Deconstruction of Different Forms of Apartheid in the Works of Edward Said, J. M. Coetzee and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: A Comparative Study of Violence, Resistance and Alienation

Jihan Mohammed Zakarriya Mahmoud

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Summary

In this thesis, I trace the representation of different forms of female cultural, economic and political activism in a selection of novels by the South African novelist, J. M. Coetzee, and the Palestinian novelist, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. Using Edward Said's contrapuntal theory as a critical method, the thesis investigates the interaction between politics and literature, focusing particularly on the representation of women, in South Africa and Palestine, which are both viewed as territories under apartheid. It analyses the differences and the similarities in the ways the notions of female nationalism and identity are represented in the selected novels, identifying a shared humanist perspective on female resistance, expressed by all three authors. Such a humanist-oriented, contrapuntal perspective is sustained by a secular understanding and a hybrid interpretation of different socio-cultural groups, which question established norms and traditions, expanding the boundaries of established cultural identity to emphasize acceptance of diversity, nonviolence, and co-existence. The three authors demonstrate that political polarization perpetuates antagonism and violence, while political-cultural dialogue helps to shift the focus onto possible paths of mutual understanding and cooperation. In this way, female resistance in the chosen novels symbolizes a humanist effort not only to redefine exclusive and hierarchical cultural notions of nationalism, authenticity and identity, but also to build inclusive socio-cultural orders free of gender bias.

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Contents

Introduction

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'apartheid' is defined as a 'name given in South Africa to the segregation of the inhabitants of European descent from the non-European (Coloured or mixed, Bantu, Indian, etc.); applied also to any similar movement elsewhere; also, to other forms of racial separation (social, educational, etc.)'.[1] In this way, the meaning of 'apartheid' exceeds the historical South African racial situation and may be seen as applicable to any form of collective segregation and discrimination on social, racial, gender, or sexual grounds. In this thesis, then, I argue that the situation in Palestine, like South Africa, can be seen as one of apartheid. Despite the fact that the colonial struggle in South Africa and Palestine has taken different forms, I argue that native people in both countries have experienced similar systematic and collective processes of discrimination and segregation. I will use the term 'apartheid' in this thesis, therefore, to encompass collective racial as well as gender and sexual discrimination in South Africa and Palestine. The thesis investigates this concept of apartheid in the works of three writers, two Palestinian and one South African, namely Edward Said (1935 - 2003), J. M. Coetzee (1940-) and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (1919 - 1994).

One of the motivations for writing this thesis has been to provide an analysis of Edward Said's works from a gender perspective. In analyzing the colonial dynamics that secure a sovereign subject status for the West, Said's critical works have been studied from a cultural perspective, focusing on the way he reads Western cultural representations of itself and the Other, while relegating gender and sexual issues to a secondary position. In addition to this, in *Orientalism* (1979), Said has been accused of ignoring the role of women as producers of Orientalist discourse or as active writers

[1] *Oxford English Dictionary*, http://www.oed.com/

within the colonial power. For example, in *Seductions: Studies in Reading and Culture*, Jane Miller praises Said's *Orientalism* as a critical analysis that 'sets out with care and delicacy the parallels and analogies developed in [Orientalist studies] between colonial relations and sexual relations', but notes that the work fails to exhibit 'a concern for women's loss of political and economic status in itself' and, consequently, 'women's history does not become part of the history which is being rewritten'.[2]

In this thesis, I take issue with Miller's criticism. I argue that in Said's works, there is a concern over gender and sexual difference and their role in reproducing racial and gender categorical distinctions. For Said, sexual and gender differences, similar to cultural differences, are fundamental constituents of the Otherness that is placed in contradistinction to the colonial, racial or gendered sovereign subject. Otherness is not confined to race alone in Said's analysis. Since only dominant subjects and groups, such as Westerners, people in authority, or men in patriarchal societies, are in a position to impose their categories and beliefs on weaker subjects and groups, such as Orientals, barbarians, people of colour, and women, by stigmatizing them as Others, I will specifically examine the ways in which my chosen writers represent women as being intentionally marginalized as Others within both the colonial and the native cultures. Moreover, in line with Said's view that such terms as 'patriarchy' and 'masculinity' are in the first place 'political constructs', meant to 'subordinate both men and women as dependents of an authority',[3] this thesis is an attempt to investigate the persistent efforts of South African and Palestinian women to deconstruct patriarchal ideas, as portrayed in the novels of Coetzee and Jabra.

Said argues that the 'history of oppression as experienced by blacks, by

[2] Jane Miller, *Seductions: Studies in Reading and Culture* (London: Virago, 1990), pp. 118-119.
[3] Edward Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization', *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1990), pp. 69-94, (p. 75).

Palestinians, by gays, by women, all that is built upon segregation, on separation',[4] and proposes a new, 'contrapuntal' approach to critical analysis, which will enable us to 'see complementarity and interdependence instead of isolated, venerated, or formalized experience that excludes and forbids the hybridizing intrusions of human history'.[5] Through a contrapuntal study of the language and content of Jabra's and Coetzee's novels, therefore, I aim to achieve Said's aim to 'draw [...] attention to how ideas and values are constructed and deconstructed through dislocations in the narrator's language',[6] with particular focus on cultural notions of nationalism and difference.

Living in and writing about South Africa and Palestine under apartheid and racial segregation, J. M. Coetzee and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra wrote novels which were inevitably embedded within the racial and hierarchical conflicts in the two countries. This thesis draws upon Said's contrapuntal theory to examine the representation of female characters in a selection of these novels by Coetzee and Jabra. It relates female characters' personal experiences to the real historical conditions within which the selected novels were produced. I argue that the novels of Coetzee and Jabra demonstrate the validity of Said's definition of contrapuntal theory, as well as sharing a similar concern over global gender and sexual conditions and their effects in South Africa and Palestine.

I believe that the works of Said, Jabra and Coetzee contain and make use of their personal experiences as either exiles, in the case of Said and Jabra, or as belonging to the privileged colonial group, in the case of Coetzee.[7] Taking my cue from Said, I

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[4] Edward Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said*, ed. Gauri Viswanathan (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), pp. 260-1.
[5] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 115.
[6] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 32.
[7] Although the novels I discuss in this thesis were written while Coetzee was still living in South Africa, he is by now also an exile - living in Australia.

discuss how the notion of female inferiority is inscribed in social institutions and national thought in order to naturalize hierarchy and domination in South Africa and occupied Palestine. Since contrapuntalism does not divorce historical and political engagement from intercultural and literary studies, it may provide ideas about new ways of overcoming racial and cultural stereotypes in South Africa and Palestine.

Contrapuntalism as the Theoretical Background of the Thesis

> By looking at the different experiences contrapuntally, as making up a set of what I call intertwined and overlapping histories, I shall try to formulate an alternative both to a politics of blame and to the even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility. A more interesting type of secular interpretation can emerge, altogether more rewarding than the denunciations of the past, the expressions of regret for its having ended, or – even more wasteful because violent and far too easy and attractive – the hostility between Western and non-Western cultures that leads to crises. The world is too small and interdependent to let these passively happen.[8]

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, we find that 'contrapuntal' is a familiar term in music, describing 'the relationship between voices that are interdependent harmonically and yet are independent in rhythm and contour'.[9] This definition may be taken as an apt description of the critical vision of Edward Said. For Edward Said, contrapuntalism is a 'comparative' literary reading, 'fully sensitive to the reality of historical experience'.[10] It relates the intellectual and literary representations of worldwide cultural and racial contacts and relations to the historical realities within which such representations are produced. Said believes that literature has direct connections with many other aspects of the world—political, social, and cultural—all of which go to make up its 'worldliness'. The text's 'worldliness' stands for its 'writer's social identity and how it involves and represents culture and orthodoxy'.[11] Said insists on the materiality of the writing process

[8] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), pp. 19-20.
[9] *Oxford English Dictionary*, http://www.oed.com/
[10] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxix.
[11] Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 12.

and the literary text. Since literature and art are essential components of the wider culture of society and reflect its general conditions, Said's aim is to investigate the cultural and intellectual bases of the permanently hostile feelings and relations among different races and societies, particularly those conditioned by imperialist contact.

This thesis applies Said's contrapuntal readings to a number of selected South African and Palestinian novels as a critical means of analysing the relationship between these novels and the historical realities in South Africa and Palestine. Since contrapuntalism is a critical method that both highlights the causes of 'hostility' and 'inequalities' among different races, and attempts to connect and relate ideas and cultures that initially appear to be in direct opposition, the thesis argues that it is very useful to understand the nature and politics of resistance to the racial and cultural hostilities and conflicts inside South Africa and Palestine. Furthermore, I argue that Coetzee's and Jabra's novels not only conform to Said's definition of contrapuntal literature, but also significantly clarify it and develop its discourse.

In his analysis of the close relationship between Western literature and the European experience of imperialism, Said traces the main reason behind the heritage of the hostility between Western and non-Western cultures back to 'the fundamentally static notion of identity' which is based on 'binary oppositions' and the idea that 'there is an us and them, each quite settled, clear, unassailably self-evident'.[12] This separatist concept of identity is the outcome of the interaction between culture and politics. In *Representations of the Intellectual*, Said emphasizes the idea that 'politics is everywhere; there can be no escape into the realms of pure art and thought'.[13] He believes that the interaction and exchange between politics and culture in modern

[12] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxviii.
[13] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 16.

societies results in the 'assimilation of culture to the authority and exterior framework of the State' and consequently cultural norms come to defend 'such things as assurance, confidence, the majority sense, the entire matrix of meanings we associate with 'home', belonging and community'.[14] Stemming from his belief that 'culture is authorized to represent the nation and to defend its identity',[15] Said investigates the role played, both consciously and unconsciously, by literature and intellectual production to fortify and deepen the state's cultural identity. He believes that culture and the state feed on and develop each other. He defines culture as:

> a system of values *saturating* downward almost everything within its purview; yet, paradoxically, culture dominates from above without at the same time being available to everything and everyone it dominates. In fact, in our age of media-produced attitudes, the ideological insistence of a culture drawing attention to itself as superior has given way to a culture whose canons and standards are invisible to the degree that they are 'natural', 'objective', and 'real'.[16]

The dominating role of culture in determining the attitudes and life choices of characters is a recurrent theme in Coetzee's and Jabra's novels. Characters like The Magistrate, Susan Barton and the Medical Officer in Coetzee's novels and characters like Isam Salman, Luma, Falih Haseeb and Wadi Assaf in Jabra's novels take their cultural identity as 'natural', 'objective', and 'real' in precisely this way. As a result, Said indicates, the rejection or defiance of cultural beliefs are perceived as expressions not only of breaking 'instinctual filiation' but also of challenging the 'sense of nation, home, community, and belonging'.[17] 'Filiation' here denotes a person's expression of identity politics through accommodating and affirming his/her natural ties, belonging, and conformity to established traditions, norms and cultural principles. One of these

[14] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 5.
[15] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xiv.
[16] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 9.
[17] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 12.

important cultural principles is the hierarchical order of society. In diffusing its principles among its members, culture has always not only 'involved hierarchies; it has separated the elite from the popular, the best from the less than best, and so forth', but also 'the dialectic of self-fortification and self-confirmation by which culture achieves its hegemony over society and the State is based on a constantly practised differentiation of itself from what it believes to be not itself'.[18]

With the prevalence of its 'separating, essentializing, dominating, and reactive tendencies', a cultural identity becomes the synonym of a 'racial' identity and both entail 'a simmering hostility' and 'the absolute opposition' to the 'other'.[19] In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba follows in Said's footsteps in studying the intimate relationship between culture and the state, yet from a different angle. Loomba indicates how 'nations are often regarded as the expression of biological and racial attributes' and that 'scientific discussions of race, rather than challenging earlier negative stereotypes of savagery, barbarism, and excessive sexuality, extended and developed these', and thus, 'science extended the association of race and nation'.[20] Coetzee's fiction frequently reflects such negative racial stereotyping, for example in his novel *Foe* (1986), in which the Negro character Friday is seen as a slave, even after his master, Cruso, dies. White Susan claims mastership over Friday, wondering: 'If Friday is not mine to set free, whose is he? No can be the slave of a dead hand. If Cruso had a widow, I am she'.[21]

Accordingly, the power of culture extends further, Said explains, to refer to other contrastive pairs of 'affiliations', such as nation and religion, tradition and belief, or

[18] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 12.
[19] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 44 & 34.
[20] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 118-119.
[21] J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 99.

collective memory and experience. Affiliation is the manner in which cultural authority and goals are built, defended, and expressed in art, literature, and politics. If a person's 'filiative' relations are seen as 'instinctual', 'abstract' and 'biological', affiliations, Said believes, take 'validated nonbiological social and cultural forms' and are 'negotiable' and 'changing'.[22] Said argues that reshaping a person's cultural affiliations is an essential step towards the objective critique of the static filiative cultural heritage. Demonstrating this point eloquently, Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and Jabra's *The Journals of Sarab Affan* (1992), show that only when white South African Lucy Lurie and Palestinian Sarab Affan are able to break the bondage that holds them to their oppressive cultural customs and preconceptions about themselves and the Other, do they start to adjust their cultural affiliations to suit their personal aims and not vice versa.

Said emphasizes that an essentialized, self-enclosed concept of racial identity is the main premise upon which imperialist and colonial thought is established. In imperialist calls for civilizing the uncivilized 'other' or savage parts of the world, Western colonizers always deal with the colonized as 'a kind of ideal and unchanging abstraction'.[23] Both the colonized and the colonizer are established and stabilized as biologically and mentally opposite identities. The colonizer is always civilized, superior and powerful while the colonized is always submissive, inferior, and powerless. In naturalizing its hierarchies and discriminations among its own members, cultural difference becomes, according to Said, a 'radical instrument to relegate the rights of others to an inferior or lesser status'.[24] In this way, the ideologies of racial difference were intensified by their incorporation into the discourse of art and science, forming

[22] Said, *The World, the Text and Critic*, pp. 19-20.
[23] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 8.
[24] Edward Said, 'Race, Writing, and Difference', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (Autumn, 1985), pp. 38-58, (p. 40).

'cultural identity', an identity that demands 'the fetishization and relentless celebration of 'difference' and 'otherness". [25]

Under the wider umbrella of racial difference, gender and sexual difference also turn out to afford effective methods of suppression of the Other. In *Orientalism* (1979), Said investigates the role of gender and sex in allocating the Other a permanently inferior position. Since the mission of the developed West was to 'civilize' and help the 'primitive' Orient, the two sides experience 'a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony'.[26] Said argues that colonial representations of 'female sexuality'[27] of the Other generally express 'temptation', 'self-sufficiency', and 'emotional carelessness', and particularly Oriental women are seen as possessing 'peculiarly luxuriant and seemingly un-bounded sexuality'. These play a significant role in stereotyping the Other as both a source of 'barbaric splendor and cruelty [and] exotic and strange pleasures'.[28]

Put this way, within colonial and patriarchal orders, sexuality serves as a force for subverting and disrupting power relations, unsettling the paradigm of the oppressor and the oppressed. In discussing sexual as well as cultural modes of differentiation, Said indicates that 'this differentiation is frequently performed by setting the valorized culture over the male Other' and by 'subjugating women'.[29] Feminist critics such as Barbara Bush and Anna McClintock have agreed with Said. While McClintock argues that 'racist discourse feminises black men and locates them on the margins of the civilization and

[25] Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors,' *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.15. No.2 (Winter, 1989), pp. 213-233, (p. 217).
[26] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5.
[27] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 188.
[28] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 119 & 188.
[29] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 47.

progress that defines white male identities',[30] Bush regards 'the complex psycho-sexual relations between white women and black men as rooted in conceptions of black and white masculinities which have been integral to the power relations of imperialism and institutionalized racism'.[31] Bush explains further that 'while white men could assert power over white (and black) women, black men, though they are subordinate to white women in race/class terms, have sexual power [over them]'.[32]

In the light of this analysis, Said indicates that woman's 'internal exile' is a sign that, similar to men, 'she too is dispossessed and her identity undercut'.[33] According to Said, then, the inferior position of women is not simply a result of backward cultural attitudes towards women but is an inevitable constituent of colonial patriarchal discrimination. This thesis examines the novels of Coetzee and Jabra in order to trace their representation of female gendered, cultural, economic, and political power, and its resistance to the imperialist culture and oppressive socio-cultural formations. I argue that sexism is central to the social and political problems in South Africa and the Arab world and that unless a reform of sexual practices is incorporated into political reform, there will be no real transformation of social relations. Such a reform starts at the level of personal life and incites a transformation of the traditional rapports of domination and subordination which permeate interpersonal, particularly sexual and familial, relationships.

In addition to the contrapuntal theory of Said, I also draw upon his concepts of

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[30] Anna McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 44.
[31] Barbara Bush, 'Britain's conscience on Africa: White Women, Race, and Imperial Politics in Inter-War Britain', *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 201-231, (p. 215).
[32] Bush, 'Britain's conscience on Africa: White Women, Race, and Imperial Politics in Inter-War Britain', p. 215.
[33] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 80.

secularism, hybridity, and humanism in my analysis of Coetzee's and Jabra's novels. These three concepts are proposed by Said as a means of deconstructing and resisting patriarchal and discriminatory cultural notions worldwide. Gunter Lenz states that Said identifies how imperialism is a 'battleground on which the encounter and clashes of cultures happen and on which cultural differences are often suppressed or displaced in the mechanics of unequal power differentials',[34] but Said also goes a step further 'in undertaking the task to mentally deconstruct such unequal power differentials'.[35] Said admits that 'no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions: Greeks always require barbarians and Europeans Africans, Orientals'.[36] In order to reestablish a positive relationship, Said proposes that the formation of cultural identities should be understood 'not as essentializations but as contrapuntal ensembles'.[37]

Said endorses the values of secular thinking, hybridity and humanism as alternatives to dominating ideas of opposition and hostility. Looking deeply into the past and its tragedies as a means of moving forward to a more tolerant present, Said highlights the fact that:

> There is in all nationally defined cultures, I believe, an aspiration to sovereignty, to sway, and to dominance. In this, French and British, Indian and Japanese cultures concur. At the same time, paradoxically, we have never been as aware as we now are of how oddly hybrid historical and cultural experiences are. […] Far from being unitary or monolithic or autonomous things, cultures actually assume more 'foreign' elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude.[38]

In the light of previous discussion of the global, patriarchal concept of culture,

[34] Gunter Lenz, 'Irreconcilabilities and Transgression: Edward W. Said's Idea of a Worldly Criticism', *ZAA*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (2004), pp. 317-329, (p. 322).
[35] Lenz, 'Irreconcilabilities and Transgression: Edward W. Said's Idea of a Worldly Criticism', p. 322.
[36] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 60.
[37] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 60.
[38] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 16.

I believe that female characters in the selected novels of Jabra and Coetzee, though at first they internalize as natural their cultural 'filiations', within which they hold an inferior position, develop towards a new understanding of their cultural and social positions and, thus, participate eventually in undermining and deconstructing them. This thesis, then, utilizes contrapuntalism as a critical tool to find answers to the following questions: how is the intimate historical relationship between literature and national politics in South Africa and Palestine reflected in the selected novels? How do Coetzee's and Jabra's secular vision help them deal with the traumatic past in the two countries, while addressing the present and foreseeing the future? How is the historical struggle of women in South Africa and Palestine depicted as part and parcel of the political and cultural attempts at rehabilitation and transition to a more just future? And finally: how do Coetzee and Jabra tackle and discuss the causes of women in the selected novels?

The Choice of Coetzee and Jabra

I have chosen to examine the novels of the South African novelist J. M. Coetzee and the Palestinian writer Jabra Ibrahim Jabra in particular for a number of reasons. Firstly, I think Coetzee's and Jabra's novels are particularly appropriate to a reading using Said's theory of contrapuntalism. This thesis explores how the nationality and cultural identity of the selected writers have a dominating presence in the majority of their writings and so play an important role in the critical readings of the whole thesis. In drawing a comparison between the South African and Palestinian historical and imperial experiences, Edward Said has persuasively underpinned the role of imperial ideologies and administration in the construction of notions of separation, alienation and violence. Long years of oppression, violence and discrimination have left a permanent mark on these two societies, particularly on the rights of women and deprived classes, creating

what Said calls 'an intense feeling [of] separateness'.[39] In South Africa and Palestine, deep-rooted notions of apartheid, isolation and separation led not only to a chronic state of 'hatred and rejection' of the Other but also to the prevalence of 'sectarianism and the mentality of the security state rule'.[40]

Being the powerful sides in the South African and Palestinian power equations, both Afrikaners and Israelis rigorously followed aggressive and comprehensive defence and security policies that often meant controlling and restructuring space and people. They pursued discriminatory and violent imperial policies, counterinsurgency, an implacable opposition to native nationalism and resistance and even unthinkably abusive laws. In this way, the situation in South Africa and Palestine becomes an intense, permanent racial struggle over controlling or regaining control over land, a struggle that inevitably entails contradictions and which ranges between violent confrontation and a dire need for dialogue.

Since Said's contrapuntal theory is concerned with the historical (worldly) significance of the literary text on the one hand, and processes of racial/gender categorizations and polarities on the other, the thesis argues that the selected South African and Palestinian novels perfectly conform to Said's definition of the 'worldliness' of literature. The events in the novels either take place inside South Africa and Palestine or deal with the general causes of racism and discrimination there. This thesis examines the literary representations of the effects of the deep-seated experiences of hatred, alienation and violence on the racial and gender relations of different, consecutive generations in South Africa and Palestine. It specifically investigates women's position during different decades of struggle and reform.

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[39] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 106.
[40] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 122.

Secondly, Coetzee's and Jabra's novels share an abiding concern with women's position and challenges in the South African and Palestinian societies. Their fiction represents women's causes as inseparable from the racial struggle in the two countries. Coetzee observes that 'colonialism allows some of the worst features of patriarchalism to survive, including the treatment of unattached (unowned) women as fair game, huntable creatures'.[41] Similarly, Jabra asserts that 'woman is not an inferior creature. Woman is an independent creature, with equal consciousness and rights with men'.[42] Both authors use women's causes to offer a critique of patriarchal, universalist standards that establish concepts of difference, nationalism and identity within the binary oppositions of male/female, black/white, and superior/inferior.

Analysing the gradual development of the position of women in South Africa and Palestine, this thesis traces the interaction between power, race and gender in determining interracial relations and in creating global structures of injustice, exploitation and discrimination. Defined by both native and colonial authorities as subaltern figures,[43] marginalized and oppressed female characters fight to convert their paradoxical images into something fundamentally and constitutively different. In doing so, they inevitably reform the intricate relationships between cultural notions of identity, nationalism and female sexuality.

Accordingly, I choose to study some texts at the expense of others in an attempt to reveal the diversity of female experiences represented in the texts and trace ideological changes within the writers' political views of their societies. The chosen

[41] J. M. Coetzee, 'The Harms of Pornography', *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 81-82, (p. 81).
[42] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Masks of Reality and Masks of Illusion* (Beirut: Arab Institution for Publishing and Distribution, 1992), p. 163.
[43] Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (Winter, 1989), pp. 205-225, (p. 221).

texts cover a variety of experiences of femininity and masculinity, ranging from the traditional and deeply reactionary to the iconoclastic and nontraditional roles of women in public arenas and in personal relationships alike. I trace how Coetzee and Jabra assign their female characters similar public roles, and analyse the variety of ways in which their female characters discharge these roles, from the domineering type to the unsure, from the feminine to the feminist. Whether in South Africa or Palestine, or indeed any other part of the globe, women face a variety of embodiments of masculinity, such as: the virile macho, the romantic idealist, the tyrannical father, the domineering husband, the daring freedom fighter, the committed intellectual, the persecuted prisoner or activist, and the ruthless military man. Coetzee and Jabra create such a variety of male characters in the selected novels. The six novels I discuss also enable a comparison of the ways in which the two authors experiment with new literary styles to serve their ideological purposes.

Thirdly, the study argues that Coetzee and Jabra, like Said, are hybridists. They are preoccupied with intercultural relationships and consequently are not just 'writing back' to people in power or oppressors, but also address the oppressed or marginalized classes as well. They are more concerned with finding a middle ground of fair human contact, rather than recording facts about historical and contemporary oppression. The works of Coetzee and Jabra epitomize the continuing colonial repercussions on culture and women's causes in South Africa and Palestine, relating them to the political systems in the two countries.

Finally, I am interested in exploring the presentation of history and politics in the works of Coetzee and Jabra. I argue that Coetzee's and Jabra's involvement with the South African and Palestinian historical experiences are personalized visions that seek to

attain a balance between the historical credibility of their works and their artistic/intellectual individualism and independence. As Said explains above, the 'worldly' dimension of the literary text is a bridge through which the writer '[articulates] a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public'.[44] Utilizing Said's contrapuntalism, then, I compare and contrast the way the selected novels of Coetzee and Jabra address the South African and Palestinian public, as well as an international readership.

Representation of Reality in the Novels of Coetzee and Jabra

The literary representation of history and politics has always been a controversial matter worldwide.[45] In this sense, South Africa and Palestine are no exception. Throughout South Africa's history, the works of South African novelists have inevitably been labelled by how they 'fit into the political struggle'.[46] Being a white South African of hybrid origin, having both English and Afrikaner ancestors, Coetzee's position as a writer is a thorny one. As a white writer in a country like South Africa in a period of total repression and silencing of the majority of black people, Coetzee's writings have not only been judged for their political significance, but he has also had to persistently declare, if not justify, his attitudes towards the past history of apartheid and oppression. In 'The Essential Gesture: Writers and Responsibility', his fellow South African writer and Nobel prize-winner, Nadine Gordimer, argues how 'the white writer who had declared himself answerable to the oppressed people is not expected by them to be 'more than a writer', since his historical position is not seen as allowing him to be central to the

[44] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p. 23.
[45] David Attwell, 'The Problem of history in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee', *Poetics Today*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Autumn, 1990), pp. 579-615, (p. 579).
[46] Susan Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.11.

black struggle'.[47]

Gordimer is highlighting a very critical point that faces many writers who address postcolonial struggles and situations. How is a writer or an intellectual positioned or how does s/he position him- or herself in the public sphere? For Edward Said, the intellectual should 'speak truth to power', be 'a secularist' and 'independent of the influence of the academy'.[48] Such a position, according to Said, implies a conscious, clear-cut and transparent engagement with politics. The public sphere determines and seems to interfere with the private vision of the intellectual or the writer. For Coetzee, it is quite the opposite. He states that:

> I am immensely uncomfortable with questions [...] that call upon me to answer for (in two senses) my novels, and my responses are often taken as evasive [...] my difficulty is precisely with the project of stating positions, taking positions.[49]

Coetzee sees the writing process as intensely private and meant to 'tell an essential truth about the self'.[50] In Coetzee's fiction, arguably both the writer himself and his individual characters unconsciously gain awareness that could change their attitudes towards and interests in the public sphere or in the whole society. In commenting on the role of state censorship in South Africa, Coetzee says that 'I regard it as a badge of honor to have had a book banned in South Africa, and even more of an honor to have been acted against punitively'.[51] Yet, he admits that more often than not his 'books have been too indirect in their approach, too rarefied, to be considered a threat to the order'.[52] Coetzee's involvement with history and politics is intentionally blurred by his use of

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[47] Nadine Gordimer, 'The Essential Gesture: Writers and Responsibility ', *The Lectures on Human Values*, Delivered at the University of Michigan (1984), pp. 1-19, (p. 11).
[48] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, pp. 13 &15.
[49] J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point, Essays and Interviews* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 205.
[50] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, p. 252.
[51] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, p. 298.
[52] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, p. 298.

allegory, metafiction and semi-realist novels, a technique that not only suggests that 'Coetzee's commitment [is] to the autonomy of his art' but also 'ensures the political force of his novels'.[53]

Despite the fact that Coetzee's writings are generally seen as 'elusive' and use 'unrealist devices',[54] he is concerned to declare, even if indirectly, his attitude towards history. 'In times of intense ideological pressure like the present, when the space in which the novel and history normally coexist like two cows on the same pasture', Coetzee thinks, 'the novel, it seems to me, has only two options: supplementarity or rivalry'.[55] He chooses his novels to be in a state of 'true rivalry, even enmity', with the historical order to 'show up the mythic status of history, demythologizing history'.[56] In the process of 'demythologizing history', Coetzee undoubtedly identifies himself with the problems of the oppressed and the marginalized in South Africa. Coetzee is the author of twelve novels to date: *Dusklands* (1974), *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), *Foe* (1986), *Age of Iron* (1990), *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), *Disgrace* (1999), *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (2003), *Slow Man* (2005), and *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013). He has also written three books of semi-fictional memoir: *Boyhood: Scenes from a Provincial Life* (1997), *Youth* (2002), and *Summertime: Scenes from a Provincial Life* (1997).

In the majority of these novels and memoirs, the South African polarities of master/slave, black/white, male/female, the private and the public and oppression/resistance are always dominant, upsetting the status quo and keeping the struggle alive. For instance, the tortured conscience of the Magistrate in *Waiting for the*

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[53] Samuel Durrant, 'Bearing Witness to Apartheid: J. M. Coetzee's Inconsolable Works of Mourning', *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 40, No. 3, (Autumn, 1999), pp. 430-463, p. 432.
[54] Dominic Head, *J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 103.
[55] J. M. Coetzee, 'The Novel Today', *Upstream*, 6.1 (Summer, 1988), p. 2.
[56] Said, 'The Novel Today', p. 5.

Barbarians and the Medical Officer in *Life and Times of Michael K* is confronted with a growing sympathy with and admiration of the oppressed, who gain awareness and demonstrate resistance. Michael K in *Life and Times of Michael K*, Friday in *Foe* and Magda in *In the Heart of the Country*, are marginalized citizens who are forced to retreat from society to their private worlds in the process of searching for an identity different from the one prescribed for them by society.

Coetzee's novels represent elements of social resistance and armed violence as well. In novels set during the apartheid era, many coloured and black characters are shown to suffer oppression, physical and psychological abuse and their rights are persistently misappropriated. These victimized characters react differently. Some retreat and keep silent, while others actively join armed resistance groups. The scattered violent acts are practised by small armed groups in *Life and Times of Michael K*, but turn into a civil war in *Age of Iron*. Coetzee's later novel, *Disgrace*, also deals with sexual and social violence. It explores why ethical codes and social justice are dysfunctional within the post-apartheid South African society.

In his article, 'The Problem of History in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee', David Attwell argues that in Coetzee's fiction, 'history is more than a referent; it is in fact a tyrannical presence, but it is nevertheless elusive and cannot be brought into full consciousness by those who are caught up in it'.[57] In other words, Coetzee's oblique attitude and 'anti-realist' strategies are an expression of the inability of his characters to fully integrate either within the society or within the text. Since the South African society in Coetzee's fiction is still torn between forces of violence and revenge, subjugation and oppression, and denial of past atrocities, fully accessing the private

[57] Attwell, 'The Problem of History', p. 579.

domain of oppressed and marginalized characters can become another form of authorial oppression. This is something that Coetzee refuses to do. Since the majority of people in South Africa under apartheid were neither equal human beings nor subjects in control of their destiny, Coetzee thinks, 'the only truth is silence'.[58] The majority of Coetzee's characters have a language problem. They fail to communicate normally with each other and are reluctant to jeopardize their limited autonomy. Rather than speak, Coetzee's characters adopt silence in order to allay the insecurity and anxiety of their lives of oppression and marginalization, and, consequently, 'symbolically elud[e] interpretation or being read, and thereby resist [...] domination'.[59]

If silence is the favoured tool of resistance utilized by Coetzee's oppressed characters, Jabra's characters are exceptionally talkative. Jabra himself believes that 'language to the Arab is food and drink. It is the means of giving substance to his dreams and defining those inner ways which lead to the cultural identity he seeks for himself'.[60] Jabra, unlike Coetzee, is a politically committed intellectual whose main concern has been reforming Palestinian and Arab culture and politics. He is a liberal thinker but adopts socialist notions as well. As a 'Third World' was being born', Jabra says, 'writers were its prophets'.[61] For Jabra, there is a vital interaction between the literary text and its socio-cultural context and so Third-World and Palestinian literature should both highlight and fight colonialism along with inherent forces of tyranny and oppression which have been prevalent within their borders for so long. Living under Israeli leadership, Palestinian writers have continually been censored and interdicted (as were

[58] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, p. 286.
[59] Jane Poyner, *J. M. Coetzee and the Idea of Public Intellectual* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), p. 3.
[60] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, 'Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Interpoetica: An Interview with Jabra Ibrahim Jabra,' *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, Vol. 1, (Spring, 1981), pp. 51-52, (p. 51).
[61] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, 'Modern Arabic Literature and the West,' *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 11, (1985), pp. 76-91, (p. 88).

South African writers for many years). Consequently, Palestinian intellectuals and writers have often been forced to live in surrounding Arab countries. The arrival of some well-educated and cultured personalities (such as Jabra himself) in Arab cities such as Cairo, Baghdad, Beirut, and Damascus, though it created a series of confrontations with authorities within these countries, was crucial not only in the development of the Palestinian and Arab novel and literature, but also in 'unifying' and 'committing' Arab intellectual efforts 'around causes of revolution, liberation, national sovereignty and justice'.[62]

In Jabra's novels, unlike Coetzee's 'oblique' engagement with history and 'elusive' characters, historical facts and events are directly presented and even discussed openly by characters. Jabra's oppressed and colonized men and women are revolutionary, voluble and challenge their enforced exile, alienation and marginalization through integrating themselves within host societies and through telling stories. They always talk about the past to keep it alive within their own and others' memories. In his book *Discovery and Astonishment: A Study of Jabra's Creative Career*, Mājid Sāmarrā'ī describes how Jabra's literary works are 'essentially based upon the idea of struggle or conflict' and that 'the life of his characters is incomplete without conflict'.[63] Unlike Coetzee's silent, isolated and introvert characters, Jabra's characters are confrontational carriers of Jabra's attitudes towards the West and the Arab political leadership. Studying and living in the United Kingdom and moving between Iraq and Lebanon, Jabra, like his characters, is open to other cultures and aspires to get their support and even sympathy with the Palestinians. Jabra is worried that, with the disaster

[62] Halim Barakat, 'Arabic Novel and Social Transformation,' *Studies in Modern Arabic Literature*, Ed. R. C. Ostle, (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1975), pp. 112- 129, (p. 127).
[63] Mājid Sāmarrā'ī , *ktishāf wa-al-dahshah, ḥiwār fī dawāfi' al-ibdā' ma'a Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā* (Dimashq: Dār al-Numayr lil-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2006), p. 12. (My translation).

of 1948, 'we became more and more politically alienated from the west', and as a result, 'the idea of culture became extra-national'.[64] Like Said, Jabra is against the separatist and self-enclosed attitudes inherent within Palestinian nationalist thought which 'have not surmounted the philosophical problem of the Other, of learning how to live with, as opposed to despite, the Other'.[65]

This 'extra-national' vision of the Palestinian struggle develops and changes throughout Jabra's novels. Jabra is convinced that the fate of Palestinian and Arab men and women is inseparable from worldwide conditions and the cultural hegemony of the West. To describe such interconnection, Jabra's novels embrace 'hybridity as subject matter', a hybridity which directly 'challenges the history of racial 'purity''.[66] In *The Ship* (1970), Jabra's characters include Arabs, Europeans and Americans who all talk about both their personal life and their view of the world around them. They come from different backgrounds but all are involved in a similar historical desire for change, real human contact and liberty from repressive cultural norms. Similarly, in *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978) and *The Journals of Sarab Affan* (1992), Arab and Palestinian men and women are open to Western culture and civilization; nevertheless, they see the world around them in relation to the Palestinian cause and the colonial experience of the Arab world.

Jabra wrote six novels, namely *A Scream in a Long Night* (1952), *Hunters in a Narrow Street (1960), The Ship* (1970), *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978), *The Other Rooms* (1986), and *The Journals of Sarab Affan* (1990) and co-authored one novel with renowned Jordanian-born Saudi novelist Abdel-Rahman Munif, namely *A World without*

[64] Jabra, 'Modern Arabic Literature and the West', p. 81.
[65] Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 330.
[66] Ferial Ghazoul, *The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative Authors Writing in Foreign Languages* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000), p. 12.

Maps (1982). Jabra, like Coetzee, published two autobiographies namely *The First Well: A Bethlehem Boyhood* (1987) and *Princesses' Street: Baghdad Memories* (1994). In Jabra's early novels like *The Ship* and *In Search of Walid Masoud*, 'the idea of celebrating a cultural heritage that had no exact geographical existence', Nathaniel Greenberg argues, 'began to intensify for Jabra the feeling that Palestine was merely a symbol for the construction of a greater Arab identity'.[67] However, in later novels, like *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, Palestinian identity is manifested in 'an [independent] will to act'.[68] Both Jabra and his characters begin to consider the existing realities of the Arab world, realizing that the independence of Palestinian people requires them to have a separate plan of action on both the military and the negotiational levels. While in *In Search of Walid Masoud*, Palestinian intellectual Walid Masoud spends all his life pursuing the mirage of a democratic united Arab world that is able to effectively address the Palestinian cause, in *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, Palestinian heroine Sarab Affan realizes that Palestinian people should act independently. She moves to Paris to publicize the Palestinian cause. Said refers to the same point when he suggests that Palestinians ought to benefit from the South African experience through addressing 'the cultural and political aspects of the Palestinian struggle' worldwide rather than 'locking it within feelings of rejection and armed resistance'. He goes on to elaborate:

> [The] ritualized and gross emphasis on armed struggle caused us to neglect the incredibly complex and far more important political and cultural aspects of our struggle, and it played right into the hands of Israel, which with its superior propaganda apparatus turned everything we did against its occupation of our lands, its devastation of our villages, and its oppression of our population, into terrorism.[69]

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[67] Nathaniel Greenberg, 'Political Modernism, Jabra, and the Baghdad Modern Art Group,' *Comparative Literature and Culture*, Vol.12, issue. 2 (2010), pp. 1-13, (p. 6).
[68] Greenberg, 'Political Modernism, Jabra, and the Baghdad Modern Art Group', p. 10.
[69] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky*: *Palestinian Lives* /Edward W. Said; photographs by Jean Mohr (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 107.

For Jabra, then, the concept of a 'greater Arab identity is profoundly personal and urgently historical'.[70] Characters in Jabra's novels realize that their identity stems first from their inward feeling of themselves and then their ability to adjust such a feeling to the outward historical position of their societies. A similar identity struggle dominates Coetzee's novels. He investigates the deep-seated processes of the construction of identity in South Africa, tracing its psychological and cultural repercussions on race and gender relations. Coetzee, like Jabra, believes that apartheid systems worldwide establish the misconception that 'humanity falls 'naturally' into three divisions, white, black, yellow, or into men and women'.[71] In South Africa, the premise of 'identity pairs' is institutionalized so that 'social, educational, and cultural policies were based on the postulate of separate (God-given) groups with separate destinies'.[72] Consequently, there is a dire need to distinguish between what is 'individual' and what is 'communal'.[73]

In the Arab world, as in case of Coloured and Black South African communities, identity is defined as a collective and monolithic entity in contrast to a clearly foreign 'Other'. The sense of belonging and of group identity is strong, and every member of the community recognizes his or her place in a social space that knows little or no mobility. Consequently, the dominant identity perception is that the Zionist Israelis are Zionist Israelis, and the Palestinian Arabs are Palestinian Arabs, two separate entities. Rejecting such fixed notions, Jabra and Coetzee suggest that identity has to pass through a continual process of redefining and compromise with other identities and

[70] Samah Selim, 'Fiction Mimics Reality: *In Search of Walid Masoud*", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 31, No.2. (Winter, 2002), p. 89.
[71] Richard Begam, 'An Interview with J. M. Coetzee', *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Autumn, 1992), pp. 419-431, (p. 426).
[72] Begam, 'An Interview with J M Coetzee', p. 427.
[73] Begam, 'An Interview with J M Coetzee', p. 248.

within itself. This process is the outcome of the interaction between both the personal and historical dimensions of identity.

The historical dimension is the general framework that moulds a person's attitudes and perceptions of his land and his duties towards it and his people. The personal dimension of identity is the individual's free aspirations, independent views of the world and changing relations with others. Through this personal perception, one is able to reconcile one's identity and the actualities of one's own culture, society, and history to the reality of other identities, cultures, peoples. Jabra's well-known concern with the personal dimension of identity and its articulation is expressed in his novels through multiple first-person narration. Unlike Coetzee's limited cast of characters and confined settings, Jabra takes readers on a geo-cultural tour among Arab, Greek, European, Asian and American spaces, languages and cultures, and characters from each of these take part in the narrating process, indicating that a harmonious, human identity can be constructed out of diversity.

Despite the fact that both Coetzee and Jabra are academics, renowned novelists and influential critics, I have not been able to trace any personal connection between them. Neither Coetzee nor Jabra comment on each other's works and they seem to be different on both the personal and literary levels. Coetzee is an elusive and introvert recluse who is reluctant to appear in public or be interviewed, even when receiving The Nobel Prize.[74] Jabra, on the other hand, was outgoing, outspoken in his political and intellectual commentary and engaged in art movements in the Arab world. In 1951 Jabra, along with artist Jawad Salim, founded the Baghdadi Group of Modern Art. He also held the position of the president of the Association of Art Critics in Iraq

[74] Austin Briggs describes his meeting with Coetzee during the Nobel Prize ceremony, as 'in conversation the third most impossible person that I have encountered in a fairly long life.' 'Who's Who When Everybody's at Home,' *James Joyce Literary Supplement*, 16:1 (2002), p. 11.

since its inception in May 1982. Jabra was the chief editor of 'Arabic Arts' magazine issued in London from 1980 to 1983,[75] all of these activities suggesting someone outgoing and actively involved in artistic circles.

Coetzee and Jabra also differ in their writing styles. To begin with, the two writers were seen by critics as 'postmodernists' who continually experiment with their style and employ non-realist devices such as allegory, metafiction, and myth.[76] However, their experimental styles follow different, if not opposite, routes. Jabra has been described as a 'Renaissance man' whose novels are 'among the most sophisticated and technically assured in the modern tradition'.[77] Jabra himself confesses that his novels are 'sesquipedalian', 'polyphonic' and that they 'benefit from painting, music, acting, and from poetry as verbal energy and suggestion' and 'use techniques belonging originally to musical composition, such as rhythm, harmony, and crescendo'.[78] Coetzee, on the other hand, sees himself as a 'miniaturist',[79] and, consequently, his novels are 'graceful and incisive'.[80] They are considered, concentrated, and carefully crafted texts.

Despite these stylistic and temperamental differences between Coetzee and Jabra, the thesis argues that their novels conform perfectly to Edward Said's definition of contrapuntal theory, exploring the worldly connections of literary texts. I am interested in comparing and contrasting the ways the novels of Coetzee and Jabra, first, involve and are involved with history and politics in South Africa and Palestine. Second, I am particularly focusing on the role of women in the literary visions of the two authors,

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[75] Nasir AL-Somi, 'Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: Amateur of Professional Art,' *Palestine*, Issue. 35, (2013), p. 3.
[76] Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), pp. 138 -139, and Dominic Head, *J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 20-24.
[77] Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical Introduction*, p. 17.
[78] Alaa Elgibali, 'Jabra Jabra's Interpoetics: An Interview with Jabra,' *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 1, 'Philosophy and Stylistics' (Spring, 1981), pp. 49-55, (p. 51).
[79] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, p. 243.
[80] Head, *J. M. Coetzee*, p. 12.

extracting the common as well as the specific experiences of South African and Arab women. I will elaborate on why I have chosen to study female characters in the next section.

Choice of Novels and Chapter Divisions

> Women in South Africa […] have emerged as primary catalysts for protests against, and as challengers of, the apartheid regime. With all the disabilities and devastating effects of apartheid on the status of women that have already been described, women have never lost sight of the fact that meaningful change for them cannot come through reform but only through the total destruction of the apartheid system. Thus the common exploitation and oppression of men and women on the basis of colour has led to a combined fight against the system.[81]

> The Palestinian Revolution has contributed immeasurably to the awakening of the Palestinian woman, and to her effective involvement in the struggle of the Palestinian people on all levels. The traumatic experience of the Palestinian people as a whole has helped Palestinian women to transcend traditional conservative and oppressive attitudes toward the role of women that are characteristic of many Third World societies.[82]

According to the above two quotations, the struggles and emancipation of South African and Palestinian women symbolize the gradual historic transition of colonized and oppressed groups from being inferior, subordinated and dependent entities to being independent, progressive and modern entities, capable of effecting political change. Women's struggles for equality and freedom have coexisted with the nationalist movements in South Africa and Palestine. Although they have a complicated relationship of sympathy and support, mutual use and mutual cooperation, and unacknowledged contestation, women's emancipation is part and parcel of their countries' emergence from Western colonial subjection and patriarchal rule to modernity and cultural reform. This thesis aims at tracing the development and change in the position of South African and Palestinian women during the second half of the twentieth

[81] 'The Role of Women in the Struggle against Apartheid', *South Africa's National Liberation Movement* (July, 1980), available at http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4667&t=Women`s Struggles
[82] *The Struggle of Palestinian Women* (Beirut: Palestinian National Assembly, 1975), p. 14.

century as represented in the novels of Coetzee and Jabra. Utilizing Said's contrapuntal theory, I argue that the national plight and racial struggles in the two countries encouraged women to reform their traditional gender roles as part of the fight for freedom and equality of their people.

Since this thesis is about the ways in which Coetzee's and Jabra's novels offer themselves as significant examples of the 'worldliness' of the literary text, and consequently conform to Said's contrapuntal theory, Chapter One discusses the interaction between the historical background and events in the novels of Coetzee and Jabra. I especially focus on the historical role of South African and Palestinian women in resisting the forces of oppression, subjugation and alienation. Also, I explore the different stages of change and development of women's social status and economic role in the two countries.

The thesis is a comparative study between Coetzee and Jabra: hence, I have decided to study three novels by each writer. The chosen novels are: J. M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), *Foe* (1986) and *Disgrace* (1999), and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978), *The Ship* (1970) and *The Journal of Sarab Affan* (1992). I have allocated three chapters to discuss the six chosen novels; each chapter will compare and contrast the representation of female characters in a novel by each writer. In Chapter Two, I discuss the cultural position of women in Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) and Jabra's *The Ship* (1970). This chapter highlights the role of secular thinking in determining how women perceive their prescribed roles within society and redefine their positions as cultural producers and active agents rather than passive victims to patriarchy. Being bound to repressive cultures and colonial orders, women in *Foe* and *The Ship* fight to be recognized as individual human beings and to rethink their relations

to the self, society and the Other.

Chapter Three is a comparative study of the economic role of women in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978). It focuses particularly on the theme of hybridity in the two novels. It argues that women's economic independence empowers both their personal and national struggles against patriarchal structures in their societies. In addition, this chapter highlights the role of economic interdependence in South Africa and Palestine in creating hybrid female identities and social structures that foster co-operation and common interests rather than feelings of hostility and revenge. While Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* represents economic hybridity as a means of initiating a new start and discovering a new identity outside the discriminatory categorizations of the apartheid system, Jabra's concept of hybridity pushes towards a new unified communal sense of justice, equality and democracy in the Arab world. Yet, both novels aim to foster economic and cultural connections among different races and identities in order to establish a new force of resistance to all forms of oppression.

Chapter Four delineates the political role of South African and Palestinian women in Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), and Jabra's *The Journals of Sarab Affan* (1992). It demonstrates how Coetzee's and Jabra's characterization of female characters changes in these two later novels to reflect a real, if not revolutionary, reform in the way women perceive their prescribed gender and racial identities. This chapter investigates the concept of humanist activism in the two novels. Women in *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, unlike female characters in the early novels of the two novelists, have a reasonable degree of economic stability and independence. Their main challenge is a purely ideological and political struggle for recognition of their humanness.

The Conclusion sums up the findings of the thesis in relation to two main areas; firstly, it considers the role of social and cultural mobility on the part of Coetzee, Said and Jabra in the development of their shared humanist interpretation of the interaction between history and literature in Third World contexts. Secondly, it examines the progressive and integrative outcomes of female-oriented resistance as represented in the chosen texts, suggesting that secularism, hybridity and humanism may be seen as forces of personal and national change and liberation.

Locating the Thesis

As far as I know, this is the first full-length study to compare the novels of the South African novelist J. M. Coetzee and the Palestinian novelist Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. It is also the first reading of the novels of the two writers in relation to Edward Said's theory of contrapuntalism. Generally speaking, Coetzee's and Jabra's novels are critically discussed in the light of theories of modernism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism. Because South Africa and Palestine are the main setting in the novels of Coetzee and Jabra, respectively, the historical element in their fiction is always under investigation and analysis. In 'The Problem of History in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee', David Attwell declares that there is an 'intractable relationship in all Coetzee's novels between, on the one hand, system, structure, synchrony, acts of apprehension or consciousness, and on the other, event, diachrony, and history'.[83] Attwell refers to the dialectic between form and history in Coetzee's novels. For Attwell, Coetzee's formalistic ways of approaching apartheid history in South Africa mystify and perplex the relationship between structure and context in his novels. Yet, Coetzee's oblique engagement with history can be seen as a means of both escaping rigid representations of reality and universalising South

[83] Attwell, 'The Problem of History', p. 579.

African struggle against oppression.

Most of Coetzee's novels employ allegory, myth and elusive structure in depicting a world of intense political and cultural conflicts. Coetzee chooses his fiction to 'operate in terms of its own procedures and issues in its own conclusions, not one that oppresses in terms of the procedures of history and eventuates in conclusions that are checkable by history'.[84] In getting rid of the shambles and procedures of history, Coetzee thinks, the novel is able to 'represent the un-representable'.[85] He continues that:

> In Africa the only address one can imagine is a brutally direct one, a sort of pure, unmediated representation; what short-circuits the imagination, what forces one's face into the thing itself, is what I am here calling history. 'The only address one can imagine' – an admission of defeat. *Therefore*, the task becomes imagining the unimaginable, imagining a form of address that permits the play of *writing* to start taking place.[86]

Susan Gallagher develops the same point when she states that Coetzee's 'allegories vividly suggest the various ways that language and discourse in South Africa have been socially and historically constructed'.[87] Both Attwell and Gallagher examine the complex relationship between structural and historical conceptions in Coetzee's novels, a relation which is of great importance in Jabra's novels as well.

In analysing Jabra's memoir *Princesses' Street: Baghdad Memories,* Allen Hibbard makes clear that Jabra's fiction 'continually reminds us of how embedded our lives are in the fabric and course of history'.[88] Jabra admits that his novels are works of 'social change' that:

> [e]ncompass the vast visionary experience which is part of Arab life today. […] I want Arab writers to live with their characters, to struggle with them and

[84] Coetzee, 'The Novel Today,' p. 9.
[85] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, p. 67.
[86] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, pp. 67-68.
[87] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*, p. 112.
[88] Allen Hibbard, 'Princesses' Street: Baghdad Memories Jabra Ibrahim Jabra', *Digest of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 15, Issue 2, (Fall, 2006), p. 174.

> argue with them and through this to participate in depicting at least a part of that overwhelming process: the transformation of our society. Furthermore, they should portray the constant intellectual interaction between writer and society. The novels of Balzac and Dostoevsky not only reflect their times, but express as well the influence of those times on the minds of two geniuses busy taking and giving with their age.[89]

For Jabra, 'the contemporary novel' derives more than one of its powers 'from the epic, the play, the dialogue and the fable, and imagination'.[90] Jabra's 'imagination', like Coetzee's, 'is the complex result of a complex understanding of a culture deeply rooted in history and in the national unconscious. It is this national unconscious which must ultimately have the final say'.[91]

Although Coetzee and Jabra have different stances towards the position of the intellectual in society, they share a concern with the ways history and historical events interfere with individuals' attitudes and personal choices. I aim to link Coetzee's representation of history to Jabra's and then read them both in the light of Said's theory of contrapuntalism. In locating Coetzee's and Jabra's novels within the vision of contrapuntal theory as conceived by Said, I also hope to relate, first, the specific South African and Palestinian imperialist history in their fiction to their critical work and intellectual positions inside their societies and second, to relate the stylistic and conceptual elements in each of the chosen novels, in order to trace how each novel tackles women's problems and causes.

In his article, 'Secularism, Elitism, Progress, and Other Transgression', Bruce Robbins focuses on the way writers' mobility across the bounds of national identity enables an engagement of 'hybrid cultural work', that seems to achieve 'substantive progress' in the struggle for deconstructing oppressive and imperialist cultures and

[89] Hibbard, 'Princesses' Street: Baghdad Memories Jabra Ibrahim Jabra', p. 54.
[90] Hibbard, 'Princesses' Street: Baghdad Memories Jabra Ibrahim Jabra', p. 53.
[91] Hibbard, 'Princesses' Street: Baghdad Memories Jabra Ibrahim Jabra', p. 51.

notions':

> National origin matters; transfers from the periphery to the center do not leave the center as it was. The transnational story of upward mobility is not just a claiming of authority but a redefinition of authority, and a redefinition that can have many beneficiaries, for it means a recomposition as well as a redistribution of cultural capital. In short, progress is possible.[92]

I believe that Robbins' notion of 'mobility' is not only applicable to the works of Said, Coetzee and Jabra but is part and parcel of their literary and intellectual visions as well. I argue that the three writers are hybridists who utilize their mobility, either forced or chosen, within different cultures and societies as a method of both redefining their intellectual priorities and positioning themselves within the public sphere.

In the case of Coetzee, this thesis will not discuss his fiction in the light of ideas about the postmodern or allegory. It focuses rather on the resonance of South African historical facts, politics and realities in his fiction, although attention will be given to the stylistic means by which Coetzee responds to that outside world. The novels of Coetzee have been the subject of many full-length books and studies. For example, Susan Gallagher's *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (1991), David Attwell's *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (1993), Dominic Head's *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee* (2009), and Dick Penner's *Countries of the Mind: The Fiction of J. M. Coetzee* (1989), all focus on the postcolonial and postmodern elements in Coetzee's fiction. Head and Gallagher in particular focus on the question of identity in Coetzee's fiction. Head emphasizes that Coetzee's 'allegorical' texts are meant to raise 'the question of identity, as a literary as well as an ethnic matter'.[93] Gallagher, on the other hand, praises Coetzee's significant 'ability to depict the war of bureaucracy against the individual' and thus, Coetzee goes beyond ‘moral

[92] Bruce Robbins, 'Secularism, Elitism, Progress, and Other Transgression: On Edward Said's Voyage In,' *Social Text*, No. 40, (Fall, 1994), p. 32.
[93] Head, *J. M. Coetzee*, p. 3.

condemnation of corrupt individuals to condemn and expose corrupt structures'.[94] Although Teresa Dovey's *The Novels of J. M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories* (1988) is a psychoanalytical study of Coetzee's fiction, she describes Coetzee as 'both [a] postcolonial and [a] postmodern writer'.[95]

Moreover, Coetzee is regarded by many critics as an 'international'[96] writer. While Dick Penner declares that 'Coetzee's novels maintain their significance apart from a South African context',[97] Clive Barnett argues that Coetzee's fiction is 'a repository of universal humanistic moral values' that succeed in 'universalizing' the sufferings of black South Africans, since 'apartheid is constructed as simply a variant of an historical form of totalitarianism'.[98] This thesis argues against that 'universalist' view, suggesting that Coetzee's fiction is deeply involved in the political and historical situation of South Africa and consequently gains its international recognition through its specific locality. It argues that Coetzee's representation and readings of the different decades of the South African historical struggles and political change determine his involvement with international literary values, not vice versa. For example, Coetzee's *Foe* questions the reliability and independence of Western literary representations of the self and the Other. However, *Disgrace* (1999) mainly addresses local readers in post-apartheid South Africa, claiming that real reform stems from within South Africa and not from outside.

Similarly, Jabra's novels are generally discussed within the light of both

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[94] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*, p. 146.
[95] Teresa Dovey, 'J M Coetzee: Writing in The Middle Voice,' *Essays On African Writing: A Re-evaluation* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1993), p. 57.
[96] Clive Barnett, 'Construction of Apartheid in The Inter-national Reception of The Novels of J M Coetzee,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, (June, 1999), p. 287.
[97] Dick Penner, *Countries of the Mind: The Fiction of J. M. Coetzee* (London: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. xiii.
[98] Barnett, 'Construction of Apartheid in the Inter-national Reception of the Novels of J M Coetzee', pp. 292-93.

'postmodernism', and 'postcolonialism'.[99] While Mohammed Bamyeh argues that Jabra's 'postcolonial novels' depict the experience of colonization 'as a moment of cultural self-consciousness and self-dividedness' and highlight 'contradictory and ambivalent identity patterns and subject positions resulting from the encounter with the other',[100] M. Badawi believes that the postmodern novels of Jabra are 'novels of rebellion' that 'focus on self-centered solutions or individual attempts at resolving one's alienation through defiance and creative social-cultural criticisms'.[101] In his article 'Sexuality in Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Novel, *In Search of Walid Masoud*,' Mattityahu Peled stresses the same point. Peled argues that the fiction of Jabra is a 'polyphony full of valid voices and plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses', and so the 'individuals' in the novels undergo 'confrontations of consciousnesses'.[102]

Jabra's novels have also been the subject of many Arabic and English studies, such as Ali Fazah's *Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: A Study of his Fiction* (1994), Ali Oda's *The Fiction of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra* (2003), Ibrahim El-Asafeen's *Masks and Mirrors: A Study of the Fiction of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra* (1996), Asma' Shaheen's *The Aesthetics of Place in the Novels of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra* (2001), Ghalel Shokri Hayas' *Jabra's Autobiography in The First Well* and *Princesses' Street* (1998), and Nabil Suliman's *Aesthetics and Concerns: A Study of Arab Fiction* (2003). In all these books, there is a deep concern with the historical dimension in Jabra's novels. For example, Ibrahim El-Asafeen regards the novels of Jabra as 'postmodern psycho-historical analyses of individuals',[103] while Ali

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[99] Roger, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical Introduction*, p. 77.
[100] Mohammed Bamyeh, 'Palestine: Listening to the Inaudible', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102:4 (Fall 2003), pp. 825-849, (p. 827).
[101] M.M. Badawi, *Modern Arabic Literature and the West* (London: Ithaca Press, 1985), p. 135.
[102] Mattityahu Peled, 'Sexuality in Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Novel, *In Search of Walid Masoud*', *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature*, Ed. Roger Allen, (London: Saqi Books, 1995), pp. [142]-152, (p. 142).
[103] Ibrahim El-Asafeen, *Masks and Mirrors: A Study of the Fiction of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra* (Cairo: Dar El-Shrooq, 1996), p. 9.

Oda emphasizes the importance of the political context in Jabra's fiction. Oda traces 'two dominant political paths' in Jabra's novels. The first path is 'the Palestinian cause and the Arab-Israeli struggle', and the second is 'the relationship between masses and authority in the Arab world'.[104] In a similar way, Majid Samarra'i argues that Jabra's novels dramatize 'conflicts', 'struggles' and emphasize the 'full responsibility of the individual, without isolating himself from the entire historical process of his time'.[105] As a Third World writer, Jabra is caught between the foreign occupation and the national dictatorship and cultural stagnation. In his novels, the ever-present past intensifies his awareness of 'the permanent interaction between man and history'.[106]

As already touched upon, in *The World, The Text and The Critic*, Edward Said speaks of the 'worldliness' of literary and critical texts, arguing that 'even in their most rarefied form, [they] are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place, and society—in short, they are in the world, and hence worldly'.[107] This is certainly true of Coetzee's and Jabra's novels. This study seeks neither to de-historicize nor to historicize their novels, but rather to establish their dialectical readings and relationships to history. It will argue that the three authors are hybridists, but each writer establishes his own deconstructive ethics. Their perception of hybridity, secularism, and humanism may differ, but their aim is one, which is creating new alternative cultural and social premises upon which more just human relationships can be established.

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[104] Ali Oda, *The Fiction of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra* (Ramallah: Palestinian Association for National Guidance, 2003), p. 145.
[105] Samarra'i, *ktishāf wa-al-dahshah, ḥiwār fī dawāfi' al-ibdā' ma'a Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā,* pp. 10-11.
[106] Samarra'i, *ktishāf wa-al-dahshah, ḥiwār fī dawāfi' al-ibdā' ma'a Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā,* p. 12.
[107] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 35.

Chapter One

A Contrapuntal Reading of the Novels of J. M. Coetzee and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: Violence, Discrimination and Alienation

Introduction

This chapter investigates the interaction between the historical background and events in a selection of novels by the South African novelist J. M. Coetzee and the Palestinian novelist J. I. Jabra. It specifically focuses on female characters' activism in relation to the experiences of violence, resistance and integration. Utilizing Edward Said's contrapuntal theory, the chapter traces the two novelists' representation of cultural attachment to land and space, in both its inseparable individual and communal aspects. It argues that in the selected novels, there is a persistent emphasis on the political right to equality and participation of all members of the nation, particularly the right of women to have access to the public sphere.

Through contrapuntalism, Said re-reads cultural and literary works 'with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts'.[1] In countries of intense racial and religious struggle like South Africa and Palestine, their modern history is inseparable from the two countries' past experiences of imperialism. Coetzee's and Jabra's novels reflect and draw upon the historical experiences of

[1] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 60.

imperialism in South Africa and Palestine. Their novels not only focus on the daily contacts, confrontations and frustrations between the colonized and the colonizers in the two countries, but also investigate social hierarchies more generally. Women are shown by both authors to be placed in an inferior position within their native cultures and within the imperialist order, and they dramatize women's personal and national struggles against these different forces of oppression. In the novels of Coetzee and Jabra, then, both the colonized and colonizing female characters who aspire to equality and freedom have to deal with forces of past and present violence and oppression that position them as inferior to men and as secondary citizens. This chapter further examines Coetzee's and Jabra's literary visions of the future of women in South Africa and Palestine, in the light of their persistent resistance against oppression.

The Politics of Violence in Patriarchal Orders: Alienation and Reconciliation as a Means of Self-Definition

> Imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control. For the native, the history of his or her colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss to an outsider of the local place, whose concrete geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored.[2]

In his article 'Yeats and Decolonization', Edward Said highlights the crucial role of violence in establishing and maintaining imperialist ideologies and patriarchal power relations. For Said, imperialism develops from being an act of violent territorial invasion to a chronic state of cultural struggle over land and power. Said regards imperialist violence as an organized, systematic and planned ideology of subjugation, rather than as deviant acts by individuals. While the colonizing administration tries by all means to impose its authority over the natives, the latter, particularly younger generations, not only fight oppressive and discriminatory systems, but also search for their authentic identity,

[2]Edward Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization', *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature.* Terry Eagleton, ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1990), pp. 69-94, (p. 77).

traditions and ways of life that they have been alienated from under imperialism. Inevitably, both the colonizing and the resistance processes involve violence.

For Said, however, 'imperialism after all is a cooperative venture. Both the master and the slave participate in it, and both grew up in it, albeit unequally'.[3] Said blames both sides for perceiving the self and the other in terms of violence and growing antagonism. It is a violent process of either imposing or fighting a form of oppressive rule. Since in South Africa and Palestine, the colonizers, white Afrikaners and Israelis, secure a permanent claim to land, the politics of violence turns into a life-long struggle for co-existence and reciprocal blame for past atrocities.

Within such violent situations, women, for both the colonized and the colonizing males, hold a contradictory position. They are regarded as inferior followers of their men and consequently are exposed to different forms of racial, class and gender violence: domestic, cultural and political. At the same time, women in the novels are used to stand for authentic identity and the right to land. In this manner, it is the way that women of different racial groups identify themselves with the land that marks a difference in their awareness of their political and historical roles and their perception of the human rights of equality and freedom. In addition to undergoing political and economic pressures in South Africa and Palestine, women in the two countries contest the patriarchal and fundamentally masculinist norms that have regulated society hitherto.

The main question explored in Coetzee's and Jabra's novels, then, is how women can discard their imposed racial identities and their complicit cultural affiliations in order to carry out acts of reconciliation and integration. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term 'integration' is generally defined as 'the making up or composition of

[3]Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization', p. 78.

a whole',[4] while, in the political sense, integration is 'the bringing into equal membership of a common society those groups or persons previously discriminated against on racial or cultural grounds'.[5] In developing these abstract definitions of the term 'integration' in order to turn it into a series of applicable practices worldwide, Edward Said states that 'separatism is a first phase', then he comes to the question 'how […] you integrate new values into an imaginative community in a world that's full of division?'.[6] By highlighting and avoiding the past mistakes and practices underlying feelings of separation, racism and antagonism among different races and cultures, Said suggests it might be possible to establish a politics of 'peaceful integration'.[7] However, Said believes that in today's world, integration requires successive efforts of official and individual 'political awareness' and 'political involvement'.[8] As an essential step toward 'peaceful integration', Said proposes 'models of reconciliation for [the oppressors] and their history, and for [the oppressed] and their history'.[9] He explains further that:

> Reconciliation [is] really the model for all of this, the struggle over land and all that that entailed. It's really the question of what you do once you get the land: you can use your independence to push people off because they were the supreme victims of all kinds of colonial and imperial schemes, but the net result was that they started another imperial battle or colonial battle.[10]

For Said, the gradual processes of reconciliation and integration have to be effected through communal and individual agreements, compensation, justice trials, and other inclusive and inter-racial projects. It is a model of reconciliation by which the self and the other are situated in a space that is not all about fighting, polemics and

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[4] *Oxford English Dictionary*, http://www.oed.com.
[5] *Oxford English Dictionary*, http://www.oed.com.
[6] Edward Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 203.
[7] Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said,* p. 203.
[8] Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said,* p. 204.
[9] Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said*,, p. 204.
[10] Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said,* p. 203.

oppositional politics. Said extends his model of reconciliation further to relate it to his theory of 'contrapuntalism':

> The contrapuntal approach is very interesting: you can reconcile the history of the colonized and the history of the colonizer without an attempt to 'be impartial', because there's always the question of justice. It's simply unjust – I certainly don't want to lose the force of that – it's simply unjust for the colonizers to have done what they did. But, on the other hand, that doesn't mean, then, that that entitles the colonized to wreak a whole system of injustices on a new set of victims.[11]

In the coming analysis, I aim to realize two goals. Firstly, I use Said's contrapuntal theory to read a selection of novels by Coetzee and Jabra, arguing that the two authors and their female characters approach their own life experiences, the histories of their countries and their contacts with Others contrapuntally. These contrapuntal approaches enlighten their views about their rights and the rights of the Other and inspire new beginnings and paths in life. Second, I use Said's concept of reconciliation in order to analyse the determined attempts of female characters in the novels of Coetzee and Jabra to break the circles of violence, alienation and siege on the personal, social and national levels. They take initiatives of reconciliation and integration and identify themselves with the land, a human cause or a free space, instead of racial groups or clan nationalism, at a time when the politics of geographical segregation and alienation have dominated for decades and shape all aspects of life in South Africa and the Arab world.

[11] Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said*, p. 204.

Psychological Investigation of Female Alienation/Integration in Coetzee's Novels

> The traces of my dealings with Freud lie all over my writings. There is an important body of work looking at the novels psychoanalytically.[12]

In his article, 'The Problem of History in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee', David Attwell argues persuasively that 'Coetzee's novels constitute a psychoanalytic allegory in which the narrators struggle to represent themselves in traditional South African literary discourses'.[13] Stephen Watson echoes Attwell, proposing that 'the novels not only allude to an actual historical reality, but they also give us, in fictional form, the type of psyche [and] the psychology that this reality dictates'.[14] In almost all his novels, Coetzee is concerned with the psychological workings of colonialism. In *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), for example, white Magda realizes that being a woman, she is of no value to her father, who wants 'a boy-heir' to inherit his farm, power and colonial ideology. Magda remembers how 'her [father] never forgave her [mother] for failing to bear him a son. His relentless sexual demands led to her death in childbirth'.[15] In her bondage to her father's authority, Magda is unable to communicate with other people in her society. She says:

> The language that should pass between myself and these people was subverted by my father and cannot be recovered. What passes between us now is a parody. I was born into a language of hierarchy, of distance and perspective. It was my father-tongue. I do not say it is the language my heart wants to speak, I feel too much the pathos of its distances, but it is all we have. […] I have no words left to exchange whose value I trust.[16]

Rethinking the position of white women within their native culture and the colonial environment, *In the Heart of the Country* achieves what Said calls 'a

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[12] J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 245.
[13] David Attwell, 'The Problem of history in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee,' *Poetics Today*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Autumn, 1990), p. 596.
[14] Stephen Watson, 'Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee', *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 17, and No.3. (Autumn, 1986), pp. 370-392., (p. 370).
[15] J. M. Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 45.
[16] Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country*, p. 97.

contrapuntal perspective', which exposes colonial racist ideology, with 'its internal coherence and system of external relationships'.[17] Magda fails to overcome her racial/class isolation and her feelings of gender inferiority. However, she is outraged and insulted when her father takes black Klein-Anna as his wife, asserting that her father has broken an 'old code' and violates 'old, correct language'.[18] Locked within her 'loneliness' and 'the menial positions to which she is consigned',[19] Magda does not accept that her father 'exchanges kisses and pronouns of intimacy with a girl who yesterday scrubbed the floors'.[20]

While Dominic Head sees Magda's rage at her father's marriage to Klein-Anna as 'natural' at a time when 'both biological and cultural hybridity were artificially policed and prevented',[21] it can also be taken as a sign of her complicity. The idea that Klein-Anna could one day give birth to a mixed-blood brother or 'the boy-heir' her father has been dreaming of all his life poses a threat to the very foundations of white supremacy. Magda violently defends her racial superiority and authority through murdering her domineering father, only to fall victim to the sexual power of her black servant, Hendrik. Distancing herself from the causes and sufferings of the Other and uncertain about her relation to the land, Magda is not only an outsider, but also a lonely, vulnerable female. As men of both the dominating and the dominated groups sexually violate the bodies of women as a means of subverting and disrupting power relations, Hendrik rapes Magda. In

[17]Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 36.
[18]Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country,* p. 22.
[19]Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian lives* / Edward W. Said; photographs by Jean Mohr. (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 79.
[20]Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country,* p. 22.
[21]Dominic Head, *J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 21.

the end, Magda realizes that 'the slave's consciousness is a dependent consciousness, so the master is not sure of the truth of his autonomy'.[22]

By focusing on white oppressed female characters *In the Heart of the Country*, Coetzee exposes 'internal exile and alienation of [the white woman] from political and, to a degree, sexual gratification and participation'.[23] In this novel, Magda is categorized by her white culture as a 'subaltern figure',[24] and accordingly her personal predicament is marginalized and sacrificed for grimmer forms of collective colonial violence.

Ironically enough, as Coetzee traces changes in the psychology of power, showing the limitation of or fall from power of the white man, white women are still mentally and psychologically caged within their traditional secondary roles. In *Foe* (1986), Susan Barton, like Magda, discovers that her authority and freedom, as a woman and as a writer, are incomplete, controlled and even censored. However, some of this censorship is self-imposed. Describing herself as 'the second subject' to old, weak Cruso and as a 'whore' to unrealized, subordinate Foe, Susan 'takes upon herself the role of a servant; she submits herself to a desubjectivized social role, the role of mother or a sexual object'.[25]

While Magda's father and Hendrik view women as sexual objects, Susan uses her sexuality to achieve her rights and dreams in life. Yet, she is too intellectually enslaved by her patriarchal culture to practise her freedom. Nevertheless, Susan conquers her stereotypical views of herself and the Other, when she sets Friday free as an independent human being, thus liberating her mind and consciousness of the weight of

[22] Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country*, p. 66.
[23] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* / Edward W. Said; photographs by Jean Mohr (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 80.
[24] Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (Winter, 1989), pp. 205-225, (p. 221).
[25] Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 18.

innumerable physical and intellectual inequalities and degradations. Unlike Magda, Susan's contrapuntal comparison between her subordinate position and Friday's provides her with 'insight into struggles for minority and women's rights'.[26] In commenting on Susan as a writer, Said describes her rejection of patriarchal ideas as 'a psychological revolution' that 'entails a heroic unwillingness to rest in the consolidation of previously existing attitudes'.[27]

In contrast to the representation of white women in Coetzee's novels, black and colonized women are mainly viewed as self-sacrificial, hardworking and more certain about their relation to their land, culture and historical roles. Despite being sexually, socially and economically abused and marginalized within the colonial and the native order equally, black female characters in Coetzee's novels both directly and indirectly serve the cause of their people and participate in their men's fight for freedom and justice. Female characters like the Barbarian girl in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), Anna K in *The Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), and black servant Florence in *Age of Iron* (1990), are seen as bearers of authentic identity and symbols of the land.

Held captive, tortured and continually raped by the Magistrate, the Barbarian girl defies his expectations with her inner strength and psychological integration. Reflecting on her submission to his desires, the Magistrate 'tells himself that she submits because of her barbarian upbringing. But what do I know of barbarian upbringings? What I call submission may be nothing but indifference'.[28] The Magistrate, like Susan Barton in *Foe*, discovers that his stereotypes and mental images of the Other are illusions, not a definite truth or reality. He is concerned to understand 'the irreducible figure of the girl,

[26] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 258.
[27] Edward Said, 'Heroism and Humanism', *Al-AhramWeeklyonline*, Issue No. 463 (January, 2000), p. 13.
[28] J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (London: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 27.

casting one net of meaning after another over her'.[29] In returning the barbarian girl to her people, the Magistrate sees the scars on the body of the Barbarian girl as 'the traces of a history',[30] and finally acknowledges her and her people's honourable resistance to erasure. Like Susan, the Magistrate achieves a new insight into his life through the Barbarian girl's heroic connection to her people and land.

In the same manner, in *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) black women Anna K and Florence symbolize the authentic right to land. The former inspires her son, Michael K, to return to his rural roots and to reshape his South African identity and right to its land and riches, while the second encourages her son, Bheki, to continue his political activism. In returning to Prince Albert to scatter the ashes of his mother, Michael K not only pays tribute to her memory, but also, according to Rita Bernard, initiates 'a new pastoral phantasy: a vision of rural life without patriarchal or colonial domination'.[31] As a gardener, Michael rejects the dominant agricultural systems of fenced and wired farms, which not only differentiate between people in terms of owner versus worker and master versus slave, but also reduce his mother to a cheap labourer. Florence in *Age of Iron* (1990), on the other hand, challenges all expectations and her own maternal instincts when she supports her son's armed struggle for justice. She explains how children '[are] burning down their schools' and '[parents] cannot tell these children what to do, it is all changed today. There are no more mothers and fathers'.[32]

In her article, 'Violence in South African Schools', Vally Salim discusses the 'segregation' policies inherent even in the post-apartheid educational system, describing how they are 'a complicated combination of past history and recent stresses – on

[29]Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 39.
[30]Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 27.
[31]Rita Barnard, 'Coetzee's Country Ways', *International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 4.3 (2002), pp. 384-394, (p. 389).
[32]J. M. Coetzee, *Age of Iron* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 26-7.

individual, school, and community levels – in a society marked by deep inequities and massive uncertainty and change within school operations'.[33] School violence is a reflection of wider communal violence and conflicts. Florence's son is murdered by police who still use colonial methods of quelling political opposition. Tom Lodge refers to the silence of the state institutions about 'the serious political violence [that] was a prominent feature of South Africa from 1985 to 1995':

> Police and soldiers patrolled South African towns. Thousands of people were detained. Deaths mounted on both sides. Many of those detained by the government were interrogated and tortured; while anti-government activists used the "necklace method" (burning people alive) to kill black people suspected of supporting apartheid. The government banned television cameras from filming 'unrest zones'.[34]

Using the same clichés, the same demeaning stereotypes, the same justifications of power and violence as 'safeguarding humanity from sexuality, madness, irrational violence, revolution', [35]*Age of Iron* is also about white complicity in this state-authorized violence, for white Mrs. Curren is a witness to the destruction of a black township, a 'crime being committed in front of [her] eyes', but remains silent. To comfort her conscience, Mrs. Curren confesses that 'it is the whites who made [young people] so cruel!', but still 'the blame must fall on [black] parents'.[36] She is still blaming the victim.

Although Coetzee's characterization of Anna K in *Life and Times of Michael K* and Florence in *Age of Iron* succeeds in liberating the 'colonized female body' from 'the stereotypical cycle of rape and sexual abuse',[37] the two novels emphasize the chronic violence in South Africa. Violence is represented as no longer a one way project practised

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[33] Salim Vally, 'Violence in South African Schools', *Current Issues in Comparative Education* (Teachers College, Columbia University, Vol. 2, (November, 1999), pp. 81-111, (p. 81).
[34] Tom Lodge, 'Action against Apartheid in South Africa, 1983-94', *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 213.
[35] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. xvi.
[36] J. M. Coetzee, *Age of Iron* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 35.
[37] Thomas Bonnici, 'Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and Postcolonial Power', *Acta Scientiarum, Maringá*, 23(1), (2001), pp. 87-92, (p. 88).

by oppressive power over the oppressed. Quite the opposite, both the powerful whites and black people identify themselves in terms of violence. White Susan Barton, like black Anna K and Florence, experiences psychological and intellectual violence that undermines her self-respect, freedom and equality. Similarly, white Magda and the Barbarian girl endure different forms of psychological and physical violence. They are raped and marginalized as sexual objects. Patriarchal and colonial societies give men sexual power over women, who are treated by society and the government as secondary individuals. The Magistrate controls and subjugates colonized men through sexual domination over their women. Nevertheless, with the decline of white patriarchal and colonial power, the new system still measures its power through violent sexuality.

Deniz Kandiyoti argues that the passive attitudes of Coetzee's female characters succeed in legitimising 'their selfless activities, be they civic, familial or political […] as natural extensions of their womanly nature and as a duty rather than a right legitimised'.[38] Consequently, Kandiyoti upholds 'their emergence as full-fledged citizens will be jeopardised, and whatever rights they may have achieved during one stage of nation-building may be sacrificed on the altar of identity politics during another'.[39] I partially agree with Kandiyoti's argument that the majority of Coetzee's oppressed women subordinate their personal rights to the national causes of their countries. Yet, these women play a historic role in undermining hegemonic patriarchal attitudes by demonstrating the diversity and complexity of their experiences. This is evident in the case of Melanie Isaacs and Lucy Lurie in Coetzee's post-apartheid *Disgrace* (1999), who are not only independent and productive women but also fight state complicity in terms of violence and discrimination directed at women. In the post-apartheid state, black

[38] Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation', *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 379.
[39] Kandiyoti, 'Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation', p. 383.

Melanie and white Lucy are violently raped and treated like sexual objects. Yet, they realize their sexual abuses are not personal, but are part of an endemic state of political violence and complicity.

Disgrace shows that the post-apartheid political transition is not realized on the ground through just social and economic measures and, thus, the system gives the opportunity to corrupt individuals and institutions to protect their interests and subjugate poor and vulnerable individuals and classes. Consequently, daily contacts between men and women become sources of violent struggle over sexual domination and class/racial superiority. In contrapuntally reading native versus colonial representations of the Other, Said argues that 'a culture may prepare that society to relinquish or modify the idea of overseas domination'.[40] Yet, these changes occur only when the state 'projects ideas of liberation, and [people] imagine a new national community'.[41] In *Disgrace*, Coetzee rereads past and present histories of (colonial) violence in South Africa to reveal that the new order does not prepare the society for true reconciliation and integration.

In the novel, white professor David Lurie tries to reclaim his vitality and declining power through sexually exploiting vulnerable black student Melanie Isaacs, while black servant Petrus emphasizes his newly-attained power by instigating the rape of white Lucy Lurie in order to usurp her farm. Robert Morrell describes the psychology of oppressed black men in the following terms:

> Apartheid was all-pervasive but it had a specific gender impact on black men: it emasculated them. They were called 'boys', treated as subordinates, denied respect. Where black men resisted class and race oppression, they were also, simultaneously, defending their masculinity. This often involved efforts to re-establish or perpetuate power over women.[42]

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[40] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 241.
[41] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 241.
[42] Robert Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001), p. 21.

Michael Kimmel echoes Morrell when he suggests that rape and '[m]ale violence is a way to prove successful masculinity'.[43] In this way, violence in Coetzee's literary world is all-pervasive. While men perceive their power in terms of masculinity, sexuality and desire, women start to understand their roles in life in relation to their dignity and rights as human beings. Melanie issues a complaint against David while Lucy insists on staying in her farm. Coetzee shows his men as locked within the past and as enslaved by what Edward Said calls 'the imperial ideology'.[44] The myth of the black rapist is challenged with the reality of the white rapist. Although the imperialist situation has clearly changed in South Africa, Said explains that imperialist ideology 'acquires a kind of coherence, a set of experiences' that survive beyond the official end of the imperial regime:

> The meaning of the imperial past is not totally contained within it, but has entered the reality of hundreds of millions of people, where its existence as shared memory and as a highly conflictual texture of culture, ideology, and policy still exercises tremendous force.[45]

In comparing the goals of the South African Truth & Reconciliation Commission with the novels of Coetzee, Samuel Durrant reiterates Said's point by raising the question of how 'a nation is able to mourn and move into the future when the past continues to influence the relationships in the present'.[46] Thus, both Said and Durrant contrapuntally relate the history of contemporary South Africa and literary representation in Coetzee's *Disgrace*. This is an aspect of his novels that Coetzee himself emphasizes when he remarks that 'the deformed and stunted relations between human beings that were created under colonialism and exacerbated under what is loosely called apartheid

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[43] Michael S Kimmel, *The Gendered Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 203.
[44] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 12.
[45] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 12.
[46] Samuel Durrant, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2004), p. 27.

have their psychic representation in a deformed and stunted inner life'.[47] Racism, violence and oppression remain a part of the present as they are still embedded in the political, social and psychic structures of South Africa, all still predominantly run by men.

In *Life and Times of Michael K*, poor black and coloured South Africans are segregated in camps and slums designed for them. Geographical separation developed from a form of racial discrimination into a legitimate, organized process of proletarianization of Blacks and Coloureds under the apartheid regime. In *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa,* Clifton Crais clarifies how while the majority of rural Africans were located in 'reserves or homelands' which occupied 'roughly 7% of the total area of South Africa' and 'became pools of cheap, unskilled laborers for white farmers and miners,'[48] white Afrikaners lived in 'farmhouse fortresses filled with luxuries imported from the metropole'.[49] This rigid division among different races in South African exposes not only 'the importance of separatedness to the rural gentry' but also 'constituted a denial of the other' that 'was ultimately based on the exploitation of the African. Racial capitalism and a colonial identity had become inseparable'.[50]

Klein-Anna in *In the Heart of the Country*, the Barbarian girl in *Waiting for the Barbarian*, Anna K in *Life and Times of Michael K* and Melanie Isaacs in *Disgrace* are representations of the millions of black women who were discriminated against, or tortured and abused because of their racial backgrounds. As black domestic servants, Klein-Anna is denied marriage to a white landlord while Anna K is denied a permit to

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[47] J. M. Coetzee, 'Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech', *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 98.
[48] Peter Duignan, *Colonialism in Africa: 1870-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 34.
[49] Clifton Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 137.
[50] Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre- Industrial South Africa,* p. 137.

return to her village of Prince Albert. The Barbarian girl is exploited by white officials and the Magistrate as a source of exotic sex. Nonetheless, all these oppressed women show different forms of complicity and reconciliation with the white Other. Klein-Anna serves her white landlord and his daughter, Magda, in exchange for money. The Barbarian girl submits to the desires of the Magistrate in exchange for her return to her tribe; and Anna K serves her employers, the Buhrmanns, for shelter and money. All these conditions prove what Said argues that 'economic and political priorities [can] produce an effective national style that is premised on something more equitable and noncoercive than a theory of fateful superiority'.[51]

These female characters oppose an unfair system by taking crucial economic roles and by remaining silent about their oppression. They never complain or show weakness. Quite the opposite, the Barbarian girl and Anna K survive physical violence while Melanie Isaacs overcomes her psychological hurt by defying authorial complicity. According to Samuel Durrant, these characters' silence and survival in face of oppression and violence are signs of 'Coetzee's ethical refusal to integrate them fully into his narratives'.[52] Instead, 'their bodies, seemingly more 'material' than other bodies, assault our (ethical) sight'.[53]

Such an ethical refusal embarrasses and condemns the arrogant and superior attitude of the oppressors in those novels. While Magda in *In the Heart of the Country* fails to communicate with the black community, the white women in *Foe*, *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* break the enslaving cycle of clan nationalism. Susan identifies herself with a human space of freedom and liberation that helps her to change her stereotypical images

[51] Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.15. No.2 (Winter, 1989), pp. 205-225, (p. 215).
[52] Samuel Durrant, 'Bearing Witness to Apartheid: J M Coetzee's Inconsolable Works of Mourning,' *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (Autumn, 1992), p. 423.
[53] Durrant, 'Bearing Witness to Apartheid: J M Coetzee's Inconsolable Works of Mourning,' p. 423.

of black Friday from seeing him as 'a cannibal' or 'a servant' or 'a burden' to an equal human being. In *Age of Iron*, Coetzee's most realistic novel, the relationship between the oppressed black servant Florence and her white employer Mrs. Curren is human and based on respect and understanding. They redefine their perception of each other through their maternal feelings. Mrs. Curren, envying Florence as she is 'surrounded by her four children',[54] asks herself: 'Do I have people? Are you my people? I think not. Perhaps only Florence qualifies to have people'.[55] Mrs. Curren questions her right to the land as she is dying of cancer while her only daughter lives in America 'thousands of miles away, safe'.[56] At the same time, Florence is proud that her children fight and sacrifice their lives for their land: 'these are good children, they are like iron, we are proud of them'.[57]

The contrast and interaction between the two forms of maternity generates different attitudes towards the war in South Africa. Claiming that her words and advice 'come from [her] heart, from [her] womb',[58] and meaning to save future generations whose 'souls, and organs of wonder [are] stunted, petrified',[59] Mrs Curren occupies 'a position that could save South Africa from its radicalization and deadlock'.[60] Although Mrs Curren intervenes as a mother to oppose atrocity, mainly to defend her white people, she sympathizes with black victims. Foreseeing the forthcoming change, she writes a letter to her daughter, saying 'Come, my darling, it's time to get up!'.[61] Mrs Curren

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[54] J. M. Coetzee, *Age of Iron* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 113.
[55] Coetzee, *Age of Iron,* p. 113.
[56] Coetzee, *Age of Iron,* p. 115.
[57] Coetzee, *Age of Iron,* pp. 26-7.
[58] Coetzee, *Age of Iron*, p. 146.
[59] Coetzee, *Age of Iron* p. 7.
[60] Gilbert Yeoh, 'Love and Indifference in J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (2003), pp. 107- 134, (p. 112).
[61] Coetzee, *Age of Iron,* p. 57.

believes that South Africa is the country of all, but still deals with the Other in terms of 'charity' and need, emphasizing that 'they are not her people'.[62]

It seems that both Coetzee and his 'white' characters like Susan and Mrs. Curren feel helpless in the face of forces of violence and alienation, so that Coetzee says, 'one can equally well see the confessional enterprise as one of *finding* the truth as of *telling* the truth'.[63] Both are satisfied with 'finding out the truth' about the injustices and brutalities of their systems. Yet, they take no action to stop it. As Said indicates, 'reconciliation is a mutual process'.[64] *Disgrace* marks an optimistic turn in Coetzee's and his white female characters' perception of the value of reconciliation and integration in post-apartheid South Africa. Despite Lucy's bleak experience of rape, she provides an example for Said's model of reconciliation. Lucy bargains her honour, property and inherited superiority for a real identification with the land of South Africa. She asks her father to:

> Go back to Petrus, propose the following. Say I accept his protection. Say he can put out whatever story he likes about our relationship and I won't contradict him. If he wants me to be known as his third wife, so be it, as his concubine, ditto. But then the child becomes his too. The child becomes part of his family. As for the land, say I will sign the land over to him as long as the house remains mine. I will become a tenant on his land.[65]

In *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, Coetzee suggests that change emerges from 'the [honest] dialogue of the self with its own self-doubt' and through 'faith and grace'.[66] For Coetzee, 'faith and grace' are possible through sharing others' sufferings. Lucy has faith in the ability to integrate different South African people to form one South African nation. She sees her unborn child, his rapist father, and Petrus as 'her people'.[67]

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[62] Coetzee, *Age of Iron*, p. 113.
[63] J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing on the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 3.
[64] J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 98.
[65] J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 204.
[66] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, p. 291.
[67] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 201.

She no longer deals with Others in terms of 'charity';[68] or 'generosity',[69] but in terms of 'the notion of citizenship, which defines people not by ethnic but by national criteria, which would then have to include [Blacks and Coloured people]'.[70]

Sociological Investigation of Female Isolation/Reconciliation in the Novels of J. I. Jabra

> I live with their characters, struggle with them and argue with them and through this [I] depict at least a part of that overwhelming process: the transformation of our society. Furthermore, I portray the constant intellectual interaction between writer and society.[71]

Jabra's novels, like Coetzee's, represent female characters of different and conflictual racial and cultural backgrounds, but from more of a sociological point of view. Generally, Jabra, like Said, believes that literary works 'should portray the constant intellectual interaction between writer and society' and should 'not only reflect their times, but express as well the influence of those times on the minds of their producers'.[72] Jabra's novels represent the Palestinian plight as part and parcel of the reactionary, patriarchal Arab cultural and political systems that control and subjugate both the bodies and minds of his characters. Unlike Coetzee's female characters, who internalize their struggles and sufferings, Jabra's women externalize their emotions and conflicts. As a result, Jabra's novels are not only preoccupied with a 'change of vision and a new way of looking at things',[73] but also 'devise a more sociological concept of the self', through which 'personal identity is formed in the interaction between self and society, negotiated between an inner core, 'the real me', and the outside world'.[74]

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[68] Coetzee, *Age of Iron*, p. 26.
[69] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 74.
[70] Said, *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward Said* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p. 6.
[71] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, 'Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Interpoetica: An Interview with Jabra Ibrahim Jabra', *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, Vol. 1, (Spring, 1981), pp. 51-52, (p. 50).
[72] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, 'Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Interpoetica: An Interview with Jabra Ibrahim Jabra', p. 52.
[73] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Yanabi Al-Ruy (*Beirut: Al-Mu'assasa al-Arabiya, 1979), p. 76.
[74] Tetz Rooke, 'From Self-made Man to Man-made Self: A story about Changing Identities', *Remembering for Tomorro*w (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 1998), p. 23.

Jabra's first two novels, *A Scream in a Long Night* (1952) and *Hunters in a Narrow Street* (1960), portray female characters of different generations, who express various intellectual attitudes and social choices. Published during and after Arab revolutions and independence movements in countries like Egypt, Iraq and Syria, these two novels express an optimistic and revolutionary spirit that corresponds with the high expectations of the majority of Arab people seeking progress in their post-colonial societies. For Jabra, signs of real change and progress in the Arab world are to be measured through the positions and social rights of its women, the first of which is women's authority over their own bodies. Jabra's young, educated heroines, Somia Soliman in *A Scream in a Long Night* and Sulafa Imad in *Hunters in a Narrow Street*, endure similar forms of psychological and social violence exercised by their families who push them to extend the families' aristocratic superiority through endogamy. While Somia is set up by her mother in an arranged marriage to a rich relative, Sulafa is imprisoned at home by her father to control and 'prevent [her] contact with [strange] men', till she marries 'an aristocratic or a rich man'.[75]

For Jabra, patriarchy and racism are seen as systems which women themselves often endorse. Somia's and Sulafa's mothers, for example, care for their social image and want their daughters to marry a rich man. They, like Magda in Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*, are self-centered hypocrites, who are concerned with their relative class superiority, power and money which they seek to maintain by any means, even if they harm their daughters. Instead of supporting their daughters' autonomy, the two mothers prove what Elizabeth MacNabb argues: that 'existence in patriarchy itself distorts/

[75] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Hunters in A Narrow Street* (London: Three Continents Books, 1996), p. 72.

disrupts the ideal mother-daughter bond'.[76] To escape their mothers' control, Somia marries Ameen Samaan, only to find that he is another opportunist jailer, who uses their marriage to improve his social position. Similarly, Sulafa decides to marry Jameel Farhan to escape her 'cold-blooded' mother who is 'incapable of passion'[77] mother and her 'dictatorial and backward'[78] father.

For their husbands, Somia and Sulafa are sexual objects. In the two novels, the family is conceived of as a society in miniature and upbringing as another form of social coercion. In *Culture and Imperialism,* Said indicates that a contrapuntal reading is 'an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented in the text', but with reference to 'its own overlapping experiences and interdependent histories of conflict'.[79] A contrapuntal reading of Jabra's *A Scream in a Long Night* and *Hunters in a Narrow Street* shows how they overtly put women's conflicts and problems at the forefront of events, proposing women's causes as a priority on the agenda of development and progress in the Arab world.

For their time in the 1950s and 1960s, both Somia and Sulafa are rebels. They defy social, class and moral rules and traditions, asserting their autonomy over their bodies and future in the face of opposition from agents of patriarchy. Yet, Somia and Sulafa discover at the end of the novels that they cannot escape 'the patriarchal hold on society', that breaches 'socio-cultural awareness, so that each gender, class, social or political group become[s] conscious of its identity and its difference from others'.[80] Like Magda in Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*, Somia and Sulafa do not plan their

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[76] Elizabeth MacNabb, *The Fractured Family: The Second Sex and Its Disconnected Daughters* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 12.
[77] Jabra, *Hunters in A Narrow Street*, p. 140.
[78] Jabra, *Hunters in A Narrow Street*, p. 33.
[79] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 78.
[80] Sabry Hafez, 'The Transformation of Reality and the Arabic Novel's Aesthetic Response', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 57, Issue.1, (February 1994), pp. 93-112, (p, 95).

future as independent women. Rather, they imprison themselves within the limits of traditional roles of wives and mothers, exposing themselves to different forms of psychological and physical violence.

Like the medical doctor and the Captain in *Life and Times of Michael K*, and Cruso and Foe in *Foe*, Somia's and Sulafa's parents subordinate and isolate the Other; in this case, the lower classes. Sulafa's father believes that 'the fear of God and the fear of authority, that's what we need'.[81] In a society dominated by 'hypocrisy in politics, hypocrisy in friendship, hypocrisy in virtue, hypocrisy in religion, hypocrisy high and low and everywhere',[82] Somia and Sulafa show a 'great example', as Jabra puts it, 'in their moral commitment against the corruption of power and its encroachment upon the free conscience of the individual'.[83] The two women fight for change as they rethink their relations under oppression.

Female struggles against violence and oppression also feature in Jabra's subsequent novels, *The Ship* (1970) and *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978). In the former novel, Cambridge graduates Luma Abdel-Ghani and Maryam al-Safar, like Somia and Sulafa, are asked by their aristocratic families to marry their relatives, Dr. Falih Haseeb and Hisham Kamal, respectively. However, Luma and Maryam, unlike Somia and Sulafa, submit to their families. Consequently, they are unhappy in their marriages but enjoy a luxurious life. Luma and Maryam are used by their families to uphold the hierarchal, class order in their society. They suffer violent sexual and physical relations with their husbands. Luma's and Maryam's submission, thus, not only reflects their personal hypocrisy as rich women, but also represents a 'sociological documentation of the

[81] Jabra, *Hunters in A Narrow Street*, p. 102.
[82] Jabra, *Hunters in A Narrow Street*, p. 49.
[83] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, 'Modern Arabic Literature and the West,' *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 11, (1985), pp. 81-89, (p. 88).

complicity of Arab intellectuals and bourgeoisie classes in maintaining the discriminatory colonial myths of hierarchical social orders and patriarchal political systems'.[84]

In *In Search of Walid Masoud,* on the other hand, Palestinian Najma Humsiyya, coming from a lower-class family, is exploited by the colonial system as a source of cheap labour. Najma, like black servant Anna K in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*, has to work to support herself and her four sons. As a young woman, Najma, like Somia and Sulafa, is rebellious. She defies her brother and marries poor Masoud whom she loves. Unlike the educated Luma and Maryam, illiterate, uneducated Najma expresses an 'individual voice and presence' that shows signs of her attitudes towards 'commitment and risk, boldness and vulnerability'.[85] Najma's work and resistance are the force behind the survival and prosperity of her sons.

However, Najma is psychologically persecuted by her culture and society. She lives in poverty in Palestine, while her sons have to emigrate to different parts of the world to secure a living and a better future. In addition, Najma's son, Elias, is killed in an Israeli attack. Consequently, Najma's long years of hard work and sacrifice, like Anna K's, are not respected or valued by the governing regime. The two women are insecure and lonely. Yet, educated, young Palestinian Rima prefers an arranged marriage to Walid Masoud to building a career and being independent. Walid, like Hisham and Falih, takes Rima as a 'secured and original' wife and mother, keeping her at home to serve him and to be one of the 'biological reproducers of future members'.[86] Like Coetzee's women, Jabra's

[84] Salim Tamari, 'Bourgeois Nostalgia and the Abandoned City', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 23 (2003), pp. 21-33, (p. 24).
[85] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 10.
[86] Haifa Hammami, 'Introduction: Palestine and Israel', *Third Text*, Vol. 20, Issue 3/4, (May/July, 2006), pp. 280-298, (p. 281).

female characters take upon themselves oppression and abuse. Whether rich or poor, they are hesitant to defy the phallocentric cultural and sexual discourses of their societies.

Said indicates that although in Palestine and South Africa, 'violence and snarling defensiveness have taken over and sectarianism and the mentality of the security state rule', Palestinians and Black South Africans are 'still dependent on others'.[87] In such complicated situations, Said continues, women can become 'a symbol of resistance'.[88] Meyda Yegenoglu echoes Said when she states that in patriarchal and colonial societies, 'nationalist thought differentiates between the outside and inside of the society and its culture. Women are symbols of the secured and original inside, spiritual part and aspects of life'.[89] In this way, characters such as Najma, Rima, Maryam and Luma, like Anna K in *Life and Times of Michael K*, are reduced to being metaphors of the land, an inspiration to men, and sacrificial wives and mothers. Thus, their sexual and social rights are ignored and their public participation is regulated.

Through a variety of different female characters in *The Ship* and *In Search of Walid Masoud*, Jabra contrapuntally compares and contrasts the position and roles of Arab women not only before and after the independence of their countries but also under different educational, social and economic conditions. Since patriarchy controls and organizes relations in these systems, Jabra exposes what Said calls 'the constraints upon the cultural representation of women [as part of] the constraints upon the cultural representations of inferior classes and races', which keep 'the subordinate, the inferior inferior'.[90] Martha Nussbaum agrees with Said, observing that 'human dignity is

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87 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 122.
88 Edward Said, *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward Said* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 64.
89 Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 125.
90 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 95.

frequently violated on grounds of sex or sexuality'.[91] This is demonstrated in Jabra's *The Other Rooms* (1986), in which a young woman, Haifa, chooses 'money over love',[92] She abandons her lover, Ali, to sell her body to a rich, old husband in order to gain a home and a livelihood. As her husband does not satisfy her emotional needs and treats her violently, Haifa resumes her relation with Ali, who later kills her, accusing her of being a prostitute. Although Haifa is the victim in a sexual bargain, she is the only one to be judged and punished by society. Martha Nussbaum offers a challenging analysis of prostitution in relation to a wide range of cases in which people sell their bodily services when she says:

> All of us, with the exception of the independently wealthy and the unemployed, take money for the use of our body. Professors, factory workers, lawyers, opera singers, prostitutes, doctors, legislators – we all do things with parts of our bodies, for which we receive a wage in return. Some people get good wages and some do not; some have a relatively high degree of control over their working conditions and some have little control; some have many employment options and some have very few. And some are socially stigmatised and some are not.[93]

In the novels of both authors we see this bodily exploitation figured time and time again. While Najma's and Anna K's bodies wear out because of the tough physical work they are forced to undertake in an unfairly low-paid sector of the economy, poor, black and coloured women are harassed and sexually abused by white guards and officials in the camp of Jakkalsdrif. Even in post-apartheid *Disgrace*, prostitution is represented as an institutional multimillion dollar business that employs thousands of vulnerable women. Similarly, in *In Search of Walid Masoud*, Palestinian widow Regina turns to prostitution to survive economic sanctions and control of movement inside occupied Palestinian territories.

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[91] Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 3.
[92] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *The Other Rooms* (Beirut: Arab Institution of Publishing and Distribution, 1986), p. 13.
[93] Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice*, p. 98.

Arab women who attempt to exert control over their own bodies in Jabra's texts are frequently stigmatized in precisely this way. Receiving a small proportion of the socio-economic and cultural opportunities and benefits in their societies, the recurrent abuse and oppression of Arab women can be seen as part of a wider capitalist economy which 'integrates poverty with wealth, industrial urbanization with agricultural diminishment'.[94] In Jabra's pre- and post-independence Arab societies, small isolated sectors connected to the regimes enrich themselves whereas the vast mass of people live in poverty. Jabra repeatedly exposes the hypocrisy and double standards of Arab men, particularly intellectuals and the bourgeoisie, who fail their people and women. Arab men in the novels benefit from revolutionary and independence movements in their countries. Yet, like Western intellectuals Foe in *Foe* and David Lurie in *Disgrace*, they maintain patriarchal practices that keep women in physical, mental, and emotional bondage. For them all, women are objectified as bodies, sexual objects and bearers of offspring.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said assumes that whereas 'the whole of a culture is a disjunct one, many important sectors of it can be apprehended as working *contrapuntally* together'.[95] In Jabra's novels, men attain social power and influence when they exert oppression and violence over 'their' women. Jabra's works show Arab men, 'readily assimilat[ing] its androcentric conceptions of power and powerlessness, [creating an] unholy alliance of androcentrism and gender polarization [which] predisposes men to construct identities around dominance and women to construct identities around difference'.[96] Like David Lurie in Coetzee's *Disgrace*, Arab men in Jabra's novels view their sexual desires and voracity as 'a way of survival' and a 'protection [of] the self

[94] Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization', p. 79.
[95] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 234. My emphasis.
[96] Sandra Lipsitz Bem, *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 195.

against annihilation'.[97] Nasr Hamid Abu-Zeid proposes that one of the reasons behind sexual and social violence against women in *The Ship* and *In Search of Walid Masoud* is the opportunistic interaction between patriarchy, sexism and social politics in the Arab world. Abu-Zeid specifies that:

> Following military defeat in 1967, Arabs increasingly felt a sense of shame. To compensate for his impotence, [the Arab man] resorted in (sic) escaping to the past, to his original identity, to the illusion of manhood. In politics, there was a move against unity, and on the social level, sectarianism instead of nationalism began to blossom. Religion substituted nation, history and geography.[98]

Abu-Zeid continues that the widespread political corruption, repression and despotism in the post-1967 Arab world bred 'an environment charged with violence on all levels'.[99] While Said discusses how oppression produces 'sectarianism and fundamentalism',[100] Zeid pinpoints 'how Arab man turns against women: does he further need a partner to compete with him or something to defend or die for and protect? Let women go to hell. Let them stay at home, serve their husbands, sweep the floors and raise the kids'.[101] Thus, the personal histories of women in Jabra's novels reflect and challenge historical realities in their countries.

Like Abu-Zeid, Mervat Hatem sees the submission of Westernized characters such as Luma and Maryam in Jabra's novels to be a result of the domination of what she calls 'state feminism' in the Arab countries. This is a 'feminism' that encourages the outward freedom of women in relation to public appearance and work, but denies them equal political and legislative rights with men. Hatem explains further that:

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[97] Ali Fazaa, *Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: A Study of his Fiction* (Amman: Al-Mahd for Publication, 1984), p. 113.
[98] Nasr Hamid Abu-Zeid, 'Women in the Discourse of Crisis', *Seen and Heard: A Century of Arab Women in Literature and Culture*, edited by Mona N. Mikhail (Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch Press, 2004), p. 60.
[99] Nasr Hamid Abu-Zeid, 'Women in the Discourse of Crisis', p. 61.
[100] Edward Said, 'Unoccupied Territory: A New Opening for Palestinians and Israelis', p. 36.
[101] Nasr Hamid Abu-Zeid, 'Women in the Discourse of Crisis', 61.

> State feminism refers to government efforts to remove the structural basis of gender inequality by making reproduction a public – not a private – concern and by employing increasing numbers of women in the state sector. […] State feminism represented a conservative top-down strategy to women's issues that did not solve the problems of underrepresentation, discrimination, and subordination.[102]

As such, most post-colonial nationalist discourses become selective and discriminatory. They copy the West in almost everything except women's rights. They differentiate between the outside and inside spheres of society and its culture; women are always related to the inside, family sphere even when they appear in public. They are never equal to men.

In his last novel, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, Jabra shows Palestinian exile Sarab Affan besieged by violent social and economic institutions that lock her in 'fear' and 'seclusion', beset by the 'voices of ignorance'.[103] Even her lover, Nael Omran, though he is a liberal writer, wants her to be a wife and a mother. Violence in *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, as in *Disgrace*, is a form of political revolt that marks a shift in the way the oppressed individuals plan their resistance. Sarab Affan, inspired by the young Palestinian people who use stones as weapons in the face of tanks and planes, initiates her intellectual revolt. She realizes, as Said put it, that 'during the course of the resistances, or some of them, types of political organization or inspiration emerged which looked in important ways to the future'.[104]

In his article 'The Ship', Jury Salim asserts that 'Jabra's hybrid and universal vision brings home the image of the Western Other, in order to rework his ideas and his

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[102] Mervat Hatem, 'Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (May, 1992), pp. 231-251, (p. 232).
[103]Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan.* Translated by Michael Beard and Adnan Haydar, (London: Syracuse University Press, 2007), p. 151.
[104] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 283.

visions within an Arab environment out of the context of colonialism'.[105] In *The Ship* and *In Search of Walid Masoud*, Jabra's characters travel to Europe and America to be educated. They get to know how Western people think and behave. However, despite the fact that Jabra's women are privileged with the ability to live in different Western countries, the majority of them, like Coetzee's, are either hesitant to reconsider their cultural affiliations and to perform within a different set of values, or even to stay in Europe to enjoy their freedom and represent the Arab and Palestinian point of views.

As Edward Said claims in *Culture and Imperialism*, 'there is no just way in which the past can be quarantined from the present. Past and present inform each other, each implies the other'.[106] In Jabra's novels, female characters are governed by the past, which moulds them to be reserved, obedient, secluded and most importantly, to be suspicious of Western culture and values. Rather than using their Western and progressive ideas to serve their nations, the majority of Jabra's female characters retreat from the public scene. Yet, they lead a double life; while they believe in the human values of freedom, democracy and justice, their social behaviour and choices display the opposite. It is the secular crisis of 'Arab young people, who', Said claims:

> [s]tand at some point of convergence, however odd, between old and new, Arab and non-Arab, traditional and uncommon. […] what parts of our identity and history need to be preserved, and what parts abandoned, in the interests of a more workable dialectic of self and other? And can such knowledge actively and creatively connect our past and future, or will we fatalistically allow the workings of secular and sacred laws to guide our history?[107]

Many of Jabra's characters are educated in the West and are open to progressive knowledge and civilization. While doctor Maha al-Hajj has the courage to travel worldwide to enrich and practise her medical profession and meet new people, Luma

[105] Jury Salim, 'The Ship,' *Al-Adab* (July, 1972), p. 66.
[106] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 24.
[107] Said, *After the Last Sky*, pp. 124-125.

remembers her days in Oxford and misses her feelings of 'pure love, happiness and free movement'.[108] In *In Search of Walid Masoud*, Maryam confesses that 'man is a product of his culture. Now, the source of culture today may well be Western books'[109] while Walid's stay in Italy encourages him 'to move, to go out and meet people'.[110] In Jabra's novels, both men and women approach and integrate with the Other. They blame cultural antagonism and disagreements on corrupt politics that, Jabra believes, is 'the power that makes [the individual] weaker than the people who'd like to put the yoke on [his/her] neck'.[111]

In judging the relationship between the East and the West, Jabra thinks that 'a fruitful conciliation must be made possible, some time, somehow. Man's creative work, properly and widely communicated, may well be the means of doing away with at least some of the chaos and the conflict'.[112] Since the publication of his first novel, *A Scream in a Long Night*, Jabra has upheld education as the only way to overcome 'Arab sickness; ignorance and injustice'.[113] Jabra tends to stereotype Arab intellectuals, male and female, as weak and self-centred. Yet, he privileges women with the ability to move forward and benefit from their mistakes, while men are trapped in past memories. As such, Jabra's female characters form a positive development in the course of the novels. While Najma, Rima and Luma in the earlier novels victimize themselves to please their families and children, Maha, Wisal and Sarab in the later texts defend their rights to work, freedom and equality.

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[108] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 140.
[109] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 227.
[110] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 140.
[111] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 148.
[112] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, 'Modern Arabic Literature and the West', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 2, (1971), pp. 76-91, (p. 88).
[113] Jabra, *Hunters in A Narrow Street*, p. 123.

Nonetheless, while in Coetzee's novels, white and black female characters interact and confront each other, there is not a single Israeli female character in Jabra's novels. Arab women, particularly Palestinians, are open in dealing with the Other, and embrace values of justice, equality and freedom to all people worldwide but there is still no direct contact with the Israeli female Other in Jabra's world. Rather, the Israeli presence is all about the violations of human rights and violent attacks on unarmed civilians. This may be seen as a reflection of the different historical and political situations of South Africa and Palestine. While Coetzee endorses justice in a united South African nation for whites and blacks as equal citizens, Jabra supports a two-state solution in Palestine, with each having complete sovereignty over its land and people.

Because of such a literary vision of the political future in Palestine, cultural contact between the East and the West in Jabra's novels is all about 'intellectual enlightenment for the Arabs' that is, first and foremost, 'a political force'.[114] Politics, gender and Palestinian independence are inseparable in Jabra's literary world. Through Sarab Affan in *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, Jabra revives his faith in the ability of the Arab intelligentsia to find the missed balance between Western progressive ideas and political models and Arab identity and historical heritage. She seeks not only to take from the West but also to give and makes an effort to contribute to change the mental climate. Feeling 'trapped and caged',[115] Sarab breaks the ferocious cycle of oppression when she leaves Iraq for Paris. In *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Anna McClintock argues that 'an individual can construct more than a personal identity by making a commitment to some aspect of the self'.[116] Taking 'the [Palestinian]

[114] Jabra, 'Modern Arabic Literature and the West', p. 88.
[115] Jabra, *The Journals Sarab Affan*, p. 4.
[116] Anna McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 44.

Revolution of Stones as the example to be followed in fighting the oppressors',[117] Sarab explores the Palestinian side of her personality. She is committed to the cause of justice and freedom not only of Palestinian people but of all oppressed human beings worldwide. However, Jabra views the Intifada as a unique laboratory to investigate youth development and functioning in the whole Arab world.

Sarab's involvement in the Intifada ensures her social and political integration in various contexts. Though describing herself as an 'eternal exile',[118] Sarab, like Edward Said himself, chooses to devote her life to 'a positive mission' and 'a cultural act' to challenge 'the readiest account of place as the nation, the boundary drawn between Europe and the Orient -- a boundary with a long and often unfortunate tradition in European thought'.[119] To advocate her cause to the West, Sarab needs first to form a 'real knowledge of what the West is and what its various components really mean'.[120] In this way, she is able to rethink her 'false assumptions and clichés' and to pursue a 'humanistic culture [of] coexistence and sharing'.[121] Sarab, like Lucy, uses the value of love not only to 'rekindle her resolve and urge her forward', but also to relieve 'her worry of the future of the world'.[122] The two women integrate their personal present and future plans with the historical realities in their respective countries. While Lucy's maternal feelings drive her closer to the Other, Sarab's intellectual power situates her at the centre of world knowledge.

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[117] Jabra, *The Journals Sarab Affan*, p. 185.
[118] Jabra, *The Journals Sarab Affan*, p. 185.
[119] Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 6-7.
[120] Edward Said, *Peace and its Discontents* (New York: Vintage, 1995), pp. 94-5.
[121] Said, Edward, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. xvi.
[122] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 29.

Conclusion

In the works of Jabra and Coetzee, then, politics, history and female rights are inextricably entangled. This brief chronological survey of their novels has shown clearly a shared progressive and supportive view of women's rights and roles in modern post-colonial societies. Both Coetzee and Jabra show an early belief in the rights of women as a precondition to political and social change in South Africa and the Arab World. None of Coetzee's and Jabra's female characters is weak. Rather, each woman, though she may seem trapped within female stereotypes, is atypical in terms of her struggle for freedom and equality. For instance, although Maryam and Luma, like Magda, fall victim to the patriarchal authority of their fathers, they all later determine to change their lives. Susan, Melanie and Lucy, like Maha, Wisal and Sarab, revolt against forces of repression and conformity, yet each in her own way.

All these women characters learn not only to be independent and determined in their fight for emancipation, but also realize that human values of justice and equality are indivisible. Thus, if they want to enjoy their own rights and freedom as equals to men, they have to believe in the equal freedom and rights of the Others. In refuting, reconsidering and challenging male power in their societies, female characters like Sarab, Maha, Susan, Lucy, and Melanie re-establish, reconstitute and even privilege not only their personal positions, but also female power in modern societies.

In the early novels of both writers, women face the archetype of the domineering, uncaring, and abusive patriarch, like Magda's father or tyrannical women in the service of patriarchy, such as Somia's mother. In these texts, women are not allowed to have public roles. In novels like *The Ship, In Search of Walid Masoud, Foe, The Life and Times of Michael K,* and *Age of Iron,* women are productive economic agents who

compete publicly with men but whose cultural bondage to patriarchal structures persists. However, in the later novels, *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, women are political agents who actively participate in the political process of change in South Africa and Palestine. Despite the fact that Coetzee and Jabra show sympathy and empathy with the sufferings and struggles of women, as they fight for their rights and equal opportunities in life, they also highlight their partial responsibility for their inferior position and subjugation.

Coetzee and Jabra moreover give authority and voice to their female characters to reveal their own stories and life experiences. On the one hand, in Coetzee's novels, Magda, Susan and Mrs. Curren are the narrators of their own stories. Similarly, the actions and conversations of Anna K, Melanie and the Barbarian girl reflect their personality and experiences. In Jabra's novels, on the other hand, women are confrontational and argumentative. They speak openly and express their feelings about and attitudes towards politics, culture and social life. Although Sarab Affan is the only major female narrator in Jabra's novels, he gives women like Wisal, Maryam, Luma and Najma, the freedom of commenting on their and other characters' lives and personalities in relation to the political situations in their countries.

In the next three chapters, I will examine in greater detail examples of the cultural, economic and political activism of female characters in six novels by Jabra and Coetzee, namely, Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), *Foe* (1986), and *Disgrace* (1999), and Jabra's *The Ship* (1970), *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978), and *The Journal of Sarab Affan* (1990). I explore how the concepts of secularism, hybridity and humanism are deployed in these novels to put forward the cause of peaceful integration and humanist values against the forces of violence, oppression and patriarchy.

Despite the fact that Coetzee and Jabra have different visions of the political future of South Africa and Palestine, they both share a concern that continued antagonism and the cult of violence will not bring about a new just order. Both authors express genuine belief in the pivotal role of women in establishing such a desired new order.

Chapter Two

Secularism and Intellectual Female Terrain in Foe and The Ship

Introduction

> Let us begin by accepting the notion that although there is an irreducible subjective core to human experience, this experience is also historical and secular, it is accessible to analysis and interpretation, and – centrally important – it is not exhausted by totalizing theories, not marked and limited by doctrinal or national lines, not confined once and for all to analytical constructs.[1]

> Secular criticism implies a scrupulous recognition that all claims of a universal nature are particular claims. Furthermore, and most importantly, it means rescuing the marginalized perspective of the minority as one from which to rethink and remake universalist (ethical, political, cultural) claims, thus displacing its assignation as the site of the local.[2]

If a contrapuntal reading activates, as I established in Chapter One, an acknowledgement of the intertwining of history and events in the novels of Coetzee and Jabra with the aim of endorsing the politics of integration and reconciliation rather than violence and hostility, then, the process of contrapuntal reappraisal engages with ideas of liberation and forgiveness. In these two excerpts, Edward Said discusses the intimate relationship between concepts of individual secular criticism and human tolerance. In the first, he emphasizes the idea that the individual's subjective thoughts, emotions, actions and ways of experiencing reality have an historical dimension; they result from interaction with people of similar and different racial and cultural backgrounds. Also, these subjective experiences and thoughts are secular in the sense that they are tangible, changeable and subject to criticism and modification. In the second excerpt, Said designates to secular thinking the role of defending and adopting the rights of minorities in order to destabilize and create a balanced view of both universal and local constructs

[1] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 35.
[2] Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 23.

and beliefs. In this way, a secular individual is able to criticize and evaluate totalizing concepts. Thus, secularism motivates feelings of tolerance and positive acceptance of difference.

Secularism is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from belief in God or in a future state'.[3] Said is clearly building on, and expanding, this fundamental meaning in his use of the word 'secular', and relating it to his interests as a political activist and a public intellectual. The crucial aspect of secularism for Said, is that it 'insists upon the possibility of emancipation'[4] on both the personal and national levels. Said further regards:

> New partitions as the desperate and late-ditch efforts of a dying ideology of separation, which has afflicted Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, both of whom have not surmounted the philosophical problem of the Other, of learning how to live with, as opposed to despite, the Other. When it comes to corruption, to racial or religious discrimination, to poverty and unemployment, to torture and censorship, the Other is always one of us, not a remote alien […] we must now begin to think in terms of coexistence.[5]

Said criticizes the separatist ideology of nationalism which often rekindles 'screaming hostility, the glib language of dismissal and contempt, [and] astounding ignorance and guilt',[6] all of which speak of 'the absence of secular and genuinely liberating ideas'.[7] He argues further that 'both patriarchal culture and religion furnish us with systems of authority and with canons of order whose regular effect is either to compel subservience or to gain adherents' and thus 'gives rise to organized collective

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[3] *Oxford English Dictionary*, http://www.oed.com/
[4] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic,* p. 23.
[5] Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), pp. 329-330.
[6] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* / Edward W. Said; photographs by Jean Mohr (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 103.
[7] Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian lives*, p. 123.

passions whose social and intellectual results are often disastrous'.[8] He integrates the secular into a political context in which it stands opposed not only to religious fundamentalism but also to the quasi-theological dogmas of national associations, organizations, and collectives.[9]

For Said, then, secularism means declaring 'oneself for difference (as opposed to sameness or homogenization) without at the same time being for the rigidly enforced and policed separation of populations into different groups'.[10] He repudiates the search for a false 'purity of race or nation', for, as he points out, 'all populations, states, and groupings--are in fact mixed. Thus there cannot be any such thing as a pure race, a pure nation, or a pure collectivity, regardless of patriotic, ideological, or religious argument'.[11]

Said thinks that literature reflects 'worldly affiliations to power and politics' and consequently, it is 'hybrid and encumbered, or entangled with a lot of what used to be regarded as extraneous elements', including 'the contests of the secular world [which] so provocatively inform the texts we both read and write'.[12] In suggesting that history and literature inform and interact with each other, Said assigns literature the role of endorsing 'narratives of emancipation and enlightenment, narratives of integration not separation'.[13]

In the light of Said's ideas, the aim of this chapter is to explore the representation of mental and cultural subjugation in Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) and Jabra's *The Ship* (1970) from a 'secular' point of view. Central to Edward Said's contrapuntal theory is the deconstruction of the systematic ways within which cultural forces act, and

[8] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 290.
[9] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 290.
[10] Edward Said, 'Race, Writing, and Difference', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (Autumn, 1985), pp. 38-58, (p. 40).
[11] Said, 'Race, Writing, and Difference', p. 41.
[12] Edward Said, 'Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations', *Race & Class*, 32 (July 1990): 1-16, (p. 4).
[13] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xiii.

which do not merely buttress imperial rule, but also produce oppressive patriarchal and hierarchal social systems. For Said, a secular view facilitates a better understanding of forms of tyranny, prejudice, cultural difference and social exclusion. This chapter specifically relates the psychological effects of sexism and discrimination on the female characters in the two novels to the workings of the laws in their societies. I argue that Coetzee's *Foe* and Jabra's *The Ship* contain a strong, secular critical sense that questions and challenges the established, oppressive beliefs and ideas which characterize the societies represented in the novels. Both authors, through this shared secular critical sense, reveal female characters in the two novels reconsidering their cultural and intellectual affiliations and existing stereotypes of the self and the Other.

This chapter presents two successive readings of female characters in *Foe* and *The Ship*. The first reading is a contrapuntal one that explores the cultural history of the two texts, focusing on the position of women in modern societies. It utilizes the concept of secularism in Said's works as a means of questioning the freedom and agency of the individual in the face of tyrannical cultural, political and institutional powers in *Foe* and *The Ship*. It analyses the two novels as novels of escapees and exiles who try to negotiate their positions within patriarchal systems. The second reading is a symbolic one which argues that Coetzee and Jabra portray symbolic female characters in order to investigate the relationship between literature and art on the one hand, and reality and patriarchal literary-cultural formations on the other. Thus, this reading concerns the aesthetics of representation of the self and the Other within colonial, patriarchal cultures.

Space, Place and Sexuality in Foe and The Ship: A Contrapuntal Reading

> Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home. […] Yet, exile has been transformed so easily into a potent, even enriching motif of modern cultures. [14]

> The question of sexuality cannot be treated as a regional one; it governs and structures the subject's every relation with the other. […] The Orientalist construction of the other is the Western subject's means of securing an identity for itself mediated by the other.[15]

In the above two excerpts, Edward Said and Meyda Yegenoglu are discussing issues of the complex relationship between the exile and the host cultures on the one hand and between place and sexual politics on the other. In the first, Said, himself a Palestinian exile, is reflecting on the psychology of the exiled person. He describes how the exile is always torn between the past and the present, suffering feelings of being 'insecure and estranged'.[16] Said explains further the fact that many modern Western and Eastern cultures 'are in large part the work of exiles, émigrés, refugees',[17] a fact that reflects how 'exile has been transformed from the exquisite, and sometimes exclusive, punishment of special individuals, into a cruel punishment of whole communities and peoples'.[18]

Said distinguishes between younger and older generations of modern exiled groups and communities. While older generations preserve 'collective cant, automatic language, ready-made sentiment', younger generations adopt 'a highly politicised, skeptical and self-conscious' attitude, seeking 'answers to theoretical questions; problems

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[14] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 159.
[15] Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 26.
[16] Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p. 160.
[17] Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p. 160.
[18] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*: *The 1993 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage: 1994), p. 35.

of identity, collective memory and the struggle against attempts to quash it'.[19] In this way, the mobility of the exiles, refugees and émigrés inevitably creates a location of cultural and spatial clashes, adaptions and reevaluations. In the second excerpt, Yegenoglu echoes Said, arguing that concepts of female sexuality and difference still remain hostage to 'phallocentric discourses and nineteenth-century imperial categories of Eurocentric thought'.[20] In this way, the Western subject's desire for its colonized other is always mediated by a desire to see and have access to the interiority of the other and to the space of woman.

In the light of Said's and Yegenoglu's ideas, this chapter probes the interaction between place, space and cultural constructions of female sexuality in Coetzee's *Foe* and Jabra's *The Ship*. It argues that forming a secular explanation of the world, female characters in the two novels go through a process of cultural-political discovery and rebellion against oppression and marginalization.

In *Foe* and *The Ship*, Coetzee and Jabra represent the interactions of different female characters with space and place. Generally speaking, in 'human geography'[21] space and place are central concepts. While place is seen as 'a portion of geographical space' or as a 'territor[y] of meaning',[22] and is frequently associated with the security and safety of home, space may be defined as a free 'neutral canvas that is filled in by human activity'.[23] According to Nigel Thrift, spaces and places, 'are intrinsic parts of our being in the world – defined and measured in terms of the nature and degree of people's

[19] Edward Said, 'Unoccupied Territory: A New Opening for Palestinians and Israelis', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 2, No. 17 (January 1999), pp. 35-37, (p. 37).
[20] Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, p. 124.
[21] Human Geography assumed a new prominence in the 1970s and may be defined as a discipline offering 'an expansive view of what the human person is and can do,' and as an attempt at 'understanding meaning, value and the human significance of life events.' Nigel Thrift, 'Space: the Fundamental Stuff of Human Geography,' *Key Concepts in Geography* (London: SAGE, 2009), p. 98.
[22] Arild Holt-Jensen, *Geography, History and Concepts: A Student's Guide* (London: SAGE, 1999), p. 224.
[23] Nigel Thrift, 'Space: the Fundamental Stuff of Human Geography,' *Key Concepts in Geography*, p. 98.

values, feelings, beliefs, and perceptions about locations, districts, and regions'.[24] In this sense, relational space connotes the way people relate to other peoples and the surrounding physical environments, and is consciously or unconsciously embedded in their intentions and actions.

Jabra and Coetzee investigate the meanings of space, place and belonging as characters in the two novels try to redefine their identities and beliefs. While some female characters perceive their home place, with its social pressures and forced solidarity, as suffocating, other characters see space, even if unknown and a potential source of dangers and threats, as safe and comforting. I believe that most characters in *Foe* and *The Ship*, particularly female characters, find difficulty in accepting their real, socially-and culturally-prescribed identities, and try to redefine their relations to society, land and space. In the two novels, Coetzee and Jabra explore the feelings of identity loss and alienation as experienced by two different types of characters. First, the exiled, colonized characters, like Palestinian Maha al-Hajj in *The Ship* and Friday in *Foe.* Second, escapees like Luma Abdel Ghani in *The Ship* and Susan Barton in *Foe*.

Colonial Space and Female Cultural Agency in Foe (1986)

The contrast between space and place is a dominant theme in *Foe*. This contrast reflects characters' feelings of alienation and estrangement, which they try to conquer by adopting virtual identities, rather than their real ones. When we read the text contrapuntally, we see how 'the strands holding the text to society, author and culture' become materially manifest.[25] Undoubtedly, Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) must be read in the light of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993),

[24] Thrift, 'Space: the Fundamental Stuff of Human Geography', p. 99.
[25] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 112.

Said has pointed out that the white hero, Robinson Crusoe, in Defoe's novel 'is virtually unthinkable without the colonizing mission that permits him to create a new world of his own in the distant reaches of the African, Pacific, and Atlantic wilderness', a new world that 'he rules and reclaims for Christianity and England'.[26]

In this way, while Crusoe is establishing his new home overseas, he is serving and thinking of his original homeland, England. Both worlds, the homeland and the colony, are always interrelated. Crusoe finds a space and seeks to recreate a known place within it, a place for the performance of a virtual identity. Coetzee's *Foe* provides a feminist-inflected parody of cultural complicity in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, while also referring to, and challenging, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Foe parodies *Robinson Crusoe* and *Heart of Darkness* by replacing their male colonizers, Robinson Crusoe and Charles Marlow, respectively, with the female explorer, Susan Barton, who is on a quest for truth. Concluding that 'our feeling for home is never lost',[27] Susan places herself in the dual role of the the exile/colonizer. She is the estranged and exiled woman in search for her lost daughter and desperate to identify herself with new spaces and new identities, that necessarily require her to be 'mobile and adaptable'.[28] At the same time, Susan is the Western explorer taking charge of the colonial heritage, symbolized in Cruso's island and his colonial subject, Friday, a role that compels her to follow a 'fundamentally narrow and constricted set of rules and laws'.[29] The two roles stem from a position of marginality and vulnerability and both affect each other.

As an exile, Susan is in mental bondage to her native culture, which restricts and marginalizes her social roles. Even when she is in Bahia where women dress

[26] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 74.
[27] J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 109.
[28] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky*: *Palestinian Lives* / Edward W. Said; photographs by Jean Mohr (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 130.
[29] Said, *After the Last Sky*: *Palestinian Lives,* p. 130.

liberally and appear in public, Susan thinks of her expected behaviour as a European woman. Considering Bahia, Friday and the island as 'other histories, other cultures, and other aspirations', Susan does not merely judge them as 'inferior' so that she cannot even copy the example of progressive imagery of female conduct, but also 'confirms the West's wicked power'.[30] Accordingly, as an explorer, Susan simply applies her stereotypical images to the new people and places she encounters. Thus, her search for truth and knowledge is hampered and turns into a struggle for dominance.

Burdened by her gender, Susan introduces herself to Cruso as 'a woman, alone',[31] assigning herself victim-like and vulnerable roles within obviously phallocentric systems. She cannot visualize for herself a 'substantial' role in life beyond the traditional roles of a wife, mother and mistress, all of which not only are premised upon sex and the female body, but restrict her inner feelings of ambition and freedom as well. Susan jumps into 'the Portuguese captain's bed',[32] to help her find her abducted daughter. On the island, though physically stronger, she justifies Cruso's rape of her by reflecting that 'he has not known a woman for fifteen years, why should he not have his desires'.[33] Likewise, she sleeps with Daniel Foe in order to help her write the island story. Susan appears to regard her body as a public domain to be owned and used by men.

NiraYuval-Davis indicates that 'gendered bodies and sexuality play pivotal roles as territories, markers and reproducers of the narratives of nations and other collectivities'.[34] Consequently, women are either the biological reproducers of future members or the social producers of the national culture. They are structured within the

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[30] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. xix-xx.
[31] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 10.
[32] Coetzee, *Foe,* p. 29.
[33] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 32.
[34] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation (*London: Thousand Oaks, 1997), p. 22.

collective consciousness of their societies as symbols, not equal human beings. In this way, through sex and obedience, Susan, Cruso and Foe are acting out their perception of their national values and roles. Foe and Cruso are exercising their authority and are also satisfying their sexual needs upon their women, symbolized in Susan, who sees her sexual and social submission as a 'national duty'.[35]

Edward Said clarifies that a person's national identity is the composite of 'a national language, like English […] a national community, [and] a national set of traditions or a culture'.[36] However, Said argues that in order to be a member of a community, a person has inevitably to accept that his/her community's culture 'always involve[s] hierarchies; it has separated the elite from the popular, the best from the less than best, and so forth. It has also made certain styles and modes of thought prevail over others'.[37] In this way, Susan's insistence on being Cruso's wife and widow is another form of following the national archetypes and being a member of this patriarchal community in which, according to Simone de Beauvoir, that 'which is not male', is perceived as 'Other' and thus the female 'is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other'.[38] As a colonizer on a mission, Cruso considers Susan an outsider and a female Other who needs to be controlled and accommodated within the system on the Island. She is thus not permitted 'to venture' far

[35] Kathy Glavanis-Grantham, 'The Women's Movement, Feminism and the National Struggle in Palestine. Unresolved Contradictions:,' *Women and Politics in the Third World*, edited by Haleh Ashar. (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 174-188, (p. 176).
[36] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 7.
[37] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 11.
[38] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage Classics, 1997), p. xix.

from the hut, 'for the apes would not be as wary of a woman'[39] and must conform to the 'laws' of the Island, which assert that everything happens 'in due time'.[40]

In the light of Said's and de Beauvoir's ideas, within an imperial, hierarchal culture Susan has to 'belong' to a man in order to feel safe and protected. Physical intimacy and submission are an unavoidable part not only of Susan's deluded national identification with her new community, but also seen by her as a natural task. Cruso says:

> If Providence were to watch over all of us, who would be left to pick the cotton and cut sugar-cane? For the business of the world to prosper, Providence must sometimes wake and sometimes sleep, as lower creatures do. […]. Perhaps it is the doing of Providence that Friday finds himself on an island under a lenient master, rather than in Brazil, under the planter's lash, or in Africa, where the forests teem with cannibals.[41]

In a secular order, with the workings of Providence suspended, Cruso asserts class, gender and racial hierarchies, establishing 'all of the subjugated peoples to be naturally subservient to a superior, advanced, developed, and morally mature Europe', and replacing the sacred power of religion with 'the [inviolable] power of culture' as 'the [sole] authority and exterior framework of the state'.[42] In this way, as a colonizer, Susan is convinced that her 'elevated or superior position to authorize, to dominate, [and] to legitimate' is related to her 'agency, powerful differentiation within [her] domain and beyond it too'.[43] Susan is thus simultaneously a victim and a colonizing figure. She is subordinate to Cruso but in an imperial position of power with regard to Friday. The latter explains Susan's obsession with owning Friday: 'If Friday is not mine to set free,

[39] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 15.
[40] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 37.
[41] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 23.
[42] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 11.
[43] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 9.

whose is he?',[44] and her dream of returning to the island with 'a sack of corn' in order to 'plant the terraces and make them bloom'.[45]

Moving around the world, Susan fails either to assimilate with new cultures and spaces or to break her bondage to the past. In Bahia, she alienates herself from people, while on the island, she does not leave her own imprint on the place. Rather, she reduces herself to the easy role of Cruso's subject and widow. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said demonstrates that it is possible to generate 'largely fictitious groups without compatibility with anything real, who mechanically contain within themselves not merely an identity but a whole systematic discipline of nefarious practices'.[46] Susan finds difficulty in understanding and respecting 'dumb' Friday's different habits and activities. When he shows sadness for Cruso's death, she wonders: 'Did he know we were subject to death, like the beasts?',[47] and when he sings and dances she yells at him. Through Susan's views of the Other, Coetzee makes the case that colonialism not only formulates policies based on the creation of stereotypical ideas of places and Other people in the minds of its people and persistently reproduces them, but also maintains 'a history [that] characterizes the position of women within patriarchal systems'.[48]

Viewed in this way, Susan, as Elizabeth MacNabb puts it, 'contributes in the production and reproduction of sexist culture'.[49] I partly agree with MacNabb. Despite the fact that Susan submits to 'the not-man or not-the-One perspective in herself from

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[44] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 99.
[45] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 44.
[46] Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian lives* / Edward W. Said; photographs by Jean Mohr (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 113.
[47] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 48.
[48] Deepika Deepika Bahri, 'Feminism in/and postcolonialism', *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (London: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 205.
[49] Elizabeth MacNabb, *The Fractured Family: The Second Sex and Its Disconnected Daughters* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 119.

infancy',[50] an attitude that enslaves her to the will of male-dominated and colonial hierarchies, her intellectual and cultural involvement with the colonial project encourages her to reconsider her historical affiliations and cultural identity. She utilizes her position as an exile gradually to develop a secular perspective on her life and relations to the Other, deconstructing different forms of sexist and racial polarities. Said describes the challenging, yet distinctly privileged position of the exile as the following:

> The exile […] exists in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another. Being skilled at survival becomes the main imperative, with the danger of getting too comfortable and secure constituting a threat that is constantly to be guarded against.[51]

The main question of *Foe,* then, is how Susan reimagines and repositions herself within the social orders she inhabits. I argue that the efforts of Susan as a feminist author, searching for liberation from the shackles of what Said calls 'frontiers and enclosures built around [her] either by nations or by other kinds of communities',[52] grow into a secular identification with the cause of the Other and her eventual defence of the right to difference. To rethink her cultural affiliations, Susan has to stand outside of society and its institutions, embracing a secular vision that enables her 'to uphold a single standard for human behavior'.[53] Susan comes to see herself as a human being with equal rights with men like Foe and Cruso, not as a subjugated body:

> I look like an old woman, a filthy old gipsy-woman. I sleep in doorways, in churchyards, under bridges. Can you believe this beggar's life is what I desire? With a bath and new clothes and a letter of introduction from [Foe] I could tomorrow find myself a situation as a cook-maid and a comfortable situation too, in a good house. I could return in every respect to the life of a substantial body, the life you recommend. But such a life is abject. It is the life of a thing.

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[50] De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. xix.
[51] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage Books, 1991), p. 23
[52] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, p. 23.
[53] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, p. 2.

A whore used by men is used as a substantial body.[54]

These words mark a major transformation in Susan's personal and intellectual vision. She confesses that 'the condition of slavehood invades the heart and makes a slave a slave for life'.[55] Contemplating her own experiences and choices, Susan realizes that her heart has been enslaved to a Western culture in which 'a woman who goes abroad freely is thought a whore'.[56] Reconsidering her physical and mental captivity to the traditional female roles of wife and mother, Susan initiates her revolt not merely against 'sexuality as a power that governs and structures the subject's every relation with the other'[57] but also her self-victimizing and enslaving 'intellectual traditions'.[58] Susan comes to understand gender and racial difference in terms of variety and diversity rather than antagonism and domination. She infers that 'the world is more various than we ever give it credit for' and consequently Friday may belong to 'tribes in Africa among whom the men are mute and speech is reserved to women', tribes that have the right to 'exist, and procreate, and flourish, and be content'.[59]

In addition, since Susan insists on being the assertive 'father to [her] story',[60] she assumes for herself the position of authority and creation, previously perceived as exclusive male domains. As a rebellious feminist writer confronting her internalized attitudes, Susan 'continue[s] to trust in [her] own authorship',[61] explaining to Foe that 'many strengths you have, but invention is not one of them'.[62] The challenge for Susan

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[54] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 125.
[55] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 85.
[56] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 85.
[57] Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 26
[58] Susan Ehrlich and Susan Levesque, 'The Strategic Marginalization of Working-Class Masculinity in a Batterers' Treatment Programme', *Gender and Language*, Vol 5, No 2 (2011): 241-269, (p. 262).
[59] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 69.
[60] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 123.
[61] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 133.
[62] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 71.

the artist, then, Coetzee asserts, is 'how not to play the game by the rules of the state, how to establish one's own authority'.[63] In describing herself as 'Sinbad of Persia and Friday [as] the tyrant riding on [her] shoulders',[64] Susan emphasizes that 'by art [she has] found a means of giving voice to the true story of Friday'.[65] She uses her artistic power of invention and imagination both to express her independent literary voice and to set free her historical guilt towards Friday. She says:

> [Friday's] mouth opens. From inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and southward to the ends of the earth.[66]

In the final part of *Foe*, Susan sees for the first time 'a scar like a necklace, left by a rope or chain' around Friday's neck. It is a sign that Susan is able now to see the unobserved sufferings of the Other. Dominic Head argues that Susan now 'accomplishes what no other character has been able to accomplish: to descend into the sunken wreck'.[67] Yet, Head thinks that the restaging of Susan's earlier frustrated attempts to bring Friday to speech 'implies the unsuitability of this narrator to the task'.[68] I disagree with Head on the point that Susan is an unsuitable narrator of Friday's story. Susan's persistence, patience and continual attempts to know and reveal the true story of Friday's cut tongue is a sign of her desire to purify her guilt, not just by sympathizing with the victim but rather by memorializing him in her book. She is no longer the colonizer 'whose role in the non-European world [is] to rule, instruct, legislate, develop,

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[63] J. M .Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 364.
[64] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 148.
[65] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 118.
[66] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 157.
[67] Dominic Head, *J.M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 126.
[68] Head, *J.M. Coetzee*, p. 124.

and at the proper times, to discipline and occasionally exterminate non-Europeans',[69] but rather, she listens 'for the call of [their] voice'.[70]

If one compares Susan as a narrator of the experience of the colonized to Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* we see that Susan is a much more sympathetic and enlightened ventriloquist. Although Conrad exposes the hypocrisy and futility of the imperial project, his novella marginalizes the Congo natives, consigning them to the background of events and does not highlight their efforts at resistance. Marlow's attitude towards the natives remains a detached feeling of pity but not a real act of sympathy and support. Susan, though she enjoys her relative superiority over the racial Other, Friday, revolts against her complicit attitude. For Marlow, 'inner truth is hidden' and 'stripped of its cloak of time',[71] but for Susan, 'the truth speaks itself willy-nilly'.[72] While Marlow is locked within the cultural-religious polarities of his society's imperial ideology, Susan develops a secular point of view that Edward Said describes as going back to 'actual human beings', realizing that 'men and women produce their own history, and therefore it must be possible to interpret that history in secular terms. […] religion has its limits in the secular world'.[73]

Susan recognizes that she has been living in in an illusory world: she lives in Bahia but is trapped by the limitations of her English culture; she is cast away on an island but discovers that it is a barren fortress; she dreams of adventure but is controlled by the lifeless colonizer, Cruso; she glorifies Foe as a famous writer but he turns out to be bankrupt; and finally she is looking for her abducted daughter but is unsure whether

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[69] Edward Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization', *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1990), pp. 69-94, p. 79.
[70] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 154.
[71] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, pp. 12-13.
[72] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 26.
[73] Edward Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said*. Interviewed by Gauri Viswanathan, (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 129.

she will be able to recognize her. The only solid truth in Susan's life is Friday, who accompanies her after her island adventure and who is 'the substance of truth'[74] to her story. Although it is difficult for Susan to explain Friday's submission, his story gives her a profound insight into the sexist and racist 'ideological filters, or ways of seeing, provided by [her] own culture',[75] and which, Susan professes, ambush her in 'a certain ignorance and a certain blindness'.[76] In some senses Coetzee himself resembles his fictional creation, Susan, for he says:

> The whites in South Africa participated, in various degrees, actively or passively, in an audacious and well-planned crime against Africa. Afrikaners as a self-defining group distinguished themselves in the commission of that crime. […] Is it in my power to withdraw from the gang?[77]

Both Coetzee and Susan seek to effect this withdrawal. In rewriting the island story from an independent viewpoint highlighting the 'truth' and 'particularity'[78] of her story, Susan challenges not only Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), often seen as 'the prototypical colonial novel of the eighteenth century, if not in all of English literature',[79] but historical facts as well. Coetzee deforms the name Defoe to Foe to suggest that the writer can be his or her own enemy. Defoe is his own enemy when he presents his subjective vision as an historical, social and even linguistic fact. Similarly, Susan in Coetzee's *Foe* is initially in bondage to her imperial culture. Susan's mission as an intellectual, thus, is 'to speak truth to power',[80] in order to deconstruct its complicit literary and linguistic constructs, 'dominated by habits of expression, one of whose main

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[74] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 24.
[75] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 71.
[76] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 106.
[77] J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 342-343.
[78] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 59.
[79] Brett C. McInelly, 'Expanding Empires, Expanding Selves: Colonialism, the Novel, and *Robinson Crusoe*,' *Studies in the Novel* 35.1 (Spring 2003), p. 1.
[80] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, p. 2.

functions is to preserve the status quo'.[81] Susan connects Cruso's political mission as a colonizer to Foe's literary mission as an Orientalist, seeing them both as 'men of the same time of life, and their way with a woman too was the same'.[82]

Susan's artistic liberation, then, is inseparable from her personal emancipation as a woman. At first, Susan proves to herself and to others that she follows her prescribed historical and cultural roles. However, she comes to feel like a 'puppet' and a 'condemned felon'.[83] Once she defies the rules of the patriarchal order, she is reprimanded. Susan wonders:

> Do I owe proof that I am a substantial being with a substantial history in the world? I choose rather to tell of the island, of myself and Cruso and Friday and what we three did there: for I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire.[84]

Susan develops an alternative secular interpretation of her world, which is embodied in the text of Coetzee's novel.

Patriarchal (Sexual) Space[s] and Female Resistance in The Ship (1970)

In a similar way, female characters in Jabra's *The Ship* are represented as living within a phallocentric culture which discriminates against them not only as an inferior Other to men, but also as scapegoats and meddlesome symbols of their nations' political corruption and lack of sovereignty. Like Cruso's island in *Foe*, the events of *The Ship* take place on board the eponymous ship, Hercules, on a cruise from the East (Beirut) to the West (Marseille). On the ship, a group of desperate exiles and escapees from different parts of the world, including Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, Italy and America, try to find an escape from reality. Like Susan, Cruso and Friday, in Coetzee's novel, the hearts, minds and dreams of the characters on board the ship are focused upon different

[81] *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures,* p. 21.
[82] Coetzee, *Foe,* p. 139.
[83] Coetzee, *Foe,* p. 135.
[84] Coetzee, *Foe,* p. 131.

places on shore. All fail to enjoy the sense of timelessness and placelessness provided either on board the ship or on the island. Moreover, as in *Foe*, the personal and intellectual attitudes of characters in *The Ship* are influenced by sex and politics, though, unlike the characters in *Foe*, Jabra's are more confrontational and overt in dealing with their personal and national feelings of disappointment and defeat.

My argument is that *The Ship* is a secular investigation of the interaction between individual freedom and modern spatial pressures like globalization and capitalism. The novel interrogates the way in which Eastern and Western cultures position women within the public domain. I further argue that Jabra's *The Ship* may be seen as a parody of the patriarchal structure of the *Thousand and One Nights* in the sense that it is the male characters in *The Ship* who tell stories in order to survive, while female characters, although they are victimized at some points in their lives, are more critical and practical in their attitudes towards their cultures and men's control. Through his representation of female/male relationships with their intense, binary feelings of love/hate, trust/suspicion and fidelity/betrayal, Jabra traces the development of the recurrent struggles of women in general, and Arab women in particular, for their human rights, such as their recognition as valuable members of society and as equal human beings with men. Living within patriarchal norms, most female characters in *The Ship* experience gender inequalities and pressure to conform to stereotypes. Jabra, like Coetzee, shows women having to fight for their own freedom and rights since their patriarchal societies give them nothing.

As in Coetzee's *Foe*, in Jabra's *The Ship* the interaction between places and characters is intense, and inflected by cultural, sexual and political concerns. While

Iraqi Luma Abdel-Ghani feels like a 'stranger in [her] own country',[85] Palestinian Maha al-Hajj asserts that 'real alienation is alienation from a place, from roots',[86] and Italian Emilia Farnesi longs for 'the memory of a landscape, the memory of a country'.[87] The spatial experiences of Luma, Maha and Emilia shape their perception of their gender roles and attitudes to racial and gender difference. Like Susan Barton in *Foe,* Luma's psychological slavery to the tribal and sexist customs of Iraq limits her personal freedom and warps her national affiliations. Despite her education at Oxford University, where she meets and falls in love with architect Isam Salman, Luma, being a woman, has great difficulty in either defying her family's rejection of their marriage or in escaping with her lover. Her act is seen as 'disgraceful', reflecting disrespect 'to the authority of the father',[88] and bringing 'shame and dishonor on all of her kin'.[89] In a traditional, patriarchal society, Luma's sexual behaviour is regarded as a direct expression of the honour of her family and even her 'national character'.[90] Luma tells Isam that:

> I told myself I'd wait for you in Baghdad, but actually I was afraid to make you part of my plans. It was as though you were a being from outer space. You and Baghdad were a contradiction. I had that feeling especially during my last few weeks at Oxford. A man was so consumed by anger over a piece of land in some remote area of Southern Iraq that he killed another man. Why should I be punished simply because the victim was my uncle? […] I was the victim, the real martyr.[91]

Luma's words shed light on the fact that the moral and social codes in *The Ship* constitute a set of secular and tribal traditions, rather than religious teachings. Since Isam's poor father killed his cousin, who is Luma's rich uncle, the poor family is

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[85]Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *The Ship*, Translated by Roger Allen & Adnan Haydar (Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1985), p. 74.
[86] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 74.
[87] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 12.
[88] Peter. C. Dodd, 'Youth and Women's Emancipation in the United Arab Republic', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 8 (1992), pp. 159-172, (p. 159).
[89] Gershen Kaufman, *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2004), p. 280.
[90] Kaufman, *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes*, p. 280.
[91] Jabra, *The Ship*, pp. 140-141.

marginalized and excluded from the protection of the tribe. Years after the incident, 'Isam's family got fragmented' and 'was hardly able to make ends meet'.[92] Feeling trapped within their social and familial affiliations and responsibilities, Luma and Isam realize that 'past and present [are] closely intertwined, each one of them alive and pointing to the other'.[93]

To uphold her national and familial responsibilities, Luma, like Susan Barton in *Foe*, submits to the desires of her male guardians. Hoda Rashad explains that marriage in Arab culture is 'a well-defined turning point that bestows prestige, recognition, and societal approval on both partners, particularly the bride', and for the rich, marriage is mainly 'a social and economic contract between two families'.[94] Luma signs a contract with Falih Haseeb, the successful doctor, in order to retain her high prestige, wealth and familial support. Luma feels lonely in the face of 'spite and hatred'[95] from people around her, even Isam himself who does not support her in her crisis. Rather, Luma believes that Isam 'was waiting for a revolution that would destroy [her] family, so [he] could have [her]'.[96]

The central issue of race in *Foe* is replaced by class in *The Ship*. Yet, both novels replace the power of patriarchal Gods with the power of patriarchal cultures. Both powers, Said emphasizes, 'are shutting off human investigation, criticism, and effort in deference to the authority of the more-than-human, the supernatural, the other-worldly'.[97] In willingly giving up her freedom, Luma, like Susan, is complicit in upholding the regime of phallocentric power. Isam's and Falih's competition over Luma

[92] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 141.
[93] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 188.
[94] Hoda Rashad, 'Marriage in the Arab World', *Population Reference Bureau*, (September, 2005), pp. 1-8, (p. 3).
[95] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 146.
[96] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 146.
[97] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 290.

is mainly a political/cultural conflict, rather than a pure passion or love. While Dr. Falih takes Luma as the mother of his children and the one who produces and transmits the boundaries of his ethnic/national group, Isam regards his sexual domination over Luma as a form of political dominance since 'Luma's wealth and (hitherto) influential social status put her right in the enemy camp'.[98] Consequently, both men consider their possession of Luma as an exercise of power and authority over land, establishing their masculinity as the only power to 'maintain their hold on Arab culture and women', a power that turns into a 'subjugating and enslaving obsession'.[99]

As a result of the disturbing personal, political and social changes in her country, Luma regards her marriage to Falih as a 'metaphysical'[100] solution to her problems. Unlike Shahrazad in the *Thousand and One Nights,* who embraces death telling her father, 'make me a doer of this good deed, and let him kill me and he will: I shall only die a ransom for others',[101] Luma confesses to Isam that 'for me, death was a difficult, horrifying concept, and you could do nothing to rescue me'.[102] In her fight against patriarchy, Luma, like Susan, learns to defend her right to live and be independent as a precondition to her fight for freedom. However, Luma, unlike Susan and Shahrazad, neither tells stories to trap men, nor is burdened with feelings of guilt or sacrifice. Rather, she defends her individuality and defies the expectations of her male guardians and lovers.

Isam's and Falih's obsession with their sexual power over Luma, like Shahrazad's obsession in keeping Shahryar's interest, imprison them in 'gendered

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[98] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 146.
[99] Rema Hammami, 'Gender, Nakbe and Nation: Palestinian Women's Presence and Absence in the Narration of 1948 memories', *Homelands: Poetic Power and the Politics of Space* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 19-39, (p. 29).
[100] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 141.
[101] *Thousand and One Nights*, p. 46.
[102] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 138.

constructions of national identity [for] meanings of nation are permeated with notions of masculinity and femininity'.[103] Isam lives in the past. He keeps telling stories about the sufferings of his family and his betrayal by the hypocrisy of his political leaders after the revolution. Similarly, Falih, suffocated by his tribal and masculine affiliations, sees the ship as a microcosm of the world as 'a prison cell' and a 'kingdom of worms'.[104] As Westernized, secular liberals, Falih and Isam express progressive and emancipatory beliefs. However, in their daily practices, they are 'locked within cultures [before the] Middle Ages'.[105] Isam 'follow[s] Luma as her shadow',[106] looking for ways 'to break those ties to the land',[107] while Falih commits suicide, failing to deal with 'the shame afflicted upon him by his [promiscuous] wife'.[108] Deniz Kandiyoti explains how 'modernity [is] invested with different meanings for men', singling 'women out as the symbolic repository of group identity' and fixing 'certain identities [as] privileged and become dominant, while others are submerged or subordinated'.[109]

Like Foe and Cruso in *Foe*, Falih and Isam in *The Ship* ascribe gendered cultural roles to themselves and to women. As a result, their fake secular beliefs, rather than making them free and tolerant of difference, 'deprive [them] of all individuality and [they] become something like a herd of sheep'.[110] Similarly, Palestinian exile Wadi Assaf endows Maha al-Hajj with '[the] responsibility to reproduce the national culture, [which] simultaneously becomes the symbolic role of representing its fixity and timeless

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[103] Amal Amireh, *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers,* (New York: Garland Punishing, 2000), p. 249.
[104] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 156.
[105] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 88.
[106] Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical Introduction (*Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), p. 46.
[107] Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical Introduction*, p. 46.
[108] Ali Fazah, *Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: A Study of His Fiction* (Amman: Al-Mahed Publishing House, 1984), p. 75.
[109] Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation', *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 382.
[110] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 107.

nature'.[111] Though he is a free and liberal man, Wadi, like Falih and Isam, internalizes the calamity of his country as a private crisis of masculinity. Thus, he replaces his feelings towards the lost home and family with the possession of women, asserting that 'physical presence and money are the only irrefutable truth'.[112] Nonetheless, Maha, unlike Luma and Susan, is a 'successful doctor' whose work is the 'first priority'[113] in her life. She is the one who is actually directing the relationship with Wadi, and not him. She decides when to meet him, when to make love and even when to marry.

In *Orientalism*, Said argues that in Orientalist writings, 'the Orient seemed to have offended sexual propriety; everything about the Orient exuded dangerous sex, threatened hygiene and domestic seemliness with an excessive 'freedom of intercourse".[114] In *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, Meyda Yegenoglu endorses Said's argument that Western literature shows 'an obsession with a 'hidden' and 'concealed' Oriental life and with the woman behind the veil and in the harem'.[115] Jabra echoes and at the same time challenges these Orientalist ideas about sexuality. In *The Ship*, on seeing Luma for the first time, Italian Emilia Farnesi reveals that she is steeped in Western Orientalist discourses and imagery when the reader is informed that 'Baghdad and Luma brought back to her mind the fantastic world of slave girls, of the harem, of the Sultan's daughter and Sindbad the sailor'.[116] Nathaniel Greenberg asserts that Emilia's stereotypical view of Arab women means that 'in *The Ship*, the primacy of sex as the arena for self-determination marginalizes the role of

[111] Hammami, 'Gender, Nakbe and Nation: Palestinian Women's Presence and Absence in the Narration of 1948 Memories', p. 29.
[112] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 19.
[113] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 56.
[114] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 168.
[115] Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 73.
[116] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 28.

women to that of a body'.[117]

I disagree with Greenberg. In almost all of Jabra's novels, these Western representations of the exotic sexuality of Oriental women are challenged. In *The Ship*, Luma and Maha, like Susan Barton in *Foe*, are intellectuals, not odalisques. They attend cultural events, read world literature and are aware of the political situations in their countries. They are neither concealed from public life, nor are they sex toys. Though Maha is a liberal woman, she respects her cultural traditions, which prohibit sexual contact before marriage. As a married couple, Luma's and Falih's sexual needs are always left unsatisfied. Falih 'can only stand sex when he's dead drunk',[118] while Luma feels that she is 'wasting her beauty, bleeding her femininity, giving her lips and breast to her drunk'.[119] Similarly, Falih 'admits that he was using Emilia [sexually] to keep his mind off Luma'.[120]

Jabra establishes a chaotic and exaggerated world of sex and bodily pleasure, then, in order to achieve two aims. Firstly, he exposes the hypocrisy of intellectualized and westernized Arab men, who pretend to adopt liberal ideas and to encourage women's equality and freedom, while they in fact participate in maintaining hierarchical power relations. Jabra counters the idealized image of women as symbols of nations, as embodiments of honour and high culture, or as obedient sexual objects with the alternative image of women as loose, free and uncontrollable. Thus, female sexuality in *The Ship* functions as a 'symbol of threat' to both traditional cultures and Western stereotypes. Jacqui Alexander clarifies further that:

[w]omen's sexual agency, our sexual and our erotic autonomy have always been

[117] Nathaniel Greenberg, 'Political Modernism, Jabra, and the Baghdad Modern Art Group', *Comparative Literature and Culture*, Volume 12, Issue 2 (June, 2010), pp. 1-11, (p. 9).
[118] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 175.
[119] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 15.
[120] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 29.

> troublesome for the state. They pose a challenge to the ideological anchor of an originary nuclear family, a source of legitimation for the state, which perpetuates the fiction that the family is the cornerstone of society. [..] Erotic autonomy brings with it the potential of undoing the nation entirely.[121]

Jabra's foregrounding of sex can therefore be seen as a deliberate destabilizing of the status quo at the hands of women.

Secondly, Jabra's aim is to establish different feminist, secular visions as alternatives to the false state secularism on display in the novel. In contrast to the passive and illusory world of Arab male characters, Arab female characters in *The Ship* go through a positive process of creating what Said calls a 'resistant intellectual consciousness'.[122] In commenting on Isam's and Falih's depression, Luma relates it to the 'problems of the intellectuals in Baghdad'.[123] She understands the predicament of the westernized Arab intellectuals in the face of 'politics that has given [them] hell'.[124] In such a polarizing political and cultural atmosphere, Luma 'g[et]s lost between right and wrong, good and evil'.[125] John Maier claims that 'Luma rarely speaks in her own voice'; and hence she 'develops no interiority in *The Ship,* and remains a mythic figure'.[126] I partially agree with Maier that Luma is a mythic figure in the sense that she 'ke[eps] a safe distance from people and look[s] down on everything around her'.[127] Yet, I believe that Luma develops a personalized sense of secular liberation, mirrored in her changing choices and attitudes in the course of the novel.

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[121] Jacqui Alexander, 'Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy', *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Edited by M Alexander; Chandra Talpade Mohanty (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 65.
[122] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p. 13.
[123] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 36.
[124] Jabra, *The Ship*. P. 33.
[125] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 38.
[126] John Maier, 'Bordering New Questions Once Thought Settled: Possibilities for a Borderless Culture,' *Journal of Middle Eastern and North African Intellectual and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 1. (2008), pp.1-49, (p. 42).
[127] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 138.

Luma approaches her tribal, phallocentric culture with rebellious acts of desire and challenge to '[the discriminatory] law of the father', which is premised on 'an alienation and a separation for both social classes and sexes'.[128] Ironically, Luma announces that she 'loves her husband',[129] but is let down by his severe depression and addiction to drinking. Yet, after the death of her husband and the end of her cruise, Luma, like Susan, questions the value of her 'sexual escapades'.[130] Moreover, Luma professes that 'marriage [to Falih] has killed [her]'.[131] Her personal suffering and mistakes open her eyes to diversity and the similarity between her experience and that of Others. Luma ponders the wealth of her feudal family, wondering how her 'ancestors acquired the land a hundred and fifty years ago? How many people did they kill in the process? How many women and children died of hunger and destitution?'.[132] Her thinking of the sufferings of Others, particularly the oppressed and poor classes in her society, changes Luma's life. She is no longer isolated in her ivory tower. Rather, she, like Susan Barton, is interested in any 'opportunity to meet people',[133] testifying to her openness to difference.

In contrast to the secular, metaphysical attitude adopted by Luma, exile Maha al-Hajj has a secular, factual perception of her life. Generally, Maha has little active voice in the novel. She is spoken for by other characters. However, her few speeches reflect a decisive woman who is able to liberate herself from the shackles of her masculinist culture. After her family is murdered in an Israeli attack, Maha moves to Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. With her persistence and hard work, she becomes

[128] Janet Todd, *Feminist Literary History: A Defence* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 52-3.
[129] Jabra, *The Ship*, p.149.
[130] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 153.
[131] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 74.
[132] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 145.
[133] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 150.

a physician. Described as 'mercurial, affectionate, eruptive and dormant',[134] Maha is an emerging feminist spirit who seeks control, regulation and self-realization in a world of chaos and colonial subjugation. Unlike Luma, Maha al-Hajj is related to 'science', 'practical knowledge', and 'rocks'.[135] She stands for the value of female work and independence.

In addition, exiled Maha, like colonized Friday in *Foe*, is the only truly productive character in *The Ship*. It is not an easy experience for a female exile, living and working in Lebanon. Ole Ugland's examination of the working and living conditions of Palestinian exiles in Lebanon concludes that the majority of exiles, particularly women, face 'underutilization, economic instability, and fierce competition'.[136] Maha fights to realize and maintain her high economic position. Even when she falls in love with Wadi Assaf, Maha is practical and reserved in their sexual contacts. In refusing Wadi's suggestion to return to Palestine 'to plant his land,' with Maha practising medicine 'for free', and to 'build a family',[137] Maha defends her social and cultural gains as an independent woman. She refuses her lover's attempts 'to force [her] to return to the domesticity of former years',[138] and also holds out against 'colonial society and its economy', which confines the colonized 'to the margins of economy'.[139]

Maha's refusal to return to Palestine is a very challenging decision since the main role of Palestinian women, according to Said, is to 'assert the value of connection

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[134] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 157.
[135] Jabra, *The Ship*, pp. 188 &186.
[136] Ole Ugland, ed, *Difficult Past, Uncertain Future: Living Conditions among Palestinian Refugees in Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon* (Oslo: Fafo, 2003), p. 81.
[137] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 113.
[138] Kathy Glavanis-Grantham, Kathy, 'The women's movement, feminism and the national struggle in Palestine. Unresolved contradictions', *Women and politics in the Third World*, edited by Haleh Ashar. (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 176.
[139]Amina Mama, 'Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence against Women in Africa,' *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 51.

with the land'. They must symbolize 'the pride of ownership', and consequently, they have to stay 'in place'.[140] Yet, Maha's bold decision may be regarded as what Said calls a 'secular interpretation that proposes a way of dealing with, a way of avoiding the pitfalls of nationalism'.[141] Said elaborates that:

> There is an emphasis upon forging a self-identity as a nation or a people that resists but has its own integrity. But it does seem to me that despite essential virtues there are great limitations to that intellectually as well as politically. The limitations have to do with the fetishization of the national identity. […] One does have to give a certain attention to the rather dense fabric of secular life, which can't be herded under the rubric of national identity.[142]

In this way, Maha can be seen to resist the fetishization of national identity. Moreover, she, Luma and Susan Barton in the two novels develop a positive situation out of their oppressive patriarchal and colonial experiences. They all adopt a secular attitude in Said's sense of the term, which means that they grow to accept human diversity and that difference, both gender and racial, is a positive quality. Rejecting discriminatory ideologies associated with the notion of a pure nation, or a pure collectivity, the two authors' female characters in these novels stand up for tolerance, secular mindfulness and the interdependence of human groupings and races.

Secular Spirituality in Foe and The Ship: A Symbolic Reading

> The more one is able to leave one's cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment and generosity necessary for true vision. The more easily, too, does one assess oneself and alien cultures with the same combination of intimacy and distance.[143]

> A spiritual activity means moral progress when man does not simply take the command of an outer or inner authority as motive for his action, but strives to recognize the reason why a particular principle of conduct should act as motive in him. This is the advance from morality based on authority, to conduct based

[140] Said, *After the Last Sky*, p. 83.
[141] Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said*, p. 131.
[142] Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said*, pp. 131-2.
[143] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Now York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 260.

> on moral insight […] it may happen that in certain circumstances one considers the progress of culture in others.[144]

In the above quotation, Edward Said argues that spiritual detachment can be an advantage in order to rethink, criticize and reevaluate one's cultural affiliations from a secular perspective and to acquire real insight into other cultures. Said develops the idea of a generous, secular spirituality which seeks to transcend religious and nationalist limitations of identity to embrace humanistic values such as empathy and interdependence. In developing his own understanding of the concept of secular spirituality, Said focuses on music as a secular, spiritual force of discovery and originality. He points out that 'music for the most part is transnational; it goes beyond the boundaries of a nation or a nationality and language'.[145]

Steiner, as the above quotation indicates, suggests that a non-authoritarian spiritual principle can help one to be able to judge other people and cultures devoid of any religious, political or cultural stereotypes. Building on the insights afforded by Said and Steiner, then, the aim of this part of the thesis is to trace the role of music, the art of writing and political engagement as secular spiritual forces in Coetzee's *Foe* and Jabra's *The Ship.* It argues that the three practices can be used as a means of endorsing secular understanding of an individual's relations to his/her home culture and to the Other. Coetzee and Jabra employ the three secular activities to exemplify, as Said puts it, 'the preservation of difference without sinking into the desire to dominate'.[146] Furthermore, activities like music, writing and political engagement demonstrate different characters' resistance to oppression and their efforts to recover identity.

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[144] Rudolf Steiner, *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* (Sussex: Rudolf Steiner, 2006), p. 64.
[145] Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society,* p. 179.
[146] Edward Said & Daniel Barenboim, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), pp. 5-6.

Music and the Art of Writing as Secular Spiritual Forces in Foe

Throughout *Foe*, Susan Barton admits that she 'mocks the art of writing'.[147] Likewise, Coetzee specifies that Susan's struggles as a writer parody the purposeful 'silences of colonialism [and] the silences of literary history'.[148] Since Susan, Cruso and Foe speak English, they assumed that they have power and agency over mute Friday, who is 'being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others'.[149] However, Susan, being the female, is controlled and silenced by male guardians, Foe and Cruso, whose linguistic freedom is curtailed by their hierarchal political and cultural affiliations. Locked within the linguistic and cultural archetypes of her home culture, Susan fails either to communicate with the Other, Friday, or to explain her subjugation. As previously suggested, only when Susan develops a secular understanding of the Other, does she perceive Friday's difference in a new way, devoid of stereotypical preconceptions.

Susan reflects that Friday's 'casting of petals was the first sign she had that a spirit or soul, stirred beneath that dull and unpleasing exterior'.[150] As she continues to observe him, she 'understood why Friday had sung and danced all day in [Foe's] house: it was to remove himself, or his spirit, from Newington and England, and from her too'.[151] For Susan, Friday cannot be considered an equal human being if he does not have a soul or a spirit. As touched upon earlier, Susan suspects the different habits of other people and cultures as giving evidence of a lower and more uncivilized culture than her own. Thus, she is deterred from imitating them. Yet, as she starts to re-evaluate her opinions and beliefs from a secular viewpoint, she concludes that 'as long as we two

[147] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 52.
[148] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 186.
[149] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 121.
[150] Coetzee, *Foe*, pp. 31-32.
[151] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 77.

are cast in each other's company, perhaps it is best that we dance and spin and transport ourselves'.[152] Susan shares Friday's feelings of alienation and rejection and works to overcome them together with him. Indeed, Samuel Durrant reads Susan's analysis of Friday's rituals as an '[act] of silent, inconsolable mourning [and] a sign of either an inability or a refusal to recover from history'.[153]

However, another way of viewing Friday's rituals and habits would be as a spiritual identification with the island in order to add a new 'current' of resistance to his lost identity. Rather than submitting to harsh reality, Friday utilizes his spatial experience to pave a 'road from chaos to order, or from desolation to happiness'.[154] Through his spiritual and musical rituals, Friday may be seen, in Said's words, as 'a performer' whose acts 'defy many of the physical laws of nature'.[155] Unlike Cruso's hysterical 'shouts' and blank 'contemplation of the wastes of water and sky',[156] which may be seen to reflect what Said calls 'the absence of tonality and a kind of homelessness, a kind of permanent exile',[157] Friday's flute performance, with its repeated tunes, reflects 'the logic of going forward from beginning to end'.[158] No wonder, then, that Cruso dies onboard the rescue ship, while Friday not only survives by floating on 'the very skin of death',[159] but also his 'memories'[160] occupy the attention of Susan and Foe.

Failing to explore Friday's true past or Cruso's life on the island, Susan thinks

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[152] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 77.
[153] Samuel Durrant, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2004), pp. 26 & 35.
[154] Said & Barenboim, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society,* p. 25.
[155] Said & Barenboim, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society,* p. 31.
[156] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 37.
[157] Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society,* p. 49.
[158] Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society,* p. 29.
[159] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 141.
[160] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 59.

that her story lacks 'substance, light and shade'.[161] Susan's spatial experiences in *Foe* lack memories, and hence 'her craft', Coetzee affirms, 'is all in reading *the other:* gaps, inverses, undersides; the veiled, the dark, the buried, the feminine; alterities'.[162] On imitating Friday's dance, Susan confesses that:

> Spinning round, my eyes closed, a smile on my lips, I fell, I believe, into a kind of trance; […] My trance, whatever it had been – I could summon back nothing distinct, yet felt a glow of after-memory, if you can understand that – had been a message (but from whom?) to tell me there were other lives open to me than this one in which I trudged with Friday across the English countryside, a life of which I was already heartily sick.[163]

Comparing herself to Friday, and emulating his actions, Susan gains a new insight into her life. Her personal 'memories [are] broken and mingled and altered'.[164] She meets people but does not know them as they really are and experiences different places and cultures but is held captive 'to a set of [separatist] authorities and canonical ideas'.[165] Dominic Head regards Friday's silence as 'a form of resistance to the discourse that defines him'.[166] In order for Susan to represent Friday's true story, she has to both replace the literary traditions of the patriarchal dominant discourse with a secular and feminist discourse and to figure out a new way to appropriate the story of the Other, and hence to (re)read history. In the scene where Susan interprets Friday's drawings as 'open eyes […] row upon row of eyes upon feet: walking eyes',[167] she evokes images of slaves being transported to places of enslavement. Susan's role as a writer is to bear witness to this history of oppression and to bring to light a repressed and silenced Other.

Yet Susan's attempts to bear witness, like Coetzee's own, are constantly

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[161] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 82.
[162] J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing: on the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 81.
[163] Coetzee, *Foe*, pp. 103-4.
[164] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 138.
[165] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p. 59.
[166] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 65.
[167] Coetzee, *Foe*, p.147

frustrated. She reflects:

> All my efforts to bring Friday to speech, or to bring speech to Friday, have failed. He utters himself only in music and dancing. […] How can he be taught to write if there are no words within him, in his heart, for writing to reflect, but on the contrary only a turmoil of feelings and urges? As to God's writing, my opinion is: If he writes, he employs a secret writing, which it is not given to us, who are part of that writing, to read.[168]

In this passage Susan realizes that knowledge is not related to language and that neither provides her with authority over Friday. Rather, finding a 'similitude',[169] between herself and Friday, in 'music', which, 'like love', 'is something [that] is passed between them, back and forth, and they come away refreshed and healed for a while of their loneliness'.[170] Both Coetzee and Susan may be regarded, in Said's terms, as 'spirits' able to 'transcend […] the shabby political realm of bureaucracy, armies, customs barriers, and xenophobia'.[171] For them, national identity and affiliation is a secondary matter since what matters for them as writers is to cross the border to the Other.

From the very beginning, Susan is reduced to a position of silence and loneliness by the patronizing attitudes of Cruso and Foe towards her as a woman. She is marginalized both as an explorer and authoress: first, Cruso prevents her from exploring or discovering the island because of his absurd argument that her sexuality is a source of danger, and second, she is excluded from the domain of authorship not only by her inexperience with the conventions of published narratives, but also by her gender, reflected in her obsession to 'father' her story. Nonetheless, Susan's dealings with the male Other, Friday, free her from white males' subjugation and help her to unleash her new identity and narrating persona. Through an understanding and tolerant relationship with Friday, Susan proposes an alternative approach to the Other, an approach premised

[168] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 143.
[169] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 80.
[170] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 80.
[171] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 52.

gradually upon love and similarity, rather than arrogance and enforcement.

Susan decides to play the flute, thinking that she and Friday 'have music in common', and so they 'will need no language'.[172] Even though 'the music [they] made was not pleasing', Susan insists that they still have something to share since '[their] instruments were made to play together, else why were they in the same case?'[173] Seeing herself as a 'dead, cold statue' in need of 'warm cover', [174] Susan, on imitating Friday, imagines herself as a new-born child 'in another life'.[175] This rebirth helps her to 'divine which episodes of his history hold promise of fullness, and tease from them their hidden meanings, braiding these together as one braids a rope'.[176] Susan's full identification with her new identity is beautifully portrayed in the final part of the novel, when she visits 'the home of Friday', announcing that 'bodies are their own signs'.[177]

Susan's literary career comes, then, as a liberating, secular, spiritual force in the face of the conflicting voices, attitudes and feelings represented in *Foe*. Admitting that 'there are not two kinds of man, Englishman and savage', and that 'there will always be a voice in [Friday] to whisper doubts, whether in words or nameless sounds or tunes or tones,'[178] Susan confronts Foe, saying:

> I am no slave-owner, Mr Foe. And before you think to yourself: Spoken like a true slave-owner!, should you not beware? As long as you close your ears to me, mistrusting every word I say as a word of slavery, poisoned, do you serve me any better than the slavers served Friday when they robbed him of his tongue?[179]

In relating Friday's earlier drawings of slaves' eyes to Susan's description of herself as a slave to Foe's authority, Coetzee emphasizes the need of both Susan and Friday 'to be

[172] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 97.
[173] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 97.
[174] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 79.
[175] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 79.
[176] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 89.
[177] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 155.
[178] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 149.
[179] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 150.

liberated'.[180] Susan succeeds in conceiving an alternative view of historical events, without discarding her own identity. She gives up on Foe and his futile promises to produce a faithful record of her true story, rejecting the models of false historical fact as in *Robinson Crusoe* and the guilty complicity of *Heart of Darkness*, developing her own, independent literary discourse.

In the final section of the novel, Susan announces that she is not 'whoring to entertain other people's stories'.[181] Rather, she crosses over 'the memorial writing of Daniel Defoe' and her old submissive identity 'lying in bed with Foe', to 'dive' into the silence of Friday, hearing 'the [true] sounds of the island'.[182] As a diver into the world of 'music and sounds' of the Other, Susan 'moves to a conclusion' that is 'to master, through memory, [her] own story'.[183] In this way, *Foe* invites its readers to look beyond the island adventure and Cruso's and Foe's authority to contemplate Susan's and Friday's processes of survival and self-discovery. After they are rescued, Susan promises to give Friday a 'copy of [their] book', through which '[they] will live forever'.[184] In the final scene of the novel, Susan is able to hear Friday's voice and to feel his pain which, as Patrick Hayes asserts in a different context, qualifies her to defend 'her individuality, her politics and her reflections on what constitutes a good story'.[185]

Music and Political Engagement as Secular Liberating Mediums in The Ship

In the same manner, in *The Ship*, music and political engagement are sources of hope, resistance and self-expression. Luma and Wadi, like Friday and Susan, choose the performance arts. Confessing that 'if I have any real emotion, it's religious, mystical',

[180] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 148.
[181] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 151.
[182] Coetzee, *Foe*, pp. 155-156.
[183] Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*, p. 76.
[184] Coetzee, *Foe*, p. 92.
[185] Patrick Hayes, 'The Feminists Trolling the Trolls', *Spiked* (September, 2013), p. 1. http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/feminists_trolling_the_trolls/13993#.UinpW95wavE

Wadi expresses his loss of 'homeland' and its religious symbolic city 'Jerusalem' through 'music' that provides him with 'harmony'.[186] As a Palestinian exile, Wadi lacks feelings of community, stability and security. To nurture his inner peace, he resorts to music, especially religious music, which is 'an international language' of human sympathy and suffering. The 'mystical' forms of 'harmonic beauty' permit Wadi to 'see [his] life, land, [and] country'.[187] Wadi continues that:

> My emotions are stirred by church music: chants that rise wounded, agonized, from the throats of choirs, organ music that thunders in the lofty ceilings, and all those humble supplications to God [...] The most beautiful things in life are sad, like my homeland, like the angels who carry cups filled with blood dripping from the palms of Christ crucified.[188]

Like Friday's petal rituals and musical performances, Wadi's musical interests are a source of inner serenity and the power to both 'defy and create illusions'[189]at the same time. As an exile, Wadi feels guilty as he survives while his closest friend is murdered during armed struggle in Palestine. Identifying himself with the suffering and torture of Christ, Wadi is both celebrating the geographical and historical significance of Jerusalem, and expressing his true pain. Through music and ritual he is cleansing his spirit and ridding himself of his burdens. Wadi leads a secular life, but his interest in religious music is, then, 'an attempt to embody the divine'.[190] For Wadi, 'memory is transformed into something resembling music. Daily happenings recede into the dark tunnels of time, leaving behind waves of music in the mind'.[191]

In commenting on the incorporation of Christian traditions in modern Arabic culture and literature, Saddik Gouhar argues that Christian images both 'constitut[e] a transnational poetics which attempts to establish a dialogue between the Arab world and

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[186] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 23.
[187] *Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: A Study of His Fiction*, p. 75.
[188] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 22.
[189] Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*, p. 33.
[190] Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*, p. 123.
[191] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 22.

the West narrowing the cultural and civilizational gap that separate peoples on both sides' and 'provides an example of hybridity and acculturation integral to the era of globalization'.[192] For Muslim Isam Salman, like Wadi, spiritual salvation is realized through contacting the Other and through experiencing and sharing new cultures. This contact, like 'a vision to a prophet' brings 'a whole world full of glow, color, and pleasure, with flesh transformed into bubbles floating in a cup of wine'.[193] Isam identifies with music and the rhythm of the waves of the sea, which provide him with 'an obscure feeling of love';[194] a love he cannot achieve in his own land, Iraq. Torn between his cultural and social affiliations to his homeland and his personal disappointment and repression, Isam sees 'the sea [as] a new salvation. Off to the West'.[195]

Edward Said argues that, in musical and dance shows and performances, 'beyond the purely aural experience, there is also a kind of argument'.[196] I believe that Said's analysis is relevant to *The Ship*. Luma, like Susan, chooses dance as a means of expressing her inner repression and isolation. A secretive individual fixed by her social position, Luma nevertheless is able to use her body as a language of communication: 'she [does] a belly dance just like a professional …bending and straightening in time to the music'.[197] Since her performance combines time and music, Luma is comparing her pre-marriage 'life of limitless freedom', with her current situation under 'limitless despotism'.[198]

For Luma, Wadi and Isam, contacting the Other gives them insight into their life experiences and inspires them to reconsider their cultural affiliations. Literature and

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[192] Saddik Gouhar, 'Modernist Arabic Literature and the Clash of Civilizations Discourse', *Rupkatha Journal*, Issue 1 (2009), pp. 44-59, p. 57.
[193] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 13.
[194] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 132.
[195] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 11.
[196] Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*, p. 69.
[197] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 85.
[198] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 106.

art, particularly music, are their primary sources of exploring, comparing and tracing changes between the past and present, between East and West and between the male and the female. Music in *The Ship*, unlike *Foe*, is, then, synonymous with multi-spatial structures of memories. Music and the sea are not only a means of 'travelling into space and memory',[199] but are also, as Jabra puts it, a means of spiritual revival and resistance for characters in the novel:

> They discover the unknown in distant places in order forget their own alienation, to put an end to it, and to return victorious to a world that they dearly wish would embrace and accept them. Like all adventurers, however, like every Sindbad, they can never remain among people for long. This feeling of alienation and this lust for escape soon takes hold of them again.[200]

In comparing his exiled and estranged characters to 'Sindbad', Jabra, like Coetzee, assigns them the task of encountering dangers and defying challenges for the sake of crossing geographical, cultural and linguistic borders. Through this spiritual and physical detachment from their homelands, Jabra's characters in *The Ship*, particularly the female characters, are inspired to attempt to overcome the forces of oppression, injustice and patriarchy. Said suggests that human contacts 'take place in time. The element of space … brings [them] closer to each other to have a kind of tension, an in-depth [insight]'.[201] Said believes that one's interaction with and affiliations to places and spaces inform one's duties as well as one's rights. Luma's Western educational experience changes her understanding of her Eastern cultural and social affinities.

Some manifestations of secular politics can also be seen as a spiritual force in *The Ship*. Egyptian journalist Mahmud Rashid and Palestinian physician Maha al-Hajj adopt an obviously secular, political attitude. Yet Mahmud sees his political writings in quasi-spiritual terms as his 'love and magic force' to fight the 'authority of exploitation

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[199] Jabra, *The Ship,* p. 67.
[200] Jabra, *The Ship,* p. 74.
[201] Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society,* p. 75.

and tyranny',[202] while Maha proves that, as Sandra Gilbert, among many other feminists, puts it, 'the personal is political'.[203] Maha considers her personal success as an individual as a force to uphold her country's political struggle. Both struggles are premised on the principle of 'fac[ing] up to things, accept[ing] whatever pains you'.[204] Mahmud and Maha are nevertheless punished for their political activism. Mahmoud is censored and imprisoned for his political criticism, but declares that 'in politics, I espouse one line of thought, one ideology' which is 'revolution'.[205]

Similarly, Maha is banished from her country, Palestine, but is like a 'rock' in her 'resilience to failure or erasure'.[206] Maha takes the cruise in the Mediterranean Sea because 'it is the sea of Palestine, of Jaffa and Haifa, of the western hills and look to the west' and because, as Palestinian Wadi Assaf puts it, 'awesome, fascinating Mediterranean waves'[207] provide them with the power to survive. According to Moshe Dann, Maha's persistence to succeed outside Palestine, is an endorsement of 'the Palestinian struggle for statehood and self-determination',[208] and exposes 'the contradiction between Israel's definition as a Jewish state and its obligation to give equal rights to all of its citizens'.[209]

Jabra employs Maha's and Mahmud's political involvement with the local causes of their countries to endorse secular notions of hybridity and acceptance of difference. Mahmud announces that he benefits from his visits to many Arab and Western countries,

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[202] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 35.
[203] Sandra Gilbert, 'Who Do Feminist Critics Want? A Postcard from the Volcano', ed. Elaine Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory* (London: Virago Press Limited, 1986), p. 31.
[204] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 197.
[205] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 34.
[206] Jabra, *The Ship*, p. 186.
[207] Jabra, *The Ship*, pp. 25, 26.
[208] Moshe Dann, 'The New Morality: Palestinian Statehood, Post-Zionism is the Moral Argument against Zionism', *The Jerusalem Post* (August, 2012), p. 19.
[209] Dann, 'The New Morality: Palestinian Statehood, Post-Zionism is the Moral Argument against Zionism', p. 19.

emphasizing 'the plurality'[210] of human life, while Maha explains how 'every time she finds herself with a lot of people, she feels a huge chasm opening up inside her'.[211] Secular and spiritual activities in Jabra's *The Ship*, like in Coetzee's *Foe*, assert the notion that 'the human is individual'.[212] Female characters in the two novels experience unique moments of transformation from situations of oppression and subjugation to positions of liberation, independence and spiritual love and sympathy.

Conclusion

The above analyses demonstrate that Coetzee's *Foe* and Jabra's *The Ship* exemplify Said's definition of contrapuntal literature. The two novels certainly relate literature and history. They explore the ideology and the effects of colonization, highlighting the specific characteristics of the exile. In *Foe* and *The Ship,* the contact between the self and the Other is direct, confrontational and human. Despite the different perspectives espoused by Coetzee and Jabra, they present characters that exist in a perpetual state of existential alienation. These characters, both Eastern and Western, colonized and colonizers, are portrayed as fleeing both past and present, which have become inseparable to their minds. Yet, for all of them the realities they seek to escape from and the dreams which they wish to create for themselves remain elusive for there can be no escape, only prolonged suffering.

Perhaps the most striking feature in the two novels is the emerging female voice. In the two novels, the subjugated individual expects protection from the 'superior' individual, and the superior, in turn, is assured of the subjugated person's obedience. Where a female is concerned, the protector is a male; a father, a husband, a brother, or a

[210] Jabra, *The Ship,* p. 34.
[211] Jabra, *The Ship,* p. 197.
[212] Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society,* p. 156.

ruler. Ironically enough, Susan and Luma, free women, impose the protective male figure on themselves. Maha, Emilia and Jacqueline are equally exposed to patriarchal forces that either construct women in nationalist ideologies as the bearers and upholders of traditions and customs and as reservoirs of culture, or as sexual objects.

In *Foe* and *The Ship*, Coetzee and Jabra portray secular thinking as a positive force in redefining female characters' relations to the self, society and the Other, in order to move forward towards a different future. They all achieve different degrees of development and change and are worthy of sympathy and understanding. Being bound to a repressive and impoverished world, the majority of characters escape into illusion. Nonetheless, female characters work hard to deal with and destroy their illusions and even the illusions of others, while male characters aspire mainly to subjugate women. Since escape into illusion does not provide a solution, male characters in the two novels, either give up completely like Falih and Cruso, or just stand still, unable to either break their bondage to the past or move forward towards a different future, like Foe, Isam and Wadi.

Female characters, on the other hand, although they are repeatedly related to the national histories and identities of their nations and positioned as inferior to men, work hard to redefine their cultural positions and representations. They fight to be recognized as individual human beings and not as collective entities. While Arab women, Maha and Luma, use their educational and economic knowledge to realize cultural authority, British Susan Barton uses creative writing. They all aim at representing women's interests as central, real and part of the national causes of their societies. In doing so, they defy the stereotyped image not only of women's causes as superficial and marginal to the state, but also the Other as inferior.

Secular spirituality and music offer alternative and hybrid spaces of resistance

and indicate a future possibility of coexistence in *Foe* and *The Ship*. Coetzee and Jabra employ the two concepts as an expression of an emerging, secular voice of liberation in the two novels. Music in both novels functions as a means of overcoming alienation and isolation, a means of communicating with the repressed self, and of sharing a universal experience with the Other. In the next chapter, I move on to offer a contrapuntal reading of the development of female characters in Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* and Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*. I discuss the economic female terrain and activism in the two novels in relation to Edward Said's concept of hybridity.

Chapter Three

Hybridity and Economic Female Terrain in Life and Times of Michael K and In Search of Walid Masoud

Introduction

> One challenge is the difficulty of separating between Palestinian and Israeli-Jewish populations who are now inextricably linked in all sorts of ways, despite the immense chasm that divides them. Those of us who for years have argued for a Palestinian state have come to the realization that if such a "state" is going to appear out of the shambles of Oslo it will be weak, economically dependent on Israel, without real sovereignty or power. […] The only reasonable course therefore is to recommend that Palestinians and their supporters renew the struggle against the fundamental principle that relegates "non-Jews" to subservience on the land of historical Palestine.[1]

> The construction of fictions like "East" and "West", to say nothing of racialist essences like subject races, Orientals, Aryans, Negroes and the like, were what my books attempted to combat. [...] I stated repeatedly that mythical abstractions such as these were lies, as were the various rhetorics of blame they gave rise to; cultures are too intermingled, their contents and histories too interdependent and hybrid, for surgical separation into large and mostly ideological oppositions like Orient and Occident.[2]

In the previous chapter, I discussed the concept of secularism in Coetzee's *Foe* and Jabra's *The Ship*. Utilizing Edward Said's contrapuntalism, I argued that female characters in *Foe* and *The Ship* develop a secular understanding of their cultural and social affiliations that enables them to deconstruct stereotypical images of female sexuality, nationalist (af)filiations and hierarchal attitudes towards the self and the Other. They promote values of acceptance of racial, class and gender difference as a sign of human diversity and interdependence, rather than separation and antagonism. This

[1] Edward Said, 'Fifty years of dispossession', *Al-AhramWeeklyOnline*, Issue No. 376 (May, 1998), p. 13.
[2] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*: *The 1993 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. xi.

chapter goes on to compare the representation of economic female agency in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978). It focuses particularly on the concept of hybridity in the two novels and its role in endorsing progressive, resistant awareness of women's rights and their historic roles in the struggle of South Africa and Palestine against apartheid and discrimination.

Central to Said's contrapuntal theory is the acknowledgement of human cultures' 'hybrid past' and the deconstruction of '[separatist] rituals, ceremonies, and traditions'.[3] In the above two excerpts, Said tackles the politics of justice and co-existence in areas of racial-political conflict like Palestine. In the first excerpt, Said suggests that economic interdependence in Palestine can be utilized as a means of promoting values of just co-existence and acceptance of the Other, rather than as a source of exploitation and subordination of Palestinian people. Said regards Israeli politics as 'a system of virtual apartheid, in which the rights of Arabs and Jews are legislatively unequal'.[4] Said sympathizes with the Jews who suffered the Holocaust and are the victims of anti-Semitism, but maintains that 'they cannot use those facts to continue, or initiate, the dispossession of another people that bears no responsibility for either of those prior facts'.[5] He advocates efforts to 'cross the line of separation that maintains current apartheid between Arab and Jew in historic Palestine', highlighting the facts that:

> [de]spite their enormous power, Israelis have not succeeded in achieving either the acceptance or the security they crave. […] The South Africans in a country twenty times bigger [than Palestine] couldn't for long maintain apartheid. It's unlikely that Israel, which is surrounded of course on all sides by Arab states, is going to be able to maintain what in effect is a system of apartheid for

[3] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 16.
[4] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* / Edward W. Said; photographs by Jean Mohr (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 142.
[5] Edward Said, 'A Desolation, and They Called it Peace', *Al-AhramWeeklyOn-line*, Issue No.383 (June 1998), p. 13.

> Palestinians when Palestinians are equal in number with them and if you add the other Palestinians and the other Arabs in the region, vastly outnumber them.[6]

Tracing the similarities between the historical struggles of Black South Africans and the Palestinians against discrimination, Said is optimistic about the possibility of a peaceful settlement between conflicting parties, based on the condition that 'one has to face the other party and to take responsibility for what one did'.[7] Based on these Saidian ideas, then, this chapter will focus on the economic element in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* and Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud,* considering what role economic interdependence in South Africa and Palestine has in either strengthening desire for resistance to oppression or overcoming differences and hostilities for a better future. I will discuss economic female agency in the two novels with recourse to three themes in particular, namely forgiveness, resistance and complicity.

In the second excerpt, Said specifically discusses 'hybridity', which he regards as 'an historical process which includes crossing boundaries, migration, genocide, all of these collective experiences of involuntary or forced uprooting and dislocation'.[8] Yet, Said clarifies that a person can be 'hybrid and authentic at the same time',[9] and hence, hybridity does not erase original identity. Rather, hybridity invigorates human experiences with 'a mixture of [human] attributes' that replace 'the dangers of chauvinism and xenophobia'.[10] For Said, then, hybridity is a process of rediscovery, reevaluation and action with or against not only nationalist affiliations and relation to the

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[6] Edward Said, *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward Said*, ed. David Barsamian, (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 7.
[7] Edward Said, 'A Desolation, and They Called it Peace', p. 13.
[8] Edward Said, 'On Democracy, Identity, Western Intellectuals and Zionism', *Al Jadid*, volume 4, issue 22 (Winter 1998), p. 14.
[9] Edward Said, 'A Desolation, and They Called it Peace', p. 13.
[10] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 257.

governing system but also of theoretically posited categories that divide people into betters and lessers, powerful and weaker, white and black, civilized and primitive and master and slave.

In the first section of this chapter, I will examine the concepts of hybridity and economic female terrain in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* and Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud,* with the aim of tracing how Coetzee's and Jabra's novels consistently support Said's assumptions about hybridity. Analysing the concept of hybridity in the two selected novels, I investigate how the colonized re-imagines his/her past culture and history both to become independent of imperialism and its shackles and to search for a practical, alternative politics of living and dealing with the patriarchal systems and the Other. I argue that Coetzee's and Jabra's novels display a sustained belief in women's historical and economic equal rights with men. Both consider women's economic participation as a key element of the cultural emancipation and political struggle for sovereignty in South Africa and Palestine. In the second section of this chapter, I pick up on a point Said often refers to when discussing the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer, which is the dominance of historical myths and preconceptions about the self and the Other. I argue that Coetzee and Jabra aim to deconstruct stagnant and stereotypical representations and images of women in South Africa and Palestine, respectively.

Economic Agency as a Source of Resistant/Integral Identity

> The hierarchy of spaces [is created] by which the metropolitan center and, gradually, the metropolitan economy are seen as dependent upon an overseas system of territorial control, economic exploitation, and a socio-cultural vision;

> without these stability and prosperity at home would not be possible.[11]

In the above quotation, Edward Said highlights the need for a critical approach to the global imperialist political economy. He emphasizes the primary role of economic interests and benefits in constructing and maintaining imperialist purposes worldwide. The alliance between military, ideological and economic imperialist methods, Said argues, 'makes it possible to preserve and extend the empire without wasting its psychic or cultural or economic substance', yet, it also 'produces troubling self-images'.[12] In propagating imperialist missions to rule distant lands and peoples, colonizing leaderships utilize lack of real contact or knowledge about the Other to represent physical and racial difference (skin colour and physical features), as Abdul R. JanMohamed puts it, as 'moral and even metaphysical difference/oppositions, whose motives remain morally fixed [and] whose categories flex to accommodate any situation'.[13] JanMohamed agrees with Said that:

> The European desire to exploit the resources of the colonies (including the natives, whom Europeans regarded as beasts of burden) drastically disrupted the indigenous societies. Through specific policies of population transfers, gerrymandering of borders, and forced production, to mention only a few such measures, European colonialists promoted the destruction of native legal and cultural systems and, ultimately, the negation of non-European civilizations. These measures produce pathological societies, ones that exist in a state of perpetual crisis.[14]

According to Said and JanMohamed, then, colonialist economics entails cultural and political reshaping and fixing of the Other as perpetually inferior, uncivilized and in need of help from the superior West. The notion about bringing

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[11] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 69.
[12] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 76.
[13] Abdul R. JanMohamed, 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature', *Race, Writing and Difference*, edited by Henry Louis Gates (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 80.
[14] JanMohamed, 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature', p. 80.

civilization to primitive or barbaric peoples includes, beside economic, social and political dislocation, disturbingly familiar ideas such as flogging, extended punishment or even death as being required when the colonized misbehave or become rebellious. Consequently, colonizers conceive of violence as a right and natural way to control the Other. In addition, within those 'pathological' colonial societies, Meyda Yegenoglu argues that 'the Other, seen as the embodiment of sensuality, is always understood in feminine terms and has been constructed in Western imagery through the simultaneous gesture of racialization and feminization'.[15] Said emphasizes that sex, particularly 'feminine penetrability',[16] has been used as a means of stereotyping the colonized's manners as 'so low, barbaric, and antithetical as to merit reconquest', and the attitudes of colonized men towards women as 'under-humanized, backward, barbaric'.[17] Such very negative and submissive images of colonized women, who are victimized by their men, by convention and by religion and who, at the same time, are seductive objects of lust, establish the colonized female as inferior and appropriated. The black American feminist, bell hooks, argues that:

> Sexuality has always provided gendered metaphors for colonization. Free countries equated with free men, domination with castration, the loss of manhood, and rape—the terrorist act re-enacting the drama of conquest, as men of the dominating group sexually violate the bodies of women who are among the dominated. The intent of this act was to continually remind dominated men of their loss of power.[18]

The colonized body, both male and female, not only becomes vulnerable to all sorts of control and submission, but also, with women entering the workforce to compete

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[15] Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 73.
[16] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 206.
[17] Said, *Orientalism,* p. 172.
[18] bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), p. 57.

with men, as a means of controlling the market and incomes. Chioma Steady explains that the emergence and alliance of the capitalist economy and European imperialist expansion in the last decade of the eighteenth century resulted in 'the awareness and emergence of women as critical economic actors'.[19] This generalization applies as much to Palestinian and South African women as to women in other parts of the world. During and after colonialism, the working classes in general and women in particular were seen by both authorities and business owners as a source of cheap labour and thus they became the cornerstone of the colonialist economy. However, although the majority of colonized women seeking to enter the public domain were exploited and abused, they managed to create new positions of 'sustained adversarial resistance'. [20]

The construction of a positive hybrid or integral identity in areas of conflict like Palestine and South Africa, therefore, requires mutual efforts from the colonized and the colonizer to find an alternative view to imperialist ideologies and economics. In what follows, I argue that in *Life and Times of Michael K* and *In Search of Walid Masoud*, Coetzee and Jabra shed light, through their focus on economic female terrain in South Africa and Palestine, respectively, on the significant part played by the concept of hybridity in helping South African and Palestinian female characters to achieve economic independence and to motivate an implied, nonviolent political resistance to patriarchy and apartheid.

Economic Female Terrain: Between Hybridity and Complicity in Life and Times of Michael K

> To become aware of one's self as belonging to a subject people is the founding insight of anti-imperialist nationalism. From that insight came literatures,

[19] Chioma Steady, ‘African Women at the End of the Decade’, *Africa Report*, 30:2 (1985) , p. 4.
[20] Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors,' *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.15. No.2 (Winter, 1989), pp. 205-225, (p. 220).

> innumerable political parties, a host of other struggles for minority and women's rights, and, much of the time, newly independent states.[21]
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> 'What I don't understand,' [Anna K] said, 'is why they don't let me know anything. What must I do if someone knocks on the door and says I must clear out at once, he wants the room for his domestic? Where must I go?[22]

In these excerpts, Said and Coetzee pinpoint the idea that a personal awareness of one's position of subjugation must inform any individual and collective form of resistance to oppression. In the first excerpt, Said argues that nationalist ideas should be accompanied with a real awareness of the inevitability of interdependence and hybridity of human cultures and societies in order to disseminate the values of human tolerance and acceptance of difference. In the second excerpt, from Coetzee's novel, *Life and Times of Michael K*, black domestic servant, Anna K, after long years of hard work, feels desperate and victimized as she is abandoned by her employers, the white Buhrmanns, and ignored by the state which fails to protect her. Being unable to either save herself or freely travel inside her own country, Anna K is suddenly transformed from being an independent working woman into a 'vagrant' who 'can get shot, no warning, no question asked'.[23]

Old, disabled, and unemployed, Anna K perceives herself as 'a burden', 'a source of torment',[24] and 'an old woman with an unsightly illness in time of war'.[25] Commenting on the economic philosophy in South Africa under apartheid, Jacqui Alexander explains that:

> Hetero-patriarchal (re)colonization operates through the consolidation of certain

[21] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 258.
[22] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K* (London: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 16.
[23] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 22.
[24] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 3.
[25] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 7.

> psychic economies and racialized hierarchies, and within various material and ideological processes initiated by the state, both inside and beyond the law. These actions can be understood clearly as border policing, in this instance, the unequal incorporation of the [Black South African] into an apartheid political economy on the basis of serviceability.[26]

Under such a discriminatory economic order, Anna K learns to be a servant to the law and the patriarchal authority of her government. She unconditionally trusts the state's institution of Huis Norenius to take care of her disfigured son, Michael K, and appreciates the Buhrmanns' kind treatment of herself, even though she lives in 'a musty room' with 'no electric light and no ventilation'.[27] When the Buhrmanns decide to sell their flat without informing Anna K, she accepts the reality and leaves her room. Yet, she is denied a permit to go back to her rural village of Prince Albert.

Caught in the middle of a chaotic order, Anna sees 'herself withheld from the gutter only by the unreliable goodwill of the Buhrmanns, the dutifulness of a dull son and, in the last resort, [her] savings',[28] that are insufficient even to buy her a return ticket to her village. Thinking about her unstable past life as she moves from one village to another and finally to Cape Town, Anna 'dream[s] of escaping from the careless violence, the packed buses, the food queues, arrogant shopkeepers, thieves and beggars, the curfew, the cold and wet, and returning to a countryside where, if she was going to die, she would at least die under blue skies'.[29] Anna's retirement project of quitting the city for the quieter countryside of her girlhood sounds just and well-deserved but since Anna lives within the South African system, she is required to 'follow its collective

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[26] Jacqui Alexander, 'Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy', *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, edited by M Alexander; Chandra Talpade Mohanty (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 67.
[27] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 7.
[28] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 5.
[29] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 6.

namings or labelling'.[30] Anna is labelled as a secondary citizen.

Nevertheless, Anna develops a hybrid, forgiving and tolerant personality. She regards her economic role and her place in the hierarchical social system of her country as an expression of her 'instinctual filiation and social affiliation'.[31] Anna sympathizes with the Buhrmanns when their flat is ransacked, and condemns the violence and turmoil caused by angry black people. Yet, she never questions the reasons behind the war and violent confrontations in South Africa. Anna's tolerant attitude may follow naturally from the social/cultural realities pertinent to her own time as 'jobs [are] hard to come by'.[32] Yet, it can also be seen as a reflection of her colonized mentality. In such an imperialist cultural sphere, Said claims, the Other everywhere is portrayed as a 'unitary and homogenous' entity that 'requires and beseeches domination […] the vocabulary of imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as 'inferior' or 'subject races', 'subordinate peoples', 'dependency', 'expansion' and 'authority'.[33]

If one principle of work philosophy in racist South Africa is a 'homogenous' acceptance of hierarchy and oppression, then surely another principle is that the colonized act in terms of 'silence and servitude'.[34] Anna K, like the female and male workers in Jakkalsdrif camp, works for one aim, namely to get food. They do not think about their dignity or rights. Anna describes herself as 'a toad under a stone'[35] while worker Robert believes that work at Jakkalsdrif is the only choice he has, for he could otherwise be arrested as a vagrant, one of the 'people wandering around, being a

[30] Deepika Bahri, 'Feminism in/and Post-Colonialism,' *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 200.
[31] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 24.
[32] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 7.
[33] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 8.
[34] Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogie*s, translated by Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 19.
[35] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 6.

nuisance'.[36] The majority of black and coloured South African workers represented in *Life and Times of Michael K* are aware of their exploitation and imposed inferiority, but lack the will to act collectively to change their living conditions. They are shown to be the product of a colonized consciousness that is divested of a controlling subjectivity

Driven by fear and conforming to patriarchal cultural norms, black and coloured characters in the novel, particularly women, are denied the warmth and intimacy of a private life. Anna K is not merely separated from her sons, who escape violence and poverty, but also lacks her privacy as a woman. At hospital in Cape Town, she spends ‘five days lying in a corridor among scores of victims of stabbings and beatings and gunshot wounds, neglected by nurses […] with no bedpan, no dressing-gown'.[37] In her tiny room, Michael and Anna K 'did not like the physical intimacy that the long evenings forced upon the two of them'.[38] Because of her swollen legs, Anna locks herself in her room so that '[she is] not making herself into a spectacle'.[39] At Jakkalsdrif, police raid the camp repeatedly, forcing people to leave behind 'everything they had, even the blankets some [women] wore wrapped over their night-clothes'.[40] The guards of Jakkalsdrif speak of ‘the visits [they] received at night from the women in the camp, [who] are starved for sex',[41] while in Cape Town, Michael sees how the pimp has complete authority over prostitutes, who have no control over their own bodies. 'Female (sexual) subjugation', bell hooks suggests, 'has always been a political stance'[42] in that:

> It mediates racial domination, enabling white men and black men to share a common sensibility about sex roles and the importance of male domination.

[36] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, pp. 79-80.
[37] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 3.
[38] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 8.
[39] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 8.
[40] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 80.
[41] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 86.
[42] bell hooks, *Killing Rage, Ending Racism* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 9.

> Clearly both groups have equated freedom with manhood and manhood with the right of men to have indiscriminate access to the bodies of women. […] It is this merging of sexuality with male domination within patriarchy that informs the construction of masculinity for men of all races and classes.[43]

Surrounded by poverty, inhumanity and enmeshed in merciless policies, black and coloured women in *Life and Times of Michael K* use their vital economic participation not only as a means of avoiding starvation, but also of supporting their men, who 'run away into the mountains to join the rebels'.[44] Through their sufferings, responsibilities and struggles for survival, 'these [self-sacrificing] women', Angela Davis suggests, 'learn to extract from the oppressive circumstances of their lives the strength they need to resist the daily dehumanization of slavery'.[45] At Jakkalsdrif, women gather to sing, dance and tell stories. As the story develops, Coetzee exposes and condemns the governing system for its inexplicable cruelty and inhumanity towards innocent people. Anna wonders: 'Why should the police want us to spend nights hiding on other people's steps and beg in the streets and make a nuisance of ourselves?'.[46] Anna and Michael use a cart to travel to Prince Albert, choosing side roads and hoping that 'people are decent; people would stop and give them lifts'.[47] Said comments on the history of racial oppression in South Africa thus:

> In South Africa, the idea was to put the blacks on reservations or homelands where they could have some of the attributes of sovereignty but none of the real ones. They couldn't control the land. The water was not under their control. The entrances and exits were controlled by the whites.[48]

Through 'fakery and slickness', Said points out, oppressive authority in South

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[43] hooks, *Killing Rage, Ending Racism*, p. 9.
[44] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 108.
[45] Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (London: Vintage Books, 1983), p.11.
[46] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 17.
[47] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 17.
[48] Edward Said, *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward Said*. Editor David Barsamian, (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 40.

Africa locked black and coloured South Africans into camps, promising them work, food and safety 'before it unleashed its own barbarism'.[49] Nonetheless, apartheid 'fakery and slickness' also affected the white community in South Africa. Commenting on economic policy in South Africa, Paul Rich proposes that white racial ideology in South Africa 'had represented a pragmatic form of modernization of an essentially Victorian colonial ethic' which it accommodated 'to the needs of an expanding capitalist economy and adjust[ed] to the continual processes of urbanisation and proletarianisation'.[50] Such processes, according to Kristin Aspirant, not only 'create[d] a cheap, controllable African proletariat for farms, mines, commerce and industry', but also 'hamper[ed] organization of the oppressed white urban working class'.[51] This is borne out in Coetzee's representation of Kenilworth camp, where white nurse Felicity is a humane and hard-working woman who treats all her patients kindly. Felicity sympathizes with Michael; she shaves and feeds him, wraps him in blankets when he is cold and takes him outdoors for fresh air. Yet, she, like Anna K, has no private life. She functions as an unrecognized work slave. The Medical Officer comments on Felicity's life in the following way:

> It occurred to me to wonder whether Felicity thought of herself as living in suspension, alive but not alive, while history hesitated over what course it would take. Felicity, if I am to judge by what has passed between Felicity and me, has never conceived of history as anything but a childhood catechism. […] To her, time is as full as it has ever been, even the time of washing sheets, even the time of sweeping the floor.[52]

These words echo Anna K's life of suffering; both women are the victims of the

[49] Edward Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), p. 27.
[50] Paul Rich, "Tradition and Revolt in South African Fiction: The Novels of Andre Brink, Nadine Gordimer and J. M. Coetzee." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Oct., 1982), p. 54.
[51] Kristin Henrard Aspirant, 'The Internally Displaced in South Africa', *Pjura Falconis*, No. 4 (1996), pp. 491-522, (p. 492).
[52] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 158.

triple colonial oppression of gender, race, and class. What connects the submissive attitudes taken by black and white workers and officials is that both parties participate in maintaining the status quo. They take for granted their historical affiliations and racial filiations. Both want to be part of the system in order to feel safe and to earn a living. Nevertheless, just as Anna K is discriminated against for her race, Felicity is exploited because of her class; both suffer because of their gender. Nevertheless, the South African economic system of hierarchical discrimination and racial segregation does generate new forms of political awareness and economic vision. As Michael K observes:

> My mother worked all her life long. She scrubbed other people's floors, she cooked food for them, and she washed their dishes. […] She went on her knees and cleaned the toilet. But when she was old and sick they forgot her. They put her away out of sight. When she died they threw her in the fire. They gave me an old box of ash and told me, Here is your mother, take her away, she is no good to us.[53]

Contemplating the history and death of his mother, Michael K concludes that 'dead bodies could be as offensive as living bodies'.[54] Since Anna K's lifetime of hard work does not provide her with a dignified death, Michael K finds his own dignified form of work and his own philosophy. After the ransacking of the Buhrmanns' flat, Michael and Anna have a significant conversation about food, a conversation that demonstrates their different economic attitudes:

> [Michael] showed his mother a picture of a gleaming flank of roast pork garnished with cherries and pineapple rings and set off with a bowl of raspberries and cream and a gooseberry tart. 'People don't eat like that any more,' [Anna] said. He disagreed. 'The pigs don't know there is a war on. The pineapples don't know there is a war on. Food keeps growing. Someone has to eat it.'[55]

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[53] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 136.
[54] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 94.
[55] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 16.

While Anna is trapped within the system and accepts its disciplinarian patriarchy, adopting a virtual hybrid position in order to survive, Michael K seeks an alternative form of hybridity inspired by the fertile land of his country. Pushing '[his mother] around the streets in a wheelbarrow begging for food' while surrounded by 'tended patches vegetables: cauliflower, carrots, and potatoes', Michael thinks 'It is God's earth, I am not a thief'.[56] Drawing on his experiences at the institution of Huis Norenius and the camps of Jakkalsdrif and Kenilworth, Michael thinks: 'I have escaped the camps; perhaps, if I lie low, I will escape the charity too'.[57] He succeeds in evading these enslaving economic structures, but as an unemployed black man, he, like his mother, intuits that 'to become an object of charity'[58] would be to relinquish his claim to dignity and autonomy.

Here, like the bodily scars of the Barbarian girl and the cut tongue of Friday in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe*, respectively, Michael K's body is a central repository of anger, guilt and distrust. All these victimized and tortured bodies signify physical rebellion, as the body develops 'an unconscious program of resistance'.[59] Michael announces that 'the truth about me [is] I am a gardener.'[60] As Dominic Head points out, 'a simple (post)revolutionary 'rebirth' cannot be provided by a return to the values of ethnic African communities, because these communities are already tainted by the ideas and effects of the capitalist system'.[61] Yet, Michael establishes his own concept

[56] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 39.
[57] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 181.
[58] Dana Dragunoiu, 'J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* and the Thin Theory of the Good', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (2006), pp. 41-69, (p. 46).
[59] Dragunoiu, 'J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* and the Thin Theory of the Good', p. 70.
[60] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 71.
[61] Dominic Head, *The Construction of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.132.

of economic sovereignty. Returning to Prince Albert to cultivate the land, Michael aims to 'keep gardening alive or at least the idea of gardening'.[62]

As a gardener, Michael K is unusual and elusive. He does not want to own the land he cultivates. Neither does he want to divide the land nor fence it in. Similarly, as a dweller in the mountains and deserts, Michael lives in caves and eats insects. He prefers 'primitive life' to the 'life of cages or camps'.[63] Said indicates that under oppressive and apartheid systems, isolation and management of space is a political/economic strategy of subjugation and control. Since 'in too small a space, [one] cannot see clearly, [one] cannot think clearly, [one] cannot have regulation or attention of the proper sort', Said argues, camps and institutions are intentionally meant to instill feelings of 'unsociability, of lonely insularity, of diminished awareness that are rectified in larger and better administered spaces'.[64] Michael's decision to live in unfenced, un-owned free space is an attempt not only to integrate with his own land and rediscover his identity, rather than being labelled, but to open up mental spaces to think clearly and freely as well. Michael reckons that 'what I discovered out in the country, [is that] there is time enough for everything'.[65]

In his book, *J.M. Coetzee*, Dominic Head states that *Life and Times of Michael K* is 'a highly political novel' in the sense that it 'implies an emerging political ethic'.[66] 'Because enough men had gone off to war saying the time for gardening was when the war was over', Michael thinks, 'there must be men to stay behind and keep gardening alive, or at least the idea of gardening; because once that cord was broken, the earth

[62] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 124.
[63] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 166.
[64] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.105.
[65] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 183.
[66] Dominic Head, *J. M. Coetzee (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.130.

would grow hard and forget her children'.[67] Michael realizes that the future of South Africa requires that each member of society actively accomplishes his historical responsibility. Since he has seen his mother, Anna K, and people at the camps subjugate and enslave themselves for food, he realizes that economic sovereignty is a precondition to political freedom.

Homi Bhabha regards the novels of Coetzee as 'documents of a society divided by the effects of apartheid that enjoin the international intellectual community to meditate on the unequal, asymmetrical worlds that exist elsewhere'.[68] As such, Bhabha continues, these novels suggest that 'the representation of difference is not the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition'. Rather, Coetzee 'seeks to authorize the complex, on-going negotiation of cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation'.[69] Bhabha's view is borne out in *Life and Times of Michael K,* in which, inspired by the life experiences of his forgiving mother, Michael builds upon her forgiving nature by initiating his own rituals of economic self-possession. He commemorates his mother within his rituals by cultivating her ashes and within his consciousness by incorporating her memory and struggle as part and parcel of his own resistance to discrimination through gardening. Michael thinks:

> My mother has now, after her season in the earth, been washed clean, blown about, and drawn up into the leaves of grass. […] I am [her] child, such a child from such a line of children, that none of us can leave, but have to come back to die here with our heads upon our mothers' laps, I upon hers, she upon her mother's, and so back and back, generation upon generation.'[70]

In this way, Michael 'projects a contemporary fable of a woman's history that is

[67] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p.133.
[68] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 5.
[69] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.
[70] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 124.

at the same time the narrative of an affective, historic memory of an emergent public sphere of men and women alike'.[71] Through his farm in Price Albert, Michael not only revives Ann K's lost memory of freedom as a child, but also recognizes her forgotten life as a productive domestic servant.

Economic Female Terrain: Between Oppression and Liberation in In Search of Walid Masoud

> Th[e] whole notion of a hybrid text, the issues of exile and immigration, crossing of boundaries—interest me for obvious existential and political reasons, but also because it strikes me as one of the major contributions of late-twentieth-century culture. There are certain figures who are most important to me, renegade figures, […] who transform marginality into a kind of passionate attachment to other peoples […] Those are the phenomena that deeply interest me, the people who were able to go from one side to the other, and then come back.[72]

> [Najma] places all her hope on Elias and Bassam, sending Bassam back to school and finding Elias a job in some government office. But just before the war ended, late in 1944 if memory serves, the office was blown up by Jewish terrorists, and Elias and several other people were killed. He was twenty years old. […] Suddenly after the war ended in Italy, Walid came to Jerusalem to find his parents sunk in abject poverty and grief.[73]

In the above two excerpts, Edward Said and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra tackle issues of diaspora and hybridity. In the first excerpt, Said describes the 'hybrid text' as a method of contrapuntal exploration of intercultural connections and the overlapping of socio-economic interests worldwide. Moreover, he suggests, a hybrid text can establish a bridge between the marginalized and the centre. In the second excerpt, from Jabra's novel, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, the life of Palestinian Najma Humsiyya, like that of Anna K in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*, is a life full of anxiety, stress and

[71] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 5.
[72] Edward Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Conversations with Edward Said*, editor Gauri Viswanathan (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 148.
[73] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, trans. Roger Allen & Adnan Haydar (London: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 78-79.

struggle for survival. Now, an old woman, Najma 'endures all hardships with a terrifying pride'.[74] As her husband, Masoud, is either absent or ill, Najma takes upon herself the role of the man of the house and supports the family financially and psychologically.

In what follows, I discuss Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* as an example of what Said calls the hybrid text. I argue that the novel explores diverse cultural and economic spaces, comparing different historical periods and political formations with the aim of tracing the changing perspectives of Palestinian and Arab female characters in relation to their economic participation and sexual agency. As a hybrid text, *In Search of Walid Masoud* offers women characters in the novel a way of finding a new beginning, of creating a completely new discourse, or a new path.

Losing her son, Elias, and grandson, Marwan, in the fight against Israeli occupation, Najma Humsiyya exemplifies unbending Palestinian resistance. However, like South African Anna K in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*, Najma is one of thousands of displaced rural Palestinians who are forced to leave their farms and houses in the Palestinian countryside to join the urban working class in Jerusalem and other big cities. Najma 'consents to the marriage to Masoud with her mother's blessing, but in the face of her brother's objections'.[75] In defying her brother's wishes, Najma not only declares her revolution against her legal guardian, but also is denied his financial or social support, particularly after her husband is imprisoned while working in Turkey. Moving to Jerusalem, Najma buys 'an old Singer sewing machine and work[s] as a seamstress in her house, raising [her family] with love and hard work'.[76] She agrees to

[74] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 79.
[75] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 72.
[76] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 75.

send Walid to Italy to study theology. For her time, Najma is an open-minded woman who not only recognizes the educational benefits of travelling to Europe, but also sacrifices her comfort for the sake of her children. She insists that her sons are educated while she works to support them.

Even when her husband returns from Turkey, Najma's responsibilities are not relieved. As Masoud is paralyzed with grief over the murder of his son, Elias, Najma 'stay[s] by [her husband's] side, catering to his needs',[77] and continues to take care of the family economically. When Masoud dies, Najma's sons, Walid, Farhan and Bassam 'are dispersed in different countries, seeking out a piece of bread, in the cities and deserts of this world' and 'none of them came to see their father buried'.[78] Like Anna K, Najma spends her last days lonely and in grief. She lives in 'a small wooden house and sleeps on a mattress on the floor in the dim light of an oil lamp, wrapped in a grey refugee's blanket'.[79] Like in the camp of Jakkalsdrif, Palestinian refugees and workers in Bethlehem live 'on the outskirts or in orchards, on barren soil, under torn tents' and endure 'the insults, curses and threats from officials and policemen' while children wait for 'handfuls of flour and lentils from the UN relief agency'.[80] Salim Tamari summarizes the socio-economic effects of the Israeli policy of displacement of rural Palestinians in the following way:

> One major consequence of the 1948 war was that a whole segment of the rural highlands of Central Palestine (which came to be known as the West Bank) became isolated from its cultivable land, coastal markets and metropolitan centres. Its population became land-locked. Those areas of Palestine that were

[77] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 81.
[78] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 67.
[79] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 67.
[80] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 67.

> not incorporated into the state of Israel were incorporated into new political formations: Jordan and Egypt.[81]

Like racist South Africa, in colonized Palestine, 'the differentiation of national space [is set] according to the territorial division of labour'.[82] Since Israelis, like Afrikaners, are the powerful and dominant group, they allocated the oppressed Palestinian population to 'small and divided areas […] the equivalent of homelands in South Africa', in the sense that Palestinians 'couldn't control the land or the water [and] the entrances and exits are controlled by the Israelis'.[83] Nonetheless, Najma thinks 'those camps, that new, horrible social order, are becoming an integrated society that none could even imagine'.[84] Najma 'keeps her brilliant smile, in spite of all the hardships she endures' while refugee women 'gather together, singing songs about their experiences'.[85] As mothers and wives, Najma and other Palestinian women in *In Search of Walid Masoud* face their challenges with courage and wisdom. They support their families and stand behind their men's fight for liberation. A report on the historical development of the role of Palestinian women living in occupied territories in resistance to policies of Israeli occupation and injustice asserts that women's 'simple daily life—working, going to school, caring for one's family—become acts of nonviolent resistance'.[86] In addition, Palestinian women have significant public tasks that:

> Include the creation of popular social organizations, the provision of material support for the revolution, nursing, providing support for the families of

[81] Salim Tamari, 'The Transformation of Palestinian Society: Fragmentation and Occupation', *Palestinian Society: A Survey of Living Conditions* (Oslo: FAFO, 1993), p. 22.
[82] William Robinson, 'Remapping Development in Light of Globalization: From a Territorial to a Social Cartography', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 6(2002), pp 1047–1071, (p. 1048).
[83] Edward Said, 'Worldly Humanism versus the Empire-Builders', *Counterpunch* (August 2003), pp. 1-3, (p. 2). Available at http://www.counterpunch.org/2003/08/05/orientalism/
[84] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 67.
[85] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 67.
[86] Abdul Jawad Saleh, 'Palestinian Nonviolent Resistance to Occupation since 1967', *Middle East Task Force* (Fall 2005), pp. 1-12, (p. 2).

> martyrs, and preserving and developing the rich Palestinian folkloric heritage. Young girls are trained in the use of arms and combat techniques. The first training camp for this purpose was established in 1968, for girls aged 6-14. […] The first military operation involving Palestinian women took place on August 6, 1970 near the Jordanian-Israeli border. In a three-hour battle two women of the five involved were wounded.[87]

After the killing of her son, Elias, Najma does not prevent her other son, Walid, from joining the Palestinian fighters. On the contrary, she encourages him to take revenge on 'the Jewish terrorists [who] killed [his] brother'.[88] When the family 'los[e] track of Walid's whereabouts', Najma shows patience. In opposition to the quiet, self-centered life of Anna K, Najma is described by her son, Walid, as a 'fighter' and a source of 'pride for the whole family'.[89] Since his early childhood, Walid sees his mother and father supporting Palestinian fighters and he used to chant with them 'we're the fighters, with no fear'.[90] Like many Palestinian women, Najma shows deep understanding of and engagement with the Palestinian cause, which frames her everyday resistance. She sacrifices one of her sons and is ready to sacrifice the life of another to defend their right to the Palestinian land. Nonetheless, Najma, like Anna K, is an ordinary woman who aspires to peace and security for her family and country. She accepts her sons' emigration and her consequent isolation in order to protect them. Yet, she also supports Walid's dangerous political activity. Said praises the amazing effort of Palestinian women but remarks that:

> Unless we are able to perceive at the interior of our life the statements women make – concrete, watchful, compassionate, immensely poignant, strangely invulnerable – we will never fully understand our experience of dispossession. […] I can see the women everywhere in Palestinian life, and I see how they exist between the syrupy sentimentalism of roles we ascribe to them (mothers,

[87] Nur Masalha, *The Struggle of Palestinian Women* (Beirut: Palestine National Assembly, 1975), p. 13.
[88] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 80.
[89] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p.136.
[90] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 136.

> virgins, martyrs) and the annoyance, even dislike, that their unassimilated strength provokes in our warily politicized, automatic manhood.[91]

As a woman, Najma, like Anna K, is marginalized, has no privacy and her rights are denied. Her husband, Masoud, wastes his money and has affairs with other women, but Najma neither asks for a divorce nor confronts her husband. Since Arab culture 'does not allow for nuances', an Arab woman is expected to be an 'obedient' and 'supporting mother, sister and wife'.[92] In this respect, Najma is no exception. She is still a wife and a mother and not a fully-recognized human being with the same rights as men. For Palestinian women, then, divorce is regarded as 'a social stigma' and associated with a threat of 'losing her children'.[93] Najma has to swallow her pride and submit to her husband's desires. Strangely enough, the same humiliating attitude is adopted by a very different female character in the novel, Cambridge graduate, Maryam al-Safar. Maryam is an Iraqi intellectual who studies English literature at Cambridge University but who is forced to marry her husband, Hisham, against her will. Hisham abuses his wife, beats her, betrays her and refuses to divorce her. As mentioned above, for the Arab woman, Maryam, divorce is a predicament. To avenge herself on her husband, Maryam betrays him, 'displaying my beauty even more, attracting still more men to me!'[94]

Living in a patriarchal society, female characters in *In Search of Walid Masoud* are obliged to critically rethink their personal choices and their prescribed social roles in order to change their inferior positions. Yet, many women in the novel are still psychologically and culturally tied to a patriarchal and sexist heritage of discrimination.

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[91] Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, p. 77.
[92] Magida Salman, *The Arab Woman, Women in the Middle East* (London: Zed Books, 1987), pp.6-11, (p. 10).
[93] Sara Pederson Randall, *Growing Fast the Palestinian Population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, (Oslo: Fafo, 2001), p. 79.
[94] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p.153.

Najma, for example, 'is constantly worried Walid might marry a woman from outside the family' and persuades him to 'marry his relative Rima'.[95] In *Beyond Identity Politics: Feminism, Power and Politics*, Maya Lloyd argues that 'gendered power relations are specifically organized according to the interplay among the traditional discourses which have controlled women's bodies'.[96] The female characters in Jabra's novel, such as Najma, Rima and Maryam, willingly turn into 'toys' in the hands of men. Despite being a liberal intellectual, Walid is also in bondage to his cultural traditions and customs, even those which discriminate against women. He does not help his friend Maryam to overcome her depression. Rather, he abuses her sexually. When married to Rima, Walid assigns her to 'the same social-sexual roles as reproducer, nurturer, or maid'.[97] For him, Rima is 'Umm Marwan'[98] or the mother of his son, Marwan. Locking herself in traditional female roles of a wife and a mother, Rima breaks down. She 'suddenly withdrew into herself and closed up like a cocoon, shutting herself off from everyone, even her son, Marwan, whom she had adored'.[99]

In Search of Walid Masoud, therefore, displays a hybrid world of cultural, economic and political formations. The majority of Jabra's characters, unlike characters in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*, come from or obtain elevated social positions. They are artists, engineers, writers and doctors who openly discuss and criticize the political situation but who are not able to act. Although female characters in the novel live in a society devoid of the ability to orient itself towards a new and fairer value

[95] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 82.
[96] Maya Lloyd, *Beyond Identity Politics: Feminism, Power and Politics* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 58.
[97] M. Ling, 'Said's Exile: Strategic Insights for Postcolonial Feminists', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* (2007), pp. 36-135, (p. 134).
[98] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 29.
[99] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 238.

system, their diverse economic, educational, cultural and social encounters raise their awareness of their denied rights and empower them to make 'patriarchal bargains'[100] like their men. Women achieve economic agency, but are denied access to power. Since she is providing economically for herself and her family, Najma, like Anna K in *Life and Times of Michael K*, challenges what Meyda Yegenoglu considers the predominant idea in Arabic literature of 'the mother, as symbolizing the motherland'.[101] As the breadwinner of the family, Najma is not simply an idealised and passive symbol of the motherland.

In addition to this, Jabra is concerned to illustrate the differences between generations in the Palestinian and Arab world. While Rima falls victim to sexist cultural traditions, Maryam fights back. Maryam searches for a job and insists on a divorce, 'starting a new chapter in her life'.[102] Another young female character, the poet Wisal Raouf, brought up in a conservative society, is initially reserved in her writings but, with the help of Walid Masoud and as a result of her strong personality and free artistic drive, she develops the nerve to approach taboo issues such as sex and to explore men's world. Defying idealized and stereotypical images, the Arab women represented in *In Search of Walid Masoud* expose 'the double colonization of women who live in colonized and patriarchal societies'.[103]

This fact is reflected in Walid's invention of the female figure, Shahd, who replaces his mother/lover as an imaginary connection to the lost land of Palestine. Walid says:

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[100] Suha Sabbagh, *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint* (Massachusetts: Interlink Books, 1996), p. 6.
[101] Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 125.
[102] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 146.
[103] Cecilia Ward, 'Postcolonial Feminism', *Resistance Studies* (2010), pp. 7-14, (p. 7).

> Shahd! I eat you I lick at you like the honey in your name you've been my ideal woman for years don't you know or are you deliberately running away from me you've trapped me. […] Shahd passes to snatch away my security and my peace of mind and threatens not to give them back to me until I pay her a thousand words which she'll put inside her blouse between her breasts I am rich with words for my fortune.[104]

In sexualizing and sensualizing his goddess of the land, Shahd, Walid reveals his patriarchal and chauvinistic attitudes. Amal Amireh confirms Yegenoglu's opinion that 'in metaphorizing the land as woman, the national story becomes the story of the possession of the land/woman by a man'.[105] Jabra accurately reflects this in his characterization of men but there is in the novel both an implicit and an explicit critique of such masculinist attitudes.

Since the bond with the motherland can be manifested through the possession of the female body, sex in *In Search of Walid Masoud*, as in *Life and Times of Michael K*, is a direct expression of manhood and political domination, rather than real passion or love. When Walid is caught by the Israeli police, they humiliate him by 'grabbing hold of his testicles and […] burning the skin of his scrotum with a thick cigar, then stub[…] it out slowly on his penis'.[106] To recover the humiliated and damaged manhood of the Palestinian man, Walid, unlike Michael K in *Life and Times of Michael K*, possesses women. Dr. Tariq Raouf, a close friend of Walid, refers to his strong sexual drive as 'an illusion of power, [which is linked] to an illusion of homeland, of belonging'.[107]

Nonetheless, Walid's relations with women, particularly his mother, help him to discover and deal with his contradictions. When he is a young student, Najma wants

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[104] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p.15.
[105] Amal Amireh, "Introduction", *Going Global: the Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-13, (p. 8).
[106] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, pp. 148-9.
[107] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 129.

Walid to learn to serve in the church and to be a monk to spread the values of 'peace and justice'.[108] Yet, as Walid travels to Italy, he 'discovers that the thing they'd sent him to study had been turned into a means of maintaining the world as it is, not changing it' and it is 'economic development [that] will free Palestinians from poverty, dependency, underdevelopment [and] various pathologies of power and corruption'.[109] He therefore turns from theology to study banking and finance. Walid, like Michael, remembers his mother's sufferings and economic struggle for survival as she was forced to leave behind their 'vegetable patches and olive, pomegranate, or almond trees' in the countryside. However, Walid, unlike Michael, adopts an open form of hybridity. He is described as 'a social being' with 'a lot of acquaintances and friends' and 'feels the need to move, to go out and meet people, and confront things'.[110]

Like his mother, Najma, and after a life of torture and abuse, Walid chooses anti-violent resistance, utilizing his writing talent and his financial knowledge. Michael K's agricultural plan for economic self-sufficiency is replaced by Walid Masoud's urban plan for the development of banking, finance and technology in Palestine and the Arab world. Edward Said supports what Jabra appears to be suggesting here: that the economic suffocation of Palestinians needs to be fought against. Said indicates that Palestinians need 'an organized campaign' in order to 'mobilize and integrate the many resources in Palestine and in the Arab world', utilizing 'the large Palestinian diaspora community', and this suggestion seems to be acted upon by Walid in Jabra's novel.[111]

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[108] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 73.
[109] Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.15. No.2 (Winter, 1989), pp. 205-225, (p. 207).
[110] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 140.
[111] Edward Said, *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward Said*., editor David Barsamian, (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 75.

While banking provides him with financial security, through writing Walid seeks to express 'the weeping and the sound of sticks and plastic hoses, spreading from the Arab Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean' and 'to penetrate into the inner sanctum of another human being' but Walid, like Michael K, 'finds himself clashing with the cruelty of others. He couldn't understand such people. Or they him'.[112] Like Coetzee, Jabra represents the changes in the attitudes of Walid and Najma towards nonviolence and peaceful calls for justice in order to condemn unjustifiable Israeli policies against Palestinian civilians. Both Najma and Walid, like Anna K, depend on their 'intuition, dreams, and a yearning for a humanitarian world'.[113] They survive uprootedness and displacement, but still 'think of the hills and valleys and the violet-hued mountains that surged behind them'.[114]

In his autobiography, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, Edward Said warns that for younger Palestinian generations, 'being refugees, all of them, everything around them seems expendable, impermanent, unstable, especially where—as in Lebanon—Palestinian communities have been disastrously depleted or destroyed, where much of their life is undocumented, where they themselves are uncounted'.[115] Consequently, 'legal armed resistance' ensues, with 'the disastrous suicide bombings', showing Palestinians, like South African rebels, as 'terrorists'.[116] Marwan Walid, like rebels in *Life and Times of Michael K*, chooses armed struggle. He refuses to leave Palestine and prefers hard camp life to a luxurious and easy life in Iraq: 'My life's here in the camp.

[112] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 137.
[113] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 178.
[114] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 131.
[115] Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, pp. 21-23.
[116] Edward Said, 'Israel, Iraq and the United States', *Counterpunch* (2002), pp. 19-21, (p. 20).

Here are the cells of the revolution'.[117] Like Michael K, Marwan does not care about enjoying a civilized and safe life. Rather, he is described as 'unsmiling, rejecting everything except his new comrades in this tended city, which take him back to the forgotten essence of life'.[118]

Both Walid and Marwan confess that 'women are better able to resist than men'[119] and that they, like Michael K and his mother in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*, are 'inspired by Najma',[120] who is stubborn in face of oppression, hardships and death, while men give up their historical and familial responsibilities. Walid learns to be open and to integrate with the Other. Marwan, like Michael, integrates with his land. Both establish their own economic and mental spaces, and both defy the systems they inhabit by integrating and uniting with their land.

Myth as a Means of Questioning Historical/Cultural Identity

This section focuses on the stylistic devices of imagery and myth in *Life and Times of Michael K* and *In Search of Walid Masoud*, with the aim of investigating the role of these devices in bringing about an alternative way of apprehending cultural identity and nationalist affiliations in the two novels. It argues that the female characters in the two novels grapple with the changing forms of cultural identity, raising their awareness that the national narrative of their countries must be based upon multicultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic diversity rather than upon a denial or effacement of the Other. In this way, I suggest that female characters in the novels validate a reality of economic diversity and interdependence that challenges imagined notions of ethnic, religious or

[117] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 212.
[118] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 211.
[119] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 125.
[120] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 211.

cultural seclusion or hierarchy.

Rewriting the Great Trek Myth in Life and Times of Michael K

> [Michael] slept in the alley with his head in a cardboard box. He had a dream: his mother came visiting him in Huis Norenius, bringing a parcel of food. 'The cart is too slow;' she said in the dream- ' Prince Albert is coming to fetch me'. The parcel was curiously light.[121]
>
> It's not that [Michael] wants to die. He just doesn't like the food here. Profoundly does not like it. He won't even take baby food. Maybe he only eats the bread of freedom.[122]

In the above two quotations from *Life and Times of Michael K*, Coetzee uses the idea of food as a symbol of economic survival at the center of political and ideological conflict in the novel. In the first quotation, Michael dreams of his mother visiting him in the institution of Huis Norenius and bringing him food; food that she works hard to get. In the second quotation, the Medical Officer at Kenilworth camp, after failing to force Michael K to eat, concludes that he is a free man who does not accept charity and subjugation. At Huis Norenius and Jakkalsdrif, Michael K learns that to accept food is to be a 'body-servant'.[123] According to Susan Gallagher, 'Michael's own understanding of himself as a person rather than a social role' is demonstrated through his 'silence' and 'refusal to be fed' which 'reveal his refusal to capitulate to society's labels'.[124]

Coetzee certainly appropriates and employs Afrikaner myths as an expression of the fear of a never-ending spiral of history repeating itself. He portrays the Afrikaners as capable of running the concentration camps that they themselves once had to suffer within. The Afrikaners go from being the oppressed to the oppressors, by inventing and

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[121] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 138.
[122] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 147.
[123] Coetzee, Life and Times of Michael K, p. 66.
[124] Susan Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 147.

enforcing the apartheid system. With the maintenance of the same discriminatory cultural myths, black people, Coetzee foresees, are very likely to fight back with the same weapons and tactics as the Afrikaners had used themselves as a dominating group.

However, Coetzee is not just recasting the Afrikaner myths to black South African experiences in order to highlight the similarity between the two groups. Rather, Coetzee employs those cultural myths as a means of establishing alternative national and cultural affiliations and identities, emphasizing human diversity and interdependence rather than assimilation and fixity. Deniz Kandiyoti observes that 'nationness is equated with gender, parentage, skin-colour – all those things that are not chosen and which, by virtue of their inevitability, elicit selfless attachment and sacrifice [and] denote something to which one is 'naturally' tied'.[125] Anna K and her son Michael K challenge this notion of nationness. Although Anna and Michael show deep ties to the land of South Africa, they neither romanticize it nor imagine themselves as heroic. The homelessness, poverty, and sufferings of Anna K and her son are the experiences of hundreds of thousands of black people. The dominant discourse of Afrikaner history, though, ignores this common narrative of black experience and instead focuses on the past suffering of the Afrikaners themselves under British colonialism. Particularly prominent in the latter discourse is the myth of the Great Trek, which is used to memorialize both their pain and their resilience.

Through her memory of her past life in Prince Albert, and her insistence upon making her epic journey of return despite pain and hardships, Anna K challenges the

[125] Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation', *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 382.

Afrikaner myth of the 'Great Trek'.[126] Coetzee calls up the myth of the Great Trek, which features an old Afrikaner woman's mysterious inner pain, her longing to escape to an idyllic farm, and the help of her faithful son,[127] when Michael K says that 'I had to take my mother into the country, for her health',[128] and also keeps telling 'the story of his mother' to commemorate her 'pain'.[129] Yet, Coetzee's version has Anna K dying alone before she reaches the farm. She experiences no salvation, no relief and no reward for her sufferings, yet she is not resentful. Quite the opposite, she, like the majority of women in Jakkalsdrif camp, is resilient to erasure. While the Afrikaner myth 'glorifies isolation and separation',[130] the South African one, as expressed by Anna, endorses integrative resistance. Anna is placed at the margins of power and authority, but she compromises with the realities of her historical situation. She recognizes that human beings must live within the system and with others in order to survive. It is, as Said suggests, 'a new awareness and performance against the fetishization and relentless celebration of 'difference' and 'otherness".[131] Bhabha agrees with Said that 'cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, is produced performatively'. Bhabha explains further that:

> The social articulation of difference, from the [oppressed] perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The 'right' to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed […] In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition.[132]

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[126] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context*, p. 156.
[127] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context*, p. 156.
[128] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 174.
[129] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 174.
[130] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context*, p. 158.
[131] Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.15. No.2 (Winter, 1989), pp. 213-240, (p. 214).
[132] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 23.

Through Anna K's economic assimilation and cultural openness to the Other, Coetzee reveals the tension between the promised integration processes and the realities of constitutional rights in apartheid South Africa. While the tragic life and death of Anna K underestimate the value of her consensual engagement and condemns the inexplicable cruelty of the system, they also give Michael K's form of engagement credibility. Yet, both forms imply a potential political awareness of accepting the Other and of peaceful coexistence. As forgiving, tolerant and hard-working, Anna K is also a figure of resilience to erasure and hopelessness. Until the last moment of her life, she dreams of returning to Prince Albert where she will take care of the house and Michael will work. Yet, as Michael 'thinks of the silence in which [his mother] lived, the silence of time before the beginning',[133] he searches for a way to both commemorate his mother and to use his own voice. While Samuel Durrant regards Michael's cultivation of the ashes of his mother as 'a protest against the state's refusal to remember a whole class of people whom it locked out of sight in camps',[134] it also marks Michael's commitment to the cause of the future of freedom in South Africa. Michael K says:

> He found a new cave and cut bushes for the floor. He thought: Now surely I have come as far as a man can come; surely no one will be mad enough to cross these plains, climb these mountains, search these rocks to find me; surely now that in all the world only I know where I am, I can think of myself as lost.[135]

Living freely in the mountains, Michael 'hears his own voice and can make any sound [he] likes'.[136] Unlike Anna K, Michael integrates with the land and nature, not with the system. His isolation teaches him to be a human being. Michael thinks: 'I am

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[133] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 97.
[134] Samuel Durrant, 'Bearing Witness to Apartheid: J M Coetzee's Inconsolable Works of Mourning,' *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (Autumn, 1992), p. 423-458, (p. 449).
[135] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 67.
[136] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 56.

becoming a different kind of man, if there are two kinds of man'.[137] He is no longer preoccupied with his physical needs but questions the value of his life, his freedom and his authority as a human being. In *Countries of the Mind: the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee*, Dick Penner proposes that 'Michael K's distinct individuality is closely connected to his role as outsider'.[138] I agree with Penner. As an outsider, Michael evaluates the reality and imagines an alternative future. As an insider, Anna K, on the other hand, protects the right of the blacks to survive and take part in building the nation, but cannot escape the system's hierarchal processes of social labelling.

Through Michael, then, Coetzee introduces the notion of a new black economic/political alternative based on direct reciprocity with the land and nature, with no mediator or symbol. For Michael, Anna K is a human being, a mother and domestic servant, but not a symbol or an ideal. When Michael talks about his mother, he tells stories about her work, hard life and cruel death but never idealizes her. Even after her death, Michael finds that 'he did not miss [his mother], except insofar as he had missed her all his life'.[139] Such an emotional detachment is reflected on the personal and national levels. Brought up in the institution of Huis Norenius, Michael does not have a real sense of a family or a community or a nation. He is isolated from the outside world.

In discovering the outside world for the first time, Michael is instinctual. He follows his mother out of 'duty', while his urge for 'freedom' [resists] to be reclaimed by stealth here and there from involuntary labour'.[140] Living within the process of colonization, the crux of which is the gradual constitution of the master/slave dialectic,

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[137] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 68.
[138] Dick Penner, *Countries of Mind: The Fiction of J. M. Coetzee* (London: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 92.
[139] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 33.
[140] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 116.

that squeezes the natives to the margins of humanity, Michael K uses the same mechanism of apartheid differentiation and exclusion in order to challenge apartheid. Michael's exploration of the empty landscape not only asserts his 'identification with the [uncaptured] interior of the land' but also every cultivated patch of land stands 'as a rival topography'.[141]

As Michael inhabits various caves and farms, he is not looking for repossession of the land but of spreading a request for freedom and justice. Michael thinks: 'my mistake was to plant all my seeds together in one patch. I should have planted them one at a time spread out over miles of veld'.[142] The idea of gardening and the reciprocal relationship with nature refute any form of patriarchal or hierarchal command. Michael's economic affinity with the land of South Africa, like Anna K's affiliative engagement with the institutionally supported discourses of the state, both affirm the survival of the human beyond the oppressive history and elaborates the possibility of hybrid voices and alternatives, other than violence and isolation.

In Search of Walid Masoud: Challenging Orientalist Myths of Arab Women

> The Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe. Virtually no European writer who wrote on or travelled to the Orient in the period after 1800 exempted himself or herself from this quest: Flaubert, Nerval, 'Dirty Dick' Burton, and Lane are only the most notable. In the twentieth century one thinks of Gide, Conrad, Maugham, and dozens of others. What they looked for often—correctly, I think—was a different type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine and less guilt-ridden; but even that quest, if repeated by enough people, could (and did) become as regulated and uniform as learning itself.[143]

In the above quotation, Edward Said explains how Western representations of

[141] Kai Norris Easton, 'Text and Hinterland: J. M. Coetzee and the South African Novel', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4. (December, 1995), pp. 585-599, (p. 595).
[142] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 183.
[143] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 191.

the female Other in general and of Oriental woman in particular stereotype her as exotic, oversexed and seductive. For Said, Western literature emphasizes 'the association between the Orient and the freedom of licentious sex', with Oriental women 'packed inside Oriental clichés: harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils, dancing girls and boys, sherbets, and ointments'.[144] Thus, Oriental females 'are only capable of sexual incitement'[145] and consequently, 'they are always shown in large numbers. No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences'.[146] In the following analysis, I argue that Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* challenges Western stereotypical images and myths about Oriental women as homogenous, passive objects of sexual subjugation. The novel portrays a variety of individual women who not only actively and boldly engage with the socio-economic and political causes of their societies, but also work to reform their sexual roles in society and culture.

Said goes on to argue that within the struggle for independence, native cultures overcome Western myths and stereotypical representations of the Other by instituting a new 'search for authenticity, for a more congenial national origin than that provided by colonial history, for a new pantheon of heroes, myths, and religions'.[147] In *Myth and Narrative in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,* Deborah West echoes Said by asserting that 'national narratives or myths are essential in providing the continuity that people need for collective action'.[148] Such a national narrative or myth is evident in the characterization of Najma Humsiyya in *In Search of Walid Masoud*. Najma regenerates

[144] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 191.
[145] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 314.
[146] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 287.
[147] Edward Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization', *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature,* editor. Terry Eagleton (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1990), pp. 69-94, (p. 79).
[148] Deborah West, *Myth and Narrative in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Cambridge: World Peace Foundation, 2003), p. 2.

the Palestinian myth of survival and struggle for sovereignty not only by giving birth to a new generation of Palestinians, but also by signalling the urgent need for Palestinian women to highlight their significant role in building Arab-Palestinian history and to get equal access to the public sphere.

Living within an oppressive order, Najma both mourns the death of her son, Elias, and celebrates the return of her son, Walid, from Italy at the same time. Even while she is grieving, Najma dissipates her sorrows with happiness. As she 'gives pumpkin seeds and candy to kids' and lets 'women ululate'[149] around her, Najma empowers her family and community with hope and resilience in the face of death. Najma is lonely and poor, her husband is paralyzed and her sons leave Palestine, but she is an honorable woman, as far as possible from the Orientalist stereotype. For years, Najma's sexual rights are ignored, but she neither betrays her husband nor submits to the seductions of prostitution, which arise mainly from 'socio-economic factors, such as increasing economic insecurity and higher levels of unemployment and poverty'.[150]

Despite the fact that official documents and reports on prostitution in the occupied Palestinian territories are rare, a recent report entitled, 'Trafficking and Forced Prostitution of Palestinian Women and Girls' reveals that 'trafficking and prostitution operate informally on a small-scale basis'.[151] According to the report, Palestinian prostitution in the 1960s and 1970s was mainly run in 'discreet apartments, brothels in hotels, rented houses, private apartments and even house cleaning companies' and arose mainly within 'an oppressive geopolitical context' through which 'Israel has put into

[149] Jabra, *In search of Walid Masoud*, p. 80.
[150] 'Trafficking and Forced Prostitution of Palestinian Women and Girls: Forms of Modern Day Slavery', *Sawa All the Women Together Today and Tomorrow* (Jerusalem: 2008), p. 10.
[151] 'Trafficking and Forced Prostitution of Palestinian Women and Girls: Forms of Modern Day Slavery', *Sawa All the Women Together Today and Tomorrow* (Jerusalem: 2008), p. 10.

practice a policy of movement restrictions within, as well as in and out of the occupied Palestinian territories'.[152] Thus, some Palestinian women, with their men imprisoned, kidnapped, or in exile, are forced to sell their bodies to survive with their families. Unlike Najma, Regina in Jabra's novel is another Palestinian woman who, being a widow without children, sells her body to men, including Najma's husband, Masoud, in order to survive. She lures men 'with her breasts jutting out of the confines of her blouse and her skirt almost splitting at the seams around her large hip'.[153] Although such a character could be regarded as conforming to Orientalist stereotype, in fact Jabra's depiction of Regina emphasizes her individuality and the dire economic pressures that lead to her sexual subjection.

Unlike Regina, Najma's moral survival in face of Israeli abuse can be taken as a process of writing the Palestinian myth of resistance. In commenting on the dominant attitude of both the international media and the Israeli authorities towards the Palestinian cause, Said condemns 'their double standards, silence and discretion' as they employ 'the Holocaust to protect [them] with the World's compassion' while showing 'Palestinians as 'other', and opposite, a flaw in the geometry of resettlement and exodus'.[154] The emergence of Najma as an independent breadwinner in the novel, then, does not merely oust the male from his position as the guardian and controller of women, reflecting the positive development of the social position of Palestinian women, but also symbolizes the continual suffering of the Palestinians as equally anti-humanist and worthy of condemnation as the Holocaust.

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[152] 'Trafficking and Forced Prostitution of Palestinian Women and Girls: Forms of Modern Day Slavery', pp. 9-10.
[153] Jabra, *In search of Walid Masoud*, p. 56.
[154] Said, *After the Last Sky*: *Palestinian lives*, p. 17.

In *Women in the Holocaust,* D. Ofer and L. Weitzman demonstrate how Jewish women suffered 'hunger, shame and humiliation while standing naked, being shaved, having to endure body searches, and being terrorized by the stories about rape and prostitution'.[155] However, Ofer and Weitzman outline how Jewish women showed an extraordinary care for one another, furthering 'the importance of social bonding, and reliance on prewar homemaking skills as coping strategies'.[156] Despite the differences between the Jewish and the Palestinian experiences of oppression, the novel concludes that there is no way to justify the infliction of suffering on other human beings. The Palestinian experience of apartheid, like the Holocaust, has involved not just death and personal injury, but humiliation and a denial of personal freedom and opportunity as well**.** Palestinian women, like Jewish women during the Nazi period, have been physically and emotionally injured. They have suffered sexual abuse, maltreatment, cruelty and loss of family members. The fact that persecution, the demolition of whole villages and cities and the displacement of their inhabitants, and collective murder in occupied Palestine are systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored acts inevitably brings to mind the Nazis' horrendous acts of extermination of the Jewish people.

As such, Palestinians' shared memory of pain and survival becomes part of the human search for freedom and equality. Through her honour, sacrifice and resilience within the colonial setting, Najma, according to Ibrahim Al Safeen, 'constitutes a universal example of resistance and fight for life'.[157] Similarly, Barbara McKean argues that 'keeping the affectionate bond with her sons and her land, Najma sees 'her family as a metaphor for the land by invoking this intimate bond, which is unattainable for

[155] D. Ofer & L. Weitzman, *Women in the Holocaust (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 270.
[156] Ofer & Weitzman, *Women in the Holocaust,* p. 335.
[157] Ibrahim Al-Safeen, *A Study of the Fiction of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra* (Cairo: Al-Shrooq, 1996), p. 118.

newcomers no matter how much they manipulate surface appearances'.[158] Najma has endured, but survived intense emotional injury and a broken spirit through the murder of her son and grandson and the fragmentation of her family, dire poverty and unremitting feelings of insecurity and loss. Najma prefers to stay in Palestine rather than emigrating to live with her sons in other countries. Her survival, therefore, symbolizes the human right to live, in spite of racism and oppression; it comes to signify what Barbara McKean calls 'a journey through the psychic and political landscape of Palestine [which] is seen as a manufacturer and a product of its inhabitants' lives and labor'.[159]

If Najma's integration with the sufferings and pleasures of her community empowers her resistance to deprivation, the affluent female intellectuals of the Iraqi cosmopolitan bourgeoisie, Maryam al-Safar, Wisal Raouf and Sawsan Abd al-Hadi, are constantly circling through a series of sexual, emotional, and intellectual entanglements and relationships. In *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society*, Fatima Mernissi argues that 'in the Arab societies where seclusion and surveillance of women prevail, the implicit concept of female sexuality is an active concept' arising 'from the assumption that woman is a powerful and dangerous being'.[160] In representing working, educated and active women who appear in public and travel alone worldwide, Jabra deconstructs both the Orientalist images of the secluded, lustful, harem women and the traditional roles of Arab women as subordinated mothers, wives and sisters. Jabra's women play important roles in the developing events of the novel

[158] Barbara McKean, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 84.
[159] McKean, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature,* p. 81.
[160] Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Wiley, 1975), p. 10.

and take the initiative to gratify their unfulfilled desire, including their sexual and emotional needs.

Commenting on the interests of her bourgeois society in Baghdad, Maryam exposes its members' failure to realize any kind of intellectual or cultural eminence, in spite of their great material achievements as they embrace appearances and neglect their role as leaders of civilizing thinking within their society. Maryam says:

> They usually have aristocratic houses, and are immune to all the supposed theories and practices of social equality. They all have fortunes that they spend freely, throwing flashy parties in their homes and organizing gatherings that remain off-limits to those newspapers and magazines that spin off the myths and rumors of society – the latest fads, the love affairs, the scandals, and the ideas that crystallize into schools of thought, trends, or gimmicks, sparing neither art nor literature nor politics.[161]

Besieged by phallocentric structures, hypocrisy and flawed moral logic, liberal and westernized women in the novel 'dwell in a state of bodily estrangement'.[162] They attempt to change reality and attain freedom and self-fulfillment, but struggle to reconcile their own personal situations of oppression with 'their lust to explore the secrets of the universe coupled with the revolutionary spirit that strives to give the world a new face'.[163] As a result, sex for these women, works 'either as a means of consolation for women afflicted with existentialist sorrows, or even as the passport to spiritual experience'.[164] After her sexual encounters, Maryam concludes that 'those relations ruin her' and that 'those days of disappointment, pain and dissembling [are transformed] in a matter of seconds', when she gets 'a divorce [and] a job'.[165] In creating such a female

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[161] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 145.
[162] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 129.
[163] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 104.
[164] M. Badawi, *Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 196.
[165] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, pp. 166 & 252. .

character, Jabra can be seen to be actively contesting the Orientalist stereotype of the sexually voracious and yet curiously passive odalisque.

Analysing Jabra's characterization of female characters in *In Search of Walid Masoud*, Alexander Elison argues that 'nationalist and independence ideas overshadowed women's struggle to be full and equal members of society'.[166] Yet, M. Badawi records that by reconciling themselves to their own personal situations, women in *In Search of Walid Masoud*, 'contribute to the cause of socio-economic and political transformation by promoting a new consciousness'.[167] I partially agree with Elison that Jabra's women are neither accessories nor sexual objects to the male intellectuals and fighters in the novel. Yet, Badawi's argument that female characters in the novel, though marginalized, succeed in authenticating a right to financial productivity and independence is far more compelling.

A notable example of Jabra contesting the Orientalist myth is in his characterization of Sawsan, who finds real salvation from her loneliness and deprivation in her paintings, realizing that 'every time she finishes a picture, she enters the paradise afresh, seeking refuge, feeling the agony of creation, [and] enjoying a pleasure like the pleasure of love'.[168] Here, the Oriental female is not the passive object of the artist's male gaze but rather an active, shaping artist herself. There is perhaps a hint of mockery in the fact that the pleasure she derives from her art is seen as analogous to sexual pleasure. Yet another female character in the novel, Wisal, also turns from sex to art; when Walid tries to turn her into one of his mistresses, Wisal refuses, telling him that 'I

[166] Alexander Elison, 'Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud'*, *Edebyat: Journal of Modern Eastern Literature*, Vol. 12, Issue 2 (2001), pp. 297-300, (p. 300).
[167] Jabra, *In search of Walid Masoud*, p. 232.
[168] Jabra, *In search of Walid Masoud*, p. 250.

want you to enter my monastery, to suffer, to be deprived of all women after me'.[169] Initiating her career as a poet, Wisal 'turns from [being] an entity affected by forces external to it into a completely different person'.[170]

For these women, then, sexual and emotional experiences are attempts to 'act outside social rules and restraints'.[171] Their attempts at assimilation or belonging to their modern societies require them to boldly penetrate dark alleys of traditions and cultural notions regarding the self, the world and the other. Unlike Shahrazad's involuted work, symbolized in her producing stories to survive, female characters in *In Search of Walid Masoud*, show a meticulous concern with action and economic authority. While Scheherazade's struggle for survival draws her into the Harem, the female fight for freedom in *In Search of Walid Masoud* exposes the fallacy of Oriental women's exotic sexuality. In this way, they reflect the fact that modern Arab women have found their own voice and are involved in a search for self-determination, which corresponds to the incessant search for national pride and self-government. Jabra reveals that:

> The purpose of vision, in the final analysis, after each female political, economic, sexual and artistic theory, after every clash and struggle is to achieve a free woman, a woman who can be convinced, who can disagree, and who can reject. Such a woman is the one who will, finally, renew the nation, give it a second birth, so that it can share in the progress of mankind.[172]

In this way, Jabra's female characters, with their appetite for life and energetic orientation towards the future despite patriarchal oppression and hardship, embody 'resistance and personal sacrifice [which] giv[e] hope and fertility to the land'.[173] They are not isolated from the problems of their societies, but perceive their sexuality in new

[169] Jabra, *In search of Walid Masoud*, p. 210.
[170] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 199.
[171] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 129.
[172] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, 'Modern Arabic Literature and the West,' *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 11, (1985), p. 87.
[173] Jabra, 'Modern Arabic Literature and the West,' *Journal of Arabic Literature*, p. 87.

and revolutionary ways that enable them to rethink their identity politics and national affiliations. Sex for men in the novel, on the other hand, is sought either for its 'own sake', or as in the case of Walid for 'drowning into illusions';[174] hence, 'contradictions continue to dominate their lives'.[175] As for women in the novel, they celebrate their happy moments to the maximum and try to overcome their feelings of sorrow, exile and estrangement by integrating together, by connecting with other cultures and societies, by satisfying their repressed desires and by exploring forbidden taboos. Yet, they are neither members of a harem nor sexual objects. Rather, they are in control and positively emphasize their right to live and to dismantle the economic and cultural sieges of their patriarchal societies.

Conclusion

In Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*, and Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud*, both female and male characters aspire to discover their roots and to understand the politics of their identity formation. Yet, none of the characters in the two novels reaches inner peace nor achieves all their dreams. However, female characters are more positive fighters. They show patience, endurance, and above all persistence in resisting all forms of oppression and in seeking to change the customs that discriminate against them. While traditional women play a significant but always secondary role at home, the liberated, independent women have still not reached equality with men.

Despite the fact that Coetzee's and Jabra's female characters are very different from each other, they all use their economic agency as a means of fighting on the

[174] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 129.
[175] Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, p. 104.
[176] Jabra, In Search of Walid Masoud, p. 125.

national and personal levels to escape masculine notions of patriotism, patriarchy and sexist stereotyping of their roles in society. Coetzee's female characters in *Life and Times of Michael K* are mainly uneducated, lower-class women. They act spontaneously and have to struggle to survive rather than to intellectualize or rethink their positions or rights within society. Black Anna K and other coloured female workers in the novel do not dream of love or even male protection and security. On the contrary, men are real threats and hindrances in the face of these poor women's struggle to live and bring up their children. Yet, Coetzee's women are not loud revolutionaries. They are reserved, silent and measured in their emotions and actions. Rather than openly confronting the Other, Coetzee's women internalize their feelings, depression and struggles, showing amazing positivity in moving forward in the face of oppression.

In contrast to Coetzee's women, Jabra's are in the main intellectuals who belong to the middle classes. Yet even Jabra's working-class women are forthright, rebellious and stubborn. Najma, Rima, Maryam, Wisal and other female characters in the novel are looking for love, freedom and self-realization. They are articulate, emotional and confrontational women who take the initiative to approach the Other and to express their needs. Jabra's women are fighting to change not only their personal circumstances but also to revolutionize their whole social and cultural heritage. Unlike Coetzee's women, who repress their needs, Jabra's women externalize their conflicts, desires and tensions, causing a lot of disturbance and challenge to the status quo.

Moreover, for Coetzee, hybridity in *Life and Times of Michael K* means initiating a new start and discovering a new identity outside the discriminatory categorizations of the apartheid system. Jabra's concept of hybridity is a little different. For Jabra, a hybrid Arab society pushes towards a new unified communal sense of

justice, equality and democracy. Both writers aim to foster cultural connections among different races and identities in order to establish a new force of resistance to all forms of oppression. To reveal their literary visions in *Life and Times of Michael K* and *In Search of Walid Masoud*, Coetzee and Jabra choose displaced rural women in South Africa and Palestine who, out of tough political circumstances, hold hybrid, in-between identities that connect lost identity to the dominant order, and thus, form a resistance against forgetting their past and inspire change. Coetzee's and Jabra's women follow different paths of resistance and integration within society but they hardly withdraw from or avoid responsibility, emphasizing what Walid Masoud admits, namely that 'women are better able to resist than men'.[176] Both novels draw on national and colonial myths, recasting them in order to indicate that new stories and an alternative future are possible.

In the next chapter, I discuss the concept of political humanism in Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and Jabra's *The Journals of Sarab Affan* (1992). I argue that these two novels represent politically active South African and Palestinian female characters who not only challenge gender stereotypes but also take part in the political decision-making process. In this way, *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan* signify a new phase in Coetzee's and Jabra's literary representation of women and their roles in society.

Chapter Four

Humanism and Female Political Terrain in Disgrace and The Journals of Sarab Affan

Introduction

> Not to see that the essence of humanism is to understand human history as a continuous process of self-understanding and self-realization, not just for us, as white, male, European, and American, but for everyone, is to see nothing at all. There are other learned traditions in the world, there are other cultures, there are other geniuses.[1]

> Humanism is the only and I would go so far as saying the final resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history. We are today abetted by the enormously encouraging democratic field of cyberspace, open to all users in ways undreamt of by earlier generations either of tyrants or of orthodoxies. The world-wide protests before the war began in Iraq would not have been possible were it not for the existence of alternative communities all across the world, informed by alternative information, and keenly aware of the environmental, human rights, and libertarian impulses that bind us together in this tiny planet.[2]

In the previous three chapters, I have shown how the novels of Coetzee and Jabra exemplify Said's theory of contrapuntalism. In this fourth and final chapter, I will demonstrate how Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Jabra's *The Journals of Sarab Affan* significantly develop Said's contrapuntal critical reading. In Chapter Two and Chapter Three, respectively, I specifically related and highlighted the importance and interrelation of the concepts of secularism and hybridity in Said's contrapuntal theory in four selected novels by Coetzee and Jabra. While secularism stands for a critical attitude towards universal and native constructs of thinking and behaviour, hybridity is an understanding and acceptance of the hybrid nature of human communities with both the self and the 'Other' as different, authentic human beings equal in rights. The endorsement of both concepts inevitably establishes and deepens values of acceptance, tolerance and justice

[1] Edward Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 26.
[2] Edward Said, 'Worldly Humanism versus the Empire-Builders', *Counterpunch* (August 2003), pp. 1-3, (p. 2). http://www.counterpunch.org/2003/08/05/orientalism/

among different human beings. According to the above two quotations, Said represents humanism as a final phase of his contrapuntal reading of the worldwide racial and cultural struggles. This chapter looks at the positive role of humanism in reinforcing the political agency of female characters in Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and Jabra's *the Journals of Sarab Affan* (1992).

Said perceives humanism as a secular, hybrid form of activism. It is a process of individual awareness and action. Humanism is not only an admission of the diversity and equality of human beings and human cultures, but also an objection to any violation of the right to equality of the self and the Other. Although humanism is essentially an individual attitude, Said argues that 'a fair degree of my own political and social activism has assured me, people all over the world can be and are moved by ideals of justice and equality'.[3] He thinks that a human tragedy or an act of violation can bring collective support or protest worldwide. Said's concept of 'humanism' is a combination of different definitions of the term. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'humanism' is defined in two ways; the scholarly and the humanitarian. Said combines and reads the two ways from a political-historical viewpoint. On the scholarly level, humanism is 'literary learning or culture; devotion to or expertise in the humanities', and also refers to:

> A European intellectual movement or climate of thought from the 14th to the 16th cent., which was characterized in scholarship by attentiveness to classical Latin (and later Greek), in neo-Latin and vernacular literature by the creative imitation of ancient texts, in education and public life by the promotion of some or all of the wide range of cultural ideals which these texts were supposed to transmit, and in the fine and applied arts by creative response to Roman and Greek artefacts or principles.[4]

As a professor of comparative literature, an intellectual and 'scholar-teacher of

[3] Said, 'Worldly Humanism versus the Empire-Builders', p. 3.
[4] *Oxford English Dictionary*, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/89272?redirectedFrom=humanism+#eid

the humanities in today's turbulent world', Said develops and builds on his study of humanities and on the Renaissance humanist movement. Stemming from his belief that 'change is human history, and human history as made by human action and understood accordingly is the very ground of the humanities',[5] Said relates human studies as a field of knowledge to people's political awareness and perceptions. He proffers as an example the 'widespread revulsion with the Vietnam War':

> Part of that revulsion was the emergence of a resistance movement to racism, imperialism generally, and the dry-as-dust academic humanities that had for years represented an unpolitical, unworldly, and oblivious (sometimes even manipulative) attitude to the present, all the while adamantly extolling the virtues of the past, the untouchability of the canon, and the superiority of 'how we used to do it' – superiority, that is, to the disquieting appearance on the intellectual and academic scene of such things as women's, ethnic, gay, cultural, and postcolonial studies.[6]

Said compares humanism to liberal movements in human rights and equality. However, traditional versions of humanist studies failed to stand up for humanist values in the face of political challenges. Said traces the reductive and didactic nature of humanist studies and practices, to the fact that they were 'often associated with very selective elites, be they religious, aristocratic, or educational', or 'left open to every sort of unruly individualism, disreputable modishness, and uncanonized learning, with the result that true humanism [was] violated, if not altogether discredited'.[7] Moreover, Said refuses the dominant humanist view that interprets the past as 'an essentially complete history' and sustains the view that the past is 'still open to the presence and the challenges of the emergent, the insurgent, the unrequited, and the unexplored'.[8] For Said, returning to past texts and relating them to modern and contemporary texts is a contrapuntal method not

[5] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 10.
[6] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 13.
[7] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 18.
[8] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 26.

only of rereading and challenging long-established, taken-for-granted 'cultural ideals', but also of relating literary and humanist studies to 'the sordid world of contemporary history, politics, and economics'.[9] As a field of scholarship and research, for Said, the humanities 'concern secular history, the products of human labor, [and] the human capacity for articulate expression'. It follows, then, that humanism should be expected to interpret the literary and cultural heritage from new perspectives. Said asserts:

> In my understanding of its relevance today, humanism is not a way of consolidating and affirming what 'we' have always known and felt, but rather a means of questioning, upsetting, and reformulating so much of what is presented to us as commodified, packaged, uncontroversial, and uncritically codified certainties, including those contained in the masterpieces herded under the rubric of 'the classics'.[10]

Returning to the second definition of 'humanism' from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, on the humanitarian level, humanism stands for 'any system of thought or ideology which places humans, or humanity as a whole, at its centre', and which is 'predominantly sympathetic and concerned with human interests and welfare, and stresses the inherent value and potential of human life'. It can also designate:

> A variety of ethical theory and practice characterized by a stress on human rationality and capacity for free thought and moral action, and a rejection of theistic religion and the supernatural in favour of secular and naturalistic views of humanity and the universe.[11]

Said utilizes the above definitions of humanism. He believes that religious enthusiasm is 'the most dangerous of threats to the humanistic enterprise, since it is patently antisecular and antidemocratic in nature' and out of its 'monotheistic forms', is 'intolerantly inhumane and downright unarguable'.[12] In suggesting that 'the core of humanism is the secular

[9] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 26.
[10] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 28.
[11] *Oxford English Dictionary*, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/89272?redirectedFrom=humanism+#eid
[12] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 51.

notion that the historical world is made by men and women and not by God',[13] Said appeals to human beings, regardless of their ideological, religious or cultural backgrounds. It is a humanitarian, yet utopian idea, since human communities are governed by different and sometimes conflicting interests. As such, how can subjective humanist acts inspire collective movements?

In answering the above question, Said insinuates that though humanism is 'centered upon the agency of human individuality and subjective intuition, rather than on received ideas and approved authority', it is 'sustained by a sense of community with other interpreters and other societies and periods'. Said confirms further that 'there is no such thing as an isolated humanist'.[14] In this way, Said is relating the scholarly and the humanitarian forms of humanism. Humanism for Said is a form of intellectual and physical resistance, a concept and a practice against various forms of patriarchy, cultural commodification and conformity. In order to create a free and critical individual consciousness, the cultural and intellectual atmospheres have to endorse secular, hybrid and worldly humanist readings of all texts and all representations worldwide. For Said, a contrapuntal reading, thus, is a combination of knowledge, critical thinking and activism. Secular humanism and hybridity are preconditions of a constructive comparative study that considers historical factors, political authority and individual representations.

In the forthcoming analysis, I aim to realize two goals. First, I discuss humanism as a form of female political activism in *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan.* I argue that female characters in both novels adopt humanist attitudes and perform acts that enhance their political agency and develop their roles in the process of decision-making.

[13] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 51.
[14] Said, 'Worldly Humanism versus the Empire-Builders', p. 3.

Female characters in these two novels utilize their growing national consciousness as a means of deepening and enriching their individual agency and transformation into a consciousness of social and political activism and self-liberation. Thus, they represent a practical model of Said's idea of humanism as a form of 'inner faith', 'will', 'emancipation', and 'political activism and synchrony'.[15]

The second aim of this chapter is to discuss Coetzee's and Jabra's late style in *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, respectively. In *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain,* Said relates humanism to what he calls the lateness of late style. He sees both humanism and late style as forms of revolutionary change and revolt against rules and conventions. Literary or artistic works of late style for him 'constitute a form of exile' and express 'a sense of being out of place and time'.[16] The writer detaches him- or herself from their society's established social order as a means of evaluation and reconsideration of its rules. In this way, late-style works lay down the foundation of a new idea or a revolutionary trend of thinking, or represent the initiation of a different future. In the light of Said's definition of late style, I argue that *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan* are examples of late style that articulate a humanist insight and a new literary direction in Coetzee's and Jabra's perception of the political future of women in their countries.

Political Humanism in Disgrace and The Journals of Sarab Affan

> The word 'sin' is derived from the Indo-European root 'es-,' meaning 'to be.' When I discovered this etymology, I intuitively understood that for a woman trapped in patriarchy, which is the religion of the entire planet, 'to be' in the

[15] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, pp. 48, 49, 51.
[16] Edward Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), p. 8.

> fullest sense is 'to sin'.[17]
>
> It is rather when a total dogmatic system in which one side is innocently good, the other irreducibly evil, is substituted for the process, the give-and-take of vital interchange, that the secular intellectual feels the unwelcome and inappropriate encroachment of one realm on another. Politics becomes religious enthusiasm – as it is the case today in former Yugoslavia which results in ethnic cleansing, mass slaughter and unending conflict that are horrible to contemplate.[18]

In the above two quotations, Mary Daly and Edward Said relate the moral and political ramifications of patriarchal ideas. In the first instance, Daly argues that within patriarchal societies, women are made to believe that they are already sinners simply by being, by behaving and by existing. Consequently, patriarchy not only gives male/hierarchal guardians the sexist right to modify their sinful women's behaviour, but also denies men moral responsibility for committing a sin. Only women are to be blamed. Said, in the second quotation, posits the view that patriarchy is a political invention meant to privilege masculine identity and speech and to make male hierarchal dominance seem inevitable. Daly and Said agree that the intimidating and constraining premise of patriarchal thought is driven by the moral immunity and power men secure by it. In modern societies, patriarchal institutions influence cultural and religious standards, and become a means of organising people's lives and protecting a notion of authentic national identity. As such, patriarchal cultures do not merely naturalize women's inferiority to men and purposely mute their voices, but teach men that their 'masculinity has to be proved by the willingness to conquer fear through aggression'.[19]

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[17] Mary Daly, 'Sin Big', *Readings in Feminist Rhetorical Theory*, edited by Karen A. Foss, Sonja K. Foss, Cindy L. Griffin (London: Saga Publications, 2004), pp. 123-129, (p. 123).
[18] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*: *The 1993 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage: 1994), pp. 85-6.
[19] bell hooks, *All about Love: New Visions* (New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 2001), p. 195.

In this part of Chapter Four, I explore the aesthetics of humanism as both a perception of the self as a valuable human being and a determination to identify with the needs and experiences of the Other. My argument is that in post-apartheid South Africa and Arab-Palestinian societies in the 1980s and early 1990s, women's activism constitutes a humanist politics. It exceeds specifically feminist causes to become a humanist demand for equality. The aim here, then, is not so much to locate a sexist and racist attitude towards women in South Africa and Palestine, but rather to demonstrate the conditions of the emergence of female political awareness and activism. In *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, female characters are represented as being viewed by their respective patriarchal societies as stereotypes, caricatures and sinners, not as human beings; women are shown as being still treated as sexual objects, inferior creatures to be used by men, and at best as obedient lovers and wives.

In order to form a humanist attitude towards their own lives, female characters in the two novels have, first, to become aware that they are not sinners or inferior to men but are equal human beings, and second, to take their personal awareness into the public sphere, as a form of action against the forces of patriarchy. Through female characters, like Melanie Isaacs, Lucy Lurie and Soraya in *Disgrace*, and Sarab Affan and her fictional character Randa al-Jouzy in *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, Coetzee and Jabra display the distinct forms of struggle, confrontation and adaptation adopted by different women trying to overcome their inner feelings of gender inferiority, shame and sinfulness. Only when women in the two novels start to break the stereotypical mental images and cultural roles they are locked within, can they establish alternative future roles that meet their aims and are free of limiting preconceptions. Both authors depict this

humanist coming to consciousness as a difficult route in which women unavoidably experience a collision between their private and public worlds; their intellect and body; their desire and love; and their self-salvation and public expectations.

The Dichotomy of Female Sinners/Victims and Political Engagement in Disgrace

> Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away.[20]

> They were not raping, they were mating. It was not the pleasure principle that ran the show but the testicles, sacs bulging with seed aching to perfect itself. And now, lo and behind, the child! […] What kind of child can seed like that give life to, seed driven into the woman not in love but in hatred, mixed chaotically, meant to soil her, to mark her, like a dog's urine?[21]

In the above two quotations from Coetzee's novel, *Disgrace,* the character David Lurie, a white professor of communications, reflects on two acts of rape committed against two women in the novel, namely his black student, Melanie Isaacs, and his daughter, Lucy Lurie, respectively. For different reasons, Melanie and Lucy become sites of male sexual violence and revenge. The former is raped by David Lurie himself and the second is gang-raped by a group of black teenagers, instigated and motivated by Lucy's servant, Petrus. The two women are raped, but their rapists as well as their guardians evade classifying the aggressive acts as 'rape'. Thus, no-one is actually to claim complete responsibility or properly punished for the appalling acts of rape. In this way, Lucy and Melanie are not only held partially responsible for their rape, but they internalize feelings of confusion and shame as sinners and victims at the same time. In the end, Lucy and Melanie are left to heal their psychological and physical wounds alone.

[20] J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 25.
[21] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 199.

In *Orientalism*, Said argues that the colonizing mind views 'itself and its subject matter [the colonized] with sexist blinkers', with 'women usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing'.[22] As already noted, Said argues that within imperialist situations, the question of sexuality is central. It not only governs and structures the subject's every relation with the other, but is an essential element in the construction of the identities of the colonized and the colonizer. In other words, as Wendy Pearson puts it, 'colonialism's ideological underpinnings require the discursive construction of the bodies of the other not only as abjected components in racialized and gendered hierarchies, but also as units of exchange in economic, sexual, and cultural intercourse'.[23] Since in post-apartheid South Africa the state gives priority to political change without really reforming the apartheid-based, discriminative social relations and divisions of labour and wealth, the female characters in Coetzee's novel continue to struggle with gender stereotypes and the opportunistic cultural economy.

Coming from a middle-class black family and studying at the University of Cape Town, Melanie Isaacs symbolizes hope and ambition in post-apartheid South Africa. She is a young woman looking for fair and equal access to educational and social chances. However, Melanie discovers, as Gayle Rubin puts it, that '*Sex* is always political […] especially in the world of the University'.[24] The racist past is not over yet and Melanie's racial and gender difference is still a hindrance in face of her ambitions. Her professor,

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[22] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), p. 208.
[23] Wendy Pearson, 'Postcolonialism/s, Gender/s, Sexuality/ies and the Legacy of *The Left Hand of Darkness*: Gwyneth Jones's Aleutians Talk Back', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, Science Fiction (2007), pp. 182-196, (p. 183).

[24] Gayle Rubin, 'Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality', *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality,* ed. Carole Vance (London: Pandora, 1984), p. 267.

David Lurie, by virtue of his racial inheritance, is placed by the apartheid government at the top of the social and political hierarchy in apartheid South Africa. As a privileged man of letters, David uses his knowledge and scholarly influence to serve the ideological aims of his racist system. David's superior socio-racial background directly enforces his sexual power: 'If he looked at a woman in a certain way, with certain intent, she would return his look'.[25] Unfortunately, although David's '[sexual] powers fled,'[26] as result of his old age and the decline of his political power in post-apartheid South Africa, he still figures out new ways of achieving domination in the new order, namely through his position and his money.

Having an 'eye' for Melanie, David pursues her, telling her that 'a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone; […] she has a duty to share it'. [27] David understands sex as an 'ungovernable impulse', so that once 'Eros entered, [he] become[s] a servant of Eros'.[28] Even if Melanie does not want to share her sexuality with him, he does not really care about her opinion. Shockingly, Melanie accepts David's sexual authority and claims as fact. She regards it as her duty to share her body and beauty with him. Edward Said defines the attitude of the colonizer towards the colonized as one of 'dominating, restructuring, and having authority'. Colonizers 'gather knowledge about the Other' so that 'through their cultural and literary representations, [they] alienate and stereotype that Other to fit their political and ideological aims'.[29] With his imperialist, racial background, David follows the same strategy with Melanie. He collects information about her, tries to exploit her youth in order to fill her head with his sexist ideas and finally succeeds in

[25] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 7.
[26] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 7.
[27] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 16.
[28] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 52.
[29] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 3.

isolating her from her family and environment. After Melanie issues a complaint against him, David is surprised:

> Melanie would not have taken such a step by herself, he is convinced. She is too innocent for that, too ignorant of her power. [Isaacs], the little man in the ill-fitting suit, must be behind it, [Isaacs] and cousin Pauline, the plain one, the duenna. They must have talked her into it, worn her down, then in the end marched her to the administration offices.[30]

Melanie is stereotyped by David as a weak, dependent and ignorant young woman who knows nothing about her rights as a university student, protected by university laws, one of which is 'Article 3.1 [which] addresses victimization or harassment of students by teachers'.[31] Melanie is not the only woman to be misjudged by men in *Disgrace*. Reducing women's roles to the service of their own desires and needs, the majority of men in the novel practise sexual and moral double standards. They grant themselves greater sexual freedom and authority over women, whom they perceive as tools to prove their masculine superiority or political domination. David sees no shame or wrongdoing in living in a 'flurry of promiscuity' in which he '[has] affairs with the wives of colleagues', with 'tourists', and with 'whores'.[32] His freedom to do so is based on a society of 'gender polarization', which Sandra Bem explains as the following:

> Gender polarization […] aids and abets the social reproduction of male power by providing the fundamental division between masculine and feminine upon which androcentrism is built. This aspect of gender polarization manifests itself at three levels: the institutional, the psychological, and the ideological.[33]

In *Disgrace*, then, sexual power has allegorical implications for broader systems of power and domination. It stands for the struggle over land ownership, racial

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[30] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 39.
[31] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 39.
[32] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 7.
[33] Sandra Lipsitz Bem, *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 194.

domination and, above all essentialized gender polarizations. Regrettably, the political atmosphere in post-apartheid South Africa paves the way for old gender polarization and sexist ideas to continue and dominate. Melanie's rape is an ideological, racial appropriation and subjugation of the female Other. Living in a period of political transformation and ideological re-organization of centres of power, South African men and women are required to fight for a better position or to readjust their interests to suit the new order. Still governed by the same laws created by the colonizers and expanded by the new post-apartheid government which, despite its attempts to equalize the position of all citizens, enables David, like many other white and black sexists, opportunists and power-seekers, still to find other indirect means of exerting their superiority, particularly over women: 'If [David] wanted a woman he had to learn to pursue her, often, in one way or another to buy her'.[34]

The institutionalized nature of the sexual economy is highlighted through the character of Soraya. David is accustomed to visiting the Discreet Escorts Agency, where he pays prostitutes for sex. Classified under the category 'Exotic', Muslim prostitute Soraya fulfils the white professor's need to conquer 'exotic girls'.[35] In seeing Soraya in the street with her two sons, David is shocked with her 'double life', something that he, ironically enough, thinks 'would be unusual for a Muslim, but all things are possible these days'.[36] David judges the morality of a Muslim woman and denies her the right to have a family and lead a normal public life, ignoring her denied economic rights and opportunities that force her to sell her body for money. Through its characterization of David Lurie, Coetzee's novel indicates that double standards and gender inequalities are

[34] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 7.
[35] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 7.
[36] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 3.

common in the post-apartheid era. Shaun Irlam suggests that such a representation is not inauthentic since he criticises the new South African society, claiming that it is merely an 'international media fantasy' which is widely sustained abroad but 'belied at home, in the cities and townships of South Africa'. Irlam argues that despite the 'modest moves' toward integration, the new South Africa remains 'deeply divided in racial relations, and the gulf between the poor and the rich never narrows',[37] Karin Lombard agrees, suggesting that:

> Most people in post-apartheid South Africa choose to forget the bitterness they suffered in the past, because issues such as the HIV/AIDS crisis, soaring crime rates, and prevailing poverty and unemployment gradually become the utmost priorities the new government has to deal with.[38]

According to these commentators, fighting poverty, social injustice, crime and chronic diseases preoccupies the majority of the South African public. If David Lurie's well-to-do life does not expose him personally to these dangers and problems, he receives a rude awakening when his daughter Lucy is impregnated through a gang-rape and is potentially infected with HIV/AIDS. Only when the situation becomes unignorably personal, do David's views really start to change. Like Melanie, Lucy is reduced to a stereotype by the black worker, Petrus, as a vulnerable woman, with no male guardians, a weak point that Lucy herself confesses: 'Objectively I am a woman alone. I have no brothers. […] To whom can I turn for protection, for patronage?'.[39] To humble Lucy and to force her either to accept his protection and control over her land or to leave South Africa and emigrate to another part of the world, Petrus targets her sexuality. The aggressive attitudes of both David and Petrus towards women go beyond lack of

[37] Shaun Irlam, 'Unraveling the Rainbow: The Remission of Nation in Post-Apartheid Literature', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Volume 103, Number 4, (Fall 2004), pp. 695-718, (p. 697).
[38] Karin Lombard, 'The Strategic and Moral Demands of Reparation at the End of the TRC', *To Repair the Irreparable: Reparation and Reconstruction in South Africa*, edited by Erik Doxtader, Charles Villa-Vicencio, (Johannesburg: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2004), p. 184-192, (p. 186).
[39] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 9.

individual morality to encompass intentional disrespect and transgression of the law. They choose to operate outside the boundaries of law, which is, as the white secretary Dawn explains, common: 'Now people just pick and choose which laws they want to obey. It's anarchy. How can we bring up children when there's anarchy all around?'.[40]

Within such a chaotic situation, David and Petrus aim at upholding the patriarchal status quo. Consequently, their sexual atrocity tends to '[re-]domesticate' and 'shame' the new, independent young women, Lucy and Melanie, so that '[their] place in the outside world would not constitute a significant challenge for the care and protection of the [patriarchal] nation and essential identity'.[41] Lucy classifies her rape as 'fighting with death'.[42] Petrus, similar to David, aims to quash Lucy's feelings of belonging, of dignity and of independence. Expressing social and sexual autonomy and fitting well inside the new South African order, Lucy threatens the exclusive connection between black women and authentic South African identity and the land. She says:

> Maybe, for men, hating the woman makes sex more exciting. You are a man, you ought to know. When you have sex with someone strange — when you trap her, hold her down, get her under you, put all your weight on her — isn't it a bit like killing? Pushing the knife in; existing afterwards, leaving the body behind covered in blood - doesn't it feel like murder, like getting away with murder?[43]

In insisting on keeping the child of rape and refusing to report her rape to the police, Lucy survives her 'death' to achieve legitimate and equal national identity with the Black South Africans. She realizes that the atrocious act unfairly punishes her for the apartheid regime's past crimes. Claudia Card suggests that Lucy's rape is a 'case of

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[40] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 9.
[41] Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 125.
[42] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 158.
[43] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 158.

genetic imperialism'[44] that 'undermines political and ethnic solidarity by obscuring the identity of the next generation' and 'robs [Lucy of] the intimate control she had over her body and forcefully transfer[s] this control to her rapists'.[45] In a similar way, Elleke Boehmer argues that 'Lucy is presented as 'always-already a creature of dumb animality' and displays 'a continuation of subjection which it would be preposterous to propose as redemptive'.[46] I disagree with Card and Boehmer. On the one hand, Card deprecates the humanist attitude and political awareness Lucy expresses as she '[is] determined to be a good mother' and confesses that leaving South Africa would mean to 'taste the defeat for the rest of [her] life'.[47] Lucy overcomes her feelings of betrayal and shame to raise a child of mixed ethnic background but one who shares the identity and nationality of a South African man. In this way, the identity of the next generation is not at all obscured, but reshaped and humanized.

Lucy's humanist-political perception of her rape 'as a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter',[48] is a direct result of her way of living. Unlike her father, who lives in an ivory tower and perceives his difference from other humans and species in terms of superiority and consequently deals with the Other in terms of 'generosity, not because [he] feel[s] guilty or fear[s] retribution',[49] Lucy is sharing life with the Other. She 'share[s] the dam' with Petrus,

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[44] According to Claudia Card, genetic imperialism refers to war and racial rape in which an embryo conceived by rape carries the genetic make-up of the father (the rapist), and the mother (victim of rape). She argues that War and racial rapes result in alienation and division within the raped society. Claudia Card, 'Rape as a Weapon of War', *Hypatia* (*Fall*, 1996), pp. 5-18, (p. 18).
[45] Card, 'Rape as a Weapon of War', p. 18.
[46] Elleke Boehmer, 'Not Saying Sorry, Not Speaking Pain: Gender Implications in *Disgrace*', Interventions: *International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, Vol.4, No.3 (November 2002), pp. 342-351, (p. 343).
[47] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 216
[48] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 112.
[49] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 74.

'share[s] her house and life' with her father, and even 'share[s] some of [her] human privilege with the beasts'.[50] Lucy's and David's attitudes towards the Other reflect a completely different perception of the meaning of difference and human rights in South Africa. Said distinguishes between two ideologies of difference. The first is an exclusionary ideology 'as an instrument to relegate the rights of others to an inferior or lesser status',[51] while the second is 'an awareness of the supervening actuality of "mixing," of crossing over, of stepping beyond boundaries, which are more creative human activities than staying inside rigidly policed borders'.[52] Said explains further that the two ideologies are inevitably grounded in, or affiliated to, a particular historical moment and a specific political situation. Being the privileged citizen of the apartheid regime, David believes in the separation of the populations into different, unequal groups and, after the rape, he asks Lucy 'to turn the farmhouse into a fortress'.[53] Quite the opposite, Lucy's humanistic attitude enables her to practically manage the historical reality of her country. She tells David that: 'We have our weak moments, all of us, we are only human'.[54]

In addition to this, Boehmer ignores the huge pressure and long heritage of hatred and abuse systematically practised against women in South Africa and thus, in blaming Lucy as 'a creature of dumb animality', she insults hundreds of thousands if not millions of Black and coloured women who kept silent about their abuses and violations to protect their families and have sacrificed their dignity to meet their responsibilities. In

[50] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 74.
[51] Edward Said, 'An Ideology of Difference', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (Autumn, 1985), pp. 38-58, (p. 41).
[52] Edward Said, 'An Ideology of Difference', p. 43.
[53] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 113.
[54] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 216

contrast to Boehmer, I see Lucy's silence as a Coetzean way of paying respect to the unreported past acts of rape committed upon innocent Black and coloured women in South Africa. By making his white, female character act as she does, Coetzee condemns 'European culture's silence and compliance'[55] with the imperialist project. Along these lines, Said argues further that the reversal of traditional power relations, symbolized in the silence of Lucy in opposition to Melanie's revelation of her abuse, is a sign of Coetzee's attempt to reconsider his impulsive, historical connection to Western literary traditions by mastering 'the art of doubling, inverting, and imitating to infinity'.[56] Thus, Coetzee and Lucy achieve independence from 'Western civilization and morals, the reversion of originality to silence by the way of repetition'.[57] Silence and violation are no longer related to non-whites. Lucy willingly overcomes her Western belief in her own superiority.

Within such a corrupt and sexist social order, women in *Disgrace* enter into a fierce battle against the old and emerging oppressive power of collective institutions and polarizations. Despite the fact that both Melanie and Soraya are abused by David, they are both able to gather themselves and fight David's aggression back. Soraya leaves the Escort Agency and when David harasses her, she is able to defend her private life and her two sons: 'I demand you will never phone me here again, never'.[58] Soraya's shrillness, like Melanie's complaint, surprises David, who asks 'what should a predator expect when he intrudes into the vixen's nest'.[59] Melanie's awareness that David's sexual-political rape 'cut [her] off from everyone' and 'made me bear [his] secret', is a confession that she

[55] Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p 136.
[56] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p 136.
[57] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p 136.
[58] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 9.
[59] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 10.

experiences a retreat from being 'just a student' or a human being, and is reduced into 'a body', a 'sexual object' and 'a passive victim'.[60] Issuing the complaint, Melanie cuts her bondage to the past and moves on with her life. On seeing her acting in a new play, David reflects how 'she is altogether surer of herself than before – in fact, good in the part, positively gifted. Is it possible that in the months he has been away she has grown up, found herself? […] Perhaps she too has suffered, and come through'.[61]

Similarly, Lucy's peaceful compromise to stay on her land under the protection of Petrus, though humiliating and subjugating, provides a practical solution to her loneliness and diverts feelings of anger and revenge. Moreover, Lucy's condition that her marriage to Petrus is on paper only and does not include any sexual obligations is another blow against her society's gender polarization and its judgement of her being lesbian as 'unnatural'. In *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa*, Henriette Gunkel argues that 'post-apartheid homophobia further highlights that contemporary homophobia is, in effect, reintroducing a colonialist and racist discourse of sexuality into a postcolonial project'.[62] My argument is that Lucy's compromise, her political marriage to Petrus, is a challenge to such post-apartheid homophobia. Lucy's identity is no longer constructed or naturalized in a polarizing link between gender and sexuality. Being a lesbian, mother and wife is certainly part of Lucy's life experiences and choices but her identity is South African. In countries with an intense, long history of racial struggles like South Africa and Palestine, Edward Said holds that 'the fundamental problem is […] how to reconcile one's identity and the actualities of one's own culture, society, and history to

[60] Jenny Sharpe, 'The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-insurgency', *Genders*, 10, (Spring, 1991), pp. 225-246, (p. 225).
[61] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 191.
[62] Henriette Gunkel, *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 28.

the reality of other identities, cultures, peoples'.[63] Through her political decision to stay in South Africa, Lucy achieves the awareness that her '[racial] group is not a natural or God-given entity but is a constructed, manufactured, even in some cases an invented object'.[64]

Furthermore, Lucy has been struggling with her sexual identity. She tells her father that she had a relationship in the past and had an abortion. However, she is currently a lesbian. In reading Lucy's sexuality in relation to her position as a woman within the political transformation in post-apartheid South Africa, Coetzee not only challenges the literary and culturally formative stereotypical image of 'the lesbian female figure [as a source of] disruption, horror, and bodily grotesqueness', but also 'reformulate[s] this image of the lesbian into a figure of revolution and change'.[65] Lucy is a figure of change on the personal and ideological levels. As Jacqui Alexander points out, 'women's sexual agency, [their] sexual and [their] erotic autonomy have always been troublesome for the state'.[66] They pose a challenge to the ideological anchor that the heterosexual family is the cornerstone of society and the solidarity of the nation. As a result, for the state, sex and gender are a means of disciplining of the body and the controlling of the population. In reinventing her sexual identity, Lucy revolts against the patriarchy of the white man. Nevertheless, under the new order, post-apartheid South Africa inherits the same oppressive sexual ideas. Both David and Petrus view Melanie

[63] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 69.
[64] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p. 25.
[65] Marilyn Farwell, *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives* (New York: New York University Press, 1966), p. 17.
[66] Jacqui Alexander, 'Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy', *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, edited by M Alexander & Chandra Mohanty (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 65.

and Lucy, respectively, through the lenses of the past traditions, according to which Melanie is a black sex slave and Lucy is a pervert. Alexander explains that:

> Formerly conflated in the imaginary of the (white) imperial hetero-patriarch, the categories lesbian and prostitute now function together within Black hetero-patriarchy as outlaw, operating outside the boundaries of law and, therefore, poised to be disciplined and punished within it.[67]

The sexual objectification of Melanie and Lucy into passive victim and sexual tool, however painful and humiliating, does not deny these two women's right to a new South African identity. In commenting on Coetzee's characterization of female characters in his novels, Pamela Cooper asserts that through all of Coetzee's books, 'the potency of women is often bound up with their mysteriousness; their strength depends on their unreadability'.[68] I partially agree with Cooper. However, I think that the unreadability of Coetzee's characters lies in the fact that Coetzee does not offer comfortable solutions; rather, he leaves space for readers to discover their own ethics of reading. Moreover, Cooper reduces women's strength in the face of patriarchy to their 'mysteriousness' while ignoring that it is their resilience that helps them survive. The fact that Melanie, Soraya and Lucy are able to collect themselves after rape and abuse and to claim a right to land and to their humanness is an admirable sign of resistance, a humanist act of defiance and a demand for justice. It may be that they cannot save the nation from acts of depravity and anger but they do initiate change within the close circle of themselves and their families.

Coetzee complicates the ethical reading of acts of rape and salvation in the novel. Since telling the truth or confession implies either responsibility or relief, the fact

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[67] Jacqui Alexander, 'Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy', p. 65.
[68] Pamela Cooper, 'Metamorphosis and Sexuality: Reading the Strange Passions of *Disgrace*', *Research in African Literatures,* Vol. 36, No. 4 (2005), pp. 22-39 (p. 27).

that Lurie confesses responsibility to Melanie's family but not to Melanie herself leaves him guilt-stricken forever so that mentioning the name of Melanie 'unsettles him'.[69] Similarly, Lucy's refusal to tell the truth about the rape can be taken as identification with the sufferings of other women who have sacrificed a great deal to maintain their possession of a place in South Africa. Melanie, Soraya and Lucy learn to act in defence of their rights as human beings, starting with their right to land as owners and natives, not as secondary citizens or foreigners.

Female Liberation and Political Action in The Journals of Sarab Affan

> My identity is in my name? My name is Sarab Affan. Then what? My identity is that I sometimes want to explode into shrapnel because I can no longer bear the kind of life I live. My identity is that my father loves me and is afraid of me and for me but does not understand me. […] I am like other women my age, but I know that I am different from them and that my identity is my difference. […] From this moment on, [Sarab] is in love, madly in love. She will also be a courageous fighter for her homeland, for freedom. She will love humanity to heal the wounds of people everywhere.[70]
>
> I am laying out a plan, and I will look for a way to carry it out. All I need is time and determination, some perseverance, patience, and control over my impulses. And why shouldn't I ask questions like anyone who sees history being shaped around him in a way he cannot keep up with. What am I capable of knowing? What do I desire? What actions must I take? […] Knowledge-desire-action – is this a trinity of the individual or of society?[71]

In the above quotations, the half-Palestinian, half-Iraqi character, Sarab Affan, reflects on her identity problems and her determination to resolve them. In the first quotation, she highlights her disappointment at her familial and societal relations. She lacks familial understanding and support, particularly from her doctor father, and finds difficulty in sharing her dreams, differences and aims in life with her people. She dreams of freedom

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[69] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 190.
[70] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan.*, trans. Michael Beard and Adnan Haydar (London: Syracuse University Press, 2007), p. 6.
[71] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, pp. 18-9.

not only for herself as an individual and her homeland, Palestine, but also for people worldwide. For Sarab, the route to freedom is realized through the concepts of humanism and love, which break cultural bondages and cross geographical boundaries to connect with human beings worldwide. In the second quotation, Sarab decides to devote the rest of her life to the service of the cause of freedom. However, she is concerned about which paths she should take, the support she can get and the knowledge she must have to be a qualified freedom fighter. Growing up and living in a patriarchal society and a phallocentric culture, where either her male guardian or oppressive systems control her behaviour and shape her life according to their goals and not hers, Sarab Affan is looking for 'salvation'.

Set during the first Palestinian intifada (1987-1993), *The Journals of Sarab Affan* tackles the theme of salvation in the face of inescapable loss, suffering and exile. Despite the fact that Sarab is a successful secretary and leads a comfortable life, she is not satisfied with it. On the personal level, Sarab is a repressed woman and an unacknowledged and marginalized writer. She lives in a patriarchal society, where she '[is] subordinated and victimized principally because she is a woman in Arab, Muslim society, or because she is a Palestinian'.[72] It is a double process of marginalization where sexuality and political identity are inseparable. As a Palestinian exile, Sarab is never at home and, as a woman, she is never an equal human being with men. Torn by her personal-political predicament as a Palestinian, Sarab sees the Palestinian cause with 'humanist' eyes, exercising what Said calls an 'act of reading' by 'putting [her]self in the position of the author, for whom writing is a series of decisions and choices expressed in

[72] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* / Edward W. Said; photographs by Jean Mohr. (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 78.

words'.[73] In relating and reevaluating her cultural and political affiliations, Sarab employs her unsettled political thoughts and unhappy emotions as a means of mastering the story of her own life and equally mastering her literary profession. She decides to challenge conformist ideas and traditional female roles through turning her alienation and marginalization into resistant writings promoting the values of freedom and human rights for all people. In this way, Sarab turns from being a receiver of cultural and literary ideas into a creator of her own distinct voice and viewpoints.

In *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said proposes the concept of 'readism', as a method of measuring 'the effect of structures of power and authority on the process of reading'.[74] The process of readism depends on two steps; reception and resistance. While reception is to read a literary or critical or artistic work in relation to the historical contexts within which it is produced and read, resistance is to use critical awareness to overcome preconceptions and collective dogmas of thinking and be able to form fair, independent opinions. Said explains further that:

> Reception is submitting oneself knowledgeably to texts and treating them provisionally at first as discrete objects. Moving then, by dint of expanding and elucidating the often obscure or invisible frameworks in which they exist, to their historical situations and the way in which certain structures of attitude, feeling, and rhetoric get entangled with some currents, some historical and social formulations of their contexts. […] Only by receiving the text in all its complexity and with the critical awareness, can one move from the specific to the general both integratively and synthetically. [75]

Said's theory of 'readism' is perfectly applicable to Sarab Affan. In reading the novels of her ideal writer, Nael Imran, particularly his latest novel *Entering the Mirrors* and writing her journals at the same time, Sarab, I argue, takes the crucial decisions of

[73] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 62.
[74] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 60.
[75] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 62.

becoming a political activist and of initiating her writing career. Rendered immune to his influence by her knowledge, independent opinions and humanist attitude, Sarab receives Nael's opinions and traditional views with suspicion, criticism and resistance. Marginalized by her society and neglected by her father, Sarab, similar to Melanie in Coetzee's novel, is confused. She looks for an inspiring example and a helping hand to take her away from her own sadness and loneliness within 'her society fenced in by fear and stagnation'.[76] For her, Nael Imran, the famous, liberal author, is the perfect model. However, unlike previous female characters in Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* and *The Ship*, who face their cultural and social oppression by escaping reality to sex or give up their dreams to lead traditional roles as housewives, Sarab confronts her society through knowledge and understanding. With Nael, Sarab voices the aspiration that '[they] will enter together into one mirror, into worlds of impossibilities'.[77] She dreams of equality in love, work and happiness and envisions their future life as travelling to Paris, London and Rome, and Cairo and Baghdad, as 'rebellious literati', lecturing together about 'Jerusalem' and 'freedom' and reading their 'poems and novels'.[78] Mohamed Shaheen interprets the love relationship between Sarab and Nael in terms of their almost contradictory artistic positions as 'a female artist in her youth and a male artist in the heyday of his elderliness'.[79] Thus, it is a relation between past and present, energy and exhaustion, illusion and reality, and irrelevance and timeliness:

> Sarab Affan's passion is not born of a personal deprivation, nor is it the result of an emotional vacuum, but rather is the result of an awareness of a historical ordeal. […] Thus, the meeting between Sarab and Nael is more than a meeting

[76] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 103.
[77] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 45.
[78] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 44.
[79] Mohamed Shaheen, *Horizons of the Arabic Novel: A Study* (Damascus: Union of Arab writers, 2001), p. 95.

> between a woman and a man. Rather, this is the first outlet outside of the siege, and the first opportunity on the way back to the origin of the ordeal.[80]

Nevertheless, Sarab is betrayed by Nael, who is supposed to be supportive of her independent opinions. As she approaches the exclusive male domain, she discovers that Nael is just 'the straw man' and 'the greatest producer of illusion'.[81] He wants to possess her body and aims at 'shaping or reshaping [her] the way [he] like[s]'.[82] Like the majority of Arab men in Jabra's novels, Nael leads a double life. His writings are liberal, progressive and radical while he is a defeatist whose personal beliefs are traditional, sexist and submissive. Nael criticises Sarab's revolutionary ideas and inhibits her will to act against oppression and political corruption: 'Sarab, the creators of all the taboos and sanctions are the masters of our day – What are we able to do with our rebellious visions to stand up to those watchdogs?'[83] Nael who believes that 'the body is a fundamental reality', endorses sexist thinking and is complicit with oppressive systems. He escapes his historical responsibility to fight for human freedom and human rights either to live in the past or to indulge himself in a life of masculine pleasures and sensual desires.

Moreover, in his romantic relations, Nael Imran, like Walid Masoud and Wadi Assaf in Jabra's earlier novels, reduces love to sensual desire. For him, Sarab's looks: her breasts, lips, cheeks, and body, come before her intellect.[84] According to Luce Irigaray, in phallocentric cultures, 'It is crucial that [women] keep [their] bodies even as [they] bring them out of silence and servitude'.[85] In such a culture, Sarab's duty, like Melanie's, is to

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[80] Shaheen, *Horizons of the Arabic Novel: A Study*, p. 95.
[81] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 44.
[82] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 46.
[83] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 113.
[84] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 56
[85] Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*. translated by Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 19.

submit her body to Nael. Nael has a wife, but looks for mistresses. When the wife is dead, he keeps her pure image in his head while seeing other women as sexual objects. In defying Nael's expectations as a submissive mistress, Sarab challenges his masculine superiority and authority over a woman's body and mind. Sarab achieves the love of her life with Nael as his intellectual and emotional equal. She even prefers in the end to refuse his suggestion of marriage, so that she may remain free and able to pursue a full life without the constraints of daily conjugal cohabitation. Irigaray clarifies that:

> Historically [women] are the guardians of the flesh. We should not give up that role, but identify it as our own, by inviting men not to make us into body for their benefit, not to make us into guarantees that their body exists. All too often the male libido needs some woman (wife-mother) to guard the male body. This is why men need a wife in the home, even when they have a mistress elsewhere.[86]

In this manner, Sarab, similar to Lucy and Melanie, is stereotyped as a body to amuse men and an idealistic writer who lives in a world of fantasies. For years, Sarab has been following the rules, shielding herself behind 'walls of fears' while 'suffering the pain of seeing'.[87] She thinks:

> Was I scared of myself, knowing that inside me there was a woman capable of things beyond [Nael's] imagination or mine? Was I destined to live my life torn between those endless contradictions? Must I forever revolve between two selves: the seductress wanting to be seduced but afraid of going all the way, and the woman searching for love who wants it all to the last drop?[88]

However, Sarab's problem as a marginalized and repressed female writer is not a private one. On the contrary, in discussing the general cultural attitude towards women's writing, Lillian Robinson refers to 'the apparently systematic neglect of women's experience in the literary canon, neglect that takes the form of distorting and misreading the few

[86] Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, p. 19.
[87] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 98.
[88] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 96.

recognized female writers and excluding the others'.[89] Robinson indicates more the sexist attitude of male authors, the majority of whom are still locked within masculinist ideas and traditional norms:

> The predominantly male authors in the canon show us the female character and relations between the sexes in a way that both reflects and contributes to sexist ideology—an aspect of these classic works about which the critical tradition remained silent for generations. The feminist challenge has not been simply a reiterated attack, but a series of suggested alternatives to the male-dominated membership and attitudes of the accepted canon.[90]

Through the literary-personal relationship between Sarab and Nael, Jabra underlines the positions and hardships of Arab female writers in the second half of the twentieth century. Sarab expects liberal, successful author Nael Imran to support her revolutionary literary ambition. Yet, Nael still has the same traditionalist, masculinist view of women. He reduces Sarab's roles in life to be his lover and wife, but denies her independent intellectual choices. However, what Sarab really misses as a writer is an unbiased and progressive literary atmosphere and not just Nael's support. Sarab's personal liberation as a woman is, then, inseparable from what Said calls 'intellectual and literary resistance'.[91] Sarab's personal experience with Nael opens her eyes to the realities of her society and her ability as a human being equal with men to fight her own battle and produce her own vision. Sarab takes the crucial decision to leave Iraq for Paris, searching for a freer literary medium:

> When I am sober and my mind is clear, I realize that I want to get on with trying to break out of my old siege. It is as though my soul were a fenced-in city

89 Lillian Robinson, 'Treason Our Text: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon', *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory,* ed. Elaine Showalter (London: Virago, 1986), p. 106.
90 Robinson, 'Treason Our Text: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon', p. 106.
91 Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p. 86.

> surrounded by enemies, and breaking the siege means getting away to other cities, other horizons, other desires.[92]

In inventing the character of Randa al-Jouzy, 'as the rational, balanced, logical one, and Sarab as the one refusing to be rational, balanced, and logical', Sarab does not merely resist Nael's 'cheap flirtation' but empowers her own intellectual/literary authority over her life in order to fight her enemies. She is 'a lover and an intruder'.[93] Sarab, like Lucy, learns to be cautious, practical and independent. Melanie, Sarab and Lucy lack a thoughtful and understanding father-daughter relationship. Doctor Affan, David Lurie and Mr Isaacs, despite their high level of education and open-minded attitudes, are still traditional in their attitude towards women and consequently are participants in the oppression and sufferings of their daughters. Sarab confesses that 'my father, with all his medical knowledge, was living in one world and I in another. In the last few years the divide separating us grew even wider'.[94] As a result of her fragmented and lonely life, Sarab decides 'It is my story. […] So let me revel in my powers, so long as I am the one with the pen'.[95] The stereotypical idea that the male guardian; father, brother, lover or even the state is the controller and protector of the female individual is challenged and turns into a fantasy. Sarab delves deep to the roots of her feelings of 'slavery and siege', to discover that it is a straw political creation. As Evelyn Accad notes:

> Sexuality often works together with what may appear as more tangible factors—political, economic, social, and religious choices. It is part of the psychological, physical, and spiritual aspects of human existence. As such, it seems quite obvious that if sexuality is not incorporated into the main feminist and political

[92] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 95.
[93] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 186.
[94] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 14.
[95] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 44.

> agenda, the struggles for freedom will remain on a very superficial level. A problem cannot be solved without going to its roots.[96]

Sarab discovers that political and cultural systems isolate her from the rest of the world, designating her as the enemy. At the beginning of the novel, she thinks that 'life is atrocious' and 'expect[s] little of the human condition'.[97] Yet, after her experimentation in writing and love, Sarab reaches the conclusion that her 'society doomed [her] to spiritual and intellectual closedness',[98] and sees her salvation in exploring the political roots of her oppression by her 'search for truth […] truth confined between the self and the other'.[99] Humanity is her refuge. She decides to 'care about the ordeals of others'[100] and to share her personal suffering and hopes with them as well. In so doing, she finds personal salvation in love but also in action, seeking collective salvation. Sarab, similar to Lucy, is a practising humanist, described by Said as the following:

> There is, in fact, no contradiction at all between the practice of humanism and the practice of participatory citizenship. Humanism is not about withdrawal and seclusion. Quite the reverse: its purpose is to make more things available to scrutiny as the product of human labor, human energies for emancipation and enlightenment, and, just as importantly, human misreadings and misinterpretations of the collective past and present.[101]

Sarab's political awareness is inseparable from her readings and re-evaluations of the realities of her society. Living in post-Ba'athist Iraq, Sarab's life and daily experiences 'are driven very much by sectarianism and the concomitant religious politics'.[102]

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[96] Evelyne Accad, 'Sexuality and Sexual Politics: Conflicts and Contradictions for Contemporary Women in the Middle East', *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Ann Russo (London: John Wiley & Sons, 1991), p. 243.
[97] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 29.
[98] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 103.
[99] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 103.
[100] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 41.
[101] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 22.
[102] Asher Susser, 'The Rise of Hamas in Palestine and the Crisis of Secularism in the Arab World', *Crown Center for Middle East Studies Essay Series* (Brandeis University, February 2010), p. 16.
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In his article, 'The Rise of Hamas in Palestine and the Crisis of Secularism in the Arab World', Asher Susser analyses the expansion of Islamist movements and ideas in the Arab world in the 1980s and their cultural-political repercussions on concepts of freedom, democracy, and the position of women in society. Susser argues that post-independence state secularist movements in the twentieth-century in the Arab world, '[have] failed to produce secular societies' and that the 'increasing economic mismanagement and corruption and rising poverty and income inequality, undermined the legitimacy of Arab regimes, creating the impression that the modernization project was failing'.[103] As a result, new religious movements with mass followings have emerged, proposing a political-social substitute, based on Islamic justice and equality. Islamic movements have spread all over the Arab world; starting with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Syria and Algeria to Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine. However, all these movements designate to women the traditional roles of housewives and mothers. Despite demographic variations, Carla Obermeyer agrees with Susser that 'in contemporary Islamic societies the link between gender relations and political structures seems more inextricable than it is elsewhere'.[104] She continues that:

> Traditional roles may thus come to be endowed with a positive political significance, as when veiling is used to express opposition to a regime or when producing many children is a forceful statement in a political struggle. Women can be caught between two conflicting loyalties – to their fellow-women and to their nation and may sacrifice some of their rights as women to reaffirm their identity as Arabs, Muslims, or nationals of a given country.[105]

[103] Asher Susser, 'The Rise of Hamas in Palestine and the Crisis of Secularism in the Arab World', p. 10.
[104] Carla Makhlouf Obermeyer, 'Islam, Women, and Politics: The Demography of Arab Countries', *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Mar., 1992), pp. 33-60, (p. 52).
[105] Obermeyer, 'Islam, Women, and Politics: The Demography of Arab Countries', p. 52.

Sarab's personal struggle between either submission to, or independence from Nael is repeated on the national level. She has either to conform to the accepted norms or to be seen by society as an aberrant. Unlike female characters in *In Search for Walid Wasoud* and *The Ship*, Sarab does not hold a middle ground. She realizes that fighting gender stereotypes, masculinist ideas, patriarchal systems and above all supporting the Palestinian cause are the real salvation for her lonely and desperate life. The Other she has been looking for an honest and true contact with is the unexplored horizons outside her limited zones of work and love. Sarab summarizes her need to revive her belief in humanity and the humanist bond between herself and people all over the world:

> The language of human understanding is doomed, and the life force is generated only in the innermost cores. [...] The same ferocious cycle is renewed every day […] robbing all human movement from its humanity and turning it into empty, mechanical motion. And finally the hormone of feeling begins to dissipate little by little, disappearing down an ever steepening slope, to the bottom of swamps, the swamps of slavery.[106]

Like Walid Masoud, Sarab leaves Iraq to join the Palestinian political resistance. A year after her departure, Nael finds her studying inside the library of the Pantheon in Paris, enjoying an intellectual respite from her activities in Palestine. In their discussions, Sarab mentions that she is a member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The fact that Sarab chooses the PLO, the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, is significant. The PLO officially endorses a two-state solution, contingent on terms such as making East Jerusalem capital of the Palestinian state and giving Palestinians the right of return to land occupied by Palestinians prior to 1948.[107] Supporting the PLO, Sarab stands against the strict Islamism endorsed by Hamas. Working with the PLO, Sarab tells

[106] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 103.
[107] Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process*: Oslo and After (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 14.

Nael: 'everything I'm doing pours into the Intifada, the Revolution of Stones—Thawra al-hagāra—the revolution that has baffled the world'.[108]

In judging Sarab's political decision to join the Palestinian resistance movement, Nathaniel Greenberg argues that she, 'like Walid Masoud, is a kind of product of the elite world that Nael introduces her to' and that 'Sarab's catharsis as an admirer of literature to a committed reader and finally a 'freedom fighter', delineates an often overlooked character type of postcolonial Arabic literature that is universal in essence'. I partially agree with Greenberg: Sarab is a universal figure who adopts humanism as a means of defending human rights worldwide, but she is not a member of the elite. As Said indicates, 'there's no isolated humanist';[109] Sarab is willing to go to the Other and to find common ground. Yet, she is not in any way isolated from her people, nor does she come from an affluent family. Like Lucy, Sarab works and supports herself. She is exposed to the daily hardships of Arab women and is deeply concerned with the causes of her people. Such experiences increase her awareness of the realities and challenges facing Arab women in modern times.

In parallel with Said's definition of the humanist, Evelyne Accad argues, in relation to the contemporary Middle East, that: 'If nationalism remains at a sexist stage, and does not move beyond ownership and possessions as final goals, the cycle of hell will repeat itself and the violence will start all over again'.[110] Sarab's political activism is not merely a reaffirmation of the admirable and sacrificial role of Palestine and Arab women in the historical struggle of their countries against colonialism and patriarchy, but a

[108] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 185.
[109] Said, 'Worldly Humanism versus the Empire-Builders', p. 3.
[110] Evelyne Accad, 'Sexuality and Sexual Politics: Conflicts and Contradictions for Contemporary Women in the Middle East', *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Ann Russo (London: John Wiley & Sons, 1991), p. 246.

secular humanist stance towards life. Rather than alienation and hostility to her time and different cultures, Sarab decides to be part of the history of her country and to define the 'connection between [her]self and the rest of existence'.[111] In doing so, she symbolises Said's vision of 'a new leadership [which] is already in evidence; a leadership not completely based on tribal roots or the web of clan affiliations'.[112] Confident, educated, and above all open to 'the realities of Israel [and] the world', Sarab 'radiate[s] a kind of hopeful security. [Her] *sumud* (resilience) is real, concrete, solid'.[113]

Sarab's choice of Paris as a centre of her Palestinian activism hints that she is more on the side of a peaceful settlement and the publicization of the humanitarian calamities of the Palestinian people, than an advocate of isolation and violence. Sarab, like Lucy, chooses to fight the powers of patriarchy and sexism through love and humanity, but from outside her country. Still in the process of mobilizing international sympathy and belief in the right of Palestinian people to have authority over their land, Sarab is not concerned with personal possession of land but with the collective right of her oppressed, displaced and exiled people. Moreover, the spread of strict Islamist ideas and politics marks an upsetting retreat for Arab women and freedom seekers in the Arab world. This fact encourages Sarab to fight for her cause from secular Paris. When Nael asks her to return to Iraq, she says:

> Do you want me to go back to compulsion, blindness, and this accursed individualism in everything, the affliction of all Arabs? I'm here in the heart of everything now, and living life the way I like. […] I'm breaking the siege and setting myself free, every day. And I write. I write a lot, and I don't need to put

[111] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, pp. 18-9.
[112] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky*: *Palestinian Lives* / Edward W. Said; photographs by Jean Mohr. (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 112
[113] Said, *After the Last Sky*: *Palestinian Lives*, p. 112.

> the scissors today to what I wrote yesterday, as I used to do every day, fearing some ignorant, unknown reader.[114]

Impassioned and practical Sarab, like Lucy in *Disgrace*, comes to represent the spirit of action missing from Arab society. In their final conversation Sarab explains: 'can't you see, Nael, I've decided I would only face death with my full volition, when I'm still fully in control of my mental and physical faculties?'[115] Again, everything in life, including facing death, is not an emotional endeavour, but an intellectual one. Sarab's devotion to the Palestinian cause, like Melanie's and Lucy's struggles, is affirmative of the right of freedom and justice for all human beings. These female characters are acculturated into inferiority, but they are strong enough to re-acculturate themselves as equal human beings with men.

Late-Style in Disgrace and The Journals of Sarab Affan

> When [David] is dead [Lucy] will, with luck, still be here doing her ordinary tasks among the flowerbeds. And from within her will have issued another existence that with luck will be just as solid, just as long-lasting. So it will go on, a line of existences in which his share, his gift, will grow inexorably less and less, till it may as well be forgotten.[116]

> Right here, right now, all that I'm able to do is go after this sensuous dream, no longer a dream, an experience I segregate every day from all my other experiences and those of my family, because mine do not belong to theirs. Dream and experience, together they are the jewel whose glitter gets me through this everyday darkness I refuse to accept.[117]

In relating humanism to late style in cultural and literary works, Said aims to 'locate a point of origin, a beginning in retrospective time' that initiates an act of 'birth, possible orphanhood, the discovery of roots, and the creation of a new world, a career, and

[114] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 185.
[115] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 186.
[116] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 217.
[117] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 95.

society'.[118] For Said, humanism and late style inspire processes of action, contribution and creative difference. In the literary field, Said perceives late style 'as a catching fire between extremes, which no longer allows for any secure middle ground or harmony of spontaneity'.[119] Hence, late style elaborates 'an alternative argument to the prevailing conventions that so deaden and dehumanize and rerationalize the human spirit' that, Said emphasizes, 'is not only an intellectual achievement but also a humanistic one'.[120] Moreover, Said traces cases of late style predominantly through 'the peculiarities of [the text's] style'; peculiarities that 'go beyond converting time to space'.[121] Rather, late style 'is in, but oddly apart from, the present'.[122] Thus, the notion of lateness encapsulates a dissonance between late work and the past works of the author. In the forthcoming analysis, I argue that *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan* are examples of late style. I specifically analyse the technique of polyphony in the two novels as an example of the late 'peculiarities' of the texts.

In the above quotations from Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Jabra's *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, respectively, the two authors express a remarkable departure from their previous representations of female characters in their novels. In the first quotation, Coetzee endorses for the first time in his novels, the right and authentic connection of the white South African people, particularly women, to the land of South Africa. Throughout his literary career up till the publication of *Disgrace* in 1999, Coetzee portrays a variety of white South African characters including oppressive leaders, callous officials, repentant oppressors, selfish landowners, opportunists, obedient employees, hardworking

[118] Said, *On Late Style*, p. 24.
[119] Said, *On Late Style*, p. 11.
[120] Said, *On Late Style*, pp. 132-133.
[121] Said, *On Late Style*, p. xii.
[122] Said, *On Late Style*, p. 43.

labourers, marginalized women and, at best, ordinary, kind people. However, there is no single white character that expresses real interest in the cause of justice in South Africa or shows real fascination and connection to the land like those expressed by Black characters Anna K, Michael K in *Life and Times of Michael K* or Friday in *Foe*. In comparison, the white attachment to the meaning and significance of land seems shallow and unreal. Nevertheless, in *Disgrace*, Coetzee shifts the fascination with and attachment to the land of South Africa from black to white characters. Through Lucy, who stays in South Africa 'because she loves the land and the old, ländliche way of life',[123] Coetzee defends the right of the white South Africans to the land and identity of post-apartheid South Africa; a right that entails taking responsibility for past crimes and making sacrifices in order to achieve peaceful co-existence with the Blacks and coloured South Africans.

In the second quotation, the Arab heroine, Sarab, in Jabra's *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, declares a break with her culture and society. She decides to defend her freedom and autonomy as a woman and as an exile, through inventing a distinct path for herself. Adopting a revolutionary humanist perspective, Sarab symbolizes the struggle between repetition and innovation, the balance between being committed and not risking missing opportunities and losing the struggle. In the end, Sarab chooses innovation and risk. Unlike the majority of Jabra's female and male characters who never have the courage to leave their land and families, Sarab discovers that her personal and national interest is in leaving her oppressive society. The fact that Sarab lives and defends the Palestinian cause from Paris rather than from within Palestine or any surrounding Arab

[123] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 113.

country, is a new direction in Jabra's perception of the political future of Palestinian people and women's position in modern Arab societies. After the failure to transfer the Western experience of democracy and freedom to the Arab world and rather than leaving the Western Other with the same stereotypical ideas about the Arabs and the Palestinians, Sarab decides to reintroduce the Palestinian cause to the international community in her own way.

Polyphony and Female Voices of Action in Disgrace

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* Mikhail Bakhtin introduces the term 'polyphony' as 'a new theory of authorial point of view' that entails 'a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, [which] combine but are not merged in the unity of the event'.[124] For Bakhtin, polyphony is an authorial approach that allows great freedom of interaction to the characters that possess and express different centres of consciousness, different voices, and different, if not conflictual attitudes. Like the majority of Coetzee's novels, *Disgrace* is structured around the familial experiences of both black Melanie Isaacs and white Lucy Lurie. However, in *Disgrace*, through the actions and decisions taken by female characters like Lucy and Melanie, Coetzee shows characters in the process of making and redefining their personal and historical positions. Through tracing the two women as they attempt to understand, escape and make their way through the realities of post-apartheid South Africa, the novel compares and contrasts the urban and the rural, the male and the female, the old and the new and the deluded and the realist. Despite the fact that David Lurie is a university professor of communications, and a modern man, he stands for the old sexist and racist cultural South

[124] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (New York: University Of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 33.

African heritage. He knows nothing about the private life of his only daughter, Lucy, and disapproves of her choice to live in rural South Africa. Even after her rape, which leaves her vulnerable and insecure, Lucy repudiates her father's suggestions and compassion, informing him that:

> You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life. You are the main character, I am a minor character who doesn't make an appearance until halfway through. Well, contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor. I am not minor. I have a life of my own, just as important to me as yours is to you, and in my life I am the one who makes the decisions.[125]

Lucy's words indicate her rejection of a dark side of David's personality as a domineering patriarch who seeks to fix her in a position of marginality. Throughout her life, David disapproves of Lucy's friends as 'nothing to be proud of' and they 'are not going to lead her to a higher life',[126] and her homosexual identity: '[David] does not like to think of his daughter in the throes of passion with another woman'.[127] David, like Magda's father in Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*, even regards true fatherhood as having a son: 'A father without the sense to have a son: is this how it is all going to end, is this how his line is going to run out?'[128] Both fathers marginalize and devalue their daughters' abilities and decisions. David regards her marriage deal with Petrus as an official announcement of his personal 'disgrace and shame'.[129] He is no longer the main character or the controller of events and others. For David, Lucy's reconciliation with her black rapists and neighbourhood is inseparable from her homosexuality. Both are a threat to his superiority, for he has been 'empowered by the cultural objectification and sexualisation of the female body' and his domination has been ensured by 'the production

[125] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 198.
[126] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 74.
[127] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 86.
[128] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 199.
[129] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 115.

and reproduction of [racist] and sexist culture'.[130] David's sexism is an essential part of an apartheid culture that judges any defiance from established hierarchical orders 'as outside, excluded, aberrant, inferior, in a word *below*', to quote Said.[131] Lucy and Melanie are, then, fighting 'an aggressive sense of nation, home, community, and belonging'.[132] Mikhail Bakhtin notes that the central challenge facing the authors of polyphonic novels is the 'assertion of poly- or heteroglot nature of real life- experiences', which is achieved not only by 'sens[ing] other's equally valid consciousnesses', but also by recreating 'these other consciousnesses in their authentic unfinalizability'.[133] In *Disgrace*, Coetzee is concerned to give each character the right to express and defend his/her point of view.

David regards Lucy's 'asexual clothes and the turn away from men' as statements of 'independence, considered, purposeful' that result from the fact that 'she has not led a protected life'.[134] To lead a protected life, Lucy is expected to be submissive to her male guardians, namely her father and her prospective husband. For David, Petrus and her rapists, lesbian Lucy is, as Lucy Graham sees it, regarded as 'unowned' and therefore 'huntable'.[135] However, Lucy's vulnerability as a lesbian woman is part of a wider sexist culture. Like Lucy, black student Melanie Isaacs and Petrus's two black wives are also seen as vulnerable sexual targets, not merely on account of their gender but on account of their race as well. While David views black Melanie, even if she has a boyfriend, as always 'unowned' believing that '[she] should share [her beauty] widely',[136]

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[130] Susan Bordo qtd. in Elizabeth MacNabb, *The Fractured Family: The Second Sex and Its Disconnected Daughters* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 191.
[131] Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, pp. 13-14.
[132] Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 15.
[133] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 13.
[134] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 33.
[135] Lucy Graham, 'Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Jun., 2003), pp. 433-444, (p. 439).
[136] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 16.

Petrus not only sees his obedient wives as a burden, for he has to 'pay for [their] clothing and nice things', but also believes that 'a boy is better'.[137] Thus, David and Petrus are two sides of the same coin of sexism and cultural stagnancy. No wonder, then, that the two men deal with the Other, whether gender or racial, in terms of violence and opportunism. In this way, Coetzee reinterprets the interaction between the native and the colonial in post-apartheid South Africa 'as a polyphonic accompaniment', manifesting 'the implicit and proleptic [and] the theoretical and historical'.[138]

Put this way, Coetzee employs male characters, like David and Petrus, to shed light on political corruption in post-apartheid urban and rural South Africa. Jelena Petković highlights 'the openness of urban society/community' and how it has 'mechanisms which enable communication among [people with] social, ethnic, religious, political, sexual, professional, and other differences'[139] and endorses 'the pronouncement of the law that would acknowledge relations and regulation of rights'.[140] Yet, she also points to 'the breakdown of traditional solidarity under the pressure of fast and dispassionate life in big cities'.[141] In *Disgrace*, Cape Town is represented not only as the locus of official post-apartheid rule and law, but also as the social centre in which differences are supposed to be respected. Rapist David tells the university committee 'I plead guilty. That is as far as I am prepared to go'.[142] It is a culture, as Lucy Lurie sees it, of 'scapegoats and escapees', which 'load[s] the sins of the city on to the goat's back and

[137] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 130.
[138] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 71.
[139] Jelena Petković, 'Traditional Values and Modernization Challenges in Forming Urban and Rural Culture', *Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology,* Vol. 6, No. 1, (2007), pp. 23-39, (p. 27).
[140] Petković, 'Traditional Values and Modernization Challenges in Forming Urban and Rural Culture', p. 27.
[141] Petković, 'Traditional Values and Modernization Challenges in Forming Urban and Rural Culture', p. 27.
[142] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 55.

drive[s] it out, and the city [is] cleansed'.[143] Getting rid of David is enough for Cape Town University to re-establish order and the status quo. There are no serious attempts at achieving real equality and freedom. Moreover, in rural South African regions, the situation is not much different. Still dominated by 'the constraints and the pressure of patriarchal rural isolation, self-sufficiency and cultural uniformity', white Lucy faces forces of 'tribal bond and [the] practice of customary law'.[144] Coetzee himself remarks that in South Africa 'rural violence is by no means a new phenomenon. […] In other words, farm murders, and crimes in general against whites are indeed part of a larger historical plot which has everything to do with the arrogation of the land by whites in colonial times'.[145] According to Coetzee, political and cultural ties in South Africa inform each other. Petrus uses customary law to get hold of Lucy's land not only because she is a vulnerable woman in a sexist society, but also because she belongs to the colonial Other. As such, it is the subjectivity of different characters and different consciousnesses in *Disgrace* that forcibly brings the extremes together in the moment, filling the dense polyphony with its tensions.

Sexual orientation is an important new element in the polyphony of Coetzee's novel. Edward Said regards 'feminist and gay movements' as not only new forces that 'contest the patriarchal and fundamentally masculine norms regulating society', but also demonstrate 'a clamorous antagonism between the status quo powers of the national state and the disadvantaged populations locked inside unrepresented or suppressed by it'.[146]

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[143] Coetzee, *Disgrace,* p. 91.
[144] Ericka Curran & Elsje Bonthuys, 'Customary Law and Domestic Violence in Rural South African Communities', *The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation* (October, 2004), pp. 1-33, (p 7).
[145] J. M. Coetzee, *Stranger Shores: Literary Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 256.
[146] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage: 1994), pp. 28-9.

Similarly, in *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives,* Marilyn Farwell argues that the lesbian subject 'functions as a powerful disrupter of the narrative' because the term 'lesbian' 'has acquired larger implications, in some cases functioning as a metaphor for the feminist woman or for an autonomous female sexuality or body and in other situations as a harbinger of the future or as a revised textuality'.[147] In the light of these arguments, I suggest that both lesbian Lucy's and black Melanie's revolts against a white masculinist attitude that, according to Anna McClintock, locates them, along with the black Other, 'on the margins of the civilization and progress that defined white male identities',[148] is an example of female resistance and solidarity in face of apartheid heritage and post-apartheid corruption. Through their defiant choices and difference, Lucy and Melanie disturb the political status quo in their country. They form a new historical consciousness that challenges patriarchy on all levels.

Yet it might be argued that there is not enough polyphony in Coetzee's bold novel. Some feminist critics have taken issue with the absence of the female voice. Lucy Graham, for instance, criticizes 'the complete absence of [Lucy's] story in the narrative structure of *Disgrace*. Similarly, the reader never hears Melanie's story, and the accounts of the two women are significant lacunae in each narrative setting'.[149] However, my argument is that Coetzee focuses more on the two women's actions and influence within their families and communities, rather than on their actual words. For example, Melanie never explains her true feelings and thoughts during and after the end of her relationship with David Lurie. Yet, her report of her rape is a refusal of the victimization and

[147] Marilyn Farwell, *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives* (New York: New York University Press, 1966), p. 16.
[148] Anna McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 44.
[149] Lucy Graham, 'Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*', p. 439.

systematic alienation practised against black women by their cultures and political orders. In addition, Melanie's experience transforms her perception of her rights as a black citizen with equal rights to whites. She moves on with her studies and her career as an actress. In a similar way, Lucy's voice in *Disgrace* is encapsulated in her actions. Living and working in the countryside, Lucy establishes a new rural white identity in real connection with the land. She is concerned with the politics of co-existence and integration, rather than the politics of colonial oppression and discrimination. The fact that at the end of the novel, pregnant Lucy is carrying out 'field-labour; peasant tasks, immemorial',[150] is an assertion that she is integrated in rural culture and that 'she is becoming a peasant'.[151]

In *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism*, Rosemary Hennessy argues that 'performative play with cultural codes is a postmodern fashion statement' that aims to 'challenge naturalized notions of identity and difference'.[152] The result, Hennessy suggests, is that 'identities are fluid, open to resignification and recontextualization'.[153] This process of intellectual, cultural and moral play occurs within Coetzee's *Disgrace*. Both Melanie and Lucy discover that their sexuality and cultural positions are an 'unstable, fabricated performative practice or set of practices that plays up the indeterminacy of identity and for this reason can be seized upon for political resistance'.[154] Lucy accepts the challenge to 'start at ground level. With nothing. No cards,

[150] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 217.
[151] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 217.
[152] Rosemary Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (London: Routledge , 2000), p. 69.
[153] Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism*, p. 69.
[154] Judith Butler 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 13–31, (p. 14).

no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity'.[155] She has the will to make a sacrifice for authority over the land. In this way, both Melanie and Lucy prove that David Lurie, the symbol of colonial culture, is 'a figure from the margins of history'.[156] Thus, Lucy's and Melanie's decisions and actions will determine the political future in South Africa.

Polyphony and Female Authority in The Journals of Sarab Affan

Sarab Affan in Jabra's *The Journals of Sarab Affan* is the main decision-maker and planner of her future life. She, like Lucy and Melanie in *Disgrace*, disrupts not only Jabra's narrative but undermines his authorial mastery over the text as well. Jabra's work 'privileges the multiple first-person technique', which allows for a complex layering of voices and 'serves to heighten the drama of his characters' search for identity'.[157] Nevertheless, Jabra's multi-narrator technique endorses ideas and characteristics that are 'typically his own'.[158] There is a recurrent thematic and autobiographical thread of ideas running throughout Jabra's novels and short stories. His characters may be regarded as representing different aspects of his personality. The characters who people Jabra's world, as reflected in *In Search of Walid Masoud* and *The Ship*, are in the main intellectuals: writers, artists, members of the social elite or bourgeoisie, radical politicians, nouveaux riches and businessmen. They live a life of struggle, alienation and insecurity. Palestinians or non-Palestinians, male or female, they aspire towards a newer, freer and better existence so as to escape from the problems of life in contemporary Arab

[155] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 205.
[156] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 167.
[157] Mattityahu Peled, 'Sexuality in Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Novel, *In Search of Walid Masoud'*, *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. Roger Allen and Hilary Kilpatrick (London: Saqi Books, 1995), pp. 140-153, (p. 144).
[158] Adnan Haydar & Roger Allen, 'Introduction', *The Ship* by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, trans. Adnan Haydar & Roger Allen (Colorado: Three Continents Press, 1985), p. 3.

society. Seeking exit from despair, anxiety and marginalization, Jabra's characters find refuge in sex, drinking and bodily pleasure.

Unlike his previous novels, in *The Journals of Sarab Affan,* Jabra relinquishes his mastery not only in relation to the recurrent themes of his works but also in relation to his characters. Despite the fact that a diary or journal is usually the most private and intimate kind of text that represents a single voice with an authoritarian and even despotic presence, Sarab's journals turn out to be a truly polyphonic text. They illustrate the clashes of independent voices, consciousnesses and gazes, all of which appear to be outside Jabra's control. In discussing the development of the 'ethical import of the concept of polyphony', Brian Poole highlights 'an intersubjective plane of interaction upon which the author's characters appear to have a consciousness distinct from the author himself: they have a position of their own […] to speak in their own 'voice'.[159]Jabra asserts the distinction and independence of the different voices of his characters through the structure of the novel itself. The journals themselves contain other journals, whose contents have a more personal and confessional tone, and which are written not from the writer's or Sarab's point of view but for Randa's eyes, while Nael's voice is heard through the discussions of his novels and personal beliefs. The novel, then, disrupts the idea of an original, singular or natural father or mother of the text. Rather, each character draws his or her own text and world. Sarab says:

> I will think of [Nael] as an unfinished marble statue, and everything I've imagined about him from his writings will be the raw material that I alone will give final shape. I will set his heart beating, ignite the senses in his body, and

[159] Brian Poole, 'From Phenomenology to Dialogue: Max Scheler's Phenomenological Tradition and Mikhail Bakhtin's Development', *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 108-135, (p. 118).

> with this I will have reversed the story of *Pygmalion*, who fell in love with the statue he himself chiselled.[160]

Seen within the postmodern norms that establish 'narrative [a]s a system that constructs rather than reflects experience and that […] is already constituted as a male and heterosexual',[161] *The Journals of Sarab Affan* disrupts the traditional structural elements of the narrative through neutralizing the narrative voice. Rather than interpreting authority in terms of sexuality or gender, Jabra endorses a humanist critical awareness through which he 'posits a final authority or body of knowledge underlying the text' and the voice who 'discovers this final authority possesses the key to the text's 'true meaning".[162] It is an intellectual battle. Sarab learns that human experiences are social and cultural constructs which she can change, modify and radically reimage. Unlike female characters in *In Search of Walid Masoud* and *The Ship*, Sarab does not perceive her sexual and gender roles as naturally ordained. Quite the opposite, for, while Nael informs her that 'erotic love [i]s the true love one person has for another',[163] and construes the meaning of love in sensual terms, looking for 'women possessed [of] some quality that stimulated the mind, the imagination, the body',[164] Sarab interprets Nael's love in terms of sexual/political superiority and inferiority: 'I felt that he was trying to take control of the situation before I could'.[165]

For Sarab, similar to Lucy and Melanie, sex, culture and politics are inseparable. As a result, her literary practice, as Said articulates it, is 'a process and

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[160] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 22.
[161] Marilyn Farwell, *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives* (New York: New York University Press, 1966), p. 12.
[162] Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 36.
[163] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 115.
[164]Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 33.
[165] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 22.

inauguration' of 'the bringing of literature to performance'.[166] Sarab thinks: 'Today words and tomorrow hellfire'.[167] She takes writing as a pathway towards action in defence of the rights of the dominated, displaced, or silenced. Her texts are against institutionalized culture. Since Sarab, unlike Lucy and Melanie, has a strong verbal presence as the only major female character and as an author, she employs clever and witty dialogues, often philosophical discussions of love and the meaning of life and interesting and provoking ideas as a way to highlight how the Arab woman 'is the most miserable creature on the face of the earth',[168] but also she does all she can to assert herself as a full and free human being in her society. She challenges the bleak images of Arab women as silenced, disenfranchised and physically and psychologically violated. Inspired by 'the accounts of [her] Palestinian grandmother Khadija about Jerusalem',[169] and the heroic acts of Palestinian children in the intifada against Israeli occupation, Sarab, like Lucy, dares to die because she wants to live life freely, to the full, and in accordance with her own vision. While Lucy asserts that 'I must have peace around me. I am prepared to do anything, make any sacrifice, for the sake of peace',[170] Sarab tells Nael that '[she has] decided [she] would only face death with my full volition, when [she is] still fully in control of my mental and physical faculties.'[171] For Sarab, freedom is action:

> I wish the body were pure mental energy, unbounded, weightless, a thought that rises up like a firework, then disappears, then comes back, then disappears again. [...] I wish existence would transform into pure motion like that of a cloud being pushed by high winds until it builds up moisture and turns into rain, then builds

[166] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 52-3.
[167] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 44.
[168] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 8.
[169] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 45.
[170] Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p. 208.
[171] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 187.

> up and dissipates into rain again. [...] And thus *being* and *nothingness* would become one, inseparable, somehow.[172]

Ghassan Nasr argues that Sarab's disappearance and the prospect that the disappearance has meant joining an underground movement for the liberation of Palestine 'offers a secular redemption'[173] but criticizes the novel insofar as 'for Jabra's protagonists, it is often a verbal presence that determines their identity, in a struggle against the threat of extinction through language, [Sarab's] disappearance, results in an absence, a defeat, on the stage of words'.[174] I partially disagree with Nasr. Sarab is a secular humanist, but her verbal absence is immediately replaced by the intensity of her acts of resistance. Unlike Walid Masoud who disappears without returning, Sarab returns to the novel as a freedom fighter and a writer. Professing at the beginning of the novel that 'when the enemy is not defined, and like the air all around us everywhere, there is no other recourse but trickery, disguise, circumvention, no other recourse but to follow the rule 'hit and run', dodge, only to hit again', [175] Sarab fearlessly decides 'to be inside the moment with all its truths and painful demands'.[176]

Utilizing Said's idea of late style, *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan* can be seen to mark a new direction in Coetzee's and Jabra's characterization of female characters and their political visions of the future of post-apartheid South Africa and post-first Intifada Palestine. Both novelists abandon archetypal or stereotypical representations and emphasize the individuality of their literary visions and

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[172] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 187.
[173] Ghassan Nasr, trans., 'After Word', *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (London: Syracuse University Press, 2007), p. 192.
[174] Ghassan Nasr, trans., 'After Word', p. 190.
[175] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p.1.
[176] Jabra, *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, p. 187.

confrontations. On the one hand, Coetzee's emphasis on the right of white South Africans to the land of South Africa at a time when apartheid crimes and violations of human rights were being recounted, recorded and redeemed, is a daring attitude. He refuses collective punishment of the whites for crimes they did not commit. Jabra's breakdown of Arab women's gender and political siege, on the other hand, is a positive idea in the age of the rise of Islamism and the resurgence of conservative ideas. In addition, Sarab's move to Paris is a challenging and different political option at a time of the high Palestinian nationalist feelings that accompanied the First Intifada. By producing such works, both authors conform to Said's argument that 'lateness is the idea of surviving beyond what is acceptable and normal'.[177]

Conclusion

Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and Jabra's *The Journals of Sarab Affan* (1992) suggest a decade of political transformation in South Africa and Palestine, respectively. Nevertheless, it is not by any means easy to identify the broader sweeps of such political transformation in the two countries. In post-apartheid South Africa or the 'The Rainbow Nation', persistent political efforts have been meant to build a society of reconciliation, introducing multicultural diversity, interracial harmony and social equality. However, the desired transformations in the socio-political situation are far from real and the old inequalities, together with apartheid institutions, are actually still latent and effective. Similarly, late-1980s and early-1990s Palestine witnessed political troubles and fierce resistance against Zionist aggression. The First Intifada, the rise of Hamas and the divided opinions of Arab countries in relation to Israeli administration, along with the rise

[177] Said, *On Late Style*, p. 14.

of political Islamism mark a turning point in the life of liberal and secular Arab writers and intellectuals, particularly women.

Unlike the majority of female characters in *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Foe* whose search for economic security meant that they were caught within the framework of a phallocratic economy, women in *Disgrace* have a reasonable degree of economic stability and independence. Their main challenge is a purely ideological fight for recognition of their humanness. Similarly, while Arab female characters in Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* and *The Ship* are unable to determine their own life choices and lack social and political engagement within their societies, Sarab in *The Journal of Sarab Affan*, is a determined, knowledgeable and independent woman who interweaves her personal interests and aims with the political conditions of her society.

Although the two novels share a 'lateness' of style, there remain important differences between them. Jabra's characters exteriorize their actions, whereas Coetzee's characters internalize theirs. Moreover, Coetzee's female characters in *Disgrace* are mainly quiet and composed while Sarab in Jabra's *The Journal of Sarab Affan* is confrontational and nervous. Yet, they all share the admirable ability to balance and control their physical and mental faculties, even after violation and abuse. What distinguishes the female characters in *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan* from those discussed in the previous two chapters, then, is that they know exactly what they want to do with their lives and choose to pursue their personal dreams. Rather than entering into useless conflicts with their male guardians and patriarchal society, they figure out a means to end patriarchal domination and coercion against them.

Despite the fact that there are some critics and readers who object to Coetzee's representation of black men as rapists in *Disgrace* and Jabra's representations of Arab intellectuals as chauvinistic hypocrites in *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, I argue that both novelists stand against any form of political, cultural or intellectual patriarchy and marginalization. With their unusual and audacious late styles in the two novels, Coetzee and Jabra dissolve clear-cut boundaries of identity and traditional literary representations of political struggle in South Africa and Palestine.

To sum up, *Disgrace* and *The Journal of Sarab Affan* read women's roles and positions politically. In the two novels, women are not excluded from the public arena, but are subordinated within it. Consequently, female characters' survival and struggles against patriarchy and phallocentric customs are the outcome of the rise of women's awareness of their rights, rather than a result of organized institutional and political plans for social and gender equality in South Africa and Palestine. Through their representation of women's resilience and resistance, Coetzee and Jabra underline the need for a new political order, and transformed attitudes towards women in society.

Conclusion

> To move beyond insularity and provincialism and to see several cultures and literatures together, contrapuntally is an already considerable investment in precisely this kind of antidote to reductive nationalism and uncritical dogma.[1]

I began this thesis by identifying gender oppression as an essential part of apartheid thinking and systems. Gender discrimination worldwide is characterized by state sponsorship, institutional complicity and cultural silence, but this thesis has shown that the novels of Coetzee and Jabra vigorously contest such covert acceptance. In fact, their novels exemplify Said's definition of contrapuntal literature as self-consciously and positively engaging with history and as resistant to any form of apartheid, oppression and violence. Moreover, each novelist shows some belief in and enthusiasm for the possibility of a better future. Said's contrapuntal theory is itself an optimistic one. Coetzee's and Jabra's novels not only conform to but also build upon Said's thesis. Said, Coetzee and Jabra demonstrate a concern with past atrocities and the scars of humiliating wounds 'as an instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending toward a new future'.[2] Throughout their novels, Coetzee and Jabra do not hesitate to examine and critique the past and the present, but they also have a vision of a future of freedom and equality in their societies and worldwide.

This thesis has drawn heavily on Edward Said's contrapuntal theory. The latter endorses a humanist attitude towards the past and the present, the self and the Other and the political and the personal, with the aim of speeding up the eradication of human prejudice and of fighting chauvinistic and violent nationalism. It has argued that in their literary works, Coetzee and Jabra maintain and develop a political, humanist perspective of resistance against patriarchy and racism premised

[1] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 50.
[2] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 35.

upon the reform of familial relations, with particular emphasis on the emergence of the oppressed, such as women, the coloured and the marginalized, as threatening forces of both violent and nonviolent change. For Said, Coetzee, and Jabra, establishing a better, democratic future in areas of conflict like South Africa and Palestine, requires a political will, a just system to amend past atrocities and most importantly an ability to forgive. In this way, their intellectual visions embrace universalist, humanist values that condemn the Holocaust and the abuse of the Afrikaners as much as rejecting Afrikaner and Israeli apartheid against black South Africans and Palestinians, respectively.

Furthermore, I have argued that the three authors position women as equal human beings. Said, Coetzee and Jabra designate women the same roles and responsibilities as men and thus their causes and struggles are perceived as the outcome of a problematic cultural-political construct, rather than simply a gender one. While Said does not discuss women's causes separately in order to challenge critical traditions that genderize critical studies, Coetzee and Jabra represent women as actively involved in the processes of change and struggle in their societies and not as victimized, second-class citizens. A contrapuntal reading of the interaction between literary events and historical background in the selected novels of Coetzee and Jabra endorses the two novelists' unique vision of women as leading change in South Africa and Palestine, mainly through nonviolent and peaceful resistance, in spite of cultural stereotypes and political obstacles.

Chapter One presented a contrapuntal reading of the interaction between historical facts and the representation of women in Coetzee's and Jabra's novels generally. This brief chronological survey of their work showed a shared reformist of women's rights and roles in postcolonial South African and Arab societies as an essential constituent of the democratic and just future in these societies. In the early

novels of both writers, women suffer the abuse of the individual or familial patriarch figure like Magda's father in Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* and Somia's complicit mother in *A Scream in a Long Night*. In these novels, women are completely excluded from public roles. In novels like *The Ship* and *In Search of Walid Masoud* by Jabra and *Foe, Life and Times of Michael K,* and *Age of Iron* by Coetzee, women achieve economic independence despite the persistence of corrupt and patriarchal structures. However in the late novels *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan,* Coetzee and Jabra, respectively, portray women as political activists in the sense that they defend their personal rights to freedom and equality through furthering political reform in their countries.

Chapter Two investigated in more detail the representation of female characters in Coetzee's *Foe* and Jabra's *The Ship*. It argued that, by forming a secular explanation of the world and human relations, women in the two novels were more open and revolutionary in their practices of the values of difference and co-existence. Stereotyped as cultural symbols of national authenticity and identity in their countries, Susan Barton in *Foe* and Luma Abdel-Ghani in *The Ship* fight for an advanced view not only of women as individual human beings, but also of the Other as equal. Additionally, Chapter Two explored Said's unique perception of 'secular' thinking and creative practices, like music and art, as emancipatory forces that liberate the human soul and spirit from negative feelings of anger, injustice and hostility. In the two novels, oppressed characters, like Susan Barton and Friday in *Foe* and Luma Abdel-Ghani and Wadi Assaf in *The Ship,* use spiritual and creative practices like music, dance and the art of writing to overcome psychological and cultural subjugation and stereotypes and to sympathize and identify with the Other as a different human being, not as an enemy

Chapter Three traced how female characters in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* and Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* utilized the hybrid, interdependent economic environments in South Africa and Palestine, respectively, to promote the politics of co-citizenship and individual autonomy. Women in these two novels consciously engage with the decision-making policies of their families and their countries. For women like Anna K and female workers at Jakkalsdrif camp in *Life and Times of Michael K* and Najma Humsiyya, Maryam Al-Safar and Wisal Raouf8 in *In Search of Walid Masoud*, economic independence not only enables them to sustain a solid national resistance to oppression and colonial discrimination, but also to take the lead in challenging patriarchal and sexist cultural traditions inside their native cultures. In *Life and Times of Michael K* and *In Search of Walid Masoud*, South African Anna K and her son Michael K choose nonviolent resistance to oppression but rebels used a1rmed struggle, while Palestinian Najma Humsiyya and her son Walid Masoud value peaceful resistance, the grandson Marwan Walid used weapons to defend his occupied land. For Said, Coetzee and Jabra, then, hybridity denotes the diversity of attitudes, choices, and relations. Yet, they also warn the local governments and the international community that the continued negligence of the rights of the oppressed can lead to further violence.

In Chapter Three, I also argued that Coetzee and Jabra intentionally employed myth in *Life and Times of Michael K* and *In Search of Walid Masoud*, respectively, both to commemorate the sufferings and resistance of the black South Africans and Palestinians against colonial oppression, and to deconstruct Orientalist and colonial stereotypes regarding the Other. While Coetzee rewrites the Afrikaner myth of the Great Trek to tell the story of Black South Africans, Jabra counters the mythical stereotypes of Oriental women as sexualized, helpless and subjugated wives and mistresses.

Chapter Four analysed female political activism in Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Jabra's *The Journals of Sarab Affan*. While Lucy Lurie and Melanie Isaacs in *Disgrace* take the initiative to re-define the inherited, discriminatory racial order in post-apartheid South Africa, Sarab Affan in *The Journals of Sarab Affan* turns to political activism for the liberation of Palestine. Women in these two novels succeed in liberating their minds and bodies from the shackles of gender, racial and cultural binary oppositions of male/female, white/black, and superior/inferior. Moreover, in Chapter Four, I shed light on Said's idea of 'late style' which marks a shift in the literary production of an author. *Disgrace* and *The Journals of Sarab Affan* demonstrate an obvious example of 'late style' in Coetzee's and Jabra's representations of women. In the two novels, female characters are politically active agents whose involvement with the cultural politics of identity and nationalism in South Africa and Palestine is expressed through an innovative 'polyphonic' style.

As I have explained in the Introduction of this thesis, Edward Said's works have been criticized for marginalizing women's rights and roles within his overall analysis of the discourses of imperialism and Orientalism. However, in this thesis I set out to prove the opposite. I believe that Said's contrapuntalism is an invaluable critical tool for a feminist reading of the whole complex and problematic relationship between 'knowledge and power' in postcolonial societies. Said's contrapuntalism implies different, interdisciplinary perspectives, visions and analyses that must be able to think through and interpret together experiences that are 'discrepant', each with its particular agenda, pace of development, historical formations, and system of external relationships with other discourses. As such, contrapuntalism shares the same concerns as feminist criticism, which aims to highlight the significance of gender issues in history, politics, and culture. In addition, feminist criticism has been

central to postcolonial studies and discusses many of the broad concerns of postcolonialism.[3]

In this way, I chose contrapuntalism as the best critical method of conducting feminist readings of the novels of Coetzee and Jabra because contrapuntalism escapes the controversial and restricting implications of feminist criticism and thought to integrate women's causes and problems within the struggle of human beings for freedom and equality. I believe that when intellectuals and thinkers stop using categories of male/female, they are participating in setting up a new literary and critical tradition free of the limitations of established gender or racial categories. Like Said's humanist criticism, Coetzee's and Jabra's literary humanism endorses the politics of activism, showing a belief in the collective human conscience to be mobilized against crimes against humanity, such as apartheid.

Accordingly, in this thesis, I employed contrapuntalism as a humanistic approach that addresses itself to the interaction between politics and culture as reflected in the selected literary texts. Despite promoting what may seem like a utopian reading of the values of humanism, secularism and hybridity as a means of deconstructing patriarchal structures and racist ideas worldwide, contrapuntalism is a realistic and practical theory. Through contrapuntalism, Said draws attention to the pivotal role played by literature and art in either deepening cultural stereotypes or endorsing alternative humanist and tolerant ideas. The aim of this Saidian contrapuntal-humanist perspective is to expose reactionary and oppressive forces and to establish new ways of understanding, which is the same ideology as to be found in the novels of Coetzee and Jabra. Although Said, Coetzee and Jabra expressed different beliefs and attitudes about politics and culture, their overall visions share a

[3] Loomba, Ania, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 43-5.

bold, future-oriented and historically-inspired feature. They are looking at past atrocities and struggle in order to avoid the past mistakes and to build a better future, acknowledging the equality of all human beings, regardless of their colour, gender or race.

Although contrapuntalism may be criticized for drawing heavily on the historical rather than the literary significance of the text, Said argues persuasively that the literary or the critical text is 'a kind of *willed human* work—not of mere unconditioned ratiocination [which gives] sight of the alliance between cultural work, political tendencies, the state, and the specific realities of domination'.[4] In this context, the meaning of originality, of continuity, of individuality of the writing process comes from comparisons, parallels, parody, and echoes of the way a text (re)reads history and culture in relation to inherited literary canons. Contrapuntalism is not, therefore, a method which ignores the aesthetic and literary dimension of writing but rather incorporates this kind of analysis within a more expansive context.

Of course, any writer is caught in the middle between his socio-cultural affiliations on the one hand and his independent artistic or critical spirit on the other. The sign of success for a writer, Said argues, is to negotiate these tensions and to 'speak truth to power'.[5] I have argued that the contrapuntal works of Coetzee and Jabra not only speak truth to power, but also find a distinct voice and style. They neither repudiate nor imitate what has gone before them; often, in fact, they are engaged upon a creative rewriting and reinvention of traditions. In this way, their works cannot be considered isolated or merely provincial. On the contrary, their novels experiment with Western literary techniques, showing an awareness of established literary canons, but at the same time re-approach other cultures and peoples with the aim of developing a new politics of representation appropriate to the

[4] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 15.
[5] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 12.

needs and concerns of the self and the Other. These novels, therefore, fit perfectly within the major aim of Said's contrapuntal theory of 'acknowledging the massively knotted and complex histories of special but nevertheless overlapping and interconnected experiences—of women, of Westerners, of Blacks, of national states and cultures'.[6]

The optimistic project of Coetzee's and Jabra's novels to work towards a different, fairer future manifests itself in the persistence of their female characters, particularly the raped and humiliated Lucy Lurie and Melanie Isaacs in *Disgrace*, and the depressed and repressed Sarab Affan in *The Journals of Sarab Affan*, to change their lives for the better. Other critics, too, have seen the works of Coetzee and Jabra as optimistic and forward-thinking, despite their repeated scenes of murder, suffering and violence. Fasil Darag regards Jabra's novels as 'deal[ing] with complexities of life such as alienation, despair, loneliness, confrontations and hard survival [in order to] defend and rebel in the name of humanity, progress and freedom'.[7] I*n A Matter of Fate: The concept of Fate in the Arab World*, Dalya Cohen-Mor argues that Jabra's works, though they 'represent the disasters of the Arab and Palestinian countries look positively towards time' in the sense that:

> [In Jabra's novels], time is seen as a factor of change, a regaining of lost rights and glory, and rehealing of the old wounds and pains. Time […]is the driving force of human advancement and represents the evolutionary spirit of man. While it may mean extinction to the individual, it means eternity for the species. Time is the great destroyer and the great healer.[8]

Similarly, for Cohen-Mor, Jabra uncovers the causes of political and cultural weakness in the Arab world, and the lack of social change. Yet, he represents individual and collective resistance and survival as continuing in the face of

[6] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 36.
[7] Fasil Darag, 'Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: Experimental Writing and Harsh Criticism of the Society', *Al-Sigel*, Issue. 76 (2009), pp. 1-4, (p. 1).
[8] Dalya Cohen-Mor, *A Matter of Fate: The Concept of Fate in the Arab World as Reflected in Modern Arabic Literature* (London: Barnes and Noble, 2001), p. 59.

despotism and oppression. Likewise, David Attwell insists that Coetzee's novels do not work 'in the spirit of abandonment',[9] and Susan Gallagher agrees with Attwell's point when she observes that Coetzee's works 'are not nihilistic [as] Coetzee does not suggest that fiction is utterly meaningless, an abyss or a void', but rather:

> While Coetzee reveals that language is an uncertain medium, he does not deny that the use of language involves responsibility. And while he dramatically depicts the nightmare of the constraints of history, he does not rule out the possibility of change or transcendence. Coetzee continually exposes the way that language works in the world, the way that power and misused authority can corrupt language. […] Coetzee's novels ultimately affirm the value of speaking and storytelling, as long as such discourse is done in a self-conscious and non-authoritarian way.[10]

In the final chapter, Chapter Four, I have referred to Said's definition of humanism, relating it to what he calls 'late style'. For Said, humanism is a constructive, positive and politically motivated activity which is pitted against discrimination. In the literary field, a humanist attitude can be expressed through late style that marks a transformation of the cultural vision, social perception, political affiliation or artistic motifs of an author. In many ways, I think Said's late works *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* and *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain* position the theory of contrapuntalism as an all-embracing new approach which consciously engages literary and historical models with social and intellectual change. As such, the contrapuntal work is allowed a wide space to grow, thrive and manoeuvre old and new ideas and historical models with the aim to synthesize new visions for development and change.

The argument of this thesis rests on Said's concept of contrapuntalism. Said uses the term 'contrapuntal' to offer comparative readings of world cultures, literatures and socio-political encounters in order to highlight a distinction between

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[9] David Attwell, 'introduction', *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 1-13, (p. 3).
[10] Gallagher, Susan, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 47.

the particularity and sovereignty of different geographical regions on the one hand and their overlapping experiences and interdependent histories on the other. Saidian contrapuntal vision may be taken as an apt description of the works of Jabra and Coetzee and the complementary contrapuntal voices that may be heard within them, and which I have sought to analyse in this thesis. Future search may build on the findings of this thesis by producing further contrapuntal readings of the relationship, for example, between historical studies and literary production; the intersection of historical consciousness, literature and practices of reading as part of rethinking power relations among the different members of society and, between a society and its outsiders. Also, contrapuntal studies may be inspirational in relation to re-reading the intertwining and overlapping connections between social and literary spaces in post-colonial societies, with emphasis on issues of identity, nationalism and gender difference.

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