyond merely describing the history of 'social and legal reform'.[394] Rather, he places specific emphasis on 'the arguments they display'.[395] Asad's discursive analysis of the ways in which debates about secularism were framed in colonial and nationalist narratives of secularism is instructive for making sense of the mediation of secularism in *The Map of Love*. Through her recurrent close listening to the arguments between the guests in her house in Egypt, Anna begins to regard the national cause in a rather different way. As she describes this new mode of historical consciousness, 'I have begun to have some understanding of the complexity of things here [...]'.[396] Anna begins to view the national movement as embedded in the political agency of the Egyptians that is constituted through the textual authority of religion.

The Map of Love provides a good exemplary model for the Anglophone reader of how secular or religious modes of thinking can act through the use and

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[392] *The Map of Love*, p. 384.

[393] Talal Asad, 'Reconfiguration of Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt,' in *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, and modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) pp. 205-256 (208-209.

[394] Ibid, p. 209. Asad focuses on reading the report on the reform of the sharia court system written by the highly influential Islamic reformer Muhammad Abdu in 1899 to examine the ways in which it reflects the new spaces of a modernizing state and does the same for Qasim Amin.

[395] Ibid.

[396] *The Map of Love*, p. 383. At the beginning of the same letter she sent to Sir Charles on (30 December 1900).

misuse of language. Anna writes in her notes (17 December 1901) of a detailed *fatwa* from Imam Muhammad 'Abdu on how the use of language in the modern ages differently from the ancestors' can generate a different jurisdictional statement. As the letter from Muhammad 'Abdu suggests, philological historicism plays a crucial rule in liberating religious terms from a fixed meaning attributed to the time of Prophet Muhammad in order to re-adopt it to secular and worldly circumstances in the present. Down below is a copy of a letter, a *fatwa* that Muhammad 'Abdu provides for approving the constitution of a school of arts. As the letter discloses, the act in itself cannot be prohibited in religious terms only because of the cultural restrictions imposed by a specific use of a word such 'image-makers' that had been detested at the time of the Prophet Muhammad:

> Painting is a kind of visual poetry as poetry is a kind of verbal painting. If you ask me about the Prophetic Tradition 'Those who will be most severely tormented on the Day of Judgement are the image-makers', I would say that this Tradition comes from the day of idolatry, when images were as empty entertainment or with the purpose of setting them up in shrines to worship and implore. If both motives are absent and painting or sculpture is attended by a seriousness of purpose, then the representation of the human or the animal form is of the same standing as the representation of flowers and other plants which we find decorating the margins of the Qur'an itself since ancient times. On the whole I would regard serious art as a means to elevate the emotions and educate the spirit – [397]

Egyptian society at the beginning of the twentieth century had not identified with the idea of 'secularism' in its familiar sense since 'secularism did not exist in Egypt prior to modernity'.[398] What happens in this *fatwa*, cannot be considered as an instance of what Asad calls the 'gradual narrowing of *sharia* jurisdiction [or] restriction of religious law' which draws upon the 'importation of European legal codes'.[399] Instead, the language used in jurisdictional statements such as the *fatwa* above mediates the religious vocabulary to produce a form of new judgement that is neither based in religious nor a secular vocabulary. Indeed, the language that Muhammad 'Abdu uses in the above extract draws on the textual authority of traditional knowledge (here is Prophetic *Sunnah*); nevertheless, he distinguishes

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[397] Ibid, p. 364.

[398] Asad, 'Reconfiguration' in *Formations of the secular,* pp. 205-256 (p. 207). As he traces back the origin of the term in Arabic language, 'the verbal form 'to secularize' had no single Arabic equivalent. It is only very recently that the verb 'almana was invented by working backward from the abstract noun '*almaniyyah*'. The word yields the abstract noun '*almaniyyah* to mean "secularism" or "laicism."

[399] Ibid, p. 208.

between the worldly use of expressions such as 'image-makers' and their original use as a negative form of religious idolatry. When Egyptian nationalism is reframed in the terms of such a new vocabulary, it also provides social and educational reform with a significant linguistic dimension. In this way, the reader is able to re-evaluate the political authority of the dawning Egyptian nationalism in terms of 'the use of words' that either approves or disapproves of the secular formations within the project of modernizing Egypt.[400]

The political agency and/or resistance strategies either radical (as in armed resistance) or gradual as in the case of social and political reform are informed by the use and misuse of words. Timothy Mitchell examines the political authority that is 'produced and generated through the language of representation', and which colonial power works 'to replace'. He thus tries to address 'the political crisis' represented by anti-colonial nationalism, as 'a crisis found in the misuse and misunderstanding of words'.[401] He draws attention to *Eight Words,* a book that traces nationalist thinking as it is reflected through eight words.[402] This emphasis given to the meaning of words accounts for the role of translation as a main determining factor in the (im)possibility of secular formations.[403]

As we have already seen in the previous chapter on *Granada,* the use of miscontextualized narratives guides each of the novel's focalized characters through a specific, yet rigid political strategy of defense against the Castilian invasion. The novel reaches its climax when the two focalizing male characters, Hasan and Saad, argue over the definition of the meaning of protection as well as cultural continuity with regard to their hermeneutic interpretation of Islamic sources on survival and self-protection. These sources include Qur'anic verses and authoritative jurisdictional ethics. Their critical and cultural debates in the novel dislocate and miscontextualize the use of religious terms by offering another

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[400] Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, p. 131.
-See Roger Allen, "The Critical Tradition," *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 238-260. In chapter seven in this book, Roger pinpoints the function of philology in the development of Arabs' critical tradition/ Critical reading.
[401] Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, p. 132.
[402] *The Essay on Eight Words (Risalat al-kalim al-thaman) …* by Husayn al-Marsafi, the senior professor at Dar-al-Ulum, the *ecole normale* in Cairo to produce teachers for the new government schools, who was among the most prominent of the established scholars and teachers of his time. *The Eight Words are:* Nation, Homeland, Government, Justice, Oppression, Politics, Liberty, and Education.
[403] Asad, 'Reconfiguration' in *Formations of the secular,* pp.205-256(p. 207). As Asad indicates, "The response of Egyptians to the concept of secularism, their attempt to further it or attack it, was mediated by this work of translation."

interpretation, which is different from its original use. In this regard, we can observe that *The Map of Love,* like *Granada,* stages the misuse of the Islamic past (*turath*) as a form of collective self-deception that shapes nationalist ideas of political agency and resistance in the present.

3.5   The Knitting Machine: Anna's Representation of Egypt

Towards the end of the novel, Anna constructs her own vision of the Egyptian character that she has once failed to figure out in terms of the colonial philology. The new vocabulary of modern nationalism that aimed to reconfigure law, ethics, and religious authority guides Anna to rethink differently from a previous stage in Egypt when her historical consciousness has been primarily shaped by colonial views. In the novel, the use of such a language becomes one of the defining features of national reformers such as Muhammad Abdu and Qasim Amin, among others.

Amal observes this noticeable shift in Anna's historical consciousness that she temporally demarcates by 'that day Anna closes the secret blue book and returns to the big, handsome green volume'.[404] At this point in Anna's narrative, her sense of self seems to have changed significantly. As Amal remarks, Anna's letters to Sir Charles and Caroline had been in decrease—the observation that might account for Anna approaching a satisfactory degree of subjectivity:

> Anna breaks off. She feels too false writing glibly to her beloved Sir Charles about the progress she makes with her Arabic [....] And yet, the truth is that for the last two months. As her life in Cairo became more and more real to her, it has seemed to me that Sir Charles and Caroline and her home in London have receded in mind'.[405]

The formation of Anna's political consciousness is not only signified by her independent understanding of the colonial and national position in Egypt. Anna also seeks to find an aesthetic form that is appropriate to represent this sense of consciousness. Amal turns to examine a piece of tapestry: a triptych that stands for Anna's materialist representation of her own vision of Egypt. What is significant about this tapestry is Anna's conjoining of linguistic and visual images. As Anna puts it:

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[404] *The Map of Love*, p. 319.
[405] Ibid, p. 309.

> [...] it shall be my contribution to the Egyptian renaissance, for it shall depict the Goddess Isis, with her brother consort the God Osiris and between them the infant Horus, and above them a Qur'anic verse—my husband will choose an appropriate one for me in time.[406]

Anna's peculiar representation as such speaks to the new mode of secular thinking adopted via the new national vocabulary discussed above. The figuration of an idea of Egyptian culture in Anna's tapestry can be interpreted not in terms of a fixed essence, but rather via a secular vision, which represents Egypt's palimpsestic history: Pharaonic, Arabic, and Islamic. This multi-layered representation of Egypt comes through an aesthetic education. 'Preach weaving,'[407] as Anna writes in a letter to Sir Charles, in which she tries to describe her 'metaphysical' vision.

Anna's tapestry and her vision of an aesthetic education that preaches weaving serves to evoke a powerful metaphor of the literary text as textile. To clarify the significance of this trope it is well to recall the etymological connection between the text and textile (*OED*). Implicit in this idea of the text as textile is an idea of the writer as artist or weaver—an association that can be traced back to Homer's framing of Penelope's weaving on her loom in the *Odyssey*. Significantly, this metaphor also stands in sharp contrast to Joseph Conrad's mechanical metaphor of existence as a 'perceptionless knitting machine'. As Said suggests in his commentary on Conrad's letters, this mechanical metaphor of reality as a product that is manufactured by a knitting machine of which the public is largely unconscious or oblivious has contributed to a sense of alienation under capitalist modernity. In Said's analysis, this mechanical metaphor of the real also helps to shed light on the politics of Conrad's literary style. By trying to represent the real in a way that made the reading public aware of how predominant notions of truth, perception, and individualism are increasingly manufactured, Conrad sought to find a literary form that would encourage readers to recognise and question the fabricated nature of the real. Considered in relation to Cromer's metaphor of the machinery of colonial government in *Modern Egypt*, Conrad's metaphor of a 'perceptionless knitting machine' may help to illuminate the anti-imperial politics of Conrad's fictional writing in novellas such as *Heart of Darkness*. By questioning the myths of the civilising mission in King Leopold's Belgian Congo through a

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[406] Ibid, p. 403.
[407] Ibid, p. 385.

writing style that questions the very authority of linguistic description, *Heart of Darkness* invites readers to interrogate the truth claims of colonial discourse. A detailed consideration of Conrad's fiction is clearly beyond the scope of this chapter and thesis. Suffice it to say that there are suggestive parallels to be drawn between Conrad's reflections on the politics of anti-imperial aesthetics and those of Anna in *The Map of Love*.

If, as Said suggests, the period from 1896 to 1912 witnessed a noticeable shift in Conrad's way of thinking about the relationship between the author, the artwork, and the real, in which 'permanent objective reality or truth becomes totally a function of individuality',[408] Anna's vision of an aesthetic education at the end of *the Map of Love* can also be seen to challenge conventional ideas of literary realism which indirectly aid and abet the project of imperial rule in Egypt. Indeed, Anna's vision of the national project has the potential to alter, transform, and perhaps even decolonize the minds and imaginations of Egyptians through an aesthetic education that challenges the intellectual rules and mechanical norms of colonial and orientalist philology.

Anna's involvement in the act of translation and her pedagogical role in educating women also guides the reader of Soueif's novel to understand how the political agency of women is a crucial part of the national project. Indeed, it is this gendered dimension of Anna's contribution to the nationalist project, and by extension *The Map of Love* as a whole, that distinguishes the novel from Said's anti-essentialist conception of a secular anti-colonial nationalism. By engaging in a public debate with Egyptian women about the social condition of women's lives, Anna can certainly be seen to contest the patriarchal norms of the colonial public sphere that had hitherto restricted her voice and agency. In this sense, one might argue that her participation in an emerging national public sphere also symbolises her sense of personal fulfilment. Yet to read *The Map of Love* exclusively in these terms—as a *bildungsroman*, or a novel of intellectual and cultural self-formation— would be to ignore the wider political implications of Anna's philological and aesthetic education.

By the end of the novel, Anna is able to communicate and interact with Egyptians by using formal Arabic. She is not limited to the vernacular language

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[408] Said, *Joseph Conrad*, p. 40.

used by characters such as Mr Boyle.[409] For the first time, she approaches national issues with a very sophisticated linguistic understanding of Arabic, which includes an understanding of the etymology of Arabic words and phrases. This philological understanding stands in sharp contrast to the poverty of colonial philology, which Timothy Mitchell has discussed in his analysis of British colonial governmentality in Egypt, and which is also satirised in *The Map of Love* through the manufacturing of a forged Arabic letter that is circulated by the British colonial authorities in order to reinforce the case for further military support to boost Cromer's waning political authority.

In an account of the linguistic education policies in British colonial Egypt, Timothy Mitchell elaborates on how a colonial philology was developed in order to more effectively know and control the Egyptian population. As Mitchell explains, 'Linguistic meaning was to be found [...] neither within the material of the words themselves nor simply within the mind of the individual. It lays outside both, as a "structure" with an "ideal existence"'.[410] In Mitchell's analysis, colonial philology held that it was possible to access the epistemological framework of Egyptian culture by studying its linguistic structures. As Mitchell proceeds to elaborate, this approach to language drew on the work of the nineteenth-century French comparative linguist, Michel Bréal's theory of linguistic 'structure'. In a theory that prefigured the work of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, Bréal posited that language was a system of signs with no inherent meaning or value, except as an arbitrary system of signification, which referred to an external semantic field; by studying this arbitrary signifying system, Bréal argued that it was possible to access a 'larger abstraction — a people's mentality, its way of thinking and feeling, its culture'.[411]

In *The Map of Love*, this attempt to colonize the Egyptian mindset through systematic language study is called into question through a failed attempt by the British colonial authorities to produce a linguistic representation that tries to emulate the Egyptians' way of thinking, as it is imagined in the Orientalist discipline of colonial philology. In an attempt to counter and suppress the political

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[409] As I have explained earlier in this chapter, one of the critique against Mr Boyle that he is only good at vernacular Arabic.

[410] Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, p. 141.

[411] Ibid. 'linguistic structure' is a form, something unique to a particular people. It is something beyond vocabulary used to analyse its grammar and to trace the words back to their etymological values so as to understand people's way of thinking and feeling.

activities of the national movement, a translated copy of a fabricated Arabic letter (presumably forged by Boyle, the Oriental Secretary) was sent to the Foreign Office in England to support Lord Cromer's request for military reinforcements. Anna received a copy of the translated letter from Mr Barrington, who was suspicious of whether the letter, which could be read as a codified plan for an uprising in Egypt, was authentic. Upon Mr Barrington's request, Anna translates the letter into French to Sharif Pasha to decide if there is a real possibility of an Egyptian revolution. Despite Anna's awareness that she is not translating from the original language, her husband insists, 'It is still nonsense'.[412] Therefore, a translation into Arabic to detect the original meaning is undertaken as a follow-up step to Anna's initial translation.

This fabricated letter acts as a metafictional literary device that discloses a plethora of facts about the colonial power and the Egyptian nationalism from a philological perspective. *Firstly*, while the colonial power seeks a linguistic representation to impose its sovereignty over the Egyptians by claiming a planned Egyptian revolution, the misuse or the absence of Arabic linguistic 'structures' as indicative of the natives' way of thinking culminates in a rather abstract language that tries to relegate the Egyptian population to a fixed cultural category or essence. In a seminar-like meeting, Sharif Pasha discusses the letter with his nationalist compatriots. All agree that the letter is either written by 'a foolish Arab' or 'an ignorant English man who imagines he knows how Arabs think'.[413] Nevertheless, they have no doubt about how the British authorities in London will interpret or rather misinterpret the letter. As Sharif Pasha puts it: 'They will read "camels" and "God is generous" and "odours of blessings" and they will say fanatical Arabs and send the troops'.[414] *Secondly*, proposing a counter-political action to such intrigue by publishing the fabricated letter in London provokes many linguistic challenges. While the suggestion of publication comes as a logical panacea to end the ongoing political disputation about the genuine meaning of the letter, this proposition proves unattainable. As Ya'qub Pasha Artin explains:

> It would be a very esoteric discussion [...] points of language, imagery. We would have
> to imagine what Mr Boyle wished the Arabic to say and then translate it correctly in

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[412] *The Map of Love*, p. 415.
[413] *The Map of Love*, p. 415.
[414] Ibid.

English. The problem is too subtle. In a court perhaps you could present it, but to the general public, no.[415]

As the crisis created by the example of the letter mentioned above suggests, the habits of critical thinking associated with Saidian philology provide a challenge to Orientalist stereotypes of Egyptian culture. Ya'qub Pasha Artin suggests that there is often no space to speak about the nuances of such political crises in the public sphere. Yet, as this chapter has suggested, it is through a careful consideration of Amal's intricate weaving of Anna's inventory of private papers and found objects in conjunction with contemporary newspaper reports of political events in Egyptian history that we can begin to glimpse the value and potential of an aesthetic education that is attuned to linguistic and cultural difference for reimagining a secular, non-essentialist, and feminist democratic future for the Egyptian nation.

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[415] Ibid, p. 420.

Chapter 4 Representations of the Intellectual: Reading Bahaa Tahir's *Love in Exile* after Edward Said[416]

4.1   Introduction

'Speaking truth to power' is perhaps one of the phrases for which Said is best known and is also perhaps one of the most oft-quoted passages in Said's critical corpus. This injunction epitomises Said's moral vision of the public role of an intellectual, as he defined it in the 1993 Reith Lectures (originally broadcast on BBC Radio 4) that were subsequently published in book form as *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994). Said's reflections on the role of the intellectual in challenging and contesting neo-Orientalist representations of the Muslim world have a particularly striking resonance with the novel that forms the subject of this chapter. In Bahaa Tahir's *Love in Exile*,[417] the language of news that Said also examines and critiques in *Covering Islam* (1981) is invoked to show how the politically-committed journalist *qua* public intellectual uses language to contest what Said calls, in his late lecture on 'The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals', 'the normalized quiet of unseen power'.[418] What Said means by this phrase is made clear in an earlier comment he makes in this essay on the ways in which US-based global media corporations such as CNN use soundbites to foreclose wider, more informed, and more in-depth public debate about current global political affairs. As Said implies, media soundbites have the appearance of addressing specific political and humanitarian crises in ways that do nothing to make intelligible or challenge the global power structures that allow such crises to take place.

By staging the challenges facing the politically-committed Arab journalist who wishes to intervene in public discourse in the form of literary fiction, Tahir reframes the circumscribed discourse of print journalism, and makes visible the

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[416] The novelist's name is transliterated as Bahaa Taher in most English translations. Bahaa is also sometimes transliterated as Baha. According to the Arabic phonetics, Bahaa Tahir is more accurate. I would rather use 'Tahir' throughout the whole chapter except for citation.

[417] Bahaa Taher, *Love in Exile*, trans. by Farouk Abdel Wahab (The American University in Cairo Press, 2001).

[418] Said, 'The Public Role', in *Humanism*, pp. 117-144 (p. 135).

global political institutions and power structures that benefit from an impoverished form of global mass communication. The literary journalist figure at the centre of Tahir's novel confronts an ethical dilemma familiar to the intellectuals that Said writes about. They either challenge the misuse of language which supports dominant narratives of power, or reproduce the rhetoric and ideological perspective of the state. The novel's narrator/protagonist is an Egyptian journalist, who struggles for the 'permission to narrate' or represent the present historical moment of Egypt in the early 1980s. This narrative constellation draws attention to the challenges of writing a cosmopolitan narrative that is both critical of the wider global history of Cold War geopolitics in the Arab world, while also rejecting the dominant essentialist and exclusionary terms of nationalist discourse, which have framed Egypt's recent national past. By reading *Love in Exile* with and against Said's conception of the public intellectual in *Representations of the Intellectual* and his late essay, 'The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals' (published in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*), I argue that Tahir's novel draws attention to the challenges of intervening in the increasingly globalised space of the public sphere through the medium of print journalism. In so doing, it also raises questions about the institutional and political constraints that are placed on Arab intellectuals who seek to speak truth to power on a national and/or international stage.

In *Love in Exile*, the intellectual's ability to contest the repressive forces of US imperialism—as symbolised by Sadat's pro-corporate and pro-Zionist Open-Door Policy—is mediated through the non-linear temporality of the narrative, which is structured as a series of flashbacks. It is through these flashbacks that the narrative gradually discloses the protagonist's encounter with national and international scales of political, economic, and geopolitical power, before and after he has been exiled from Egypt. Many of these proleptic and analeptic movements are formed of extended dialogues that take the form of debates about the limits of journalism to change public opinion and to challenge predominant power relations, both on a national and an international scale. These dialogues occur on a regular (often daily) basis between the protagonist and his friend, between the protagonist and himself, and between the protagonist and his old-age lover, Brigitte—an Austrian woman with whom he falls in love in Europe. Throughout such dialogues, readers of the novel observe that the protagonist's personal experience overlaps with his public life and is reflected via his job as a journalist. It

is through these debates that readers gradually come to understand the historical and material forces that have shaped al-Ustaz's public performance as a journalist working for a national newspaper.

These multiple dialogues and shifts in geopolitical scale as well as temporal order raise a number of questions about the condition of the public intellectual *qua* journalist in a neo-colonial society. Why has the protagonist been reluctant to write in the predominant national language while he was in exile, and why does he decide to give up on the writing process itself at certain points? To what extent are such decisions a form of withdrawal or deviation from the protagonist's main role as a public writer and as a journalist? And might such a withdrawal also be read as a comment on the constraints that are placed on oppositional public discourse in a society such as Sadat's Egypt? I attempt to explain the protagonist's position as a public intellectual in the light of how Manar and Brigitte respectively disclose another dimension in the narrator's public role as a journalist: both women see al-Ustaz as unable to represent human suffering in the way that might serve the interests of the poor, the oppressed, or the victims of wars. In doing so, I suggest that the change of scale in the novel is mediated through the women characters, Manar and Brigitte, who are also the narrator's sexual partners, pre- and post-exile. In this way, spatial scale, time, and gender are interlocked, and endowed with political meanings that encourage us to think in different ways about the gendered determinants of Said's conception of the public intellectual.

Since Said's brief reflections on the conditions of the Arab intellectual in *Representations of the Intellectual* are relevant to my reading of the representation of the intellectual in *Love in Exile*, they are worth pausing to consider here in a little more detail. In a discussion of the secular intellectual, and the imperative to question what he calls 'Gods that always fail', Said says the following:

> In the Arab world, the brave, if airy and sometimes destructive, pan-Arab nationalism of the Nasser period which abated during the 1970s has been replaced with a set of local and regional creeds, most of them administered harshly by unpopular, uninspired minority regimes. They are now threatened by a whole array of Islamic movements. There has remained, however, a secular, cultural opposition in each Arab country; the most gifted

> writers, artists, political commentators, intellectuals, are generally a part of it, although they constitute a minority, many of whom have been hounded into silence or exile.[419]

It is in this transition from the 'pan-Arab nationalism of the Nasser period' to the 'unpopular, uninspired minority regimes', which are sometimes also pro-American that *Love in Exile* is situated. As I go on to explain, the intellectual figures in *Love in Exile* may be understood in terms of a 'secular cultural opposition' to the pro-US and pro-Zionist stance of Anwar Sadat's government, a government which has directly or indirectly 'hounded [many secular intellectuals in Egypt] into silence or exile'. Yet in exploring how these intellectual figures understand their silence, and how they attempt to transform their exilic perspective into a space from which to contest political oppression and human rights abuses, *Love in Exile* also makes us aware of the challenges facing journalists who seek to facilitate a more sophisticated public understanding of global power relations. It is worth saying too that Said went on to revise some of his observations in *Representations of the Intellectual* in 'The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals'. Reflecting on the legacy of the US-led war on terror, Said notes how 'the bipolar world of the Cold War has been reconfigured and dissolved in several different ways', and that 'the realm of the political and public has expanded so much as to be virtually without borders'. Writing at the start of the twenty-first century, in a period just prior to the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, Said is clearly cognisant of how the internet had already transformed the scale of the public sphere from a national to a transnational form since the mid-1990s. Yet he stops short of considering how the global media's hunger for spectacular events of violence, such as the attacks on America of September 11, 2001, work to eclipse the slow, routine violence that takes place in Palestinian refugee camps or the urban slums of the global South. It is for this reason that I supplement Said's account of the public intellectual with Rob Nixon's theory of slow violence. For Nixon's theory can help to make sense of the unreported world that is variously foregrounded in *Love in Exile*, as I will explain.

The novel addresses the protagonist's dilemma as a crisis of representation refracted via the literary voices of its two female characters and the protagonist's sexual partners: his ex-wife Manar and his lover Brigitte. The narrator and his

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[419] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual,* p. 118.

colleague Ibrahim al-Mehallawi, on the other hand, are presented as suppressed voices—public intellectuals who cannot deliver their own voices to the public through their local newspapers when they attempt to 'cover' the human violations in Chile and Lebanon while drawing on a very limited national vocabulary. Against the background of the novel's two female figures' public interventions in the use of either an ideological or an aesthetical restricted language of news in their respective public spheres (Manar as a professional journalist and Brigitte as an amateur translator), I examine the political positions of the novel's two male figures against Said's writings on the public intellectual. In doing so, this chapter also raises profound questions about the ethics and politics of the relationship between the language and rhetoric of the media, politics, and ideology in modern Egypt and the Arab world, and beyond.

Bahaa Tahir (1935-) is a contemporary Egyptian literary figure whose writings address, in various ways, the Egyptian Experience of national and religious conflicts.[420] *Love in Exile* develops Tahir's long-standing preoccupation with human suffering experienced in national and international social and religious conflicts. Broadly speaking, Tahir's work is populated with Egyptian characters and plotlines that explore various modes of identitarian and racial conflicts specific to the modern Arab world. In many of his writings, he is mainly interested in representing Egyptian sectarianism and the socio-political situations that emerge as a result of different modes of essentialist thinking, whether it be chauvinistic, tribal, national, or religious. The novels *Aunt Safiyya and the Monastery* (1991) and *Sunset Oasis* (2007) are particularly good examples of such concerns. The former novel addresses the religious tensions that controlled the life of the Muslims and the Christians living in Luxor in Upper Egypt in the sixties and the seventies, the latter deals with the tribal conflictsthat have continued to govern people inhabiting Siwa oasis[421] even after the British occupation of Egypt.[422] In

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[420] See UC Press E-Books Collection, 1982-200. Barbara Romaine uses these words to describe Tahir's fiction: 'struggle of daily life in Cairo to the difficulties facing an Egyptian emigrant in Europe to a conflict of ethics and tradition in an Upper Egyptian village'. <http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft3b69n847&chunk.id=introduction&toc.id=introduction&brand=ucpress> [accessed 20 July 2017]

[421] The Siwa Oasis is an oasis in Egypt, between the Qattara Depression and the Egyptian Sand Sea in the Western Desert, nearly 50 km east of the Libyan border, and 560 km from Cairo. Siwa Oasis is one of Egypt's most isolated settlements, with 23,000 people, mostly Berbers who developed a unique culture and a distinct language of the Berber family called Siwi. Its fame lies primarily in its ancient role as the home to an oracle of Ammon, the ruins of which are a popular

contrast, the social and political setting of *Love in Exile* goes beyond the limits of local struggles, daily disputes, and the national debates to represent a multi-layered conflict of an exiled Cairene journalist in an un-named European country.[423]

The narrator of the novel—always referred to as al-Ustaz,[424] and former colleague, Ibrahim al-Mehallawi (with whom he shares a past of professional collegiality) have lost their professional positions as eminent journalists in Cairo. They have been forced into a perpetual state of exile due to their political loyalties. However, al-Mehallawi's exilic experience predates that of the narrator since many communist advocates were arrested and put into prison during Nasser's rule in the 1950s and 1960s. The narrator, as a Nasserist, is dismissed from his position and forced to leave the country, only when al-Sadat became Egypt's president in the 1970s. The narrator and his friend belong to the 'generation of the 1960s' (*jīl al-sittīnāt*), the period in which 'the writers were generally politically "committed"'.[425] Nonetheless, against their will, the novel's two protagonists are forced to violate their public commitment to their nation and to humanity, and betray what they believe to be their public mission, inherent in their jobs as journalists. In the following sections, I will discuss various forms of such violation, and consider how they interrogate and complicate Said's vision of the public intellectual.

I have divided the rest of this chapter into two parts. In part one, I investigate the varied forms of power that shape the language of the press as both an aesthetic

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tourist attraction which gave the oasis its ancient name Ammonium. Historically, it is part of Ancient Libya. *Tahir's Sunset Oasis deals with tribal conflicts between two divisions; the eastern and western inhabitants of Siwa.*

[422] Tahir's Sunset Oasis expands the postcolonial Arab literature by evoking various aspects of the late 19th century Egyptian social, cultural and political life under the British rule. The novel's protagonist is an Egyptian officer who works for the British administration in Cairo, but he was posted as the local governor of Siwa oasis for his support of Orabi's revolution (1879–1882).

[423] This country is probably Switzerland where Tahir lived there during the 1980s and 1990s. Upon being banned from writing in 1975, he left Egypt and travelled widely in Africa and Asia seeking work as a translator. During the 1980s and 1990s, he lived in Switzerland, where he worked as a translator for the United Nations. Afterwards, he returned to Egypt, where he continues to reside.

[424] Literally, means 'Mr' in English, but it is also an honorific that refers to teacher /master.

[425] See Line Reichelt Føreland, *Love versus Political Commitment: An Arab Intellectual's Dilemma as Portrayed in Bahā' Ṭāhir's al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā (Love in Exile)*, (PhD Thesis, University Of Oslo, 2011), p.7. The term 'New Sensibility' or the *ḥassāsiyya jadīda* has been extensively described and used by Idwār al-Kharrāṭ and by Sabry Hafez [Ṣabrī Ḥāfiẓ]. Al-Kharrāṭ explains that 'the characteristic features of the literature of the *ḥassāsiyya jadīda* is how, over the course of the 1960s and in particular the 1970s, the understanding of and approach to what constitutes reality changed.'

and political language by drawing on Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence*[426] and Said's reflections on the public intellectual. In doing so, I suggest that Nixon's account of slow violence usefully supplements Said's reflections on the intellectual's attempt to facilitate public understanding of political violence and oppression in the global South and the Arab world, and the relationship of such acts of violence to the current geopolitical conjuncture. In the second part, I turn to the analysis of Tahir's *Love in Exile* in reference to the argument related to different power relationships I tackle in part one. Together the two sections consider how contemporary *neo-orientalist* representations of the Arab world work in mutually reinforcing ways with US foreign policy in the region, and how Tahir's novel complements, but also complicates Said's reflections on public intellectual dissent and bearing witness to persecution. I examine how the many restricted forms of representation which marginalize and hamper the agency and power of Arabs to redraw the lines of the world's geopolitical map in the current era of neoliberal global capitalism.

4.2   Part I

4.2.1   The (Im)Possibilities of Worldly Cosmopolitan Narrative: Worldly Powers and the Intellectual's Public Performance

By framing his protagonist's journalistic correspondence in the literary form of a novel, Tahir draws attention to the transmission and 'philological reception'[427] as well as the composition of journalistic discourse. Such a narrative strategy corresponds in interesting ways with Said's reflections on the possibilities and challenges of the intellectual's rhetorical performance in the public sphere. In the introduction to *Representations of the Intellectual*, Said tries to clarify his point that intellectuals are figures who are defined by the autonomy of their performances, which he says 'can neither be predicted nor compelled into some slogan, orthodox party line, or fixed dogma'.[428] In doing so, Said also cautions against the temptations of 'patriotic bluster and self-dramatising apostasy' as well

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[426] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard University Press, 2011).
[427] See Said, 'The Return to Philology', pp. 57-84 (p. 70).
[428] Said, *Representations*, p. xii.

as forms of self-censorship such as 'trimming' and 'careful silence'.[429] In Said's view, these practices 'disfigure the intellectual's public performance' and distract from the political task of questioning 'patriotic nationalism, corporate thinking, and a sense of class, racial, and gendered privilege'.[430] The negative consequences of such forms of disfigurement and self-censorship cannot be underestimated; for if the intellectual fails to meet their public responsibility in respect of enlightening the public about forms of socio-economic injustice and political oppression, it is difficult to see who will speak for the oppressed (or indeed speak about the ethical-political double bind of speaking for the oppressed in a way that also makes the intellectual's relatively privileged/ empowered role as political proxy 'visible'). Like Said, Tahir similarly foregrounds the subtle forms of censorship that take place in the process of writing and editing newspapers. The following extract from the novel is an interior monologue, where the protagonist, al-Ustaz, spells out how the reports that he sends to his newspaper in Egypt are edited in such a way as to make their meaning unclear:

> I knew ahead of time that certain things would be said which if I were to report, would not be published by my paper in Cairo. And even if the paper published the article, it would shorten it, dilute it, and jumble the paragraphs in such a way that the reader would not be able to figure out what happened exactly or what the story was about.[431]

The implication here is that the newspaper's editors would 'trim' and jumble the story in such a way that would make it impossible for an 'average' reading public to decipher. That might account for why only critical readers trained in the practice of interrogating sources and fake news stories might be able to discern the hidden message, which is distorted by the process of editing. This point has significant implications for my own approach to the writing of world historical events in the dominant national Egyptian press, as they are represented in Tahir's novel. The main concern of al-Ustaz/the protagonist, and his junior colleague (al-Mehallawi) is to produce a worldly narrative that might challenge what could be understood in the terms of Nixon's argument as different forms of disguised power. While they strive to reach out to a large audience by creating a counter-narrative to 'the media-marginalized causes,' they also have to constantly negotiate with the hegemonic authority of the newspaper's editor, the demand to be

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[429] Ibid.
[430] Ibid, p. xiii.
[431] *Love in Exile*, p. 4.

professional, and the stylistic constraints of news articles and reportages. Press agencies that are increasingly controlled by a set of rules drawn by the corporate agents of global capitalism dictate the formal and aesthetic parameters of what can and cannot be said, under the guise of the economic language of the news. As I am going to explain in the analytical part, the *elliptical* or fragmented narrative that comes into being as a result of complying with such strict rules helps to illuminate how press institutions can and do collude with authoritarian regimes in order to provide an *essentialist* account of the nation. It is only by reading such narratives contrapuntally—or, against the grain of the essentialist terms in which they are written—that we can begin to understand the political events that are eclipsed by such narratives.

In a related, yet different discussion, Said expresses scepticism about how Islam is 'covered' from the perspective of so-called experts and professional intellectuals in the mainstream American media. It is for this reason that Said valorises the privileged position of a skilled 'critical reader', who has the potential to reconstruct the original story of the journalistic report, even if the story that is reproduced in print is distorted, miscontextualized, and misrepresented. In the following extract, Said specifies the importance of critical reading in challenging Islamophobia in the mainstream American media, and fostering a more cosmopolitan public understanding of modern Islam and the contemporary Islamic world:

> [...] I do not believe as strongly and as firmly in the notion of "Islam" as many experts, policy-makers, and general intellectuals do; on the contrary, I often think it has been more of a hindrance than a help in understanding what moves people and societies. But what I really believe in the existence of a critical sense and of citizens able and willing to use it to get beyond the special interests of experts and their *idée reçues*. By using the skills of a good *critical reader* to disentangle sense from nonsense, by asking the right questions and expecting pertinent answers, anyone can learn about either "Islam" or the world of Islam and about the men, women, and cultures that live within it, speak its language, breathe its air, produce its histories and societies. At that point, humanistic knowledge begins and communal responsibility for that knowledge begins to be shouldered.[432]

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[432] Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. xix.

Said's argument here is compelling in many respects. And yet, in contrast to his suggestion that critical thinking is the exclusive responsibility of the reader, I would argue that such a moral and intellectual burden should be shared between the public intellectual *qua* journalist and the critical reader. Said also highlights how 'insidious' the negative impact of the language of mainstream news can be for non-critical readers, especially when it is politicized to create a particular effect or to create an aura of national consciousness that reproduces a nationalist ideology. It is for this reason that I proceed to argue that both the writer and the reader can collaborate to reproduce meanings of ongoing events in the world, but from quite different positions.

4.2.2   Silence, Slow Violence, and Strategic Forgetting

Whereas Nixon talks about 'slow violence' in terms of the ecological violence inflicted on the poor and dispossessed in the peripheral spaces of the global economy, the dominant Zionist narrative, which Said criticises, can be understood as another parallel mode of 'slow violence' directed towards the Palestinians. For Said, the Zionist narrative works in mutually reinforcing ways with more overt, 'spectacular' forms of militarised settler colonialism, such as house demolitions, targeted assassinations, and the proliferation of securitised checkpoints. Said warns against the Zionist narrative as another mode of violence against the Palestinian people in addition to armed forms of violence. As Said contends, 'the inadmissible existence of the Palestinian people whose history, actuality and aspirations, as possessed of a coherent narrative direction pointed towards self-determination, were the object of this violence'.[433] What is common in Nixon and Said's approach in elucidating the dynamics of such 'slow violence' is the temporal and spatial divergence whereby 'forgetting' threatens the life of the marginalized—those people who live on the periphery and do not have the advantage of being 'visible' in the eyes of the global media, when compared to people who benefit from the wealth and power of the centre. Nixon emphasizes the hindering force of 'the strategic and representational challenges posed by slow violence' that make the causes of the marginalized invisible and unnoticed for the public. Its danger lies in its being 'a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor

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[433] Edward Said, 'Permission to Narrate,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 13.3 (Spring 1984) 27-48, (p. 29).

instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales'.[434]

For this reason, violence cannot be interpreted exclusively in terms of those 'spectacular' crimes that the novel foregrounds to discuss human rights violations (in Sabra and Shatila); rather, this violence extends to other 'invisible' forms that one can trace through the consciousness of the focalising narrator. For Said, the power to memorize as well as the power of forgetting is instrumentalized in the interests of both Israeli and US foreign policy in the Arab world. In his article, 'Methods of Forgetting,' he seeks to draw the attention of Arab readers in particular to the difference between the act of forgetting on the Israeli and the Palestinian sides respectively. For the former, forgetting of the atrocities of the national past is considered to be a methodological means to avoid confrontation with a contemporary world that condemns a replication of a similar historical trauma against anti-Semitism.[435] For the latter, however, the same act of 'forgetting' is catastrophic. The importance of 'collective history' is essential to the Palestinian people since, as Said contends, 'Unlike Jews, we are still a homeless and totally dispossessed people'.[436] That is why he sees that 'There is considerable irony in that the Palestinian attitude to the past, as expressed by the current leadership, is too willing to forget, too loose about protecting the collective past'.[437] This is not to suggest that Said is nostalgic, and neither does he appeal to a nostalgic form of nationalism. Yet, his insistence on a 'unified' collective narrative for the Palestinians as an inseparable means of cultural resistance—apart from armed struggle—constitutes a cornerstone in Said's intellectual contribution to the Palestinian cause. Said's repudiation of nationalism as a mode of collective thinking, critique, and as an affiliation to particular movements, and organizations shape Said's criticism, yet in the case of the Palestinian cause, Said's insistence on a narrative of power that draws on the premises of nationalism has provoked much critical controversy.

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[434] Nixon, *Slow Violence*, p. 2.

[435] See Said, 'Methods of Forgetting,' *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 400 (22-28 October 1998) <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Archive/1998/400/op2.htm> [accessed 4 April 2018] (para. 1 of 10). Here Said is drawing on the Israeli sociologist Yehuda Elkana who wrote a remarkable essay on the importance of forgetting. As Said writes 'For Israelis just to see them [Israeli attitudes to the Arabs generally, Palestinians in particular] as instances of anti-Semitism replicating the past was not only wrong, but foolish and in the end self-defeating.'

[436] Ibid, (para. 3 of 10).

[437] Ibid.

Corporate strategies of mass communication that work towards a structured or systematized forgetting can also work to indirectly support human rights abuses committed against the marginalized and the dispossessed in spaces of conflict. If Said highlights the historical injustice committed against the Palestinian people, and the role of the Zionist narrative in foreclosing oppositional voices which seek to contest this sense of historical injustice, his critique does not account for the indirect role of the corporate media in producing a collective amnesia of the slow violence of colonial dispossession that the Palestinians are subjected to on a daily basis.[438] Nixon touches on this relationship between forgetting and slow violence in the following section: 'If, as Said notes, struggles over geography are never reducible to armed struggle but have a profound symbolic and narrative component as well, and if, as Michael Watts insists, we must attend to the 'violent geographies of fast capitalism', we need to supplement both these injunctions with a deeper understanding of the slow violence of delayed effects that structures so many of our consequential forgettings'.[439] The professional language of the news that produces the crisis of misrepresentation with which the novel is concerned indirectly supports the continuation of violence and crimes against humanity. This is particularly true if we consider how this language reinforces the corporate ethos of multinational press agencies that support the interests of global capitalism.

This specific aspect of the discussion extends my earlier reading of Said's philological and secular humanism in chapter One. I argue that both 'national language'[440] and secular philology shape the contours of the very language of the news that aids and abets the production of a political knowledge that works to promote a collective 'forgetting' that is part of a wider geo-political strategy. Unlike a secular humanist philology that appeals to people's sense of compassion towards the condition of the oppressed across the globe, such 'national language' employs a restricted vocabulary, and thus marginalizes the causes of those suffering people

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[438] See Said, 'Permission to Narrate', pp. 27-48 (p. 31). In this article, Said only stresses the fact that nationalism becomes secular/understood in secular rather religious terms. His critique eclipses the role that might media plays in ameliorating the atrocities and thus leads to 'forgetting'.

[439] *Slow Violence*, p. 8.

[440] Said, *Representations,* pp. 27-28. Said discusses how George Orwell talks about this very persuasively in his essay 'Politics and the English Language', Clichés, tired metaphors, lazy writing, he says, are instances of 'the decay of language.' The result is that the mind is numbed and remains inactive while language that has the effect of background music in a supermarket washes over consciousness, seducing it into passive acceptance of unexamined [....]'
& See also Said, *Representations*, p. 32.

who live outside the national borders. Yet, this secular philology might also be politically instrumentalized in a way that leads to the same negative impact of the prevailing national language. In Tahir's novel, the language of news, even when it is grounded in a secular vocabulary, is shown to limit the extent to which the unreported world of slow violence can be disseminated; in this way, the novel adds a different dimension to the 'representational challenge' of imaginatively rendering the experience of slow violence that Nixon examines in *Slow Violence*.

It is precisely through the government-controlled media's construction and dissemination of a very essentialist and impoverished form of national consciousness that this collective amnesia is reproduced. Against the essentialist language of nationalist narratives that aid and abet such a form of collective amnesia, writers and public intellectuals have tried to invent a narrative and lexicon that facilitates a more critical approach to such narratives. It is precisely this struggle to invent such a language that is dramatized in *Love in Exile*.

4.2.3 Power, Platform, and Style: The Complexities and Ambivalences of the Saidian Intellectual

If public writers or journalist figures are to play an independent, yet dissenting role from the normative one assigned to them, and if the main goal of their public performances is to reach a large audience, such considerations of political autonomy and public address cannot be discussed outside of questions of 'power'. Such 'power' determines the policies that contribute to the formulation of the predominant narratives and the structural frame that maps it out. Even though Said has stressed the important intellectual task of exposing such 'power' in order to put an end to the world atrocities done in its name, what that power is, and the method by which it is to be resisted are not made sufficiently clear or precise. Instead, Said defines these political tasks in quite vague and general terms: 'The intellectual's role generally is to uncover and elucidate the contest, to challenge and defeat both an imposed silence and the normalized quiet of unseen power, wherever and whenever possible'.[441] One might try to infer a method of resistance from his suggestion that there is an intrinsic coexistence between 'a social and intellectual equivalence between this mass of overbearing collective interests and

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[441] Said, 'The Public Role', in *Humanism*, pp. 117-144 (p. 135).

the discourse used to justify, disguise, or mystify its workings while also preventing objections or challenges to it'.[442] Yet, questions remain about the methodology and style that a Saidian intellectual might adopt to end the 'imposed silence' by such an 'unseen power'. In a related discussion, Saree Makdisi stresses those 'unacknowledged' powers in Said's critique of representational strategies: 'One of the primary concerns of Edward Said's work is the extent to which intellectuals are, in one way or another, directly involved in the manufacture of worldly realities, or essentially—to borrow a phrase from Shelley—the real unacknowledged legislators of the world'.[443] And yet Said's emphasis on 'styles' of intellectual self-representation or rhetorical performances that can oppose oppressive forms of power raise further questions about the nature and character of such styles and modes of expression. The variegated styles that Said appeals to on many occasions[444] speak less to the diversity than to the complexity of the intellectual as a public figure. Rob Nixon is sympathetic to the idea of 'intellectual complexity' as Said represents it. In formulating his main thesis about the ways in which writers have foregrounded the environmentalism of the poor, Nixon refers to Said's search for a clear style of public address that can help to make marginalized causes 'visible' to a wide public audience on an increasingly international stage:

> I felt emboldened by Said's determined search for a style—or rather, a whole repertoire of styles—equal to his wide-ranging commitments. He thrived on intellectual complexity while aspiring to clarity; he taught and wrote as if—and I know this should sound unremarkable for a literature professor—he yearned to be widely understood.[445]

Extending the 'complexity' that characterizes Said's critical apparatus, a more detailed consideration of the idea of a public 'platform' can help to clarify the challenges of speaking as an intellectual. My discussion of the idea of a *platform* along with *the intellectual's voice* might help to make sense of the public performance of the protagonist and his communist colleague's in Tahir's novel. In so doing, I suggest that the novel's representation of the intellectual helps to

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[442] Ibid.

[443] Saree Makdisi, 'Edward Said and the style of the public intellectual', in *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual,* ed. by Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly (Melbourne University Press, 2007)*,* pp. 21-35 (p. 21).

[444] See for example, Said, 'Bursts of Meaning' in *Reflections,* pp. 148-152.

[445] *Slow Violence*, p. x.

illuminate more precisely what Said means by the intellectual's style of public address. More precisely, I focus on the importance of having *a public voice* or a personal tone by seeking the support of a particular movement, organization, or any other secular institution—a pulpit or a platform from which an intellectual can project his or her voice, and make it heard. Tahir represents the idea of 'platform' via the depiction of his two male journalist protagonists, who seek to publicise the causes of the oppressed in Pinochet's Chile and the Occupied Palestinian Territories by appealing to non-governmental organizations such as 'Amnesty International,' 'The Red Cross,' 'The International Doctors Committee for Human Rights,' and 'The Palestinian Friendship Society' among others.

The professional language of news discussed above can work to problematize the *idea of the platform* when the goal of achieving 'clarity' is at stake, and especially when this language aims to produce a counter-narrative to the mainstream press. Indeed, the 'virtual' or 'imaginary' character of mass readerships in an increasingly globalised public sphere make it difficult to know with any certainty how the message encoded in the journalist's individual voice will be received; such uncertainty also problematizes the idea that a media platform is a straightforward means of transmitting and disseminating the journalist's voice.[446] What's more, the arbitrary assemblage of different global and national events in a particular news cycle can work to frame political events in such a way that a particular political or humanitarian crisis is deemed urgent enough to make the headlines; and yet the importance and urgency of that story can quickly drop out of the news in the next cycle.

Nixon's idea of the 'writer-activist' is particularly helpful for addressing the complexities and ambivalences of the Saidian intellectual as it is embedded in his critical relationship with official and non-official institutions alike. As I go on to explain, the figure of the 'writer-activist' is a useful concept-metaphor through which to better understand the valences and tensions that animate Said's critical thought: on the one hand, there is a tension between writers as 'autonomous' intellectual figures who can deliver their message and their national and political affiliation to a particular party, organization, or political movement. On the other hand, the tension between professionalism as it is codified in a specialised lexicon

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[446] See Said, 'The Public Role', in *Humanism*, pp. 117-144 (p. 130).

of expertise—is another form of power that should be critiqued and challenged—together with the national and political affiliations. The topical/thematic and stylistic flexibility as addressed via the Saidian intellectual corresponds with Nixon's account of how 'Writer-Activism' can work to challenge the restrictions of professional or specialized languages. Against any national affiliations or professional expectations, the activist writer—and, by extension, the journalist—can struggle to achieve a clarity or a visibility of his/her cause.

4.2.4   Intellectual Subjectivity: Global Suffering, Ideological and National Affiliations of the Journalist, and Philology of Secular Intervention

In *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said appeals to a 'new universality' in the face of nationalist ideologies that are deeply seated in particular cultures. Taking issue with the provincialized knowledge formations that are implicit in institutional labels, such as the 'Western Humanities' and 'American humanism', which are nonetheless a central part of his university faculty's curriculum, Said reaffirms his long-held view that it 'is possible to be critical of humanism in the name of humanism'.[447] This appeal to a new cosmopolitan idea of universal humanism can be seen to extend the decolonial humanism of influential anti-colonial intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon.[448] The orientation of these lectures can be seen to extend the humanist position of his earlier work on *Representations of the Intellectual*, where Said endeavours to define 'standards of truth about human misery and oppression [...] despite the individual intellectual's party affiliation, national background, and primeval loyalties'.[449] The task of defining and living by those moral standards of truth is of course increasingly difficult in a neoliberal world order, where universities as well as corporate media organisations are increasingly subjected to the norms and values of so-called market fundamentalism and the regressive forces of privatisation. Said was clearly aware of the damaging effects of neoliberalism, as the late and rather short essay for *Al-Ahram* weekly, entitled 'Problems of Neoliberalism', indicates. Yet he did not (or perhaps was not able to) offer a more sustained response to the urgent question that he poses at the end of this article: 'How much social suffering is tolerable

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[447] Said, 'Humanism's Sphere', in *Humanism,* pp.1-30 (pp. 10-11).
[448] Ibid, pp. 2-3 & p. 47.
[449] Said, *Representations,* p. xii.

before the need for change actually causes change? This is the major political question of our time.'[450] Many of Said's critical interventions as a public intellectual focus on the 'critique of nationalist discourse'[451] and the ideologies that shape its cultural, political, and even humanist knowledge. Said does not explicitly consider how nationalism can serve the political and economic interests of neoliberalism. Yet if his critique of nationalist discourse is brought into conversation with Nixon's analysis of the slow violence of neoliberalism, we can begin to see how the terms of his argument might be reframed and renewed.

My reading of Tahir's novel also attempts to investigate the implications of a statement that Said makes elsewhere in his work: 'the structure of the evening news depends on ideas of reality determined by the political and social discourse already empowered outside the newsroom'.[452] In the fictional world of Egypt under Sadat that is evoked in Tahir's novel, these ideas are shaped by the legacy of Orientalism as well as the contemporary neoliberal forces of global capitalism. Indeed, there are significant continuities between the late nineteenth-century formation of European imperialism and the current imperialist moment, as commentators such as David Harvey have argued.[453] We have already seen in *The Map of Love* how British newspapers such as the London *Times* contributed to the promotion of national public support for British imperial campaigns. In a similar way, the fictional newspaper represented in *Love in Exile* is shown to preserve the global political and economic order, even as it also represents the human suffering that is perpetuated by that order.

It is in this wider geo-political and intellectual historical context that I approach *Love in Exile* as a realist novel. What I mean by this is that the novel uses detailed description drawn from real-world historical events to convey a sense of verisimilitude in its representation of the challenges facing journalists. In the fictional world of the novel, the journalist's newspaper is subject to the pressures of al-Sadat's transnational economic policies known as the 'Open Door Policy'

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[450] Said, 'Problems of Neoliberalism', *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 498 (7-13 September 2000) <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Archive/2000/498/op2.htm> [accessed 6 March 2018] (para. 7 of 7).
[451] Said, 'Nationalism, Human Rights, and Interpretation,' in *Reflections,* pp. 411-435 (p. 428). It is perfectly clear that an underlying 'critique of nationalist discourse' has taking place, since it national governments acting in the name of national security who have infringed the rights of individuals and groups who are perceived as standing outside the nationalist consensus.
[452] Said, 'Permission to Narrate', pp. 27-48 (p. 35).
[453] See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford UP, 2007).

(*Infitah*), which also serves to normalize Egypt's relationship with Israel, and the widely criticised Camp David accords.[454] Such pressures are registered in the professionalised house style and editorial processes of this fictional newspaper: a style and process that draws on the vocabulary of Sadat's policies, and thus works to normalise them. And yet at the same time, the novel employs the language of journalism as a quasi-literary form and genre in order to defamiliarize fixed modes of thinking about *human suffering* that also invite readers to reflect critically on the current political conjuncture in Egypt and the Arab world.

Said insists that the voices of public intellectuals should be independent, and that they should set themselves free from any partisan or professional commitments; he also holds that intellectuals should strive towards an ideal of universality by intervening in the public sphere and seeking the support of human organizations. Unlike the narrator, who has lost faith in Arab nationalism and other forms of humanitarian solidarity, al-Mehallawi represents a more optimistic intellectual figure. The narrator recursively refers to this character as an 'optimist' as he still believes in the power of human solidarity. Partisan-communist journals and the human rights associations of the West provide al-Mehallawi with a source of hope in the possibility of social and political reform. The political function of these organizations problematizes the intellectual crisis of the many journalist figures in the novel—including the narrator and his friend—when they fail to generate a counter-narrative to the mainstream papers and magazines through such presumably independent institutions.

As I will explain in the second section of the chapter, which is dedicated to an analysis of the novel, it is through an engagement with these organizations that the narrator and his friend strive to transform the suffering of their nation into a universal cause by using a language that makes it part of the world's suffering, even as they work to integrate that global suffering in the terms of a national narrative, which is reproduced in their national newspaper.

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[454] Camp David was written without participation of the Palestinians and was condemned by the United Nations. Although Egypt and Israel generally abided by the agreement since 1978, in the following years a common belief emerged in Israel that the peace with Egypt is a 'cold peace'. Others feel that the peace agreement was between the Israeli people and Egypt's charismatic President Anwar El-Sadat, rather than with the Egyptian people, who were not given the opportunity to accept or reject the agreement with a free vote or a representative majority.

In the remaining part of this chapter, I consider how the linguistic performance of the intellectual figure is staged in Tahir's novel; in so doing, I suggest that the journalist's *voice* works to register a sense of the secular or humanistic intervention of the intellectual. More precisely, I examine the specific features of such a rhetorical language which speak to the limits and possibilities of political agency in the context of a global economy and mediascape that seeks to silence such critical and dissident voices. Here, Nixon's idea of the 'writer activist' is instructive for assessing the extent to which al-Ustaz as well as other journalist figures in *Love in Exile* are able to intervene in the simple descriptive language they are forced to adopt in the process of writing their reports. For Nixon, the political essays of the Indian novelist, Arundhati Roy, exemplify the practice of writer-activism he has in mind. To put it in Said's terms, Roy's essays seem to have found a way to negotiate between the language of his professional guild and his 'primeval loyalties'.[455]

In Tahir's *Love in Exile,* the political subjectivity of the intellectual (and in the same sense optimism) is bound up with a belief in the democratic power of secular institutions to address national causes in the context of international forums. If the protagonists begin by questioning the potential of their public voice after the loss of their social positions as prominent journalists in Egypt, this questioning also redefines their subjectivity as public intellectuals. By examining the narrative trajectory through which their subjectivity is invented, the next section of this chapter considers how the protagonists also challenge the language of the press and its mediation of 'national patriotism' and 'corporate thinking'. Their subjectivity as public intellectuals is not only defined in terms of their intervention in the public sphere (via platforms) but also in terms of their intervention in the professional language of their guild. In what ways is the language of the news politicized to represent a predominant (nationalist) view of people in power? To what extent can it be inventively deployed as a challenging tool to oppose this power and to give a public platform to the voices, interests, and desires of the marginalized? And how can fictional representations of political journalism help us to better understand the significant rhetorical and political challenges as well as the moral necessity of speaking truth to power?

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[455] Said, *Representations*, p. xii.

4.3   Part II

Previous critical studies of *Love in Exile* focus on the narrator's political crisis as a psychological[456] or as a moral dilemma.[457] Differently from these critical studies, I argue that it is the narrator's frustrated desire to commit to his public role to educate and inform the Arabic reading public about current political events in Egypt and Israel-Palestine that accounts for his inner turmoil and physical fatigue. The narrator's intellectual crisis is best exemplified by a watershed moment in the novel where the Israeli military invades Lebanon, and carries out massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in the summer of 1982. These real-world political events in the novel's historical present shake the passive and pessimistic position he has adopted as his *raison d'être* for the long period of his exile from Egypt.

4.3.1   Pre-exile Phase: The Public Writer as a Nationalist

It is tempting to read the period before Al-Ustaz*'s* physical exile from Egypt as a beginning in the sense that Said imputed to this word: as a provisional starting point, which is often tied up in a more complex network of political relations. Manar, the protagonist's wife, casts light on an unacknowledged part in his national and ideological affiliation before he has been exiled from Egypt. When the protagonist recalls the details of everyday life between him and his wife, many veiled facts concerning his role as a public intellectual are brought to the fore. Al-Ustaz's past relationship with Manar elucidates how his public performance as a

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[456] See Julia Borossa, 'The extensibility of psychoanalysis in Ahmed Alaidy's Being Abbas el Abd and Bahaa Taher's *Love in Exile*', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47.4 (2011), 404-415. Julia Borossa explores the impact of the constraining power of the superego on freedom and authority by framing them in the non-Eurocentric methodology of psychoanalysis.

& See Evangeline A. Jemi, 'Silhouette of Ordeals in Bahaa Taher's Love in Exile', *IJELLH: International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, 5.5 (April 2016), pp. 465-470<http://ijellh.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/48.-Dr.A.Evangeline-Jemi-paper-final.pdf?cec7d6> [accessed 29 January 2017]. Jemi reads Taher's novel in terms of psychosomatic disorders and post-traumatic stress. Her paper 'Silhouette of Ordeals in Bahaa Taher's *Love in Exile*,' analyses the protagonist's response to the current global conflict in the reductive terms of obsessive-compulsive disorders.

[457] See Lorenzo Casini, 'Beyond Occidentalism: Europe and the Self in Present-day Arabic Narratives', *EUI Working Paper RSCAS*, 30 (European University Institute: Italy, September 2008).

& See also, Line Reichelt Føreland, *Love versus Political Commitment: An Arab Intellectual's Dilemma as Portrayed in Bahā' Ṭāhir's al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā (Love in Exile)*, (PhD Thesis, University Of Oslo, 2011). Both Casini and Føreland read the love experience and the intellectual duty of the protagonist in terms of a 'moral dilemma.'

journalist has been shaped across two national regimes: Manar's daily disputes with him correspond with the declining power of Egyptian nationalism, known as Nasserism and the ascending neo-liberalism during al-Sadat's regime and its 'electric shock policy'. As the novel reflects back on Manar's increasingly hostile feelings towards the protagonist, the latter's national consciousness and its impact on how he employs an orthodox national language in the two successive political regimes of Nasser and al-Sadat are also problematized.

Indeed, exile can also help us to make sense of the protagonist's political position as a public intellectual. As Said puts it, 'The pattern that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider is best exemplified by the condition of exile'.[458] In *Love in Exile*, the narrative makes use of analepsis to recall an earlier stage when the protagonist has undergone a 'metaphorical' exile from the political establishment. If the protagonist has already undergone the bitter feeling of being an 'outsider' a long time prior to his actual exile, how are we to make sense of his position as a 'disturber of the status quo' through such a critical period that anticipated his actual exile? As I proceed to argue, the professional language of news that the protagonist is forced to use before and during his exile, and which also draws on a nationalist vocabulary that is broadly supportive of Sadat's policies, might seem to neutralise his oppositional intellectual position as an 'outsider'.

Said argues that in exile, one 'must cultivate a scrupulous subjectivity' whereby he or she is able to challenge what Adorno called the 'administered world'.[459] The intellectual's subjectivity becomes a priority, whereby he or she can produce a relatively independent representation of reality apart from the political reality that is drawn by official voices and people in power. That might account for why 'a kind of consciousness that is skeptical'[460] is crucial for the formulation of such a subjectivity. The idea that 'beginnings' are bound up with exile is one that Said explored via his critical engagements with Gramsci, Auerbach, Adorno, and Vico; it is also one that regards exile, in an actual or metaphorical sense, as a

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[458] Said, *Representations*, p.53.
[459] Said, 'Reflections on Exile,' in *Reflections*, pp. 527-553 (p. 184).
[460] Said, *Representations*, p. 20. As Said argues, 'intellectual representations are the activity itself, dependent on a kind of consciousness that is skeptical, engaged, unremittingly devoted to rational investigation and moral judgment; and this puts the individual on record and on the line.'

prerequisite for secular thinking, where the exiled person rethinks the past by leaving aside all of his or her previous affiliations.

In my reading of *Love in Exile*, I do not address Said's idea of *beginnings* in the same way that I did in the previous two chapters. In Ashour's *Granada* and Soueif's *The Map of Love*, Abu Jaafar's extended family and Anna Winterbourne (also Amal al-Ghamarwi) trace their beginnings from a very specific point in the present of each of these respective historical novels. However, in Tahir's novel, the protagonist's examination of his public role as a nationalist might be understood as a beginning that formulates his secular consciousness as reflected via his writing in exile. This section of the chapter tries to make sense of the political significance of al-Ustaz's journalistic writing by assessing to what extent it reflects a critical consciousness of the predominant right-wing nationalist ideology of Sadat.

The protagonist's critique of al-Sadat's *Open-Door Policy* that has predated his exile attests to a reversal of this axiomatic Saidian refrain on beginnings and its secular connotations. In doing so, al-Ustaz has already managed to set himself free from the prevailing nationalism of the time. The following quotation is an interior monologue where the protagonist attempts to exonerate himself from any complicity in Sadat's national policy:

> [...] when the coup at the paper took place you refused to go with the flow? [...] you said to the person who suggested to you "Send a telegram of support to the President! The President likes you and he knows that you are quite a writer. Write an editorial against the power centres!"? You dismissed him politely, saying, "I am not sending a telegram and I am not writing an editorial." You know that he was going to convey what you said and you wanted him to do just that. You did not deliver an eloquent speech; you only wanted them to know that you were not for sale. So they knew and you paid the price.[461]

As the above extract suggests, the protagonist—as a journalist working for an official newspaper—has not participated in 'the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate'.[462] That might help to account for how al-Ustaz has been an 'outsider'. By refusing 'to go with the flow,' he has gone through a metaphorical exile before his actual exile.

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[461] *Love in Exile*, p. 74.
[462] See Said, *Representations*, p. 35. As Walter Benjamin said, 'whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate.'

In order to understand why he refuses to write against 'the power centres', it is important to take stock of his changing affiliations with respect to Nasserism and Pan-Arabism.[463] In spite of the protagonist's negative attitude towards al-Sadat's 'Open-Door Policy,' he is actually neither attacking al-Sadat's regime nor supporting Nasser's Pan-Arab nationalism. In the novel, the ideals and language of Nasserite socialism are regarded as obsolete, as the political banner which the protagonist used to hang on the wall of his office suggests. Under the map of 'the large father land, the Arab world', the banner reads 'A great state which protects rather than threatens, preserves rather than wastes'.[464] With the passage of time, the language and imagery of pan-Arabism has been transformed into a kind of 'decayed language', since those refrains of national unity themselves are out of synch with geopolitical relations in the post-1967 Arab world; what's more, the idea of Nasserism and its promise of a united bloc of Arab nations are seen as a 'lost cause'.

The tone of Nasserist nationalism, with its rhetoric of equality and social justice is also presented as outmoded in the brave new world of al-Sadat's presidency. When the protagonist is working to 'moralize reality' by criticizing the Open-Door policy, Manar turns the tables on him by making her own counterclaims that it is he who initiates the application of the open-door policy within the family. Her critique of her husband's performance discloses the protagonist's unacknowledged materialism. In Benda's terms, he is acting as if he were 'gazing as [a moralist] upon the conflict of human egotisms [which] preached in the name of humanity and justice'.[465] Manar highlights his performance as a form of 'double speak' caused by his use of a language. The following is an extract from the novel when the protagonist's wife stresses a disparity between the words signifying his national beliefs and his actual behaviour:

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[463] For a detailed study on Gamal Abel Nasser and 'the power centres' that the narrator of the novel references, see Ziauddin Biebers, *The personal secrets of Gamal Abdel Nasser* (Arabic source). Biebers renarrates how Mahmoud Aljayyar addressed the issue of the emergence and development of centers of power around the leader, how their power reached the point of blocking information about Nasser and the delivery of specific information only to him. Some of them were ready to die for Nasser. However, Jayyar, who was in charge of the post of president, highlighted the tragic facts that confirm that Nasser was a victim of a group of hypocrites who were strengthening their positions and taking advantage of their gains.
[464] *Love in Exile*, p. 23. *Al-Ustaz* asks the calligrapher of the paper to write for him this specific statement from Nasser's speech on that day when the union with Syria was announced.
[465] Julian Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, trans. by Richard Aldington (Transaction Publishers, 2007), p. 44.

> I did not say 'I am a revolutionary.' I did not tell stories about my poverty in the village and the suffering of the peasants and the justice that the revolution will bring about. Then she came closer to me, saying 'And I did not attack the open-door policy!'[466]

It can be postulated that al-Ustaz has turned into a mere 'faceless professional' when his language has been inadvertently instrumentalized to maintain the political status quo. Al-Ustaz*'s* critical attitude towards the open-door policy suggests that he is sympathetic to the interests of the poor by representing their affliction; however, his own performance does nothing to oppose the open-door policy. The *revolutionary* vocabulary does not ensure any degree of verisimilitude, but engenders a narrative of hypocrisy. His article gives a false impression that actual steps towards change have already been taken. Despite his use of a revolutionary lexicon, the narrative that al-Ustaz generates to attack al-Sadat's policies paradoxically serve to legitimise them. Below I quote at length from the protagonist's inner monologue where he realizes—via his wife's derisive words and looks—that he uses a corrupted language that makes what he calls 'a lie of life':

> I was only doing what others were doing! *To convince others with our words, of justice, equality, revolution, and sacrifice.* And yet we were living better, in more luxury, so we would get the inspiration! Neither I nor the others saw any contradiction in that. But Manar was watching me with indictment in her eyes when I met with friends and *spoke the resounding words*: Did you see? The uprising of January 18 and 19 …. The Shah and Sadat in Aswan, imagine! Egypt wants to bury Europe's nuclear waste in the desert [...] *Words and words and words* which we said as we felt our expensive neckties and looked around us as if spies were recording every word we said, as if each word would bring down the regime! [...] And what did we do the night Sadat visited Jerusalem? We deemed that we had done our duty entirely when we met in the café and argued and screamed and cried. Screw it all! Screw it! *What does it really have to do with the revolution?*[467]

By addressing new forms of suffering and inequality that have come into being in the seventies, Manar questions the efficacy of her husband's journalism. The Egyptians witness new economic challenges differently from those prevalent at Nasser's time. Al-Sadat's new polices have generated new modes of social protest among the lower-class citizens which culminated in 'the uprising of

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[466] *Love in Exile*, p. 43.
[467] Ibid, p. 43-44, *(emphasis is mine).*

January 18 and 19'.[468] If the protagonist had once thought that he had been defending the values of truth and justice, Manar's derision projects him as a 'liar'. And if 'the purpose of the intellectual's activity is to advance human freedom and knowledge,' the protagonist falls short in achieving this goal by failing to develop a worldly narrative that helps Egyptians to connect their lived experience of the economic crisis to the impact of the open-door policy. In Benda's terms, al-Ustaz has 'played the game of political passions' via his own 'doctrines'.[469] Instead of providing the national reading public with alternative interpretations of political reality, he presents his views through a very cautious language.

It is through such a cautious use of language that the protagonist's self-censorship is made intelligible. The statement in the above extract provides a powerful example of just such a cautious language: '*Words and words and words* which we said as we felt our expensive neckties and looked around us as if spies were recording every word we said, as if each word would bring down the regime!'. Here, the image of expensive neckties and paranoia combine to evoke a sense of bourgeois intellectual quietism that has turned its back on the moral principles of public political duty associated with the profession of journalism.

Instead of providing incisive critical analysis of al Sadat's policies that might empower readers to take specific actions, *al Ustaz* seems to mollify the political passions of his readers. He participates—via a hesitant and hedging language—in ameliorating the harsh conditions that threaten the average standard of living among the general population by representing them as being surmountable. By doing so, his public performance might also be interpreted in terms of what Nixon calls the 'machinery of doubt', which serves to legitimate the neoliberal policies of the government.[470] By recalling Manar's critique of his public performance, the protagonist becomes alert to the limitations of his professional language—a kind of consciousness that might account for his later withdrawal from any public engagement in exile. More precisely, it becomes clearer to him that he has failed to

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[468] The Egyptian 'bread riots' of 1977 (in Arabic; intifāḍatul khobz, 'The Bread Intifada') affected most major cities in Egypt from 18–19 January 1977. The riots were a spontaneous uprising by hundreds of thousands of lower-class people protesting World Bank and International Monetary Fund-mandated termination of state subsidies on basic foodstuffs. As many as seventy-nine people were killed and over 550 injured in the protests, which were only ended with the deployment of the army and the re-institution of the subsidies.

[469] Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, p. 78.

[470] *Slow Violence*, pp. 39 & p. 60.

represent the suffering of the poor and the marginalized even as he claims to adhere to the universal standards of justice and freedom. As discussed above, al-Ustaz has aimed to 'represent a standpoint of some kind', yet this does not negate the fact that he was politically instrumentalized by two national successive regimes. His personal beliefs may seem to correspond with the national ideology of Nasser. Yet, during Sadat's regime—as his wife's sarcasm reveals—he gradually realizes the ineffectiveness of his style and his deluded sense of their impact on reading public. As the protagonist himself acknowledges in his exile, 'I lost interest in politics some time ago and perhaps I never was knowledgeable about it. I was *an intruder*. At one time I understood but now I know I was wrong'.[471]

To summarise, from his exilic perspective, al-Ustaz comes to understand that his public performance as an intellectual before his exile was a form 'double speak'. By representing ordinary Egyptians' economic and political woes in terms of a collective national crisis, his vocabulary only serves the interests of the middle-classes, who benefited from the open door-policy and the normalization with Israel. In the following section, I develop this reading further by considering how al-Ustaz tries to intervene in public discourse about international human rights violations in Pinochet's Chile and the Palestinian refugee camps of South Lebanon.

4.3.2 Exile Phase: Writer-Activism and Intervention in the Public Role

Building on Nixon's account of how the global media's marginalization of 'the environmentalism of the poor' exacerbates their suffering, I read *Love in Exile* as a novel that dramatizes the struggle of al-Ustaz and Ibrahim al-Mehallawi to publicise the causes of human suffering in Chile and Lebanon by making the human-rights violations 'visible' to a larger global audience. As Nixon puts it, 'How can we turn the long emergencies of slow violence into stories dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment and warrant political intervention, these emergencies whose repercussions have given rise to some of the most critical challenges of our time?'[472]

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[471] *Love in Exile*, p. 58, (*emphasis is mine*).
[472] *Slow Violence*, p.3.

The novel foregrounds two press conferences on the violation of human rights in Chile and the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon respectively—two humanitarian causes that neither the protagonist nor his journalist friend, Ibrahim al-Mehallawi, have been able to represent properly. I argue that their failure to speak publically about these human rights violations draw attention to the ways in which the temporality of the mainstream global media—its editorial insistence on soundbites and succinct descriptive prose—and its desire to depict scenes of spectacular violence serve to foreclose more in-depth discussion and critical analysis of routine forms of violence, dispossession, and poverty. *Al Ustaz*' initial silence on the Israeli attacks on Palestinian refugee camps in South Lebanon is demarcated by his apparent reluctance to write any long articles or columns. During his exile, the protagonist goes through a limbo stage where he decides to stop writing any detailed articles. As a foreign correspondent, he writes monthly reports in the form of a collage of press clippings gathered from all the newspapers published in the country where he lives; he combines these clippings together, and sends them to his newspaper in Egypt. In contrast, al-Mehallawi shows great enthusiasm to publicise the papers in his possession, which testify to the Israeli violation/abduction of the Palestinian soldiers in Lebanon at the hands of Saad Haddad men.[473] He searches for influential organizations that might convey his voice to a large audience.

The protagonist's intellectual responsibility to question and challenge all forms of human suffering is put in jeopardy since he is obliged to write reports that assimilate the prevailing national perspectives of the contemporary political regime in Egypt while excluding any reference to global conflicts. The narrator implicitly draws readers' attention to the national political frame of his newspaper in Egypt when he criticizes his editor-in-chief's articles that are confined to empty rhetoric about national progress; he is consistently talking about a 'spurt of development'. In a sardonic account of these articles, he says at one point: 'It appears every week in his articles. For many long years the spurt has been ceaselessly squirting out of the bottleneck [...]'.[474] One can infer from this comment that the narrator is disaffected with the editorial politics of the newspaper, and resigned to doing the bare minimum necessary to continue

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[473] Saad Haddad is a Lebanese Greek Catholic leader of the Israeli-supported militia in Southern Lebanon (Southern Lebanese Army) created by Israel in 1978.
[474] *Love in Exile*, p. 5.

working as a journalist. He prefers not to send any correspondence in the form of letters or reports to his office in Cairo as long as he gets his salary from his employer in Egypt. In doing so, the protagonist gives up not only his professional commitment as a public intellectual as his job entails, but also his political commitment with respect to global conflicts. As he puts it, in a tone of desperation, when he was about to write a report on a conference he is attending: '[...] why bother the editor-in-chief or myself? The salary will keep coming, that's what matters. Let's enjoy the beautiful day'.[475] Al-Mehallawi, on the other hand, represents the only optimistic figure in the novel as he still has wide hopes that he can deliver his voice to the public. Such hopes are not entirely ill-founded; after all, he works for an independent magazine in Lebanon which provides him with a platform to publish his personal views. Yet, this public platform is still insufficient for addressing a larger audience. Al-Mehallawi is unable to convince any Western paper to publish his independent account of what is going on in the political arena in Lebanon, and the abduction and torture of Palestinian refugees.

This first impression of the two journalists' public performances as intellectuals is complicated when one considers the novel's critical representation of press conferences. Indeed, we cannot simply interpret the protagonist's withdrawal from public life as compared to his friend's positive attitude as a sign of their respective political affiliations; on the contrary, their pessimism and optimism are problematized via the language of the press. I argue that the idea of publicity as manifested in writer-activism becomes problematic when al-Mehallawi (at the first conference) and al-Ustaz (at the second conference) are not able to publicize the testimonies they have listened to. Therefore, I question the limitations of press conferences as platforms for writing-activism when they project testimonies without a public record. For the performance of these testimonies to international journalists in press conferences will make little difference if they are not translated, transmitted, and communicated to a global public readership in terms that will move them to act.

4.3.2.1   A Cosmopolitan Writer or a Border Intellectual?

In exile, the act of writing itself comes out of a complicated process whereby the protagonist's earlier sense of national consciousness, which was formed prior

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[475] Ibid.

to his exile, coexists with his increasing scepticism about the restrictions of the language of the press. Line Reichelt Føreland (2011) claims that the protagonist's initial position whereby he is neither unwilling to send any reports to his national newspaper nor to publish them in any Western newspaper indicates a 'lack of purposefulness or being unable to commit'.[476] He epitomises the protagonist's failure in a dilemma that he is 'trying to solve during his 'journey' toward reaching a higher consciousness'.[477] However, against this limited view, the protagonist's public disengagement—unlike that of his colleague—comes as a result of a thorough understanding of the politics of journalism and the limitations of a predominant journalistic language that is shaped by national and international forces.

In Tahir's novel, the language of the news is employed effectively to emphasize how the possibilities of an Egyptian cosmopolitan narrative are drawn by international forces. *Love in Exile* foregrounds the 'Camp David accords' as an epitome of how international relationships limits the possibilities of such a cosmopolitan narrative and/or how the Egyptian official journalism contributes to the new world order drawn by American economic and military hegemony, as it is embedded in the national/strategic goals of the normalization of Egypt's relations with Israel.

In their debate, both al-Ustaz and al-Mehallawi evaluate their current positions as lost or suppressed voices. Al-Ustaz tends to historicize their ossified situations as public writers in the light of an overstated trope in the literary history of Arabic literature—the poet–ruler relationship. Al-Ustaz draws an analogy between their disempowered positions and the degradation of the poets' status in the modern times when compared with their compatriots among famous figures in ancient Arabic dynasties:

> It occurred to me that in the past we knew the politicians thanks to poets. We know
> the rulers *Sayf al-Dawla* and *Kafur* because of *Mutanabbi*; not vice versa. But today
> we want to know the poet through the politician. We kill our poets with silence [...] I
> wanted to ask Ibrahim, 'If it is true that poets are the nation's conscience, what is the
> fate of a nation that forgets its poets?[478]

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[476] See Føreland, *Love versus Political Commitment,* p. 64.
[477] Ibid.
[478]*Love in Exile*, p. 34.

Chapter 4

By drawing such an analogy, al-Ustaz emphasizes how the loss of their public voices as journalists under the current regime in Egypt, and the contemporary geopolitical order, of which it is a part, is ineluctable. Ibrahim's stance, when compared with that of al-Ustaz, suggests a very limited understanding of 'the representational challenges' placed on Egyptian journalists working under Sadat's regime; he thinks of publicity as a matter of geographical and spatial constraints. In contrast, al-Ustaz*'s* stance shows a more nuanced understanding of the material and political constraints placed on Egyptian journalists. When Ibrahim wonders, 'why don't you come to Beirut?', al-Ustaz says: 'I had no choice. You know that our paper does not have any business in any Arab country since the peace treaty with Israel and I need my salary to raise my children. I don't have any other income'.[479] Ibrahim's suggestion that they can exchange places to enjoy each other's privileges[480] shows how his vision is globally constrained. The protagonist's reply, however, reveals how his worldly perspective as an exile has led him to understand the limits of his public position as a professional journalist. It is through his focalising consciousness as a public intellectual, in other words, that readers are made aware of a vast, global network of economic and political power relations, which use professionals and experts as its political arm.

In a related discussion, Bill Ashcroft relates Said's exilic perspective to his account of the public intellectual. As he puts it, '[Said's] intellectual is always someone who opposes power [...] an outsider who must stay inside to be heard'.[481] In Ashcroft's account, 'the [Saidian] public intellectual must be exiled to generate effective criticism, [and] must journey into the centre to make his criticism heard'.[482] However, the turn of events in *Love in Exile* would seem to negate this idea. Al-Ustaz becomes a border intellectual, but he has no access to the centre; consequently, he is unable to address either the national or the international

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Sayf al-Dawla ('Sword of the Dynasty') was the founder of the Emirate of Aleppo, encompassing most of northern parts of Western Jazira. He was the most prominent member of the Hamdaniad dynasty (a Shi'a Muslim Arab dynasty of northern Iraq (al-Jazirah) and Syria (890-1004). *& Al-Mutanabbi* was a famous Arab poet.

[479] *Love in Exile*, p. 40.

[480] Ibrahim's privileges can be interpreted aesthetically in terms of 'immersion journalism' where the center he enjoys is the actual site of the event that he wants to cover versus al-Ustaz's center as Ibrahim views it; is manifested in his being annexed to power/the Western humanism. I will explain this further later on in this chapter.

[481] Bill Ashcroft, 'Exile and representation: Edward Said as public intellectual', in *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual,* ed. by Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly, Melbourne University Press, 2007), pp. 75-95 (p. 67).

[482] Ibid.

reader. In exile, he has lost his previous authority to address the national readers, and has no means to compensate for this loss of authority as an outsider in a European country. Considered in the terms of Said's account of the public intellectual, *al Ustaz*'s position seems particularly disempowering. As Said puts it, 'To deliberately not belong to these authorities is in many ways not to be able to effect direct change and, alas, even at times to be relegated to the role of a witness who testifies to a horror otherwise unrecorded'.[483] As an outsider, al-Ustaz loses contact with the powerful 'circles' that might help validate his perspective as a journalist, and thereby enable him to change the international public's understanding of the political situation in the contemporary Arab world:

> I found out that journalists and others in general here did not welcome social relations that were useful. As I was not an important source of information and was not connected to influential circles, they didn't make an effort to get to know me. I considered this solitude part of the punishment time I was doing in exile [...].[484]

The two press conferences in the novel question the effectiveness of the writer's intervention in the public sphere. More precisely, the collective work of such organizations/press conferences draw attention to how journalists might 'be relegated to the role of a witness' when they cannot publicize their voice beyond these non-official gatherings. The following sections consider in more detail the representation of these press conferences, and their wider implications for understanding the constraints that are placed on the Egyptian intellectual in exile.

4.3.2.2 Unpublished Story News, Unrecorded Narratives: The (In)validity of the Intervention in the Professional Language and Public Sphere

In *Love in Exile*, 'The International Doctors Committee for Human Rights' that was held to denounce and comment in public on the human violation in Chile parallels a later press conference that condemns the human crimes against the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon at the end of the novel. The journalists who attended that conference are not able to publish the testimony of a Chilean citizen named Pedro Ibanez, which recounts how he and his brother (Freddie) have been exposed to physical torture at the hands of the National Security Administration

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[483] Said, *Representations*, p. xvii.
[484] *Love in Exile*, p. 77.

(NSA). What happens during and after this conference provides a good example of how public intellectuals fail 'to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug'.[485] The conference ends without any hope of publishing what the journalists have just listened to in the conference. As the narrator puts it:

> [...] they were leaving hurriedly as if they were running away from the whole place and the whole story. I know that before lunch we would all have forgotten Pedro and Freddie and Chile and that who had to send cables or news stories to their newspapers would look for other topics'.[486]

What stands between Pedro's testimony and the publicization of his story is unacknowledged, yet it is a tacit form of power. The protagonist and his compatriots are alive to its influence and how it imposes upon them certain strategies and conventional rules for covering the international news. *Al-Ustaz* alludes to this tacit knowledge, which he shares with the other journalists when he tells Ibrahim that 'Pedro Ibanez will be lucky if any newspaper in the world published five lines about his story'.[487]

Five lines is clearly insufficient space to do justice to Pedro Ibanez's powerful and harrowing testimony of detention and torture in Pinochet's Chile, and to analyse its wider humanitarian and geopolitical implications. As the novel makes clear, the conventional rules of space allocated to articles, columns, and reports are a generic feature of all national newspapers, and are not specific to the Egyptian press. As he says to Ibrahim, 'As for our newspaper, as you know, all world news is covered in less than five lines'. As an experienced and somewhat disaffected senior journalist, the protagonist provides a discerning evaluation of what would, in all likelihood, take place if he were to attempt to write an account of Pedro's testimony:

> It's best if I shut up completely. This way I'll spare him [the editor-in-chief] from the awkward apologies, "I swear to God, my friend, your letter arrived too late," or "We actually put in there but at the last moment news from the presidency came and ate all up the space," Or "You know? I am conducting an inquiry on so and so in the foreign

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[485] Said, *Representations*, p. 11.
[486] *Love in Exile*, p. 21.
[487] Ibid, p. 22.

desk because he did not show me the letter. I have actually turned him over to Legal Affairs," and so forth.[488]

In this extract, *al-Ustaz* shows how the authority of the editor-in-chief is considered a figure of executive power, who uses the newspaper's editorial policy to impose arbitrary decisions on what can and cannot be printed. Considered in relation to the superficial content of his monthly reports, such anecdotes work to highlight the limitations of corporate media organisations as public platforms.

In *Representations of the Intellectual*, Said has little to say about the political role of newspaper editors, and their complicity with government policy-makers. In a discussion of the American news media in *Covering Islam*, however, Said offers a suggestive account of how the media platform that is afforded to him by American media organisations in the United States has an impact on editorial decisions in Cairo; at the same time, he is clearly mindful of the constraints that an editor-in-chief might impose on foreign newspaper correspondents, when compared with local journalists. As he puts it:

> Doing a spot on the NBC Nightly News will cause a Cairo correspondent to put things differently than might *Time magazine's* Cairo bureau chief in an article prepared over a longer period of time. Then too, there is the way a correspondent's foreign report is recast by the editors at home: another set of unconscious political and ideological constraints comes into play here. [489]

Said's brief yet suggestive comments certainly help to elucidate the constraints—unconscious or otherwise—that are placed on *al Ustaz* as a foreign correspondent. Against such constraints, the novel implies that Brigitte Schaefer's translation of Pedro's testimony into English makes a valuable intervention in the public sphere, even though Brigitte is not a professional journalist. When *al-Ustaz* meets Brigitte for the first time after the end of the press conference; he praises her translation despite being unprofessional telling her, 'what you did was the only *human* thing at that meeting'.[490]

The translation Brigitte provides in English for Pedro's Hispanic testimony draws attention to the passive role of journalists such as *al Ustaz,* who are assigned to the narrow role of merely listing events. As a public intellectual, a journalist

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[488]Ibid, p. 5.
[489] *Covering Islam*, p. 48.
[490] *Love in Exile*, p. 49, (*emphasis is mine).*

should be able to offer their 'point of view'[491] by adopting a particular tone and vocabulary of their own.[492] In other words, an intellectual should have a 'voice'.[493] It seems particularly ironic, then, that it is a translator rather than a professional journalist, who is framed as the effective public intellectual in this scene. Brigitte's translation contains a variety of 'inflectional tones'.[494] At the beginning of the conference, she apologises to the audience for being 'slow' since translation is not her profession. As Pedro narrates his story, Brigitte becomes a little speedy as she feels more confident until she reaches the stage where he gives the details of how the passenger that he drove in his car was chased and killed by the NSA, and how Pedro himself had been shot. At this point, her voice rises and then becomes monotonous again:

> Pedro was speaking in *a monotonous voice* and Brigitte was translating *the same monotone* as she shifted her eyes between him and us in the fall. But I noticed that her face was gradually hardening and her voice rising a little when Pedro was pointing to the spot where the bullet entered his side. Dr Muller urged him on with a gesture from his index finger pointing at the watch […] Pedro's tone changed from the moment that Muller urged him on. Words were now rushing out of his mouth in a disjointed manner. Brigitte was having a hard time following him and at times apologized to us and asked him to repeat. *The narrative was no longer neat* […][495]

If Brigitte has failed to maintain a 'narrative distance'[496] between her own voice and Pedro's words, the pace and intonation of her performance can be seen to shape the story in a way that helps to guide the audience's reaction. What is

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[491] For more about point of view and tone, see Jack Hart, 'A Storyteller's Lexicon', in *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers' Guide*, ed. by Mark William Kramer and Wendy Louise Call, (*from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University,* Plume, 2007, pp. 235-239 (p. 235).

[492] Level of diction is the degree of formality of a story or a language. Unlike the writer's voice, which is relatively constant, the diction may be shift, depending on the subject and the writer's goal.

[493] See Hart, 'A Storyteller's Lexicon', in *Telling True Stories,* ed. by Mark Kramer and Wendy Call, pp. 235-239 (p. 238). Hart defines voice as' the overall personality of the writer as perceived through the text.'

[494] As Nixon addresses the idea of Writer-Activism as embedded in a 'vexed intellectual' who uses a diversity of styles. Among those who endeavour to address national and international audience are Wangari Maathai, Arundhati Roy, Indra Sinha, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Abdulrahman Munif, Njabulo Ndebele, Nadine Gordimer, Jamaica Kincaid, Rachel Carson, and June Jordan are alive to the inhabited impact of corrosive transnational forces. Arundhati Roy in particular shows a noticeable emphasis on the use of such 'inflectional tones' to address international audience.

[495] *Love in Exile*, p. 15, (*emphasis is mine*).

[496] Phillipe Lopate, 'The Personal Essay and the First-Person Character', in *Telling True Stories*, ed. by Mark Kramer and Wendy Call, pp. 78-81 (p. 78). The definition of 'distance' is 'turning yourself into a character in your writing requires the understanding that you can never project your whole self. You must be able to pick yourself apart.'
See also Jack Hart, 'A Storyteller's Lexicon,' in *Telling True Stories,* pp. 235-239 (p. 238). Hart defines psychological distance as 'the separation the narrator maintains from the protagonist.'

more, these non-verbal features of Brigitte's speech creates a 'memorable effect', which lives on beyond the moment of translation; such an effect is reinforced by *al-Ustaz*'s description of her performance as 'human'. It may be true that the transmission of Brigitte's translation of Pedro's testimony is thwarted by the overdetermined constraints of international news reportage and the agendas of global media corporations. Yet, the novel's staging of Brigitte's live and impassioned translation stands as a counterpoint to the limitations of journalism.

4.3.2.3 Ain-al-Helweh Event: Another Unrecorded Narrative/Unpublished News Story

During a fictional meeting of the International Doctors Committee, a woman journalist, who is one of the conference delegates loudly declares 'God damn this profession!' In response to this, the French journalist Bernard says, 'Which profession? Journalism, National Security, Administration, medicine, electricity, or taxi driving?' then he kicked the metal chair and said, 'or the world?''' The coverage of news on the Israeli transgressions in Ain-al-Helweh and the massacres in Sabra and Shatila elucidates what Bernard means by 'the world'. Considered in relation to the soft power of the editors-in-chiefs, the corporate language of the news can be seen to subordinate the voices of the journalists to a very small circle of specialists. This cult of expertise paradoxically prevents journalists from using language as an interpretative and critical tool. Instead of writing detailed informative articles that guide their readers' reaction, they obediently generate an incoherent narrative that assimilates predetermined lines drawn by a hydra-like system that uses the jargon of expertise. In response to this, *Al-Ustaz* comes to the conclusion that the language of news is a very limited tool that only addresses the experts and causes a real challenge for the average reader when they scrutinize the Arabic, English, and French papers in an attempt to 'extract something from between the lines, to predict the change that would finally take place in Lebanon and in Egypt and everywhere in the homeland'.[497]

The professional language of the news that produces the crisis of misrepresentation supports the continuation of violence and crimes against humanity. This is particularly true if we consider how this language reinforces the corporate ethos of multinational press agencies that support the interests of global

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[497] *Love in Exile*, p. 133.

capitalism. The crimes against humanity that are represented in the novel by the massacres and war crimes in Lebanon run in parallel with another invisible crime. What happens in *Ain-al-Helweh* and the *Rashdiyyeh* refugee camps as narrated by the Norwegian nurse, Marianne Eriksson, who has just returned from Lebanon epitomises and expands the novel's earlier concerns with the limitations of the press news. *Al-Ustaz* fails to reconstruct the nurse's testimony in order to counter the misinformation that is disseminated in both the Western and Arabic newspapers. This testimony in particular is essential for explaining what was going in Lebanon as the nurse herself emphasizes. She is a 'professional nurse', and thus she provides a professional estimation of the magnitude of the crisis there. While all the articles on that topic are briefly covered using quite clichéd headlines, Eriksson's testimony could provide a more detailed and well-informed account of the political scene in Lebanon. In their interview with the Norwegian nurse, Bernard takes notes and *al-Ustaz* makes a tape-recording. Throughout the running dialogue between them, Bernard repeatedly apologizes for her. As he says, 'forgive us,' *al-Ustaz* keeps his eyes away from her, while she looks straight at him.

The ways in which *al-Ustaz* and Bernard record the nurse's testimony, in addition to the articles that Eriksson tries to send to his newspaper in Cairo draw attention to the many injustices that are committed in the name of professional journalism. The performance of recording and notetaking belies a deliberate intention not to narrativize or publicise the nurse's testimony; it is as if they were escaping from the story she is about to tell them in the same manner the journalist had fled 'The International Doctors Committee for Human Rights'. This may be a consequence of the technology that is used to record the testimony; indeed, for some journalists, the tape recorder, like 'the reporter's notebook', can make the reporter 'intellectually lazy'.[498] Yet the novel's mediation of this interview also draws attention to the tensions between the value of Marianne's testimony and the economic language of journalism.

In *Love in Exile,* Bernard and *al-Ustaz* exemplify how expert or senior journalists are alert to the dynamics of the coded language of news when compared

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[498] Jacqui Banaszynski, 'To Tape or Not to Tape', in *Telling True Stories,* ed. by Mark Kramer and Wendy Call, p.29 (p. 29). As Banaszynski puts the problem with tape-recording, 'A Tape recorder can be as intrusive as the reporter's notebook. Tape recorders make me intellectually lazy [....] During the course of an interview, my mind filters information, moving toward the core of my story. I found that when I listened to recordings and transcribed them, it was as though I had erased all the filtered, distilled information in my brain [...]'.

with non-professional or amateur writers/or beginners. The deliberate choice of words and tone show how journalists can use the same language in different ways to convey different meanings. When Bernard says to *al-Ustaz*, 'This is Marianne Erikson a nurse from Norway who left Lebanon yesterday,' the nurse corrects him in the following way: 'I was *kicked out* of Lebanon. *There is a difference*'.[499] Bernard implies that the language of the press is 'economic' or 'concise'. From the very beginning of the interview, Bernard encourages her to be brief: 'Listen, Marianne, we don't want to overburden you. I've taken down the most important points'.[500] Nonetheless, Marianne's way of telling her experience refuses the authority of Bernard's rules. She insists on providing a detailed story which recalls specific situations that consolidate her point of view while Bernard refers to the notebook in his hand, 'Yes, Marianne, I told you I've written a summary'.[501]

Marianne Erickson provides the protagonist with a detailed story that features all the constitutive elements of a 'dramatic' or 'complicated story'. She specifies the names of characters and places, mentions the names of the hospitals in *Sidon*, designates directions and routes. She narrates how the Belgian doctor (Francis Capet) had tried his best to save the injured people by asking the Israeli soldiers' permission to take the wounded outside the refugee camp and that he was met by rejection because he has been ordered to hand over 'the terrorists' or *'Baader Meinhoff'*—the Palestinian doctors and nurses who worked with her in the clinic. Also, she mentions how the clinic she works for has run out of medicine until she reaches the point that 'there was nothing left to offer by way of first aid except words and putting covers over the face of the dead'.[502] Referring to the obstacles that stand in the way of publishing her story in his newspaper, al-Ustaz apologizes to Marianne as Bernard has done before with the words: 'Forgive us'.

On the face of it, the Norwegian nurse does not understand why *al-Ustaz* and Bernard repeatedly apologise. And yet she persistently pleads with them to publish her testimonial experience: 'I don't understand why you and Bernard are apologizing. But please, do something. Write the truth'.[503] The implications of Marianne's injunction here are significant for the wider argument I am making

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[499] *Love in Exile*, p.137
[500] Ibid, p. 138.
[501] Ibid, p. 142.
[502] Ibid, p. 140.
[503] Ibid, p. 144.

about the novel's comment on the gender politics of the Egyptian public intellectual; for it is the female figure of a Norwegian nurse that witnesses the conditions inside the Palestinian refugee camps of South Lebanon, and who also unwittingly draws attention to the limits of the male-dominated profession of journalism. As Bernard shakes Marianne's hand 'with a tired smile on his lips', he says, 'Write the truth? That is more difficult than saving your wounded in Lebanon, believe me'.[504] The representation of the truth is beyond their power; it is ideologically-biased, relative, and multi-faceted, especially when is it constrained by the geo-political and geo-cultural forces of American imperialism, as they are lived and experienced in Sadat's Egypt and the wider Arab world.

Reading *Love in Exile* with and against Said's reflections on journalism can certainly help to shed light on the diffuse power relationships that exist between the media apparatus and the state. For Said, news 'is neither the result of deterministic laws, nor of conspiracy, nor of dictatorship. It is the result of the culture [...]'.[505] For *al-Ustaz*, however, the culture of journalism masks a more complex set of power relationships that work to legitimate the emerging global order. The articles he sends to his national newspaper enact the ways in which a professional journalistic style codifies the detail of humanitarian atrocities. By framing the killing of Palestinian refugees in South Lebanon in a dispassionate and formal language, for instance, the newspaper forecloses a meaningful political response to the events that are described:

> [...] He looks at the smiling Abd al-Nasser I asked him, *"What should I do?* I've tried everything. I wrote a story at least one-half page long with the headline, 'Europe horrified by Beirut massacres.' It was published in a half column with the headline, 'European countries criticize Israel's stand.' In one article, I quoted at length paragraphs from reports by the Red Cross and human rights groups which talked about shelling hospitals and the use of internationally banned phosphorus bombs and cluster bombs, and all of what was deleted from the article. Every time *I tone down my language* so that the article might be published. I quote what neutral sources say and I don't express my opinions [....] *"What should I do? What should I write? In any case I cannot include Marianne's testimony in the monthly letter"* [....] Yes, Bernard, more difficult than saving the wounded in Beirut.[506]

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[504] Ibid, p. 144
[505] *Covering Islam*, pp. 48-49.
[506] *Love in Exile*, p. 146, (*emphasis is mine*).

Tahir employs the picture of Abd al-Nasser that *al-Ustaz* hangs on the wall as a metafictional device; this device draws attention to the protagonist's nationalist affiliations, and how they continue to inform his writing. In this quoted extract, it is as if *al-Ustaz* is judging Nasser; in so doing he could be seen to project his own failings as a journalist onto this political figure, and the nationalist ideals of decolonization and Pan-Arab unity that Nasser's government symbolised. In the neoliberal world of al-Sadat's Egypt, *al-Ustaz* suggests that such ideals are belated and powerless to challenge the existing geopolitical order.

By suggesting that it is the gendered figures of the translator and the nurse who foreground the limitations of the masculine public intellectual to speak truth to power, *Love in Exile* points to counter-public spaces beyond the hegemonic form of platforms, where the voices of the dispossessed can be heard. Significantly, these counter-public spaces are also gendered. Brigitte's translation of Pedro's testimony and the testimony of Marianne Erikson provide a comment on the limitations of the restricted format of print journalism, and the failure of (mostly male) public intellectuals to change and influence the public understanding of the routine violence associated with neo-colonial dispossession in the Arab world and neoliberalism in the Global South.

The novel also raises questions about the position of the narrator's wife, Manar, as a public intellectual. Specifically, it suggests that the only way she is able to intervene in the nationalist discourse of the press is by reaching a compromise with Sadat's policies. Such a position stands in sharp contrast with some of the other female figures in the novel, who mediate testimonies of global suffering. What's more, Manar's pragmatic decision to adopt the language of religious nationalism in order to continue to have a voice in mainstream public discourse complicates some of Said's claims about the secular figure of the intellectual—an assumption that extends to a consideration of feminist intellectuals. In a brief account of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Said writes of how Woolf exposed her argument in the act of writing as a woman rather than 'telling the truth directly':

> Exposing her argument, Woolf says, is an alternative to telling the truth directly, since where sex is concerned controversy rather than debate is likely to ensue: 'one can only give one's audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the limitations, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker.' This is tactically disarming of course, but it also involves personal risk. That combination of

vulnerability and rational argument provides Woolf with a perfect opening through which she can enter her subject, not as a dogmatic voice providing the *ipsissima verba*, but as an intellectual representing the forgotten "weaker sex," in a language perfectly suited for the job.[507]

Woolf's reflections on the condition of women writers in Britain are clearly very different from the experiences of women journalists in late twentieth-century Egypt. Yet, one might approach Manar's negotiation with the rhetoric of nationalism in her newspaper column in terms that are quite similar to those which Said outlines in his discussion of Virginia Woolf. We have already seen how *al-Ustaz* rejects the Nasserite rhetoric of nationalism, on the grounds that it has been stripped of any political significance in the context of Anwar Sadat's administration. In contrast to the ostensible political quietism of her husband, in an attempt to gain back some of the lost column inches, she adopts the language of religious nationalism that underpins Sadat's right-wing political agenda. A more detailed consideration of debates about 'Islamic feminism' and 'secular feminism'[508] lie beyond the scope of the novel (and therefore of this chapter). Suffice to say that Manar's noticeable shift in tone signals a desire to remain a professional journalist in a changing political context, as the following extract suggests:

> I found some issues of my Cairene newspaper, glanced at the headlines, and put them aside. I kept the Thursday issue and opened it to page eight where Manar published her weekly column. But it was not there. Instead there was a religious article: 'Between Sharia[509] and History,' so I put the paper on the top of other papers [...] looking distractedly at the picture published with the religious article. It was a profile of the face of a veiled woman, with a white scarf covering her hair and surrounding her face [...] I know this face. This face is familiar [...] it was Manar. Yes, it is the Women's Page as usual with her name in the Middle. There was a subtitle in small font under the headline: "Between Sharia and History: What happened to Women's rights?" I quickly scanned the article was full of quotations and citations of religious reference books. *It*

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[507] Said, *Representations*, p. 34.

[508] I build my understanding of 'Islamic Feminism' versus 'Secular feminism' by drawing primarily upon the writings of Margot Badran, Leila Ahmed among other prominent figures in the field. I focused on Margot's Badran's article, 'Between Secular and Islamic Feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and Beyond', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 1.1 (Winter 2005), pp. 6-28.

[509] *Sharia* (as defined in Oxford Dictionary) means Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith and Sunna), prescribing both religious and secular duties and sometimes retributive penalties for lawbreaking. It has generally been supplemented by legislation adapted to the conditions of the day, though the manner in which it should be applied in modern states is a subject of dispute between Muslim traditionalists and reformists.

was not Manar's usual style. She had *toned down* her attack on men for whom she used to save words like bullets, the mildest of which were such expressions as: 'man's historical tyranny,' 'jurists of ignorance and lies who break the neck of the texts,' and the like. This time the strongest sentence in her article was something to the effect that if men had understood the sharia properly, equality would have been achieved a long time ago because in the sharia women's rights were equal to their duties. Men have additional rights because they have additional duties.[510]

Unlike her ex-husband, Manar is able to address the national reader. Yet, at the same time, her chosen tone raises questions about her commitment to the principles that Said attributes to the public intellectual: of empowering readers through 'critical' thinking and participation in secular debates. If Manar once accused *al-Ustaz* of being 'miserable' as he struggled to find a way to express his critical views within the constraints of the states, she now chooses (what the novel presents as) an easy option by taking on the predominant religious-nationalist idiom of the political establishment. As the narrator puts it, 'If you can't beat them, join them! [...] Manar is following the path of virtue and you are going down the slippery slope of vice'.[511] Here, the narrator's presentation of the two options available to Egyptian intellectuals in terms of a moral dichotomy between vice and virtue invite readers to question that dichotomy. By suggesting that he is 'going down the slippery slope of vice', in other words, the narrator suggests that *al Ustaz*'s 'vice' might actually be understood as a sign of his principled secularism, which not only rejects the religious terms of a moral dichotomy between vice and virtue, but also refuses to embrace the terms of religious nationalism in order to gain a voice as journalist in the Egyptian public sphere, as his ex-wife has done.

Manar's articles address Muslim women's rights within the terms of a very limited Islamic perspective—an orthodox or traditional view that is consistent with the representatives of Islamic fundamentalism. More precisely, she identifies the dilemma of Muslim women in a way that does little to challenge the religious foundations of Sadat's political regime.[512] In doing so, Manar reproduces certain

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[510] *Love in Exile*, pp. 202-203, (*emphasis is mine*).

[511] Ibid, p. 204.

[512] See *Covering Islam*, p. xvii. As Said argues, discourse on Islam, if not absolutely vitiated, then certainly colored by the political, economic, and intellectual situation in which it arises: this is as true of East as it of West [...] it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that *all* discourse on Islam has an interest in some authority of power.'

[512]*Covering Islam*, p. 40. Said ascribes those neo-orientalist modes of the representation of Islam to the Western media and how such new modes replicate the old ones by (re)dividing the world into Orient and Occident by foregrounding 'the so-called Third World'. Said condemns those

neo-orientalist modes of thinking, which Said castigates in *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam.* The new format of the women's page reinforces a reductive, neo-orientalist 'image of Islam' by representing the Muslim world as an 'unthinking essence'.[513] By framing the women's page in this way, however, the novel also invites readers to see how such essentialist representations of Muslim women work to shore up Sadat's political hegemony.

If Manar's decision to toe a particular editorial line in order to keep her job draws attention to the constraints placed on Arab women intellectuals in Sadat's Egypt, they also highlight the challenges facing all intellectuals. We can also infer that Manar is committing the same 'crime against humanity' by her adoption of the monotonal religious (and not the secular) tone. Particularism as addressed in the very aesthetic language of press that Manar adopts alongside her new religious tone generates and abets a compartmentalized and 'essentialist' version of Egyptian and Arab history instead of contrapuntal and counter-narratives.

4.3.2.4 The Writer as an Activist: Gramsci, Benda, and Universal Humanism

In *Representations of the Intellectual*, Said presents Antonio Gramsci and Julian Benda as neither antagonists nor intellectual bedfellows, but as two complementary models through which an intellectual can develop their public performance. As Pannian contends, 'Said incorporates the revolutionary edge/the counter point in Gramsci's thought and assimilates it with Benda's philosophy of universal principles. In other words, Said's intellectual is a hybrid figure, part Gramscian organic intellectual and part Bendasque intellectual and internationalist critic'.[514] Said approaches Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' as a pragmatic figure, who is able to challenge the political status quo, with a view to putting an end to people's suffering. In this context, Said explains the vitality and vividness of organic intellectuals in opposition to 'traditional intellectuals'. Unlike

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representations that are based in a predetermined ideological framework that id filled with prejudice. He mentions many of the names of prominent figures, Christian thinkers, and literary figures who abet the exposition of such reductive image of Islam, such as V.S. Naipaul, Albert Hourani, Carlyle, Mark Twain, Herman Melville, and Bill and William Beeman of Brown University. Prasad Pannian, *Edward Said and the Question of Subjectivity* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2016), p. 96.

[514] Prasad Pannian, *Edward Said and the Question of Subjectivity* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2016), p. 96.

organic intellectuals, who 'are always on the move, on the make', and 'are actively involved in society, [insofar as] they constantly struggle to change minds and expand markets,' traditional intellectuals, 'such as teachers, priests, and administrators [...] continue to do the same thing from generation to generation'.[515] For Gramsci, what gives organic intellectuals a plausible degree of reliability and effectiveness is their ability to coordinate and work towards a collective goal. Said highlights this point in Gramsci's thought when he says, 'organic intellectuals, whom Gramsci saw as directly connected to classes or enterprises [...], used intellectuals to organize interests, gain more power, [and] get more control'.[516]

In contrast to Gramsci, Benda offers an 'attractive and compelling' model of intellectual engagement for Said because he believes that it is incumbent on the intellectual to 'to speak the truth to power' and because he believes that 'no worldly power is too big and imposing to be criticized and pointedly taken to task'.[517] Such a lofty ideal of the intellectual figure is not to be found in the fictional world of war-torn Lebanon that is evoked in *Love in Exile*, where the journalist's language is both shaped and shackled by a network of global powers that render 'truth' relative and ideologically constructed. On the contrary, al-Mehallawi's attempts to publicise the abduction and torture of Palestinian soldiers speaks to his old enthusiasm as a communist, even as such political ideals are subordinated to the profit-making imperatives of the capitalist news industry. As an 'organic intellectual', al-Mehallwai seeks to 'expand markets' and to 'get more control' through his contact with humanitarian organizations such as the 'International Doctors' network run by Dr. Muller. He aspires to publish accounts of Israeli military atrocities with the help of the leftist organizations in Europe, so that the refugees' crisis might be made visible to a larger audience. However, the novel also draws attention to the political forces that try to proscribe such oppositional voices. In a conversation with al-Mehallawai, Bernard acknowledges Israel's responsibility for the abduction of the Palestinian and Lebanese soldiers, yet emphasises that al-Mehallawi's documents would not meet the high standards of proof that are required by his editor-in-chief:

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[515] Said, *Representations*, p. 4.
[516] Ibid.
[517] Said, *Representations*, p. 8.

> Not enough. I told you I believe you, but how would the editor-in-chief believe me? What would I do if we received an official refutation and we are told that these are commandos and that we are encouraging terrorists, or more seriously, what if we are told that by defending these terrorists we are anti-Semitic?[518]

Here, Bernard suggests that any attempt to intervene in public discourse, in the context of Israel–Palestine, would be useless and ineffective because such an intervention would not be able to address or question the real powers that cause extreme violence in the Lebanese refugee camps.

In a similar vein, Muller's debate with al-Mehallawi suggests that there are similar reasons for not publishing his report: 'These are cases that fall within our mandate, but only tangentially. Couldn't you submit these papers to Amnesty International? They have more visibility than we do'.[519] Amnesty International certainly gave a platform to human-rights atrocities in Lebanon during the 1980s, yet by doing so within the universalising terms of its humanitarian mandate, it did not address the imperialist causes of this violence.[520] Further, Muller's refusal also suggests that the dissemination of reliable public information about the plight of Palestinian refugees is constrained by the limited economic resources that organisations such as his have at their disposal. As he puts it:

> We must send an investigating committee. Actually, we are a poor organization that operates on the donations of its members and most of them are old like me. Which means that even we secured the funding there would be a problem finding volunteers for the missions, I mean volunteers who are young and capable of doing the work.[521]

The point that Dr. Muller addresses then is how gathering information or seeking reliable sources of information—rather than the publication process—is as economically constrained as it is ideologically framed. The investigation process speaks to the challenges of 'immersion journalism,'[522] where 'empowered seeing' validates truth; and where only large corporate-style NGOs such as Amnesty International can conduct knowledge formation, while smaller humanitarian organizations struggle to compete.

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[518] *Love in Exile*, p. 80.
[519] Ibid, p. 47.
[520] See for example, '*Amnesty International*,' (January 1999).
[521] *Love in Exile*, p. 49.
[522] Immersion journalism or immersionism is a style of journalism similar to gonzo journalism. In the style, journalists immerse themselves in a situation and with the people involved. The final product tends to focus on the experience, not the writer.

We have already seen how Said's brief account of the platform as a source of empowerment for the public intellectual through the collective work of political organizations and social movements is problematized by the language of the press. In *Love in Exile*, it is Brigitte who speaks to the ineffectuality of 'press conferences' as public platforms. Brigitte's withering criticism of the organization and committees that Dr. Muller represents should be understood as a comment on the powerlessness of these organisations to change the status quo. As Brigitte puts it:

> All there is to it is that I wanted to prove to this gentleman [al-Mehallawi] that whoever suffers, does it alone. I didn't suffer, none of those who attended the conference suffered. Pedro alone suffered [...] No matter how many medical committees or press conferences, Doctor. [523]

Such a negative stance on the activist work that Brigitte embraces resonates with the protagonist's passive attitude towards his public commitment; both view public work as an act of 'lying' and deceit whereas writers, activists, and their likes mislead and delude themselves that they can change or influence public opinion in ways that might make a meaningful difference. The reader of the novel can deduce this shared perspective from their demeanour; while al-Mehallwi is arguing with Dr. Muller, Brigitte and *al-Ustaz* don't follow their talk. Instead, they engage in a subsidiary talk about Brigitte's current job and her unprofessional translation that 'ruined the conference'.[524] Brigitte's deviation from the performative norms of simultaneous translation may have produced 'a language of intimacy,' but, the effect of this rhetoric is short-lived. For at the end of the conference, Dr. Muller, al-Mehallawi, *al-Ustaz*, and Brigitte meet at a café where they chat and laugh as if nothing had happened to Pedro Ibanez.

As the protagonist converses with Brigitte, he recalls the period prior to his exile when Manar lays bare how his national language had proved ineffective in addressing the hardships endured by ordinary Egyptians under the neoliberal system of al-Sadat's regime. From that time onwards, *al-Ustaz* refers to himself as 'an intruder,' and a 'liar'. At a specific point, *al-Ustaz* sees that Brigitte's words are directed to him rather than Muller especially when she says, '[...] everything can be forgiven except lying to yourself and lying to people deliberately [...] if you make a mistake, be courageous. A person must at least try to act like somebody who has

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[523] *Love in Exile*, pp. 52-53.
[524] Ibid, p. 49.

made a mistake, and continue the deception'.[525] For the duration of their relationship, there has always been a tacit agreement to give up all worldly affiliations and to disengage from public life. Like the protagonist, she holds the view that any kind of intervention in their public role will mean nothing but a continuity of a 'lie'.

4.4   A Concluding Section: The Writer and Public Memory

In his account of the intellectual's critical autonomy, Said emphasizes the importance of critical judgement in matters of solidarity, and of finding an appropriate tone to lead one's audience to form their own opinions rather than trying to persuade through the use of a dogmatic voice. In a discussion of Noam Chomsky and Gore Vidal's efforts to educate the American public about the manufacture of American national interests and foreign policy during the Vietnam War, Said speaks of how these figures patiently show how the group or nation 'is not a natural or god-given entity but is a constructed, manufactured, even in some cases invented object, with a history of struggle and conquest behind it'. In Said's assessment, such an exemplary practice involves 'asking questions, making distinctions, restoring to memory all those things that tend to be overlooked or walked past in the rush to collective judgment and action'.[526]

If the pessimistic tone of *Love in Exile* seems to challenge Said's ideal of a public intellectual, the truth content of the novel implies that the demand for independent critical voices that can shed light on all forms of oppression is greater than ever. The Sabra and Shatila massacres that took place in the Summer of 1982 constitute a significant turning point for Bernard and *al-Ustaz*. Both have broken their long silence: *al-Ustaz* seeks all the available public platforms, which al-Mehallwi has previously tried in vain to secure, and Bernard breaches the codified language of the press to which he had previously committed himself in order to keep his job. In his article, 'Les Intouchables,' Bernard does what he once articulates in a private talk with *al-Ustaz* as the real role of public writers: 'to write a real article about our own role in the crisis of the world over which we shed tears! Try to give what's happening in Lebanon the name it deserves! Ask how this daily

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[525] Ibid, p. 66.
[526] Said, *Representations*, p. 33.

massacre can be a war [...]'.[527] Bernard lays bare his opinion, identifies enemies, and worldly powers, and poses questions—the rhetorical tool that he had previously avoided using—and thus invites readers to draw their own conclusions. For the first time in his life-long career working for the capitalist paper (*Le progress*), he gives up his neutral language and provides a critique of Israel as the actual agent that is responsible for the human violations in Lebanon. As *al-Ustaz* says of Bernard's noticeable shift in tone and use of rhetoric, 'finally Bernard did it'.[528] As *al-Ustaz* reads, the text of Bernard's article is presented in the following way:

> Our free country has been stricken by a strange malady these days. It has become mute and hasn't uttered a word about the crimes about human rights, so long *were committed by the Hebrew State*" [...] "Journalists come back from Lebanon. *They* want to write about the atrocities *they* have seen; it is their profession. But what they write, no one publishes" [...] "*They* will brandish Hitler's gas ovens in your face, you say you had not born yet at the time of the genocide? It does not matter. You are morally responsible, because *Israel is a taboo*; Israel cannot be touched and everything that country does is good" [...] "But *you* will say, 'there are no bad atrocities or good atrocities, especially if their victims were women and children and old people and wounded on hospital beds. Then *you* are a leftist, an extremist, an agent provocateur, and on the payroll of the PLO." [...] "I understand, of course, after writing these lines that I am an anti-Semite, so there is no need for anyone writing to draw my attention to it.[529]

Against the Israeli counter-claims that it is the Arabs who are responsible for what has happened in Sabra and Shatila, Bernard directly accuses Israel. The Hebrew newspapers states 'Goyim kill goyim and they accuse the Israeli'; the implication of this statement is that since Ariel Sharon[530] had claimed that he had let the 'Phalangists' enter the refugee camps 'to preserve human lives', the Israeli government cannot be blamed for the massacre. The novel also makes mention of

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[527] *Love in Exile*, p. 224.
[528] Ibid, p. 232.
[529] Ibid, pp. 232-233, (*emphasis is mine*).
[530] Ariel Sharon was the Defense Minister who launched an invasion of Lebanon called Operation Peace for Galilee, later known as the 1982 Lebanon War, following the shooting of Israel's ambassador in London, Shlomo Argov. Although this attempted assassination was in fact perpetrated by the Abu Nidal Organization, possibly with Syrian or Iraqi involvement, the Israeli government justified the invasion by citing 270 terrorist attacks by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Israel, the occupied territories, and the Jordanian and Lebanese border (in addition to 20 attacks on Israeli interests abroad). Sharon intended the operation to eradicate the PLO from its state within a state inside Lebanon, but the war is primarily remembered for the Sabra and Shatila massacre.

The Father Land as a newspaper that aligns with Israel because of its 'long history of hating Arabs'; it interprets the massacres as 'part of the ongoing war between the Muslims and the Christians in Lebanon'.[531]

What Bernard has done in 'Les Intouchables,' seems unprecedented—as *al-Ustaz* himself asserts—yet, the novel does not present him as exceptional. His breach of the conventional rules of the news industry can be read undoubtedly as a feature of courage and defiance of the official authorities in his professional guild, but as the protagonist clearly states: 'Even the editors-in-chief left what the reporters wrote unchanged in most cases'.[532] The editorial freedom that Bernard is granted to report on what happens in Sabra and Shatila stands in sharp contrast to the silencing of the testimonies of Pedro Ibanez and the Norwegian nurse, and the documents of al-Mehallawi. It is tempting to argue that the 'spectacular violence' of the events in Sabra and Shatila are the condition of possibility for its hypervisibility in the mainstream global media. As Rob Nixon suggests, the visual language of the global media fetishizes spectacular violence because it sells newspapers and boosts television ratings. In the novel, al-Mehallawi's phone call to *al-Ustaz* from Sabra provides a good example of this spectacular violence. Al-Mehallawi narrates what he is actually witnessing in the refugee camps by describing how 'mountains of flies cover mountains of corpses'; at the same time, we see al-Ustaz watching a media representation of the massacres on television. At this point, the projected images on the television screen interrupt and silence al-Mehallawi's *voice*, which is drowned out by the images that are disseminated by the official media.

The press conference held at the same time as the Sabra and Shatila massacres is the second conference that Tahir's novel foregrounds, yet it reiterates what happened in the first one. In that conference, the PLO representative and the American Jewish journalist Ralph attempt to elucidate what happens in the massacres by recapitulating how Palestinian soldiers were abducted from Ain-al-Helweh. They do so not from the perspective of mainstream journalism, but in the terms of two historical massacres: the Deir Yassin massacres and the Holocaust. These historical comparisons clearly correspond with the Palestinian and Israeli

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[531] *Love in Exile*, p. 246. Here, I would like to recall what Soueif did in the Map of love when she adduces Cromer's interpretation of the conflict in Sudan as triggered by 'Muslim fanatics'.
[532] Ibid.

national narratives. In so doing, the PLO representative and the American journalist provide the conference delegates with an object lesson in reading history contrapuntally. What is particularly striking about this press conference is the testimony of Ralph, who accuses the Israeli militia of their responsibility for the massacres. In so doing, he also provides a counter-narrative to the mainstream American and Israeli newspapers. Nevertheless, such a press conference neither enhances people's knowledge about the Lebanon war, nor changes the status quo. Such conferences do not challenge the existing networks of global power in any meaningful way; they address neither common people in remote global areas, nor decision-makers. The press conference at the end of the novel reiterates the same public performance of the first conference at the beginning of the novel: both rehearse the same scenario of staging an unpublished/unrecorded narrative.

In his elaboration of the challenges that intellectuals face in order to produce a counter-history differently from the official narrative, Said invokes Walter Benjamin's 'Theses on the Concept of History' (1940). According to Benjamin, 'to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it was' […] It means to seize hold of a memory [or a presence] as it flashes up at a moment of danger'.[533] In the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the wider context of America's geopolitical hegemony, *Love in Exile* tries to seize hold of just such a history of the oppressed, even as the media platforms that promise to represent persecution and violence often fail to do justice to the routine violence that is inflicted on the poor and the dispossessed in Palestine, Lebanon, and Chile. As this chapter has argued, the figure of the Egyptian journalist in *Love in Exile* draws attention to the challenges and constraints placed on critical reflection and analysis in an increasingly globalised public sphere. This may be a sign of the how 'the writer has taken on more and more of the intellectual's adversarial attributes in such activities as speaking the truth to power, being a witness to persecution and suffering, supplying a dissenting voice in conflicts with authority', as Said puts it in 'The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals'. By drawing attention to the limits and constraints placed on meaningful public intellectual performance in the transnational public sphere, Tahir's novel provides an alternative space for dissent and critical reflection. What's more, the exilic perspective of the novel corresponds

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[533] Said, *Representations*, p. 35.

in quite striking ways with Said's concluding reflections on Adorno in the same essay:

> I conclude with the thought that the intellectual's provisional home is the domain of an exigent, resistant, intransigent art into which, alas, one can neither retreat nor search for solutions. But only in that precarious exilic realm can one first truly grasp the difficulty of what cannot be grasped, and then go forth to try anyway.[534]

Differently from Said, however, *Love in Exile* also suggests that intellectual dissent and bearing witness to violence and persecution can be found in a number of different spaces and can be expressed by different people in different forms and registers. Against the predominant idea that public intellectual performance requires a hegemonic public platform, such as a newspaper, or a television studio, the novel shows how the increasingly transnational scale of the public sphere offers countervailing sites for dissent and debate. What's more, the fact that many (though not all) of the dissenting voices in the novel are those of women highlights the limitations of Said's largely masculine conception of the heroic public intellectual. This reading is of course complicated by Manar's pragmatic decision to conform to conservative, patriarchal ideas of Muslim femininity in order to continue working as a journalist in Sadat's Egypt. Such compromises may serve to highlight the challenges facing all intellectuals working under conditions where dissent is foreclosed. Yet in 'grasping the difficulty' of speaking truth to power in spaces where such speech acts are foreclosed, the truth content of the novel enjoins readers to 'go forth to try anyway'.

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[534] Said, 'The Public Role', in *Humanism*, pp. 119-144 (p. 144).

Chapter 5 Conclusion

This thesis has sought to significantly extend the understanding of Said's critical thought by addressing the limitations as well as the strengths of his critical corpus. It has also tried to examine the implications of some of the key tensions animating his thought: between secularism and religion on the one hand and between nationalism and imperialism on the other. Each of the three literary case studies examine how Said's thought provides a critical and conceptual framework for understanding the nationalist and cultural politics of twentieth-century Egypt; the legacy of colonial modernity; and the strategies of anti-colonial resistance as they are mediated in the aesthetic codes of these literary narratives. Such an approach has sought to open up new horizons in Said's critical corpus. This is not to deny Said's contribution to the critical assessment of Arabic literature and culture; on the contrary, the thesis has tried to extend some of Said's brief yet insightful observations on Arabic prose through a more sustained examination of three contemporary Egyptian novels.

I have divided the rest of this conclusion into two parts. In part one, I provide a summary of each chapter in an attempt to focus on how each novel in this thesis can stand as a case study on how the geopolitics of cultural production at varied historical moments (three colonial/imperial discourses) can enhance a better understanding of the worldliness of Said's *abstract/ahistorical* secular criticism. In the second part, I turn to reflect on the virtues and limitations of Said's orientalist legacy as well as his philological project in order to critically trace and understand the political reality of post-revolutionary Egypt by approaching the predominant discourse of national resistance as represented in the narrative form of contemporary Egyptian fiction. By addressing the cultural sphere of post-revolutionary Egypt guided through Said's secular and philological humanism, this conclusion can also open new horizons of seeking a secular solution for Egypt's political crisis. In doing so, we can redraw the lines of the Arabs' location on the geopolitical map in a critical period known recently as Arab Spring.

Chapter 5

Part I

In Radwa Ashour's *Granada*, the subject of chapter two, the worldliness of religious texts such as *qur'anic* verses and *Sunnah* is exemplified most clearly in the interface between Islamic heritage/*turath* and the worldly practice of Islamic religious rituals. The debates between and among Abu Jaafar's extended family may seem to exemplify the position of Muslim families during the Castilian invasion of Granada in 1492. Yet, the invocation of Qur'anic verses and Hadith (the prophetic sayings) are also framed as a pragmatic means to appropriate religious texts in order to make sense of the secular time of colonial modernity. In this way, the novel draws attention to the limits of a religious discourse of nostalgia as a resource for a future political imaginary. In doing so, it enjoins readers to invent new secular modes of reading and critical thinking that stand apart from essentialist ideas of religious nationalism, which are prevalent in the contemporary Arab world, as well as in the cultural memories of Al-Andalus.

In a similar vein, Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* exemplifies a secular spirit of critical inquiry via its focalizing female characters, Anna Winterbourne, Amal al-Ghamrawi, and Isabel Parkman. This secular critical ethos is foregrounded in Amal's critical engagement with Anna's letters, fragmentary notes, and the mainstream print journalism found in Anna's trunk. In order to draw out the worldly historical significance of Anna's letters, Amal re-frames Anna's words to historicize her own understanding of the contemporary political situation in Egypt, and to situate it in relation to the overarching and overlapping political and national histories of two countries—England and Egypt—at the beginning of the twentieth century. Through the mediation of Anna's notes and letters, the novel hints at wider disagreements over different socio-legal, textual, and historical conceptions of political and religious authority from both national and colonial perspectives. In this way, the novel complicates Orientalist and neo-Orientalist ideas of Egyptian national/religious culture through a series of narrative frames that embed Anna's acts of writing in Amal's critical reading.

In chapter four, I examined the worldliness of the Egyptian public intellectual, as it is figured in Bahaa Tahir's representation of the journalist in *Love in Exile*. *Love in Exile* presents a distinctive mode of what Said calls philological heroism by dramatizing the personal struggles of two Egyptian journalists, who strive to intervene in the national and transnational public spheres. As public

intellectual figures, they attempt to intervene either in the limited spaces afforded to them by the Egyptian newspapers, or in the terms of a secular vocabulary drawn by corporate forces to create a cosmopolitan narrative that might help to raise public consciousness and understanding of human rights violations in Lebanon and Chile. In order to elicit public understanding of the crimes against humanity that the novel addresses, the two Egyptian journalists seek to enlist the help of secular organizations that might help provide them with a public platform from which to appeal to people's sense of compassion towards the condition of the oppressed across the globe. However, these endeavours are obfuscated by the condensed and codified language of the mainstream media. As the novel makes clear, such professional language and the constraints that are placed on more in-depth analysis of (say) militarised violence in South Lebanon or human rights violations in Pinochet's Chile forecloses a more detailed consideration of the historical and geopolitical determinants underpinning these events. And yet by drawing attention to these constraints, the novel also highlights the conditions of possibility for writing contrapuntal histories of the contemporary world order.

Taken together, these readings emphasise the value as well as the limitations of Said's secular critical thought for understanding the limits of religious nationalism in the wake of the so-called 'Arab Spring' and the Egyptian revolution of 2011. This thesis seeks to extend Said's criticism of the essentialist tendencies of pan-Arab nationalism to reflect on the ways in which religious nationalism have informed and inflected the recent Arab revolutions or 'Arab Spring'. The same can be said with respect to the 25th January Egyptian revolution in 2011. As my analysis throughout three chapters suggests, the thesis embraces the subjective endeavours of creating anti-essentialist formations as a source of the nation's survival and development, yet it also touches on the absence of a unified 'secular culture'. Such absence demarcates the post-revolutionary Egypt in tandem with the last mass uprising in 2011.

Part II

Anti-essentialist Formations: Redefining Political Agency and National Solidarity in Post-revolutionary Egypt

The present thesis responds to an urgent need of a sustained study that takes in consideration anti-colonial national and religious formations as neo-essentialist

modes of thinking and yet emphasises a need of a more nuanced critical vocabulary that might address such new formations in postcolonial Arab nations. Said broadly, yet unsustainably discusses such critical issues in terms of a crisis in Arabs' historicity and/or in their 'secular culture'. Recent Anglophone critics have drawn attention to the value of Arabic fiction for grasping the national and cultural politics as well as ethics of collectivity and solidarity that have informed and shaped contemporary Arab revolutions. As Moore (2008) contends, 'Postcolonial narratives examine what is left unresolved by the Egyptian revolutions [...]'.[535] In this respect, a sustained study on the worldliness of Said's critical secularism as applied to Arabs' conception and manipulation of the term 'secular' as a worldly and not as a 'totalising theory' might provide a clue for answering many inquiries proposed by those Anglophone critics. For instance, why Achcar sees the situation in the Middle East as 'a protracted or *long-term revolutionary process*' and what Hamid Dabashi[536] claims to be 'revolutions without end'.[537] Said's thought provides a critical and conceptual framework for understanding the national and cultural politics of twentieth-century Egypt; the legacy of colonial modernity; and the strategies of anti-colonial resistance as they are mediated in the aesthetic codes of literary narratives that also might answer those up-to-date questions.

Investigating both the teleological narratives of the nation by focusing primarily on the narrative form can figure out what has been going on in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution in 2011. The cultural field becomes an arena where political views can be contested and evaluated. As my Saidian reading of the three Egyptian novels in this study suggests, the cultural representations and narrative genres help to explicate the collective agency of the masses or the predominant 'sense of identity at the time of crisis'[538], 'the discourse of national elite'[539], 'the dichotomy between the elites and the masses'[540] or the role of public intellectuals in cultivating and developing a critical sense and/or secular debates among the masses. And yet, my reading highlights Said's limitations with regard to

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[535] Lindsey Moore, *Narrating Postcolonial Arab Nations*, p. 27. Egyptian revolutions of 1919 against the British occupation, 1952 that overthrew the monarchy and ended the colonial period, the 1970s (the 'corrective revolution') that Anwar al-Sadat's 'Open Door' policy represents, and January 2011.

[536] See, Hamid Dabashi, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*. London: Zed, 2012.

[537] Moore, *Narrating Postcolonial Arab Nations,* p. 3.

[538] Elsada, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel,* p. xx.

[539] Ibid.

[540] Mehrez, *Egypt's Culture Wars*, p. 16

the gendered construction of the nation as an imagined community as represented in the Egyptian literary tradition (see Chapter Three).

A good example of the importance of benefiting from Said's anti-essentialist ethos is the possibility of understanding 'the collective desire of emancipation'.[541] As Moore suggests, 'Literature has many ways of figuring the desire that saturates Tahrir's image'.[542] My reading of Egypt's national trajectories (as mediated by three Egyptian novels) in the light of Said's position on religion, nationalism, and national culture can elucidate the symbolic significance of al-Tahrir (square) for understanding Egypt's competing nationalisms. As a case in point, Ahdaf Souief's account of *al-Tahrir* square typically speaks to Said's critique of projects of resistance and liberation and yet the (re)construction of the nation that she addresses in *The Map of Love* (Chapter Three). Said sees that once the anti-colonial nationalism succeeds to drive the latest soldier away from the occupied land, it fails to stage itself on the geopolitical map. For Souief, *al-Tahrir* square or her own favoured word, the *midan* (or piazza) stands for a constructive space of unified political action. In her critical book *Mezzaterra,* Soueif has both underscored and lamented the absence of '*Mezzaterra'*—a 'meeting point' or a 'common ground' that is necessary for gathering people together. In the Egyptian revolution, *al-Tahrir* square stands for just such a spatial meeting point: the whole country is gathered around this central urban space with a collective political/national goal, regardless of their religious or political affiliations. Unfortunately, the historical course of events that unfolded after the Egyptians succeeded in overthrowing their president has perpetuated the old political scene where passivity and fragmentation has taken the place of coordinated political action. The emergent secular voices did not guide people towards meaningful change; instead, they merely caused riots by complicating the political and social atmosphere as they raised new tensions and waves of sectarianism within Egyptian society. By invoking such voices, I do not mean to defend or align with any of these positions; instead, I suggest that a Saidian rethinking of the religious and the secular may provide a crucial starting point or beginning for imagining the conditions of possibility for a new *mezzaterra*, even if such an idea seems like a lost cause.

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[541] Moore, *Narrating Postcolonial Arab Nations*, p. 28.
[542] Ibid, p. 2.

As the mass media has focused on after the Egyptian revolution, the cultural field in post-revolutionary Egypt has witnessed the emergence of secular voices who have attempted to seek a secular solution for Egypt's political crisis. Youssef Ziedan, Nawal al-Saadawi, Sayyid Al-Qemany, Islam Behery, and Fatima Naoot—to mention but a few—have struggled to shake deep-seated religious values and thus they worked to (re)identify national solidarity that is (mis)informed by such values. Such voices alongside with other figures of the Islamic movements of the Ancestors' trend (*altayar al-salafi*) and Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-muslimeen*) stood as two competing modes of nationalism that have worked to shape the conscience of the nation and/or Egypt's geopolitical map. The political performance of these two modes of nationalism contradicts the '*Mezzaterra'* scene of al-Tahrir and confirms a fixed reading of the Egyptian revolution in terms of an 'irruptive, revolutionary force that pervades the social'[543], or in terms of 'what [Ella] Shohat describes as the "pastoral" (liberal) and more "terrorizing" (revolutionary and sometimes violent) dimensions of Arab resistance'[544], or Tamim al-Barghouti's description of Arabs as 'cracked cauldrons'.[545] Against Moore's claim that 'a revolutionary discourse can be exploited by state and other (notably Islamist) formations as a means of suppressing diversity and dissent,'[546] Egypt's national history has never embraced a homogeneous national movement that worked towards a unified political action (see my chapter on Soueif's *The Map of Love*). That's not to say that Egypt's current sectarianism has a long history, but to emphasise that the national movements are shaped primarily via the Egyptian national elites who were the executive forces of the national regime that ruled over the country at varied historical moments. And if this cultural construction is partially true in colonial Egypt, this becomes an insurmountable historical statement in postcolonial Egypt. The absence of authentic secular voices in postcolonial Egypt who can approach the political sphere not as antagonists of the religious-based national regime, but also as critical of any secular national regime that oppresses the other political trends including even the religious trends creates

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[543] Quoted in Moore, *Narrating post-colonial Arab Nations*, p. 28.
See, Ziad Elmarsafy, 'Alaa Al-Aswany and the Desire for Revolution', in Resistance in Contemporary Middle Eastern Cultures: Literature and Cinema and Music, edited by Karima Laachir and Saeed Talajooy, New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 15-31 (p. 15).
[544] Quoted in Moore, *Narrating Postcolonial Arab Nations*, p. 7
[545] Moore, *Narrating Postcolonial Arab Nations*, p. 12.
[546] Ibid, p. 3.

what Mehrez terms as a 'paradox in the cultural field'.[547] As Mehrez maintains to explain how the secular voices has suffered from a 'gradual collapse' in 2005, she states, 'Their reputed secular leftist leanings have pitted them against religious forces in society in general, often pushing them into dubious alliance with the state'.[548] Consequently, the 'secular cultural players' among the Egyptian national elites 'were polarized against each other'.[549] The Islamist movements did not suppress cultural diversity, as it has never existed in the contemporary Egypt where a state of polarization has dominated the political reality of postcolonial Egypt. Alternatively, across many generations, a particular national regime was overridden by another while imposing specific cultural matrix upon the elites who worked to pass it down to the public.

In Egypt, secular nationalism and religious nationalism stand for Gamal Abdel El-Nasser and Anwar al-Sadat's two political regimes respectively. When compared with Hosni Mubarak's regime that featured a frame of amelioration and compromises between Muslim Brotherhood and the state, these two national regimes unravel a state of polarization whereby the religious and the secular stood for a binary opposition. The language or the national vocabulary (the focal point in Chapter Four of this thesis) that underpin and support the dominant national discourse makes neither the secular nor the religious an attainable democratic alternative in such a perpetuated state of polarization in those two successive national regimes. In such a burgeoning gap between the religious and the secular, a new nuanced vocabulary that has the potentials to abridge this gap becomes essential. Throughout my reading of the Egyptian selected novels *after* Said, I have attempted to provide historical evidence substantiating the proposition that secular thinking which is less anti-religious than a worldly and yet emancipative style of thought can culminate in a possibility of *secular solution* for Egypt's political present.

Thanks to the efforts through which an earlier misconception yet a well-established reading of Said's orientalist legacy is rectified, secular criticism can be liberated from its narrow-axed realm of social change. My reading of Egypt's

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[547] Mehrez, *Egypt's Culture Wars*, p. 6
[548] Ibid.
[549] Ibid, p. 18.

national and colonial history assimilates those readings of Talal Asad and Mathieu E. Courville (see Chapter One) whereby Said's secularism is understood one time in terms of a historicising process and/or a secular consciousness of time—the core of the idea of philological historicism (Asad's reading) and conceived as a 'style of thought' another time (Courville's reading). In this way, 'religion' and 'secularism' (as two opposing concepts) are liberated from a very limited and yet fixed (essentialized) categorization within the Egyptian national unconscious. Analogously, nationalism, national politics, and ethics of national solidarity as anchored in the two concepts are also emancipated. In this context, Said's 'Traveling Theory' (1982) can also provide a pragmatic interpretation of 'unitary theories'. As Hafez explains, 'Said also observed that in "the Arab world there is this tendentious reliance on and even blind replication of unitary theories without a clear effort to change these theories to something relevant to the Arab culture"'.[550] This might have to do with many Arab critics'[551] growing interest in Said's critical legacy in addition to comparing him to 'the early pioneers of engagement with Western discourse, towering figures like Rifa'ah Rafi' al-Tahtawi (1801–73), Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (1804–87), and Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi (1810–90)'.[552] In this regard, the cultural and national critique that Said provided by mediating Arabic fiction (after 1948) and (after Mahfouz) that would have inaugurated a new critical turn in the Arabic critical theory. Just to mention here, Ayman al-Desouky's critique of Naguib Mahfouz's *Children's Alley* which typifies Said's mediation of Arabic fiction.[553] Al-Desouky approaches the concept of secular time as a means to examine the historical consciousness as represented in Mahfouz's novel.

Said's philological project can provide such a pragmatic interpretation of 'unitary theories' that he disavows and even rejects. Throughout the thesis, I examine how philological historicism can be used a critical tool to consider the temporality of nationalism and religion by tracing back their shifting positions in the history of Arabic culture in order to identify their current place in the abiding

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[550] Hafez, p. 84

[551] Hafez, p. 84. As Hafez, explains, 'Arab critics, such as Jabir Asfur (Egypt), Muhammad Barrada (Morocco), Yumna al-'Id (Lebanon), Subhi Hadidi (Syria), and Fakhri Salih (Jordan), to mention but a few, embraced his call and spoke out for the need to liberate Arab critical discourse from the grip of Western theory and the drudgery of imitations.'

[552] Hafez, pp. 82-83

[553] Ayman A. El-Desouky, 'Heterologies of revolutionary action: On historical consciousness and the sacred in Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley*', Journal of Postcolonial Writing, 47.4, 2011, pp. 428-439.

cultural heritage known as *turath.* Philological historicism as such provides an epistemological framework according to which (various formations of the secular) can be generated and remodelled after Said's 'secularism' not as an antonym of the negative religious connotations of the term, but as an overarching term that Said foregrounds for his repudiation of any primordial/teleological modes of thinking. Suffice to recall here how Said has consistently equated nationalism with religion and any other primordial loyalties that dictate a stereotyped action by describing them as 'gods that always fail'.

In this way, the thesis highlights the questions of human agency or subjectivity as embedded in those secular modes of reading and/or the philological traces of the past as an alternative to predominant national and religious modes of thinking/belonging and the varied forms of humanitarian solidarity that draw on such teleological modes of thinking. Each chapter foregrounds a peculiar feature of 'humanistic practice' that Said views as a methodological means of rectifying the pitfalls of collective history and forging a secular history by drawing on new beginnings from which the ideal or romanticized past can be reread, recovered, and reconstructed. After this recurrent motif, each chapter focuses on specific modes of philological production and reception or, in other words, narrator-narratee reciprocity as ways in which some focalized characters are assigned to the role of 'philological heroism' whereas they hold an extended past-present dialectics that helps them to *contrapuntally* understand the current historical moments by retrieving the past.

Reading the selected novels as such, the thesis also highly considers Said's affiliations with philologists such as Auerbach and Gramsci in particular as an indicative of a mode of criticism that is enlightened by the historical traces of an exilic mind working through fragmentary knowledge. In the three novels I am devoted to their analysis, I have contested the possibility of building up alternative forms of secular history that have the potential to challenge national and religious essentialist formations that are represented in the official narratives/history and sacred religious texts. My reading of the novel attests to the worldliness of the texts as understood and traced by Arab individual subjects. The personal endeavours of the three novels' focalized characters demonstrate how the varied secular traces and modes of reading enhance ideas such as the importance of making personal 'inventory' and the necessity to 'intervene' in language—ways in which they resist

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those essentialist cultural formations and in order to cope with the very historical moment they are living through.

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