

**Strategies of Refusal: Art and Cultural Politics in the work of Edward W.
Said and Hassan Khan**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the thought of Palestinian-American literary scholar Edward W. Said and selected works by London-born Egyptian artist Hassan Khan. Through a comparison and contrast of their respective approaches to the production and critique of Arab representations I argue that Said's work from the 1970s and 1980s is of lasting importance for art historians dealing with contemporary art from the Middle East in general and Khan's work in particular. Much recent scholarship on contemporary art in the Middle East and Egypt has focused on features of artworks that contribute to notions of Arab political, ethnic and national identity. While such studies are valuable in describing the social and political contexts of emerging Middle Eastern art practices, they often pass over the formal, stylistic and aesthetic strategies employed by artists in the region. Through an examination of Said's published writing and his unpublished correspondence, I argue that his approach to literary and visual art interpretation accounts for both identity-political and more strictly formal or stylistic features of artworks and practices from the contemporary Middle East. In this dissertation I examine Said's interpretative strategies to prepare for an analysis of selected artworks by Hassan Khan. This is not a regional study of Arab or Middle Eastern art. Indeed, Said's work and Khan's, albeit in different contexts, with different means and to varying degrees challenges and often refuses generalizations about political, ethnic and national identity on which regional art histories are based. This dissertation thus aims to describe Said's and Khan's critical, highly individual and often eccentric approaches to Arab representations, rather than represent and identify them as Arabs, and explain their work as a consequence or expression of such a fixed identity. In the interest of preserving the particularity of Said's work and of Khan's I examine their reckoning with these problems in context. In chapter 1 I make the case for a comparison of their works on biographical, thematic and theoretical grounds. That is, both Said and Khan describe themselves as between (Arab and Anglo-American) cultural traditions, and employ strategies of representation in their work that are attuned to and critical of discourses and figurations of Arab identity. Having justified my comparison of Said's work and Khan's, I argue in chapters 2-3 that Said issues a call for Arab artistic self-representations as an antidote to Arabophobic and Islamophobic (Orientalist) stereotypes. Furthermore, in his work on Arabic literature after 1948, and in his work of photo-criticism entitled *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1985), Said recommends an approach to the interpretation of images (in text and in pictures) of Arabs that emphasizes formal and stylistic aspects over gross political ones. In the final two chapters and in the Conclusion I offer an analysis of selected works by Hassan Khan that is similarly attuned to formal strategies of representation and the artist's refusal of Arabophobic and Islamophobic (Orientalist) stereotypes. In the course of examining Khan's work in its particular twenty-first century Cairene context, and in relation to recent scholarship in Middle Eastern studies, I show that his approach to Arab representation exceeds and challenges that of Said's in several respects. In particular, while both Said and Khan endorse Arab self-representations as an antidote to Arab-Islamophobic stereotyping, Khan goes further than Said in

refusing the identity-political terms on which such stereotypes are based. In short it will be seen over the course of this study that the terms of Said's Palestinian identity-politics do not account for the many identifications and disidentifications at work in Khan's artistic subject formation.

Résumé

Cette dissertation examine la pensée de l'homme de lettres palestinien-américain Edward W. Said, ainsi qu'une sélection d'œuvres de l'artiste égyptien d'origine londonaise Hassan Khan. En comparant et contrastant leurs approches respectives de la production et critique des représentations des arabes, je soutiens que l'œuvre de Said entre 1970 et 1980 est d'une importance durable pour les historiens de l'art, du moyen orient en général, et particulièrement dans le cas de l'œuvre de Khan. Une grande part des recherches académiques récentes portant sur l'art contemporain moyen oriental et égyptien porte sur les aspects d'œuvres d'art qui contribuent aux notions d'identité politique, ethnique et culturelle arabe. Tandis que ces études ont la vertu de décrire le contexte social et politique de pratiques artistiques émergentes au moyen orient, celles-ci omettent souvent d'examiner les stratégies de représentation formelles, stylistiques et esthétiques, employées par les artistes de cette région. En examinant les écrits publiés et ses correspondances non-publiées de Said, je soutiens que ses stratégies d'interprétation de l'art littéraire et visuel s'appliquent tant aux aspects identitaires-politiques qu'aux aspects strictement formels ou stylistiques d'œuvres d'art et de pratiques du moyen orient contemporain. Dans cette dissertation j'examine les stratégies d'interprétation de Said afin de préparer une analyse d'une sélection d'œuvres d'art de Hassan Khan. Il ne s'agit pas d'une étude régionale d'art arabe ou moyen oriental. En effet, malgré que l'œuvre de Said et de Khan proviennent de différents contextes, avec des stratégies de représentation distinctes qui à divers degrés mettent en cause et refusent les généralisations portant sur l'identité politique, ethnique et nationale sur laquelle se basent les études régionales de l'histoire de l'art. Cette dissertation vise donc à décrire les approches critiques, hautement individuelles et souvent excentriques, plutôt que de les représenter et identifier comme arabes, expliquant leur œuvre comme la conséquence ou expression d'une telle identité fixe. Dans le but de préserver la particularité de l'œuvre de Said et de celle de Khan, j'examine contextuellement leur évaluation et production de représentations arabes. Dans chapitre 1 j'argumente pour une comparaison de leurs œuvres, sur des bases biographiques, thématiques et théoriques. Explicitement, tant Said que Khan se décrivent eux-mêmes comme étant entre deux traditions culturelles (arabe et anglo-américaine), et emploient dans leurs œuvres des stratégies de représentation qui à la fois s'accordent avec et critiquent les discours de figuration de l'identité arabe. Ayant justifié ma comparaison de l'œuvre de Said et de Khan, je soutiens dans chapitres 2-3 que Said lança un appel pour des autoreprésentations artistiques arabes qui remédient aux stéréotypes (orientalistes) arabophobes et islamophobes. De plus, dans son

œuvre sur la littérature arabe après 1948, et dans son œuvre photo-critique intitulé *Après le dernier ciel : vies palestiniennes* (1985), Said recommande une approche pour l'interprétation des représentations arabes qui met l'accent sur leurs aspects formels et stylistiques, plutôt que sur leurs simples aspects politiques. Dans les deux derniers chapitres et dans la conclusion, j'élabore une analyse d'œuvres choisis de Hassan Khan qui sont également sensible aux stratégies de représentation formelles et expriment le refus artistique des stéréotypes (orientalistes) arabophobes et islamophobes. En examinant l'œuvre de Khan dans son contexte cairot et en regard des recherches académiques en études moyen orientales, je démontre que son approche des représentations arabes dépasse et met en cause celles de Said dans plusieurs cas. En particulier, alors que Said et Khan soutiennent les autoreprésentations arabes comme remède contre les stéréotypes arabophobes et islamophobes, Khan va plus loin que Said en refusant les termes identitaires-politiques sur lesquelles se fondent ces stéréotypes. En somme, cette étude démontre que les termes identitaires-politiques palestiniens de Said ne prennent pas en compte les différentes identifications et dés-identification à l'œuvre dans la formation du sujet artistique de Khan.

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Chapter 1: The Case for a Comparative Study of Edward W. Said and Hassan Khan

I. Introduction

In this dissertation I will be examining selected works by Palestinian-American literary scholar Edward W. Said, and London-born, Cairene artist Hassan Khan. I aim to show that Said's work on Orientalist writing, and on Arab representations in literature and photography provides a helpful framework for the analysis of Hassan Khan's art practice. Both Said and Khan offer powerfully critical approaches to the interpretation and production of representations of Arabs, but in two very different national and historical contexts, and, as will be seen for very different audiences. While taking account of these differences I aim to show that Said's approach to the critique of Orientalist representations of Arabs, and his call for corrective artistic (literary and photographic) representations of the Middle East and its people sets helpful terms for the analysis of Khan's work. In this connection I argue that Said's major work of the 1970s and 80s remains useful for the analysis of Khan's contemporary art practice. By extension, this study will suggest the importance of Said's work in examining contemporary art in the Middle East in general.

Nevertheless Said's work of the 70s and 80s and Khan's, produced mostly after 2000, are dissimilar enough to set limits to the comparative aspect of this study. I argue that while Said's (critical and corrective) approach to Arab representations is useful, up to a point, in guiding an analysis of Khan's work, it

remains too closely bound to a particular (national and ethnic Palestinian) context and too narrowly addressed to the 1970s U.S. Middle Eastern studies establishment to account for many aspects of Khan's contemporary, Cairo-based practice. A nuanced account of Khan's work, I argue, requires an engagement with recent ethnographic and historical studies of the Middle East and specifically studies of art and ethnography in Egypt.

In this introduction I will make the case for a comparative study of selected works by Said and Khan. I will do this by first showing that Said's (understudied) engagement with art, and his reception in the discipline of art history, justifies an application of his critical concepts to the artwork of Hassan Khan. A major part of this dissertation will be devoted to a close study of Said's book *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1985) and Hassan Khan's *17 and in AUC (American University in Cairo)* (2003). I will set up my comparison of these two *autobiographical* works by examining the way in which Said and Khan establish their respective subject positions in relation to their immediate contexts, (in the U.S. academy for Said, and in the Cairene and international art scene for Khan), and in relation to post-WWII, mostly French critiques of visual and textual representation. The work of Michel Foucault, is, in this connection, especially important for both Said and for Khan. And, insofar as this dissertation involves an analysis of discourses, Foucault's work provides something of a method here. I will conclude the Introduction with a brief account of figures of Arab "emergence" and "resistance" that circulate in Said's work and in Khan's. Ultimately I aim to show that both Said and Khan enlist their strategies of critique

in the task of refusing dogmatic and reductive (popular and scholarly) representations of Arabs, and replacing them with more complex accounts of their respective, perhaps only nominative “Arab” subject positions.

II. Edward Said’s Reception in Art History

Edward W. Said assumes a disciplinary relation in his most celebrated book *Orientalism* (1979) to art history and its objects. Reflecting on the influence of the Romantic and Pre-romantic imagination – “its gothic tales, pseudomedieval idylls, visions of barbaric splendor and cruelty” -- on Orientalist discourse and ideology, Said marks a tentative distance from art history. In the prison scenes of Piranesi and the “luxurious ambiances” of Tiepolo and later in Delacroix’s iconic representations of the Napoleonic experience in Egypt, Said notes that “the Oriental genre tableaux carried representation into visual expression and a life of its own” which, he adds, his book must pass over for the most part.¹ Nevertheless he insists that art in these instances made a major contribution to the construction of a “free-floating, adjectival” Orient in the European imagination of the late-eighteenth century. Representations of Oriental “sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure and intense energy” in art constructed the Orient as a “supernatural” terrain to be “naturalized” but not completely dispensed with in the more technical anthropological and philological representations of academic Orientalists beginning with Silvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan.²

This academic and technical brand of Orientalism, Said argues, “severely curtailed,” in the interest of scientific objectivity, the free-floating representations of Romantic painters such as Antoine-Jean Gros, Jean-Léon Gérôme, and Eugène Delacroix. A few pages later Said offers the following thesis:

the essential aspects of modern Orientalist theory and praxis (from which present-day Orientalism derives) can be understood not as a sudden access of objective knowledge about the Orient, but as a set of structures inherited from the past, secularized, redispersed and re-formed by such disciplines as philology, which in turn were naturalized... substitutes for (or versions of) Christian supernaturalism.³

In the course of his study, Said follows the trajectory of this “academic” and technical mode of representation and restricts his reflections on art to key works of *literary* Orientalism such as T.E. Lawrence’s *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922) and Gustav Flaubert’s *Salammbô* (1862). Said’s background in comparative literature accounts for his preoccupation with the philological and literary roots of Orientalist discourse. But one of the features of “discourse” in the sense in which Michel Foucault uses the term (which Said uses as well), is that it is constituted as a regime of *representation* in which experiences – both artistic and scientific – of the Orient in this case, are translated into images and statements which are reciprocally enforced and validated within the material and epistemological bounds of an archive. It is in this respect that the “structures” of Delacroix’s “supernatural,” Romantic and “adjectival” Orient persist in the “naturalized,” descriptive and academic work of Renan and others.⁴

So it is that while Said does not explore Orientalist art at length in his book, art historians have nevertheless been able to make extensive use of his

analysis. In a set of undated lecture notes from a file marked “Orientalism and Art” at Columbia University’s Rare Books and Manuscripts Library Said outlines the main themes, motifs and artists associated with the intellectual and literary history of Orientalism (fig.1).⁵ The notes confirm that Said’s understanding of Orientalist art was very much based on his extensive research of colonial institutions. This basic aim of co-ordinating analyses of art and of colonial politics has had a lasting effect in the discipline of art history. In much of the art historical work on colonial era representations of the Arabo-Islamic world published after the appearance of *Orientalism* in 1979, art and visual culture is examined contextually and in an anti-canonical spirit. In Linda Nochlin’s “The Imaginary Orient” and more recently in studies by Zeynep Çelik, Mary Roberts and Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, whose essays appear in collections such as *Orientalism’s Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (2002) and *The Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture* (2005), the relationship between academic, literary and artistic representations of the Orient is worked out in illuminating detail and very often drawing on the polemical urgency of Said’s writing.⁶

While art historians like Nochlin and Çelik have focused in their writing mostly on Napoleonic era French painting and visual culture, Said’s work has been of great use as well to contemporary art historians. The polemical spirit of Said’s work has, on the whole, survived better in such contemporary studies than it has in historical studies of Orientalist painting. Post-colonial critiques of art history, and of its institutions of dissemination and display have benefitted greatly

from Said's account in *Orientalism* and elsewhere of the relationship between dominant and peripheral cultural formations and the politics of their interpretation. This context, like the French art historical context mentioned above, is vast and Said's influence is felt widely within it in both academic art historical and art critical work and in curatorial projects.

Said's essay "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community" for example appears in several edited volumes of art theory and criticism such as Hal Foster's *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-modern Art and Culture* (1983), Charles Harrison and Paul Wood's *Art in Theory* (2001) and a special volume of the journal *Critical Inquiry* on "The Politics of Interpretation" (1982) edited by W.J.T. Mitchell.⁷ In the first of these volumes Said's work appears alongside essays by art historians such as Rosalind Krauss and Douglas Crimp and in the second alongside essays by post-colonial critics Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. In the *Critical Inquiry* volume Said's work appears alongside essays by T.J. Clark and Michael Fried – a social art historian and a high modern formalist: odd bedfellows.

Such various frames determine Said's reception by artists, curators and critics interested in contemporary art and its institutions.⁸ There are clear indications as well of a specifically curatorial interest in Said's work. The DIA Art Foundation edition entitled *Remaking History* (1989) and a catalogue for and exhibition curated by Jamelie Hassan and titled *Traveling Theory* (1991) after an essay by Said of the same name, suggest themselves as interesting case studies in the reception of Said in art history and curatorial practice.⁹ Said's essay

“Traveling Theory” provided Hassan with both a title and a curatorial premise for her exhibition. In Hassan’s project, artists were directed to respond in their commissioned works to Said’s essay. A closer look at projects such as this would determine the extent to which Said’s work has been not simply received by contemporary artists and curators but translated through a dialogical process, or as an object of inspiration – a kind of theoretical muse – into actual works of art.¹⁰ The question that arises is already suggested in Hassan’s initial curatorial choice of Said’s essay “Traveling Theory”: to what extent is Said’s work fit for such a journey and to what extent (with what omissions, inclusions and interpellations) has his thought been altered in this process of translation? In this dissertation, these questions will frame an assessment of Said’s translation into critical, curatorial and visual practice, with a particular focus on these discourses in the contemporary Egyptian art milieu.

Egypt is at the center of Said’s intellectual history and his critique of Orientalist strategies of representation. As he notes, a blue print for Orientalist accounts of the Arab-Islamic world was contained in Napoleon’s *Description De L’Égypte*. While the *Description* would be contested by more focused ethnographic studies such as Lane’s *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* the moving force behind it, namely a preoccupation with Egypt as a site of world-history, was common to a great many of the works Said examines in his book.¹¹ For this reason Egypt seems an appropriate context in which to trace the effects of Said’s own discourse and that of the Orientalist discourses he takes up. I will be focusing then on the extent to which Said’s critique and his key concepts

can account for work being done in the Egyptian art milieu over three decades after the publication of his major work. It will be seen that in spite of this historical gap, Said's critical strategies are still useful in assessing those of selected Egyptian artists.

In the "Glossary of Terms" at the end of *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (2004), a now standard, if problematic survey text in the field of art history, Hal Foster et al. describe "postcolonial discourse" as an "eclectic" one which draws on the theories of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, especially as they are taken up in the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida.¹² They note as well that:

even as post-colonial discourse works over the cultural-political residues of colonialism, it also seeks to come to conceptual terms with a present in which the old markers of first, second and third worlds, center and periphery, metropolises and hinterlands – are no longer so relevant.¹³

Said's place in such a discourse is crucial. They note that post-colonial theory was: "all but inaugurated by him with his *Orientalism*... a critique of the 'imaginary geography' of the Near East, and it was thereafter developed by Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, and many others."¹⁴

Several authors are named by Foster et al. in this characterization of a discourse "inaugurated" by Said. An immediate problem presents itself in proposing at once that this discourse was inaugurated by Said and yet derived from the work of writers as various as Marx and Freud, Lacan, Derrida and Foucault. Said acknowledges his debt to all of the writers mentioned but he takes issue with them as well. For example, in *Orientalism* Said notes a lack of "fellow

feeling” in Marx’s account of the Orient and India, and he turns his critical eye on Freud’s account of the relationship between the Jewish people and their Pharaonic oppressors in *Freud and the Non-European*.¹⁵ And while Derrida’s techniques of close reading are useful for Said, he is wary of the textual universe in which deconstructive procedures are confined.¹⁶ Said finally characterizes his entire critique of Orientalism as a Foucaultian endeavor – a critique enabled by Foucault’s approach to the analysis of discursive formations – but takes issue with Foucault’s elision of the problem of agency and with his radical anti-humanism.¹⁷ Said is a stalwart humanist, and the tradition of humanism, from Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) to Erich Auerbach (1892-1952) is another which in a crucial sense contributes to the “discourse” Said is said to have “inaugurated.”¹⁸ The sense of the term “inauguration” then, should be specified.

In his essay “What is an Author?” Michel Foucault makes a helpful distinction between two different kinds of inaugural discourses: those in the physical sciences (Galileo’s and Newton’s for example) and those in the human sciences (Marx’s and Freud’s). These thinkers are all for Foucault rightly regarded as inaugurators of discourses, but the latter two are in a position he calls “transdiscursive.”¹⁹ The consequence of this difference for Foucault is that “unlike the founding of a science, the initiation of a discursive practice does not participate in its later transformations... the initiation of a discursive practice is *heterogeneous to its subsequent transformations*.”²⁰

It is in this sense that Said may be described as the “inaugurator” of post-colonial discourse, with the proviso that others in Said’s midst, and, for example,

Frantz Fanon *before* Said, were at work on similar problems.²¹ This is surely an oversight in the account of post-colonial theory advanced by Foster et al. Nevertheless, it is in this Foucaultian sense that Said's discourse can be inaugural and yet derived in important ways from that of Marx, Freud, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida and Fanon. Finally, while Said regards the work of Bhabha and Spivak as crucial for the development of post-colonial criticism he marks his distance from them as they do from him. In Foucault's language we might say that Said's inaugural discourse of post-colonialism is "heterogeneous" to its subsequent transformations – in Bhabha's and Spivak's work for example. Furthermore, Said's work, although derived from Marx, Freud and others constitutes a transformation of these authors' concepts and discourses and is thus heterogeneous to them. One of the goals of this study then is to trace such transformations: the transformations of Said's discourse within post-colonial art historical writing (and art practice), and the transformations of art historical and art critical discourses within Said's writing.

I will broach this issue of influence primarily as it relates to Said's understanding of and engagement with visual culture and art. Among the authors Foster et al. mention, Foucault and Freud perhaps contribute the most to Said's understanding of visuality.²² In this study I will examine these relationships of influence.²³ But Foster et al. neglect to mention other major contributors to Said's thought on visuality such as Roland Barthes, André Malraux and John Berger. These relationships will be clarified as well in this dissertation.

In clarifying the nature of Said's engagement with images, I aim to show how his "inauguration" of a discourse was directed at specific ends and concerned with a specific post-colonial situation, that of the Palestinians on whose behalf he so tirelessly advocated. Images and a particular understanding of visuality (derived from Foucault, Barthes, Malraux and Berger) play a major part in this work of advocacy. In examining this aspect of Said's work, the specificity of his discourse will be wrested from the bad universalisms of post-colonial theory. In this connection I will distinguish between the post-colonial theory with which Said is reductively identified and his specific practice of post-colonial critique.

Having clarified Said's specific interest in the analysis of images, I will attempt to measure his critical strategies and key concepts against the work of selected Egyptian artists, focusing in the final chapter of the dissertation on Hassan Khan's 2003 autobiographical performance *I7 and in AUC (American University in Cairo)*. While translating Said's critical concepts in case studies of contemporary Egyptian artists risks undermining the specificity of his *Palestinian* cause, I will argue that there are good grounds – biographical, thematic and conceptual - for doing so. Indeed it will be seen that the critical power and explanatory value of Said's key concepts - especially those concepts and *figures* through which he engages with visual culture - increase in proportion with the specificity of their application. Furthermore it will be seen that the application of Said's figures and critical concepts in the contemporary Egyptian context is especially timely.

Among the most useful figures and concepts Said contributes to the analysis of selected Egyptian art practices in the third and fourth chapters of the present study are those concerning the relationship between Arabic language and “Arab mind,” “temperament” or “political behavior” – a relationship which, he claims, reflects a “textual attitude” in much Orientalist scholarship.²⁴ Against the Orientalist habit of fixing figures of Arab identity in an inflexible, ahistorical and often deterministic relation to Arabic language but also to an imputed Arab biology and an “imagined” geography, I will argue ultimately that Hassan Khan stages in his autobiographical performance piece *17 and in AUC* (2003) a process of artistic identity formation that challenges and very often exceeds the terms of debates (Orientalist and otherwise) about Arab identity (fig 2).

III. Said’s Production and Use of Art History

A second way in which I aim to characterize the relationship between Said and the discipline of art history is by reading him *as an art historian and an interpreter of visual culture in his own right*. References to art history and art historians appear frequently in Said’s work. In his first work of literary theory entitled *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1975) Said laments the dearth of scholars in his midst who, like Erwin Panofsky so ably did, draw on a broad range of cultural texts in their interpretation of art.²⁵ Indeed Panofsky’s philological approach to art, like Leo Spitzer’s and Auerbach’s to literature, would provide Said with a life long model for his own interpretive work. In the same book Paul

Valéry's and Freud's psychobiographical interpretations of Leonardo's art receive similarly high praise as do Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writing on Paul Cézanne and the art historian and former French Minister of Culture André Malraux's writing on T.E. Lawrence.²⁶ *Beginnings* ends with extended treatments of Giambattista Vico's proto-iconological interpretation of the Renaissance frontispiece with which his *The New Science* (1725) was originally published, and Foucault's reading of Velasquez's *Las Meninas* in the opening chapter of *The Order of Things* (1966).²⁷ Said's reflections on literary beginnings are curiously populated with visual artists, including those noted above as well as Tristan Tzara, Piet Mondrian and Auguste Rodin.²⁸

Were these references merely set dressing for the more serious staging of a discourse on strictly literary, that is *textual* beginnings they might be passed over without comment. But in reviewing Said's uses of art, art critical writing and art history it seems that much more than this is at stake. In a striking passage in *The Question of Palestine* (1979) Said describes the Palestinian "form of life" as "cubistic." Concerning the task of coordinating Palestinian self-determination on economic, political and cultural fronts simultaneously Said offers the following:

These are not psychological difficulties primarily. They have psychological consequences but I am speaking here of real, historical, material difficulties. This is what makes the Palestinian's lot so unusual. His history and contemporaneity are cubistic, all suddenly obtruding planes jutting out into one or another realm of culture, political sphere, ideological formation, national polity. Each acquires a problematic identity of its own – all real, all claiming attention, all beseeching, demanding responsibility.²⁹

Much more than a rhetorical flourish is at issue here. Said makes use of art history as a tool of visualization, persuasion and cultural translation. The “cubistic form of life” is a problem to be dealt with for Said by first rendering it intelligible for a particular audience, and then by *inhabiting* it to some extent in the act of writing in order to communicate its psychological as well as political challenges in a deeply felt manner. It is interesting to note the distance between Said’s writing on or rather through Cubism and the “disinterested” modernist appraisal of the movement, in Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler and Clement Greenberg for example. Said’s distance from the tradition of formalist criticism in literature and in art history is implied in this politicized repurposing of the Cubist’s aesthetic to describe the concrete conditions of life for Palestinian Arabs. It is this odd but effective and highly original pairing of a modernist aesthetic sensibility and oppositional politics that I will review in Said’s engagement with art and visual culture.

A proper account of Said’s uses of art history, and the understanding of visual experience such uses imply should involve an analysis of the relationship between art or aesthetics and politics. Politics were for Said an abiding priority, whether those of the Palestinian struggle for statehood or the more distant politics of colonial occupation reviewed in *Orientalism*.³⁰ In a 1998 interview entitled “The Panic of the Visual” with W.J.T. Mitchell Said describes a complex position on the nature of the relationship between aesthetics or art and politics.³¹ This interview as far as I know is the only published material dedicated to the status of visuality in Said’s thought and biography. I aim to develop Mitchell’s line of

inquiry by analyzing Said's expressly political uses of specific works of art (including literature), and visual culture. I will focus especially on Said's book length work of photo-criticism entitled *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1985).

In reviewing Said's approach to the analysis of literary art (in an essay on Arabic prose and prose fiction) and photographic art in *After the Last Sky* a precise sense of the relationship between artistic forms and devices on the one hand, and politics on the other hand emerges. I will argue that Said's largely *formal* approach to the analysis of literary and photographic art provides a useful model for interpreting the work of selected Egyptian art practices and especially Khan's abovementioned *17 and in AUC*. Said is clear in his work about the importance of Arab artistic self-representations in combatting Arabophobic and Islamophobic stereotypes. He issues calls in much of his published work for just this kind of literary and artistic counter-discourse to Orientalism. Through an examination of a key document recovered from the Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said, I aim to show how such a call for contemporary Arab self-representation stands in relation to the historical critique of Euro-American representations of Arabs and Islam in *Orientalism*.³² By way of anticipation, one of the benefits of art Said identifies over press or scholarly representations of the Middle East and its people concerns its potential to exceed, *by formal means* the stifling terms of conventional political discourses. In the first two chapters of the dissertation I will examine Said's exploitation of this special potential of literary and photographic art. In the third and especially the fourth

chapter of the dissertation I aim to show that Khan as well enlists artistic forms in a similar manner – to counter or complicate stereotypical scholarly and popular representations of Arabs.

IV. Said's and Khan's Strategies of Autobiography and Disappearance

In his memoir aptly entitled *Out of Place* (1999), Said describes himself as a thoroughly divided person and writer, as a displaced and “exiled” intellectual. In *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994) Said has compiled an inventory of similarly displaced or otherwise alienated, oppositional intellectuals from Frantz Fanon to Jean Paul Sartre and Eric Auerbach. Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in European Fiction* (1946), written in exile from Istanbul, was, in Said's account, both a template and a provocation for *Orientalism* as a result of the alienated circumstances of its production.³³ Exile is thus for Said a productive constraint. Such a subject position is characterized in Said's writing on the critic's vocation as a distinct advantage. The interdisciplinary mobility between politics, literary studies and art history or visual culture that I will explore in Said's writing is to a large extent underwritten by his self-description as an exile.

Said was born in 1935 in Jerusalem to Palestinian Christian parents, then schooled initially in Cairo until the age of sixteen when he was sent to the United States to complete his secondary education. Said's undergraduate and postgraduate formation at Princeton and then Harvard (two of the most elite

private universities in the U.S.) where he wrote his PhD dissertation, entitled *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966), lead to a position in the Department of Comparative Literature at Columbia University.³⁴ There he remained until his untimely death in 2003 after a long battle with Leukemia. Said's divided identity was, in his telling, almost fated by a name: "'Edward' a foolishly English named yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic name 'Said'."³⁵ The name pointed Said in irreconcilable directions for fifty years before he became "less uncomfortable with it." Between the Prince of Wales, who, Said recalls somewhat facetiously, "cut so fine a figure in 1935, the year of my birth" and uncles and cousins but no known grandparents named Said, the search for a stable nominative identity was doomed from the start. Comically, Said recalls: "I would rush past 'Edward' and emphasize 'Said'; at other times I would do the reverse, or connect these two to each other so quickly that neither would be clear. The one thing I could not tolerate, but very often would have to endure, was the disbelieving and hence undermining reaction: Edward? Said?"³⁶

Foucault's reflections on authorship in his essay "What is an Author?" are useful in characterizing Said's position. Foucault notes, following the speech act theory of John Searle, that the author's name has "more than an indicative function... it is the equivalent of a description"³⁷ Names function differently in different discursive contexts for Foucault and are taken as descriptions of different acts and characteristics of both the named and the giver of names. In the case of authors' works too, depending on the circumstances of the works' production – political, institutional, disciplinary or psychological – names also describe aspects

of a particular speech situation. Foucault begins and ends his essay with a key question from Samuel Beckett: “what does it matter who is speaking?”³⁸ In articulating the importance of this question for criticism Foucault describes how, in modern writing, the concept of the author always includes a reference to the author’s “work” on the one hand, which will be designated variously according to rules of value and coherence, and his/her act of writing on the other hand which is increasingly understood not as expressive but as the site within language of “the author’s disappearance.”³⁹

Writing is to be understood as an operation with and within language that strives in various ways to dispense with the notion of the author as a stable or fixed presence. Modern writers – including Said -- enact in their texts a “death of the author.”⁴⁰ This is especially poignant in considering the timing of *Out of Place*; an autobiography begun shortly after Said was diagnosed with Leukemia and completed shortly before his death. But Said’s “disappearance” as an author is *performed* as well in his reckoning with the ambivalence of an Anglo-Arabic name, in relation to his cultural inheritance and elite academic formation.

Whereas Said hangs his hybrid identity on a name and then narrates his life long reckoning with a divided identity in a more or less traditional autobiography in *Out of Place*, Hassan Khan’s autobiographical performance is focused on a specific period in his formation. Nevertheless a comparable disappearance of authorship is achieved in Khan’s work. Khan’s hybridity to begin with is determined by biographical details. Khan was born in London, but grew up in Heliopolis, a suburb of Cairo with his father a prominent Realist

filmmaker Mohammad Khan and his mother an artist and jeweler. He attended the American University of Cairo where his courses were conducted in English. With this training Khan manages his practice – which includes writing and performance/lectures – equally comfortably in English and Arabic. As will be seen he engages with the politics of language and bilingualism specifically at the AUC in the transcript of his performance *17 and in AUC* from the outset.

But his English language facility and bilingualism, and his dual British-Egyptian citizenship are not enough to stage a disappearance of the kind described by Foucault in his essay. Khan paraphrases Foucault's gloss on Beckett (without attribution) in *17 and in AUC* – “who is the I that speaks...”⁴¹ The question remains open throughout the transcript. Indeed Khan's memory of struggling to nominate his national, ethnic, cultural or sub-cultural identity throughout the performance indicates the question is very much an open one for him. Whereas Said describes the position of the exiled intellectual as a critical and oppositional one -- and his autobiography's traditional form serves the purpose of making an author appear (as a discursive unity) in these oppositional terms – Khan's authorship is more thoroughly undermined by the content of his performance and its form.⁴² At the level of content Khan mentions interests as various as the American Beat writer William Burroughs and the Sufi singer Yassin El Tohamy. The list of cultural, sub-cultural and artistic interests that emerges from the performance works against any effort to establish a culturally pure basis for Khan's authorial identity.

The putative national, ethnic and artistic identity that seems dimly visible in the performance at the level of content or information is overwhelmed by the built-in details and *form* of *17 and in AUC*. The fourteen-day performance was conducted in a glass box fitted with one-way mirrors that prevented Khan from seeing his audience. The entire performance was recorded with a video camera and eventually the spoken part of it was produced as a two-hundred eighteen page transcription. If he seems to appear as a coherent subject or author in stories about early experiments with collaborators and more indirect engagements with the likes of Burroughs and El Tohamy, Khan's authorial disappearance (as Foucault describes this phenomenon) is assured by the excessive mediation (institutional, technological and physical) of his narrative – by his highly self conscious staging of the visual, aural and political aspects of his speaking situation. In Foucault's terms, Khan makes an artwork in part at least, out of an inventory of his "enunciative modalities."⁴³

V. The Problem of Location in Said and Khan: Transformations of Foucaultian Discourse Theory

The note of ambivalence with which Said opens his autobiography, shuttling between the "fancy English" given name and an Arabic name of uncertain provenance, provides a useful starting point for the description of his exilic style of criticism. But ambivalence has also been identified as a problematic feature of Said's thought, most persuasively perhaps in Aijaz Ahmad's essay

“*Orientalism* and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said.” Ahmad argues that the most grievous ambivalence in Said’s “deeply flawed (and best known) book” *Orientalism* results from its untenable narration of a continuous and transdisciplinary tradition of thinking and writing on the Orient (from Napoleon’s time to Kissinger’s) by means of a theory of discourse taken from the work of Michel Foucault which does not allow for such continuity. For Ahmad, Said sets up an inescapable ambivalence in his work by invoking “humanism-as-ideality” on the basis of a theory of discourse which rejects “humanism-as-history.”⁴⁴ Ahmad argues that Said “observes none of those austerities” with which Foucault carefully traces boundaries between disciplines.⁴⁵ In attempting to show how Orientalism as a single and continuous discursive formation and institutional force “managed and produced the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” Said, according to Ahmad, refuses to choose between a canonical humanistic tradition and the anti-humanist or post-humanist critique of that same European, post-Enlightenment tradition.⁴⁶

At stake in this critique is the status of authors in Said’s narrative. If as Said claims there is such a thing as a single discursive Orientalist formation which *constrains* authors such as Fourier in the *Description de L’Egypte* (1809-29) and Lane in *Customs and Manners of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) to repeat and reinforce dogmas of, for instance a passive and feminized Oriental subject and an active and penetrative European imperial consciousness, then according to Ahmad it is difficult to see how these authors can be held accountable as *authors* and

agents for their statements. Lane and Fourier cannot be Orientalists both by choice and by inheritance for Ahmad but for Said they must be seen in this double-perspective in order to best understand both the broad institutional scope of Orientalism and its constitution at the level of authorial style and personal statements.

Accountability is central to Said's critique of Orientalism and indeed to his entire case for secular, oppositional criticism. In the opening pages of *Orientalism* Said measures both his distance from and debt to Foucault's theory: "I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism...Orientalism is after all a system for citing works and authors."⁴⁷ In the book Said alternately employs techniques of close reading or stylistic analysis to determine the investments and choices that inform the production of Orientalist literature, and institutional analysis to show how these authorial styles of Orientalism were validated by the political, economic and military imperatives of colonial governments to manage potentially insubordinate populations, their labor and their resources.

There are two ways in which it is possible to respond to Ahmad's critique. To begin with Said explains the ambivalence that troubles Ahmad by means of a Freudian distinction. To account for the diversity of statements and styles in an otherwise unified body of texts Said makes a distinction, following Freud's schema for psychoanalytic interpretation between "latent" and "manifest" Orientalism: "between an almost unconscious (and certainly untouchable)

positivity... and the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology and so forth.” Having made this distinction Said argues that “whatever change occurs in knowledge about the Orient is found almost exclusively in *manifest* Orientalism; the unanimity, durability and stability of *latent* Orientalism are more or less constant.”⁴⁸ The key and invariant features of this latent dimension of Orientalism are for Said grounded in the racial theories and classificatory schemes of Cuvier and Gobineau – theories that aim to establish a “biological basis of inequality.” For Said this *latent* premise of European superiority and Oriental inferiority is taken up in various genres of Orientalist writing, from the travel-log to the scientific manual, and in different national literary and scholarly traditions.

On the basis of this distinction between latent and manifest aspects of Orientalism, Said is able to trace stylistic differences between, for example, the administrative tone of nineteenth-century British Orientalists such as Lord Cromer and Edward Lane on the one hand and the comparatively sympathetic and personal styles of French writers on the Orient such as Gustav Flaubert and Louis Massignou on the other hand. This shift from a close view to a wide lens is essential in Said’s analysis and does not constitute a problematic ambivalence as Ahmad argues so much as a versatility of perspective. Crucially, this double perspective also allows him to explain how such writers could be both influenced by, and influential within the Orientalist framework. The distinction in other words allows for an analysis of authorial responsibility and agency in *Orientalism*.

A second response to Ahmad's critique is possible through an engagement with Said's brief correspondence with Michel Foucault. In a letter dated Nov. 5, 1972 Foucault acknowledges, and in fact commends Said's unique understanding of his work on discursive formations. In the letter Foucault thanks Said for his careful reading and analysis of the "ramblings" (*balbutiements*) in his major work *The Order of Things*.⁴⁹ The article by Said in question appeared a few months before Foucault's letter in the inaugural issue of the journal *boundary 2* (Autumn, 1972) and was titled "Michel Foucault as an Intellectual Imagination." In the article Said focuses on what he calls Foucault's "profoundly imaginative side" and his "poetics of thought."⁵⁰ Several features of Said's analysis suggest a further response to Ahmad's claims, and specify the particular use of Foucault that Said makes in *Orientalism* and in his other works on literature and the photography of Jean Mohr.

To begin with Said focuses on the spatial and theatrical aspects of Foucault's thought and argues that his analysis of discourses as "events" in intellectual, but also institutional history obliges such an approach.⁵¹ Said argues that Foucault's interest in spatializing the history of thought or his staging of discursive events (in relation to the clinic, money and goods, and physical bodies) enables a *view* of discourses (psychiatric, economic and biological discourses respectively) as more than language, that is, as the very material of history.⁵² It is this act of imaginative synthesis that I think explains Said's refusal to adhere to the "austerity" of Foucault's boundaries between discourses. In approaching Foucault's work as an imaginative and visual rendering of the history of ideas and

institutions, Said shows how Foucault locates discourses (spatially and temporally) in a material and historical continuum. In Said's work this same approach to Orientalist discourses is taken – but the theatre and space at issue are defined, within the discourses Said examines, as bounded geographically and inhabited by bodies of a specific and racialized kind.⁵³ In short the “austerity” of Foucault's boundaries is only unbreachable if discourses are regarded primarily as textual. Said's breach of disciplinary boundaries in his analysis of the common features of literary, philological, ethnographic Orientalist writing is justified by his geographical and spatial location of these texts, and by their consistent reference to the language, politics “manners and customs” of Arab bodies.

Said's emphasis on imagination, visuality and spatiality in Foucault's thought furthermore suggests a way of reconciling his work on Orientalist writing and his work on other more strictly visual representations of Arabs such as the photographs of Jean Mohr. Whereas Ahmad approaches these works as distinct and irreconcilable ones within Said's oeuvre, I argue that *Orientalism* and *After the Last Sky* exhibit a common strategy of critique that emphasizes the spatial and geographical aspects of Orientalist discourses. Said's Foucaultian approach then is modified but consistent.

Said's interpretation of Foucault's imaginative, that is spatial and theatrical approach to discourses will inform my account of Khan's work *17 and in AUC*. Khan's performance illustrates several aspects of Foucault's vision of discursive formations. His performance is transcribed and produced ultimately in a textual form, but as an act of sheer endurance -- the performance involved fifty

six hours over fourteen days of relentless talking – it is very much a work about enunciation, embodiment and location. Spatial manifestations of discourses identified by Foucault such as the archive, the clinic and indeed the prison are recalled in the transcription, the clinical or therapeutic process, and the confined and observed aspect respectively of *17 and in AUC*. In this way Khan's own discourse - his narrative of artistic subject formation - is produced self-consciously as both willed and constrained. In Foucault's terms Khan appears as both subject and subjected – his work is a meditation on the phenomenon of subjectivation.⁵⁴

In my analysis of *17 and in AUC* I will focus on the content of Khan's discourse, but also on the way in which the entire performance (and especially its structural and formal aspects) interacts with other discourses concerning Arab (national, artistic and gendered) subject formation. In this way I aim to show how Khan's work not only produces a discourse but also interacts critically with inherited and authoritative discourses on Arab identity – especially ethnographic discourses, which have their roots in Orientalist associations between “Arab mind” and (imagined) Middle Eastern geography as will be seen. It is in this respect that Said's modification of Foucault's discourse theory (a modification aimed at addressing Orientalist structures and institutions of authority specifically) seems relevant to a discussion of Khan's work. I will approach *17 and in AUC* as a sort of laboratory in which the discourses and institutions of Orientalist intellectual history are ultimately worked through in Khan's effort to describe his particular experience.

Ahmad's critique of Said however goes beyond his Foucaultian approach to the nature or tone of his writing. Ahmad insists that Said's *own* statements are determined by his location within the Western academy and on the basis of his allegiance to Western tools of literary analysis. By availing himself of the techniques of Foucault's discourse analysis and focusing almost exclusively on European authors, in *Orientalism* and other work, Said for Ahmad situates himself within a Euro-American cultural perspective while claiming the outsider status of a post-colonial intellectual. This more insidious ambivalence, which amounts to something like a performative contradiction for Ahmad, is most clearly seen in Said's "sweeping statements about nation and state as coercive identities... delivered alongside resounding affirmations of national liberation, of the Palestinian *intifada* in particular and the right of Palestinian people to obtain a nation state or live as co-equals in a bi-national state."⁵⁵

In his paper on Foucault's intellectual imagination, Said suggests an interest in moving beyond the Eurocentric or Occidental framework of *The Order of Things*. The suggestion is admittedly slight in the *Critical Inquiry* paper. He compares Foucault's writing to that of a "medieval Islamic critic of poetry... (who) formulates rules covering every instance of authorial flair," and a few lines later he compares Foucault's analysis of texts as "myths" and "themes" to the Koran.⁵⁶ Said's willingness to write between Occidental and Oriental intellectual traditions is more apparent in his work in *After the Last Sky* and in an essay on Arabic prose and prose fiction as will be seen. This effort to establish a dialogical relationship between Euro-American concepts of the Orient and Arab-Islamic

self-representations is also an aspect of the original intention for *Orientalism* according to Said's proposal for the book. This will be examined in the first chapter of the present study. For now it should be noted that what Ahmad regards as Said's performative contradiction – generated by Said's location in the Western academy and his advocacy on behalf of Palestinians – is perhaps more charitably viewed as an effort to productively complicate the “austerity” of a cultural Orient/Occident boundary. To be sure Said came of age in a time when such binaries were coming under attack by literary critics influenced by the work of poststructuralists. I argue in this dissertation that Said inhabits – at the level of his Palestinian-American self-description and in his writing - the binaries of the Western literary and philosophical tradition in order to deconstruct them.

Here again there is a parallel between Said's and Khan's work. To begin with Khan is at pains in his performance to register the traces of his metropolitan Cairene location, and more to the point his location at an American University in Cairo, in the details of his performance and at the level of content in his speech and its transcription. It will be seen that Khan is both aware of the ambivalence, as Ahmad would call it, of such a location, and its privilege, and keen it seems to take a critical perspective on it (one informed by a reflection on the artist's own class and gender privilege for instance). Khan in *17 and in AUC* perhaps does this in a more searching manner than Said does in his work as will be seen. Nevertheless both Khan and Said seem to be keen on working through their respective positions of authority and their divided allegiance to Oriental and Occidental cultural traditions.

In the process, albeit in different ways both Khan and Said seem to very deliberately breach this imagined Oriental/Occidental boundary. In *After the Last Sky* Said asks why it is that there is no “Freud, Chagall or Rubenstein” to grace the Palestinians with a record of glorious achievements.⁵⁷ To be sure his work on Arabic prose and in *After the Last Sky* aims at least in part at securing a kind of cultural capital for Palestinians by insisting on the unique contributions of writers such as Mahmoud Darwish and Ghassan Kanafani to a modern Arabic literary tradition. In Khan’s work a motley crew of cultural heroes (and anti-heroes) makes an appearance – including lesser-known figures (to European and North American audiences) such as Sufi singer Yassin El Tohamy, and better-known ones such as Warhol, Iggy Pop, William Burroughs and John Waters. This network of “bad boys” in Khan’s formation indicates to be sure a difference of taste between the artist and Said – the self-described “high-modernist aesthete.”⁵⁸ But it also suggests Khan’s sympathy with Said’s omnivorous approach to culture. To modify and update Said’s question, we might ask how the inglorious and obscure achievements of Khan’s favorite musicians and filmmakers might nevertheless function to secure a place for art and culture, and a critical one at that, in the contemporary Middle East.

Foucault indicates in the abovementioned 1972 letter that Said’s interpretation of his work does not at all constitute a betrayal. In fact he suggests that Said’s angle on the work might even have steered the future course of Foucault’s own.⁵⁹ Here again then Said’s use of Foucault might be regarded as a transformation of the latter’s “inaugural discourse” and an authorized one at that.

Ultimately, it is this transformation that Ahmad's critique does not take account of. In the present study this modified Foucaultian discourse in Said's work and thought – his emphasis on the spatial and theatrical aspects of discourse theory, and on its application in non-Western contexts – will prescribe a method and scope for the analysis of Hassan Khan's work. I will approach both Said's work and Khan's in terms of language or acts of speech, and in terms of visual and spatial forms of representation. In my analysis of *After the Last Sky* for example this approach will be registered in dedicated sections on Said's "argument in language" and his "argument in pictures." And in my analysis of Khan's *17 and in AUC* I will consider both the content and referential structure of Khan's act of speech, and the spatial and visual aspects of his performance. Ahmad is right to note that one can detect a "very *personal* kind of drama being enacted in Said's procedure of alternately debunking and praising to the skies and again debunking the same book, as if he had been betrayed by the objects of his passion."⁶⁰ To be sure Said identifies a methodologically useful "personal dimension" to his work.⁶¹ And it is surely passionate. But the visual aspect of such a drama, that is to say its theatrical moments of staging and animating figures of the imagination is not explored in Ahmad's critique because he remains focused on Said as a writer and reader of *texts* exclusively. Said does not simply collect written or spoken statements in *Orientalism* to praise or analyze stylistically and denounce propositionally. His critique operates on the level of visual or imaginative material and its inscription in language, or on the level of visual and linguistic signs.⁶² It will be seen that this notion of the sign enables Said to unfold the personal drama of his critical interpretation in both the direction of the written

statement in *Orientalism* and in the indexical space of Jean Mohr's photographs for example in *After the Last Sky*. Khan as well in his transcription of *17 and in AUC* and in the details of the performance space itself works out his critique in both textual and visual directions.

VI. From Location to the Imaginary Museum: Ethnography, Writing and Imagination in Said and Khan

My particular aim for the first two chapters of the dissertation is in characterizing the kind of *imagination* one engages with in reading Said. Ultimately I aim to explore not Said's "Arab imagination," whatever this would be, but his *strategic imagination of Arabs*. While the first of these two possibilities would unduly psychologize and fix Said as an ethnic type the second takes seriously his claim that such types are imaginatively constructed and thus always open to interrogation. The importance of imagination and vision for Said's study of *Orientalism* is indicated in the very titles of several of his chapters: "Imaginative Geography and its Representations," "Oriental Residence and Scholarship: the Requirements of Lexicography and Imagination," "Style, Expertise, Vision: Orientalism's Worldliness." I will argue that Said's references to artists, their works and the interpretation of their works in *Orientalism* and elsewhere, and his various visualizations of the figure of the "Arab" contribute important techniques and motifs to his critical task. This figure of the Arab is perhaps more thoroughly deconstructed in Khan's performance.

The phrase “imaginary museum” appears in several places in Said’s work. Said uses the phrase in *Orientalism* to describe the encyclopedic structure of Napoleon’s *La Description de l’Egypte* and its legacy in the institutionalized ambition of Sylvestre de Sacy and The Royal Asiatic Society to establish a comprehensive archive for the accumulated work of authors in all subfields within Middle Eastern studies.⁶³ This is an especially apt use of the concept of the “*musée imaginaire*” coined originally by the author, art historian and French Minister of Culture under Charles De Gaulle, André Malraux.⁶⁴ The concept for Malraux was developed to describe a similarly encyclopedic project in which photographs would enable a survey of monuments and art objects, from across the globe: a *kunstwollen* or transcultural “will to form.”⁶⁵ In describing the curatorial process behind *After the Last Sky* Said again uses Malraux’s concept. Indeed in his process of selecting photographs for the book, and for the planned United Nations exhibition out of which the book emerged, Said adopted Malraux’s very method of constructing such a “*musée*” by laying photographs out on the floor and arranging them initially on the basis of an “aesthetic response” and then after according to several themes.⁶⁶

This way of working has a long lineage within art and photographic history: from Aby Warburg to the controversial 1955 exhibition *The Family of Man* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.⁶⁷ Several issues arise in the evaluation of such efforts to imagine and contain representations of a people or their artifacts within the technical and institutional framing devices of photography and museums. These issues bear on Said’s own procedures and

intentions for *After the Last Sky*. Do such collections of photographs represent cultures and political conditions in a developmental or diachronic manner, or in a fixed and synchronic manner? What is at stake in the inclusion, omission or writing of didactic supplements for such picture displays? Is there a way in which photographs of forms of Palestinian life (like Warburg's photos of serpent iconography in Hopi rituals) over-aestheticize and thus block meaningful access to the people and rituals pictured?⁶⁸ In looking at *After the Last Sky*, the institutional and collaborative circumstances of its production and conception (i.e., with the Swiss photographer Jean Mohr and for an intended audience at the United Nations), and the complete archive of photographs from which it was assembled, I will investigate some of these issues.⁶⁹

It seems as though Said, not unlike Malraux and Warburg, employs something of an anthropological or ethnographic approach to the presentation of Palestinians in *After the Last Sky*. The difficulties and benefits of such approaches to art history have been explored in a great deal of art historical writing since the MoMA's controversial *Primitivism in Twentieth Century Art* (1984) and the Centre Georges Pompidou's *Magiciens de la terre* (1989) in Paris.⁷⁰ Reflecting partly upon these ambitious museological stagings of a cultural encounter between the West and its primitive "others" Hal Foster argues for the recognition of an "ethnographic turn" in contemporary art and curatorial practice.⁷¹

Ethnographic practices and discourses will be considered in this dissertation's case studies in the context of the contemporary Egyptian art scene and its institutional framing by curators and writers. In my analysis of Khan's *17*

and in *AUC* especially some of the problems of ethnographic representations will be taken up. By way of anticipation it will be seen that one of the critical aspects of Khan's performance concerns his engagement with and ultimately his refusal of the ethnographic concept of rooted Egyptian authenticity (*asala*). But with respect to *After the Last Sky* I will be primarily concerned with the way in which Said claims his "right to narrate" the lives of Palestinians not by virtue of his disciplinary authority – literary, ethnographic or otherwise (though not entirely without some claim to disciplinary authority) - but as a self-described Palestinian-American. In this connection the work will be approached as a personal and to some extent *autobiographical* engagement with photographs. I argue that by means of a deeply autobiographical writing style, Said establishes an empathetic rather than ethnographic link with his Palestinian subjects thus avoiding some of the problems identified by Foster.⁷²

Said in *After the Last Sky* is perhaps closer to Roland Barthes's semiological analysis in *Mythologies* (1957) and *Camera Lucida* (1980) than he is to Foucault's analysis of statements in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) or discourses in *The Order of Things*.⁷³ In the course of this study the nature of Said's relationship with these two authors will be clarified further, but for now it is important to acknowledge their shared concept or theory of writing as "*écriture*," a theory which accounts for the visual aspect of the linguistic sign and its production. In keeping with Foucault's discourse theory Said insists near the beginning of *Orientalism* and in the "Afterword" for the book's Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition, that the categories of 'Orient' and 'Occident' "correspond to

no stable reality that exists as a natural fact... all such geographic designations are an odd combination of the empirical and the *imaginative*.”⁷⁴ Said’s reading of the Orientalist and neo-Orientalist corpus involves an analysis of *images* of the Orient and its inhabitants and shows how such *images* came to be institutionalized and validated through colonial, post-colonial and neo-colonial practices and discourses. In this connection Said exposes the role of images and visibility in the dubious business of naturalizing or “mythologizing,” in Barthes’s language, the categories of Orient and Occident. In the act of writing, Said too traffics in images and directs his powers of visualization to respond to and modify the representational field of literary and academic Orientalism. His work can thus be regarded as a personalized counter-discourse which enlists the visual material of art and photographic history and the tropes and motifs of the literary imagination in order to expose the fissures and gaps which are disavowed in mythic discourses about the Arab.

Whereas Said’s engagement with Foucault involves a transformation of the latter’s strategy of discourse analysis, Said’s praise of Barthes’ work is unqualified. In a *New York Times* review of Barthes’ *Mythologies* Said offers emphatically that “Roland Barthes is one of the very few literary critics in any language of whom it can be said that he has never written a bad or uninteresting page...”⁷⁵ In the review Said commends Barthes’s use of a “system” (of structuralist and semiotic analysis) to decode the naturalized social and political meanings or “mythemes” of everything from literature to high art and toys, while refusing to make an “unquestioning commitment to (that system).”⁷⁶ For Said

Barthes' work is especially useful for a political purpose. As Said notes in the review, "to Barthes myth is an alibi, it celebrates but it does not act, it is a sort of de-politicized speech, it is always right wing..."⁷⁷ Barthes's efforts to interpret the ideological or naturalized and deeply political meanings of objects and cultural texts in his midst corresponds with Said's efforts in *Orientalism* and elsewhere to show how constructions (myths) of Arabs have been similarly naturalized. For both the critical task consists in exposing the contingent, arbitrary and made aspect of myths-as-signs, be they myths of Arab indolence or lasciviousness, or myths of bourgeois satisfaction contained in consumer objects.

In their brief and heartfelt correspondence, three years after the appearance of the review of *Mythologies* in the New York Times, and four years before the publication of *Orientalism*, Said expresses his hope that Barthes books will begin to take an "important and major position" within American criticism.⁷⁸ In his letter Said goes on to inform Barthes that he is in Lebanon pursuing a current interest (and a personal one as "an expatriated Arab") in Arabic literature.⁷⁹ There is a suggestion in this note from Said that he intends to take a role in establishing Barthes' position in American criticism. Over the course of the following years Said would do exactly this - in *Orientalism*, in his essays on Arabic prose and prose fiction and in *After the Last Sky* Said takes up the challenge of exposing the contingency of naturalized myths (constructed in language and images equally) of Arab presence.

VII. Late Twentieth-Century Orientalism and the Art, Discourse and Figuration of “Arab Presence”

In the final section of Said’s *Orientalism* an Arab stereotype, seen in British and French works of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries is identified as a “persistent dogma” in late twentieth-century Orientalist writing. Said offers the following concerning “the Arab presence” as it figures in “mythic discourses about him”: “the only way in which Arabs count is as mere biological beings; institutionally, politically, culturally they are nil... numerically and as the producers of families they are actual.”⁸⁰

Said identifies this reductive figuration of “Arab presence” in the very language employed by Sania Hamady, Bernard Lewis and P.J. Vatokiotis in authoritative twentieth-century Orientalist works such as *The Cambridge History of Islam* (1970) and *Temperament and Character of the Arabs* (1960) and *Revolution in the Middle East and Other Case Studies* (1972) respectively.⁸¹ He notes in particular a recurrent use of sexual, horticultural and veterinary metaphors to describe Arab habits of mind and socio-cultural conventions – metaphors that “reveal,” “demonstrate” or “show” ‘the Arabs’ in these discourses but always “without an indirect object.” Said rightly asks; “to whom are the Arabs showing themselves?” in passages like the following from Hamady: “They show lack of co-ordination and harmony in organization and function, nor have they revealed an ability for co-operation. Any collective action for common benefit or mutual profit is alien to them.” He concludes that the truths advanced in passages like Hamady’s here are addressed to “no one in particular and everyone in

general.”⁸² The “revealing” at issue is not grounded in evidence, for, as Said notes, no evidence could possibly be rallied in support of such generalizations. Rather, characterizations of a politically inefficacious Arab such as Hamady’s are taken for granted and confirmed by means of a selective use of available (often dated) research or an equally selective use of observations of social and political phenomena.

In the first chapters of this study I will examine Said’s response to the construction (in images and text) of such figures of Arab presence. It is my contention that Said’s work on Arabic literature and photography serves the purpose of replying critically to scholarship such as Sania Hamady’s, Bernard Lewis’s and P.J. Vatokiotis’s. But his engagement with these authors, and his implicit critique of the culture of Middle Eastern studies in the American academy is a dated one. Since the publication of *Orientalism* in 1979 a great deal of new work from various disciplinary perspectives within the Middle Eastern studies milieu has appeared. While I am interested in showing how selected Egyptian artists have in important ways extended Said’s critique of *Orientalism*, a proper account of their strategies of self-representation will require an engagement with recent Middle Eastern studies scholarship. Anthropological studies of art in Egypt (Jessica Winegar), historical studies of the reception and use of ethnographic methods in Egypt (Omnia El Shakry) and work on gender and particularly emergent masculine subject formations in the Middle East (Paul Amar, Joseph Massad, Wilson Chako Jacob) will be crucial in my analysis of Khan’s work especially. Khan’s performance does not respond to mistaken Orientalist figures

of Arab presence with an account of actual Arab experience (to use Said's phrase). Rather his autobiographical performance interacts with ethnographic, art historical and gendered discourses on Arab identity to problematize the very premises of those discourses. Khan's work does not simply refuse unhelpful figures of Arab presence but rather exposes the discursive and institutional mechanisms of their production in his particular Cairene context. If Said was interested in a critique of figures of Arab presence, and their replacement with more accurate or sympathetic Arab self-representations, Khan, as I will argue ultimately responds to such figures by staging a disappearance or withdrawal of his authorial and perhaps merely nominative "Arab presence."

VIII. Figures of Emergence: The Scarecrow and Said's Politics of Hope

Said notes that characterizations of the "Oriental" as both passive with respect to political action and active, indeed menacing, with respect to reproductive or sexual capacity, harbors a contradiction which is concealed by different means in "mythic discourses" of Arab presence such as Hamady's and Lewis's.⁸³ Toward the end of *Orientalism*, Said invokes a powerful visual metaphor to make his point:

It is in the logic of myths, like dreams exactly to welcome radical antitheses. For a myth does not analyze or solve problems. It represents them as already analyzed or solved, that is it presents them as already assembled images, in the way a scarecrow is assembled from a *bric-a-brac* and then made to stand for a man... the antithesis between an overfertile Arab and a passive doll is not functional... an Arab Oriental is that impossible creature whose libidinal

energy drives him to paroxysms of overstimulation – and yet, he is a puppet in the eyes of the world, staring vacantly out at a modern landscape he can neither understand nor cope with.⁸⁴

Interestingly Said does his best to repurpose this metaphor of the puppet to emancipatory ends in his book *After the Last Sky* where he writes about a photograph taken by Jean Mohr of a scarecrow in a Palestinian farmer's field, a precarious but insistent figure of Palestinian "emergence" (fig. 3). This horticultural metaphor, quite unlike those used in work such as Hamady's and Lewis's is invoked by Said in *After the Last Sky* to narrate a story of Arab resourcefulness and industriousness against all odds. The photographic figure of the Arab, or more precisely of his labor and resourcefulness, reveals and demonstrates but in a manner that saves a measure of agency for the Palestinian Arabs in question. To be sure, in the photograph of the scarecrow by Mohr Said fixes on a specific act of Palestinian revealing and specifies an agential and complex presence. Following Ibrahim Abu Lughod, Said argues in *The Question of Palestine* for a "politics of hope" to replace a politics of dispossession and fear.⁸⁵ The synecdoche of the scarecrow is not the most hopeful sign of Palestinian life, but it nevertheless provides material out of which such a politics can be articulated.

Reading Said in this way, biographically and across his oeuvre – from the critique of historical Orientalist discourse to a polemic against the late twentieth-century Orientalist policies of the Israeli government in *After the Last Sky* -- one is struck initially by the consistency of his thought and writing. The problem of an insidiously textual neo-Orientalism (in Hamady's and Lewis's metaphors) visited

in *Orientalism* is given visual and contemporary contours in *After the Last Sky*. In reflecting on two very different appearances of the same figure of the Arab – one textual and one photographic – Said’s understanding of the political potential of images is made clear. What saves Said from tethering a figure of “Arabness” (Hamady’s for example) to an essential set of characteristics or fixing him in a “metaphysics of (Arab) presence” is a *theory of images/myths* taken from Barthes’s *Mythologies* and a politically astute *use of images* (informed by the work of John Berger) in works such as *After the Last Sky*, and a *theory and a practice of visuality* that are united in the body and performance of his texts.⁸⁶

IX. Figures of Resistance: Said’s Call for Art and Khan’s Practice

Said’s use of images in *After the Last Sky* to invest a paroxysmal and fraught figure of the Arab with a measure of political agency and intentionality begins the work of revision provoked for him by generations of Orientalist scholarship. Images, and art practices from the Middle East continue this difficult work of critique by interrogating other persistent dogmas of Orientalist discourse. Said notes in his chapter on the latest (post WWII) phase of Orientalism that works such as P.J. Vatikiotis’s 1972 *Revolution in the Middle East and Other Case Studies* reveal the way in which the mythic discourse of the Arab is worked out in a characterization of failed political behavior.⁸⁷ For Said the contradictory image of the Arab as both politically or culturally passive and biologically or generatively active is resolved in analyses of failed attempts at Arab

modernization and revolution.⁸⁸ Vatokiotis's "psycho-clinical" rendering of the failure of Arab revolutions and modernization in "case studies" privileges the passive term of the contradictory image of Arabs.

In his essay on "Revolution" for *The Cambridge History of Islam* Bernard Lewis achieves a similar characterization of Arab political behavior by means of an etymological argument: "In the Arab speaking countries a different word was used for revolution (*thawra*). The root *th-w-r*, in classical Arabic meant to rise up (e.g. of a camel), to be stirred or excited... and hence to rebel."⁸⁹ Said notes that Lewis sets up an opposition between modern and political Western concepts of revolution and a mechanical and animal concept of Arab revolution – which is not without its sexual valence – in "bad faith," to "discredit the modern" in the Arab context. As a result of this kind of reductive analysis for Said Orientalists have been unable to "explain or prepare one for the confirming revolutionary upheaval in the Arab world in the twentieth century."⁹⁰ Said is writing here about decolonization movements such as the Algerian War of Independence and the Iranian Revolution, but his remarks seem prescient given the events of 2011 in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria – revolutionary stirrings that have been met with reverence and admiration but also with mass incomprehension and surprise among Westerners, and indeed with fear in neo-Orientalist quarters.

New dissident figures of Arab presence are available in the flood of coverage of the so-called Jasmine and Lotus Revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt, and in coverage of the other Arab uprisings, but so too are the old figures of Arab paroxysms and lifeless doll eyes. During the Egyptian Revolution, with a startling

attunement to the Orientalist visual repertoire, the Mubarak regime engineered an iconic image of a counter-revolutionary storm of Arabs brandishing swords and other tools of medieval combat on camel-back (fig. 4). The image appeared in the international press as an icon of what would be called “The Battle of the Camel.” This may be read as a curious act of *self*-Orientalizing from Mubarak’s perspective, and, given the wide and enthusiastic reception of the image in the press, it indicates a still strong appetite, or at least a readiness and literacy for Lewis’s vision of the failed revolutionary stirrings of nearly sub-human Arabs.⁹¹

This is not a study of the relevance of Said’s work in the current post-revolutionary moment in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East. Nor is it a study of the revolutionary credentials of Egyptian artists such as Hassan Khan. I will approach selected works by Said in their specific historical contexts. This is the purpose of my engagement with his correspondence around the time of the publication of *Orientalism* (in the 1970s). In doing so I aim to identify the limits and also the contribution of his work to academic debates of the 1970s and 80s about the Middle East and its representation. Similarly my study of Khan’s and other Egyptian artist’s works will be treated in context – without exception the artworks I examine in this study were produced in the pre-revolutionary period in Egypt. Although my research in Cairo and Alexandria was conducted in the months immediately following the Jan. 25th 2011 revolution there, I did not, and indeed I was cautioned against hastily associating pre-revolutionary artworks with an emergent post-revolutionary political culture. Work on the relationship

between art and revolution in Egypt is now emerging, according to many commentators, far too soon to be of more than journalistic value.

This study is primarily concerned with an analysis of the work of two men. I will examine Said's approach to Arab literary and photographic representations and Khan's self-representation in *17* and in *AUC*. Said advocates precisely for an artistic response to an over-politicized popular and scholarly representation of Arabs and the Middle East. I will argue that this response is apparent in Khan's work – Khan answers to a great extent the call Said issues for Arab artistic self-representation as an antidote to unhelpful figures and discourses of Arab presence. For both Said and Khan artistic representations have the advantage of exceeding and problematizing the terms of popular and scholarly representations of political life in the Middle East. For both, art seems to provide not an escape from politics but, as will be seen, a way of engaging with it in a reflective, imaginative and willful way. Assigning a place to these two men's respective works in a teleological narrative of revolutionary Arab emergence would be not only presumptuous (how is their agency to be traced precisely?) but it would also disavow the rich and productive tension in their works between conventional or gross politics and the specific capacities of art. It is these tensions I am primarily concerned to explore in this study.

X. Method and Materials

One of the bases for my comparison of the work of Edward Said and Hassan Khan consists in their shared and demonstrable interest in discourses that bear on Arab representation and misrepresentation. Both Khan and Said explicitly engage with the work and ideas of Foucault albeit in different ways that correspond with their respective disciplinary perspectives. In the present study I will approach their work, that is to say their statements, their speaking positions and the institutional contexts of their respective speech acts (i.e., at the UN and in the vicinity of the American University in Cairo) with an eye to identifying the character and limits of their respective discourses, and in relation to discourses on Arab identity.

The research for the present study was conducted over the course of two research trips: one to Columbia University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library in New York, and a second to Alexandria and Cairo, Egypt. At Columbia I recovered professional correspondence of Said's that I will examine, along with his published works, to situate his thought on art, art history and visibility in the trajectory of his career. The correspondence is also useful in characterizing the evolution of Said's interests and the way in which those interests were developed and explored in collaboration with and in opposition to his peers. In short, my selective use of Said's correspondence will precisely situate his discourse in relation to the communities (academic, ethnic and national) he sought to represent, address, criticize and persuade. My research in Cairo and Alexandria involved informal conversations with artists, curators and writers in the contemporary art milieu and in the academic art historical community there.⁹² My

study of selected Egyptian art practices, and of the work of Hassan Khan in particular, aims in a similar manner to situate particular artistic statements in relation to their addressees and to the discourses (art historical, ethnographic, etc.) that structure the customary interpretation of such statements.

As indicated above I aim by means of this approach to the analysis of Said's and Khan's respective discourses, to show how their work functions critically. A key aspect of their respective projects, and another basis for their comparison, consists in their strategies of refusal. I will examine these in detail over the course of the present study. For now, it should be said that both Khan and Said attempt in their work to problematize Arab identity. This is a Foucaultian gesture and critical strategy in both cases as I will argue. Against constructions (national, ethnographic, institutional, philosophical) of a rounded and unproblematic identity (Arab or otherwise) both Khan and Said stage in some respect a disappearance of their authorial roles and refuse or complicate stifling and essentializing constructions of Arab linguistic, national, ethnic identity. I will argue that this work of disidentification is in Said's oeuvre, inhibited by his explicitly nationalist claims on behalf of stateless Palestinians. And in Khan's work a more thoroughgoing disidentification with Arab stereotypes is accomplished by means of multiple strategies of mediation in the performance work *17 and in AUC*.

XI. Two Historical Contexts of this Study

My primary interest in this study is to detail the ways in which Said and Khan refuse in their work Orientalist constructions and stereotypes of Arabs. Their strategies of refusal in this connection are consistent. The differences between their respective critical strategies will be drawn out in the course of the dissertation. For now it is important to note the way in which the historical contexts of the works (and their authors) I will focus on account for these differences. The contexts at issue here are that of Palestine, between the time of Said's birth in 1935 and the time of his work on Orientalism and on behalf of Palestinians in the 1970s and 1980s, and that of Egypt between Khan's youth in the 1970s and 1980s and the time of his work *17 and in AUC* in the early 2000s. I will deal with these contexts in turn.

A cursory look at Edward Said's biography explains the basic outlines of his research agenda and the particular aims of *Orientalism* and *After the Last Sky*. Said was born in Jerusalem in 1935 during the British Mandatory period in Palestine, and schooled shortly thereafter, in exile, at Cairo's Victoria College.⁹³ His concern in *Orientalism* with the British administrative style of colonialism in Egypt and in Palestine is traceable to these formative moments in his biography. Indeed, in *Orientalism* Said examines, as a key move in his critical project, the language, spirit and aims of the 1917 Balfour Declaration to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine.⁹⁴ The establishment of this home in 1948 coincides with the *Nakba* ("disaster") which landed the Said family in Cairo. As will be seen the *Nakba* is a crucial event in both Said's analysis of Modern Arabic fiction and in his narration of Jean Mohr's photographs in *After the Last Sky*.

By the time of Said's birth in 1935, even before the exile of his family, Jewish-Arab antagonism within Palestine was ingrained on account of increasing social and economic disparities between the two communities.⁹⁵ These disparities, which increased with Jewish immigration to Palestine, gave rise to Arab protests between 1936 and 1939 - the formative years of Said's life in Palestine.⁹⁶ While these revolts were ultimately unsuccessful, they provide an important historical backdrop and a symbolic value for Said's research on British colonial ideology and practice in *Orientalism*, and for the nation-building aims of his work on behalf of Palestinians in *After the Last Sky*. Said's arguments for the necessity of a Palestinian state and the articulation of a Palestinian national identity must be seen against the background of this history of threats to Palestinian statehood and identity.

The more immediate context of Said's work on Orientalism is the period between the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the first Palestinian *Intifada* (1987-1991). Leading up to the so-called Six Day War of 1967, Said had established himself within the US academy. With a BA from Princeton University (1957) and an MA and PhD from Harvard University (1960 and 1964 respectively) Said was well positioned for a career as a literary scholar in the US by the time of the 1967 conflict. He taught in the English and Comparative Literature Department at Columbia University in New York from the time of his Harvard graduation until his death in 2003. As has been seen, this comfortable position or "metropolitan location" within the US academy is the focus of Ahmad's critique of Said. However, the more or less consistently pro-Israeli stance of the US government

between the 1967 War and the first *Intifada* put Said, a self-described Palestinian-American *uncomfortably* close to what he calls in *Orientalism* a neo-colonial US power with deep strategic and economic interests in the Middle East.⁹⁷ Said pursued his critique of European colonial ideology and institutions in the geographical and historical context of this “latest phase” of *American* empire.⁹⁸

As will be seen, Said’s work on Arabic fiction and his writing on photographs of Palestinians in *After the Last Sky* is focused on the defining disappointment for Palestinians in particular and Arabs in general of the June 1967 War or the *Naksa* (“relapse” or “setback”). Once again, Said’s effort to articulate a Palestinian national identity must be understood against the background of this major disappointment and threat to Palestinian statehood. In what follows I will look closely at the institutional context of Said’s and Mohr’s *After the Last Sky*. For now it is important to note that the work appeared in 1986 - one year before the beginning of the first Palestinian *Intifada*. If the disappointment of the 1967 war provides an important context for Said’s *Orientalism* (published in 1978 but begun in the mid 70s in the wake of the Six Day War), the first *Intifada* and the events leading up to it clarify the urgency of Said’s nation-building agenda in *After the Last Sky*.

David McDowall begins his study of the first *Intifada* (“the shaking off”) with some arresting testimony about a conflict within the Balata Refugee Camp in the occupied West Bank in 1987. In it we learn that an Israeli soldier was urged by his officer to refrain from striking a Palestinian with his baton after it was noticed that a photographer was approaching.⁹⁹ This eyewitness account of the

tension within a West Bank refugee camp describes the volatile conditions out of which the first *Intifada* was generated, but it also suggests that Palestinians pursued their uprising in full awareness of the necessity of international reporting on their conditions. *After the Last Sky* is a documentary testament to, among other things, the condition of Palestinians under occupation and specifically in refugee camps not unlike the Balata Camp. The beginnings of the first *Intifada* are difficult to locate precisely, but an incident involving the death of four Palestinians who were hit by an Israeli Army vehicle on Dec. 8 in Gaza (four days before the Balata Camp conflict mentioned above) is generally regarded as a catalyst. As McDowall notes, whatever the specific cause of the first *Intifada*, it appeared to Palestinians, Israelis and the world press as an uprising on a different and bigger scale than the “disturbances” that had preceded it. As McDowall notes, “it was the first time that the people of the territories had acted with cohesion and as a nation” against the Israeli occupation.¹⁰⁰

Direct resistance within the camps was one of many responses to the Israeli militarization of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The first *Intifada* was also sustained by a coalition of Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) affiliates organized under the umbrella of the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLV). The PLO affiliates included Fatah, The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and The Palestinian Communist Party.¹⁰¹ These organizations and the people involved with them such as Hanan Ashrawi (b. 1946), Faisal Al-Hussein (1940-2001) and Haidar Abdel Shafi (1919-2007) were responsible for the promotion of

independent networks for education and the provision of medical care and food aid to Palestinians during the first *Intifada*. The cohesiveness of the Palestinian “nation” in the late 1980s was partly a result of the organizing role of these individuals and organizations, and their credibility with Palestinians in the occupied territories. Said’s work with Jean Mohr in *After the Last Sky*, published just one year before this historic uprising should be seen as a response to the condition of statelessness that provoked the first *Intifada*. *After the Last Sky* is a nation-building text that is rightly read in the context of the other Palestinian nation-building and institution-building initiatives that characterized the first *Intifada*.

I have indicated that Khan’s work goes further than Said’s does in dispensing with or complicating constructions of Arab identity. The details of this claim and the evidence I rally in support of it will be dealt with in due course. For now, in light of the fraught context of Said’s work in the 1970s and 1980s – work produced on behalf of stateless Palestinians - it should be noted that what I will describe as Khan’s more radical refusal of constructions of Arab identity was enabled by an Egyptian context in which national identity could be taken for granted. In other words Said urgently forged a kind of Palestinian national identity and even *authenticity* in much of his work because this seemed to be a necessary condition for the emergence of a Palestinian state. By contrast, Khan came of age and produced much of his work during a time of Egyptian national self-confidence. This very different historical context enabled Khan to play somewhat

with the concept of Egyptian identity and, as will be seen, especially with the concept of *authenticity*.¹⁰²

Khan was born in 1975 in London, England to a prominent Realist filmmaker father, Mohammad Khan and an artist mother. His family returned to Cairo shortly thereafter where Khan was raised and educated. As will be seen he details his middle-class Cairene upbringing and especially the privileges afforded to him as a university student at the American University in Cairo in his autobiographical performance *17 and in AUC*. While Khan reflects on the Nasserist politics of his parents' generation in the performance, the more immediate context of the work, and of Khan's biography is that of the Sadat and Mubarak eras in Egypt.¹⁰³ The nature of Egyptian national self-confidence had changed considerably between Nasser's time and Mubarak's – between the Pan-Arabist vision of Nasser and the modernizing aims of his him and his allies in the Non-Aligned Movement, and Mubarak's era of globally oriented, neo-liberal economic development.¹⁰⁴ Through all of these periods in the history of the Republic of Egypt, the integrity of the state and its powers to confer a national identity on its citizens (often paternalistically) were not in question in the way Palestinian national identity necessarily was in the absence of a state apparatus.

In light of the events of the so-called Arab Spring – a wave of uprisings against *over*-confident Arab dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and beyond in late 2010 and 2011 - it is important to distinguish between a kind of authoritarian national self-confidence from above and a revolutionary and grassroots national self-confidence from below. It is this context in particular, this

tension between opposed visions of Egyptian national identity that suggests itself as an important one for Khan's play with the concept of authenticity.

The culture of opposition to authoritarian governments in Egypt has a long history. In the period of the Republic it began with the Muslim Brotherhood's opposition to Nasser's government. To be sure the Muslim Brotherhood would maintain an alliance, albeit an inconsistent one, with secular forces of resistance to the government into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.¹⁰⁵ Khan's performance was conducted in 2003 but it deals with his time at the American University in Cairo during the 1990s. The culture of resistance in Egypt between the 1990s and the early 2000s was augmented in ways that are reflected in Khan's performance as will be seen. For now a couple of important changes during this period should be noted.

To begin with, the conditions for an open resistance to the Mubarak government were set during the 1990s. Beginning in 1991 President Hosni Mubarak pursued an aggressive structural-readjustment program involving domestic economic reforms that were to reduce the size of the public sector (a break with the legacy of Nasser's socialism) and expand private investment (a development of Sadat's move toward economic liberalization policies, also known as the "open door" policies or *Infitah*). In spite of Mubarak's reforms, which resulted in lowered inflation and a marked increase in the GDP, most Egyptians suffered a drop between 1991 and the 2000s in their standard of living.¹⁰⁶ The alienation and increased impoverishment of regular Egyptians wrought by Mubarak's structural re-adjustment set the economic conditions for

the rise of grassroots resistance movements. Khan's piece reflects on a period in which the artist was somewhat insulated, within the American University in Cairo, and on account of his middle-class comforts from the negative effects of these changes. But throughout his performance he is keenly aware of the great disparities between the beneficiaries of Mubarak's reforms (approximately 5% of the population) and the majority of Egyptians whose real-wages dropped by 8% between 1991 and 1996.¹⁰⁷

In addition to these economic pressures, the Mubarak government imposed restrictions on political participation and free speech by various legislative (cosmetic electoral and constitutional reform) and authoritarian means (the maintenance of emergency laws extending the powers of police).¹⁰⁸

Dissatisfaction with this situation came to a head after the November 2000 People's Assembly Elections in which a mere 34 opposition members secured seats in a 454-seat assembly dominated by representatives of Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP). Shortly after this election, and in response to increasing if still timid public criticism of Mubarak's undemocratic policies, the president attempted a "rebranding" of the NDP from an old-guard military government to a "positive centrist" one driven by savvy technocrats. Schemes for economic liberalization or privatization of the public sector, a placating rhetoric concerning a "deepening of the culture of human rights" defined this effort to rebrand the NDP.¹⁰⁹ To oversee this process President Mubarak appointed his son Gamal Mubarak to the General Secretariat of the NDP feeding speculation that the president's son was being groomed to inherit his father's office. Within two years

of Gamal's appointment the main motif of political discourse in independent and opposition Egyptian periodicals such as the Nasserist *Al-Arabi* was a fear of nepotism or a "surreptitious process of inheritance of power" (*tawrith al-sulta*).¹¹⁰ Significantly, the first direct public criticism of Mubarak occurred in the wake of the 2000 election and appointment of Gamal to the Secretariat. As political scientist Mona El-Ghobashy notes *Al-Arabi* was perhaps first to cross the "red line" against direct criticism of the president with a May, 2003 headline: "President Mubarak, on your birthday we ask you: are you democratic?"¹¹¹

This brings us through the recollected context of Khan's performance (in the 1990s) to its immediate context in 2003. The performance was conducted from April 7th to the 20th in 2003, less than one month after the largest public demonstrations in Egypt since the 1977 "bread riots."¹¹² On March 28, 2003 for the second consecutive Friday thousands gathered at the Al-Azhar mosque in Cairo to voice their opposition to the US-lead invasion of Iraq and Mubarak's support of it. The wave of anti-war demonstrations was initiated on March 21, 2003 when one hundred students made their way from the American University in Cairo to the Omar Makram Mosque on the edge of Tahrir Square. The students were met there by supporters from the Muslim Brotherhood who joined them in chanting slogans such as "Mubarak, leave, leave!" and "Mubarak, wake up! Tomorrow the bombing will be in Bab al Luq!"¹¹³ With these important precedents, in the popular press and in public spaces, of open and direct resistance to the Mubarak government, the conditions were set for the emergence in 2004 of

the *Kafeyah* (literally, “enough”) Movement for Change – a key organizing force in the Egyptian Uprising of 2010-11.¹¹⁴

These more or less organized expressions of resistance (in the press, in public spaces and from the ranks of opposition parties) to Mubarak’s presidency can be regarded as aspects of an increasing national self-confidence in Egypt between the 1990s and the early 2000s – the period with which Khan’s work *17 and in AUC* is concerned. It is hazardous to overemphasize the broadly revolutionary power of Khan’s very focused work of cultural and institutional critique. As will be seen in due course, the performance is very much about exploring alternatives to conventional political modes of representation within and beyond this Egyptian context. Nevertheless, Khan’s *strategies of refusal* may be productively referred to these roughly contemporaneous *moments of refusal* in the Egyptian press and in street politics.

I have reviewed these two contexts – that of Said’s estranged Palestine in the 1970s and 1980s, up until the first *Intifada*, and that of Khan’s Egypt in the neo-liberal, Mubarak-era – to indicate some important differences between these two authors’ positions. Said, as will be seen, is not willing to dispense entirely with a concept of Palestinian national identity. His goal is to articulate a Palestinian and Arab identity that complicates and refuses Orientalist stereotypes in general and Palestinian stereotypes in particular. Such constructions, as will be seen, undermine the Palestinian cause of self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state. These causes were determining ones in Said’s work. Khan’s refusal of such stereotypes is more radical in that it is not balanced out by a

positive or alternative articulation of Egyptian or Arab identity. Given the context of his work, one in which the *confidence of Egypt's state authority* is counteracted by agents of resistance in an increasingly *confident critical public sphere*, it is understandable that Khan could dispense with conventional notions of national identity. His experimental approach to art and his emergent or tentative subject position (with respect to sub-cultural formations, friends, institutions and conventional politics) is endorsed by an equally experimental and emergent culture of resistance that gained momentum in the 1990s, during Khan's university days, and made its first public debut the month before Khan's *17 and in AUC* was carried out in April 2003. Khan could in this way participate in a national culture or counter-culture without having to assert or reinforce a stable national identity.

This sketch of Said's and Khan's respective contexts accounts for the differences between their strategies of representation, and their efforts to refuse essentialist constructions of Arabs. The differences between their two contexts serve the purpose of individualizing Said's work and Khan's. Biographically, as Arab-American and Anglo-Arab authors respectively they work from within hybrid and thus anti-essentialist positions. But their concerns are also rooted in specific historical and geopolitical contexts – that of Palestine in the 1970s and 1980s (viewed from the US) for Said, and that of Egypt in the Mubarak era for Khan. The reflection of these particular circumstances in their work, and in this study of their work militates against an essentializing account of their putative Arab identities. Said's and Khan's refusals of stereotypes of Arabs are a key

aspect of the work I will examine. It is this spirit and some specific techniques of refusal that the two authors have in common. As indicated above in connection with their highly reflexive authorial subject positions, both Said and Khan make use of deconstructive procedures to complicate and refuse received Orientalist constructions of Arab identity. In the course of this study I will concentrate on an assessment of the particular deconstructive strategies employed in Said's and Khan's work – with respect to language and discourse, and with respect to images.

XII. Chapter Summaries

In chapter 2 I argue, *pace* Ahmad, that Said's work of discourse analysis in *Orientalism* on the one hand, and his analysis of Arab artistic/literary self-representations on the other hand are reconcilable. I look closely at a proposal for the book *Orientalism* recovered from The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said to examine Said's original intention for the work. As indicated in the proposed title for the book, "Orientalism: A Polemic and Counterproposal," Said conceived the study as both an examination of Euro-American representations of the "Orient" and of corrective self-representations by Arab writers. The polemical aspect of the published book, its exclusive and highly critical focus on Euro-American (mis)representations of Arabs and Islam is what has come in for the most severe criticism.

I argue that Said fulfills the original counterproposal planned as an aspect of *Orientalism* in his work on Arabic literature. Arabic prose and prose fiction in the wake of the 1948 *Nakba* and the 1967 *Naksa* is described by Said in formal terms – in terms of scene structures, narrative modes, etc. This approach is intended to emphasize the way in which literary devices are employed to establish critical positions in the work of the writers Said considers in his study. I argue that Said's attunement to both formal and contentual aspects of this work – to its aesthetic merit and its political message – functions as a counterproposal to Orientalist representations of Arab-Islamic culture that emphasize political, or worse biological or environmental determinants of that culture. At stake in Said's work on Arabic literature then is an account of Arab self-representation that takes note of, and encourages the region's artistic production. In short I argue that Said's counter-proposal to Orientalist myths of Arab presence is articulated as a call for literary and, by implication visual representations of an Arab present.

In chapter 3 I take a close look at Said's 1984 book *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (w/ photographs by Jean Mohr) to show how his formal approach to Arab literary analysis is adapted and developed in an engagement with photographs of Palestinians. This work constitutes Said's most sustained engagement with images and is thus an important one to consider in relating his thought and work to the disciplines of art history and visual culture studies. In it he goes far beyond his admittedly slight engagement in *Orientalism* with historical Orientalist art to address issues bearing on the interpretation and production of contemporary images of Arab and specifically Palestinian life.

Through an examination of the institutional context of the work I argue that *After the Last Sky* is also useful in bringing into focus the political stakes of artistic representation outlined in Said's work on Arabic prose and prose fiction. In this connection it constitutes an aspect of the counter-proposal to Orientalist misrepresentations of Arabs and Palestinians in particular.

After the Last Sky can be regarded as a nation building project, a work of advocacy on behalf of stateless Palestinians or, in short, a piece of activism. This is the aspect of Said's writing that Ahmad considers to be Said's most enduring contribution. But the critical and explicitly political purpose of the work is served by its formal attributes, at the level of Said's text and at the level of the photographs he selected for it. I will argue that the first two chapters of the book titled "States" and "Interiors" especially show how Said negotiates, by means of narrative devices and Mohr's photographic effects, a particular kind of relationship between aesthetics and politics or, in his words a "politics of hope." He does this by first describing the "paradoxical state/less" experience of the Palestinians in Mohr's photos. Following an account of the conditions of Palestinian exile in the diaspora and captivity in the occupied territories – an account of their determinate state - Said in the second chapter of the book describes a movement inward or an interiorization of Palestinian life. In the second chapter his writing is focused on motifs in Mohr's photos that at once address the difficulties of Palestinian statelessness and point toward a way of processing these difficulties through acts of imagination and imaginative projection.

I attempt through this analysis to show continuity between Said's work on literature and his work with Mohr's photographs. In the first case Said's highly formal analysis responds to myths of Arab presence that deny collective and individual agency with an account of how Arab writers act within an Arab present creatively and critically. In the second case Said works through Mohr's photographs, again with an eye to formal details, to show how a measure of agency, or at least "hope" can be gained through a withdrawal from the brute political and geographic facts of statelessness into an account of Palestinian interiors. He deploys this concept of the Palestinian interior, crucially, in at least two senses: in a geographical sense dealing with the changing political boundaries of the occupied territories and in a kind of psychological sense dealing with the character and behaviors of particular photographed Palestinians. In doing so the concept mediates between external and stifling political conditions of Palestinian life and interior experiences of particular Palestinians. At stake in this movement from an external or objective political characterization of Palestinian circumstances to the humanizing and compelling narrativization of the interior experience of particular Palestinians (including Said's own as a commentator on Mohr's photographs) is a proposal for Arab self-representation – and a claim to Arab subject positions.

Said's approach to photo interpretation in *After the Last Sky* is instructive insofar as he co-ordinates formal and contentual levels of analysis. But the work comes close to constructing essentialized national and gendered types as has been noted by W.J.T. Mitchell. This limitation of Said's work will be explored as well.

Nevertheless his rendering of the Palestinian experience is nuanced in its attunement to forms of everyday life, cultural achievements and the testimony or speech acts of particular Palestinians.

In the chapter 4 I explore the way in which Said's (self-) representation of Palestinian Arab experience in text and images departs from what he describes in his work on historical Orientalism as a primarily "textual attitude" to the study of the Middle East. At stake in Said's critique of the textual attitude is an account of Arab political and cultural experience that is not reduced in a deterministic fashion to aspects of Arabic language. As Said put it, it is often the case in philological Orientalist scholarship that the Arab ends up being "spoken by, rather than speaking the language."¹⁵ One of the global aims of this study is to show how visual representations of the Middle East and Arabs can complicate one-dimensional textual accounts of the region's culture, politics and people.

In chapter 4 I focus on how the textual attitude contributed to discourses on Arab "mind" and "temperament" both in the eighteenth and nineteenth century authors Said writes about in *Orientalism* and in work produced in Said's milieu in the 1970s. To outline Said's concerns about the relationship between the textual attitude and constructions of Arab mind and temperament I will draw on his correspondence with Princeton Near Eastern Studies professor Carl Brown leading up to a conference in which Brown hoped Said would participate. Said's refusal to participate indicates, as will be seen, his precise concerns about the ways in which elements in the culture of Middle Eastern Studies in the 1970s were inclined to construct Arab types on the basis of studies of Arabic language

but also psychology. I will also draw on Said's correspondence from the 1970s with his colleague and friend Noam Chomsky on the political stakes of the latter's theory of universal grammar. I will argue that Said's work in *After the Last Sky* suggests his sympathy with contextual approaches to the analysis of speech acts.

I will conclude the chapter with an analysis of the phenomenon and interpretive framework (based on the work of Austin and Searle) of speech acts in the Cairene public sphere and art scene. I will focus on a 2011 curatorial project by art historian Angela Harutyunyan titled *You Tell Me* in which the performance and video-based works of several Egyptian artists are presented in terms of the speech act theory. These artists are Wael Shawky, Shady El Noshokaty and Hassan Khan. It will be seen that while the contextual sensitivity of the framework in Harutyunyan's project makes significant gains on the often ahistorical "textual attitude" described by Said, it runs the risk of setting up too inflexible a relationship between artistic speech acts and the national, ethnic and linguistic contexts of their production. In the curatorial project, this relationship (between speech and context) constructs Arabic speaking subjects in pathological terms – in terms of speech pathologies. Furthermore the framework does not account for the way in which artistic speech acts may exceed their contextual conditions of production.

In chapter 5 I focus on a work by one of the artists included in Harutyunyan's program. I argue that Hassan Khan's transcribed and recorded fourteen-day autobiographical performance piece entitled *17 and in AUC* (2003) exceeds the speech act framework by loosing the association of artistic speech

acts and their contexts of production. I argue that this decoupling of speech and context, achieved in Khan's work by spatial, technological and mnemonic means amounts to an uprooting of the ethnographically described Egyptian, and by implication Arab subject. Khan's achievement in this work extends the arguments Said makes concerning the textual construction of Arab political and ethnic subjects. Furthermore, this critical aspect of Khan's work, his refusal of essentialized constructions of Arab subjectivity, comes into focus through a formal analysis of the kind endorsed by Said in *After the Last Sky* and in his work on Arabic prose and prose fiction. Accordingly I will approach Khan's work with an eye to showing how his formal strategies interact with the spoken and transcribed content of the performance. The transcript of the performance titled *I7 and in AUC* (2003) and published by Chantal Crousel Gallery (Paris) will be a key source of information in this regard.

Said's key concepts then provide a good deal of interpretive power in approaching Khan's performance. But I will argue that Khan's work also exposes some limitations of Said's approach to Arab representation in general, and in particular his construction, along gendered and nationalistic lines of Palestinian subjects in *After the Last Sky*. In place of a national, ethnic or ethnographically described Arab subject, Khan's performance stages incomplete, partially recalled and not always transparent processes of *mediated* subject formation - his own subject formation in 2003 during the fourteen day performance and in the 1990s during his undergraduate years at the American University in Cairo. The frameworks I employ in the interpretation of Khan's piece are drawn from recent

research in Middle Eastern ethnocultural and art history, intellectual history and gender studies. This research brings into focus the critical power of Khan's staging of his mediated (technologically, institutionally and culturally) artistic subject formation. The specificity of his formation, which I characterize as oriented to cultural (not conventional) politics, avant gardist, cosmopolitan, heterodox and gender critical is best accounted for through the lens provided by this recent Middle Eastern studies scholarship.

In my account of Khan's performance I will be drawing on anthropologist Jessica Winegar's work on Egyptian artistic identity, intellectual historian Omnia El Shakry's work on European and indigenous ethnography in colonial and postcolonial Egypt, and finally the work of Joseph Massad and Wilson Chacko Jacob on class-specific and cultural/literary dimensions of masculine subject formation in Egypt. This recent scholarship is useful in interpreting Khan's performance and it also historicizes Said's criticism of the culture of Middle Eastern studies in the 1970s. Much work of great value for art historians dealing with art from the region has emerged since the appearance of Said's "inaugural" discourse on the Arab post-colony in the 1970s. However in this study I aim to show that his key concepts and elements of his critical strategies remain relevant for the study of art from the region and especially for the study of Hassan Khan's art.

¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1994), 118-119.

² Said deals primarily with Renan's *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* (1855) and De Sacy's *Chrestomathie arabe* (3 vols., 1806) in *Orientalism*. Ernest Renan (1823-1892) was a French expert on Middle Eastern languages and a political theorist with an abiding interest in theories of nationalism. Sylvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) was a French linguist and Orientalist with an interest in Arabic literature. Significantly, De Sacy taught the French translator of the Rosetta Stone Jean-François Champollion. Renan's work for Said inaugurates the modern mode of Orientalism. His studies of religion and nationality were grounded in philological studies

of Semitic and Indo-European languages. See Said's chapter "Sylvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan: Rational Anthropology and Philological Laboratory," in *Orientalism*, 123-148.

³ Said, *Orientalism*, 122.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ In the Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said at Columbia University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library there is a dedicated file on "Orientalism and Art" which includes undated notes for a lecture on the subject. There are five pages of notes, the last of which is the only one that deals specifically with art. The artists named in the document are the French Orientalist and realist painter Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), the Italian composer Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi (1813-1901) and the German composer Wilhelm Richard Wagner (1813-1883). In addition to these 19th century European artists Said includes a note toward the end of the document about "ethnomusicology" and "Oriental music" (no names are associated with this tradition), "Hollywood and T.V.," "The Arabian Nights" and the 1921 silent film by American director George Melford titled *The Sheik*. The lecture notes are schematic but major themes and "motifs" to be discussed are listed including "travel and pilgrimage," "slave girl," "courtesan," "dancer," "femme fatale," "spectacle and display," and "exoticism." Without access to the lecture itself this document indicates only that Said's interest in Orientalism and the arts was focused on cultural products from colonial era Europe, including French, German and Italian works, and on film as well. Also, in keeping with Said's lifelong interest in music, much of the lecture it seems was dedicated to composers and opera. For the present purpose it is important to note that Said's interest in the arts was anti-canonical and multidisciplinary. See "Orientalism and Art" in The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said, (New York: Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library).

⁶ In keeping with Said's approach to the arts, Nochlin makes a claim on behalf of cultural studies approaches to the history of art. She argues, against Donald Rosenthal's connoisseurial and canonical approach to Orientalist art in the exhibition *Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880* (Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, Aug. 27-Oct. 17, 1982) that European representations of the Orient ought to be regarded and analyzed primarily as "political documents" that "anticipate and predict the qualities of incipient mass culture." See Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient" in the *Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 57. Nochlin's visual culture approach to Orientalist representation is developed as well in the volumes *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* and *The Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture* as the titles of the collections indicate. See Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts eds., *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), and Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones and Mary Roberts, eds., *The Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

⁷ Said's essay appeared originally in *Critical Inquiry* as the first essay in the special issue on "the Politics of Interpretation." See Edward W. Said "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 9, No. 1, The Politics of Interpretation (September, 1982), 1-26. The essay subsequently appeared in Foster's and Harrison and Wood's collections. In Foster's volume it is the last essay included. See Hal Foster ed. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1998) 155-183. In Harrison and Wood's anthology an excerpt from Said's essay appears at the beginning of the final section titled "Figures of Difference." See Charles Harrison and Paul Wood eds. *Art in Theory, 1900-1990: And Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 1992), 1086-1088. In each of these cases Said's essay is given pride of place.

⁸ Concerning Said's reception in contemporary art discourse, there is a further question for intellectual historians perhaps about how Said's post-colonial criticism began in the 1980s to appeal to Euro-American academics influenced especially by trends in post-war French criticism. While my study of Said will not focus on situating his work in this broader Euro-America context it will be seen that his use of the work of Foucault and Barthes, and to a lesser extent Derrida is apparent in much of his writing. His engagement with Foucault was extensive as will be seen. As one of the first major interpreters of Foucault's work in the American academy it might be argued that Said's appeal in American art critical quarters was encouraged by his Foucaultian credentials.

I will examine this relationship between Foucault and Said in more detail in this introduction and in the following chapter. The rapprochement between post-colonial criticism and Euro-American post-structuralist writing has been examined under the rubric of “multiculturalism” in recent art theoretical work by Amelia Jones. See Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2012). The discourse on multiculturalism was an especially established one in Said’s U.S. academic milieu after the 1980s. In Said’s last book, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* his strategies of post-colonial analysis are contextualized in the U.S. academic milieu in relation to the discourse of multiculturalism. In this work he endeavors to show that his post-colonial criticism is intended as a challenge to popular notions of multi-cultural harmony. Specifically he issues a call for serious philological and humanistic study, and thorough contextualization of non-Western literature in the U.S. academy as an antidote to generalized programs of world literatures in translation. He also makes a case for the relationship between such serious studies on non-Western sources and the vocation of U.S. public intellectuals. See Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). In this work Said addresses himself primarily to literary scholars and readers however. The work does not deal with the visual arts.

⁹ Said’s essay “Yeats and Decolonization” is included in the DIA Art Foundation volume. See Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani eds. *Remaking History* (Seattle: Bay Press and DIA Art Foundation, 1989). For the essay that inspired Hassan’s curatorial project see Edward W. Said, “Traveling Theory” in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226-247. Jamelie Hassan’s exhibition *Traveling Theory*, co-curated with Fern Bayer was the first major Canadian art exhibition after the Gulf War to focus on artists from the Middle East. It was held at The Macintosh Gallery at the University of Western Ontario.

¹⁰ Said’s and Hassan’s correspondence is available in The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said at Columbia University’s Rare Books and Manuscripts Library. It continued from 1992 until 2000 and there are a total of four letters. See “General Correspondence,” Feb., 1992 – July, 1993 and April, 1997 – Nov., 2000 in The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said (New York: Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library).

¹¹ Said notes the importance of Egypt for Napoleon’s savants, especially for Joseph Fourier, the author of the *Description*’s preface and one of the leading forces behind its conception. In addition to the strategic and economic importance of Egypt’s location between Africa and Asia, it exerted a great influence on the European cultural imaginary. As Said notes “because Egypt was saturated with meaning for the arts, sciences and government, its role was to be the stage on which actions of a world-historical importance would take place. By taking Egypt then, a modern power would naturally demonstrate its strength and justify history; Egypt’s own destiny was to be annexed to Europe preferably. In addition this power would also enter a history whose common element was defined by figures no less great than Homer, Alexander, Caesar, Plato, Solon...” See Said, *Orientalism*, 84-85.

¹² For critical reviews of *Art Since 1900* see Geoffrey Batchen, Amelia Jones, Robert Storr et. al “Interventions Reviews. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* by Hal Foster; Rosalind Krauss; Yves Alain Bois; Benjamin Buchloh” *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 88, No. 4 (June, 2006), 373-389.

¹³ Hal Foster et al. *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 688.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ For the critique of Marx see Said, *Orientalism* 153-156. For the critique of Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* see Edward W. Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (London and New York: Verso, 2003).

¹⁶ See Edward W. Said, “The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions,” in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Summer, 1978), 673-714.

¹⁷ Said is clear about his debt to and distance from Foucault’s thought in the “Introduction” to *Orientalism*. He writes: “Yet unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism.” See Said, *Orientalism*, 23.

¹⁸ The humanistic aims of Said's work were perhaps the most lasting in his career. In his last work *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* Said attempts to describe the changing conditions of humanistic study in the U.S. academy and reiterates his debt to Erich Auerbach. On humanism in the U.S. see Edward W. Said, "Humanism's Sphere" and "The Changing Bases of Humanistic Study and Practice," in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 1-56. On Auerbach see "Introduction to Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*," Ibid. 85-118.

¹⁹ Such authors are unique in that they produce in their work not just texts but "the possibilities and rules for the formation of other texts... of discourse." The salient difference between founders of scientific discourses and founders of discourses in the human and social sciences, according to Foucault is that while the founding acts of Galileo and Newton are assessed in relation to "what cosmology and physics are in their intrinsic structure and normativity," that is, in relation to spaces defined empirically and verified theoretically by science, Marx and Freud's propositions are related to features of their own discourses which refer to interpretable human and social experiences. See Michel Foucault, "What is an Author," in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 113

²⁰ Ibid., 115-6.

²¹ Frantz Fanon's work dealt mostly with the case of French-Algeria and the 1962 Algerian War of Independence. His major works were produced between 1952 and 1964, well before Said's *Orientalism* appeared. See for example Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press, 1952/2008).

²² It is worth noting that Foster et al. also neglect to note Said's deep engagement with the work of Arab-American writers such as Eqbal Ahmad and Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (Said dedicated his major work *Orientalism* to Abu-Lughod and Abu-Lughod's wife Janet, also a notable contributor to the field of Middle Eastern studies), and with other non-Western post-colonial critics such as Frantz Fanon. Said's extensive correspondence with Ahmad and Abu-Lughod is contained in The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said. See for example Said's and Abu-Lughod's correspondence concerning an Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG) conference planned for Oct. 1973 and titled "National Liberation and Settler Regimes: Africa and the Middle East." Said co-chaired a panel with Eqbal Ahmad at the conference. See "General Correspondence," Apr. 1973 – Oct. 1974, in The Collected Papers of Edward W. Said (New York: Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library). Along with C.L.R. James and Aimé Césaire Said calls Frantz Fanon "a great anti-imperialist black intellectual." For Said these writers made major gains "culturally and politically" toward the establishment of the rights of colonized peoples. See Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 93. While it is important to acknowledge these interlocutors and predecessors of Said's they do not seem to have contributed as directly to his approach to visuality and visual culture as Foucault, Freud and other Western authors..

²³ Said's debt to Foucault is developed in several essays and book chapters which will be examined. But Foucault too suggests in a letter to Said that this influence might well be reciprocal. In characterizing the relationship between these two authors I will draw on their correspondence available in The Collected Papers of Edward W. Said at Columbia University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library. Although limited, the exchange between these authors will be useful in clarifying the nature of Said's approach to Foucaultian discourse analysis.

²⁴ Said traces a genealogy of this "textual attitude" from the work of Renan and De Sacy to twentieth-century writers including Bernard Lewis, Sania Hamadi, P.J. Vatikiotis and Raphael Patai. The formulations of "Arab mind" and "temperament" to which I refer here are drawn from the work of Patai and Hamady respectively. For Said's critique of these twentieth-century authors (about whom, more later) see Said, *Orientalism*, 306-321.

²⁵ Said mentions Panofsky and other philologically oriented scholars at the outset of his study such as Auerbach, scholars who for him "tell a rather humbling story about the researcher today." See Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (London: Granta Books, 1975), 7.

²⁶ On Malraux's reading of T.E. Lawrence see Said, *Beginnings* (London: Granta Books, 1975), 156. On Merleau-Ponty's reading of Cezanne see Ibid. 241. On Freud and Valéry's psychobiography of Leonardo see Ibid. 48-9, 60-64. These points of contact between Said and Valéry and Merleau-Ponty have not been explored in detail. Said's engagement with Freud is

registered in *Freud and the Non-European* and has thus received more attention. Nevertheless Said's engagement with Merleau-Ponty was long running. His notes for the 1966 essay "Labyrinth of Incarnations: The Essays of Maurice-Merleau-Ponty" are kept in The Collected Papers of Edward W. Said and would serve as a useful resource for this understudied part of Said's intellectual biography. See "Early Subject Files" in The Collected Papers of Edward W. Said (New York: Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library). Said's essay on Merleau-Ponty is included (as the first piece) in Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 1-14.

²⁷ On Vico see Said, *Beginnings* (London: Granta Books, 1975), 345-382. On Foucault's reading of *Las Meninas* see Ibid. 284.

²⁸ These points of art historical contact in Said's first major theoretical work are peculiarly French in terms of the specific role given to art and artists in both Said's reflections and those of the writers he mentions. It is worth noting that here again Said's work is aligned with a post-WWII French tradition in which artists and artworks are taken up in philosophical analyses (Merleau-Ponty and Foucault are the key examples of this trend). Said's engagement with art history in *Beginnings* then is very often mediated through this French mode of philosophizing about or through art and artists. I am grateful to Amelia Jones for her helpful comments on this aspect of Said's work.

²⁹ Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Times Books, 1979), 123.

³⁰ It is worth noting in this connection that in Said's undated notes for the lecture on "Orientalism and Art" mentioned earlier, red "x's" appear beside several artists names including Gérôme and Verdi. These marks refer the artists to a note in the margin that reads "background in control of territory/ colonialism." The conspicuous note indicates the importance for Said of interpreting art in relation to the political circumstances of its production. See "Orientalism and Art" in The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said, (New York: Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library). Said's work *Culture and Imperialism* explores this connection between art and politics in more detail and with reference to literary case studies. See Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

³¹ W.J.T. Mitchell and Edward Said, "The Panic of the Visual: a Conversation with Edward Said", *Boundary 2*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), 11-33

³² The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said are housed at Columbia University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library. During the initial phase of my research the papers were being indexed, but the librarians and graduate students at work on the collection graciously allowed me to conduct my research on the archive in numbered boxes. My references throughout this dissertation to the collection correspond with the working index given to me by the librarians in the Fall/Winter of 2010.

³³ Erich Auerbach (1892-1957) was a philologist and comparative literature scholar. *Mimesis* treats the history and pre-history of realism in the Western literary canon. Said includes an analysis of Auerbach's *Mimesis* in his first major theoretical book *Beginnings*, and returns to Auerbach's thought in the last chapter of his final published work *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. See Said, *Beginnings*, 69/211, and *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, 85-118.

³⁴ Said's dissertation was published in 1966 by Harvard University Press. See Edward W. Said, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966)

³⁵ Edward W. Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 3

³⁶ Ibid., 3-4

³⁷ Michel Foucault, "What is an Author" in *The Foucault Reader*, 105.

³⁸ Ibid., 101.

³⁹ Ibid., 104.

⁴⁰ The phrase is taken from an essay written in 1967 by Roland Barthes. For Foucault the same phenomenon of a disappearance or at least a complication of authorial integrity and agency was a major concern. In my treatment of Said's and Khan's authorial disappearances I have followed Foucault's analysis. Barthes's formulation, although consistent with Foucault's, preceded it and

the phrase ought to be attributed to him as a result. See Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text*, Trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-148.

⁴¹ Hassan Khan, *17 and in AUC: the transcription* (Paris: Galerie Chantal Crousel, 2003), 81.

⁴² Khan's work *17 and in AUC* is addressed to an English-speaking audience. His community of readers is thus at least partly located in the international Anglophone artworld. However in conversation with Khan in 2011 it became clear that his attitude toward this international culture of parachute curators and their exhibitions - which often exploit the ethnic or national identities of non-European and non-American artists is ambivalent. His recent work has been circulated and written on in this international context of biennales and art fairs. And Khan negotiates this terrain with his own written responses to the culture of international art fairs as will be seen. I will be focusing on a work done in 2003 for the most part in my study of Khan.

⁴³ Foucault takes up the centrality of enunciative modalities in the formation of discourses in his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. In his analysis of enunciative modalities Foucault argues that the authority of a doctor, for example is based in a dispersed system of technical claims or statements (medical claims) and in a network of institutions that validate and operationalize such claims. Of central importance for Foucault is an analysis of statements in terms of who issues them and from what authoritative speaking position. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 55-61. These questions seem central for Khan as will be seen. As has already been intimated, they are central questions for Said in his analysis of the enunciative modes of Orientalist discourse.

⁴⁴ Aijaz Ahmad, "Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said," in *Edward Said* (2 vols.) Patrick Williams, ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 82.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 23

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁴⁹ "À mon retour d'Amérique, j'ai trouvé l'article que vous avez bien voulu écrire sur mon travail. Je n'ai pas besoin de vous dire combien je vous suis reconnaissant de l'effort que vous avez fait pour lire, comprendre et analyser les balbutiements que j'ai pu émettre." See "General Correspondence," (1972) in *The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said* (New York : Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library)

⁵⁰ Edward W. Said, "Michel Foucault As an Intellectual Imagination," *boundary 2*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1972), 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵² Said makes his claim as follows: "... in short the theatre's stage is where there occurs a play of events, embodied either in gestures, characters, groups of actions, or even in a changing scene. All this precisely fits Foucault's attitude towards what he calls "*l'existence des événements discursifs dans une culture*," their status as events and also their density as things – that is their speed and paradoxically their monumentality." See *Ibid.*

⁵³ Said develops this analysis of the theatrical and spatial aspect of Foucault's thought in an article published a year prior to *Orientalism*'s publication entitled "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions." In this paper Said makes a case for the work of Foucault over that of Jacques Derrida on the basis of the former's effort to situate the history of language and concepts in a geographical and political field. Derrida's deconstructive approach to the history of ideas, by contrast remains trapped for Said in an a-political textual universe. See Said, "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions," in *Critical Inquiry*, 673-714.

⁵⁴ This is a complex concept worked out in different ways across Foucault's writings. In general the concept refers to the way in which subjectivity comes to appear through modes of enunciation

or speaking, or on the basis of an authority that is extrinsic to a speaker and grounded in a pre-existent discourse. For Foucault's discussion of this concept see Michel Foucault *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982* trans. Graham Bruchell (New York: Picador Press, 2005), 333-334. As I will argue, Khan dramatizes the way in which subjects come to appear through institutionalized discourses by staging his recollection of his years at the AUC in a situation of captivity.

⁵⁵ Ahmad, "Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said" in *Edward Said*, 89.

⁵⁶ Said, "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions," in *Critical Inquiry*, 6.

⁵⁷ Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (w/ photographs by Jean Mohr), (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 17.

⁵⁸ W.J.T. Mitchell and Edward W. Said "The Panic of the Visual," *boundary 2*, 29.

⁵⁹ "J'admire infiniment votre intelligence, votre maîtrise, et la rigueur de vos analyses, – au point que sur bien des points vous m'éclairez pour mon travail futur." See "General Correspondence," (1972) in *The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said*. (New York: Columbia Rare Books and Manuscripts Library)

⁶⁰ Ahmad, "Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said" in *Edward Said*, 85.

⁶¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 25

⁶² These distinct levels of analysis or modes of signification are for Said, following Ferdinand de Saussure and his structuralist progeny (up to a point) united in a theory of the differential sign – a material trace-structure involving both visual and phonetic elements. Said's rapprochement with and critique of the "cybernetic hope" of structuralism appears in his *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (London: Granta Books, 1975), 277-344.

⁶³ The Royal Asiatic Society was founded in 1823 in London by Sanskrit scholar Henry Colebrooke et al. It was and remains dedicated to the study of Asian societies and their relation to the arts and sciences of Great Britain. The society's best-known member, and a key figure in Said's study of Orientalism is Sir Richard Burton whose translation of "The Arabian Nights" and the "Kama Sutra" were among the earliest and most widely disseminated in Europe. For Said the Society was a major institutional context for Orientalist learning and discourse. See Said, *Orientalism*, 166.

⁶⁴ André Malraux, *La Musée Imaginaire de la Sculpture Mondiale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952-54)

⁶⁵ The concept of a "will to form" was introduced and theorized by Vienna School art historian Alois Riegl (1858-1905). It is regarded as a founding concept in formalist art historiography. See Alois Riegl, *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*, Jacqueline E. Jung trans. (New York: Zone Books, 2004).

⁶⁶ W.J.T. Mitchell and Edward W. Said, "The Panic of the Visual: a Conversation with Edward Said", *boundary 2*, 15-6

⁶⁷ See Edward Steichen et. al. *The Family of Man: The Greatest Photographic Exhibition of All Time (503 Pictures from 68 Countries)* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955). On Warburg's *Mnemosyne* Atlas project see E.H. Gombrich's classic study *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1970).

⁶⁸ Warburg's essay on serpent iconography is included in the anthology *The Art of Art History*. See Aby Warburg, "Images From the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America (1923)," in *The Art of Art History* ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 162-188. For a good critical study of Warburg's photographs and the exclusion of ethnographic subjects from such studies as his, see Claire Farago, "Silent Moves: On Excluding the Ethnographic Subject from the Discourse of Art History," *The Art of Art History*, 195-212.

⁶⁹ Columbia University's Rare Books Library's The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said contains a complete file of Mohr's photographs originally conceived as part of the book but not included in its final form. I will consider the rationale for Said's inclusions and exclusions through an examination of selected photographs from these files.

⁷⁰ See William Stanley Rubin, "Primitivism" in *20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984) and Jean Hubert Martin, *Magiciens de la terre: Centre Georges Pompidou* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1989).

⁷¹ See Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer" in *The Return of the Real: the Avant Garde at the End of the Century*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 171-205. It should be said that Foster is somewhat contemptuous of this "ethnographic turn" and by implication he is resistant it seems to post-colonial art historical discourses that might be enlisted to analyze the turn. For a good recent analysis of the relationship between ethnographic practice and contemporary art see Jennifer A. González, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008).

⁷² Foster's critique of ethnographic approaches to art practice is at the same time a rejection of identity-based art practices. His opposition to identity-based art, perhaps a reactionary move in his writing, was grounded in a preference for avant garde or autonomous art. In general, the major problem Foster identifies in ethnographic and identity-based art practice concerns the artist's advocacy on behalf of a community. Such advocacy, when institutionalized in an art practice is for Foster indistinguishable from exploitation. Furthermore, an art practice thus engaged in the interests of a community or constituency cannot attain the autonomous or disinterested ideal associated with avant garde and broadly Modernist art works. The value of disinterest or aesthetic autonomy is not strictly shared by Said (or Khan). Nevertheless I aim to examine the way in which Said and Khan co-ordinate aesthetic form and, very often, politically charged contextual detail. See Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer" in *The Return of the Real: the Avant Garde at the End of the Century*, 171-205.

⁷³ See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Annette Lavers, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972) and *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Richard Howard, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

⁷⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 331.

⁷⁵ Edward W. Said, "Review of *Critical Essays* and *Mythologies*," in *The New York Times Book Review*, July 30, 1972, 5.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ The correspondence between Barthes and Said occurred in 1975. Said writes: "En tout cas j'espère que vos ouvrages commenceront à trouver leur place importante et majeure dans la critique américaine." See "General Correspondence," (1975) in The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said. (New York: Columbia Rare Books and Manuscripts Library)

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 312.

⁸¹ See P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis eds. *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Sania Hamady, *Temperament and Character of the Arabs*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960); P.J. Vatikiotis *Revolution in the Middle East and Other Case Studies: Proceedings of a Seminar* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972).

⁸² Said, *Orientalism*, 310. Cited from Hamady, *Temperament and Character of the Arabs*, 100.

⁸³ Said follows Roland Barthes here in his understanding of myth in which both writers (Orientalists) and their subjects (Orientals) are reproduced endlessly as "inert" or stable points of

reference without ever interrogating the assumptions on which such fixed knowledge is produced. See Barthes, *Mythologies*, Annette Lavers, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 109-152.

⁸⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 312

⁸⁵ For Said the Palestinian people's history and politics can be divided into three phases: A politics of accommodation after the 1948 *Nakba*, a politics of rejection in the 1950s and 60s, and finally a politics of hope after the 1967 *Naksa*. See Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 140-141. Said's analysis here is based on that of Ibrahim Abu Lughod's. See Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, "Review of Sabri Jiryis's *The Arabs in Israel*," in *MERIP Reports*, 58 (June, 1977), 24.

⁸⁶ Jacques Derrida's critique of ontotheology or the Western metaphysics of presence in *De la grammatologie* (1967) provides Said with important tools in his critique of a similarly metaphysical Western tradition of Orientalism. In his book *Beginnings* and in the essay on Foucault and Derrida entitled "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions," Said cautions against an overzealous use of "deconstruction" as a technique of analysis since for him it lapses easily into a textual and thus ahistorical formalism. His critique of Orientalist institutions balances the "exemplary positions" of Foucault and Derrida by enlisting deconstructive or close readings of texts with a historically sensitive analysis of colonial institutions. See Said, "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions" in *Critical Inquiry*, 673-714.

⁸⁷ P.J. Vatokiotis, *Revolution in the Middle East and Other Case Studies: Proceedings of a Seminar* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972).

⁸⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 313.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Mubarak's act of self-orientalizing here is not strictly an act of self-representation. He seems to have aimed to contrast his executive power and class membership with an unruly and violent student and working class revolutionary community. The stunt was intended, it seems, to demonize and arguably Orientalize the demonstrators in the square, or to show that their protest was uncoordinated and bound to generate violence within the revolutionary community and among Egyptians generally. Mubarak's strategy, it seems, was to suggest the necessity of his continued leadership.

⁹² These conversations were conducted in English. This is an important limitation of the research project. I was not able to conduct interviews in Arabic or consult primary Arabic sources during my research. This study is thus focused on artists, curators and writers in Egypt who are fluent in English and eager to participate in an international Anglophone art discourse. While this language limitation functioned as a principle of selection for the artists in this study, it is methodologically justified since I aim ultimately to engage with these artists through the work and thought of Said who wrote primarily in English, and for an English audience. By comparing Said's discourse and, ultimately the work of Hassan Khan, I am thus interested in examining two hybrid Arab-Anglophone subject positions. The informal conversations I had with artists have informed my understanding of their published works, but the details of the conversations are not cited in the dissertation. I have indicated in notes and in the main text where I do draw informally on these conversations. In every case, the conversations have concerned published artworks.

⁹³ Edward Said, "Between Worlds: Edward Said makes sense of his life," *London Review of Books* Vol. 20 No. 9 (7, May 1998), 3-7.

⁹⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 294, 316-17, 348.

⁹⁵ Between 1922, the date of the formal approval of the British Mandate in Palestine by the League of Nations, and 1948 the annual growth rate of the Jewish economy was 13.2% as compared with 6.5% in the Palestinian-Arab economy. By 1938, three years after Said's birth, and while the family was still in Palestine, the literacy rate among Palestinian Arabs was 22% as compared with

86% among Palestinian-Jews. See Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 9-22.

⁹⁶ On the role of the British in the suppression of these protests see Matthew Hughes, "The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-1939," in *The English Historical Review* Vol. CXXIV, No. 507 (April, 2009), 314-354.

⁹⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 284-329.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁹⁹ David McDowall, *Palestine and Israel: The Uprising and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 2.

¹⁰¹ See Joel Benin and Lisa Hajjar, "The Intifada" in *Primer on Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Middle East Information and Research Project* (MERIP). www.merip.org, Retrieved Dec. 6, 2013.

¹⁰² I am grateful to Laila Parsons for her very helpful remarks on this important difference between the historical and geopolitical contexts of Said's work and of Khan's.

¹⁰³ The Republic of Egypt was declared on June 18, 1953 in the wake of the Free Officer's Revolution, lead by Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1952. The revolution succeeded in deposing King Farouk. Thereafter the Republic was governed by four leaders who all emerged from the ranks of Nasser's Free Officer's milieu. The Egyptian presidents during Khan's lifetime, namely Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak are distinguished from their predecessor Gamal Abdel Nasser in general by their embrace of free-market economic policies. However all three leaders' terms were characterized by authoritarian domestic policies which imposed limits on free speech and political participation. On the culture of military Egyptian government see Anouar Abdel Malek, *Egypt: Military Society; The Army Regime, The Left and Social Change Under Nasser*. New York: Random House, 1968.

¹⁰⁴ Nasser was one of five founders of the Non-Aligned Movement along with Sukarno of Indonesia, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Josep Broz Tito of Yugoslavia and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. The movement was born out of a will to forge economic and political alliances across the Cold-War divide. The principles of the movement were first articulated at the 1955 Bandung Conference hosted by Indonesian president Sukarno and included mutual respect for territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in domestic affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence. For a history of these origins of the movement see Peter Willetts, *The Non-Aligned Movement: The Origins of a Third World Alliance* (New York: Nichols Publishing, 1978). On the neo-liberalism of the Mubarak era see Timothy Mitchell, "Dreamland: The Neo-liberalization of your Desires" in *MERIP* 210 "Reform of Reaction: Dilemmas of Economic Development in the Middle East" Vol. 29, (Spring, 1999).

¹⁰⁵ As Hossam El-Hamalawy notes, an important symbolic alliance was forged between Islamist groups such as the Brotherhood and The Egyptian Communist Party, Tagammu, the official opposition party during Mubarak's presidency and The People's Socialist Party after the second Palestinian Intifada in 2000. See Hossam El-Hamalawy, "Comrades and Brothers," *MERIP* 242 Vol. 37 (Spring, 2007).

¹⁰⁶ See Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From Nasser to Mubarak* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). See especially Chapters Four and Six, "The Rise of Liberal Capitalism" and "The Mubarak Years," 115-144/164-196.

¹⁰⁷ Timothy Mitchell remarks on the odd coincidence of this overall decline in the standard of living and the expansion of neo-liberalism within Egypt – an expansion of speculative real-estate, which resulted in gated suburban communities and spectacular shopping centers- reminders of the "imaginary nature of neoliberalism's success in Egypt." Mitchell remarks that, in spite of the stated aims of structural readjustment "the neoliberal program has not removed the state from the market or eliminated profligate public subsidies. These achievements belong to the imagination. Its major impact has been to concentrate public funds into different but fewer hands. The state has turned resources away from agriculture, industry and the underlying problems of training and unemployment. It now subsidizes financiers instead of factories, speculators instead of schools." See Mitchell, "Dreamland," (Spring, 1999).

¹⁰⁸ Mona El-Ghobashy offers an excellent analysis of the history of Egyptian “illiberal” security policies and the limited but essential ways in which citizens could, in spite of the restrictions imposed by Mubarak’s maintenance of emergency laws, claim agency in a political and legislative process. See Mona El-Ghobashy, “Constitutionalist Contention in Contemporary Egypt,” in *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 51, No. 11 (July, 2008), 1590-1610.

¹⁰⁹ On this attempt to rebrand the NDP see Mona El-Ghobashy, “Egypt’s Summer of Discontent,” in *MERIP*, Sept 18, 2003. www.merip.org. Retrieved Dec. 1, 2013.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² The “bread riots” occurred in January of 1977 and were set off by an International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank termination, under Sadat’s presidency, of subsidies for basic foodstuffs. This revolt can be seen as an early outcry against a pattern of increasing economic liberalization that was begun with Sadat’s *Infatih* policies and continued with Mubarak’s neo-liberal reforms through the 1990s.

¹¹³ See Paul Schemm, “Egypt Struggles to Control Anti-War Protests,” in *MERIP*, March 31, 2003. www.merip.org. Retrieved Dec. 1, 2013.

¹¹⁴ The Kafeyah Movement’s first major demonstration was on the steps of the High Court on Dec. 12, 2004. 500 to 1000 protesters assembled there to demand the removal of Mubarak with yellow stickers emblazoned with the word “Kafeyah” placed over their mouths. Protesters included Kamal Khalil, a veteran of the Feb. 1968 student protests in Cairo, a handful of Muslim Brothers and Abd al-Halim Quandil, the editor of the Nasserist paper *Al-Arabi*. Assembled out of a network of opposition groups such as the Nasserist faction of Karuma, the liberal al-Ghad Party, the Communist Party and members of the 1970s student movement, *Kafeyah* emerged as a coherent movement after its manifesto was penned by the prominent judge Tarek El-Bishri in October, 2004. See Mona El-Ghobashy, “Egypt Looks Ahead to Portentous Year,” in *MERIP* Feb. 2, 2005. www.merip.org. Retrieved Dec. 1, 2013.

¹¹⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 321.

Chapter 2: From Myths of Arab Presence to Scenes of an Arab Present: Edward Said's Approach to Arab Literary Representations

I. Introduction

In this chapter I show that Said's best-known work *Orientalism* was not published as it was originally conceived. Said's account of Euro-American *mis-*representations of the Arab-Islamic world in the published work was, according to a proposal for the book, to be balanced out with a review of some corrective Arab *self-*representations in literature. In this chapter I will examine the unfulfilled proposal for *Orientalism* and provide some explanation for why Said abandoned his original plan. Through an examination of a 1982 essay on Modern Arabic prose by Said, I argue, the original plan for *Orientalism* was to some extent carried out.

An examination of this particular, if unfulfilled aim of Said's major work, will prepare for an account of his approach to the interpretation of photographic Arab representations in *After the Last Sky*. It will be seen that Said's approach to Arabic literature, and his attunement to the literary character of Orientalist historiography, betrays a formalist sensibility that is manifested in his approach to the interpretation of Jean Mohr's photographs in *After the Last Sky*. It is this formalist sensibility, or an attunement to *form* over, and indeed against gross political *contents* in Arab representations (both literary and photographic) that recommends Said's interpretive strategies for an analysis of Hassan Khan's work.

II. Said's Unfulfilled 'Counter-Proposal' to Orientalism

The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said became available to researchers in 2010 at Columbia University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library. The collection, meticulously indexed by Said before his death in 2003, spans the years 1969 to 2003.¹ It contains some twenty-eight file boxes in which can be found Said's professional correspondence (with occasional personal correspondence from, for instance "Well Known Friends and Colleagues"), drafts, press clippings and reviews of published works (*Orientalism*, *Culture and Imperialism*, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, *The Question of Palestine* and others), and "Subject Files" including lecture notes, press and correspondence concerning topics ranging from "Orientalism and Art," to the Palestinian poet "Mahmoud Darwish," to early interests such as "Joseph Conrad" and "Adorno." Said's intellectual development can be traced back to his seminar notes and major research projects, on Graeme Greene for example from his years at Princeton as a graduate student.

The collection will certainly be enormously important for future researchers, and especially intellectual historians in Said studies. To my knowledge my engagement with the archive was the first, however I make no claim to representing it in this study in an exhaustive manner. Rather I will focus on material that may be helpful in characterizing some key issues that pertain to Said's relationship with literary and photographic art, and material that clarifies relevant aspects of his critique of Orientalism for art historians dealing with contemporary Egyptian art.

In this chapter I will examine a book proposal for Said's best-known work *Orientalism* in which can be found evidence of his original though unfulfilled intention for a study of Orientalist misrepresentations of the Arab world.² In particular what remains unfulfilled in the book's final version is Said's proposed study of Arab literature as a corrective to mistaken representations of the Arab world by Orientalists past and present. While such a study does not appear in the published version of *Orientalism* Said does investigate Arab literature in an essay entitled "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948."³ I will examine this essay in order to draw out Said's approach to Arab artistic self-representations.

Said detailed his intentions for *Orientalism*, his best-known work in a book proposal entitled "Orientalism: A Polemic and a Counter-Proposal."⁴ In the proposal Said offers a principle thesis for the book, and summarizes his argument and evidence for three planned sections. The proposed thesis:

is that knowledge imparted in the West about Arabs and Islam comprises a systematical but deeply flawed orthodoxy which I call Orientalism. This is a school of thought whose historical, cultural, social and economic perception of the Arabs and of Islam constitute a myth-system capable neither of attention to developments in the Arab world, nor of a sense of Arab-Islamic human reality.⁵

The book is intended to trace the institutional emergence and functioning of such a system across a vast historical period, beginning with Crusader literature and ending with Henry Kissinger's pronouncements on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. As proposed, the book focuses mainly on eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth century British and French colonial adventures in the Middle East and the popular and scholarly literature that resulted from these adventures. Such

a study of the historical and institutional roots of Orientalism is designed to explain current (1970s) U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and especially the consequences of such policies for Israeli-Palestinian relations. Said aims in his book to trace the roots of a system of false yet institutionalized knowledge about Arabs and Islam up to his time of writing. He makes this claim in his proposal both implicitly, by invoking an “Arab-Islamic reality” which Orientalism obscures, and explicitly in the following promissory note: “this set of myths is embodied not only in the scholarly and popular accounts of the area, they are also institutionalized as ‘givens’ on which the major scholarly and governmental bodies concerned with the Near East operate, wrongly as my book will try to show.”⁶

To support this thesis Said proposes a study of the development of Orientalist dogmas in two sections. The first section is to focus on Anglo-American academic Orientalism and the policy research it supports. In this first section Said takes aim at well-known academic Orientalists such as Bernard Lewis, P.J. Vatikiotis, Morroe Berger and Gustave von Grunebaum. The proposed second section, which was to be the longest in the book traces the roots of twentieth century Orientalism through the works of key eighteenth and nineteenth century British and French writers from Ernest Renan to Gustave Flaubert and Richard Burton.⁷ The second section then is intended to show how Orientalist literature, across disciplines, and between British and French national traditions, constitutes a discourse in Michel Foucault’s sense, and a myth-system in Roland Barthes’s sense. In the published version of the book, Said follows this plan up to a point. The first section entitled “The Scope of Orientalism” details the

epistemological, imaginative and economic or military grounds of Orientalist beliefs about Arabs and Islam. This section covers the period from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. The second section entitled “Orientalist Structures and Restructures” deals with the scholarly (mainly philological and anthropological) and literary roots of Modern Orientalism in nineteenth century writers like Sylvestre de Sacy, Ernest Renan and Gustave Flaubert among others. So far, Said delivers on his promise in the proposal. In moving between a selection of key scholarly and literary Orientalist writings, Said shows how the figuration of Arabs has remained more or less consistent or has constituted a discourse in Foucault’s sense.

Two important differences between the proposed and published versions of the book are of special interest. Both of these differences concern the third section. To begin with, the published book’s third chapter entitled “Orientalism Now” is the longest section.⁸ As the title implies, Said deals in the third chapter mainly with twentieth century authors. The two foundational national traditions of Orientalism (British and French) treated in the first and second sections of the book, are related to a third national tradition of Orientalism in the U.S. characterized by social scientific research methods and policy expertise, and crucially by a complicity between the Zionist movement and the U.S. political establishment. The eighteenth and nineteenth century colonial interests of the British and French, in this third chapter, give way to U.S. strategic and economic interests in the Middle East. The length of this third section alone suggests the priority of the study of Neo-Orientalist institutions and literature in Said’s book.⁹ But Said aims to illustrate a troubling historical irony in this section as well. The

Arab and specifically Palestinian present for him is constituted as a historical irony. The historical investigation of the first sections of the book aims to expose the anti-Semitic roots of Orientalism in, for example, work on Semitic and Indo-European languages by writers like Ernest Renan. In the “latest” twentieth century phase of Orientalism, according to Said, this originally anti-Semitic discourse is transformed in U.S. foreign policy and popular culture, and in Zionist ideology into an anti-Arab discourse. For Said the “transference of a popular anti-Semitic animus from a Jewish to an Arab target was made smoothly, since the figure was essentially the same.”¹⁰ Said is referring here to popular images which turned up with alarming frequency in the U.S. press after the 1973 Yom Kippur war and the Oil Crisis, images in which Arabs appeared with the same menacing “sharply hooked noses (and) evil mustachioed leer(s)” once reserved for Jewish caricatures (fig. 5,6).¹¹

These two images map out, in addition to cranial topography (in the manner of Franz Joseph Gall’s nineteenth-century phrenology) the historical period with which Said is primarily concerned in *Orientalism*. They are also iterations of the abovementioned anti-Semitic “animus” in two different national contexts, one French and one American. While the forums are very different – *La Libre Parole* was a well-known French anti-Semitic publication during the time of the so-called Dreyfus Affair (which commenced with the wrongful conviction for treason of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a mere year after the Gall cover appeared), and the now defunct *Middle East International* (MEI) was a Regan-era American news source for the Middle Eastern policy experts Said deals with towards the end of Orientalism – their consistent rendering of a Jew and an Arab respectively,

illustrates the continuity between remote national traditions and historical periods of Orientalist representation. Beyond the similar facial features in the two caricatures there is an effort by the artists to generalize and lay bare the political and mental characteristics of the two ethnic groups concerned.¹² The Arab, really an archetype of an oil-rich but war-torn population with no significant national or cultural characteristics (no land is plotted in the longitudinal and latitudinal grid, and the figure's clothes are anonymous) is pacified (intravenously) by a dominant political and economic force individualized in the figures of Ronald Regan and his envoy cheekily named "Richard W. Morphine."¹³ The Jew is similarly pacified by means of a visual inventory of characteristic thoughts and memories of historical experiences. In both cases the figures are represented as exhaustively known and utterly subdued.

For Said Zionist ideology and U.S. policy after 1948 absorbed and modified the anti-Semitic premises of historical Orientalism:

Of itself, Orientalism cannot develop... it is the doctrinal antithesis of development. Its central argument is the myth of the arrested development of Semites. From this matrix other myths pour forth, each of them showing the Semite to be the opposite of the Westerner and irremediably the victim of his own weaknesses. By a concatenation of events... the Semitic myth bifurcated in the Zionist movement: one Semite went the way of Orientalism, the other, the Arab, was forced to go the way of the Oriental.¹⁴

The irony for Said then, consists in the adoption of an anti-Semitic system of belief by the U.S. and Israel in the establishment and maintenance of the State of Israel.¹⁵ The lengthy historical treatment of Orientalism is intended to expose this historical impasse. It is an impasse for Said, writing as a Palestinian-American and an odd transformation in the history and development of Orientalism as an

institutionalized discourse on Semitic alterity. It also reveals Said's willingness to express history in literary terms. It will be seen that this is a key feature of his work in *After the Last Sky* as well.

The second difference between the proposed and published work is stark. Said proposes two sub-sections for the third part of the book, which together are to comprise an alternative to Orientalism or a "counter-proposal."¹⁶ Said proposes for his third section to outline a theoretical alternative to Orientalism "based on critical theory and humanist reading," and then apply this reading method to key works of Modern Arabic prose and prose fiction. This section, proposed as the last section of the book is of tremendous importance in Said's reckoning: "In this study I demonstrate how attention to literature (always neglected in the gross politicization of Orientalism) gives one a much more nuanced and accurate sense of what contemporary Near Eastern actuality is like."¹⁷

This third section on Modern Arabic literature does not appear at all in the published version of the book, though in several places Said repeats his criticism of the neglect of literature in Orientalist scholarship and its gross politicization of Arab "actuality."¹⁸ For example in his review of *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Said notes that while the sections which treat literature are "on an altogether higher level than most of the *History*" the authors do not avail themselves of the newest techniques of analysis in the human and social sciences (i.e., Marxist analysis, History of Ideas, New History).¹⁹ The proposed study of Arabic literature in *Orientalism* was to fill in this gap. The counter-proposal or alternative to Orientalism was to be, for Said, an approach to the representation of Arabs and the Middle East through the region's Modern literature. The "counter-proposal"

Said has in mind then is to be culled, using advanced tools of analysis, from Arab literary self-representations. I argue that this goal, though unfulfilled in *Orientalism* informs Said's writing in *After the Last Sky*.

The third section of *Orientalism* – as it is proposed, and as it is published – reveals some important features of Said's study for the present purposes. First the historical study of Orientalism culminates with a critique of late twentieth century Neo-Orientalist policy and scholarship. This critique aims to expose the complicity of the U.S. and Israeli governments and their debt to early anti-Semitic Orientalist studies. Said describes this contemporary history in literary terms as an historical irony.²⁰ He returns to figures of the Oriental-Arab or “myths of Arab presence” throughout the book's third chapter that express this irony – as paradox or contradiction.²¹

In other words, conceiving of the history of Orientalism as a trope, as irony, offers both a form to Said's critique – a literary form – and explains how Orientalist ideology produces its figures of Arabs as caricatures and images or as “myths of Arab presence” (fig. 7. a/b).²² In these two images, the first a still from a film titled *The Sheik* (1921) and starring Rudolph Valentino and Agnes Ayres, and the second a piece of cover art for a work of erotic or “adult” fiction titled *Turn the Other Sheik* (1970), the myth of Arab presence at issue is a highly sexualized one. The Arab in both images is figured as hypersexualized and menacing on the one hand, and politically inept on the other hand. In the case of the Valentino film the Arab character is autocratic and resistant to negotiation. In the case of the book art the Arab is figured, with the unnecessary help of a caption, as in possession of an array of phallic powers – from the “pipeline” to the

machine gun he brandishes over a bikini-clad captive. But this very gesture of hypersexualization diminishes the figures' political and reflective capacities. As in the Valentino film, the cover art suggests a negotiation for the Arab's hostage is difficult to imagine so long as he has his gun, and the "world's longest pipeline" in hand. Said is interested in tracing the literary history of just this dual or contradictory appearance of the menacing but ultimately sub-human or politically inept Arab. And while he does not gather examples of images of such myths of Arab presence in *Orientalism*, they are pervasively illustrated in the press and media of Said's time.²³

In both the proposed and the published versions of *Orientalism* Said concentrates on literary and scholarly, rather than strictly visual iterations of this ironic or paradoxical construction of Arabs. It is perhaps significant that the historical irony concerning the transformation of an anti-Semitic discourse into an anti-Arab discourse is formulated in the third section of the book where an analysis of Modern Arabic literature was planned. The space intended for works of literature is taken over by a literary-historical trope of irony. The point is that literature informs Said's approach to and critique of the discourse and institutions of Orientalism, and at least in the proposal, points a way beyond Orientalist dogmas. There is a disciplinary aspect to this vision of the history of Orientalism (and anti-Semitism and Arab-Islamophobia). Said is writing intellectual history in *Orientalism* but from the perspective, and with the analytic tools of a literary scholar. This explains his close readings of specific passages, and even punctuation in authors such nineteenth century British orientalist Edward William Lane.²⁴

But how would this attention to literature point a way beyond Orientalist dogmas? It is my contention that Said is interested in literary Arab self-representations as an antidote to Orientalist dogmas primarily because he sees a kind of agential and reflective power in works of literature. If Arabs are, in Orientalist scholarship as it is described by Said, denied agency and the power of reflection this would have to do with the deterministic and explanatory approaches of, for example, Arabic philology (Renan) and anthropology/ethnography (Lane). In such studies the Arab is represented as a function or effect of his language and his cultural/physical environment respectively. Arabic literature (and literature in general) for Said has a special capacity to challenge such causal and explanatory models of representation by allowing for imaginative projection, reflective narration and non-linear, which is to say non-causal representations of time.

III. A Call for Arab (Self-) Representation in Literature and Photographs: Said's Fulfillment of the Counter-Proposal

Through a close look at Said's book of photographs entitled *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* and produced collaboratively with the Swiss photographer Jean Mohr, I will fill in the "counter-proposal" promised but not delivered in *Orientalism*. Said constructs a representation of Palestinian Arabs in this book that is, I think, best understood as a literary-historical alternative to Orientalist representations of Arabs. Of course Said has also published on Modern Arabic literature. I will approach Said's manner of representing Palestinian lives in *After the Last Sky* by first looking at his proposal for the study of Modern Arabic

literature in a famous essay entitled “Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948.” This essay, along with *After the Last Sky* can serve as the basis of a counter-proposal to Orientalist orthodoxies of representation. I will contextualize Said’s work with Jean Mohr more fully in the next chapter when I deal with it in detail. For now it should be said that Said’s essay on Arabic prose and prose fiction is somewhat anomalous in his oeuvre and might be regarded as a disciplinary trespass. The work was originally published as a lengthy introduction to Trevor Le Gassick’s 1974 English translation of Halim Barakat’s *Days of Dust*.²⁵ As such it is intended as a work in comparative literary analysis for English speakers.²⁶ Said in both of these works seems to be interested in representing Palestinian lives and Arabic literature to an audience mostly unfamiliar with both. In the works Said is thus attuned to points of convergence and divergence between strategies of representation in Arabic and Euro-American literary traditions.

A note on the term “representation” is necessary before turning to Said’s treatment of Arabic literature and Palestinian lives. It is possible that Said backed off from the proposal to provide an alternative to Orientalism because he did not want to respond to truth-claims about Arab-Islamic “character,” “mind,” and “temperament” that appear in Orientalist scholarship, with his own set of truth claims. The approach of the entire book – to examine Orientalism as a discursive formation, or a set of statements whose truth-value is conventional and institutionally enforced, not necessary – prohibits such a counter-proposal. Said’s original goal, to correct mistaken assumptions about “Arab-Islamic human reality” (or elsewhere “Near-Eastern actuality”) might have promised more than

his method authorized him to deliver. What *Orientalism* does accomplish is an analysis of the way in which the Orient and the Oriental are produced textually and institutionally, that is, discursively as representations. Said is clear about this restriction in his note on methodology in the “Introduction” to *Orientalism*.²⁷ And he ends the book with a reminder that:

It is not the thesis of this book to suggest that there is such a thing as a real or true Orient; nor is it to make an assertion about the ... privilege of an ‘insider perspective’... On the contrary I have been arguing that ‘the Orient’ is a constituted entity.²⁸

So what might Said be up to in his writing on Arabic literature and Palestinian lives if he is not making truth claims? I argue that Said’s counter-proposal, not as it was originally conceived before *Orientalism* but as it is articulated in *After the Last Sky* and in his analysis of Arabic literature, amounts to a call for sympathetic literary and visual representations of Arabs. Said prioritizes the role of art – its forms and representations – as a tool for the articulation of a “national self-consciousness” and a “politics of hope” and as an alternative to social scientific and grossly over-politicized representations of Arabs, in scholarship and in the mass media.²⁹ At stake in this project is a counter-narrative to Orientalist stereotypes and truth-claims. In short, Said’s writing on Arabic prose and prose fiction and in *After the Last Sky* does not respond to Orientalist truth claims with an essentialist Arabism from a privileged insider perspective. Rather he enlists a set of representations and literary tropes, drawn from Jean Mohr’s photographs, the Palestinian resistance poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, and the short fiction of writers like Emile Habiby and Ghassan Khanafani, in a kind of artistic nation-building process.³⁰ This approach, although primarily an approach

to literature from the region, is used by Said in his engagement with Mohr's images of the Palestinian present. Furthermore, that Said enlists a Swiss national's photography in this project indicates that he is not interested in advocating for an essentialist or "insider" representation of Arabs. It should also be noted that so-called "insiders" such as Sania Hamady and E. Shouby come in for major criticism in *Orientalism*.³¹

As was mentioned above Said does not engage with visual iterations of contradictory myths of Arab presence such as the Valentino figure and the more insidious armed and oversexed Gulf Arab on the cover of the Conway book. But if his ideas about this kind of mythology of the Arab menace are read in dialogue with the more favorable and sympathetic representations of Arabs in Modern Arabic literature and in Mohr's photographs, a sense of how art in general and visual art in particular might combat Arabophobic stereotypes can be gleaned.

IV. Figuring the Arab Present: Said's Formal Approach to Modern Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction

In his essay "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948" Said offers an approach to the analysis of Arab politics, history and psychology through its literature.³² As the title of the essay implies, the literature under consideration is thought through in historical terms. Said identifies at least two crucial events in the political history of the Modern Middle East that have inscribed themselves in the region's literature.

The two events at issue in Said's account are the *Nakba* (disaster) of 1948 and the *Naksa* (relapse) of 1967. The 1948 establishment of the State of Israel and

consequent displacement of the Palestinians, and the devastating and swift defeat of the Egyptian Army under Gamal Abdel Nasser in the Arab-Israeli War of June 1967 set the historical terms of Said's analysis. For example Said identifies a tone of disappointment in the post-1967 writing of Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, and a tone of urgency and provocation in the post-1948 writing of Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani.³³ But Said's analysis is more formal and structural than this. He describes the way in which these events both produce a mood in literature of the region and identify a literary or artistic form capable of precisely contextualizing such moods. The sense of urgency after 1948 was likely common to all Palestinians, and disappointment after 1967 common to many Egyptians. The noteworthy contribution of Arab writers in Said's account was to have identified the appropriate literary form to narratively contain such experiences or to develop an art form adequate to this history.

In the first instance, the form in question is that of the novel. But Said wishes to explain how this European form was not simply copied in Modern Arabic literature but transformed to reflect the particular needs of Arab writers and their audiences. Said's reflections are centered on the unit of the scene as a site of such a transformation. The dramatic and prose scene in both Arabic and European literature is characterized as a "contested space."³⁴ The contest or conflict of the scene in European literature is, at least in the Aristotelian sense, resolved within a periodic narrative: the scene is resolved in the passage from prologue to middle and end. By contrast, the unit of the scene in Arabic literature, according to Said, is treated more strictly as a unit, disconnected from a narrative trajectory and joined to other scenes in a precarious manner. The result of this for

Said is “a tendency to episodism, and the repetition of scenes, as if the rhythmic succession of scenes can become a substitute for a quasi-organic continuity.”³⁵

The unit of the scene in this way is extracted from the European novelistic tradition and used to express a historical experience of irresolution.

Said describes this form of irresolution in terms of a “paradoxical present.”³⁶ The paradox he has in mind concerns the memory of the 1948 *Nakba* primarily, a “monumental enigma” in Modern Arabic literature that is nevertheless registered at the level of narrative and character profiles.³⁷ Taking his cue from Constantine Zurayk’s 1948 book *Ma ‘nā l-nakba* (The Meaning of the Disaster) Said identifies two senses of the term *Nakba*. The first is indicated in the translation: the Zionist victory and Palestinian exile of 1948 was a disaster that presented a challenge to the whole of Arab modernity. The second sense of the term however suggests that this disaster consisted in a “deviation, a veering out of course, a serious deflection away from a forward path.”³⁸ The disaster refers to the Arabs’ lack of preparedness in the face of a modern Zionist military apparatus (a lack which generated an anxiety about what, if anything, constitutes Arab modernity). But it also refers to a rupture from a past course or pre-1948 history. This deviation for Said put in question “the very possibility of their (the Arabs’) historical continuity as a people.”³⁹

This is not yet a paradox, but rather a bivalency of the term *Nakba*. The paradox for Said comes into focus when these two senses of the term are held in mind together to describe a historical present for the Palestinians in particular and Arabs in general. Said formulates the paradox as follows:

from the perspective of the past, the Arabs would seem to have swerved from the path toward national identity... from the perspective of the future, the disaster raised the specter of national fragmentation. The paradox is that both of these observations hold, so that at the intersection of past and future stands the disaster... deviation from what has yet to happen (unified Arab identity)... and... the possibility of what may happen (Arab extinction as a cultural or national unit).⁴⁰

Simply put then, the paradox arises when the disaster is recalled in the present as the historical point at which Arab identity is forged on the basis of its loss. For Said the present (which is inflected by the memory of the disaster) is a “problematic site of contemporaneity” at once “occupied and blocked from the Arabs.”⁴¹ But this paradox for Said was productive for writers. Arabic writing in the wake of 1948 (and again in the wake of 1967 with renewed urgency) was characterized by realistic or precise description and narrative forms that served an affirmative purpose of social development in spite of this paradox. Following Egyptian literary critic Ghali Shukri, Said argues that Modern Arab writing became a historical act after 1948, and after the rise of nationalist movements in 1967, an act of resistance.⁴²

Said is not taking a concept of Arab identity for granted in all of this. On the contrary, the Modern Arabic novel, through its forensic rendering of historical detail is engaged in the making of a present out of, or in spite of the uncertainty of the future and the disappointments of the past. The scene is the preferred form for this literature because it is disconnected from a period structure. The concatenation of scenes without periodic or narrative resolution situates the present in an uncertain historical trajectory. Arab identity in this respect is not taken for granted but put into question.

The dates are important. Said notes that the term for the 1967 loss of Nasser's army to the Israeli forces (which seriously undermined Nasser's Pan Arabist ideology and the dreams of national cultural identity it fostered) suggests in its root a "relapse" or "setback" as in a recovery from an illness.⁴³ The *Nakba* of 1948 marks a moment of rupture, a collective traumatic break from a lost Arab authenticity, and the *Naksa* of 1967 figures as a traumatic repetition of the same loss.⁴⁴ The dates allow for a negative articulation of Arab identity as something that was twice lost. The distinct political circumstances that surround the two events however, (the first suffered primarily by Palestinian Arabs and the second suffered by Egyptian Nasserists but also by the multinational constituency of the Arab League) allows for a positive description of Arab contemporaneity. The dates allow, at the very least, for distinctions to be made between Egyptian and Palestinian iterations of a concept of Arab identity.

The "affirmative" nature of Modern Arabic writing for Said consists in its insistence on a present and its call for a future in spite of the losses of 1948 and 1967. For all its chauvinistic arrogance, the Pan Arabist vision of Nasser registered this at best projected quality of Arab national and cultural existence. Said notes this in a gloss on one of Nasser's "Pirandellian" refrains from *The Philosophy of the Revolution*: "Arab history was like a role in search of an actor to play it... a scene in search of a drama."⁴⁵

Several characteristics of Modern Arabic writing have been mentioned already. The unit of the scene stands out for Said as an "irreducible form of the present to be affirmed."⁴⁶ Furthermore the tissue of disconnected scenes in writing by authors such as Egyptian Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz and Kanafani,

but also in the journalistic or chronicle styles of Taha Hussein and Emile Habiby, reveals a taste for “episodism” or a rhythmic succession of scenes without narrative resolution. Several motifs or narrative devices follow from this temporal structure of the Modern Arabic novel for Said. First of all characters are often treated in a substitutive manner, short circuiting plot development with entrances and exits that, for Said, function symbolically as “ontological affirmations” and “quasi deaths” respectively.⁴⁷ What is crucial here is that the scene of the novelistic present is inhabited or claimed without necessarily being developed in an overall narrative structure. A character’s presence in a scene is political in a very precise sense for Said:

there may be no whole linking these parts, no Arab ‘idea’, identity, history... giving the diachrony of scene-events any synchronic intention... The present may after all be only that, perhaps not a consequence of the past and certainly not a basis for the future.⁴⁸

The hypothetical or tentative nature of these features is important. Once again it seems to be historical experience - represented formally in literature through the unresolved passage from one scene to another, or through figures of a “paradoxical present” – rather than any concept of fixed identity that is of primary interest for Said. Said’s attention to literary form it seems is at the same time an attunement to the ways in which time, history and temporality are represented in Modern Arab writing. Form and temporality are associated in Said’s account of literature. The account of literary representations of history and temporality in the essay on Arabic prose and prose fiction serves Said’s interpretive purposes in *After the Last Sky* as well. In both literature and photography, that is, in *art*

formal strength is associated with representations of time and with the experience of time.

Two further features, one concerning characterization, the other concerning narration, follow from this account of history and temporality in Arabic literature. Firstly, the characters that inhabit scenes, by substitution, are moved on and off stage as it were not by force of will but by often ill-defined circumstances. Said cites Shukri on this point. In post 1948 Egyptian writing present uncertainty is expressed historically in “near-tragic conflict between a protagonist and some ‘outside force’.”⁴⁹ Secondly, the narrative voice in such work is not omniscient but reflexive, assuming a spectator’s mode. Narration thus serves a testimonial function rather than an explanatory one. While the narrator’s act of telling guarantees a kind of actuality to the story - Said refers this novelistic function to the Islamic tradition of the *isnād* (witness, support) – the forces at work on the characters exceed the narrator’s control.⁵⁰ The narrator is thus both engaged and invested and disengaged enough to be able to “point out the abuses, the comedy or melodrama of what is taking place before him in the narration.”⁵¹ Finally this narrative mode is made reflexive by means of a sort of strategy of depersonalization. Said raises a phrase from author Tawfiq al-Hakim’s narrative persona – *Masrah l-hayāt* (the theatre of life) – to the level of an “aesthetic method”: the importance of a scene is not that it has taken place but that it is being recorded or narrated to someone.⁵² This feature of Modern Arabic narrative is related to a secular literary tradition of the *maqāma*, a “meta-art form” for Said whose main characteristic is the dramatization of the tale’s telling.”⁵³ The classic example of this form is *The Thousand and One Nights* in which Scheherazade

postpones her death at the hands of her royal audience each night by reciting a tale. Said notes that this form of the story within a story is developed not just in Modern Arabic literature through reflexive narration but also in pre-1967 “popular” Arabic film through inexplicable appearances of cabaret or theatre scenes.⁵⁴

Said’s study of Arabic prose, as was mentioned does not seem to have been aimed at a specialist audience in Middle Eastern Studies. There is a vast literature on the emergence of the Arabic novel with which Said does not engage in his essay. His account misses a great deal of historical detail, an omission that perhaps enables him to generalize characteristics of the Arabic novel across specific and very different national contexts (in Palestine and Egypt for example). Recent work on the historical emergence of the Arabic novel has focused much more narrowly on the development of particular themes in national Arabic novelistic traditions.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Said’s essay is instructive in its attention to formal devices such as reflexive narrative strategies and non-periodic scene structures in work that is, in his estimation too often read for political statements and content exclusively. Instead of emphasizing the specific grievances of testimonial Arab literature, for example, Said is interested in showing how a testimonial perspective is made possible through reflexive narrative strategies. And instead of reading Arabic literature for a record of political events, Said emphasizes the way in which history and temporality are manipulated as elements of non-periodic scene structures. It is this formal approach that I will examine further in *After the Last Sky*, as it is worked out in dialogue with visual representations of Palestinians. And this formal approach ultimately may be

regarded as a critical retort, via artistic strategies of representation to Orientalist myths of Arab political or ethnographic presence.

V. The Value of Literary and Visual Form: Combatting Myths of Arab Presence with Representations of an Arab Present

I have enumerated these features of Modern Arabic literature as Said describes it because I believe they inform his collaborative rendering of Palestinian Arabs in *After the Last Sky*. Scenes, episodism, substitutive entrances and exits, undermined protagonists and reflexive strategies of narration characterize Said's representation of Palestinian lives at both the level of his text and in his selection and sequencing of photographs from Jean Mohr's archive. Said also makes frequent references in *After the Last Sky* to the authors he discusses in the essay "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948." Indeed the title of the book, "After the Last Sky" is taken from a poem by Mahmoud Darwish. I argue that, in mediating between history and literature, Said assigns for himself the same national task he sees fulfilled in Modern Arabic literature: namely to affirm a present in spite of its uncertain historical location.

What distinguishes *After the Last Sky* from the Modern Arabic literature Said examines is its inclusion of images in the nation-building task. The representation of Arab Palestinians Said constructs in *After the Last Sky* is developed out of a combination of photographs and various kinds of text (transcripts of radio interviews, schemas from sociological works, fragments of poetry and prose, etc.). I will argue that in spite of the range of media Said makes

use of in the book, the representation is developed along the lines of the literary analysis visited above.

VI. Conclusion

Having identified Said's strategy for the analysis of Modern Arabic literature, we are in a better position to characterize the counter-proposal with which this chapter began. What is it exactly about literature that would combat the "gross politicization" of Arabs Said associates with Orientalist scholarship? Given what has been seen so far, it seems as though for Said literary form offers a way of describing Arab experience that rises above brute political circumstances. If Orientalist writing has historically sustained "myths of the arrested development of Arabs," the literature Said considers in his essay combats such myths by narrativizing and temporalizing a concept of Arab experience. Indeed a reckoning with time and temporality would seem to be necessary to describe experience at all. Whereas Orientalist "myths of Arab presence" fix Arab identity, and explain it causally as a result of gross political or biological factors, the literary representations visited above show characters in development – judging and imagining their relation to history and political circumstances. In other words literature combats myths of *Arab presence* with an account of an *Arab present* that may be freely, critically and variously described by authors. That it is a paradoxical present which Modern Arab writers describe according to Said – a present that is unresolved with respect to an "authentic past" or a fated future - further complicates any notion of a fixed Arab identity.

As will be seen in the next chapter Said interprets Jean Mohr's photographs of Palestinians in a similar manner – with an eye to drawing out the dynamism and agency of the particular lives they picture. His interpretation of the photographs animates them by means of narration – by acting upon the arrested image in order to explain it as both a product of history but also as a potentially agential force within history.

¹ Included in the collection are two shoeboxes full of "Index Cards" with which correspondents can be located in the collection alphabetically by name, by date and through various organizations with which Said was involved such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and The American Association of Arab University Graduates (AAAUG). When I conducted my research at Columbia Said's index was indispensable as the project of formally archiving the collection was still underway.

² The proposal is contained in a rather large file titled "Orientalism: Drafts, Correspondence, Log and Translations." While a draft of the entire book was sent to Basic Books (NY) in 1975 through Said's literary agent's office (Georges Borchardt) the only substantial response to the proposal I will examine is from The University of California Press. Basic Books published Said's *Beginnings* (1975) but ultimately refused to publish *Orientalism*. Erwin A. Glikes, the president and publisher there indicates in a letter to Said dated Feb. 13, 1975 that he should approach The University of California Press with his proposal. Said's correspondence with The University of California Press is quite extensive and was carried on primarily with William J. McClung. McClung's first letter to Said is dated Apr. 22, 1975 and expresses a definite interest in the proposed book "Orientalism: a Polemic and a Counter Proposal" but also an uncertainty about whether the book is to be an "unorthodox scholarly polemic" which would be of interest to the publisher or a "political polemic" which McClung says the press "does not exist to publish." In his response to McClung's question, Said in a prompt and rather heated letter dated Apr. 26, 1975 indicates that he is "put off... and insulted" by McClung's characterization of the essay "The War and Arab Society" (which Said submitted earlier to the press while developing his ideas for *Orientalism*) as "vindictive and unfair." McClung in his Apr. 22nd letter seems to have been concerned that *Orientalism: A Polemic and Counterproposal* would take the "political polemic" tone of this earlier essay. Said goes on in his response to explain that he wishes to put his findings from the earlier essay in a "the most thorough and convincing framework possible" and as "dispassionately" as possible as well. Said implicitly answers McClung's question concerning the scholarly and political options for the project with a refusal to move in either direction exclusively. The correspondence with The University of California Press continues with nine exceedingly positive reviews of the proposal by the likes of Masao Miyoshi and Ibrahim Abu Lughod. In a final letter dated June 9, 1977, following this initial and very successful review process, McClung

writes “Dear Ed: We watch the mails hopefully, but your manuscript does not appear. Will it soon?” Curiously Said did not publish the book ultimately with The University of California Press but rather Vintage Books (NY) in 1978. I was not able to find Said’s correspondence with the book’s final publisher. See “Orientalism: Drafts, Correspondence, Log, Translations,” in *The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said Papers*, (New York: Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library).

³ While this essay was anomalous in Said’s oeuvre, he had long been interested in Arabic literature and had been preparing to write seriously about it in the early to mid 1970s as is indicated in his correspondence with Barthes discussed earlier. Said expresses his interest in “contemporary Arabic literature” explicitly in his letter to Barthes. In other correspondence from the mid 70s, mostly with colleagues at Columbia University, Said indicates that he is pursuing research in Arabic philology, linguistics and grammar as well. These studies were conducted while Said was in Beirut on a fellowship preparing his manuscript for *Beginnings* (1975). See “Correspondence Aug. 1973 – Oct. 1974” Edward W. Said Papers.

⁴ “Orientalism: a Polemic and a Counter-Proposal” in “Orientalism, Book [Correspondence], 1975-1979,” Edward W. Said Papers.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The manuscript grew beyond Said’s expectations in the proposal. It is possible that the increased length of the book was one of the reasons Said had to take the manuscript from the University of California Press to Vintage Books. As indicated in his correspondence with McClung, Said’s book was originally to appear in a University of California Press series titled Quantum Books, a series in which publications run about one-hundred printed pages. Said indicates, in a letter to McClung dated July 5, 1977 (about a month after McClung’s inquiry about the undelivered manuscript mentioned above) that the book is growing substantially and will likely no longer be appropriate for the Quantum Series. See “Orientalism: Drafts, Correspondence, Log, Translations” in Edward W. Said Papers.

⁹ Said identifies a “latest phase” of Orientalism in which 19th century European binary and antagonistic models of East/West relations are taken up in a new (in 1978) post Cold-War context in US foreign policy and policy research. His focus is on an institutional context (in US universities for example) for new Orientalist discourses. I will use the term “Neo-Orientalism” to refer to this latest phase in Said’s account. Research is now appearing on the theoretical basis and historical applicability of this category of Neo-Orientalism. Theoretically, the binary logic of Orientalist writing seems to be retained in most accounts of “Neo-Orientalism.” And historically the category covers scholarship and research that redeploys this binary in the wake of moments of conflict between the Euro-American and Arab-Islamic “worlds” such as The Gulf Wars and the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York. As has been argued, key to a proper definition of this term will be an analysis of the way in which Orientalist binaries are entrenched in a globalized world. For a good review of these emerging discourses on Neo-Orientalism See Mohammad Samiei, “Neo-Orientalism? The Relationship Between the West and Islam in Our Globalized World,” *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 31, No. 7 (2010) 1145-1160.

¹⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 286.

¹¹ There are pretty obvious echoes between the phrenological mapping of the French caricature and the longitudinal and latitudinal lines of the Arab’s head in the MEI caricature. The comparison roughly illustrates Said’s point about a transference of the Semitic myth from Jews to Arabs.

¹² In the MEI caricature, by well-known political cartoonist Mahmoud Kahil (d.2003) this gesture, in light of his other work, is deeply satirical.

¹³ The figure is Richard W. Murphy, Ronald Regan’s Assistant Secretary of State. The article for which the cartoon was drawn describes a regional tour by Murphy of the Middle East. The purpose of the tour is to address the Palestinian question and the business of an Arab-Israeli peace process, but, as indicated in the article Murphy was to meet with a joint- Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, King Hussein and other “Arab” leaders on his tour but not Yasser Arafat or the PLO. He met with

a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation in Baghdad but arrived as Arafat was leaving. The caricature thus reads as a kind of abstract Palestinian Arab, but without any specific political representative. In any case the caricature achieves its effect, albeit ironically and satirically, by means of generalizing a vaguely discernible “Arab” type. See Fred Axlegard, “A Step in the Right Direction?” *Middle East International* (19 April, 1985), 9. The article was drawn from a file titled “After the Last Sky: Press clippings, Drafts Chpt. 1” in The Collected Papers of Edward W. Said.

¹⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 307.

¹⁵ Said’s account of this transformation is organized around a concept of historical irony in general, and he traces the transformation ultimately through authoritative Orientalist discourses (Renan’s for example) to details (discursive and institutional) of US and Israeli policy with respect to Palestinian Arabs. A more conceptual history of the relationship between the figure of the Jew and that of the Arab is available in Gil Anidjar’s *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy* (2003). Anidjar’s work takes up Said’s insight about the uncomfortably close relationship between Arabophobia or Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, but whereas the latter couches his account of this relationship in terms of irony, Anidjar explains how the concept of “the enemy” in writings by European thinkers such as Augustine, Aquinas, Hobbes, Kant, Hegel and Shakespeare is what the figures of “the Jew” and “the Moor, Turk, Arab” have had in common historically and it is this sense of threat that has enabled their separation as well in contemporary representations of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Anidjar’s approach is perhaps not as historically sensitive as Said’s in *Orientalism*, but he extends and deepens the analysis of these figures in literature beyond the mere recognition of an irony. For example Anidjar’s analysis of Shakespeare’s *Othello* includes a comparison of the figures of “the Moor” and “the Shylock” that details the similarities between these types at the level of characterization. See Gil Anidjar. *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). Opposed somewhat to Anidjar’s analysis of Jewish-Arab enmity is Martin Kramer’s edited volume *The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honour of Bernard Lewis*, which focuses rather on Jewish-Islamic amity, or Jewish contributions to a richer understanding of Islam. Kramer’s introduction, and indeed the subtitle of the book suggests that establishing this history of productive and sensitive Jewish study of Islam is necessary as a corrective to Said’s work in *Orientalism* which criticizes fiercely the work of Jewish Orientalist such as Bernard Lewis. See *The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honour of Bernard Lewis*. Ed. Martin Kramer. (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dyan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, Syracuse University Press, 1999).

¹⁶ Said, “Orientalism: a Polemic and a Counter-Proposal” in Edward W. Said Papers.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ More will be said below about Said’s problematic reference to a “Near Eastern actuality.” This concept at first seems to conflict with his claims in *Orientalism* and elsewhere about the constructed and unverifiable nature of such concepts. I will examine Said’s use of the related concept of “representation” in what follows.

¹⁹ Said, “Orientalism: a Polemic and a Counter-Proposal” in Edward W. Said Papers.

²⁰ This literary approach to historiography was perhaps most persuasively formulated by Hayden White in his *Metahistory*. Said was engaged with this work especially in his essay “Permission to Narrate” as will be seen. See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1973).

²¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 311.

²² Said has in mind a contradictory construction of Arabs in popular imagery that includes both signifiers of power and strength (usually economic or sexual) and signifiers of a lack of real political power (usually in the form of markers of pre-Modern, pre-political cultural identity). On this contradictory construction of Arab types (in literature and the media) see Said, *Orientalism*, 308-316. The film still is taken from *The Sheik* (Paramount Pictures, 1921) and features Rudolph

Valentino and Agnes Ayres. The book pictured here was featured in a special exhibition of Neo-Orientalist pulp fiction, held at the Serpentine Gallery in London and organized by *Bidoun Magazine*. It is an adult pulp novel by Troy Conway. See Troy Conway. *Turn the Other Sheik*, Coxman #24 (New York: Paperback Library, 1970).

²³ Said does make brief mention of Valentino in *Orientalism*, but does not examine his image in any detail. Concerning Arab stereotypes in cinema Said notes: "The Arab leader (of marauders, pirates, 'native' insurgents) can often be seen snarling at the captured Western hero and the blond girl (both of them steeped in wholesomeness)... this is a current debasement of Valentino's Sheik." See Said, *Orientalism*, 287. The relationship described here by Said is apparent in the book art as well, and it is indeed a debasement in 1970 of the comparatively refined Valentino film of the 1920s.

²⁴ Said's approach to Lane's work was that of a close-reading literary scholar to be sure. Said offers an analysis of a tellingly attenuated sentence in Lane's major work *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1860) in *Orientalism*. See Said, *Orientalism*, 163. The section in Lane's book that Said fixes on is as follows: "I was sure that I could never make up my mind to part with her. But I found it rather difficult to silence my officious friend.-" The passage describes an incident where Lane refused an offer of a bride from his informant. Said interprets Lane's refusal, and his sharp transition, indicated by a period and dash, from this rather personal anecdote to a statement of fact about customs concerning "unmarried men" as a disengagement from the process of social reproduction in his ethnographic field. This disengagement for Said is at the same time a choice to maintain objective, ethnographic distance. See Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: John Murray, 1860), 156. For a rather more sympathetic account of Lane's work than Said's see Leila Ahmad, *Edward William Lane: A Study of His Life and Works and of British Ideas of the Middle East in the nineteenth-century* (London and New York: Longman Books, 1977).

²⁵ Halim Isber Barakat. *Days of Dust* Trans. Trevor Le Gassick; Intro. Edward Said. (Wilmette, Ill.: Medina University Press International, 1974).

²⁶ Research on Said's not always glowing reception in the Arab world is now emerging. See for example Marcus Schmitz, "Re-Reading Said in Arabic: (Other) Worldly Counterpoints" in *Edward Said's Translocations: Essays in Secular Criticism*. Eds. Tobias Doring and Mark Stein (New York: Routledge Press, 2012), 97-111. On the comparative literature approach in Said's essay "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948" See Ferial J. Ghazoul "Edward Said and the Practice of Comparative Literature" also in *Edward Said's Translocations: Essays in Secular Criticism*. Eds. Tobias Doring and Mark Stein (New York: Routledge Press, 2012), 113-128.

²⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 20-21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 322.

²⁹ Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (Vintage: New York, 1992), 140-141. The phrase a "politics of hope" is taken by Said from the work of Ibrahim Abu Lughod. This politics will be historicized and illustrated in what follows.

³⁰ These Palestinian authors are taken up along with Egyptian authors such as Naguib Mahfouz in the essay on "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948." Said's allusions to Darwish, Khanafani and Habiby in *After the Last Sky* are consistent with his treatment of these authors in the essay on Arabic (not exclusively Palestinian) writing. In the essay, as will be seen Said's basis for invoking a general category of "Arabic Prose" is worked out in relation to two events – the 1948 *Nakba* and the 1967 *Naksa* – which effected both Palestinians and Arabs in general. A prime characteristic of Arabic prose and prose fiction (Palestinian and Arab generally) for Said consists in the consciousness of and will to narrativize these experiences of national loss and displacement.

³¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 309-320.

³² Edward W. Said, "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948" in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2000). While this essay is somewhat anomalous in

Said's career as a literary scholar, as was indicated above, he took a keen interest especially in the years leading up to the writing of *Orientalism* in modern and contemporary Arabic literature. In addition to this essay, and also included in the collection *Reflections on Exile* are dedicated essays on Arab writers such as the Nobel Prize winning Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz. See Edward W. Said, "After Mahfouz," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2000), 317-326. Said's earliest published work on Arab literary and artistic representations entitled "The Arab Portrayed" was solicited by his colleague and friend Ibrahim Abu Lughod for an edited volume. See Edward W. Said, "The Arab Portrayed," in *The Arab Israeli Confrontation of June 1967: An Arab Perspective*. (Evanston Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 1-9.

³³ Said, "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 51/58

³⁴ Ibid., 49.

³⁵ Ibid., 49-50.

³⁶ Ibid., 47.

³⁷ Ibid., 46.

³⁸ Ibid., 47.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 47. Said's use of the term "Arab" here is not specified. That it designates a "national" or "cultural" unit however indicates that he is not interested in a linguistic or ethnic definition of Arabness. Albert Hourani in his *A History of the Arab Peoples* takes up several definitions of the term – political, cultural, linguistic and ethnic. Ultimately Hourani's historical object domain in the study is delimited by geographical and linguistic criteria. As a result, for example his history does not include Arab-Islamic cultural history in Turkey or Iran. See Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991). Said's use of the term is less specific. He seems to be borrowing a concept of Arabness from discourses on "national" and "cultural" authenticity. Zurayk's book, from which Said takes his basic orientation made a major contribution to such discourses. These debates will be revisited in connection with Hassan Khan's work and the indigenous Egyptian and European ethnographic discourse on "authenticity" or *asala*.

⁴¹ Said, "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 47.

⁴² Ibid., 48.

⁴³ Ibid., 47.

⁴⁴ The concept of Arab "authenticity" that circulates, undefined in Said's discourse, is worked out in more detail in Egyptian nationalist writings to be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. As indicated above, Said's use of the concept of authenticity is not didactic. Arab Authenticity is a problem or a kind of Lacanian object-cause of desire (i.e., for national or cultural unity). This negative articulation of authenticity in Said's essay allows him to focus on imaginative projections of, or desires for, national or cultural belonging in Modern Arab literature rather than arguments for or against a fixed Arab identity that would appear in historical writing. This emphasis on temporality over deterministic historical explanation seems to function as an argument in Said's essay for the agency and imaginative potential of the artist/writer.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 55.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 54.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ See for example Hoda El Sadda's *Gender, Nation and the Arabic Novel: Egypt 1892-2008* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012). The themes of gender and sexuality especially have been treated extensively in studies of the Arabic novel, and it is a theme that Said does not take up in his essay at all. See for instance H. Al-Samman "Out of the Closet: Representations of Homosexuals and Lesbians in Modern Arabic Literature," *Journal of Arabic Literature* Vol. 39. (2008), 270-310. Other themes that appear explicitly in works with which Said is concerned in the essay are more economic in nature. See for example Ellen McLarney's "Empire of the Machine: Oil in the Arabic Novel," *Boundary 2* Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer, 2009), 177-198. McLarney examines work by Khanafani among others with an eye to describing the relationship between the oil economy and the politics of Palestinian displacement. Finally, Sabry Hafez's work on Arabic narrative discourse and short stories deals ably and historically with many of the issues Said takes up in his analysis of modern Arabic prose. See Sabry Hafez, *The Quest for Identities: The Development of the Modern Arabic Short Story* (London: Saqi Books, 2007) and *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature* (London: Saqi Books, 1993). For a good standard work on Arabic literature see Roger Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Chapter 3: *After the Last Sky*: Pictures, Projection and Repetition in Said's Narration of Palestinian Lives

I. Introduction

In this chapter I will examine Said's co-authored work *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (with photographs by Jean Mohr) in detail. I will first introduce the work by describing the institutional context of its production and Said's approach (political and aesthetic) to writing about and through the photographs of Jean Mohr. Having introduced the work as a whole I will then look more closely at how Said organizes an argument alongside and with the help of Jean Mohr's photographs.

In a chapter of his book *Picture Theory*, W.J.T. Mitchell helpfully treats *After the Last Sky* as one of four "case studies" in the genre of the "photographic essay."¹ Mitchell's theoretical aim in analyzing *After the Last Sky* and the other case studies is to characterize the relationship between language and photography in the genre of the photographic essay as one of "mutual resistance," wherein language remains irreducible to photography and photography remains irreducible to language.² This task for Mitchell is of both art historical and political importance. Mitchell argues that a proper analysis of the form or aesthetic dimension of the photographic essay distinguishes it from documentary and reportage and establishes its place in the history of artistic representation as an "anti-canonical" genre that mediates "between modern and postmodern visual languages."³ The irreconcilability of language and image or writing and photography in Mitchell's case studies makes it difficult to classify them as either

“aesthetic unities” (an ultimate modernist art historical value) or as didactic exercises in documentary representation (in the manner of journalism).⁴ The resistance Mitchell traces in his case studies is thus of political importance because, at its best, the genre occupies a critical position at the margins of art history and on the periphery of the documentary form – a position from which both art history and the mass media may be equally interrogated.

In what follows I will build on Mitchell’s analysis. To be sure the gap or disjunction between Said’s writing and Mohr’s photographs is a site of immense political and aesthetic power in *After the Last Sky*. As Mitchell rightly notes, in Said’s and Mohr’s hands the medium-specific fissures of the photographic essay enable an ambitious and fraught or inconclusive Palestinian “nation-making text.”⁵ But whereas Mitchell’s interest is in contextualizing the book within the genre of the photographic essay, I aim to show how it emerged in a particular institutional context on the one hand, and how it relates to Said’s engagement with literary and visual art across his works on the other hand.

Through an examination of key sections, it will be seen that in *After the Last Sky* Said develops the counter-proposal outlined above but along the lines of an account of visual representations of Arabs. As was seen in the previous chapter, Said’s approach to Modern Arabic literature takes account of political/historical *contents* as well as *formal* features (i.e., narrative strategies, scene structures, etc.) in the work of Mahfouz, Kanafani and others. He does this, in my view, to avoid reducing Modern Arabic literature to its testimonial function alone, or to a documentary record of gross political conditions of Arab experience. Rather Said is interested in describing the literature he examines as

imaginatively and narratively freed to some extent from such conditions. The distance these writers secure from the histories and politics they process in their work serves a critical purpose, but Said describes this distance as well as an aesthetic achievement.

In *After the Last Sky*, as I will argue, Said takes a similar approach to Jean Mohr's documentary photographs of Palestinians. As historical documents the photos serve a testimonial function, or illustrate the narratives of Palestinian displacement, exile and resistance with which Said is concerned. That is, Mohr's photographs describe the political/historical conditions ("States" as the first chapter title of the book suggests) of Palestinian life. But Said's attunement to their *formal* qualities as well enables in his writing an imaginative projection beyond gross political conditions of Palestinian life. The testimonial function of Mohr's photographs is supplemented by Said's imaginative narration of them as signs of an emerging Palestinian interiority or national consciousness (as is suggested by the book's second chapter title "Interiors"). This drawing away from deterministic accounts of Arab politics and toward a more projective and indeed hopeful description of particular experiences (Said's own recollected ones, Mohr's as a photographer, and the experiences of the photographic subjects) serves the unfulfilled purpose of the counter-proposal visited in the first chapter of this dissertation.

The book's division into four sections - "States," "Interiors," "Emergence," "Past and Future" – provides for an historical, albeit non-chronological, narration of Palestinian lives. Said's sequencing of the photos in these sections, and within each section invests the book with a kind of halting

temporal quality. This corresponds with his account of the unit and function of the scene in Modern Arabic literature. That is, the book is structured around themes associated with the “contested space(s)” of Palestinian life. For example, “States” opens with a formulation of the Palestinian paradox of “mobility and insecurity,” an outcome for Said of the condition of statelessness.⁶ That a chapter entitled “States” would contain a meditation on statelessness indicates clearly the contested nature of the scene Said is setting. Similarly, the chapter on “Interiors” opens with a meditation on the shifting or contested definitions of the Arabic phrase “*min al-dākhil*” (from the interior). For Palestinians, as Said notes the shifting meaning of the phrase (between 1948 and his time of writing in the 1980s) corresponds with a ceaseless re-drafting of official political borders. Furthermore the interior is always defined by contrast with “*fi l-khārij*” or the diaspora “from the exterior.”⁷ The representation that Said and Mohr tease out of such contested spaces as Palestinian “States” and “Interiors” extends the literary framework visited in the previous chapter in the direction of images. *After the Last Sky* thus presents narratively organized visual signs of a fraught Arab and Palestinian present.

Said’s engagement with the photos is also highly personal, and he seems to encourage a personal engagement from the reader. The personal aspect of his narrative invests the forms he identifies (literary and visual) with an individuating psychological charge. By this I mean that as Said fixes on motifs and themes (of repetition or alienation for example) in Mohr’s photos he urges an individualized engagement with the latter’s documentary or potentially generic rendering of Palestinian life. The photographs are made personal for Said as they trigger his

childhood memories in some instances. In other instances they are approached as records of patterns and forms of Palestinian life, that is to say, as records of individual Palestinian experiences that exceeds the bounds of a conventional political or historical analysis. In this way his narrative history avoids reducing Palestinian-Arab representations to their gross or general political characteristics.

II. Before the Last Sky: The Institutional Context of Said's and Mohr's Collaboration

In the "Introduction" to *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (hereafter *ATLS*) Said explains the "peculiar circumstances" of the book's conception and production:

In 1983, while I was serving as a consultant with the United Nations for its International Conference on the Question of Palestine (ICQP), I suggested that photographs of Palestinians be hung in the entrance to the main conference site in Geneva. I had... known and admired Jean (Mohr's) work with John Berger, and I recommended that he be commissioned to photograph some of the principle locales of Palestinian life. Given the initial enthusiasm for the idea, Mohr left on a special U.N. - sponsored trip to the Near East. The photographs he brought back were indeed wonderful; the official response, however, was puzzling and, to someone with a taste for irony, exquisite. You can hang them up, we were told, but no writing can be displayed with them. No legends, no explanations. A compromise was finally negotiated whereby the name of the country or place (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, West Bank, Gaza) could be affixed to the much-enlarged photographs, but not one word more. When Jean and I met it was this strange and inflexible formula that we confronted.⁸

A Swiss photographer and a Palestinian-American literary critic join forces in a curatorial project for a diplomatic audience. Surprisingly, or in an "exquisitely ironic" turn of events, delegates of Arab member states, presumed to be

sympathetic to the cause and project, refused to allow Said to narrate Mohr's images. Said notes that the U.S. and Israel did not object because "they did not deign to take note of any aspect of ICQP."⁹ He does not recall the exact explanation given by the Arab delegates for their refusal, but Said does mention that several Arab states also rejected seventeen of twenty studies he commissioned in the year leading up to the conference citing ill-defined "principles, insinuations or putative injuries to (their) sovereignty."¹⁰

Leaving aside for the moment the details of Said and Mohr's response to ICQP's partial censorship of the project, several aspects of this odd beginning should be highlighted. First of all Said notes the irony of the Arab delegates' refusal.¹¹ As has been seen already Said's taste for irony enables him to render problems of Arab representation and history in a literary form. This trope continues to serve his aesthetic and analytic purposes in *ATLS* as will be seen. But the irony of the Arab delegates' refusal points to an important aspect of Said's work on Arab literature and in *ATLS*. The irony in question forecloses the possibility of a monolithic or totalizing representation of Arabs in *ATLS* as it does in Said's writing on modern Arabic fiction. Just as the historical framework of 1948 and 1967 allows for a nuanced account of perspectives and voices (Palestinian and Egyptian for instance) in Arabic literature, the irony of the delegates' refusal emphasizes the fissures and inconsistencies in the business of institutionalizing Arab identity. Said's writing in *ATLS* poses the question of Arab identity through a reckoning with the dispersed, multinational experience of Palestinians. The text panels that were permitted by the delegates suggest the

broad outlines of such an experience – in the West Bank and Gaza but also in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

This intra-Arab lens on Palestinian experience corresponds with the goals of the counter-proposal mentioned above, namely to examine self-representations of Arabs. Such representations will inevitably differ depending on their country of origin and the particular investments of a writer, artist, photographer, etc. In the case of *ATLS* this is especially true since the photographer Mohr is Swiss. The myth-system of Orientalist literature is not countered in *ATLS* by a privileged insider's picture of an essential Arab experience, but rather by an account of the circulation of Arabs (as photographic representations and elements of literary, political and scholarly discourses) throughout the Near and Middle East.

In an essay written ten years later entitled "Permission to Narrate" Said expands on this fraught discourse of Arab national and ethnic identity and the place of Palestinians in it. Among the documents that were refused by IQCP were a first-ever census of refugee and ex-patriot Palestinians and a "Profile of the Palestinian People." The explanation given for these refusals is telling. Said notes that an "apologetic ambassador" from an unnamed Arab country explained that these documents would create a vexing "dual-nationality problem for the Arab countries in which Palestinians had been dispersed since 1948."¹² According to Said these refusals suggest that for the Arab delegates at IQCP: "...there was an Arab context and an Israeli context... and to speak of Palestinians outside the Occupied Territories was to challenge the collective Arab narrative... and to view history in too liberal and Western a way."¹³

It was on the basis of such a threat to the narrative of Arab unity that Said and Mohr's exhibition was censored.¹⁴ Said resists the seduction of the evidentiary force of the photographs in *ATLS*, and remains alert to the discursive features of the "question of Palestine." Palestine remains throughout *ATLS* as exactly that, a question, formulated in different ways by Palestinians Arabs, Israelis, Americans and representatives of Arab states according to their specific interests. The particular experience and agency of the photographer Jean Mohr, and the record produced by his photos are taken as points of departure for Said's writing. More often than not, Said's writing acts as a supplement or para-text to Mohr's photographs.¹⁵ In this way the interpretive possibilities of the photos and their place in an *ongoing* discourse on Palestinian national identity are emphasized over their evidentiary force.

The book was a response to IQCP's censorship. Said responds to the gag-order by narrating Mohr's photographs with a sensitivity to their various economic, national, psychological and ethnic significations. But the selection of the photographs and their narration together are to respond to a more diffuse and formidable adversary. Two stereotypical images of Palestinians are to be challenged by *ATLS* – the image of the terrorist, clad in a *kaffiyah* or a mask and wielding a *kalachnikov*, and the image of the "helpless, miserable-looking refugee."¹⁶ Said and Mohr's project is to fill in the everyday details of Palestinian life in the interest of combating predictable icons such as these. The purpose of the book as Said describes it is thus: "to deny the habitually simple, even harmful representations of Palestinians and to replace them with something more capable of capturing the complex reality of their experience."¹⁷

The language here is familiar and problematic. Just as he did in the proposal for *Orientalism* Said seems here to be invoking something like a transparent Palestinian reality or experience. This is not in keeping with the Foucaultian principles on which *Orientalism* is based. Said attempts (sometimes with difficulty as will be seen) to remain faithful to these principles in *ATLS*. The formal aspect of Said's counter-proposal, or his attunement to forms of representation over simple presences or essences is worth recalling. A charitable reading of this stated intention of the work would not focus on the philosophical problems of invoking a Palestinian "reality" or "experience" but on *the effort to discern a form amid the complexity of Palestinian life*. Said is deliberate in his choice of "fragmentary forms of representation" which for him correspond with the main features of Palestinian existence: "dispossession, dispersion and a kind of power incommensurate with... stateless exile." The power in question is manifested in the representational field – in the mass media primarily but also in the diplomatic context where endless statements, articles and resolutions on Palestinian statehood are added to a "huge body of literature... most of it polemical, accusatory, denunciatory" in Said's estimation.¹⁸ Bringing some salutary form to this unruly web of representations is the primary goal of *ATLS*. Form is sought without sacrificing complexity: "...the Palestinians as a dispersed national community – acting, acted upon, proud, tender, miserable, funny, indomitable, ironic, paranoid, defensive, assertive, attractive, compelling."¹⁹

Mohr's and Said's collaborative representation of Palestinians is complicated further at the level of authorship. Mohr is a Swiss photographer operating in the Middle East under the aegis of the UN (the earliest photographs

in *ATLS* were taken during Mohr's first visits to the region as a Red Cross photographer). Said is a Palestinian-American, born in Jerusalem but trained entirely in the U.S., and he writes in *ATLS* from New York about Palestinian lives delivered to him through photographs. As will be seen his narrative is even more mediated than this, by personal memories and an eclectic mix of references from Europeans Marcel Proust to William Butler Yeats, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, to Palestinian writers including Mahmoud Darwish and Emile Habiby. Finally the declared method for Said's photo-narrative – non-chronological, fragmentary, personal and political – is taken from the work of British critic and novelist John Berger.²⁰

The representation of Palestinians that results is thus co-authored and collaborative. Said is to some extent dissolving his authorial role in the work. But this does not mean he is abandoning the related question of authority. Although he claims that *ATLS* is “not a political essay,” it is certainly an aspect of Said's activism on behalf of Palestinians. To be sure, the diplomatic context of the exhibition out of which the book developed expresses Said's political interests. It was after all a conference on the question of Palestine at which a general consensus on the need for a Palestinian state was articulated by one hundred-thirty seven nations in attendance.²¹ Said thus appeals to the authority of an international diplomatic community in the work, in spite of the resistance of certain of that community's member states to the original plan for an exhibition of Mohr's photographs. As was mentioned above, Mohr's photographs for *ATLS* were commissioned by the UN and his earlier work had been carried out with the Red Cross. Add to the moral authority of these institutions Said's own moral

authority as a self-described Palestinian-American exile and the above mentioned picture of shared authorship is cast as a joint force of legitimacy.²² This question of authority is explored in *ATLS* in the details of the photographs and in Said's engagement with them. Mohr's presence is never taken for granted and Said is clear about his personal and subjective identification with the photographed Palestinians in the book.²³

The legitimacy or moral authority of the photographer derives from that of the agencies (the UN and the Red Cross) that commissioned his work, and Said's does as well to some extent. But Said's account of authority is not so conventional. He explores the problem of authority in his essay "Permission to Narrate" as a feature of narrativity. The kind of authority that interests Said is not granted through permission but contained in narrative – a feature of language primarily and politics by implication. Rather than appealing to a Palestinian constituency on whose behalf he is authorized to speak, Said considers the way in which moral authority is necessarily inscribed in a historical narrative. Following the historian and philosopher Hayden White, Said says "narrative in general, from the folk tale to the novel, from annals to the fully realized history, has to do with the topics of law, legality, legitimacy or more generally, authority."²⁴ Said acknowledges that countless resolutions and pronouncements on Palestine provide a semblance of moral authority for the cause. But without the recognition of Israel and the United States, such pronouncements "do not have the authority of which White speaks."²⁵ Such recognition is lacking because the Palestinian narrative has not been absorbed in "official" Israeli or U.S. history -- in those countries' own authoritative narrative self-descriptions. Instead, according to Said, the Palestinian

question, and the Palestinian people are referred to in official Israeli and U.S. discourses either as an “inert presence,” a “problem,” or negatively as “non-Jews,” that is to say in “non-narrative and indefinite formulae.”²⁶ For Said, *ATLS* and Arabic literature after 1948 provide such a missing narrative, with or without permission and outside of the usual political arena.

What is at stake for Said is not permission or authority in the sense of representational politics, but the authority that is provided by narratives in which bare “facts” of Palestinian life may be “absorbed, sustained and circulated” in “socially recognized” forms.²⁷ In *ATLS* the photographs of Jean Mohr thus serve a dual and mediating purpose: on the one hand they provide both a guide and content for Said’s narrative, and on the other hand they anchor this narrative in the authority of an indexical document.

III. Visualizing Palestinian Lives: Said’s Political and Aesthetic Approach to Mohr’s Pictures

Before turning to the narrative in question, I would like to outline two aspects of Said’s approach to pictures specifically in *ATLS*. The first is political and the second is aesthetic. Concerning the political value of the work, a few remarks on Said’s acknowledged debt to John Berger should be made. *ATLS* and much of the literature Said mentions in his essay on Arabic prose after 1948 is not narrative in a conventional sense. That is to say there is no requirement for Said that narrative be linear and chronological. Said’s authoritative (in White’s sense) Palestinian narrative must fill in a gap where such narratives are missing entirely (as he claims they are in official Israeli and U.S. documents and histories). But it

must also contend with narratives of Palestinians that Said regards as often only superficially helpful to the cause such as those produced in sympathetic Arab states. As was mentioned above the narrative of Arab nationalism reserves a privileged place for Palestinians as freedom fighters against various forms of imperial occupation. But this place (discursive and geographical), according to Said's "apologetic" informant at ICQP must be within the Occupied Territories, and not within the wider Arab world. The dispersed presence of Palestinians living in unfavorable situations in Lebanon, Jordan and other Arab countries is difficult to absorb in the teleological drift of a narrative of Pan-Arab liberation. *ATLS* thus employs a method of narration that fills in the gap of missing Palestinian narratives, but in a way that also takes account of the inconvenient details left out of a rhetoric of Arab national unity that places "Palestine" at the center as its organizing principle.²⁸

In his essay "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community," written ten years after *ATLS*, Said explains his approach to narration with reference to the work of John Berger. *ATLS* responds to what Said regards as Berger's "two concrete tasks":

One is to use the visual faculty (which also happens to be dominated by... television, news photography and commercial film, all of them fundamentally immediate, objective and ahistorical) to restore the non-sequential energy of lived historical memory and subjectivity as fundamental components of meaning in representation... Second is opening the culture to experiences of the Other which have remained 'outside' (and have been repressed or framed in a context of confrontational hostility) the norms manufactured by 'insiders.'²⁹

This then is the political use of pictures Said is interested in. It remains to be seen how “lived historical memory” and subjectivity are enlisted in the production of “meaning” in *ATLS*.³⁰ Also the familiar and often unhelpful categories of the “Other,” “insiders” and “outsiders” are complicated in Said’s narrative in *ATLS* and will require special attention in the analysis to follow.³¹ But we will leave aside for the moment how these terms are engaged in *ATLS* to focus on another important aspect of Said’s approach to Mohr’s pictures.

Said is interested in the aesthetic impact and formal qualities of the images in *ATLS* – an impact that must be coordinated with his political use for pictures. In an interview with W.J.T. Mitchell entitled “The Panic of the Visual” Said describes this approach to *ATLS*. In selecting photographs for the book from Mohr’s archive Said recalls taking a kind of “abstract” and intuitive approach:

I couldn’t formulate what the response was. But I chose them. And then, looking at the photographs and having them spread out all over the floor for weeks on end, I then began to group them in series... I broke them down into four groups with series within them. And I felt I was actually doing it in a kind of abstract way... I was really working according to principles that are much easier for me to deal with within the non-representational art of the Islamic world... there were certain kinds of patterns that were not representational in the sense... that they had a subject, but they had some motif and rather a musical motif.³²

A few comments on this should be made. First of all, it seems significant that Said compares the spread of images in *ATLS* to a geometric design in Islamic art. Whether or not such a pattern is discernible Said seems to be expressing a *will to form* representations of Palestinian life into something distinct with respect to the European and Western canon of art.³³ This corresponds with his aims in the essay on Arabic literature, where the Islamic tradition of the *isnād* (witness) and

the narrative form of the *maqāma* (the dramatization of the tale's telling) are cited to show how the novel (a European art form) is modified and to some extent Arabized in the modern literature of the Middle and Near East.³⁴ The argument is made more convincingly in the case of Arabic literature. But what I'd like to emphasize is that in both cases Said is not simply describing conventions or modes and contents (i.e., subjects) of representation. His aims are more ambitious: to give a form to Arab representations and situate them within a distinct aesthetic tradition.

In the essay on Arabic literature he does this by referring to features of religious and secular literature of the Middle East, and by distinguishing the unit of the scene in this literature from the European novel's periodic scene structure. In *ATLS*, as will be seen, he does this by referring Mohr's representations of Palestinians to Arabic literature. More than a tradition of Islamic art, the modern Arabic literary tradition seems to provide Said with his aesthetic framework in *ATLS*.

Said also describes his process in terms of musical motifs. As an accomplished pianist and resident music critic for *The Nation*, this comparison is grounded in expertise and experience. But I think the point is also a philosophical one. Two further observations should be made here. First of all Said describes his approach to post-colonial criticism in terms of counterpoint: an attunement to "patterns against each other, with each other, not alone."³⁵ This contrapuntal method of analysis is applied most systematically in Said's book *Culture and Imperialism* wherein Camus's *L'Étranger* is read against the Algerian War of Independence or with it in mind (even though it is not an acknowledged context in

the book), and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* is read similarly through the novel's British protagonists' colonial activities – they are quietly sustained by their landholdings and plantations in Antigua.³⁶ Musical composition functions as a political metaphor for Said then. But when he compares photographs of Palestinians and music his point is stronger than this.

Towards the end of his interview with Mitchell Said reflects on the productive relationship of tension between aesthetics and politics. Said seems to argue in the interview for a kind of autonomy of the arts. He is clear about the importance of protecting art from politics: “a great work of art is not an ideological statement, pure and simple.”³⁷ But when pushed to consider the possibility that politics too might be autonomous, Said nuances his position by invoking Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory. Adorno's taste for the atonal music of Schonberg was an expression of a desire for the formal autonomy of the arts, but it was also an argument for a kind of art that is political by virtue of its resistance to late-capitalist commodification and “affirmative culture” in general.³⁸ Art for Said too, at its best, is political by virtue of its separability from politics in the usual sense, and its resistance to a simple instrumentalization.³⁹ Following Jean Paul Sartre, Said makes his point with a qualified dig at the French poet Paul Valery: “he was a petit bourgeois. But not every petit bourgeois is a Valery.”⁴⁰

One final point can be made here about Said's aesthetic interest in Mohr's photographs. The Islamic and musical patterns emerged for him when Mohr's pictures were laid out on his floor. Said does not attribute this approach in his interview but it resembles the method employed and theorized by novelist and

French Minister of Culture André Malraux with whose work Said was familiar. Malraux argued for an approach to world art history as a sort of “*musée imaginaire*” (fig.8) in which visual patterns and forms might communicate (by means of rhymes, correspondences, contrasts, etc.) in a utopian fashion across cultural contexts and vast historical periods.⁴¹ Malraux’s method was to arrange photos of monuments on his office floor and assemble them for curatorial purposes without regard for their place in a chronology of world art, and without regard for their specific cultural and national contexts. This was a humanistic and formalist project in the highest degree. But it was also arguably an aspect of Charles De Gaulle’s cultural diplomatic goals for the Ministry of Culture and an effort by Malraux to justify highly controversial French collecting and museological practices dating back to the time of the Napoleonic campaign in Egypt. Other equally controversial curatorial and art historical methods (ethnographic and nationalistic) might be mentioned here as precedents for Said’s initial engagement with Mohr’s photographs.⁴²

Said’s approach to the images is thus with precedent in art history. And it is an approach that, at its worst, de-historicizes photographic subjects and art historical traditions. But at its best it alerts us to a formal language of representation that describes history as a kind of human creative production. This is what Said seems to be attempting in *ATLS*.

What began as an abstract and intuitive engagement with Mohr’s photographs assumed a definite, but as I will argue, highly aesthetic structure in the finished book. As I have argued, the aesthetics in question seem also to have more to do with literary categories and regimes of photographic representation

than Islamic design or music. Nevertheless Said in *ATLS* endeavors to bring a visual-literary form to his account of the Palestinian situation. In doing so he mediates between politics and aesthetics to establish an authoritative narrative alternative to, on the one hand official diplomatic statements on the question of Palestine (both sympathetic and accusatory), and on the other hand stereotypical images of Palestinian aggression and suffering.

The book is organized into four sections entitled “States,” “Interiors,” “Emergence,” and “Past and Future.” I will deal with them in turn, focusing mostly on the first two, and conclude with some remarks on two important aspects of Said’s approach: the historical and the psychological. Specifically I will argue that Said’s narrative and engagement with images in *ATLS* moves along two tracks. As a historical, albeit non-chronological narrative, Said renders Palestinian-Arab experience collectively as it is recorded by a Swiss photographer and as it is registered in national traits, rituals and customs. As a result he runs the risk of generalizing Palestinian experience or reducing it to its historical and political dimensions. To guard against this risk, Said brings personal memories to his reading of Mohr’s photographs. The question is, how does the *individuality* Said expresses in his writing get into Mohr’s photos without undermining a politically important concept of Palestinian collectivity? I will argue that Said accomplishes this by means of a psychoanalytic engagement with both the photos and with Palestinian history.

IV. “States” of Palestinian Life

The first section of *ATLS* describes the condition or “state” of Palestinians in the diaspora and within the Occupied Territories. In doing so Said identifies and fleshes out a historical irony. That is, he seeks a characterization of the Palestinian experience of *statelessness* in the economic, cultural and political aspects of their *state* as a people. Two senses of the term “state” are implied: a strictly political sense which Said is using ironically in the title, and a more broadly sociological sense which guides his narrative in its details and argument. This formulation of a historical irony serves the purpose of opening strictly political discussions of Palestinian statehood onto an aesthetic horizon informed by sociological detail. In other words, the irony or equivocation at work in the first section of *ATLS* announces Said’s intention to establish a Palestinian narrative that is both political and aesthetic.

His articulation of politics and aesthetics can be seen in his choice and sequencing of images, and in the overall argument of the section. I will briefly outline this general argument as it is made explicitly in Said’s narrative and as it is made implicitly in his sequencing of photographs. I will then focus on the photographs that Said makes the most extensive use of in his narrative to show how he mediates between the political and aesthetic in his engagement with Mohr’s photographs.⁴³

V. The Argument in Writing: The Paradox of Mobility and Insecurity

The argument that emerges from Said’s written narration in this section is roughly as follows. The chief claim Said makes is that Palestinian life is

characterized by a “paradox of mobility and insecurity.”⁴⁴ This condition is brought about by the political fact of statelessness. Said’s argument is that this condition, also formulated as one of “stateless mobility” and “present absentee” status is a result of a lack of an adequate response from Palestinians to the “pure administration” of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Said appeals to the authority of Merron Benvenisti, ex-deputy mayor of Jerusalem and the findings of *The West Bank Data Project: A Survey of Israeli Policies*, to make his point:

The criteria established to determine priorities of settlement regions are “*interconnection [havirah]* between existing Jewish areas for the creation of [Jewish] settlement continuity” and “*separation [hayitz]* to restrict uncontrolled Arab settlement and the prevention of Arab settlement blocks”; “*scarcity [hesech]* refers to areas devoid of Jewish settlement.” In these criteria “pure planning and political planning elements are included.”⁴⁵

For Said this translates into a condition of “discontinuity” – both historical and geographical – for Palestinian Arabs. Palestinian life is administratively dispersed according to Said and thus difficult to co-ordinate politically and culturally.

However, according to Said limited success in the recognition of this condition has been achieved. Said mentions the work of Noam Chomsky, Israel Shahak and Izzy Stone in this connection.⁴⁶ The recognition of the international community is noted as well, but Said seeks an alternative to official narratives and diplomatic statements on Palestine. The abstract characterization of “*el pueblo palestino, il popolo palestino, le peuple palestinien*” in sympathetic diplomatic speeches is only marginally more productive for Said than the unsympathetic and more radically abstract characterization of “present absentees” and the “population factor” in official Israeli documents.⁴⁷ Said seeks an alternative to this

abstract discontinuity of Palestinian life in literary activity – his own in *ATLS* and that of Mahmoud Darwish, Emile Habiby and others. As he notes, part of the problem is that Palestinians have “no known Einstein, no Chagall, no Freud or Rubenstein to protect us with a legacy of glorious achievements.”⁴⁸

Said’s account of the literature of Darwish, et al., expresses a hope for the Palestinian capacity to exploit the condition or paradox of “mobility and insecurity” for its imaginative and subversive possibilities.⁴⁹ This capacity is identified in “underground” narratives that take the form of “meandering,” “coded” and “outrageous” “mock-epics, satires, sardonic parables (and) absurd rituals.”⁵⁰ But the “two great images” that for Said express the Palestinian condition of insecurity and mobility are to be found in Mahmoud Darwish’s poem “*Bitāqat Hawīya*” (Identity Card) (1964) and Emile Habiby’s book “*Al-Wakā’i’ al-Gharība fī Ikhtifā’ Sa’īd Abī al-Naḥs al-Mutashā’il*” (The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-fated Pessoptimist: A Palestinian Who Became a Citizen of Israel) (1974).⁵¹ In his poem on the identity card Darwish for Said fixes on the most ubiquitous symbol of Palestinian displacement: “a passport, travel document, laissez passer... which is never Palestinian but always something else.”⁵² Darwish’s poetic intervention consists in making an affirmative claim on the basis of this official negation of Palestinian statehood: “Record! I am an Arab/Without a name – without title, patient in a country/with people enraged.”⁵³

What makes this a productive image of Palestinian life for Said would seem to have to do with the economy of Darwish’s translation of a political document into a poetic subject. A non-narrative and abstract political marker of Palestinian identity is inhabited by Darwish and given an expressive dimension.

Furthermore, like the paradoxical present described in the essay on Arabic fiction, Darwish's poetic sleight involves a claim to identity on the basis of its negation in official documents.

The second great image is that of Emile Habiby's "pessoptimist." Habiby's protagonist "Saeed" (Said remarks on the coincidence later in *ATLS*) is a witless but observant Palestinian who spends the better part of his professional life in the employ of an Israeli officer, until one fateful day he is visited and rescued by an "extraterrestrial" to whom he tells his story, at a safe distance from earthly threats. Said regards the character's self-description as a "pessoptimist" and his professional experience as a Palestinian conspirator with the Israeli government as a productive reckoning with the paradox of mobility and insecurity. Saeed's pessimism is explained historically as a result of his harrowing experience as a Palestinian Arab between 1948 and 1967. His optimism is explained as a result of his foolishness, but it also provides for an aesthetic flight from the painful circumstances of his life on earth.⁵⁴

These two images exemplify a spectrum of artistic responses to the experience of Palestinian exile. Darwish's and Habiby's alternatives are described by Salma Khadra Jayyusi in her brief introduction to the translation of *The Pessoptimist*. Whereas the work of Darwish is typical for resistance poetry in terms of its direct tone and its tragic and heroic narrative form, Habiby achieves a "comic apprehension of experience" replete with ironic, parodic and burlesque characters and descriptions.⁵⁵ These two types of aesthetic response structure much of *ATLS* and Said's argument for a literary rendering of Palestinian experience and history. The crucial point in invoking these "great images" for

Said concerns the critics' task in assessing Palestinian literature in particular and Arab literature in general. For Said, an attention to formal qualities of Palestinian literature is important as an antidote to overly political readings and because it mimetically translates "the elusive reality it attempts to represent" by means of "broken narratives, fragmentary compositions and self-consciously staged testimonials." Attention to form, he seems to suggest delivers an account of real Palestinian experiences. He writes:

Most literary critics in Israel and the West focus on what is said in Palestinian writing, who is described, what the plot and contents deliver, their sociological and political meaning. *But it is form that should be looked at.* Particularly in fiction the struggle to achieve form expresses the writer's efforts to construct a coherent scene, a narrative that might overcome the almost metaphysical impossibility of representing the present. A typical Palestinian work will always be concerned with this peculiar problem which is at once a problem of plot and an enactment of the writer's enterprise.⁵⁶

In what follows it will be seen that this attention to form is reflected in Said's engagement with "great images" of Palestinian experience from literature, but also in the photography of Jean Mohr.⁵⁷ Before focusing on a few key images in "States" I would like to briefly outline the visual argument the images seem to me to make by virtue of their grouping and sequencing. Following Said's lead I will argue that the photos make an argument by virtue of their ordering and grouping but also at the level of form (i.e., photographic technique, motifs and themes).

VI. The Argument in Pictures: Families, Children and Scarecrows

The first group of photos shows Palestinian families in a generally chronological order from a newlywed state to old age. The sequence opens with a photo of a wedding party (fig. 9).⁵⁸ Two pictures follow: one featuring a mother and child and the other featuring the husband/father. The young family is photographed separately though evidently in the same house. These photos are followed by a portrait of the former mayor of Jerusalem with his wife “in exile” in Jordan. In this final picture in the series a large image of Jerusalem appears behind the couple; a nostalgic signifier of the ex-mayor’s lost political power (fig. 10).⁵⁹ This is the only proper sequence in the chapter. As a narrative sequence it follows the family unit through three stages of progressive dispersal, from an apprehensive marriage, through the difficult and potentially divisive task of parenting, and finally to a state of exile in which home is pictured not as a setting but as wallpaper behind an aged couple.

The rest of the section features photos that do not seem to belong in a sequence, though some groups corresponding with themes and motifs can be discerned. Groups of children, at play, in schools, and singly showing what Said calls an “out of season maturity” are scattered throughout the section (fig. 11).⁶⁰ Odd stand-ins for Palestinians appear as well such as a scarecrow in front of a family garden near a Bedouin camp (fig. 3), and a family proudly posing before a spread of harvested eggplants.⁶¹ The eggplants, we are told, were the subject of an article by Avigdor Feldman that appeared in the journal *Koteret Rashit*. The title of the article was “The New Order of the Military Government: State of Israel Against the Eggplant” and it detailed laws prohibiting unauthorized

eggplant farming in the West Bank and Gaza.⁶² These alternately odd and dispiriting figures or metonyms of Arab-Palestinian presence are represented in isolated photos that are not at all resolved in a narrative sequence and thus invite Said's commentary.

This mostly visual argument, an argument concerning the dispersal and isolation of Palestinians, is reinforced by various motifs of containment in the first chapter – children and old women are pictured in cars, in windows, in improvised tents often confronting Mohr's camera with head-on stares. The motif of cars in particular sharpens the paradox of insecurity and mobility that Said uses to frame his argument in the chapter. But the theme of containment is expressed most decisively in Mohr's snapshots of street scenes (fig. 12, 13 a/b). It is in Said's engagement with these photos that I think his aim to articulate a Palestinian "state" is best served.

VII. The Argument in Pictures: Street Scenes (Snapshots)

In this group of street scenes are pictured a man in a white *kaffiyah* (a traditional rural Palestinian headdress) walking through a market toward the photographer. He will pass a crudely rendered but iconic poster to his left of the well-known Egyptian singer Om Kalsoum (fig. 12). The second photo (fig. 13 a) in the group shows a boy in mid-stride bounding through a Jerusalem market past bystanders engaged in conversation or idling. The third photo (fig. 13 b), also in Jerusalem features five people disengaged from one another and contained visually in shadows cast by nondescript buildings. Said's description of these scenes is unadorned, applying only the barest, nominative terms to unconnected

elements of the image. It is a mode of description that mimics the strictly denotative features of the photos:

The man enters a quiet alley where he will pass cucumbers... tomatoes... the boy dashes off... other boys loiter... carrying an airline bag a man advances past a display of trinkets, a young man disappears around the corner, two boys idle aimlessly. Tomatoes, watermelons, arcades, cucumbers, posters, people, eggplants.⁶³

These photos for Said are compelling as “random” snapshots of Palestinian life precisely because they “offer only occurrences and coincidences.”⁶⁴ They appear exactly halfway through the chapter’s photo-sequence as a seemingly isolated group. But in this central location in the chapter they serve an important argumentative and narrative function. Said follows his staccato description of the scenes’ details with an appeal to the reader to consider what lies outside of the frame: “The poster is about Egypt, the trinkets are made in Korea or Hong Kong. The scenes are surveyed, enclosed and surrounded by Israelis.”⁶⁵ These scenes of Palestinian life correspond with Said’s description of the unit of the scene in post-1948 Arab literature almost point for point. The scenes are not narratively resolved but featured in rhythmic succession and according to a principle of substitution. Figures are frozen at the thresholds of Mohr’s frame, making entrances and exits that are inexplicable but charged with significance for Said. His identification of “outside forces” quietly at work in the scenes also corresponds with Shukri’s account of the typical protagonist of post-1948 Arabic literature – overwhelmed by unseen adversaries. These scenes describe for Said a photographic present that corresponds with the novelistic present of post-1948 and post-1967 Arabic literature. They represent a

paradoxical present which Said describes in the literary context as split between a “what has not yet happened” and a “what has yet to happen.” Deviation from a past course is signified most clearly by the poster of Om Kalsoum, an icon of Nasser’s Pan-Arabist Egypt, and in the *kafiyah*, a symbol of an enduring Arab cultural identity - paired with modern business attire. And the uncertain future is signified in the boy’s suspended stride.

In assigning the photos a central place in a chapter on “states” Said, I argue, is investing the novelistic present he discusses in his essay on Arabic literature with sharpened spatio-temporal co-ordinates. The snapshot is an especially apt form in this connection since it fixes on what the early twentieth century French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson called a “decisive moment” (fig. 14). The peculiar characteristic of the snapshot as opposed to the “time exposure” according to art historian Thierry De Duve is that it suspends animation and dramatizes the technology’s surgical intervention in the present.⁶⁶ This photographic present, an impossible moment, is extracted from the diachrony of a lived temporal sequence. In this way it is a necessarily split sign which produces in the viewer something akin to an experience of trauma.⁶⁷ Just as a traumatic experience renders the past inassimilable in the present, the snapshot perpetually holds apart the temporal units that constitute its immediate past and imminent future. As signs of a specifically Palestinian present, the snapshot scenes perhaps appeal to Said as signifiers of a collective historical trauma, the *Nakba*, and its repetition or relapse in the 1967 *Naksa*. The whole book is concerned with the memory of the *Nakba* insofar as it deals with the general theme of Palestinian exile and displacement. But in this section the inclusion of a photo of the

aftermath of 1967 suggests the inassimilable memory of the *Naksa* as well in the Palestinian present (fig. 15). Here again Said is responding to a photographic technique employed elsewhere, in an entirely different (Indian) cultural context, in Mohr's oeuvre (fig. 16). But the form of the photo, its devices of framing, separation and confrontation further serve the purpose of figuring a Palestinian present as alienated from the past and from a foreseeable future in the hands of Israeli authorities.

VIII. The Argument in Pictures: Turning Inward

As has been seen, the photographs in "States" are signifiers for Said of dispersion and isolation. This is registered at the level of form and content and also in the ordering or grouping of the photos. Before turning to the next section of the book, I will pause for a moment on the final image in the first chapter and Said's rather sustained treatment of it (fig. 17). Said introduces the photograph as follows:

Mohr's photograph of a small but clearly formed human group surrounded by a dense and layered reality expresses very well what we experience during that detachment from an ideologically saturated world. This image of four people seen at a distance near Ramallah, in the middle of and yet separated from thick foliage, stairs, several tiers of terraces and houses, a lone electricity pole off to the right, is for me a private, crystallized almost Proustian evocation of Palestine.⁶⁸

This image appears at the end of the chapter on "States" and provides a narrative transition into the following chapter on "Interiors." It is an unassuming pastoral scene with very few markers of cultural, national or ethnic distinction. It is not a picture of Palestinians or Palestine in an obvious sense, but for Said it is

evocative. Before introducing the image Said claims to “detect a general turning inward among Palestinians,” which is at the same time a turning away from an “ideologically saturated” world – from the staid narratives of Palestinian resistance, belligerence and suffering.⁶⁹ The anonymity of the photo serves to illustrate this perceived retreat from ideology toward aesthetics. The reference to Proust, and a subsequent, more ambivalent reference to eighteenth century Italian engraver Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s “Imaginary Prisons” (fig. 18) invests this aesthetic turn with a European literary and visual sense. Such references would seem to serve the purpose of an aesthetic withdrawal from ideological constructions of Palestinian life. But Proust and Piranesi have little to contribute to the distinctly Palestinian aesthetic or representation Said is after – little to do, for example, with the tropes, motifs and devices of post-1948 Arab literary modernism visited earlier.⁷⁰

The Piranesi reference expresses Said’s trepidation about Palestinian captivity. But it is also a reference to an icon of the Italian Romantic imagination. Piranesi’s “prisons” were after all, imaginary, even hallucinogenic evocations of Romantic interiority.⁷¹ In this respect the Piranesi reference serves the transitional purpose above-mentioned. But the Proust reference, a reference to the most prolific twentieth century writer on the theme of memory, serves this purpose more directly. Immediately following the above description of the photograph, Said launches into two personal memories. The memories are introduced abruptly, almost as interruptions in Said’s narration. That is, they read like associations brought out by the images but also as intrusive, almost traumatic memories. Their content supports this interpretation. They are both from his

childhood. The first is from 1942, when Said was six, and the second is not dated but described simply as “another childhood memory.”⁷² Both memories, significantly, are thus from the period around the *Nakba* or “disaster” of 1948.

The first is set in Ramallah during a period when Said’s father was suffering from a nervous breakdown. Said remembers him as “withdrawn and constantly smoking.”⁷³ He goes on to describe an experience at a local school’s variety show with his mother. After leaving the show for a washroom break the young Said was prevented from returning to his seat by a boy-scout usher. He recalls a poignant experience of “separation, of solitude” when, before leaving he “furtively took a quick look back through the door window at the lighted stage... (a) telescoped vision of small figures assembled in a detached space.”⁷⁴ The scene in Mohr’s photograph, we are told, called up this formative memory of childhood alienation – an experience in turn linked to Said’s father’s symptomatic “nervous breakdown.” There is thus an association here of a personal experience of alienation and the alienation wrought by Palestinian exile.

The second memory is less vividly recounted but equally alienated. During a road trip through the Sinai from Egypt into Palestine Said recalls musing about the telephone and electrical poles on the side of the empty desert road: “Who are they, I would ask myself. What do they think when we are not here?”⁷⁵ He recalls stopping for breaks on the roadside and carving his initials into one of the poles in hopes of finding it again on the way back. This never happened since, we are told, the poles all looked the same, landmarks in the empty desert were not available and on their trip back from Palestine, the Said family “never stopped.”⁷⁶ Said claims to have never returned to the Sinai road where he made his “futile effort to

register... (a) presence on the scene.”⁷⁷ Once again, Said is associating a personal experience of alienation – projected onto, and indeed carved into anthropomorphized electrical poles – with a Palestinian experience of displacement. The setting of this memory in the Sinai, the theatre of Arab-Israeli wars in 1956, 1967 and 1973, reinforces its national significance.

These passages are followed by a brief description of “two movements” in Mohr’s photograph. The first movement, like the narration of the street scenes in the middle of the chapter, abstracts from the denoted plane of the photograph, “from the visible enclave of domesticity... to the unseen larger world of power and authority beyond.”⁷⁸ The second, more optimistic movement reiterates the earlier point about a retreat from the ideologically saturated world into an aesthetic domain. It is a movement from the plainly visible detail of the photograph towards its lacunae: “the two strikingly marked openings in the buildings” which, for Said “suggest rich cool interiors... outsiders cannot penetrate.”⁷⁹ Said concludes with an invitation to the reader to enter. If the chapter were concerned up until this point with the themes of containment, dispersal and isolation – with *discontinuities*, both historical and geographical – Said ends with a narrative transition from inert and politically over-determined “states” to a hopeful meditation on the aesthetic, psychological and historical potential of “interiors.” This transition is, in other words, a shift in Said’s narrative from an account of discontinuities to a search for creative and historical *continuity* in the Palestinian experience.

With this the transition to the chapter on “Interiors” is clearly made. Said lingers over this photograph because it serves an important narrative and

rheterical purpose. But it is also an image that arrests his narration of Palestinian “states” and supports the overall argument of the chapter to attend to the more subjective and aesthetic precincts of Palestinian life. His personal memories particularize the photo that is treated initially with references to a European literary and artistic tradition. In this way the interiors Said urges his reader to explore are given a specifically Palestinian cast. But the photograph is not satisfactory for Said as a generic scene of Palestinian life. He collapses his moment of looking at the photograph with two past but inassimilable scenes of childhood alienation. The memories are structured along the same lines as the photographic and literary scenes described earlier. As was the case with post-1948 Arabic literature, the indirect memory of the *Nakba* constitutes the moment of Said’s engagement with the photo as a split present. The photo represents a contested space in which Said perceives outside forces menacing the protagonists in their domestic setting. The cool, darkened doorways, which for Said are signifiers of interiority and aesthetic withdrawal, correspond also with his account of entrances and exits (“ontological affirmations” and “quasi deaths”) in Arabic fiction.⁸⁰ And the variety show scene – a scene within a scene or a story within a story – recalls the narrative devices of the *maqāma*.

The important point I want to make here is that Said’s engagement with this photo in particular exemplifies his goals elsewhere in the chapter on “states” and in the book as a whole. It is a personal engagement with photos that particularizes Palestinian life without simply politicizing it. The aesthetic strategies at work in Said’s narration (taken from post-1948 Arabic literature) allude to the collective memory of the *Nakba* at the level of form – in the

constitution of a photographic and narrated present or scene. But his personal engagement with the photos draws them into a lived experience of displacement or exile.

IX. “Interiors” of Palestinian Life

In this section Said engages with the problem of articulating the “inside” and “outside” as aspects of Palestinian experience. It is a difference that is complicated at the level of language in the first place. Said opens the chapter with a reflection on various colloquial senses of the phrase “*min al-dākhil*” which translates as “from the interior.”⁸¹ The problem of approaching Palestinian representations from the outside is, I argue, dealt with visually in this section through an engagement with some of Mohr’s more confrontational photographs and portraits. There is also a crucial section on the status and role of women in Palestinian society in “Interiors.” Said’s writing on women in a section titled “Interiors,” as Mitchell rightly notes, is suggestive and will be explored for its psychological significance.⁸² In this section, Said’s psychoanalytic discourse is most apparent. The motif (at once aesthetic and psychological) of compulsive repetition is described in the context of Palestinian habits of behavior and speaking. And Said describes compensatory excesses in Palestinian interior decorative schemes and acts of generosity that also suggest a psychoanalytic approach.

In this section Said’s engagement with the photographs emerges clearly as a psychoanalytic one. I will assess the advantages of such an approach in terms of particularizing representations of Palestinians and preparing for a psychoanalytic

approach to images of Arabs in general. Once again, Said seems to adhere to the broad outlines of his approach to Arabic fiction in this section. Finally I will argue that Said's entire discourse on Palestine, while it avoids the traps of over politicization, is structured around the trauma of the *Nakba*. Following the work of Jacques Lacan, I will show how Said's fascination with forms of repetition (and elsewhere paranoid constructions) betrays his investment in a primary loss or, in psychoanalytic terms a primal scene. Lacan's notion of the "*objet petit a*" – a missing object of desire which provides, among other things, a motive force for interpretation and analysis – corresponds with the place of Palestine in Said's discourse on statelessness.

X. The Argument in Writing (From the Interior)

As was the case in the first section of *ATLS*, the title of the second section is at least bivalent. "Interiors" for Said are to be found in modes of expressions (in poetry, literature, everyday speech) and in the material culture of Palestinian homes and domestic rituals. In other words there is in this section an inward-looking description of an emergent Palestinian consciousness, and an outward material description of patterns of Palestinian life. Said's overall argument in this section is premised on this doubleness of the concept of interiority. Before focusing on key moments in Said's text in this section I would like to summarize the argument as it is laid out. To begin with Said's reflections on interiors follow from his description of the paradox of stateless mobility in the first section. The fragmentary form of "States" (i.e., its relative lack of narrative and visual sequencing) is meant to reflect the experience of discontinuity for Palestinians. In

“Interiors” Said’s narration is less fragmentary or more continuous. We will consider the role of images in detail below, but for now it should be noted that the writing in “Interiors” is (thematically, argumentatively, aesthetically) autonomous from the section’s image repertoire. This reflects the overall purpose of the section: to respond to the discontinuity of Palestinian “states” by describing Palestinian “interiors” as a historical and psychological continuity. The section is in this respect, remedial for Said. He announces this intention toward the beginning of the section. Having described the stateless mobility of Palestinians, Said asks what can be done to forge a national Palestinian consciousness.⁸³ The rest of the chapter is concerned with mapping such a consciousness through a description of patterns of Palestinian life.

Said makes a key distinction between Palestinians within the Occupied Territories – “*min al-dākhil*” (from the interior) – and the Palestinian diaspora – “*fi l-khārij*” (in the exterior) or in the “*manfā*” and “*ghurba*” (exile and estrangement).⁸⁴ The distinction structures the entire section and indeed Said’s own agency as a Palestinian-American writer in exile. But in this section Said wishes to draw attention to the activities of Palestinians within the Occupied Territories who are for him specially positioned to articulate a sense of Palestinian interiority. The point is made historically.

To begin with Said traces the changes in the connotation of the phrase “*min al-dākhil*” between the *Nakba* of 1948 and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The first point is straightforward and geographical. The inside or “interior” for Palestinians was regarded as co-extensive with Israel’s borders between 1948 and 1967. After 1967 the interior referred to the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan

Heights, and after 1982 it came to refer as well to South Lebanon. But the more important point Said wishes to make concerns a change in the sense or value of the concept of the “interior” for Palestinians in the diaspora. According to Said the phrase “*min al-dākhil*” has, since 1967 taken on an honorific sense for Palestinians in the diaspora, in contrast to its pre-1967 pejorative sense.⁸⁵ Said’s recollection of this change having taken place around 1967 is important. His claim is that the failure of Nasser’s Pan-Arab nationalism changed the perception of Palestinian life within Israel. During the early days of Nasserism Palestinians within Israel were regarded, according to Said, as insufficiently anti-Imperialist or too tolerant of the Israeli presence. In his words they were regarded with suspicion by Palestinians in the exterior on account of Israel’s “stamp” on them: “...their passports, their knowledge of Hebrew, their comparative lack of self-consciousness about living with Israeli Jews, their references to Israel as a real country rather than ‘the Zionist entity’ had changed them.”⁸⁶

This suspicion was required by the ideology of Pan-Arab nationalism Said seems to suggest. After the disappointment of 1967 and the subsequent emergence of a politically organized resistance movement within Palestine the rigid and ideological anti-imperialist stance in the diaspora became more nuanced and attentive to local struggles within Palestine.⁸⁷ Palestinians on the inside, at Said’s time of writing and since the 1970s, he claims, enjoy a kind of privileged status.

Said anticipates this shift in his focus (from the ideology of the exterior to the actuality of the interior) in the transition from the first to the second section of *ATLS* when he claims to detect a general turning inward among Palestinians. But the point is reiterated at the beginning of “Interiors”: “Politically, it is important to

note that Palestinian activity is now mainly directed toward and focused on the interior, whereas until the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the problems and politics of the exterior were what mattered most.”⁸⁸

With this Said specifies his interest in the activities and prospects of Palestinians in the geographical and political “interior.” But he outlines a second sense of the phrase “*al-dākhil*” that pertains to the Palestinian experience in the diaspora as well. This second sense of the phrase refers to the experience of privacy or solidarity among Palestinians both within Palestine and in the diaspora – a solidarity that is sustained uneasily by coded and indirect communication: “words, phrases, names, inflections and emphases known only to Palestinians.”⁸⁹ This insider status for Said is double-edged since it implies both healthy social and psychic bonds that sustain a dispersed community, but also some threat on “the outside” as it were that compels privacy or secrecy and strategies of dissimulation.⁹⁰ For Said:

the problem of the inside is that it is inside, private, and can never be made plain or evident to anyone, perhaps not even one’s fellow members... Even when it appears that insiders know the codes, they are never sure whether these codes can in fact deliver the right answers to the important questions... Thus, although to Palestinians today the word ‘*awda*’ (‘return’)... stands at the very heart of our political quest for self-determination, to some it means return to a Palestinian state alongside Israel, yet to others it means a return to all of Palestine.⁹¹

The “rich cool interiors” of the Yeatsian pastoral scene in “States” lose their Romantic connotation here. The interior is defined politically and geographically as bounded on all sides by Israeli authority (in spite of its privileged status). As an experience of privacy or solidarity the interior is inseparable from paranoid

constructions concerning the threat of the outside. This fear of political isolation for Said is manifested in a kind of hermeneutic circle that threatens insider communications at all times with the possibility of misunderstanding. The distance between interiority and at least a possible solipsism is collapsed. This then is the problem of the inside that Said wishes to address or ‘work through’ (the psychoanalytic valence is intended) in the chapter. Though he does not use the word, *interiority* it seems is to be wrested from these fraught *interiors*.

But how can this be done? After having outlined the many senses of the phrase “*min al-dākhil*” Said poses this very question: “what do you do then?”⁹² The remaining sections of the chapter are taken up with descriptions of the habits, customs and modes of communication that characterize the interior dimension of Palestinian life. As was the case in “States” Said is after a kind of formal and aesthetic description of the Palestinian experience. In this chapter he mentions the work of Palestinian poets and writers such as Mu’in Basisu and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. But his reliance on literary tropes in “Interiors” is not extensive. Instead interiority is sought in a description of visual forms of repetition and in the experience of alienation (manifested as an inadequate historical consciousness).

XI. The Argument in Pictures: The Motif of Repetition

To begin with repetition for Said is approached as both a symptom of the Palestinian experience of displacement (outside Palestine) or captivity (within the Occupied Territories), and as a form of affirmation or statement of presence. In the first case repetition is compulsive and pathological, and in the second it is defiant and redemptive. The motif of repetition thus serves in Said’s writing to

mediate between the private and public aspects of the experience of the interior. What is crucial, it seems is that Said is identifying a *form* of repetition or a way in which Palestinian politics and psychology are expressed in visible everyday behaviors. Whereas in “States” a literary aesthetic (the trope of irony, the device of the scene) was to be read into the Palestinian situation to provide an alternative to grossly politicized representations, in “Interiors” Said seems to be fixing on patterns of repetition to show how culture and politics interact in everyday spaces made and inhabited by Palestinians. In both cases images (rendered in writing or in photographs) fill in the gaps of an abstract and administered experience of exile or displacement.

Said attends to this aesthetic dimension of repetition in a reflection on the meaning of “the cult of physical strength, of fascination with bodybuilding, karate and boxing” among Palestinians (fig. 19 a/b). In the first instance he recognizes that it is “obviously the response of the weak to a strong, visibly dominating other.”⁹³ But he goes further to make a claim about the form of life that is sustained by this cult:

it is also an eye-catching, almost decorative pattern woven through ordinary experience, and it means something much more than ‘making ourselves strong.’ It is an assertion of self, an insistence on details beyond any rational purpose. But what may appear to outsiders as utter stupidity for us scores a tiny, almost imperceptible point on the inside.⁹⁴

In this passage Said shifts his focus from political considerations - from an observation about futile acts of resistance to Israeli occupation – to aesthetic ones. He is interested in describing a “decorative pattern” of Palestinian life. This pattern of repetition exhibits a taste for details “beyond any rational purpose,” but

it is nevertheless productive and affirmative. To be sure, it is this insistence on detail without purpose that distinguishes such activities as aesthetic ones. The culture of fitness is free from the sphere of purposive rational action, and from the administered realities of Palestinian life. It is in this sense a refuge from politics that nevertheless expresses a political situation.

He sees in the repetitions of an exercise regime an expression of will that is at once political and aesthetic. Said follows this note on the cult of physical strength with an amusing anecdote about a letter that was sent to him from a Palestinian shopkeeper (significantly for Said the shop was an embroidery shop) in Jerusalem through a friend. The letter opened with Said's name, written in English, and contained five lines in Arabic "telling of the writer's great expertise in karate, and of his participation in the world karate championships under the name of Palestine."⁹⁵ Said's account of the meaning of the letter is humorous and poignant.

That he wrote my name in English was as much a sign that he too could deal with the world I lived in as it was that he followed what I did, with some pride perhaps, but also with the wariness of one who for too long has been represented by Westernized intellectuals whose track record wasn't any too good. The time had come to demonstrate a healthy indication that the Edward Saids had better remember that we were being watched (by karate experts), somewhat approvingly, but also cautiously.⁹⁶

Said regards this as a characteristic act of, somewhat comic, Palestinian self-assertion. The crucial point for him is that the letter writer would have known that his "super-Palestinian" story would be received on the outside and repeated. Such acts of repetitive self-assertion for Said constitute a network of communications that seems futile if viewed through a strictly political lens. When viewed as a kind

of etiology of the Palestinian present, and as a pattern of expression such acts betray the resolve and productive powers of Palestinian “obduracy.” As Said notes:

In the rigorous discipline of the repetition, as my karate expert knew perfectly, you cannot get out of it, cannot easily transform it into a symbol of something else. Karate does not stand for self-development, but only for the repeated act of being a Palestinian karate expert. A Palestinian. It is as if the activity of repeating prevents us, and others from skipping us or overlooking us entirely.⁹⁷

It is interesting that Said calls repetition here a “rigorous discipline.” The implication is that it is both symptomatic or compelled by unfavorable political circumstances in the interior, as well as a deliberate and productive assertion of will or a sign of life that is registered in the exterior.

This double sense of repetition or the “compulsion to repeat” is also implied in Said’s description of Palestinian domestic “interiors” and rituals of hospitality:

This compulsion to repeat is evident in the interiors of Palestinian houses of all classes. The same food and eating rituals occur... with maddening regularity... offering and hospitality are designed... to be excessive, to put before a guest more than is needed... the same signs of hospitality and offering keep appearing, the same expectant intimacy, the same displays of affection and of objects – replicas of the Mosque of Omar, plates inlaid with mother of pearl, tiny Palestinian flags – appropriated for protection as well as sociability... It is part of a larger pattern of repetition in which even I, supposedly liberated and secular, participate. We keep re-creating the interior... but it inadvertently highlights and preserves the rift or break fundamental to our lives. You see this if you look carefully at what is before you. Something is always slightly off, something always doesn’t work. Pictures in Palestinian houses are always hung too high, and in what seems to be random places. Something is always missing by virtue of the excess... the rift is usually expressed as a comic dislocation, the effect of too much for too little a space or for too uninteresting an

occasion. Too many places at a table; too many pictures; too many objects; too much food (fig. 20).⁹⁸

The “constitutively anti-aesthetic” effect of such decorative schemes and conspicuous rituals of hospitality symbolize exile for Said in the first instance.⁹⁹ But he goes further than this to explain how it is that such a form of repetition relates directly to the facts on the ground in the Occupied Territories. Following the research of historian Glenn Bowersock, Said claims that repetition in homes and behaviors is a result of the gradual “fragmentation of a fundamentally unified region” over a long historical period stretching from pre-Zionist and even pre-Islamic Palestine to the establishment of the State of Israel.¹⁰⁰ The point Said wishes to emphasize here is that the region is fragmented administratively but also crowded symbolically by the traces of a “whole army of nineteenth and twentieth century claimants”:

topographically and even bibliographically, the place is unimaginably divided, dense and cluttered. Cover a map of Palestine with legends, insignia, icons, and routes of all the peoples who have lived there, and you will have no space left for terrain... the map, like the land itself, or like the walls of our houses, is already so saturated and cluttered that we have had to get used to working within an already dense and worked-over space.¹⁰¹

The accumulation of claims to land is manifested in decorative forms of repetition and in behaviors that express a toggling for space: all efforts for Said that seem like “adornments to what is already adorned.”¹⁰²

This is Said’s argument for Mohr’s images of Palestinian interiors. It is an explanation for what he suggests would seem like a simple case of bad taste to an outside observer: an “anti-aesthetic effect” that “will ultimately attract...

attention... as it has caught Jean Mohr's eye."¹⁰³ Said notes this effect of excess in his initial description of repetitive decorative schemes and, for example, pictures that are always hung too high or in random places. Nevertheless, Said's engagement with these instances of repetition is designed to expose it as willful and productive and not simply reactive and symptomatic. It is the inevitable but salutary response of Palestinians to a situation in which "every direct route to the interior... is either blocked or pre-empted."¹⁰⁴ The response for Said may be futile and compulsive but it expresses perseverance through repetition. It is important in this connection that each repetition contains a slight variation, at the very least on account of its particular place in space and time. Temporality and, by extension history breaks a pathological or tautological cycle of repetition - perseverance perseveres from one moment to the next and constitutes a historical experience for Palestinians in need of some sense of continuity. These rituals for Said are pursued in the hope that some "distinction may well appear at the end and after much effort as a small nick, a barely perceptible variation, a small jolt. Irony. Imposition. Odd decorum."¹⁰⁵

I would like to pause here to reflect on the specific utility in Said's discourse of the motif of repetition. We have seen how the "decorative pattern" of repetition serves an explanatory purpose for Said. That is to say it expresses the political circumstances of Palestinians on the interior – their contested history and their struggle for space and ultimately self-determination. But this is how repetition is narrated in the chapter by Said. His selection of images seems to suggest two additional purposes for the motif of repetition: one psychological or psycho-clinical and the other political. I will deal with these in turn. It will be seen

in this connection how an aesthetic motif or a pattern of repetition – an attention to form - serves as an antidote to grossly politicized images of Palestinians in keeping with the goals of the counter-proposal examined earlier.

To begin with Said notes the unfortunate placement of pictures in decorative schemes – too high, randomly hung, etc. But his selection of images does more than simply lament bad taste. In his essay on the “Time Exposure and the Snapshot” Thierry De Duve describes two psychological conditions that are occasioned by two different kinds of photographs. Earlier we saw how Said makes use of the snapshot to describe an experience of trauma. I argued that the photos of scenes of Palestinian life in suspended animation corresponded with the description of scenes in rhythmic succession but without narrative resolution in Modern Arabic literature. Said’s selection of images in the chapter on “Interiors” can also be explained in De Duve’s terms. While the traumatic “snapshot” is used to describe Palestinian “states” in the first chapter, here it is the “time exposure” or honorific portrait that commands Said’s attention. The time exposure for De Duve corresponds with an experience of melancholy rather than trauma. The characteristics of the time exposure, unlike the snapshot, compel the viewer to linger over the photographed subject in a way that permits a coherent memorial experience and, crucially, an operation of de-cathexis. The lost object of the honorific portrait can be slowly assimilated in the viewer’s experience to allow for a healthy transfer of affection to substitute objects.¹⁰⁶

Such portraits appear throughout the chapter on “Interiors”. They are elements of decorative schemes that are crowded as well with objects – figurines, carpets, pendants, etc. When read after the chapter on “states”, with its “snapshot”

or scenographic aesthetic, this use of memorial photos suggests a “clinical process” in Said’s representation of Palestinians.¹⁰⁷ These photos describe a movement beyond the discontinuities of unconnected scenes to a more patient and continuous meditation on loss and alienation. To be sure the photos do not solve the problem of discontinuity, of a fractured Palestinian state, but they serve to interiorize this discontinuity in a memorial viewing experience.

This memorial function of the honorific portrait in the chapter is divided between personal memory and collective political memory. Personal memory is invoked in Mohr’s photograph of two women looking through a family photo album, and in the clearly honorific portrait “on a crowded wall” on the facing page (fig. 21 a/b). In a picture of a man and child in Ramallah, seated below a photograph of an imprisoned then exiled relative, we have an example of a personal memorial photo that is also deeply political in its invocation of a generic experience of Palestinian imprisonment and exile (fig. 22). The photo album, we are told feeds “memories of Jerusalem,” and the portrait on the crowded wall appears directly below Said’s claim about the Palestinian will to “adorn to what is already adorned.” In the last photo then we have a relay between the memorial photo and the process of de-cathexis De Duve describes, wherein desire for a lost object is refocused on substitute objects.

The picture of the man and child (fig. 22) is less sentimental, more political, as the caption attests. We are told that the man pictured on the wall behind the pair, a picture hung too high on the wall, was imprisoned for life, then expelled to Algeria, then Jordan. The process of de-cathexis here thus corresponds with a movement of the lost object itself – from Algeria to Jordan. Near the end of

the chapter, in a section dealing with the status of women in Palestinian society another more strictly political memorial photograph appears (fig. 23). In it a woman stands with her hands on her hips, squarely confronting Mohr's camera. It is a resolute pose marked off sharply from the cluttered wall of memorial photos in the background. Included among the photos on the wall is an honorific portrait of Nasser, turned away from the photographer's gaze, and proud and indifferent, as is the woman featured in the foreground. With this we have a less entangled relationship between the memorial photo and its (presumed) owner and viewer than was seen in the photo of the women combing through a photo album. The clinical process of de-cathexis here it seems, is represented as complete. And it is significant that the memorial photo at the photographic subject's back represents the moment of greatest Pan-Arab aspiration and its location in the past, as a disappointment that might nevertheless find an honorific place in a collective historical consciousness.

The passage then, in De Duve's account of the trauma of the snapshot and the melancholy of the time exposure – a passage from an inassimilable traumatic memory, to a healthy reckoning with a lost object – can be mapped onto a collective experience of trauma (the *Nakba*'s repetition in the *Naksa* of 1967) and its historicization. This is a narrative in pictures that seems to move from the discontinuity of states of exile and displacement to the continuity of interiorization and historical memory.

The political resonance of the motif of repetition is evident in Said's inclusion of two other images in the chapter: one, a generic image of a young Palestinian stone-thrower, and the other a picture of the prefabricated architecture

of an Israeli settlement at Ramot near Jerusalem (fig. 24/25). The first photo is anomalous in this chapter insofar as it is a “snapshot.” Following De Duve’s scheme then it describes an experience of trauma. It is an obviously politicized representation of Palestinian resistance to occupation. But it is also a generic image, or one that is ubiquitous in the mass media. It will be recalled that Said aims in *ATLS* to provide an alternative to such representations. So why then would he include one of the very images he seeks to move beyond in *ATLS*? I argue that there is, in the choice to include this photo, a reckoning with the phenomenon of repetition in the mass mediated image-repertoire of Palestinians. This choice rounds out Said’s analysis of the motif of repetition in general. With the stone thrower we have a kind of unproductive repetition that describes the politics of Palestinian liberation critically.

This image of repetition can be viewed alongside another unhelpful (i.e., “ideologically saturated”) image of repetition. Said describes Mohr’s photograph of a settlement near Jerusalem as a kind of impersonal and compulsive scourge (fig. 25):

The attitude expressed in the construction of settlements on the West Bank is unmistakable. Visually there is a rude interventionary power in them that, I am told, shocks even Israelis. One thinks not only of a coarse army of heedless and rough crusaders, but also – given some of the structures themselves – of a marching cancer.¹⁰⁸

I would argue that Said’s inclusion of this image of repetition – a *structure* of architectural and colonial repetition – can be viewed alongside the image of the stone thrower as a menacing instance of the motif to which the “decorative pattern” of Palestinian life provides a retort. For all its bad taste and anti-aesthetic

effect, excessive hospitality and cluttered pictures and decorations offer a proportional response, by means of repetition to stereotyped images of stone throwers and prefabricated schemes for Israeli settlement.

Repetition is not innocented thereby. Rather it is regarded by Said as an aspect and tool of representation. Said's understanding of the concept of repetition should be specified here. It is derived from the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze as will be seen and, as indicated above, from the psychoanalytic framework of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan.¹⁰⁹ For all of these authors repetition is a strategy of representation that proceeds from an original loss or lack of meaning – it is precisely an attempt to produce meaning where it is missing or lost. It is in this sense that Said seems to be identifying the motif of repetition as a distinctly Palestinian one. Repetition in Said's account of Palestinian "interiors" expresses both a personal and a shared desire for a lost homeland.

XII. The Argument in Pictures: The Adversarial Utility of Repetition

In the conclusion of an early work on the theoretical importance of literary "beginnings" Said claims for his own use a "methodological principle" taken from the work of Deleuze:

For each appeal to the absolute, profound or transcendent origin, Deleuze – and this is a methodological principle I support – would oppose in answer an instance of surface, which is the place at which meaning begins... at the level of production... as a form of repetition.¹¹⁰

And again a few lines later, Said aligns himself with Deleuze's view that:

repetition signifies the absence of an assignable origin: what is repeated, therefore is not the one but the many, not the same but

the different, not the necessary but the aleatory... Deleuze's theory... multiplies meaning because it is articulated as an account of production, not of *a priori* validation based on resemblance.¹¹¹

These passages are dense and appear in a detailed treatment of issues in literary criticism. They are useful to recall here for the following reason. Repetition in Said's view is cast as production, that is, as a productive operation rather than a compulsive one. For Said, Deleuze's theory of repetition makes an important contribution to criticism by virtue of its insistence on decentering absolute claims including claims regarding origins. In the Palestinian context such claims are ubiquitous and it would seem for Said, unhelpful. In answer to such claims, which constitute a form of numbing and unproductive repetition, Said counterpoises "an instance of surface" and a form of repetition that produces meaning without appeal to an absolute point of origin. This is a theoretical and abstract point that, I would argue, explains Said's hope for observable patterns of repetition in Palestinian life.

It is crucial to note Said's tacit critique of traditional theories of mimetic representation in this passage on Deleuze. He identifies absolute claims to origin with a theory of resemblance -- one could think here of regimes of theological representation that insist on man's resemblance to an omniscient Creator, or, in secular culture varieties of Realism (philosophical, literary, artistic) that assume a perfect correspondence between an original object domain and its faithful representation in thought, in language, in images. This last instance of correspondence between an object and its visual representation would seem at first to inform Said's writing in *ATLS*. Photographic representation is, by virtue of

its indexical relationship with objects, a compelling case of correspondence. And Mohr's documentary mode of photography adds to the indexical value of the pictures a style that boasts veracity. But Said's attention to forms of repetition within the representational space of Mohr's photos serves to complicate a simple correspondence between actual and pictured Palestinian lives. One gets the sense in reading Said's reflections on "decorative patterns" of the interior that the ongoing work and clinical process of repetition exceeds the temporal and spatial bounds of the photograph.

By invoking this sense of repetition, unhinged from a philosophy of origins, Said is setting up a relationship between Israeli and Palestinian *representations*, not ethnic or nationalistic *origins*. If we recall the regimes of representation at issue here, for example "decorative patterns" of repetition in Palestinian interiors and the architectural and administrative repetition of Israeli settlements, the importance of the motif becomes clear. In both cases the work of repetition is carried on indefinitely and, in Said's account, almost compulsively precisely because it proceeds from a lack where origins are sought. No original Palestinian or Israeli identity will correspond perfectly with the meanings generated through, for example the repetitions of an exercise or patterns of settlement. There is a leveling operation then in Said's decision to include the stone-thrower's picture and pictures of settlements in the same chapter on "Interiors." Said seems to be equalizing the claims and counter-claims of Palestinians and Israelis by exposing their groundlessness with respect to origins and fixed identities. Such claims for Said are less important than the mechanisms of representation that give rise to them.

The psychoanalytic sense of repetition in “Interiors” is consistent with Deleuze’s and Said’s theory of representation. Said remarks on this affinity (among others) in *Beginnings* in a passage on Freud’s and Nietzsche’s “most fierce” representation of Deleuze’s theory of repetition. For all these authors according to Said, the affirmation of repetition as a tool of representation (which operates on the basis of an absent origin or loss) constitutes an:

adversary epistemological current found (as well) in Vico, in Marx and Engels, in Lukacs, in Fanon, and also in the radical political writings of Chomsky... writing is the act of taking hold of language in order to do something, not merely in order to repeat an idea verbatim.¹¹²

XIII. The Argument in Pictures: Repetition and Mimic Men

I would like to focus on one clear instance of repetition that illustrates the political and adversarial utility of the technique for Said. This instance of strategic repetition in the form of *mimicry*, is found in a transcription of a radio play, and is thus not part of Said’s “argument in pictures” in the chapter. But it seems most appropriate to mention this case here since it is treated along with the picture of the stone-thrower visited above as an instance of repetition-as-resistance.

The radio play and the stone-thrower for Said reveal the way in which Palestinian resistance is expressed with difficulty through “closely managed acts of self-assertion”: acts which for Said have grown “odder, more ironic and darker” since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.¹¹³ Said includes an excerpt from a transcript of an Israeli radio broadcast in which a Palestinian prisoner is, in the course of an interrogation, compelled to express gratitude (strategically disingenuously) to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) for their “good treatment to

each terrorist.”¹¹⁴ What is crucial for Said is the way in which the interrogator’s language is repeated or mimed “hapless(ly), but by no means witless(ly)” by the prisoner to expose a relationship of domination and an experience of captivity:

Israeli broadcaster (I.B.): Your name? Captured Palestinian (Pal.) *fedayi* (guerilla’): My name is Ahmad Abdel Hamid Abu Site. I.B.: What’s your movement’s name? Pal.: My movement’s name is Abu Leil (‘father of night’). I.B.: Tell me Mr. Abu Leil, to which terrorist organization do you belong? Pal.: I belong to the Popular Front for the Liberation (*taḥrīr*) - I mean Terrorization (*takhrīb*) – of Palestine. I.B.: And when did you first get involved in the terrorist’s organization? Pal.: When I first became aware of terrorism. I.B.: And what was your mission in South Lebanon? Pal. My mission was terrorism... in other words we would enter villages and just terrorize. And wherever there were women and children we would terrorize. Everything and all we did was terrorism.¹¹⁵

In performances of mimicry such as this, repetition constitutes a kind of counter propaganda. Said also mentions Palestinian guards in an Egyptian jail in Mu’in Basisu’s autobiographical *Descent Into Water* who are tasked with keeping watch over young militants imprisoned for their activities with the Palestinian Communist Party – an irony by which “Arab ‘nationalists’ abuse those very Palestinians whose cause is at the center of their nationalist concerns.”¹¹⁶ Basisu’s jailers and, to a greater degree the prisoner in the radio broadcast take on the characteristics of their adversaries in order to, perhaps dissimulate and protect themselves from dangers.

This is the standard evolutionary account of animal mimicry. But in the psychoanalytic literature, especially after Lacan, mimicry can be seen also in the human, social realm as an aspect of visibility and representation in general: as an effect of the consciousness of being given in the world to the sight of others. For

Lacan what is crucial is that the subject is given not in the Cartesian sense as a *cogito* whose representations are guaranteed by the certainty of self-consciousness (i.e., “of seeing oneself seeing oneself”) but rather as both a producer of representations and as a representation for others. Lacan’s category for this structure of visibility is the “gaze” -- a rubric under which the subject is both the source of an act of looking and *subjected* to the looks of others.¹¹⁷ For Lacan, such a field of visibility decenters the traditional subject of philosophy, and indeed the logic of identity on which it is based. This is yet another account of representation that exposes the rhetoric of origins Said wishes to move beyond.

Although Said does not mention Lacan in *ATLS* it seems as though he has this account of the field of visibility and its consequences for subject formation in mind when discussing the subversive activities of “mimic men.” A moment of tenderness between Basisu’s jailer and one of the prisoners, and the coded mockery of the Israeli interrogator by Abu Site in the radio transcript reveal the way in which acts of mimicry can reveal the contingent nature of regimes of representation. Abu Site enacts begrudgingly, mockingly the representation of the terrorist that is foisted upon him by the Israeli interviewer. He reveals the structures of visibility (and terminology) that underwrite Israeli propaganda in his uneasy appropriation of those very structures in speech.

For Said, the prisoner’s mimicry is carried on, in the absence of a sophisticated counter-propaganda apparatus among Palestinians, as an effort to expose a fissure or moment of rupture “within the discourse of the Israeli interrogation itself.”¹¹⁸ This modest protest recalls Said’s claims mentioned above

about the “distinction” that appears after much effort as “a small nick, a barely perceptible variation, a small jolt. Irony. Imposition. Odd decorum.”

It should be said that such efforts to represent the Palestinian experience, or the Israeli experience for that matter, are not discounted as a result of their groundlessness. Said is attuned to the mechanism of repetition to expose regimes of ethnic and national representation as modes of propaganda and counter-propaganda. But he also seems to be issuing a call for a kind of ecology of representation. Mere repetition (i.e., of the administered space of settlements or endless diplomatic statements) is unhelpful for Said. The salutary effect of repetition would seem to have to do with the establishment of a historical consciousness. It is worth noting that Said identifies minor interventions like Abu Site's as a kind of national epic: “this story and several others like it circulate among Palestinians like epics; there are even cassettes of it available for an evening's entertainment.”¹¹⁹ According to Said, there is a need for a historical consciousness, for continuity, that is expressed in such forms of repetition. This is not a claim about a monolithic Palestinian identity but rather a call for a sense of the place of Palestinians in history. Said appeals for a restoration of a Palestinian sense of historicity through narratives and testimonials -- antidotes in his account for an “inadequate” historical consciousness.¹²⁰

The radio play is a step in this direction, but he cites the more serious headed work of authors like Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Hisham Sharabi, Akram Zuayter and Zakaria al-Sahikh as well. He also mentions testimonials that make use of images such as Walid Khalidi's book of personal photographs of Palestinians entitled *Before Their Diaspora*.¹²¹ Said invokes Adorno to support this call. A

sense of Palestinian history, and a representation of Palestinian lives must be pursued in spite of its erasure in propaganda campaigns and geographically in the throes of displacement. With Adorno, Said notes:

What has been cogently thought (i.e., a Palestinian historical sense) must be thought in some other place by other people. This confidence accompanies even the loneliest and most impotent thought.' That is another way of phrasing the Palestinian dream: the desire for a perfect congruence between memory, actuality and language.¹²²

XIV. Said's Politics of Hope and the Historical Purpose of Pictures and Art in *ATLS*

The above reference to Adorno suggests a key purpose Said sets for himself in *ATLS*. He is interested in narrating the Palestinian experience - in terms of its outward geo-political circumstances, and in terms of its inward or interior desires expressed through patterns of repetition – in order to locate such an experience historically. In the final two sections of the book this is what he sets about doing. I will conclude here with a very brief outline of the final two chapters entitled “Emergence” and “Past and Future” respectively in order to better situate Said's purposes in the first two chapters (“States” and “Interiors”) dealt with above.

In his chapter “Emergence” Said's narrative takes a rather optimistic turn. This is the most illustrative section of the book. Mohr's photographs are used straightforwardly to illustrate a Palestinian emergence from a “politics of refusal” to a “politics of hope” in Ibrahim Abu Lughod's terms. Said uses photographs of prominent Palestinian intellectuals to make his case for such a politics. In doing

so he expresses a deep investment in the role of intellectual labor in the establishment of a Palestinian consciousness. The section however opens with photographs of Bedouin farmers and shepherders and includes several photographs of working class scenes. Said is obliged in this section to deal with the issue of class, which he does by means of Marx's category of alienated labor. He also includes a schematic account of Palestinian exile and internal colonialism taken from what he calls the "nascent Palestinian sociology" of Queen's University professor Elia Zuraik.¹²³ This schematic presentation of Palestinian history is informative and didactic, not aesthetic. Said's engagement with the photos too, seems more didactic in this section than aesthetic. Nevertheless, the section occupies a very important place in the overall narrative of the book. Said's intention to provide a missing historical narrative is clearly in evidence.

In the book's final Chapter entitled "Past and Future" Said is explicit about the historical goal of the book. It is in this last section that the two primary discourses (one literary-historical the other psychoanalytic) at work in *ATLS* are united. Said's historical narrative (which is alternately informed by literary references and social scientific research) is laid out in terms of a Palestinian "Past and Future." The contested space of the present, as expressed in Arabic fiction in the formal unit of the scene, and in various decisive photographic moments in *ATLS*, is tellingly left out of the chapter title. The present is, like Palestine for Said, a missing but motive force of interpretation or an object-cause of desire in Lacan's terms. The present seems to be in question for Said, as is the prospect of articulating Arab contemporaneity. This missing present is thus given a literary and historical, but also a psychoanalytic dimension in Said's writing.

XV. Conclusion: Gender, Inclusions, Exclusions for a Palestinian Portrait

As I have argued, Said endeavors to inhabit the elusive Palestinian present by various means in *ATLS*. We have seen that his autobiographical approach to the narration of Mohr's photos involves a good deal of projection. The photos give rise to intrusive memories for him and compel his identification with their subjects. As was the case with Arabic fiction after 1948, the present delivered to Said through Mohr's photos is also interpreted through the lens of literary tropes and motifs. Art and its forms of literary and photographic representation, provide an opportunity (for Said, his readers and the novelists and poets he mentions) to imaginatively inhabit a Palestinian history (if not a Palestinian territory) that is withheld politically. It is in this sense that the book articulates the counter-proposal visited earlier.

I have focused on the first two chapters of *ATLS* because I believe they are of use in approaching the art of Hassan Khan. Both Said in *ATLS* and Khan in his performance *17 and in AUC* enlist autobiographical and artistic devices in the task of describing an Arab present and interiority but in such a way that Orientalist stereotypes or myths of, for example, the "arrested development" of Arabs, are contested and complicated. Such myths are sustained, as we have seen, by mass mediated representations of Palestinian belligerence and victimization, that is, by images Said regards in his book proposal for *Orientalism* as grossly politicized. Said aims in *ATLS* to respond to such images with representations of a less inflammatory and more artistic kind. The specific utility of Said's work in *ATLS* for the present purpose then, has to do with his insistence on cultivating and

exploring artistic representations in an effort to respond critically to mass mediated Orientalist dogmas.

Nevertheless, Said's work in *ATLS* comes close to constructing an essentialized and ideal Palestinian subject. It is worth noting that Said did not include some images from Mohr's archive in the final version of *ATLS* that might have complicated the book's portrait of Palestinian lives. Two unpublished images drawn from a dedicated *ATLS* "Subject File" in The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said are worth mentioning here (fig. 26 a/b). In the first of the two photos by Jean Mohr a well-dressed man, perhaps a gallery guide or curator is pictured with a young boy in an art gallery in Amman. In the second, taken in Al-Birreh, a Palestinian city near Ramallah, several women are pictured in a hair salon in front of three large oval-shaped mirrors. The reflections of the hairdressers and their clients are repeated, *en abyme* in the large mirrors.

The photographs to be sure deal with the aesthetic dimensions of Palestinian life that I have tried to tease out of Said's narrative. Had they been included in the published version of the book, they would surely have nuanced Said's account of the relationship between art and politics. The first photo suggests an unexamined place for visual art and art education in the Palestinian diaspora. That the photo was taken in Amman and not in Palestine suggests that at the time of Said's writing such venues were not available in Palestine.¹²⁴ Said's engagement with art, as has been seen in *ATLS* deals primarily with motifs drawn from testimonial Palestinian fiction and poetry. While Said is attuned to formal devices in the literature he calls up in his commentary on Mohr's photos, the authors and works selected give voice to Said's own struggle for Palestinian

statehood. It is possible that the photo of the Amman art lesson was too difficult, too connoisseurial in appearance to fold into such a narrative of Palestinian liberation for Said. The work hanging on the gallery wall is highly abstract, even geometrical and conceptual, in the manner of Sol Le Witt's drawings of the 70s and 80s. It is possible as well that not only the insular context of the Amman gallery, but also the conceptual nature of the work in it (its lack of a referential structure, much less a political referential structure) was too abstract to suit Said's nationalist purposes in *ATLS*.

The same could be said about the second photo from the Al-Birreh salon. While Said does write women into his narrative of Palestinian national emergence -- indeed they are given a prominent if essentialized role as Mitchell rightly notes -- it might be that this image of a ritual of feminine self-styling was too idle or too vain for his purposes. Nevertheless, it would have provided a good counterpoint to Said's highly gendered account of the male cult of physical fitness and the, very often traditional and maternal roles given to women throughout the book. The motif of repetition in the photo's play of reflections is an aesthetic effect with well-known precedents in both art and photographic history (fig. 27/28). Said's approach to the motif of repetition, in what has been seen is trained rather on the appearance of Israeli settlements and the compensatory excesses of Palestinian interior decoration -- forms of repetition that Said identifies as symptoms of political and psychological difficulties primarily. Politics in the Manet picture and in Wall's reworking of it concern the gendered spaces of middle-class indulgence. Had Said engaged with the salon photo he might have explored these class specific and gendered dimensions of Palestinian lives as well.¹²⁵

These oversights in or exclusions from Said's book make it possible for him to align Palestinian (literary) art and a rather prescriptive and traditional role of Palestinian women and men with the national struggle for statehood. He elaborates a kind of national mythology, based on the heroic writings of mostly male Palestinian authors, and on images of Palestinian women in traditional roles. Gender is approached by Said in *ATLS* in terms of traditional and fixed roles rather than in terms of dynamic and fraught processes of identity formation. This is an aspect of Said's portrait of Palestinians that perhaps undermines his aim to represent their complex everyday struggles. By way of anticipation, it will be seen that Khan takes up these issues that Said passes over in *ATLS*. Whereas Said misses an opportunity to think of the role of visual art institutions in Palestinian life, and indeed the place of men and boys within those institutions, Khan's autobiographical performance deals with the challenges of an emergent male artistic subjectivity in the Cairene context. And whereas Said decides not to consider gendered spaces of middle-class indulgence and self-styling such as the Al-Birreh salon, Khan decodes sub-cultural appearances and affectations among his middle class peer group at the American University in Cairo. These explorations in Khan's work produce a complex and rich portrait of a particular Arab artists' identity formation. In doing so, as I will argue, Khan advances Said's aim in the "counter-proposal" and in his work on Arabic prose and prose fiction to combat essentializing dogmas of Orientalist representation.

In the following chapter I will explore Said's critique of the institutions and discourses of Orientalism that have historically anchored such dogmas in

research – in analyses of Arabic language, “mind” and “temperament.” It will be seen that just as Said inhabits a Palestinian present in *ATLS* in order to complicate such static constructions of Arab identity, so too are artists such as Wael Shawky, Shady El- Noshokaty and Hassan Khan refusing (to varying degrees) such constructions in their performance-based practices. Said’s drift in *ATLS* from outward and static “states” to dynamic and lived “interiors” is particularly useful as a model for approaching Khan’s performance piece entitled *17 and in AUC* (2003) – a work in which the artist stages his interiority by physically confining himself to a one-way mirrored glass box for fourteen nights to work through difficult memories of his past experience at The American University in Cairo.

¹ The other cases treated in Mitchell’s chapter are James Agee’s and Walker Evans’s *Let us Now Praise Famous Men* (1939), Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida* (1981) and Malek Alloula’s *The Colonial Harem* (1981). On the genre and the “classic” status of these four works in it, see W.J.T. Mitchell. *Picture Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 281-290.

² Ibid., 281/321-2.

³ Mitchell cites the philosopher Stanley Cavell on this subversive aspect of the photographic essay in art history. He writes: “it (the photographic essay) seems to participate in what Stanley Cavell has described as the tendency of ‘modernist painting’ to ‘break down the concept of genre altogether,’ as if the medium were not given naturally, but had to be reinvented, reevaluated in each new instance; this is the tendency I’ve associated with the mutual ‘resistance’ of photography and writing, the insistence on the distinctive character of each medium, the search for a purity of approach that is both aesthetic and ethical.” This modernist aspect, and purist impetus in the genre is challenged according to Mitchell by its roots in mass media and popular forms of communication in which there is a “freedom of exchange between image and text.” See Ibid., 321-322.

⁴ Ibid., 316.

⁵ Ibid., 321.

⁶ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 11.

⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹¹ Included in the list of ICQP participants are: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Palestinian Liberation Organization (seated as full participants at the conference's second plenary meeting), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The League of Arab States was included among intergovernmental agencies. Edward W. Said was registered at the conference as an unaffiliated "Eminent Person." For the list of delegates see "Report on the International Conference on the Question of Palestine (Geneva, 29 August – 7 September, 1983)" (UN: New York, 1983). The irony Said mentions of the refusal of the exhibition by unspecified Arab delegates is perhaps an overstatement. While the Arab delegations unanimously signed the ICQP declaration (without reservations) the schisms between many of them were, at the time of the conference, unresolved on account of the Lebanese Civil War and the Camp David Accords through which an Israeli-Egyptian agreement was struck. On the Lebanese Civil War see Martha Wenger. "Primer: Lebanon's 15-Year War, 1975-1990" *Middle East Research and Information Project* (MERIP), MER 162, (1990). Also the PLO's involvement in the conference as a newly seated full member might have contributed to the resistance to the exhibition. Said was an independent member of the Palestinian National Council from 1977 to 1991 but eventually broke ranks with the PLO after the Oslo Accords, citing irreconcilable differences with PLO leader Yasser Arafat. On Said's differences with the PLO see George Wright, "World-renowned scholar Edward Said dies" *The Guardian*, Thurs. 25 September, 2003.

¹² Edward W. Said, "Permission to Narrate" in *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 253. Besides this "dual-nationality problem" the Lebanese Civil War especially would have made an accurate census of the Palestinian people very difficult to administer. As has been noted by sociologist Bassem Sirhan, in the years immediately preceding the ICQP conference "there existed no scientifically compiled studies covering all aspects of the Palestinian refugee camps." Sirhan's own 1975 study of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon was based on UNRWA statistics and a survey carried out in 1971 by the Statistics Department of the Lebanese Ministry of Planning. But an account of the conditions in the camps, which would have affected these statistical studies, required Sirhan to conduct "unstructured participant and non participant observation... over several years." Among these conditions, Sirhan emphasizes a "descending scale of space, housing, basic amenities, etc." in Lebanese camps but it is noted that such conditions are similar to those in camps in Gaza, Syria, the West Bank and Jordan. See Bassem Sirhan. "Palestinian Refugee Camp Life in Lebanon" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Winter, 1975), 91-107. In 2012 UNRWA reported a registered 455,000 refugees in Lebanon's twelve camps and a ten percent Palestinian population in the country. See UNRWA, "Lebanon," accessed Jan. 24, 2013. www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=65. For a recent ethnographic study of Palestinian refugee camps see Julia Marie Peteet. *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

¹³ Edward W. Said, "Permission to Narrate" in *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994*, 253.

¹⁴ Said does not examine the specific issues each of the Arab states at the ICQP would have had with their respective Palestinian populations. The "Arab" context and the "Israeli" context he cites here could be nuanced in each national case. But Said's concerns are more focused on narratives of Arab unity it seems rather than the historical details of Arab disunity. That Said took this focus on a perhaps simplified narrative of Arab unity indicates that his audience for *After the Last Sky*

was not as engaged in the Palestinian Question as were the delegates at ICQP. I am grateful to Laila Parsons for her helpful remarks on this difficulty in Said's recollection of the ICQP conference.

¹⁵ W.J.T. Mitchell as well notes this aspect of the relationship between Said's writing and Mohr's photographs. The supplemental character of Said's writing is one of the ways in which it is held in tension with, and remains irreducible to Mohr's photographs. See Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 313. I intend here the Derridean sense of the supplemental nature of writing. Said's manner of writing past the photos works against their use as exhibits (in the quasi-legal sense) of an essentialized Palestinian experience. I am grateful to Amelia Jones for alerting me to this potential in Said's writing. Said was of course familiar with Derrida's work but wary of its textual orientation. In an early paper on Derrida and Foucault, Said explains his preference for Foucault's spatial approach to institutional history over Derrida's temporal approach to literary history. In *ATLS*, Said seems to combine aspects of these two "exemplary positions," as he calls them, effectively writing his experience of time into the spatial matrix of Mohr's photos. See Said, "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions," in *Critical Inquiry*, 673-714. On Derrida's notion of the supplement see Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak trans. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 141-164.

¹⁶ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 4.

¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁹ Ibid., 6.

²⁰ At the time of Said's writing John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* was already well-known. In it Berger describes a method of working with images (from art history and visual culture) that compares with Said's approach to Mohr's images as well. See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972).

²¹ "The Geneva Declaration on Palestine" opens the document of the conference proceedings: "In pursuance of General Assembly resolutions 36/120 C of 10 December 1981, ES-7/7 of 19 August 1982 and 37/86 C of 10 December 1982, an International Conference on the Question of Palestine was convened at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 29 August to 7 September 1983 to seek effective ways and means to enable the Palestinian people to attain and to exercise their inalienable rights." In "Report on the International Conference on the Question of Palestine (Geneva, 29 August – 7 September, 1983)" (UN: New York, 1983).

²² On Said's self-description see Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (Vintage Books: New York, 2000).

²³ As Mitchell notes, Said's and Mohr's collaboration, and their shared authority was a function of their relative access to Palestine in the 1980s. On the one hand, Mohr is an outsider as a Swiss citizen, and as a result he does not have the kind of intimate access to images of Palestinians that Said does. However, as Mitchell notes, "(Mohr's) Swiss neutrality allows him what was denied to the writer (Said) in the 1980s, the freedom to travel throughout Israel and the West Bank, to go 'inside' Palestine and represent it with the transparent accuracy of photography." See Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 316.

²⁴ Said, "Permission to Narrate" in *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994*, 255.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 254.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ I am grateful to Laila Parsons for her remarks concerning this rhetorical status of Palestine in discourses of Arab national unity.

²⁹ Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community" in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, 182.

³⁰ On Said's understanding of "meaning" in this passage see his essay "Bursts of Meaning: On John Berger and Jean Mohr" in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 148-152. In this essay Said emphasizes the importance of non-linear and non-chronological narratives as an alternative to "monopolistic systems of order." A theory of

meaning production is not advanced in the essay. Rather Said argues, with Mohr and Berger that official (i.e., state-sponsored and mass mediated) national narratives are too often teleological and rigidly causal in a way that excludes accounts of “privacy, subjectivity and free choice.” In *ATLS* Said’s narrative strategy, as will be seen is non-chronological and deeply subjective insofar as Mohr’s pictures call up Said’s personal memories.

³¹ It should be noted that Said capitalizes the term “Other” in the passage cited. His call for something like the counter-narrative provided by books like *ATLS* takes for granted a concept of “Otherness.” Representations of Palestinians are included in this category – that is Palestinians qualify as “Others.” But we are not told what the criteria are for such inclusion. Nor does Said expand on philosophical and psychoanalytic uses of the category, uses that are suggested by the capitalization of the word. Finally Said passes over the term here without engaging authors dealing with the problem of alterity in post-colonial literature such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha.

³² W.J.T. Mitchell and Said, “The Panic of the Visual: a Conversation with Edward W. Said,” *Boundary 2*, 16.

³³ This concept is taken from the Vienna School art historian Alois Riegl’s lexicon. “*Kunstwollen*” is his term which translates roughly as “will to art” or “will to form”.

³⁴ A similar project of co-ordinating Arabo-Islamic and European cultural and philosophical traditions is at the center of Laura Marks’s book on Islamic art and continental European theories of new media art and film. See Laura Marks *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010). Marks’s book also takes up the intellectual context of Islamic art, relating its major innovations to breakthroughs in scientific and philosophical writing from Middle Eastern intellectual history.

³⁵ W.J.T. Mitchell and Said, “The Panic of the Visual: a Conversation with Edward W. Said” *Boundary 2*, 28.

³⁶ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 80-97, 169-186.

³⁷ W.J.T. Mitchell and Said, “The Panic of the Visual: a Conversation with Edward W. Said” *Boundary 2*, 31.

³⁸ See Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, Robert Hullot-Kentor trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Said’s engagement with Adorno’s work was long running. There is a dedicated file on Adorno in Said’s Collected Papers. See “Adorno: Subject Files,” Edward W. Said Papers. While the relationship between Said’s and Adorno’s aesthetic theory has not been explored in detail, general comparative studies have been made. See for example Moustafa Bayoumi, “Reconciliation without Duress: Said, Adorno and the Autonomous Intellectual,” *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* No. 25 (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2005), 46-64.

³⁹ Said acknowledges his conservatism on this score in the interview with Mitchell wherein he describes himself as a “high-modernist aesthete.” See W.J.T. Mitchell and Said, “The Panic of the Visual: a Conversation with Edward W. Said” *Boundary 2*, 29.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴¹ André Malraux, *La Musée Imaginaire de la Sculpture Mondiale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952-54).

⁴² For a good recent study of Warburg’s so-called “*Mnemosyn Atlas*” project see Christopher D. Johnson *Memory, Metaphor and Aby Warburg’s Atlas of Images* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012). On some implications of projects such as Warburg’s (and Malraux’s) for museological practice and theory see Hal Foster’s “The Archive without Museums,” *October* 77 (Summer, 1996), 97-119. Edward Steichen’s “Family of Man” photo exhibition at the MoMA might also be included as a precedent, and a highly controversial one at that, for Said’s work in *ATLS*. See Edward Steichen et. al. *The Family of Man: The Greatest Photographic Exhibition of All Time (503 Pictures from 68 Countries)* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955). The almost imperialistic ambition of the project is suggested in the hyperbole of the subtitle. On Steichen’s project and its all-important Cold-War context see Eric J. Sandeen. *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).

⁴³ This distinction between the political and the aesthetic is an analytic one. I am using it primarily to examine how Said avoids a strictly political and contentual account of the Palestinian situation.

As W.J.T. Mitchell notes, it would be more accurate to describe the form of the work as at once political and aesthetic: "This form is not something distinct from content; it is the content in its most material, particular sense, the specific place it carves out as the site of Palestinian existence." See Mitchell. *Picture Theory*, 316.

⁴⁴ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁶ Said's effort to raise awareness in the U.S. about Palestinian issues began in earnest in the early 1970s. I will examine aspects of Said's relationship with Noam Chomsky in the following chapter. Israel Shahak and Izzy Stone were invited along with Said to participate in a conference organized by Ibrahim Abu Lughod (African Studies, Northwestern University) and the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAAUG) in Oct. 1973. Abu Lughod invited Said, Shahak and Stone, as well as Lebanese writer Jubran Majadalan and Institute of Policy Studies Fellow Eqbal Ahmad, to participate in a panel entitled "Palestinians, Israelis, Arabs and Jews: Conflict and the Possibility of Concord" for the Sixth Annual AAAUG convention. See "Edward W. Said and Ibrahim Abu Lughod (undated), General Correspondence" (1973) in Edward W. Said Papers. In spite of these efforts (for which Abu Lughod should also be credited) to raise awareness about the Palestinian issue, Said expressed some frustration about putting the issue on a more public agenda in the US. In a letter to Helen Cixous (University of Paris III) from the same year, Said commends Cixous as well as philosophers Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva and the writer Jean Genet for signing a petition in the French newspaper *Le Monde* (Jan. 15, 1973) in support of Palestinian statehood. Said writes: "I have just been shown the 'appel pour les palestiniens' signed by you and many others in today's *Le Monde*. I've already written a little note of appreciation to Foucault, who aside from you and Genet, is the only person on the list with whom I have had any communication at all... I wanted to tell you how many of us Palestinians truly appreciate a gesture which has yet to come from such places as the US, where the so-called Left is still trying to decide whether criticism of Zionism is equivalent to anti-semitism... For me the example of names like yours... is to invigorate (sic) and enliven our thought and determination as we try to press forward in the task of liberation and justice." See Letter from Edward W. Said to Helene Cixous, January 15, 1973, in "General Correspondence" (1973) in Edward W. Said Papers. Said's criticism of "the Left" in the note to Cixous was at the time worked out programmatically by Noam Chomsky in his *Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship* (1967) of which Said seems to have been aware.

⁴⁷ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 25-26.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁹ In his introductory notes for a 1981 reading by Mahmoud Darwish, Said describes this coupling of imaginative or aesthetic and subversive or political possibilities in the poet's oeuvre: "His poetry has expressed... the extraordinary conjunction that actually exists between words and what we might call reality, except that it is Darwish's achievement to have connected the two so crucially as to have made the distinctions... idle and inconsequential... by bringing together words and reality, art and politics Darwish forces upon each of them what the hypocrisy of liberalism has torn asunder. We are so used to hearing that art is art and politics politics, that we tend to forget, for example that such distinctions have made it possible in... the West... for critics and spokesmen of the liberal culture to make it impossible for people to hear the voices of the oppressed in non-Western countries..." Said continues to argue that this "liberal" ghettoization of art operates unevenly so that "certain kinds of resistance are acceptable (e.g., Polish resistance against the Soviet union), others are unacceptable and terroristic. Milosz wins a Nobel Prize, the Palestinian writer is scarcely known." Said's use and indeed promotion of Darwish in *ATLS* is aimed at correcting such oversights. By using Mohr's pictures in his narrative Said, it seems, follows Darwish's lead in conjoining for political purposes, words and reality (insofar as Mohr's documentary photographs function as indexes of a Palestinian reality). See "Edward Said, April 6, 1981. (typed introduction)," in Subject Files: Mahmoud Darwish" in Edward W. Said Papers. In a later essay on Darwish, Said suggests that the poet's "late style," exemplified by the poem "Eleven Stars Over Andalusia" involves a shift from a testimonial political poetry into political allegory

drawn from the remote history of the Arab-Islamic golden age. This later phase, Said notes, perhaps commenced with Darwish's resignation from the PLO's Executive Committee in protest to Yasser Arafat's signing of the Oslo Declaration in 1993. See Edward W. Said, "On Mahmoud Darwish" *Grand Street* No. 48 (Winter 1994), 112-115. The relationship between art and politics is central to Said's understanding of Darwish's poetry, as it seems to be a major concern in *ATLS*.

⁵⁰ Edward Said, *After the Last Sky*, 20.

⁵¹ Said does not engage in *ATLS* with the abundant literature on these two works. Recent studies of Darwish's poetry include Najat Rahman, *Literary Disinheritance: Home in the Writing of Mahmoud Darwish and Assia Djebar* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008) and Najat Rahman and Hala Khamis Nassar, eds. *Mahmoud Darwish: Exile's Poet, Critical Essays* (Northampton: Olive Branch Press, 2008).

⁵² Said, *After the Last Sky*, 26.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Again, Said does not engage with any of the literature on Habiby's work in *ATLS*. Recent studies of Habiby's novel include Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "The Pessoptimist: Breaching the State's *da'wa* in a Fated Narrative of Secrets," *Edebiyat*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2003), 1-10. Abisaab writes as a specialist in Arabic literature, unlike Said, and is thus able in this essay to unpack esoteric and exoteric uses of language in the novel. The "secrets" that Said does not fully explore in *ATLS* are described by Abisaab as both historically informed and politically subversive *esoteric* uses of language. This analysis develops Said's general claims about "coded" language use in the work. Similarly Nancy Coffin's work on Habiby's novel examines the figure of the "spaceman" and its multiple significations that do not appear in Said's analysis. The "spaceman" for Coffin is a naturalized fantasy figure that contains the paradoxes Said glosses somewhat in his reading of Habiby's novel. Through an examination of this figure Coffin is able to decipher the way in which Habiby moves between contradictory terms (pessimist/optimist, passive/active, the word/the gun, and indeed the CPI (Communist Party of Israel) to which Habiby's protagonist uneasily belongs and the *fedai* (guerilla fighters with whom the author's sympathies occasionally lie). See Nancy Coffin, "Reading Inside and Out: A Look at Habibi's 'Pessoptimist'" *The Arab Studies Journal*, Vol. 8/9, No. 2/1 (Fall 2000/ Spring 2001), 25-46.

⁵⁵ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, "Introduction" in *Emile Habibi The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-fated Pessoptimist: A Palestinian Who Became a Citizen of Israel*, Trevor Le Gassick and Salma Khadra Jayyusi trans. (Vantage Press: New York, 1982), viii-x. Once again, Said does not engage with the literature on Habibi in his assessment. Work on these aspects of *The Pessoptimist*, especially on Habibi's use of "verbal" and "situational" irony was available in the 1980s when Said was writing *ATLS*. See Samia Mehrez, "Al-Mufaraqa 'inda James Joyce wa Imil Habibi' [Irony in James Joyce and Imil Habibi], *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 4 (Spring, 1984), 33-54. For a more recent treatment of irony in Habibi's work see Coffin, "Reading Inside and Out: A Look at Habibi's 'Pessoptimist,'" in *The Arab Studies Journal*, Vol. 8/9, No. 2/1, 25-46. Coffin nuances Le Gassick's reading of Habibi's *Pessoptimist* as an ultimately positive or redemptive political allegory.

⁵⁶ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 38.

⁵⁷ Mitchell remarks on this passage in *After the Last Sky* as well. For Mitchell it describes the way in which Said's writing maintains him in a critical position with respect to the usual arenas for discussions about Palestinian statehood. He writes: "This 'form' is not something distinct from content; it is the content in its most material, particular sense, the specific places it carves out as the site of Palestinian existence." Once again Mitchell is interested here in the "form" of the photographic essay in general – a form that is always divided between image and text. The irreconcilability of these two mediums in Mohr's and Said's collaboration for Mitchell embeds *After the Last Sky* "in a complex field of heterogeneities that can never quite be accommodated to traditional dialectical forms of aesthetic unity." See Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 316. While this is certainly a value of the form of *After the Last Sky* as a total (albeit collaborative) work, Mitchell does not examine the way in which Said co-ordinates literary form and photographic form in his writing.

⁵⁸ Said spends a fair amount of time analyzing this image. It is for him suffused with tensions: a boy fleeing the wooden and posed wedding group in the background, a car with a “D” for *Deutschland* (a ubiquitous import and status symbol among Palestinians), and a mixture of traditional and modern European dress. The group is, according to Said “caught” in this web of incoherent signifiers. See Said *After the Last Sky*, 10-11.

⁵⁹ Mitchell notes interestingly that this photo is involved in a displacement. Said does not comment on the image in the book directly but includes a note, a “counterpoint” to the image according to Mitchell, on the facing page about Said’s father’s lifelong effort to escape mementos of Jerusalem. See Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 313. Here I am attempting to read the image in sequence rather than in dialogue with the text.

⁶⁰ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 25. Said does not spend much time analyzing this image further, but the John Travolta collage-print on the boy’s t-shirt functions as a signifier of the global commodity culture which both threatens and preoccupies ordinary Palestinians. It is a sign of an unproductive and ironic fetishism of U.S. popular culture in a region marred by questionable U.S. foreign policy decisions according to Said.

⁶¹ Said uses a metaphor of a scarecrow in *Orientalism* to describe the contradictory “myths of Arab presence” mentioned earlier in connection with Neo-Orientalist popular representations. See Said *Orientalism*, 312.

⁶² Said, *After the Last Sky*, 28.

⁶³ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 30. Roland Barthes’ distinction between denotative and connotative features of the photograph is in the background here, though Said does not say so. Said is making use of Barthes here as he does in *Orientalism* in his description of “myths of Arab presence.” Mitchell points out another striking similarity between *After the Last Sky* and Barthes’s *Camera Lucida*. In both works, images of elderly women occasion reflections on the author’s respective relationships with their mothers. See Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 317-18.

⁶⁴ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 30.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁶ Thierry De Duve, “Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox” *October* Vol. 5, “Photography” (Summer, 1978), 117.

⁶⁷ This reading of the street scenes or snapshots in *After the Last Sky* suggests another point of comparison between Said’s work and Barthes’s in *Camera Lucida* (though not one that Mitchell takes up in his comparison). Barthes identifies two semiotic planes of the photograph in his work. The first, the “*studium*” names the photograph’s intelligible or connotative detail which is easily read and converted into an “average effect” or a readily available cultural meaning. The second, the “*punctum*” concerns some denotative and inassimilable detail that disrupts, or punctures the connotative plane of the photograph. On the distinction see Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* Trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 25-27.

⁶⁸ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 47.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁷⁰ Said’s use of these and other modernist artists and writers, and indeed his formalist strategies of Arab literary interpretation might be regarded as Euro-American impositions on a Palestinian cultural and political object domain. This is a tension that runs throughout Said’s work. That Said is, in his approach to literature and art, a kind of formalist is not difficult to discern. As was mentioned, he describes himself as a “high-modernist aesthete” in the interview with Mitchell. See Mitchell and Edward W. Said “The Panic of the Visual” *boundary 2*, 29. The question of the cultural roots of Said’s formalist strategies and his modernist inclinations is an interesting one, however I aim to examine which forms are selected out of Mohr’s pictures, and out of the literature visited in the essay on Arabic prose and why. It is my contention that in both *After the Last Sky* and the essay on Arabic literature Said is working between a strict formalist strategy and a strategy of more or less careful social-historical and contextual analysis. In any case, his aim seems to be to identify forms of representation that are adequate to details of the Palestinian experience. Work has been done on non-synchronous or multiple modernisms. The Carlton

University and University of Toronto-based research group "Multiple Modernities: Twentieth Century Artistic Modernisms in Global Perspective" is working out approaches to "mapping" non-synchronous modernisms in non-Western art contexts. A conference held in 2002 at The University of Montreal and titled *Modernité Arabes* dealt with some similar problems but in the narrower context of the Arab world. On Arab modernism in particular and its fraught reception and development see Steven Sheehi, "Modernism, Anxiety and the Ideology of Arab Vision" *Discourse* 28, No. 1 (Winter, 2006), 72-97. On the relationship between Edward Said's work and mid-twentieth-century European modernism and the avant-garde see David LeHardy Sweet, "Edward Said and the Avant-Garde" in *Edward Said and Critical Decolonization*, Ferial Ghazoul ed. (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2007), 149-176.

⁷¹ The Piranesi reference is a favorite for Said. The "Prisons" are mentioned as well in Said's chapter in *Orientalism* on the Romantic French and British (and to a lesser extent the Italian) imagination of the Near East. Said's interest in the so-called Lake Poets might also be cited here. Piranesi's "Prisons" were often invoked by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas De Quincey to describe their opium-induced visions of Oriental splendor and danger.

⁷² Said, *After the Last Sky*, 48.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Said, "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948" in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 50.

⁸¹ Said's analysis of this phrase will be explored, but for now it should be noted that it commonly refers to the area inside the so-called "green line." As will be seen Said traces the usage of the term through geopolitical transformations. The "green line" was established initially after the 1949 Armistice Agreements between Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. It was redrawn however after the June 1967 war between Egypt and Israel to demarcate territories captured by Israel then including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. On the relationship between the "green line" and Palestinian identity (following the Oslo Accords in 1993) see Azmi Bishara "Bridging the Green Line: The PA, Israeli-Arabs and Final Status, an Interview with Azmi Bishara," *Journal of Palestinian Studies* Vol. 26, No. 3 (Spring, 1997), 67-80. On the legal status of the demarcation line see Jamil Dakwar, "People Without Borders for Borders Without People: Land, Demography and Peacemaking Under Security Council Resolution 242" *Journal of Palestinian Studies* Vol. 37, No. 1 (Autumn, 2007), 62-78.

⁸² Mitchell points out that Said's association of "interiors" and women in this section is a shortcoming in the work: "a vestige of traditional divisions of labour... Said's meditations on gender difference suggest the collaboration of a male text with a body of female images." The gendered division of labour extends beyond this section. The authors and thinkers Said discusses in the work are primarily male authors. Women are pictured in this section and elsewhere in the home, as early childhood educators and on the land -- in traditional roles. The intellectual and artistic labour Said valorizes in the work is represented as the work of men. Women's work, although necessary is not marked by invention and artistic or intellectual merit but by devotion to the land, the home and the memory of Palestine. Mitchell's point is well-taken however he overstates the case when he claims that "The section of the book called 'Interiors'... is mainly devoted to images of women." See Mitchell. *Picture Theory*, 317. Eight of eighteen photos in the section feature women. The remaining ten photos reinforce the gendered division Mitchell takes up in some cases (i.e., in photos of boys exercising and men playing cards). However in photos of Israeli architecture, a child throwing a stone in Mohr's direction, bus stations, graffiti and various doorways and labyrinthine passages through Jerusalem and elsewhere, there seems to be more at stake for Said than a simple portrait of gender divisions among Palestinians. While Mitchell's

critique is compelling, I am interested in taking Said's sense of "interiors" more broadly – to refer to political boundaries and metaphors of interiority.

⁸³ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 53.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 51.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964 but did not secure official "observer status" within the UN until 1974. Said describes his engagement with and qualified belief in the aims of the PLO (he was a member of the Palestinian National Council) and foreshadows his eventual parting of ways with the PLO (mostly on account of Yasser Arafat's role in the Oslo Accords) in his *The Question of Palestine*. See Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 157-169.

⁸⁸ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 52.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ For a recent study on paranoia and the politics of dissimulation in the Arab world, see Matthew Gray, *Conspiracy Theories in the Arab World: Sources and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2010). As will be seen in the conclusion of this study, Hassan Khan as well deals with the theme in his video work *Conspiracy: Dialogue/Diatribes*. I have focused in this chapter on the literary and artistic resources of this tension rather than the political origins or sources of it. Palestinian visual artists (left out of Said's study, and this dissertation) have produced a great deal of important work on the theme of an inside/outside dichotomy in the Palestinian context. See for instance Emily Jacir's project *Where We Come From* (2001-2003).

⁹¹ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 52..

⁹² Ibid., 53.

⁹³ Ibid., 54.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 56.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 59-60.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 62.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 63.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Thierry De Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox" *October* Vol. 5, "Photography" (Summer, 1978), 117.

¹⁰⁷ In the essay "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948" Said describes this literature in the same way, as a kind of clinical process of dealing with historical traumas in the Arab experience. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 41-61.

¹⁰⁸ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 72.

¹⁰⁹ Said deals in several works with the thought of Freud. His most extensive study of Freud appears in *Freud and the Non-European*. Said makes only brief references to the thought of Lacan in the 1975 work *Beginnings*. See Said, *Beginnings*, 329/374.

¹¹⁰ Said, *Beginnings*, 377-78.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 378.

¹¹³ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 64.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 65.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 66.

¹¹⁷ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Alan Sheridan trans. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 74-75.

¹¹⁸ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 64.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 66.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 68.

¹²¹ Ibid., 75-6.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Said, *After the Last Sky*, 110-111.

¹²⁴ For a brief account of the difficulties of establishing an art scene in Palestine see Felice Maranz, "Occupied by Art" *The Jerusalem Report* (Dec. 16, 1993), 42-3. Maranz describes the East Jerusalem gallery setting as follows: "At number 27 (Salah Al-Din Street) a little piece of Western Modernity intrudes: an angular, off-center glass door, the entrance to Gallery Anadiel, the only Palestinian art gallery in the world." Said's direct engagement with visual art by Palestinians is limited to an essay in the catalogue for Mona Hatoum's 2000 exhibition at the Tate. See Edward W. Said, Sheena Wagstaff. *Mona Hatoum: The Entire World as a Foreign Land* (London: Tate Gallery Publication, 2000). Said's approach to Hatoum's art is very much focused, as the title of the catalogue suggests, on the experience of exile and displacement, in Hatoum's case, in the West.

¹²⁵ Had this photo been included it might have been interpreted by Mitchell as further evidence of Said's traditional division of gendered Palestinian labour. Work in the salon is certainly as traditional as work in the home and on the land. However this photo would have been difficult to fold into a national narrative in which women are, as Mitchell argues, a nurturing master-sign at the "center of the photographic matrix." See Mitchell. *Picture Theory*, 317. I am interested in how this photograph might have forced Said to consider micro-political aspects of gender in Palestinian society, rather than gross national, or mythic aspects.

Chapter 4: Edward Said's Critique of the Textual Attitude and Cairene 'Speech Acts'

I. Introduction

In the following chapter I aim to show how Said's "counter-proposal" to Orientalist dogmas is articulated by several contemporary artists dealing with Arab representations. I will contrast several Cairene artists' performative uses of language with what Said identifies as an unhelpful "textual attitude" in Orientalist scholarship. The artists are Wael Shawky, Shady El-Noshokaty and Hassan Khan. I argue that at stake for both these artists and for Said is a representation of Arabs that is not reducible to gross political characteristics, or worse, stereotypes of the kind visited in the last chapters. Following from Said's work on Modern Arabic literature, and from his engagement with images of Palestinians in *ATLS*, I will argue that the above artists, to varying degrees and more or less successfully, contribute to an emerging representation of Arabic cultural production that is focused on formal characteristics of language rather than "grossly over politicized" ones. In this connection they refuse, again to varying degrees, to reinforce essentialist (Orientalist) discourses on the "Arab political character/temperament," or the "Arab mind." I will argue ultimately that this focus on form shares with Said's approach in the counter-proposal and *ATLS* a strategy of refusal.

II. The Textual Attitude of Orientalism

Edward Said offers an explanation for what he regards as an unhelpful “textual attitude” in Orientalist scholarship. The textual attitude, in brief, is a kind of bookishness that privileges texts over direct encounters. In Orientalist scholarship, Said argues, this preference for the clarity of books over “the swarming, unpredictable and problematic mess in which human beings live” is precipitated by two factors:

One is when a human being confronts at close quarters something relatively unknown and threatening and previously distant. In such a case one has recourse not only to what in one’s previous experience the novelty resembles but also to what one has read about it.¹

The textual attitude then, is likely in the face of fear of the unknown. Said mentions travel books as an example of the kind of literature that is used to manage this fear. Indeed, much of the literature under consideration in *Orientalism* is of this kind. Said elaborates a typology of Orientalist travel literature in two sections of his book on “Orientalist Residence” and “Pilgrimages.”² He organizes this literature according to three “intentional categories” which fall on a spectrum between more or less objective “scientific observation” and more or less subjective wish fulfillment. Edward William Lane’s *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) and Gerard De Nerval’s *Voyage en Orient* (1851) are cited as paradigmatic cases of the objective and subjective modes respectively.³ In establishing these categories Said aims to argue for the coherence of a corpus of Orientalist literature. In other words the objective

and subjective modes share basic assumptions about the foreign character of the Orient and Orientals. These assumptions are for Said transmitted and uncritically accepted in Orientalist scholarship – they are *idées reçues* that constitute the Orientalist corpus as an archive for and a discourse on the European and later the American management of a “silent” and “available” Orient.⁴ It is this structure of authority that preoccupies Said for the length of his study.

This structure or corpus is effective in the administration of the Orient by colonial governments. Said focuses in his book on French and British interests in the Near and Middle East mainly. For all their destructive force, these adventures were enormously successful – economically, militarily and politically -- for colonial governments and their European subjects. This success or the “appearance of success” for Said is a second condition that favors a textual attitude. Said offers an analogy to make his point:

If one reads a book claiming that lions are fierce and then encounters a fierce lion (I simplify, of course), the chances are that one will be encouraged to read more books by that same author, and believe them. But if, in addition, the lion book instructs one how to deal with a fierce lion, and the instructions work perfectly, then not only will the author be greatly believed, he will also be impelled to try his hand at other kinds of written performance.⁵

A problem arises for Said when the subjects of such authoritative manuals are rendered inseparable from the terms used to describe them. Such subjects, lions in this case, are then produced for readers with characteristics that are assigned to them textually and, in the worst-case scenario capriciously by an author:

There is a rather complex dialectic of reinforcement by which the experiences of readers in reality are determined by what they have read, and this in turn influences writers to take up subjects defined in advance by readers’ experiences. A book on how to handle a

fierce lion might then cause a series of books to be produced on such subjects as the fierceness of lions, the origins of fierceness and so forth... as the focus of the text centers more narrowly on the subject – no longer lions but their fierceness – we might expect that the ways by which it is recommended that a lion's fierceness be handled will actually *increase* its fierceness, force it to be fierce.⁶

The description in question here, fierceness, is value laden. An author's perception of fierceness does not, needless to say, correspond with the lion's hard-wired program of self-defense in the face of perceived threats. In this way the text produces a kind of mythology of lions that derives its authority from the practice of dealing with them through one's already loaded interpretive frame of reference, not from dispassionate observation (insofar as this is possible). The analogy, though sensational, is easily applied in the case of Orientalist literature, where "fierceness" but also "sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, intense energy" textually structure what Said calls a "free-floating" or "adjectival" "Oriental."⁷

The last point in Said's analogy is unfortunately not developed in his book in any detail. But the suggestion seems to be that Orientalist tropes (of sensuality, etc.) are internalized to some extent by Oriental subjects and re-produced in their encounters with non-Orientals to satisfy or confirm the latter's expectations. Said examines the circularity of such tropes – the way in which they are determined in advance of experiences of the Orient – in a chapter called "Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental."⁸ This approach is designed to demonstrate the internal coherence of Orientalist scholarship or the structure of repetition on which it is based. The related, and perhaps more insidious phenomenon of *self-Orientalizing* is only alluded to by way of analogy.⁹

In what follows it will be seen that this operation of internalizing Orientalist stereotypes is very much an issue for artists dealing in different ways with speech and language in performance and video-based practices.

The genre of travel writing is for Said only one manifestation, and a relatively late-blooming one of the textual attitude in Orientalist literary history. The foundational philological, grammatical and lexicographical studies of the French linguists and Orientalists Sylvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) and Ernest Renan (1823-1892) constitute for Said the scholarly basis of the textual attitude.¹⁰ Their studies of Arabic and Semitic languages share with the work of Orientalist residents such as Lane and Nerval a faith in the correspondence between texts and their subjects. But whereas the travel literature Said mentions assigns adjectives to an imagined and then encountered Orient and Oriental, the philological studies of Renan and De Sacy are conducted at a geographical and historic remove from their subjects. Such studies on the one hand seem more faithful to their subjects since they focus in the first instance on what is or has been said and written *by* Orientals, in Arabic, rather than what is said *about* Orientals by European residents and “pilgrims” to the Near and Middle East. But the textual attitude in Renan and De Sacy is for Said woefully out of touch with social, economic and political conditions in the Modern Middle East. Worse still, their historical studies are read anachronistically into contemporary Arabic politics and culture.

III. The Legacy of the ‘Textual Attitude’ in Neo-Orientalism

Post-WWII iterations, albeit retrograde ones, of the philological mode of Orientalist writing are to be found in the work of Sania Hamady, P.J. Vatikiotis,

Bernard Lewis, and E. Shouby.¹¹ Said deals with these authors in the final section of *Orientalism*. His critique reveals the way in which Orientalist discourse is constituted between researchers working on several disciplinary fronts at once. This complicity, elsewhere Said calls it a “research consensus,” reinforces the “textual attitude” described above since authors secure their authority by means of affiliating with each other and by citing each other’s works. In this network of publication a study of the “temperament” of Arabs, by rights a psychological study, might find its justification in a work of Middle Eastern political science. The conclusions of both of these studies might in turn be grounded, as is often the case in Orientalist scholarship, in a reflection on Arabic language. The textual attitude then is manifested as an affiliative web or a structure of reference and citation on the one hand, and on the other hand, as a structure of validation that rests ultimately on an analysis of Arabic language.¹²

Said exposes this structure, and the textual attitude it supports in the work of Hamady, Vatikiotis, Lewis and Shouby. Rather than opening a field of Middle Eastern studies for investigation, and increasing the nuance and complexity of the observations within the field, these authors according to Said construct a kind of mythology on the basis of reductive analyses. Works such as Sania Hamady’s *Temperment and Character of the Arabs* (1960) and P.J. Vatiokiotis’s edited volume *Revolution in the Middle East and Other Case Studies* (1972) according to Said, reduce complex political and economic events in the Middle East and North Africa – including constructive ones such as the Iranian Revolution (1979) and anti-colonial wars such as the Algerian War of Independence (1954-62) – to manifestations of an essentially pre-Modern and pre-political “Arab mind” or

“Arab character.”¹³ Said remarks on the essentializing effect of Vatikiotis’s “psycho-clinical attention” and Hamady’s quasi-anthropological mode of observation. These are *styles* of Orientalist writing that masquerade as objective scholarship for Said. But that is not to say they are benign with respect to the “Arabs” that they describe. On the contrary Vatikiotis’s “psycho-clinical” and diagnostic language associates modern political phenomenon in the Middle East with illness, and Hamady’s prose is so heavy handed as to rule out the possibility of “collective action” among Arabs. For Said: “The categories harden, the assertions are more unyielding and the Arabs have been totally transformed from people into no more than the putative subject of Hamady’s style.”¹⁴

The field of Middle Eastern studies and its subjects are produced as known and basically unthreatening quantities – as aspects of style rather than “the swarming, unpredictable and problematic mess in which human beings live.”¹⁵ The fierceness of the lion, as it were, is first abstracted, and then domesticated.

The work of Vatikiotis and Hamady appears in the Orientalist corpus alongside works and reflections on Arabic language by Bernard Lewis and E. Shouby. As Said notes, the scholarly centerpiece of Vatikiotis’s edited volume is Lewis’s essay “Islamic Concepts of Revolution.” Said cites a long passage from Lewis’s essay in which the modern political concept of revolution (and available precedents in Iran and Algeria for instance) is rendered, by means of an etymological argument as an, at best pre-modern kind of uncoordinated stirring. Near the end of his essay on the subject of revolution, Lewis offers the following: “In the Arabic-speaking countries a different word was used for [revolution]

thawra. The root *th-w-r* in classical Arabic meant to rise up (e.g. of a camel), to be stirred or excited, and hence, especially in the Maghribi usage, to rebel.”¹⁶

Revolution in Lewis’s estimation can be explained as a result of a kind of irritation. It is a reflex or involuntary action rather than a reflective and politically coordinated one. The correct, circumspect and presumably Euro-American or Western response to a situation that might in the Middle East provoke revolution is indicated by Lewis in the following:

The noun *thawra* at first means excitement, as in the phrase, cited in the *Sihah*, a standard medieval Arabic dictionary, *intaẓir hattā taskūn hadhihi l-thawra*, wait till this excitement dies down – a very apt recommendation. The verb is used by al-Ij̄n, in the form of *thawarān* or *ithārat fitna*, stirring up sedition, as one of the dangers which should discourage a man from practicing the duty of resistance to bad government.¹⁷

With this Lewis offers an etymological explanation of the concept of revolution, and two pieces of textual evidence – from medieval texts – to refer the concept to a pre-modern political environment.¹⁸ The implication is that these etymological tools are necessary and along with dated illustrations of the topic at hand, sufficient to understand the doomed prospects of any revolutionary activity in the present. For Said, Lewis’s “entire passage is full of condescension and bad faith. Why introduce the idea of a camel rising as an etymological root for modern Arab revolution except as a clever way of discrediting the modern?”¹⁹

The animal analogy cited earlier was deliberate for Said. The lion’s fierceness is echoed in Lewis’s discourse with the camel’s stirring or modern Arab political ineptitude. In both cases a value-laden term, with complex social and political connotations is first abstracted from an animal behavior and then

thematized in a focused study of human social and political life, or in the case of Lewis's essay, a "case study" of a kind of collective social and political pathology.

To tether this analysis of language to its rightful subject – the "Arab mind" or "Arab character," which is ultimately what is at issue for Lewis in Said's account - another disciplinary maneuver is required. This is provided by E. Shouby in his essay "The Influence of the Arabic Language on the Psychology of the Arabs." Said does not examine the work in detail, but remarks on its telling subheadings such as "General Vagueness of Thought," "Overemphasis on Linguistic Signs," "Over-assertion and Exaggeration." Said notes that the work is authorized to a large extent by Shouby's insider status as an Arab. However his characterization of the language does not draw from the literature "of which the Arab is so inordinately proud" and which, in earlier philological studies would provide a focus for the analysis of Arabic language. As Said notes:

[Shouby] hypostasizes a sort of mute Arab who is at the same time a... word-master playing games without much seriousness or purpose... Where then does Arabic influence the Arab mind (if not in Arabic literature)? Exclusively within the mythological world created for the Arab by Orientalism... That such a result can be attained by philological means testifies to the sad end of a formerly complex philological tradition.²⁰

Said concludes his critique of this degraded form of Oriental philology – a mere hand-maiden in post-WWII Anglo-American Orientalism to policy research and social science – with a concise formulation of the "textual attitude":

The exaggerated value heaped upon Arabic as a language permits the Orientalist to make the language equivalent to mind, society, history and nature. For the Orientalist the language speaks the Arab Oriental, not vice versa.²¹

IV. “Coercive” Psycholinguistics and “Jazzy” Psychobiographies: Said’s Correspondence Concerning Language and the “Arab Mind”

This association of mind and language in Orientalist literature is a problem that Said deals with in different ways. His interest in the politics of theories of language, linguistics and especially the psycholinguistics of Noam Chomsky is attested to in the Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said at Columbia University.²² Said’s general interest in Chomsky’s linguistics anticipates his critique of the Orientalist mode of reducing national and ethnic character to language – his anxiety about the treatment of Arabic grammar and etymology in the philological studies of Renan et al. and the quasi-philological studies of Lewis et al. This anxiety is expressed for instance in correspondence with Chomsky concerning Said’s published reflections on the (potentially “coercive”) politics of a theory of universal grammar.²³ For Said it seems all universalisms are in principle to be considered suspect, or at least interrogated for their tacit political purposes and Chomsky’s theory is no exception. Chomsky shrugs off the suggestion in a reply to Said:

As to your side remark that universal grammar is a coercive institution – surely this is utter nonsense. What on earth did you mean by that comment? Would you also argue that the principles of cognition that account for depth perception are “coercive” and “authoritarian”? As to the truism that creative acts presuppose a system of rule, surely it is just that, a truism – at least for anyone who doesn’t regard a paintbrush on a donkey’s tail as artistic creation. Well, enough of this.²⁴

Said’s response to Chomsky’s dismissal of his claim appears in two letters posted in the following months of 1972. In the letters Said offers rather diplomatically, that Chomsky misunderstood his claim about universal grammar

or “theories of language.”²⁵ The details of this debate lie beyond the scope of the present study. It should be noted here though that Said’s suspicion, while perhaps based on a kind of misapplication of a political concept of coercion to an area of research in which such concepts have little traction, was explored in detail, and with experts of Chomsky’s caliber in the years leading up to the publication of *Orientalism*. As he indicates in a letter to Chomsky dated April 15, 1972, Said was deeply interested in theories of grammar and their political and disciplinary implications and convinced of their importance.²⁶ The relationship between language and mind, and the authority on which this coupling of topics is based was a preoccupation for Said.

Said’s intervention into the Orientalist coupling of language and mind is more explicit in correspondence between him and Princeton Near Eastern Studies Professor Carl Brown. The relevant dialogue between Brown and Said begins in 1972 with a proposal by Brown to organize a conference on psychoanalytic methods in Middle Eastern studies. Brown’s letter opens with the following, not entirely convincing mission statement:

The conference is designed to be an effort in vulgarization. We hope to bring together a group who can get beyond their narrow professional specializations in order to discuss creatively the potential for better adopting and adapting the several psychological methodologies to the field of Near Eastern Studies. To achieve this aim, we need people capable of presenting their ideas clearly... eager to face the challenge of a conservative resistance to novelty... good pedagogues – even with a touch of showmanship.²⁷

Included among the confirmed participants are Manfred Halpern and P.J.

Vatikiotis, both of whom would come in for serious criticism five years later in the last section of Said’s *Orientalism*. Some topics for the proposed conference

include “psycho-biographies” of Turkey’s first president Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938)²⁸ and the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970); a panel on “Fathers and Sons” which was to include studies of how intellectual and political leaders of the Arab world have described their relationships with their parents, and a panel called “Godfathers”: “A panel examining in psychological terms selected persons from Western culture who have adopted, (in some cases “married”?) the Near East. These would include T.E. Lawrence, Gertrude Bell *et al.*”²⁹

The appeal or salability of such a program is clear. If the panels on “Godfathers” and “Fathers and Sons” were not marketable enough to begin with, Said’s solicited “showmanship,” Brown hoped, would be. Brown himself admits that it is a novel approach, but he does not thereby seem unsure of the direction he wishes to take. It is a direction we are told that had been suggested previously, but not taken up seriously by Halpern and two other colleagues of Brown’s in the Program of Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Princeton.

Said’s reply to the initial proposal is rich and interesting as a critique of the culture of Middle Eastern Studies in the 1970s. He begins his reply with two concerns around methodology. Said raises questions about the nature of the “evidence” that might be gathered to make psychoanalytic claims about a people for whom, and a region in which there is no strong tradition of psychoanalysis and only limited familiarity with psychoanalytic methods. Second, Said makes the claim that such a venture might be hazardous in the absence of a body of careful theoretical reflection on the particular nature of the relation between Arabic language users and their language, (Said invokes Saussure’s relation between

langue and *parole*), and the same linguistic group's relation to discourse (presumably psychoanalytic discourse).³⁰ Said's third point in the initial reply to Brown concerns an oversight. The program does not include any studies of Arabic literature using psychoanalytic methods. Said recommends studies of the literature of twentieth-century Nobel Prize winning Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz in this connection – a writer who for Said possesses “enormous skill and artistry in dealing with the psychological dimension of experience.”³¹ Said appeals cheekily to the highest psychoanalytic authority to support his point: “someone should investigate that special mode of Arab psychological experience in the literature, remembering that Freud said that the poets were the first psychologists.”³²

These objections or suggestions are interesting. The issues are complex and Said refers Brown to an article he published in the journal *Mawāqif* (Issue # 19-20, January-April, 1972) on the “problems of psychoanalysis and language presented to the contemporary Arab mind.”³³ Notwithstanding Said's problematic reference here to an “Arab mind” – the very construct that he would later single out in the Orientalist tradition as a persistent and dangerous dogma, this recommendation to examine the literary tradition is consistent with the aims of the “counter-proposal” visited earlier. The suggestion seems to be that psychoanalysis might be a productive means of access to the nuances, devices and tropes of modern Arabic literature, but as a tool for psychobiographies it is a second rate academic gimmick. Said is explicit about this major reservation both before and after he enumerates his technical objections: “I must confess at the outset that I stiffen whenever I see ‘vulgarization’ given out as part of a conscious intention.” And towards the end of the letter:

I guess I can say what my main reservation is now. God knows that I'm always the first one to be ready with attacks on tradition, on stuffiness and pedantry in scholarship, to be ready with testimonials to the New etc. etc. But I find it difficult to be wholly positive when I imagine a field as conservative, as perniciously conservative as Mid. East studies suddenly trying to change itself jazzily. Many of the same conservative tendencies will remain, alas, only now disguised in Freudian clichés [sic].³⁴

The psychobiographies of Atatürk and Nasser, the Russian literary reference of the panel on “Fathers and Sons” and the Italian-American reference of the “Godfathers” panel are certainly what Said has in mind when he worries out loud about a “jazzy” change in Middle Eastern Studies. But there seems to be a deeper concern here with the conservative orientation of Middle Eastern Studies in general. Said expresses concern that psychoanalytic “tools” might be put to bad use in such a conference, widening the gap of misunderstanding between Arabs and the American academy. In light of Said’s critique of the textual attitude in *Orientalism*, it seems that the concern would have to do with using psychoanalysis to mediate between philological claims about Arabic language and dogmatic and harmful claims about “Arab mind,” “Arab character,” etc. Said seems wary of the possible misuse of psychoanalysis to argue from legitimate linguistic and philological studies of Arabic, to Neo-Orientalist claims like those of Sania Hamady’s and E. Shouby’s; claims about Arab political ineptitude or “vagueness” of language and thought. It is important to note that, on the basis of these reservations Said ultimately refused the invitation to participate in the conference. In a reply to Said’s letter of Dec. 6, Brown makes the following plea: “The beleaguered bureaucrat learns to say ‘write me a memorandum’. Likewise

the beleaguered conference organizer finds himself wanting to say ‘write me a paper.’”³⁵

Brown proposes in this beleaguered letter that Said write a paper on the complex relationship between language, literature and psychoanalysis in the Arab context. The request, which assumes that there is something like a monolithic and strictly definable “Arab context,” to which psychoanalytic tools could be broadly applied, is perhaps reinforced by Said’s own reference to an “Arab mind” in the letter of Dec. 6. Nevertheless, after more of Brown’s requests, and the finalized conference schedule are sent, Said finally decides against participating citing logistical reasons.³⁶

Said takes up the difficulties associated with generalizations about “Arab character” and “Arab mind” five years after his correspondence with Brown in *Orientalism*. It is clear in Said’s critique of Lewis and his associates in the U.S. academy (and government) that Neo-Orientalist studies of “Arab character” intended to hone social science and foreign policy strategies for dealing with the Middle East can be traced back to a time-honored sleight by which “mind” and “character” are grounded in studies of language. It seems Said’s concern with Carl Brown’s proposal anticipates the critique of this aspect of the textual attitude in *Orientalism*. The philological roots of Neo-Orientalist dogmas about “Arab language and psychology” (in Shouby), and Arab political concepts such as *thawra* (in Lewis) occupy a great deal of Said’s attention in the book. The textual attitude in Orientalist discourse he argues can be traced from its scholarly origins in Renan and De Sacy (for all of their Eurocentric biases, Said describes their

work as comparatively rigorous) to particular quasi-scholarly and propagandistic arguments in the work of Lewis.

The focus of Said's indictment then is the contemporary culture of Middle Eastern Studies in the U.S. He begins the final section of *Orientalism* entitled "The Latest Phase" with a review of Morroe Berger's 1967 report, commissioned by The Department of Health, Education and Welfare, on strategic interests in the Middle East. Berger begins his report with a qualification that reveals his bad faith for Said:

The Modern Middle East and North Africa is not a center of great cultural achievement, nor is it likely to become one in the near future. The study of the region or its languages, therefore, does not constitute its own reward so far as Modern culture is concerned.³⁷

The language ought to be studied, according to Berger because the area is of tremendous strategic and economic interest to the U.S. Berger was, at the time of the report, the president of the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) and a Professor of Sociology in Princeton University's Near Eastern Studies Department – incidentally Carl Brown's department. Indeed Berger would appear, in the final version of the conference program Brown sent to Said, as "Chairman" for a panel called "Psychological Insights in Modern Near-Eastern Literature" – a panel on which P.J. Vatikiotis as well would sit.³⁸ These authors, along with Lewis comprised an establishment in the Anglo-American culture of Middle Eastern Studies at the time of Said's research and writing of *Orientalism*. His refusal to participate in the Princeton conference indicates the degree to which Said was both invested in and suspicious of the research agendas within the U.S. Middle Eastern studies milieu. It is perhaps ironic that scholars like Berger and

Vatikiotis ended up filling the role Brown had in mind for Said originally, as resident experts on Arabic literature. Interestingly, Brown developed the panel on literature after Said's letter of Dec. 6th -- literature had not been included as a proposed topic in the original schedule.

Said's curiosity about an application of psychoanalysis to Arabic literature is plain to see in the correspondence with Brown. As has been seen, he indulges this curiosity in his work on Arabic fiction after 1948 wherein he explores the relationship between scene structures in literature and structures of historical trauma (after the *Nakba* and the *Naksa*). To be sure he locates the effects of a historical trauma in the very form of Arabic fiction, in its tropes, narrative strategies and temporality. Said looks further into the question of a collective Arab psychology in *ATLS*. Again the structure of trauma, and specifically the Lacanian structure of trauma or original loss/lack (*objet petit a*) can be identified in Said's narration of a Palestinian quest for statehood, and in his focus on forms of repetition in both Israeli and Palestinian life and material culture.³⁹ These forays into psychoanalysis, it seems, are intended to exploit the analytic framework for its aesthetic strengths while avoiding the traps of psychobiography or overt diagnosis of psychopathology. This seems to me to be a compromise position that is consistent with Said's suspicion and interest (i.e., his ambivalence) in the 1970s about psychoanalytic approaches to Middle Eastern studies.

V. 'Bringing Arabs to Speech'

For the present purpose, Said's chapter in *ATLS* on "Interiors" is of special interest. As has been seen, the psychoanalytic framework is most in evidence in

this chapter. Indeed the quest for Palestinian “interiority” is all but synonymous with a quest for Palestinian selfhood or a collective psychology. Crucially, Said’s approach in the chapter begins with an analysis of the phrases “*min al-dākhil*” and “*fi l-khārij*” and their various senses and connotations between the years before the 1948 *Nakba* and the time of Said’s writing in the 1980s. The first image in the chapter is one of a child peering through a door covered with illegible graffiti (fig. 29). Said’s analysis of the senses of the expression “*min al-dākhil*” immediately after this image is loaded with psychoanalytic significance. Photographed Palestinians in this chapter are being ‘brought to speech,’ not exactly in the psychoanalytic or diagnostic sense, but not entirely free of it either. Said calls the photographs “mute” on several occasions.⁴⁰

I argue that Said attempts, in this chapter, to embark on an analysis of language (everyday language, not language uttered in a clinical setting) as an element of a broader aesthetic inquiry into forms of Palestinian life. The utility of this approach is that it does not repeat the errors of the textual attitude – it does not reduce the Palestinian Arab to his/her language, but works through an analysis of language to other forms of cultural expression. It is this kind of an analysis of language that I believe could usefully inform a close reading of some performance and video practices from the contemporary Egyptian art milieu. The artists I will consider share, I believe, this spirit of qualified refusal to reinforce the textual attitude of establishment Middle Eastern Studies.

One of the ways in which Said de-psychologizes language, in the chapter on “Interiors” but elsewhere in his work as well, is by approaching it in its performative context. The connotation of the phrases “*min al-dākhil*” and “*fi l-*

khārij” is all-important for Said. He tracks changes in this connotation in specific historical contexts and among Palestinians, within Palestine and in the diaspora. A more strictly performative analysis was seen in Said’s remarks on the Palestinian “karate expert’s” letter. If this contextual approach to the analysis of language has a salutary effect with respect to the pervasive textual attitude of Middle Eastern studies, it would have to do with the insistence on details of context. In “Interiors” the phrases Said analyses are situated in their historical contexts and, in the case of the karate expert’s warning to Said at least, informed by the particular circumstances of the speaker “*min al-dākhil*” (from the interior) and addressee (a Westernized intellectual “*fī l-khārij*” or from the exterior). As has been seen the emphasis of the philological studies of language reviewed in *Orientalism* is on etymology and linguistic roots (Semitic, Indo-European, etc.). Said’s attention to the details of speech contexts in the present among Palestinians constitutes a refusal to locate language in a remote historical context. This contemporary focus is consistent with other of Said’s analyses of Arabic language – literary language in the essay on Arabic fiction after 1948, and in *ATLS* where Said considers the work of Mahmoud Darwish et al. These two encounters with Arabic, in everyday speech acts and in literature together constitute what seems to be a retort to the textual attitude in Said’s work.

Said is not alone in this effort. Since the 1980s a great deal of work in Middle Eastern studies has developed Said’s implicit critique of and response to the textual attitude.⁴¹ Stephen Sheehi in his book *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (2004) considers an episode in Modern Arabic intellectual history in terms of constative and performative speech acts. His focus is on writers working

mostly in Cairo and Beirut in the late nineteenth century during the so-called *Nahda* or Arab Renaissance. The key protagonist in Sheehi's narrative is the Lebanese writer Butrus ibn Bulus al-Bustani (1819-1883) whose *Khuṭba fi 'Adab al-'Arab* (Discourse on Arab Culture) is said to sketch an "epistemological map of the reform project itself, whereby knowledge is central to culture (*adab*) and socio-cultural progress (*taqaddum*)."⁴²

Although Sheehi is interested primarily in political writings and not literature (the exceptions to this are the historical novels of Lebanese writer Jurji Zaydan (1861-1914) which Sheehi interprets in terms of their political importance) his approach can be compared with Said's on several scores. First of all his analysis situates the relevant texts in a specific historical context, that of the *Nahda*. We have seen that Said's reflections on Arabic fiction after 1948 (and 1967) take seriously the horizon of these watershed moments in Arab cultural history for authors of fiction. Secondly, Sheehi's focus is on the cultural and literary production of Arab subjectivity, rather than the activities (anti-colonial, nationalistic, etc.) of Arab subjects. This effort to establish an epistemological ground for Arab subject formation is similar to Said's, albeit more tentative, effort to articulate a Palestinian experience (spatial and temporal) of the interior. Finally Said's call for a counter-proposal to Orientalist descriptions of Arabs – a counter-proposal that would focus on the literature of Arabs rather than their political, ethnographic or linguistic description – is taken up in Sheehi's focus on the work of Arab writers.

This counter-proposal, and the Orientalist discourse to which it responds is perhaps most clearly staged in Sheehi's chapter on the historic debate between the

Orientalist Ernest Renan and Shaykh Jamal al-din al-Afghani (1838-1897) which appeared in the *Journal des débats* (Paris, 1883).⁴³ His review of a major debate between Renan and al-Afghani - one of the chief proponents of Islamic modernism - is valuable as a piece of intellectual history in its own right. But Sheehi's interest goes beyond history or chronicle. Sheehi's approach to the debate is dialogical and contextual. That is to say he is primarily concerned with the way in which these authors construct or modify their respective discourses (Islamist-Modernist and Europeanist-Orientalist) in dialogue with each other. This is an instructive contextual approach to the language of Arab modernism.

Sheehi's analysis of these key authors in Modern Arab intellectual history is compelling. For the present purpose I want to briefly outline one of Sheehi's key frameworks, taken from British philosopher J.L. Austin's speech act theory developed in the 1950s. Sheehi begins his book with a note on the tendency in Middle Eastern studies, exemplified by Bernard Lewis, to approach the topic of Arab nationalism ideologically and Eurocentrically. That is to say, Middle Eastern studies proceed all too often for Sheehi on the basis of an "ideologically loaded presupposition that (Arab) national identity inevitably manifests itself in a logical if not etiological desire for a (European) nation-state."⁴⁴ Sheehi contends that this kind of historical muddying, which is premised on an inflexible and usually pre-Modern concept of 'Arab mind,' has prevented scholars from "distinguishing between primary and secondary sources, between polemics and history," and most importantly for the present purpose, "between constative and performative statements."⁴⁵ It is Sheehi's goal to make just these distinctions by attending to the nuances of statements of Arab modernists in print, in dialogue with peers and

opponents, and in public addresses. The distinction between constative and performative statements is indispensable for Sheehi.

To begin with, Sheehi accepts Austin's starting distinction in the elaboration of a theory of speech acts. For Austin there is a distinction to be made between constative and performative utterances. Whereas it is reasonable to inquire into the truth or falsity of constatives, since they correspond with a state of affairs or facts, the performative utterance is rather measured according to its effectiveness as an action. In the beginning of his posthumously published *How To Do Things With Words* (1962) Austin "isolates" the performative as a class of philosophically interesting utterances and provides examples of contexts in which such utterances operate: the "I do" in a marriage ceremony, the "naming" of a person or object, an act of "bequeathing" property in a will and a "bet."⁴⁶ While philosophers have historically focused on the truth-value of utterances, Austin argues the performative class of utterances cannot be held to the same standard. Rather, when assessing the meaning of a locutionary act, the force of an illocutionary act or the consequence of a perlocutionary act, one is obliged to attend to contextual details of the utterance. Rather than inquire about the degree of correspondence between the propositional meaning of an utterance and a state of affairs, when assessing performatives one would inquire about the intentions of the speaker and his/her effectiveness in using language to bet, marry, name, etc. The criteria for such an evaluation have to do with intelligibility, felicity and infelicity, sincerity and insincerity, motivation, tone, etc.

As a general prescription, Austin suggests toward the end of his book that "the total speech act in the total speech situation is the *only actual* phenomenon

which, in the last resort, we are engaged in elucidating.”⁴⁷ When Sheehi insists on this approach in his work it is in an effort to shift the focus in Middle Eastern studies of Arab writers from questions of truth (regarding “Arab mind,” “Arab character,” etc.) to questions of intention, effectiveness, sincerity and motivation (regarding the context of expressions of Arab national identity, etc.).

VI. Speech Acts in Public and in Art: Contexts, Strategies and Forms of Refusal

This framework, taken from Austin and adapted for Sheehi’s purposes, is also at work in some recent reckonings with “speech acts” in the Egyptian art scene. Before examining these iterations of the Austinian framework I would like to briefly describe the social and political context in which such work has and continues to be produced. The point of this initial description of the social and political context of “speech acts” in Cairo is to justify the Austinian approach for analyzing the works of selected artists in that city and in the region. It will be seen that the social and political context of speech acts in the Egyptian art milieu can be approached in the first place in terms of the emergence of a post-revolutionary public sphere.⁴⁸ Following the work of Jurgen Habermas I will argue that the performance and video artists under consideration below offer reflections on the political efficacy of speech acts in the Cairene and Arab public sphere.⁴⁹ Although the works I will consider were produced before the revolution of 2011, they are concerned with issues of freedom and power of speech that became especially urgent in the initial post-revolutionary period. Of special interest for the present purpose is the articulation of strictly political speech acts and artistic speech acts

in contemporary Egypt. To sketch this relationship I will consider first the general social and political context of speech acts and then the particular art-historical context of speech acts of selected Egyptian artists.

First, the social and political context of speech acts in Cairo is highly charged. The Habermasian public sphere is modeled on a notion of purposive-rational action.⁵⁰ One of the prime characteristics of such a public sphere for Habermas is its structure of dialogue oriented toward consensus. This feature of the public sphere in the post-revolutionary Cairene context is evident.⁵¹ However dissent as well as consensus, or dissent in the interest of eventual consensus, was an equally constitutive aspect of the Cairene public sphere in the months immediately following the Feb. 2011 revolution as I will argue. During the third week of a peaceful three-week sit in at Cairo's Tahrir Square in July, 2011 a demonstrator made a quiet but powerful protest against the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) and their suspected complicity with former members of the Mubarak regime. His protest was an odd kind of speech act. With two pieces of tape crossed over his mouth and a sign reading "I'm striking from speech until the Higher Council of the Armed Forces executes the demands of the revolution" attached to his shirt, the young protester suggested a strategy which contrasted sharply with the demagoguery and grand-standing that characterized the demonstration until then (fig. 30).⁵² By the third week of the sit-in a consensus had emerged to prioritize the removal of General Tantawi, one of Mubarak's long time associates, from his executive position within the military. In voicing this demand the demonstrator was not breaking ranks with the others in the square. However, his negative approach to articulating the demand by "striking from

speech” suggested that the endless diatribes booming from megaphones in the preceding weeks might not accomplish what the demonstrators had hoped.

The protester’s quiet objection to the Military Council’s mishandling of the post-revolutionary moment functioned as a critique of the counter-productive excess of speech acts in the post-revolutionary public sphere. This strategy of refusal provides a point of access to some of the art practices I will review below. In particular, the demonstrator’s keen awareness of the stakes of public speech and his willingness to reduce their volume and dizzying rate of production squares with the emphasis on a kind of ecology of speech at work in some Egyptian art practices. It will be seen that this reduction of the complexity of speech acts is pursued in the work of Hassan Khan especially.

Before moving on to look at the performance-based and video works of Shawky, El-Noshokaty and Khan I would like to mention a case in which an artistic intervention in the public sphere, by means of speech acts, reflected this post-revolutionary effort to parse and direct protest and popular will. The public sphere, especially in the post-revolutionary moment was saturated with speech acts – in print, on banners in public addresses, etc. Artists, like the demonstrator, have endeavored to manage this excess of speech in various ways. Egyptian artist Malek Helmy developed a concept for a clandestine public art project in Cairo in the months leading up to the revolution. She took over an abandoned vendor’s stand just a few blocks from Tahrir Square and turned it into a sort of wishing well (fig. 31). A sign was attached to the boarded and disused booth inviting passers by to deposit their wishes written on scraps of paper. Over a period of one month, countless scraps of paper with wishes ranging from the banal (wishes for

financial means to marry, for pets, clothes, etc.) to the bizarre (wishes for a purple pet), to the political (wishes for the removal of the Mubarak regime, for an end to military trials, etc.) were deposited.

Fearful of the consequences of being held responsible for the intervention, a neighboring vendor siphoned off the politically volatile wishes and collected them in his booth. After a month the authorities caught on, closed the booth and investigated. As expected, the neighboring vendor was questioned and suspected of setting up the wishing booth.. The vendor was not charged, and the inflammatory wishes he diverted were destroyed. This threatened forum for public wishes in the pre-revolutionary public sphere – a muted or constrained public sphere – contrasts with uses of public spaces in the initial post-revolutionary period. An improvised hoarding for written demands of the revolution (this time all inflammatory and explicitly political wishes) was set up in Tahrir Square (fig. 32).

Helmy's response to this outing of the wishing well in Tahrir was ambivalent. She was pleased with the new forum for free speech but reluctant to associate her work with it as a kind of precursor. Nevertheless, her interest in the public context of speech acts runs deep. She explained it biographically, as a result of having lived in the Gulf region with family as a child, where she took note of the way in which the public and legal sphere was constituted by means of royal decrees. Helmy invoked the language of Austin's speech act theory in her explanation of her work and in her description of the public sphere in the Gulf. Specifically she identified the political culture of decrees in the Gulf as an object lesson in "performative speech acts."⁵³

What do Helmy's intervention, and the hoarding in the post-revolutionary moment tell us about speech acts in the public sphere – in their political and artistic dimensions? What happens exactly when the public sphere is transformed into a space for art? I would argue that, between Helmy's wishing booth and the hoarding, the more radically free speech is occasioned by the artistic intervention. Whereas the space for free speech contrived by Helmy, using the most modest means, constituted an archive of diverse statements and wishes, the hoarding in the square permitted only explicitly political demands. The more inclusive space for speech acts was in this respect the more effective in imagining a progressive public sphere. Indeed, its closure and investigation by the authorities is a measure of its success as a political intervention. The hoarding was intended to voice political concerns. However, due to its location in an environment saturated with similar speech acts, the voiced demands lost their distinctiveness and urgency. Furthermore, the exclusive admission of political demands constitutes a kind of restraint on speech in a fiercely politicized public sphere. In this respect Helmy's project echoes the intention and vision of the speaking strike. Helmy and the protester share an interest in free speech, but they are attuned to the way in which a forum for it can become prescriptive. Both Helmy and the protester enlist artistic strategies of representation to make their claims on behalf of an emerging public sphere while marking a distance from that sphere's normative pressures.

Habermas's vision of a rationalized space for "communicative action" is only partially inscribed in Helmy's work. The political demands deposited in her booth might be considered as a kind of emergent consensus-building archive of statements. And the consensus at issue is forged through a spirit of dissent with

respect to the Mubarak government. However the frivolous or apparently apolitical wishes deposited describe a non-purposive and irrational (i.e., dream-based) aspect of the public sphere that is not accounted for by Habermas. This articulation of an artistic and a political public sphere can be clarified using Austin's framework for "speech acts."

Wishes and political demands are equally admissible in Austin's framework. Firstly, the distinction between constative and performative acts can be mapped onto these instances of speech. The demands on the hoarding (explicitly political demands, for the removal of Tantawi for example) correspond with an actual state of affairs and are thus constative. They describe a popular will, at least among the Youth and Revolutionary Party's constituency in Tahrir Square, to alter the structure of government by means of purging the old guard associated with Mubarak. The wishes deposited in Helmy's commandeered booth on the other hand are performatives, corresponding with no particular factual state of affairs. Nevertheless, when analyzed in terms of the criteria for performatives they turn up a wealth of information regarding the sincerity, motivation, consequences and force of speech acts in the public sphere. The anonymity of the wishes, for example, all but guarantees their sincerity, or at least encourages it. The consequences of the wishes are plain to see in the authority's censorship of the project. And the force of the accumulated wishes is immediately registered in the neighboring vendor's fear of being held responsible for the project.

VII. *You Tell Me*: Speech Acts and Speech Pathologies in Some Recent Egyptian Art

There are strong grounds then for utilizing the Austinian framework for analyzing forums for speech in the Egyptian public sphere, in both the pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary moments. The framework has been explicitly adopted by Helmy for instance and it clearly informs her practice. She is not alone in adopting this framework in the contemporary Egyptian art milieu. Indeed, the speech act framework is a preoccupation in curatorial and artistic practices in the Cairene art world as will become clear presently.⁵⁴ Before focusing on what I believe to be the most complex and provocative inscription of speech acts in the Cairene art scene, namely in Hassan Khan's work, I would like to briefly review a recent curatorial project which takes up Austin's basic distinctions.

In a short video program entitled *You Tell Me*, screened at The Townhouse Gallery in Cairo in June, 2011, art historian and curator Angela Harutyunyan explicitly framed a selection of works by Egyptian artists in terms of Austin's speech act theory. The program included work by three Egyptian artists, and four artists from outside of the Middle East. The Egyptian artists curated in the program were Hassan Khan, Shady El-Noshokaty and Wael Shawky. The non-Egyptian artists were Aras Ozgun, Imogen Stidworthy, Avital Ronell and Lusine Chergeshtyan.⁵⁵ It should be noted that Harutyunyan's inclusion of both Egyptian and non-Egyptian artists in a program designed to investigate the relationship between language and subject formation is novel in the region. By approaching the work of Egyptian artists in this thematic or problem-based manner, rather than

a national, ethnic or religious one, Harutyunyan's program implicitly refused the essentializing tendencies of the textual attitude reviewed in Said's work. That is to say, the speech act framework for her provides a basis of comparison between artists with different national, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Austin's framework does not level such differences either. Trained as it is on the details of a "total speech situation" or context – contexts shot through with national, ethnic and religious significance – the speech act framework can at least in principle distinguish between culturally, nationally or ethnically inflected modes of speech. The framework of speech acts, in principle, thus provides a way of analyzing the culturally specific features of performative utterances by Egyptian artists without at the same time essentializing such utterances or tracing them back to invariant features of "Arab mind" or "Arab character."

This being said, Harutyunyan is deeply interested in contemporary Arab subject formation and her treatment of the Egyptian artists in *You Tell Me* attests to this. I want to focus on an implicit and an explicit curatorial premise in her video program with respect to the Egyptian artists selected. To begin with Harutyunyan's explicit curatorial premise concerns the Austinian framework. Both the title of the program *You Tell Me*, and her introduction to the program, which framed the work in terms of the Austinian distinction between constatives and performatives, reveals an interest in the contextual features of speech and language in video art practices. In her introduction she emphasized her interest in the discursive, political and social "conventions" which "determine" to some extent the articulation and outcomes of speech acts in general.⁵⁶ Such conventions and determinants of speech acts for Harutyunyan are also framed in terms of

Althusser's notion of "interpellation," - that is as ideologically saturated utterances that are enabled and informed by specific normative and dominant interests.⁵⁷ These interests, explicitly described in Harutyunyan's introduction to the video program, concern the determining features of a "total speech situation" or aspects of the context of speech acts. However, in addition to determining utterances in this way, Harutyunyan expressed an interest in evaluating the selected artists' performances/videos in terms of their relative success. The criteria for the success or failure of the speech acts in question were not specified in Harutyunyan's introduction, but it is reasonable to assume that she had in mind those provided by Austin. That is to say, Harutyunyan suggests, by means of her Austinian framework, an assessment of the success or failure of the utterances in the work selected on the basis of their sincerity/insincerity, force, consequences for the addressee, etc.

In addition to this explicit framing of the program in Austinian terms, I argue that Harutyunyan implicitly invokes a psychoanalytic and psychopathological or etiological framework in her sequencing of the works in question. Harutyunyan's program presents the work of Khan, El-Noshokaty and Shawky (in that order) to illustrate a kind of clinical process of managing psycho-pathologies of speech. In this sequence, a therapeutic process is inscribed by means of which an ideal Arab subject is followed through three stages. In the first, illustrated in Hassan Khan's *Rant* (2008) (fig. 33.), this subject is rendered, in an anxious and melodramatic monologue as isolated, even solipsistic and mildly self-destructive. In the second, illustrated by Shady El-Noshokaty's *Stammer: A Lecture in Theory*

(2007) (fig. 34), the Arab subject's pathology is reduced considerably but still apparent in the disorder of speech named in the work's title.

In this passage from Khan's work to El-Noshokaty's the Arab subject is imagined by Harutyunyan as having passed from a cluster of anxious disorders, manifested in *Rant* as a self-defeating, ruminating monologue, to the relative improvement of a self-diagnosed speech pathology in *Stammer*. The therapeutic process in Harutyunyan's sequence is completed by Shawky's work *The Cave* (2005) (fig. 35) in which a fluid and assertive speech act, free of apparent pathologies is achieved but the "talking cure" or script, the *sura* of "The Cave," is provided by the *Qu'rān*. In Shawky's performance no obvious pathologies of speech or anxious disorders are staged, and the speech act's confident tone and fluidity betray a rounded and healthy subject.

To review briefly, Harutyunyan's program is structured by two approaches – one explicit and one implicit - to the analysis of language.⁵⁸ These frameworks interact in a quasi-clinical narrative of Arab subject formation. The *explicit* Austinian framework emphasizes the national, social and political contexts of the speech acts in question. Khan's "Rant" for example presents a speaker radically isolated from a social context and tormented by a circular, self-deprecating internal monologue. El-Noshokaty's pathological speech act is carried on in the institutional context of the university where the artist is employed as a professor. El-Noshokaty is visibly uncomfortable with the authority bestowed upon him in this post. It should also be said that El-Noshokaty's "stammering" is occasioned by a recited passage from a work by John Searle, an American speech act theorist who developed Austin's framework from *How to Do Things With Words*. We are

invited to consider the “sincerity” of his performance at a moment when he is brought to tears by a passage in Searle’s work that describes the mind in cybernetic terms as a “digital computer.”

The context of Shawky’s performance is both immediate and historical. He stages a “rupture” as Harutyunyan notes between the remote Arabian and Islamic context of the *sīra* of “The Cave” and the contemporary context of an Amsterdam grocery store in which his performance is recorded. The success of the performance in Austinian terms is assured by the “intelligibility” of the Platonic allusion of “The Cave” in the context of a grocery store – a space of “spectacular consumption” according to Harutyunyan.⁵⁹ One final aspect of the total speech situation of Shawky’s work should be mentioned. The performance is effective when assessed in terms of its “force” and “consequence” in the context of The Townhouse screening. One especially vocal audience member at the screening expressed frustration with the assertiveness of Shawky’s recitation of the *sīra*. The seamless and heavy-handed delivery of the *Qu’ranic* story, he insisted, was alienating for him as a non-Muslim.⁶⁰ It is perhaps unfortunate that the success of Shawky’s recorded speech act – its effectiveness as a provocation to non-Muslims – coincides with Harutyunyan’s presentation of his speech act as an instance of rounded or healthy Arab subjectivity. The emergence of an Arab subject in this respect comes at the expense of the alienation of at least one non-Arab/Muslim audience member.

The second and *implicit* framework for the analysis of language in Harutyunyan’s program is psychoanalytic and psycho-pathological. Pathologies of speech in her presentation are identified in an etiology of frustrated Arab

subject formation. The artists she considers are in this respect “brought to speech” in much the same way the muted Palestinians in Said’s *ATLS* are given voice in the book’s narrative. To be sure, this clinical framework is suggested as well by the artists in question. Khan’s *Rant* dramatizes the problem of isolated speech as a portrait of frustrated desire. The therapeutic relationship between analyst and patient is roughly paralleled in that between Khan’s sympathetic observation and the actress’s tormented performance.

El-Noshokaty is indeed staging and examining an actual speech pathology. In an interview with the artist, El-Noshokaty, interestingly, explained that his stuttering is only an issue when he speaks Arabic.⁶¹ His performance suggests a correlation between the cybernetic observations of John Searle on the nature of mind and his speech pathology. However, the psycho-biographical information shared in the interview suggests a correlation between the *Arabic language* and disorders of speech. The psychoanalytic framework in El-Noshokaty’s performance/video is more clearly inscribed in text panels in which he narrates his son Yassin’s dreams. Significantly, one of the dreams is about a man seen hanging from a hook through his tongue. This is a gruesome and vivid icon of frustrated speech that departs radically from the clinical framework of speech pathology and connects El-Noshokaty’s performance with the more strictly psychoanalytic themes of castration and performance anxiety.

What do these two frameworks – the *explicit* Austinian framework and the *implicit* psychoanalytic framework -- accomplish with respect to the goals of Said’s counter-proposal? How do these performances combat the textual attitude specifically? Is their success in providing an alternative to the textual attitude

captured by Austin's criteria for the success or failure of speech acts? To begin with the performances of speech under consideration are cultural texts produced *by* Arabs, perhaps incidentally, and not *about* Arabs in a reductive or objectifying sense. Said's counter-proposal to attend to the literary or artistic statements of Arabs is thus served by the works. Secondly, the attention of Harutyunyan and these artists to contexts of speech works against the ahistorical or anachronistic analysis of Arabic language in Renan, Lewis and other Orientalists' work, by locating utterances in contemporary communicative situations (i.e., the university, the grocery store, The Townhouse Gallery). Harutyunyan's implicit framing of the works in psychoanalytic terms invests these contexts with charged and individuating psychological resonance. This attention to contextual detail and insistence on the psychological dimension of speech acts serves a humanizing purpose that Said would surely support.

The constructs of "Arab mind" and "Arab character" – mainstays of the textual attitude – are nevertheless at work in Harutyunyan's programming and in the details of El-Noshokaty and Shawky's work especially. Harutyunyan's clinical rendering of Arab subject formation via speech acts risks pathologizing the Arabic language and its speakers. "Arab mind" especially in the case of El-Noshokaty's work is tethered to a dysfunctional relationship with the Arabic language. The emergence of a rounded Arab subject in Shawky's performance does not necessarily make amends for this Orientalist trap. The "Arab character" that emerges, fully formed and articulate in Shawky's work, it might be argued, internalizes the textual attitude by associating Arab subjectivity with the timeless, textual universe of Islam. Through the act of recitation, the "Arab" in this piece

seems very much “spoken by the language” to use Said’s phrase, rather than “speaking the language.”

The problem, it seems would have to do with the nature of the relationship between these performances of language and their contexts – psychological and social or historical. It remains too easy to refer the utterances of El-Noshokaty and Shawky to Orientalist clichés concerning “Arab mind” and “Arab-Islamic character.” The two frameworks at issue in Harutynyan’s curatorial program refer Arab speech acts to an Arab/Islamic context in too inflexible or literal a way. The success of the speech acts (their intelligibility, sincerity, force, etc.) in Austin’s terms diminishes their potential of escaping the textual domain of Orientalist dogmas. The speech act framework does not capture the excess and radical possibilities of speech visited in, for example the work of Malek Helmy, or in the young Tahrir protester’s quiet strategy of refusal. In Said’s terms, language in the work of El-Noshokaty and Shawky is Arabized and thus “grossly over politicized” too easily.

VIII. Conclusion

What is sought in Said’s counter-proposal specifically is a way of approaching cultural production in the region that is sensitive to historical and political conditions of production but also attuned to the various *forms* of such production. The psychoanalytic approach of Said in *ATLS*, as has been seen, treads lightly between pathologizing Palestinians individually and collectively and identifying the aesthetic byproducts of the Palestinian condition – in the motif of repetition, in compensatory rituals of generosity, and so forth. Said’s emphasis on

such *forms* of Palestinian life, he hopes, will wrest the discourse on Palestine from the limited and monotonous sphere of mass culture and diplomatic politics – from stereotypes of Palestinian resistance or suffering and the “endless statements” of sympathy for the Palestinian quest for statehood. Said’s attention to *form*, in the observation of Palestinian life through Jean Mohr’s photographs, and in the analysis of Arabic fiction after 1948, in this respect constitutes a gesture of refusal to reproduce a staid discourse on Arab identity politics.

While the artists and works selected in Harutyunyan’s video program refuse aspects of the textual attitude of Orientalism, the program for *You Tell Me*, and the works included in it do not engage with language in a sufficiently formal manner to effect a total refusal of the textual attitude and its associated constructions of Arab identity (i.e., Arab “mind” and “character”). Other works by Hassan Khan, as will be seen, do achieve a sufficiently formal rendering of language for this purpose. In the following chapter and in the Conclusion I would like to examine several works by Khan to show how language, Arabic but also English, is rendered as a *form of politics* while remaining irreducible to the clichés of Arabism and the stereotypes of Orientalist discourse.

¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 93.

² See Said, "Orientalist Residence and Scholarship: The Requirements of Lexicography and Imagination," and "Pilgrims and Pilgrimages, British and French," in *Orientalism*, 149-201.

³ *Ibid.*, 168. Lane and Nerval are, for Said, exemplars of two styles of Orientalist writing -- roughly a proto-ethnographic style and a more sentimental travel literature style respectively -- but they are also representatives of two national styles (British and French) of Orientalist scholarship. Lane's text was a result of an extended stay in Cairo during which he produced engravings of local styles of dress, musical instruments, prayer rituals, architecture, among other things, and accompanying written records of his experiences and observations. The work was published by the London based Society For the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Nerval, a French poet produced his *Voyage en Orient* during a trip to Cairo and Beirut in 1842. The first chapters appeared in the periodical *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1846 under the title *Scenes de la Vie Orientale*. The final 1851 book-length version included a series of appendices taken from Lane's *Manners*. Unlike Lane's work, Nerval's includes features that betray his poetic sensibility such as retold 'Oriental' tales. This literary sensibility in Nerval's work has been described as an ironic sensibility as well in a recent article by art historian James E. Housefield. See James E. Housefield, "Orientalism as Irony in Gerard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient*" *The Journal of North African Studies* Vol. 5, Issue 4, (2000), 10-24. Said does not examine this aspect of the *Voyage*. Said's reading of Lane's work as well has been complicated by Leila Ahmed's very thorough and often charitable monographic study. See Leila Ahmed *Edward William Lane: A Study of his Life and Works and of British Ideas of the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Longman Books, 1978).

⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 94.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 49-73.

⁹ While Said did not develop an analysis of the phenomenon of self-Orientalizing, work on the subject has been done. On this phenomenon as an aspect of elite Ottoman self-styling in eighteenth-century Egypt see Gabriel Piterberg's *The Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2003). On discursive instances of self-Orientalizing in twentieth century Egyptian nationalist writing see Gabriel Piterberg, "The Tropes of Stagnation and Awakening in Nationalist Historical Consciousness: The Egyptian Case" Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski (eds.), *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). On self-Orientalizing as an aspect of discourses on gender and sexuality see Joseph Massad's *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Said deals primarily with Renan's *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* (1855) and De Sacy's *Chrestomathie arabe* (3 vols., 1806) in *Orientalism*. Ernest Renan (1823-1892) was a French expert on Middle Eastern languages and a political theorist with an abiding interest in theories of nationalism. Sylvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) was a French linguist and

Orientalist with an interest in Arabic literature. Significantly, De Sacy taught the French translator of the Rosetta Stone Jean-François Champollion. Renan's work for Said inaugurates the modern mode of Orientalism. His studies of religion and nationality were grounded in philological studies of Semitic and Indo-European languages. Said contrasts Renan's work with that of De Sacy. De Sacy's approach to language, although oriented towards a description of national and ethnic characteristics, was trained on poetic uses of Arabic. His *Chrestomathie* as Said notes is a compendium of fragments of prose and poetry for the student of Arabic. Said thus contrasts De Sacy's romantic and nostalgic approach to Arabic pedagogy with Renan's technical and strictly comparative approach. See Said's chapter "Sylvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan: Rational Anthropology and Philological Laboratory" in *Orientalism*, 123-148. On the relationship between Renan and the French Orientalist Louis Massignon see Said's "Islam, Philology and French Culture" in *The World, The Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 268-289. Said does not take up the Arab-Islamic scholarly response to such studies. On the well-known nineteenth-century Islamic political philosopher Jamal al-Din al-Afghani's "Reply to Renan" see Margaret Kohn "Afghani on Empire, Islam, and Civilization" *Political Theory* No. 3 (June, 2009), 398-422. Also on the Afghani-Renan debate see Stephen Sheehi *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 135-159. On the response of Arab intellectuals to European scholarship in general during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries see Albert Hourani's classic *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

¹¹ Sania Hamady is an Orientalist of Arab origin whose work focused on Arab psychology. Her best-known work is *Temperament and Character of the Arabs* (New York: Twain Publishers, 1960). P.J. Vatokiotis (1928-1997) was a Greek-American Orientalist and political theorist. He was a faculty member at London's prestigious School of Oriental and African Studies. Bernard Lewis (b. 1916) is a British-American Orientalist and historian. Lewis held a professorship in Princeton University's Near Eastern Studies Department, and he was an advisor or policy expert for the George W. Bush administration. He was general editor, with P.M. Holt and Ann K.S. Lampton of *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). E. Shouby's work focused on the relationship between Arab psychology and language. He was trained in Clinical and Social psychology. His controversial paper "The Influence of the Arabic Language on the Psychology of the Arabs" appeared in *The Middle East Journal* Vol. 5, No. 3 (Summer, 1951), 284-302.

¹² Said discusses the "affiliative" character of Euro-centric humanities scholarship in the introductory chapter of his *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Crucially for Said the affiliation of European scholars working on European texts constitutes a quasi-organic unity that excludes non-European texts and authors from its purview. In this respect for Said, cultural *affiliation* takes on the character of biological *filiation*: "filiation gives birth to affiliation... Affiliation becomes a form of representing the filiative processes to be found in nature, although affiliation takes validated non-biological social and cultural forms." The task for the "secular critic" according to Said is to "recognize the difference between instinctual filiation and social affiliation, and to show how affiliation sometimes reproduces filiation..." See Said "Secular Criticism" in *The World the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 1-30. While Said works out his theory of affiliation in relation to European humanistic scholarship on European texts, it applies as well to the authors considered in *Orientalism* whose work deals with non-European subjects.

¹³ The classic example of in this genre is Raphael Patai's *The Arab Mind* (New York: Scribner, 1973). Said takes up Patai's book as well in the chapter on the "Latest Phase" of Orientalism. See Said, *Orientalism*, 308-312.

¹⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 310.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁶ Bernard Lewis, "Islamic Concepts of Revolution" in *Revolution in the Middle East and Other Case Studies: proceedings of a seminar*. P.J. Vatokiotis ed. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972), 33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ For a less textually oriented and broadly institutional account of the nineteenth-century colonial perception of the Arabic root system see Timothy Mitchell's *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 146-150. Mitchell relates nineteenth-century British colonial technologies of separation (of bodies, spaces, institutions – separations designed to manage a subject population) to British colonial anxiety concerning the absence of the vowel (and its bold separation of syllables) in the consonantal root system of Arabic.

¹⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, 315.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 320.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 321.

²² Said and Chomsky's correspondence is contained in a file marked "Correspondence with well-known friends and colleagues" and in "General Correspondence" in Edward W. Said Papers.

²³ The discussion between Chomsky and Said on universal grammar began in 1972 after Said's review of Paul Goodman's *Speaking and Language: A Defense of Poetry* appeared in *The New York Times Review of Books* (Feb. 20, 1972). Goodman's "defense of poetry" for Said is at the same time a critique of linguistic theories of language such as Chomsky's which insist that all utterances are "modifications and complications" of a simple declarative form or "germ." Goodman's view of the reductive nature of theories such as Chomsky's (Said mentions as well Roman Jakobson's and Emile Beneveistes's work) is for Said a polemical one that misrepresents the state of linguistic research even as it attempts to save a space for the "flow of literary process" – in excess of theories of grammar. In summary, Said poses the following question to Goodman and his readers: "Certainly each of the specific exceptions he (Goodman) cites to weaken a general theory is convincing, but is this display of what can be said over and above prescriptive rules enough to dissolve instruments of mass coercion that range from general theories of language to the universities to the G.N.P.?" See Edward W. Said "A Good Man Against Theories" *The New York Times Review of Books* (Feb. 20, 1972).

²⁴ Letter from Noam Chomsky to Edward Said, March, 4, 1972, in "General Correspondence" Edward W. Said Papers.

²⁵ Said offers the following in his letter to Chomsky: "Before I say something about the more pressing political questions that you've raised I'd like to refer once again to the dispute about my irresponsibility. I'll accept your imputation of irresponsibility re Goodman and my views on him simply because I seem to have given you the impression that instruments of coercion is what I believe universal grammars are. I don't believe that, I feel he does, but if you still get the impression that I said that and mean that even now, then I am irresponsible, and I withdraw the suggestion (although, alas, I will still maintain that I never believed it). See Letter from Edward Said to Noam Chomsky, Nov. 7, 1972 in Edward W. Said Collected Papers.

²⁶ After directing his criticism at Goodman rather than Chomsky, Said concludes the letter of April 15th with the following: "I remain interested in (your work), willing to read, discuss, learn in that area in some of the ways I've indicated to you, both in my last letter and in the main body of my [Goodman] article. Perhaps we can take some of those matters up when you can be convinced that I am serious about them." And immediately after, as if to demonstrate the degree of his interest, Said inquires about a paper titled "Remarks on Nominalization" -- a specific topic of mutual interest. He follows this with a bit of second hand flattery (a note about Roland Barthes's professed admiration for Chomsky's work in a *Tel Quel* article) and then inquires about Chomsky's views on the work of Emile Beneviste. Having extended the olive branch, and having set up a framework for future discussions on the subject of theories of language, Said cuts himself short: "I must stop now. I hope you'll believe me when I say that I'm not really good for or built for polemics for their own sakes; my reason for persisting in this has been that I have been intent on getting at the correct view on things, and I have felt that it was important." See Letter from Edward Said to Noam Chomsky, April 15, 1972 in Edward W. Said Papers.

²⁷ Letter from Carl Brown to Edward Said, November 22, 1972, in "General Correspondence" Edward W. Said Papers.

²⁸ Norman Itzkowitz, a colleague of Carl Brown's at Princeton in the 1970s, co-authored an autobiographical study of Atatürk a decade later. See Vamik D. Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz *The Immortal Atatürk* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). For Volkan's and Itzkowitz's more recent reflections on psychobiography in general see Vamik D. Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz "Psychobiography: Terminable and Interminable" *The Annual of Psychoanalysis* Vol. 31 (2003), 7-20.

²⁹ Letter from Carl Brown to Edward Said, November 22, 1972, Edward W. Said Papers.

³⁰ Letter from Edward Said to Carl Brown, December 6, 1972, Edward W. Said Papers.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Letter from Carl Brown to Edward Said, January 8, 1973, Edward W. Said Papers.

³⁶ Letter from Edward Said to Carl Brown, February 23, 1973. Edward W. Said Papers.

³⁷ Cited in Said, *Orientalism*, 288.

³⁸ Letter from Carl Brown to Edward Said, February 9, 1973, Edward W. Said Papers.

³⁹ Said took a longstanding interest in Freud's work. Indeed Freud was a lifelong interest for Said. Said's *Freud and the Non-European* appeared in 2003 at the end of his life. Appropriately enough it includes an analysis of Freud's "late style." See Said *Freud and the Non-European* (London: Verso Books, 2003), 11-56. His engagement with Lacan's work is limited by comparison. He mentions Lacan only twice for instance in his book *Beginnings* (1975) while Freud's work is given an extensive treatment in a chapter of *Beginnings* titled "Beginning with a Text." Said's theoretical interest in Freud concerns the latter's investigations into the relationship between imagistic thoughts or data and "the speaking cure" or language. He takes up Lacan's work in connection with other post-structuralist writers such as Derrida whose primary interests concern language and textuality in isolation. For example he mentions Lacan's analysis of metonymy and metaphor as an overly formalistic rendering of Freud's more embodied "talking cure." See Said *Beginnings*, 329. As indicated in his essay on Foucault and Derrida mentioned earlier, Said seems suspicious of the overly textual or "grammatical" approach to the analysis of experience. Nevertheless, Said's extended reflections on the place of trauma in Palestinian collective experience suggests a (perhaps unacknowledged) sympathy in his work for Lacan specifically and a qualified absorption of post-structuralist strategies of interpretation in general. I am grateful to Amelia Jones for her helpful remarks on this partial engagement with post-structuralism in Said's work.

⁴⁰ For example Said writes in the first section of *ATLS* "Exile is a series of portraits without names, without contexts. Images that are largely unexplained, nameless, mute." See Said, *After the Last Sky*, 12.

⁴¹ A good example of recent scholarship of this kind is Shaden M. Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

⁴² Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 20.

⁴³ Ibid., 135-159.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 5.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁸ Egypt's public sphere has undergone a significant transformation in the past several years. The Egyptian Revolution of 2011 resulted in the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. Mubarak's thirty-year presidency (1981-2011) was characterized by major restrictions on free speech, control of the state-media and mismanagement of state funds. The fourth Egyptian president, Mubarak was preceded by Anwar Sadat (1970-1981), Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956-1970) and Mohammad Naguib (1952-1956). Naguib and Nasser were allied in the 1952 Free-Officer's Revolution against

British colonial occupation of Egypt. The political culture established by Naguib and Nasser has been described as militaristic, in spite of its original anti-colonial and socialist agenda. The restrictions on free speech in the Mubarak era (Mubarak emerged from the ranks of Nasser's Free-Officers) are explicable in terms of the (socialist and charismatic/patriarchal) political culture established in the wake of the 1952 revolution. For a very good history of Egypt's transition from an anticolonial and socialist state to a more militaristic political culture see Anouar Abdel-Malek *Egypt: Military Society; The Army Regime, The Left and Social Change Under Nasser* (New York: Random House, 1968). In my analysis of speech acts in the Cairene public sphere I will not recite this history. Rather I aim to engage with some specific speech acts to evaluate their efficacy as political statements and their status as performative artworks.

⁴⁹ In my analysis I draw on the notion of the public sphere introduced by Jurgen Habermas in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991). However whereas Habermas's account of the emergence of a nineteenth-century French public sphere is focused mainly on the agency of the bourgeois class and its technological and institutional (i.e., journalistic) means of communication, in my account of speech-acts in the Cairene public sphere I will focus on rather low-tech or improvised artistic communications.

⁵⁰ The action-theoretical explanation of the emergence of the nineteenth-century French public sphere was worked out in Jurgen Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. 1 Reason and the Rationalization of Society* Trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

⁵¹ For a selection of essays on public speech-acts (in graffiti, poetry, jokes, etc.) recorded at Tahrir Square during the 2011 revolution see Samia Mehrez ed. *Translating Egypt's Revolution: The Language of Tahrir* (Cairo; New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2012). For a less celebratory analysis of the frustrated formation of an uncensored post-Mubarak public sphere, see Talal Asad "Fear and the Ruptured State: Reflections on Egypt After Mubarak" *Social Research* Vol. 79, No. 2 (Summer, 2012), 271-298. On religious and jurisprudential aspects of the Egyptian public sphere see Wael Hallaq *Shari'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁵² The protester's sign was written in Arabic and thus addressed not to the international English media but rather to Arabic speaking Egyptians and the transitional post-revolutionary (military) government. His sign in Arabic reads: "*anā maḍrib 'an l-kalām li-ghāyat lamma al-majlis al-'ā'ilā l-quwāt al-masallaḥa yunaffiz muṭālib al-thawra.*"

⁵³ Conversation with Malek Helmy and Angela Harutyunyan, Zamalek, Cairo (Summer, 2011). Helmy explained in this conversation that while living in the Gulf she was struck by the way in which law was enacted by means of autocratic and very often oppressive and patriarchal royal decrees. For a recent helpful description of the relationship between royal decrees, Shari'a law and the public and private spheres in Saudi Arabia see Frank E. Vogel "Shari'a in the Politics of Saudi Arabia" *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*, Vol. 10, No. 4. (2012), 18-27.

⁵⁴ While it is possible to approach much performance and video-based art practices in terms of speech-act theory, I will limit myself to some explicit references to and uses of the framework in art and curatorial practice in Cairo. Austin and the American John Searle are referred to explicitly by the artists and curators I will take up. It should be said that Austin's inaugural work on speech-acts, and the work of other major speech-act theorists such as John Searle does not deal with artistic speech-acts. Nevertheless the framework has been useful for art historians writing about performance based art practice especially. See for example Amelia Jones *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁵⁵ Aras Ozgun is a media theorist, scholar and artist from Turkey. He lives and works between New York and Dubai where he holds professorships at The Media Studies Department of The New School University and at The Communications Studies Department of Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Communications, American University in Dubai respectively. Imogen Stidworthy is a UK-born multi-media artist based in Liverpool. Avital Ronell is a Prague-born philosopher of Israeli origin. She was one of the first English translators of Jacques Derrida and her work has consistently taken up his strategies of deconstruction in relation to historical events including epidemics, opera and technology. She holds professorships at The European Graduate

School in the Department of German Languages and Literature and at New York University's Department of Comparative Literature. Lusine Chergeshtyan is an Armenian artist and filmmaker whose work deals with queer identity politics.

⁵⁶ Angela Harutyunyan, Introduction to "You Tell Me", The Townhouse Gallery (Cairo, June, 2011).

⁵⁷ Ibid. Louis Althusser introduced the concept of interpellation in his groundbreaking post-Marxist study of ideology. The term first appeared in an essay entitled "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." See Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Ben Brewster, trans. (London: New Left Books, 1971).

⁵⁸ As indicated earlier Harutyunyan's approach to the more general question of subject-formation, and the role of ideology in subject-formation is informed by her engagement with Althusser's work. I will leave this more general interpretive framework aside in my analysis since it does not deal explicitly with the relation between speech acts and their contexts.

⁵⁹ Angela Harutyunyan, Curatorial Statement for "You Tell Me," The Townhouse Gallery (Cairo, June, 2011).

⁶⁰ Comment from anonymous audience member. "You Tell Me," The Townhouse Gallery (Cairo, June, 2011).

⁶¹ Interview with Shady El-Noshokaty, *Arḍ al-Lawā*, (Cairo, July, 2011).

Chapter 5: Avant-Garde Culture and Emergent Masculinity in Hassan Khan's "Great Social Laboratory"

I. Introduction: Mediated Subject Formation in Hassan Khan's Work

In this chapter I will consider how the 2003 autobiographical performance piece by Hassan Khan entitled *17 and in AUC (American University in Cairo)* (fig. 2) can be analyzed in terms of Said's critique of essentializing Arab misrepresentations in scholarship and in the media, and in terms of his "counterproposal" to such misrepresentations. I will argue that Khan's work takes up Said's counterproposal in several respects. However a full account of Khan's performance seems also to demand an engagement with recent scholarship in Middle Eastern studies – scholarship not considered, but perhaps anticipated by Said. I argue that while Khan's work takes up Said's counterproposal in important ways, it also exceeds the terms on which that counterproposal is based.

To begin with Khan's autobiographical performance describes an experience of the Middle East, and of Cairo in particular, that de-emphasizes what Said calls "grossly politicized" features of the region and its people. For example Khan does this by marking his distance from "Arabist politics" on the one hand and from "student politics" at the American University in Cairo on the other hand. In place of these modes of political engagement Khan locates his practice in a Cairene and international cultural political sphere. By engaging primarily with influential writers, filmmakers, musicians and artists in his transcript/performance and by describing his own artistic production, Khan takes up Said's counterproposal to attend to artistic self-representations from the Middle East as a

means of combatting narrowly politicized accounts of Arabs and the region. Secondly, in *17 and in AUC* Khan recalls his formation at the American University in Cairo and as an artist under psychic and physical conditions (contrived by the performance space) that recall Said's effort in *ATLS* to restore to the Palestinian Arab experience a sense of interiority. For both Said and Khan personal memories and reflexive narratives take precedence over objective description of an Arab (Egyptian or Palestinian) political situation. At stake in Khan's performance, and in Said's movement in *ATLS* from Palestinian "States" to "Interiors," is a narrative of Arab subject formation that does not rehearse Orientalist constructions of "Arab mind," "temperament," etc. It will be seen that Khan's highly mediated staging of his subject formation challenges and ultimately refuses such constructions. In this respect Khan's performance responds critically to the "textual attitude" described by Said.

Khan takes up a critical position with respect to the (Orientalist) discourses described by Said. That is, he *refuses* in his performance key premises of these discourses. But Khan's work can also be characterized *positively* or in terms of its affirmation and description of an artistic subject position in a particular Cairene context. It is my contention that Khan, in *17 and in AUC* establishes for himself a position that can be described as avant gardist and gender critical. That is to say, as Khan refuses essentializing Orientalist constructions of Arab identity, he puts forward an account of his own gendered subject formation that betrays an awareness of the critical and indeed political potential of avant-garde strategies of representation. In place of Orientalist discourses of Arab *identity* Khan's performance describes a process of artistic becoming that turns on

his *identifications* with and *dis-identifications* from (Arab and non-Arab) artists and associates introduced always through specific institutional contexts such as the American University in Cairo.¹

A proper account of these avant-garde and gender critical aspects of Khan's work will require an engagement with recent literature from the field of Middle Eastern studies. In what follows I will engage with recent scholarship on art from the region by historian Omnia El Shakry and anthropologist Jessica Winegar, showing how Khan establishes an avant gardist position that is peculiar to the Middle Eastern and Cairene context in which his performance and practice is situated. I will engage with recent work on gendered male Arab subject formation by political scientist Joseph Massad and historian Wilson Chacko Jacob. In this connection I will show how Khan's avant gardist position is worked out in opposition to culturally specific normative models of Egyptian masculinity.

While Said's account of Orientalist misrepresentations of Arabs and his call for corrective literary and artistic self-representations describe well Khan's post-colonial strategies of *refusal* by artistic means, it will be seen that a *positive* account of the kind of subject position established in *I7* and in *AUC* requires instruments of analysis that were not available to Said. Said's attention to literary and photographic *forms* of Arab representation is a useful reminder to attend to the formal aspects of Khan's work. But the particular forms Said identifies in Arabic prose after 1948 and in the photography of Jean Mohr – irony, episodism and repetition for example – are exceeded and problematized in Khan's work. I argue that Khan's work offers, in place of securing a relatively fixed Arab identity (sought by Said in the mediums of literature and photography), a more tentative

account of a perhaps merely nominative Arab experience. Khan's subjectivity and artistic subject formation is not *represented* (in photography or literature) so much as it is *mediated* through haphazardly narrated memories, a transcription of that narrative, and a video-recording of the performance from which the narrative emerges. All of these mediations, as the title of the work *17 and in AUC* indicates, are further mediated through the culture, curriculum and authority of an American university located in Cairo.

In the analysis that follows I will detail Khan's account of his avant gardist and gender critical subject formation at the AUC. In preparing this chapter I conducted a detailed analysis of the content and form of Khan's fourteen-day performance action.² I will address formal and contentual aspects of the performance and its transcription selectively in what follows. First I will describe how Khan's use of language in the performance provides a powerful retort to the "textual attitude" described by Said. I will then show how the design of *17 and in AUC* contributes to this retort by holding apart or suspending the relationship between Khan's language and what it refers to – by holding apart the text of the performance and its context. I will argue that this strategy of separation or suspension serves a critical purpose with respect to specifically anthropological constructions of "Egyptian personality" and "rooted authenticity" -- discursive relatives of the constructions with which Said was concerned but which are better detailed in recent work in Middle Eastern Studies (by Omnia El Shakry and Jessica Winegar).³ I will then turn to the content of Khan's performance and its transcription to characterize his practice in positive terms as a gender critical and avant gardist challenge, carried out in the cultural political sphere, to normalizing

forces in the artist's midst at the AUC and in Cairo. I will do this by first briefly reviewing his explicit engagement with the theme of politics in the performance. Having illustrated Khan's interest in cultural (as opposed to conventional) politics primarily I will explore the appearance of particular cultural influences (heterodox and avant gardist as I will argue) in Khan's performance (and in his formation). I argue finally that Khan's professed cultural and artistic influences describe an emergent masculine subject formation in the middle-class Cairene and Egyptian context.

II. Language and Khan's Retort to the Textual Attitude

Language is thematized at the outset of Khan's performance. Recalling his first day at the AUC Khan offers the following:

OK it starts... someone wearing green pants and a yellow T-shirt and entering this place... finding himself against everything around him but with the language he learned from (home)... then later he discovered that it is not necessarily his language.⁴

The languages at issue are Arabic and English. It is not clear in the transcript which language Khan enlisted in his opposition to the new environment but it can be safely deduced. Since the language of instruction at the AUC is English, and since Khan's first language is Arabic, it would seem that Arabic was marked for this oppositional purpose. But if this is the case then it seems as though Khan by the end of the passage has marked a distance from the Arabic language: "it is not necessarily his language." With this Khan seems to be interested in a self-description that is not reducible to his "native" tongue.

What does seem clear is that the AUC for Khan is perceived initially as an institution in which the language of instruction is contentious and not simply a matter of pedagogy. But Khan's position in this linguistic controversy (an aspect of the kind of cultural imperialism Said notes in his remarks on U.S. universities in the Middle East) is flexible or adaptable. The suggestion is that language, Arabic and English equally are acquired – language in the passage is “learned” or modified by the possessive “his.” It is an accidental rather than a substantial characteristic of the young man Khan describes. It is also perhaps telling that Khan recalls this first impression of the AUC in the third person. This is an anomalous mode of narration in the performance, especially chosen, it would seem, to broach the subject of language. This depersonalized mode of narration might be designed to establish a distance between language and speech on the one hand, and on the other hand between Khan's recollected experience at the AUC and the linguistic choices available to him at that time.

His choice to carry out the performance in English and Arabic is a testament to Khan's flexible politics of language. In his second engagement with the theme of language Khan explains:

before I started this I had a big problem...do I speak in English or in Arabic... I do not have any problem being bilingual... it happens to be my situation... but I also thought that I should not speak to Cairo in English... but I chose... a situation where it is not completely Cairo so I can have the freedom of moving from one language to the other which is necessary to understand who you are if this is part of who you are.⁵

Here again Khan betrays an awareness of the contentious status of language in his performance – he recognizes an imperative that he ought not “speak to Cairo in

English.” But the narrower context of the AUC makes the choice of English a sensitive one with respect to his audience.⁶ Of course his use of Arabic occasionally in the performance functions as a reminder, in the Anglophone orbit of the AUC, of the excluded linguistic majority in the wider Cairene and indeed the Egyptian context.

I want to remark on the appearance of the concept of “necessity” in this second passage. It is employed differently here than it was in the passage visited above. Whereas Khan began by marking his freedom from language as a “necessary” or determining aspect of his character (i.e., he discovered that Arabic was not “necessarily” his language) here he suggests that it is “necessary” to move from one language to the other “to understand who you are if this is part of who you are.” This is only an apparent inconsistency in his use of the concept of necessity. In the first case Khan seems to be saying that, for a bilingual Arabic-English speaker, it is not necessary to identify exclusively or even primarily with one linguistic group. In the second case Khan makes the further point that it is necessary to use both of the languages available to him to forge a self-understanding. Khan thus seems to be refusing a linguistic identity in the first case, (or in Said’s terms he refuses to be “spoken by” Arabic or English), and claiming the languages available to him for use in the task of self-examination in the second case, (or in Said’s terms, he claims a right to speak the languages available to him). This second appearance of the concept of necessity then, describes Khan’s agency and range of choices as a speaking subject.

At the very least this is a description of the privilege and predicament of bilingualism. But, as is his habit in the performance, Khan does not belabor his

self-description. These moments of reflexivity are consistently stopped short in the interest of offering new content to the recording. In this case, Khan's reflection on the necessity of passing between English and Arabic is interrupted by a memory:

I remember in my seminar paper about *Season of Migration to the North* a classic text dealing with that kind of relationship... in the end (of the paper) ... I made an index of my relationship with Roxanne... my first girlfriend at the university... a semi-sadistic relationship... for personal reasons nothing to do with politics or culture but I framed it in this paper... I cited (it) as an example...⁷

Khan's reference here, after a gloss on the politics of language, to the Sudanese author Tayib Salih's acclaimed novel *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), and his association of the novel with a romance with Roxanne, an American student at the AUC, is loaded.⁸ In this passage from a personal reflection on language, to a literary reflection on (racialized) sexual politics, and finally to a personal experience of sexual politics at the AUC, Khan opens his struggles with language onto a broadly political and psycho-sexual horizon. The necessity of passing from English to Arabic is nicely paralleled in Salih's novel about sexual awakening (and deviance) in the course of a journey from Sudan to England and back again. Khan's claim that the association of his "semi-sadistic" romance with Roxanne was entirely personal and not at all concerned with politics or culture is difficult to take seriously. But the desire expressed by such a claim indicates that Khan is at once aware of the potential imbrication of his romance in a framework of post-colonial sexual politics, and intent on allowing his memory to exceed that framework. Khan attempts to establish a narrative position that is not determined or exhaustively explained by a politics of language

or sex. He is nevertheless aware of such a basis of explanation. This mode of informed refusal is a characteristic of Khan's practice in general as will be seen.

Khan's remaining engagements with the theme of language reinforce his understanding of its wider cultural and post-colonial context – i.e., of the cultural politics of language in Cairo and the Middle East in general. The English language is straight forwardly associated with “American mass culture” and “Hollywood” in one passage, and in another more complex and tentative passage Khan considers its peculiar social currency at the AUC.⁹ Reflecting on an unnamed friend's awkward or ill-timed uses of Arabic and English, Khan says:

I never understood why... he always (spoke) in English when it would provoke people and always spoke in Arabic when he needed to make an advantage by speaking in English... it is because he started in AUC... went to England and didn't learn that strategy.¹⁰

The self-congratulatory implication, which is made explicit a few lines later, is that Khan's displaced friend did not avail himself of the social and linguistic “tools” Khan himself mastered in the course of his AUC experience. The important point however seems to have less to do with Khan's linguistic competence than the way in which appropriate language use, and code-switching at the AUC, produces cultural capital.¹¹ These concerns with the politics of language are abiding ones in Khan's work.

This engagement with language in the transcript, through the phenomenon of code-switching at the AUC, through the lens of Tayeb Salih's literature, and indeed through Khan's own bilingual competence in the performance, departs radically from the “textual attitude” described by Said. If, as Said noted, the Arab in Orientalist scholarship and literature was described as a function of the Arabic

language, Khan's bilingual performance at a minimum refuses this kind of determinism. Instead of engaging with language in the philological mode (by way of a concern with linguistic roots and their supposed national, political or ethnic correlates) Khan offers a strictly contemporary account of language-use in literary, institutional and class-conscious social contexts. In this way he describes his code-switching linguistic competence positively as he refuses deterministic Orientalist associations of Arab language and mind, temperament, etc. Once again, in Said's terms, Khan claims a right to speak the languages available to him, often strategically, and refuses to be "spoken" by them as per Orientalist accounts of "Arab mind/language."¹²

III. Subject and Position in Khan's *17 and in the AUC* (2003)

In part by means of this engagement with the theme of language, Khan's performance stages a kind of subject formation that undermines Orientalist constructions of Arab identity. In what follows I will describe some of the other means, generated by the physical, linguistic and technological conditions of the performance, which serve this critical purpose of contesting essentialist constructions of Arab identity. It will be seen that Khan's effective refusal of such constructions is achieved through a strategy of containment and separation. Khan holds apart in his performance textual and contextual aspects of his account of his AUC years. In doing so he works against deterministic anthropological constructions of "rooted Egyptian authenticity" – constructions that insist on a direct and causal relationship between an ideal Arab subject and that subject's uniquely Egyptian physical environment.¹³

In a brief introduction to the 218 page transcript for *17 and in the AUC*

Hassan Khan describes his work as follows:

For 14 nights, 7th-20th of April 2003, I sat in a soundproofed one-way mirrored glass room from 7 to 11 pm drinking beer, smoking cigarettes and speaking. My main focus were my undergraduate years (between 1990 and 1995) at the American University in Cairo (AUC), which I entered when I was 15... Although people could see and hear me I could not see or hear except myself. All 56 hours of this performative action were documented on a digital video camera. (fig. 36.)¹⁴

Khan's description of the performance here is economical. It is amenable to a more or less straight-forward analysis in terms of Austin's framework visited in the last chapter. Indeed Khan himself invokes the framework in his description by listing the basic features of his total speech situation, and by nominating the work as a "performative action." The particular context of the work is especially important. Khan is not simply indulging his nostalgia for bygone undergraduate years. His "focus" – a deliberate rather than a sentimental attachment is implied – are the years spent at the AUC.¹⁵ Over the course of the transcript Khan's reflections on the experience indicate clearly that he was both rendered by the institution as a privileged member of the Egyptian middle class (i.e., as a bourgeois, Cairene teenager) and resistant to the institution's class-specific, pedagogical and sub-cultural stamp on him.¹⁶ His mode of resistance, inscribed in the details of the performance, is reflexive. His approach to dealing with the context of his university years (by becoming aware of that context and then criticizing it – a sort of second-order analysis of his situation) is reflected in the physical details of the performance. The mirrored glass box in which Khan's performance was carried out was conceived as a mechanism of internal

institutional critique, on the AUC campus.¹⁷ The one-way mirrored container in which he sat, “drinking beer and smoking cigarettes” as well, dramatizes and ironizes the captivity of a particular undergraduate experience -- that of an Arab student (and artist-in-forma) at an American university in the Egyptian capital.¹⁸

The speech context then is crucial for Khan, but it does not exhaust the meaning of the performance and in some crucial respects Khan seems to work against too close an association of his memory of the AUC context and the present conditions of the performance. The AUC as a context is split between the intended location of Khan’s performance and a recollected undergraduate experience. The monological structure of the performance, Khan’s physical isolation from his would-be interlocutors, further complicates a contextual analysis of *17 and in AUC*. After describing the bare details of the performance, Khan goes on in his introduction to characterize its “result”:

a mixture of deeply personal recollections and various theoretical attempts at deciphering and analyzing the period as well as the situation itself, a specific relation to an audience – a technology of communication. This is a personal investigation of the construction of memory and persona in relation to a specific institution and the context it is in. The following text is a transcription of every legible word uttered during these hours, the text has been lightly edited to avoid the repetitions of oral delivery, however the decision to keep the unpunctuated flow of the spoken word was dictated by the interest of maintaining the rhythms and enigmas of a consciousness on the brink.¹⁹

This is a loaded passage. The virtue of the performance for Khan would seem to have to do with its planned refusal of narrative resolution, with its unedited inclusion of “enigmas” and its flirtation with mental or cerebral

breakdown. The transcript and recording of the performance preserve it as a work. As a speech act however it is frustrated by the structural conditions of the performance space. Khan short-circuits the relationship between an ideal speaker and addressee by isolating himself from his audience and insisting on the mediation of his performance in several forms (visual, textual and aural). Left with his memory-reel and the barest technological means of recording it, Khan offers a portrait of a “consciousness on the brink” rather than an efficacious or successful speech act. The elements of a socially embedded or properly contextualized speech act are present in the performance but held apart or in tension. Speech is pursued but unconsummated within a total speech situation. Khan in this respect opts for a kind of unflinching and unedited self-examination and refuses to indulge in a fantasy of inter-subjective communication and understanding.

I want to emphasize at this point two features of Khan’s performance that describe the kind of subject at stake in *I7* and in *AUC*. First, the reflexive, if not solipsistic subject in Khan’s performance is formulated in the transcript, appropriately enough, by means of a question. In a moment of second order observation – wherein Khan observes himself reconstructing his memories in a mirrored room – a lesson from an AUC literature class intrudes: “I... remember a very simple formula put forward by a professor in one of my Literature classes... when you say ‘I’ who is the I that is speaking and where is the I that is looking at the I that’s speaking?”²⁰ The transcript, it should be noted is almost entirely free of punctuation. The question mark that appears here is thus a conspicuous break in the narrative that suggests the importance of the insight that precedes it for

Khan. The question, it seems, is rhetorical and as such indicates that it is one of the “enigmas” around which Khan’s understanding of subjectivity is constructed. Khan thereby indicates that the subject staged in his performance is to be understood not in the Cartesian fashion as a sovereign *cogito* but rather as an effect of language, as a grammatical function indicated by the “I” that speaks, and as an effect within the visual field or an object of a gaze and an origin, perhaps a missing origin, of a look.²¹

Crucially for the present purpose, this tentative and highly reflexive figuration of the subject can be contrasted sharply both with linguistic constructions of “Arab mind” (in Renan, Lewis, Shouby and Patai) and with psychobiographical accounts of the same (in the proposed studies of Ataturk, Nasser, etc. in Carl Brown’s conference program). Khan is interrogating subjectivity by recording the repetitions, lapses of memory and musings of a “consciousness on the brink.”²² The enigmas of such a staging are left in the transcript as reminders that the process of self examination is pursued in earnest but not resolved in a definitive sketch of a personal identity – Arab or otherwise. The proper subject of Khan’s performance is “consciousness” not Arab mind or psychology.²³

This then is Khan’s second retort to the “textual attitude” and its essentialist dogmas visited above. But how is such a tentative and precarious subject to be described positively? For Khan the subject is not figured. Rather an attempt – and a frustrated one at that to locate and explain a particular subject *formation* is recorded and transcribed. At the level of vision the subject for Khan is an effect of the gaze and the look. At the level of language (in spite of his

above-mentioned agency as a competent Arabic-English code-switcher) the subject for Khan is a grammatical function or an author complex, in short an effect of language and not its unproblematic producer. Similarly, the recorded performance produces a portrait of Khan as an effect of technology. This rendering of the subject indirectly through the technology of the mirrored box, and through transcription, recording and media is perhaps best described by Khan's phrase for this and other earlier flirtations with film and video art. *17 and in AUC* and the undergraduate experiments with film and video that prefigured it are one and all "fantasies of transmission" for Khan.²⁴ In this connection, it might be argued that Khan defers the matter of his subject formation to technologies of communication (including those employed in the performance).

In Said's work on Arabic literature, by contrast, an ideal Arab subject was constructed out of the testimonial force of Darwish's, Habiby's, Kanafani's and Mahfouz's narratives of a paradoxical experience of stasis and mobility in the wake of 1948 and 1967. This history is read directly into the ironic, episodic and theatrical form of works by these authors. Their work thus appears as a result or symptom of the trauma (*Nakba*) of 1948 and the relapse (*Naksa*) of 1967. In *ATLS*, a similarly strong link between the Palestinian experience and the documentary form of Mohr's photographs aids in the construction of an ideal or authentic Arab subject. Said's writing in these cases is expressly interested in recovering a kind of lost or misrepresented Arab *authenticity*. In *17 and in AUC* Khan's testimony and its documentary elements are at least doubly mediated – through the enclosed and mirrored recording environment in which the performance takes place, and through the many contexts (institutional, sub-

cultural, linguistic) that frame and often interfere with his recollections. The figure that emerges is in this respect precisely inauthentic and uprooted.

Khan thereby marks a distance from Said's approach to Arab self-representation. To properly account for Khan's complex staging of his formation at the AUC I will draw on some recent anthropological, art historical and historical scholarship from the discipline of Middle Eastern studies.²⁵ To set up the analysis of Khan's work a brief review of the social scientific and especially anthropological discourse on authenticity (*aṣāla*) in recent Middle Eastern studies is necessary. It is with respect to this discourse on *rooted authenticity* that I will argue Khan's work appears as strategically uprooted and inauthentic.

IV. Uprooting the Ethnographic Subject: Khan's Challenge to the *aṣāla/mu'āṣira* Dichotomy

Khan succeeds in problematizing the relationship between text and context, or in Austin's terms between his individual speech and a total-speech situation by means of the highly mediated design of his performance space. In this way he generates a critical distance between his performance and its contextual conditions – conditions that, in the Austinian framework, would be cited as determining ones. Nevertheless Khan acknowledges an important relationship to the context of his performance in its institutional and national Egyptian aspects. If this relationship is not a strictly causal one, then what kind of a relationship is it? In what follows I will argue that Khan's separation (and mediation) of the *text* of his performance from (and by way of) its institutional, Cairene and Egyptian

context functions as a critique of anthropological constructions of rooted Egyptian authenticity.

Such constructions are related to the discourses on “Arab mind” and “temperament” with which Said is concerned. In his work on Arabic prose and in *ATLS* Said seems to come close to refusing these latter constructions while tacitly proposing similarly essentializing constructions of Arab identity as rooted (to Palestinian land for example) and authentic (with respect to the collective traumas of the *Naksa* and the *Nakba*). While Said’s account of the relationship between an Arab (Palestinian or Egyptian) *context* and the *texts* of exemplary Arab writers is nuanced, it aims at a description of the way in which such texts are rooted in and to a large extent caused by their national, political, cultural contexts. In his quest to narrate and forge a kind of authentic Palestinian and Arab experience (through literary and photographic representations) Said passes over the discursive mechanisms through which the concept of Arab authenticity is secured. It is my contention that Khan’s performance obliges a close look at just these mechanisms. Through an engagement with some recent scholarship on Egyptian anthropology/ethnography and art, it will be seen that Khan’s performance works against constructions of Arab authenticity by complicating and ultimately refusing the causal relationship, sustained in ethnographic and art historical writing, between Egyptian subjects and their national, environmental and cultural contexts.

In her book the *Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (2007) historian Omnia El Shakry traces the emergence in the interwar period of an “Arab social science.”²⁶ Through a close examination of the popular press forums for this emergent social science (*Al-*

Hilāl, Al-Muqtaṭaf) and its institutional context at The Egyptian University established in 1908 (now Cairo University), El Shakry shows how Egyptian sociologists, geographers and anthropologists both “reformulated and critiqued” positivist European and colonial analytic methods in their studies of rural populations.²⁷ The indigenous studies that concern El Shakry were modern, nationalist, anti-colonial and reformist in spirit insofar as they aimed at the social welfare of the Egyptian peasantry. But, as she notes, in adopting the protocols and framework of European (Comtean) social science many Egyptian writers and researchers in the interwar period reinforced a European Enlightenment and teleological model of history. For El Shakry, such a model is “embedded within a hierarchical discourse of civilizational progress.”²⁸ According to this model, the social problems to be remedied were Arab or Muslim “backwardness” (*takhalluf*), “stagnation” (*jumūd*) and “decline” (*inḥiṭāṭ*) with respect to a “progressive” European counterexample.²⁹ Egyptian reformers differed on the causes (endogenous/exogenous) of these problems but were united in their absorption of the hierarchical thesis of colonial difference. Writers thereby sought to radicalize the thesis of “colonial difference” by (geographically) locating and (empirically) describing the “uniqueness of the collective national subject.”³⁰

El Shakry’s study traces two strains of thought in this body of literature: a positivist strain out of which emerged anthropometric and serological studies of race, and statistical studies of mostly rural populations, and a romantic strain out of which emerged “anthropologically inclined” studies of the *mentalité*, personality and cultural essence of the same rural population. In these latter

studies, as El Shakry notes, “cultural essence” was very often constructed on the basis of an account of the intimate and productive relation between the Egyptian peasantry and the countryside – an account of their “proximity to and intercourse with nature.”³¹ Egyptian anthropologists thus furnished discourses on modernity (*ḥadatha*), identity (*ḥuwiyya*), cultural heritage (*turāth*) and authenticity (*aṣāla*) with an ethnographic Egyptian subject conceived as uniquely rooted to the land. The hoped for anti-colonial “re-conquest of identity” that such discourses aimed at was, as El Shakry notes, thus troubled by the need to secure Egypt’s “modernity while maintaining the historical specificity of its (ancient) cultural identity.”³²

In her chapter entitled “The Painting of Rural Life” El Shakry details the way in which Egyptian cultural identity was articulated in (romantic) Orientalizing and literary representations of the peasantry – representations that underscored an atavistic relation to the region’s Pharaonic past. Citing the work of literary scholar Samah Selim, El Shakry notes that the twentieth-century genre of national literature (*adab qawmī*) erected “a whole mythology, an entirely new and singular, if quixotic discursive structure... around the figure of the peasant.”³³ In this literature the link to the ancient Egyptian past was explained in terms of the atavism of the rural population and the presence of cultural “survivals” in its midst.³⁴ Crucially for the present purpose, while this literature articulated an authentic national subject by alternately “extolling and denigrating” the peasant (as authentic and unique on the one hand and backward or in decline on the other hand) it was consistent in its naturalistic and realistic rendering of this figure as a “mere expression of his surrounding environment.”³⁵ It is here, in this motif of

attachment to the land that an overlap between anthropological or social scientific and literary knowledge can be discerned. The concept of authenticity (*aṣāla*) in national literature was worked out in dialogue with ethnographic and deterministic studies of rootedness or autochthony.

In Khan's work to be sure we are not presented with a figuration of an essentialized Egyptian peasant. Khan carries on his performance in the city of Cairo, and his memory of the AUC is concentrated on his distinctly metropolitan and cosmopolitan experience there. But in the details of the performance he does seem to allude to an aspect of the ethnographic Egyptian subject whose genealogy El Shakry traces in her study. She notes that the "textual attitude" of early Orientalist studies was transformed over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into "an ethnological form of knowledge localized on native bodies." This "signaled the dissemination of Orientalist knowledge into the social-scientific disciplines, in which the study of the native 'other' became an empirical and objective enterprise."³⁶ El Shakry's study follows precisely this absorption and, as was mentioned earlier, the occasional reformulation and critique of Orientalist knowledge in anthropological work done in Egypt and by Egyptians in the interwar period. Such work offered, in the genre of national literature, a figure of the Egyptian peasant tethered to the land. But in more social scientific literature, the Egyptian was constructed according to disciplinary protocols as a "native informant" or an "indigenous interlocutor."³⁷ It is here, in the figure of the native informant that the textually rendered subject of Orientalist scholarship is transformed into a legible body.

Khan's performance, I argue, stages this embodied figure of the native informant as hyper articulate and legible but always mediated. He relates his artistic subject formation to specific international and local influences, to friends, professors and peers, to techniques of representation and to codes of gendered conduct within Egypt.³⁸ While his two hundred eighteen page transcript might well be approached as a rich source of ethnographic information, the conditions of the performance – its excessive mediation especially seems to allude to and hold apart the elements of the ethnographic subject described by El Shakry. In particular Khan's performance challenges the character of rootedness on which the concept of authenticity (*aṣāla*) is based. By isolating himself in a sealed performance space Khan suspends and problematizes a direct link between his legible body and its physical or cultural environment. Furthermore, by recording and then transcribing the spoken element of his performance Khan similarly problematizes a direct link between his speech and its addressee.

Given these separations, it is difficult to impute a simple ethnographic or testimonial function to *17 and in AUC*. The excessively mediated and staged nature of the performance refuses the terms on which an "authentic" ethnographic subject (as described by El Shakry) is based.

With respect to Said's work in *ATLS* Khan refuses a straightforward or documentary link between his recollected experience at the AUC and the determinate physical, institutional, national or cultural context of his performance. In an interview with curator Neda Ghouse at the Delphina Foundation in London in 2012 Khan situates *17 and in AUC* in the trajectory of an artistic career that began with documentary filmmaking.³⁹ The performance for Khan was developed

out of a feeling of frustration with the documentary format. In his reckoning *17 and in AUC* marks a break between the “documentary impulse” that was nurtured during his brief tenure at *A-Live* magazine in Cairo and in several film projects on the one hand, and a more conceptual and multi-media practice on the other hand.⁴⁰ By staging and mediating his recollections, Khan forces an engagement on the part of the viewer/reader/listener with the artifice and form of *17 and in AUC* in excess of its putative documentary or ethnographic, that is, its informational value.

Khan does take up a position in relation to his particular Cairene social and cultural context nevertheless. But he finds in such a context an array of local and international sources of artistic inspiration. I will turn to these sources in the next section of the chapter. For now I would like briefly to explore how Khan’s effective refusal of the ethnographic concept of rooted authenticity (in the details of his performance space) is also a refusal of specifically art historical inscriptions of the same concept.

In her essay “The Hidden Location: Art and Politics in the Work of Hassan Khan” El Shakry explores the way in which Khan engages with the contemporary social history of Cairo in works that depart from a straight-forward documentary mode.⁴¹ El Shakry is concerned to show that Khan’s work defies easy and binary categorizations of the Middle Eastern landscape.⁴² She notes, citing anthropologist Jessica Winegar’s pioneering work *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (2006) as an example, that accounts of art production in Cairo have taken for granted a binary between local and “authentic” (*aṣīl*) artists and an opposed group of “modern” or

“contemporary” and globally oriented artists (*mu‘āṣira*).⁴³ El Shakry’s social-historical analysis shows how Khan’s work complicates especially this binary. Winegar does not address Khan’s work in her book.

Given what has been said already about the conditions of Khan’s performance, El Shakry’s critique of Winegar’s binary or “false dichotomy” between “authentic” (*aṣīl*) artists and “modern/contemporary” (*mu‘āṣira*) artists can be developed further.⁴⁴ Winegar’s account of these alternatives in the Egyptian art scene is premised on what she calls a primary nationalist “cognitive frame” that *determines* both kinds of approaches to art making in Egypt. For Winegar, one of the distinguishing features of the Egyptian “artistic personality” is a sense of social responsibility – a sense of the artist’s role in forging a link between the individual and the collective. This according to Winegar constitutes the “nation” as a primary “cognitive frame” in the Egyptian art milieu. By contrast Winegar argues, European historical avant gardes have insisted on a romantic notion of the artist as radically isolated from society.⁴⁵ Winegar’s distinction then between the “authentic” *aṣīl* type artist and the “modern/contemporary” or globally oriented *mu‘āṣira* type artist is premised on a further dichotomy between an individualistic, romantic and European model of avant-garde art production and a socially minded and nationalistic model of art making in Egypt.

This tacitly civilizational dichotomy between modes of art making in Europe and Egypt specifies the nature of the “creative reckonings” of Egyptian artists for Winegar. Both of Winegar’s artistic types (*aṣīl/mu‘āṣira*) make

claims to a vision of the Egyptian nation. The strictly local and “authentic” *aṣīl* artist’s vision is focused on Islamic, Coptic and Pharaonic cultural survivals.⁴⁶ And the more globally oriented *mu’āṣira* artist insists on an engagement with international cultural products and motifs. These claims in Winegar’s analysis call forth counterclaims. *Aṣīl* artists are accused of nostalgia and *mu’āṣira* artists are accused of derivativeness with respect to a global contemporary art culture. In both cases the artist is conceived as rooted in an Egyptian context and interested in a truthful description of that context. While the *aṣīl* artist is bent on preserving uniquely Egyptian craft techniques and motifs the *mu’āṣira* artist attempts to move beyond or transform these traditions by engaging with a local Egyptian context understood as a “free, fluid source for artistic inspiration.” This latter approach does not reject the cultural history of Egypt but instead reconceives it in terms of the country’s legacy of “cosmopolitanism.”⁴⁷ This toggling between claims to a remote or cosmopolitan, but always rooted and nationalistic Egyptian authenticity, betrays an anxiety about the country’s position in relation to the West.

Khan’s performance partakes, it seem, of both of the conditions (of Egyptian belonging and of willed European avant-garde alienation) described by Winegar. His named influences as well, registered at the level of content in the transcript, are both local and international as will be seen in the next section of this chapter. But the very form of *17 and in AUC* establishes a position for Khan that problematizes the terms of Winegar’s analysis. The containment and excessive mediation of the performance describes the profoundly contingent

nature of Khan's formation without putting forward any kind of a general thesis concerning an Egyptian "artistic personality." Khan challenges this construction, and its faintly discernible traces of Orientalist essentialisms ("Arab mind," "Arab temperament" in Lewis, Shouby et al, or in El Shakry's study an idealized Egyptian ethnographic subject) by severing or at least problematizing the connection between his spoken account of his AUC years and the context which gave rise to that experience.

In the content analysis which follows, it will be seen that Khan makes no such claims to Egypt's cultural history – conceived along cosmopolitan and international or broadly cultural/religious lines. Rather, his work is characterized by an oppositional (avant-garde) sensibility that is manifested and articulated always in relation to specific forms of authority. Khan complicates Winegar's nationalist binary (which is premised on a civilizational distinction between the West and the Middle East) by setting up critical distinctions *within* his milieu: between heterodox and orthodox aspects of religious culture, or in terms of Egypt's colonial relation with the Sudan, or between Khan's own emergent gendered subjectivity and normative codes of masculinity within Egypt, Cairo and the AUC. These mediations, which are mirrored in the physical details of the performance space, render Khan's AUC experience in terms that are more nuanced than those available in ethnographic descriptions of Cariene artists such as Winegar's.

V. Khan's Cultural Politics

It what remains of this chapter, it will be seen that at the level of content Khan's work processes a breadth of cultural products and influences that all seem to describe an oppositional sensibility. The details of Khan's specific gestures of opposition will be examined closely in order to characterize his avant gardist and gender critical position within the Cairene and Egyptian context. For now I want to contrast, as I think Khan does, the sphere of cultural politics with that of what Said calls in *ATLS* and in his work on Arabic prose "conventional" politics. In Khan's transcript (and in his Cairene and Egyptian context), cultural politics provides an alternative specifically to conventional (AUC) "student politics" and the inherited Arabist politics of his parents' generation. In turning from these conventional modes of political activity toward cultural politics, Khan makes finer distinctions than Winegar does between Europe and Egypt, or within Egypt between *aṣīl* and *mu'āṣira* artistic types.

a. Student Politics:

Khan indicts the culture of student politics in his transcript in no uncertain terms, and in an odd context. After an anecdote about the murder of an allegedly "old gay person" in Khan's friend Sari's building – a murder for which Khan and all of his friends who had visited the man at one time or another were investigated – we are told:

It was interesting and exciting for us somehow... excitement... (comes) out of the boredom I keep coming back to... there was a hidden invisible boredom functioning and it was impossible for me and my friends... to... participate in... institutional pastime(s)... clubs... student politics like the SU and SJB... these official groupings always had this strange aftertaste... playing this role.⁴⁸

The student associations Khan mentions, the “Student Union” and the “Student Judicial Body” are treated in equally suspicious terms earlier – the SU is associated with opportunism, and the SJB, perhaps hyperbolically is associated with “an architecture of authority” within Egypt including “torture chambers (and) interrogation rooms.”⁴⁹

Of note here is the transition from a disturbing anecdote about a murder to the fantasy of political participation Khan associates with groups such as the SU and the SJB.⁵⁰ The murder, perhaps not incidentally of an “old gay person,” is contrasted with the force of normativity and the mechanisms of surveillance with which Khan identifies student politics. The imagery of interrogation rooms especially, invoked to describe the SU and the SJB, further associates student politics with the investigation of Khan and his friends for the murder in Sari’s building. Khan’s gesture of refusal here is directed at two targets – the institutional legitimacy of AUC student politics and abuses of authority in the Cairo police force.

This gesture of refusal might be written off as typical adolescent rebellion. But Khan develops his implicit critique of institutionalized *moral* authority in a passage, following the indictment of the SU and SJB, on a “make Cairo greener” initiative in which he was grudgingly involved.

after we finished (planting a garden in Mokattam)... one day of semi-hard physical labour... it just felt so self-satisfied... by the second day I was a bit bored... and... did not see the sense of it... the first and last time I was involved in anything that smacked... of...charity.⁵¹

Boredom with student activities is once again cited as a reason for Khan's disengagement. However there is also a note of suspicion about the "self-satisfaction" that attends such organized student initiatives. By way of this anecdote, Khan ultimately indicts a culture of charity in which the AUC participates.

b. Arab(ist) Politics:

To appreciate Khan's refusal of conventional politics (student politics, authoritarian abuses of power, and the culture of charity) it is necessary to examine his indictment of Arabist politics. His dissatisfaction with the arguably failed ideals of his parents' generation also explains to some extent his stated "boredom" or apparent political apathy. Khan explains his and his closest friends' and collaborators' aspirations as counter-cultural producers toward the end of the performance/transcript: "we were trying very hard to connect with something... it could never be... conventional Arab politics... that did not work for us we were very critical of that."⁵² Khan goes on immediately after this negative characterization of his and his friends' politics to a frustrated recollection of performance projects done with Sherif El Azma and early video art experiments done with Amr Hosny. Khan's note of disappointment is strongest as he recalls two aborted attempts at performance interventions. In one Khan and his friend Islam had planned but failed to stage a noise concert at Cairo's British Club during which they were to burn a British flag onstage. In the other, planned with Amr Hosny but once again never executed, the walls of an unspecified exhibition space were to be covered with meat.⁵³ It is not clear how Khan hoped these

interventions would function with respect to his politics.⁵⁴ However these efforts indicate that Khan and his collaborators' apathy and boredom with respect to conventional politics did not translate into strict passivity. Once again countercultural production is, for Khan, to be raised above the din of conventional politics.

Khan thus valorizes difficult cultural practices over conventional Egyptian politics. His and his friends' activities respond to and highlight the failure of conventional politics to produce a space for avant-garde practices. Khan's description of such practices immediately following a refusal of "Arab politics" suggests this. These refusals correspond with Said's refusal of conventional Palestinian-Arab politics. Said offers in place of representations of the gross political features of the Arab (Palestinian and Egyptian) experience an account of the way in which literature and photography might be enlisted in the service of a nation-building project. Even as he refuses conventional modes of political activity, Khan makes no such claims to a nation-building project or vision. This is not to say his interest in culture is apolitical. On the contrary it is clear that Khan sees in his and his friends' activities as cultural producers a means of describing specific forces of normativity and authority in their midst.

c. Places for Cultural Politics:

In the transcript Khan describes several kinds of places in which he and his friends pursued and showcased their art. His account of these places gives an indication of the way in which Khan's cultural politics clashed with the rhetoric of conventional politics.

The spaces in the transcript can be categorized roughly as private or public. Among the most prominently featured private spaces in the transcript are “bedrooms,” belonging to Khan and his friends in the upper-middle class Cairene suburb of Heliopolis, and the so-called “Funhouse,” a student residence shared by Khan, his collaborator Amr Hosny and their girlfriends “Miriam” and “Marliese” in 1995 and named after a Stooges album.⁵⁵ Khan’s describes his activities in these private spaces affectionately as formative and uncensored, but also as somewhat confined from more visible venues for cultural production. Indeed Khan concludes that his and his friends’ artistic experiments failed to cross over into public space and the wider Cairene cultural landscape. He laments this fact toward the end of the transcript:

we were producing a culture that only stayed within our houses... this culture... really had a lot of strength and power... if it had come out and been in conflict with the world and with the city maybe something interesting would have happened... we were too fragile...⁵⁶

This confession of failure at the end of the transcript recasts Khan’s exited recollections of the “bedroom” and “Funhouse” experiments as details of a kind of captivity narrative, a narrative that is perhaps well situated in the confines of the glass box performance space.

Khan’s failure to cross over into public spaces was not complete however. Some brushes with a Cairene art audience are described in the transcript albeit in mixed tones. One important public venue for Khan’s and his friends’ art was the Cairo Atelier, a venue described by him as a kind of testing ground for aspiring artists but also, more cynically, as a “haunt of the corrupt intellectual.”⁵⁷ Khan

mentions two experiences at the Atelier in his transcript. The first was a noise music concert organized and performed with Sherif El Azma, which was surprisingly well received, and a less well received screening of Khan's first collaborative video art work (with Amr Hosny) called *Lungfan* (1995) (fig. 37).⁵⁸ The single-channel video piece is an eerie montage of mostly black and white stills (in negative) featuring aerial views of congested Cairo intersections, pedestrians crowded along Cairo sidewalks, close shots of bare feet in mid-stride, artifacts from the Egyptian Museum, x-rays and a repertoire of double-exposed or composite portraits. Khan's alternately ambient and grating soundtrack for the video finishes with a looped sample from an Egyptian (*sha'abī*) song.

Khan described the reception of the video at the Cairo Atelier in 1995 as "hysterical":

The cultural elite of Cairo seemed threatened by the form of the work... their reaction was hostile and hysterical... we were accused of being Israeli agents... brainwashing (viewers) with subliminal images.⁵⁹

The form in question is a straightforward montage form – a mode of counter-cultural representation in twentieth century European and American art as has been noted in standard texts on the historical avant garde.⁶⁰ Winegar does not consider any of Khan's work in her study, but her account of the polemics between *aṣīl* and *mu'āṣira* artists might explain the reaction of the Atelier audience to a foreign (avant garde) technique developed, named and canonized in the European context.⁶¹ Whether or not *Lungfan* is a *mu'āṣira*-type artwork (much of its detail is not accounted for by the category) Khan's unintended

provocation at the Cairo Atelier indicates the extent of his alienation in the 1990s from the sanctioned Egyptian artworld and its nationalist discourses.⁶² What I want to emphasize is that the rhetoric of conventional, in this case anti-Israeli, politics within Egypt fails to account for the details of the artwork Khan and Hosny screened. Indeed the accusation, as Khan notes, was “hysterical” and not at all justified on the basis of the work’s details. But it does explain their withdrawal, attested to in the transcript, to more private places of cultural production. Furthermore it indicates that Khan’s cultural production, by virtue of its resistance to conventional political interpretations, was functioning in the service of a cultural politics. It is to the cultural material out of which Khan forges such a politics that I will now turn.

VI. The Material of Khan’s Cultural Politics: Avant-Garde, Cosmopolitan and Heterodox

Khan spends a great deal of time elaborating a network of artistic and personal influences from literature, music and film. He mentions writers/literature such as George Bataille, Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), William Burroughs, William Blake, John Donne, and the general category of “70s Egyptian poets”; musicians such as Ahmad El Tuni, The Velvet Underground (and Lou Reed), Jimmy Page, Pink Floyd, The Beatles, Patti Smith, Jim Morrison, John Cage, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, The Stooges and Yassin Al Tohamy; and films/filmmakers such as *Eraserhead* (David Lynch, 1977), *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman, 1966), *Pink Flamingos* (John Waters, 1972), *Lonesome Cowboys* (Andy

Warhol, 1968), *Solaris* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1972), *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Bunuel and Slavador Dali, 1929), *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969), Russ Meyer, John Cassavetes and the general category of “Arabic Kung-Fu movies.” This list betrays, at the very least, Khan’s eclectic taste as a consumer of culture, and since these are admitted influences for him, as a producer of culture.

It is a rich list that could be combed over and connected with Khan’s works to characterize his artistic sensibility and taste. Khan’s sexual politics in the transcript correspond in general with those expressed in Salih’s novel.⁶³ Also, a fairly straight-forward line of influence could be drawn between the on-stage antics of The Stooges and Khan’s “Funhouse” happenings. Such an analysis would produce a detailed picture of the way in which Khan processes a variety of cultural and subcultural products in his practice. For example Khan’s interest in what the Beat Poets and their ilk call ‘consciousness expansion’ by psychotropic means might be referred to the work of William Burroughs. Khan’s surrealist pedigree too is established in the reference to the Dali and Bunuel film *Un Chien Adalous*.⁶⁴ This list could go on: Khan’s interest in abjection and sadism – in evidence in a planned “evening of whipping and poetry” - smacks of the work and sensibility of Bataille, and William Blake’s dual practice as a poet and illustrator is reflected in Khan’s own as a writer and artist.

I will argue that, taken as a whole, this web of references and names points in general to a form of cultural politics that is insistently cosmopolitan, avant-garde and heterodox. It is thus a structure of reference that positively characterizes the attitude of refusal in Khan’s practice (described so far in mostly negative

terms as not-Arabist politics, not-student politics and at the outset of this chapter not-(authentic) ethnographic testimony).

a. The East/West Civilizational Debate and its Limits:

The references and names listed above can be referred back to two major cultural traditions: the Euro-American (Bataille, Burroughs, Blake, Donne, Waters, Warhol, etc.) and the Arabo-Islamic (“1970’s Egyptian Poets,” El Tuni, Al Tohamy, Salih). This distinction, although helpful in characterizing Khan’s eclectic taste, holds only superficially. Two problems immediately arise in this distinction. The first concerns those references to authors and works that occupy an ambiguous position with respect to the two traditions mentioned. Salih’s novel is precisely about a migratory move, and a psychological reckoning with Arabo-Islamic and European cultural traditions, social norms and sexual politics. The Dali and Bunuel film, *Un Chien Andalou* as well refers at least nominally by way of Andalusia to a moment and region in which Christian, Islamic and Judaic intellectual and cultural products were forged in dialogue. And a less canonical reference to cultural hybrids comes through “Arabic Kung-Fu movies.” Where might one place these?

A second problem with the East/West binary is described well by Said. For him, it is a demonstrable fact that cultures are almost always polyglot, hybrid

and mixed.⁶⁵ It is not enough, for Said, and apparently for Khan, to simply lay claim to or indulge in a cultural multi-verse. For both, *politics* is precisely what falls out of view when such a fancy of multicultural harmony is left unexamined. The second problem with the distinction between cultural traditions, then, concerns its inability to account for the circulation and modification of mixed cultural products, and more grievously its inability to account for conflict, contestation and power in this process of circulation. In short, the distinction between *cultural traditions* cannot account for Khan's *cultural politics*.

The charge of derivativeness, seen in Winegar's analysis of the *aṣīl/mu'āṣira* debates and implied in the *Lungfan* controversy, is civilizational or culturalist in Said's words and merely identifies aspects of work that are "not-Egyptian" or are "Western." The distinction puts too much weight on the provenance of cultural products and distracts from the way in which such products are appropriated, modified and repurposed in particular contexts and for particular ends. I am interested in examining the cultural material from which Khan fashions his practice to see how it functions critically in his art to articulate fine distinctions within the Cairene cultural landscape. The question is not which cultural tradition(s) does Khan's work take up in order to articulate a national Egyptian vision (Euro-American or "authentically" Egyptian), but rather how are Khan's appropriations of both Euro-American and Egyptian cultural products to be described as a part of one and the same critical practice within Egypt? In describing Khan's practice as avant gardist I am not nominating it as a Euro-American copy.⁶⁶ The avant-garde elements of Khan's work are not simple

Western imports, but strategies that function in a particular context to articulate an oppositional cultural politics and contest norms and orthodoxies (religious, gendered, etc.) the artist describes in his midst.

b. Naming an Avant-Garde: Bourdieu's Principle Mediations, and Khan's:

In order to assess the above list of references, I will follow sociologist Paul Bourdieu's work on the literary and artistic avant-garde in nineteenth-century France. He claims that the avant-garde constitutes itself, across medium-specific and disciplinary lines, as a force of opposition and by virtue of a politics of refusal. Bourdieu begins his account of the genesis and structure of the nineteenth-century French literary field with the following epigram from the poet Charles Baudelaire: "It is painful to note that we find similar errors in two opposed schools: the bourgeois school and the socialist school. 'Moralize! Moralize!' cry both with missionary fervor."⁶⁷

Baudelaire's imperative of refusal, here articulated as a double refusal of bourgeois taste and manners and socialist prescriptions for "useful art," describes a value of autonomy in nineteenth-century French arts and letters. For Bourdieu autonomy was sought, by writers such as Baudelaire and Gustave Flaubert, and by artists such as Édouard Manet, as a response to the encroachments of politics and the art market on art practices. A non-monetary value of "art for art's sake," a

value which emphasized form over content, emerged as a distinguishing one for French writers and painters in the second half of the nineteenth-century.⁶⁸

Baudelaire's account of the privileging of "pure art" or "art for art's sake" over other types of art more amenable to political instrumentalization (i.e., socialist art) or popular tastes (i.e., bourgeois theatre or the novel of manners) is not a triumphal or utopian one. There is a persistent desire for, but no possibility of, a strictly autonomous art in Bourdieu's reckoning. His account is "structural" because he grants that Baudelaire's peers' shared intention to secure a place for art free from the constraints of politics and the marketplace was subject to the power dynamics and institutions of a literary and artistic *field* itself constituted by economic and political forces. This "structural subordination" of the artistic and literary field is instituted by two "principle mediations" for Bourdieu: the market with its constraints and sanctions (and corresponding financial rewards and penalties), and "durable links based on affinities of lifestyle and value systems, and operating especially through the intermediary of the salons."⁶⁹ This second point concerns the vulnerability of artists to economic factors as well since a distinguished position within a salon will attract the funds of patrons.

This circumstance, Bourdieu seems to suggest, is recognized by leading artists of the nineteenth-century. It is a predicament that motivates an attitude of "moral indignation" and constitutes exclusive (i.e., bohemian) subcultures.⁷⁰ A tendency to shift positions, break off affiliations and refuse categorization is characteristic of the nineteenth-century avant-garde, but it persists into the twentieth-century. The same cultural politics of refusal can be heard in another of

Bourdieu's epigrams in the work, this time from the twentieth-century Surrealist writer Andre Breton:

Leave everything. Leave Dada. Leave your wife and your mistress.
Leave your hopes and your fears. Sow your children in the corner
of a wood. Leave the prey for the shadow. Leave if need be an easy
life, what you are offered for a future situation. Hit the road.⁷¹

Khan's strategies of refusal can be understood in Bourdieu's terms as features of a highly reflexive avant-garde practice – that is to say a practice that registers an awareness of the economic and political constraints imposed upon it by a pre-constituted field of art production, consumption and patronage. We have already seen that Khan's transcript is full of gestures of refusal – of conventional and student politics for example. But the particular advantage of Bourdieu's structural analysis for the present purpose concerns the second “mediation” mentioned above, namely that of “durable links based on affinities of lifestyle and value systems, and operating especially through the intermediary of the salons.” It is this constitution of Khan's milieu – his collaborative relationships and the abovementioned network of artistic influences – that Bourdieu's framework explains well. The context of Khan's production is of course not that of Bourdieu's analysis.⁷² But the correspondence of basic features is plain to see. Khan's “Funhouse” functioned as a kind of exclusive salon for collaborative artistic experiments and for bohemian misadventures as has been seen.⁷³ And the durable links forged therein were based on a shared refusal of the normative prescriptions of AUC student life.

The “durable links” or affiliations at issue for Khan and his collaborators extended well beyond the milieu of the AUC to include writers and artists as diverse as Yassin Al Tohamy and William Burroughs. This network of interests maps out an aesthetic environment for Khan’s nascent practice during his AUC years. It is a cultural universe that can be regarded as a kind of refuge from the field in which Khan and his collaborators operated. A closer look at the appearance of selected figures in Khan’s transcript reveals that this (exclusively male) network of artists, musicians and writers is characterized by a common value of refusal, or, more specifically an ethos of heterodoxy.

VII. Khan’s Network: Heterodoxy and Homosociality

a. Yassin El Tohamy: Khan’s Heterodox Ethos:

Yassin El Tohamy, a well-known Sufi singer, figures prominently in Khan’s transcript. The artist’s conflicted interest in the singer was developed at an early age:

I started listening to Yassin El-Tohamy... when I was...16 (I) was immediately drawn to his music and completely affected by it... it... led to a very deep kind of crisis... in which after a year of listening to it I started wondering how could I listen... if I did not believe where this comes from?⁷⁴

Khan does not elaborate on this “crisis” but it seems clear that it had to do with reconciling his aesthetic interest in a Sufi singer with the religious convictions which inspired El-Tohamy’s songs. Khan is clear about his dis-identification with

the religious aspect of El-Tohamy's art – that is, for Khan El-Tohamy is regarded as an artist primarily.⁷⁵ In his conversation with curator Neda Ghouse at the Delphina Foundation, Khan confirms this aesthetic interest. It is the “poetry” of El-Tohamy that he was drawn to, so much so that he committed entire songs to memory and integrated El-Tohamy's lexicon into his everyday speech with friends.⁷⁶ There is in Khan's affection for this cultural tradition a priority given to the aesthetic practice of Sufism over the religious worldview associated with that practice. But this aesthetic interest has micro-political consequences. His interest in El Tohamy was not encouraged among Khan's friends:

I had a couple of friends in my room... and again the music playing... a moment of complete loss (an) orgasmic moment... being almost flung onto my bookshelves and being pinned to the bookshelves and sighing deeply really like an internal orgasm and then being shaken up a little and realizing that I had these friends who were completely not a part of this... looking at me with this very strange look.⁷⁷

Khan sets himself apart from his friends here as if to insist on the individuating value of an ineffable subjective experience.⁷⁸

I want to pause here to contextualize Khan's interest in the music of El-Tohamy. The interest at first seems predictable in the context of the Arab-Islamic world. It would be easy to misrecognize Khan's taste in this Sufi tradition as a simple result of his acculturation in the Arab-Islamic context. The choice would thus be conventional and not at all consistent with the claim that Khan's network of interests is characterized by an avant-garde spirit of refusal. Indeed it would scarcely be a choice at all. On this view it would seem that Khan's interest in El-Tohamy affirms an Arabo-Islamic cultural inheritance and refuses nothing. But it

is clear that Khan wants to describe his interest as an individuating one, even as an alienated and alienating one. How then can this choice of a Sufi muse be interpreted as part of an ethos of refusal?

To examine this aspect of Khan's interest I will draw on Said's brief but helpful remarks on the appearance of Sufism in the canon of French Orientalist literature. Said offers the following concerning the prominent French Orientalist Louis Massignon's interest in the tenth-century Sufi mystic, poet and teacher Mansour Al-Hallaj:

For Louis Massignon, perhaps the most renowned and influential of modern French Orientalists, Islam was a systematic rejection of the Christian incarnation, and its greatest hero was not Mohammed or Averroes but Al-Hallaj, a Muslim saint who was crucified by the orthodox Muslims for having dared to personalize Islam.⁷⁹

Said notes that Massignon's choice of Al-Hallaj as a heroic figure in the history of Islam had to do with his "Christ-like" character.⁸⁰ Al-Hallaj was valorized by Massignon according to Said because he was a figure who was rejected by orthodox Muslims for convictions concerning the sanctity of personal spiritual experience; convictions that bore a dangerous resemblance to the doctrine of transubstantiation and of the elect. In other words, Al-Hallaj was Massignon's chosen protagonist because he cultivated a personal spirituality and was thus easily domesticated as a kind of early, if incidental proponent of Judeo-Christian/liberal individualism. For Massignon, Al-Hallaj was a great Muslim by virtue of his crypto-*Christian* beliefs.

What seems relevant here for assessing Khan's interest is Said's nomination of Sufism as a counter-tradition within Islam in which personal or individual experience is sanctified. This corresponds with Khan's individuating and occasionally alienating interest in El-Tohamy. But the interest in Sufism – Massignon's and I would argue Khan's too – also betrays a sympathy with *heterodox* cultural traditions. Said characterizes Massignon's affection for Sufism in these terms:

British Oriental expertise fashioned itself around consensus and orthodoxy and sovereign authority; French Oriental expertise between the wars concerned itself with heterodoxy, spiritual ties, eccentrics. It is no accident then that the two major scholarly careers of this period, one British, one French were H.A.R. Gibb's and Louis Massignon's, one whose interest was defined by the notion of the Sunna (or orthodoxy) in Islam, the other whose focus was on the quasi-Christlike, theosophical Sufi figure, Mansour Al-Hallaj.⁸¹

Given this description of French and British national styles of Orientalism, it would seem as though Khan's sympathy for El-Tohamy is doubly heterodox. Khan's qualified interest in Sufism might have been regarded with suspicion by his peers due to their shared situation in a largely Sunni Egyptian and Cairene context. But in the narrower Anglo-American context of the AUC, Khan's partial identification with Sufi heterodoxy could be read as an affront to the historically British taste for Sunni consensus and authority.⁸²

b. David Lynch, John Waters, Russ Meyer, Andy Warhol: Homosociality and Khan's Bad Boys:

Khan's interest in film is an abiding one. Biographically, this comes as no surprise. As the son of prominent New Realist filmmaker Mohammad Khan, he was steeped in the Cairene film culture from an early age. Khan explained that his early exposure to film production, his countless hours spent watching his father in an editing suite cutting and composing scenes, may account for his artistic preoccupation with the artifice of the filmmaking process.⁸³ In *17 and in AUC* Khan does not mention his father's filmmaking career. Rather he identifies several filmmakers, mostly from the US underground and avant garde film scene of the 1960s and 70s, whose work in various ways influenced or inspired his.⁸⁴

Perhaps the most influential of these filmmakers for Khan is David Lynch, whose oddball cult-hit *Eraserhead* (1977) was for Khan "one of the most paranoid films ever" (fig. 38).⁸⁵ Khan's affection for this film runs deep. The protagonist in the film seems to have been for Khan a kind of tragic/heroic icon of unrewarded individuality. The film's atmosphere of paranoia, embodied in the protagonist as a social pathology and rendered in the soundtrack through "continuous, controlled white noise," is striking for Khan. Concerning the protagonist's virtues, Khan notes:

The fascinating thing for me in *Eraserhead*... was not that he was defeated or small... but the way he lived in this field of complete mistrust and the way everything was so strongly hurting him... the sound of the film... created a world that was so apart... a bubble.⁸⁶

The effect of the white noise in the film combined with the almost solipsistic and hypersensitive experience of the protagonist are Lynch's greatest successes in the film according to Khan. To begin with, the structure of *17 and in AUC* – Khan's

isolation in a soundproofed and one-way mirrored container mimics the social situation of Lynch's protagonist in *Eraserhead*. For now I would like to emphasize the similarity between El-Tohamy and Lynch's character. Taking Said's remarks on Massignon as a guide, it might be argued that Khan's interest in these figures is focused on each one's marginality and isolating individuality. In the case of the Sufi singers, with Said and Massignon, it may be argued that this marginality appears as a form of heterodoxy with respect to the Sunni tradition. In Lynch's film it appears rather as a cultivated eccentricity. In both of these cases though, it is the experience of separation from or refusal of normative prescriptions (religious or social) that seems to fascinate Khan.

One further point should be made concerning the "field of mistrust" Lynch's character occupies. In his description of Lynch's film, Khan implicitly equates sensitivity and mistrust. At first we are told the film is a paranoid one. This judgment about the film is analyzed and resolved into the virtues of sensitivity and justified mistrust by Khan in the subsequent passage. In this slippage from a diagnostic and pathologizing register to a more optimistic one Khan, I argue, emphasizes one of the peculiar powers of both Lynch's art and by association his own. The film when regarded from 'the outside' as it were is a portrait of paranoia, or of something wrong, pathological and non-functional. But in the course of Khan's appraisal we are given a view of the film through his own sympathetic identification with the protagonist. From this perspective, an immersive one attuned to the film's sonic and psychological atmosphere, the

protagonist's paranoia may be re-written as a special capacity to feel and to suspect.

Lynch's film in this respect is not simply an influential artwork for Khan. These virtues of sensitivity and founded suspicion operate throughout the transcript. They are the tools with which Khan analyzes the shortcomings of Arabist and AUC student politics for instance. Lynch's film then, for Khan would seem to have an almost pedagogical and therapeutic value. It enables Khan to objectify his own 'paranoia,' analyze it into functional attributes and then inscribe these attributes in his narrative about personal and political interactions at the AUC and beyond. If we follow Khan's wording in the passage above closely, this redemptive note concerning the experience of paranoia may be discerned. The "field of mistrust" is described as "lived" by Khan, as inhabitable and inhabited. And the emotional pain of the experience of inhabiting such a field – an experience of marginality and persecution – is for Khan deeply but also "strongly" felt.

In a passage following these reflections on the Lynch film, Khan describes his admiration for a group of filmmakers even more marginal than Lynch. The filmmakers in question, John Waters, Russ Meyer and Andy Warhol, were major contributors in the 1960s and 1970s to the underground and queer cinema scene.⁸⁷ Waters and Warhol became commercial successes in the 1980s and rose from the relative obscurity of the underground queer culture of the 1960s and 1970s. Khan's interest in them seems to be focused on their earlier production however, and on their more explicitly queer films. In his performance/transcript Khan

singles out Warhol's *Lonesome Cowboys* (1968) and Waters's *Pink Flamingos* (1972) for special praise. On Water's film Khan offers the following:

Watching *Pink Flamingos* in SS 06 (Social Science Building, AUC Campus) was also great... it was about this playful crime this dirty obscene playful crime... something I flirted with a bit... stealing ashtrays or wanting to break into houses or stealing a twenty-pound note or stealing books playing with what is unaccepted and obscene... crime... John Waters's *Pink Flamingos* sleaze... a film about people competing (to be) the most disgusting on the planet... (it had) this light playful criminal... touch that attracted me... I can read myself in the film(s).⁸⁸

Khan mentions Warhol's film and Russ Meyer (by name only, no film is associated with him) in the next passage. Also while Waters and Warhol are described as film heroes of Khan's during his time at the AUC, the encounter with Meyer's work came after graduation in London.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to associate these filmmakers in Khan's transcript under the description reserved for Waters, namely as artists who cultivate in their work a kind of "playful criminality or obscenity."

Many senses of criminality may be associated with this group of directors and films. Warhol's film is a homo-erotic satire of the Western film genre, Meyer's films are usually regarded as "sexploitation" classics and Water's *Pink Flamingos* is a work of homo-erotic cinema and camp sensibility. The sense of criminality that best fits these cases taken together would seem to involve a transgression of normative codes of conduct and representation – a transgression of hetero-normative codes in Waters's and Warhol's films and a transgression of decorum in Meyer's films.

I want to argue that here again, in Khan's taste in films, a spirit of heterodoxy or refusal is central. Khan's affinity for the work of Waters and Warhol especially may be read as a provocation to the cultural and institutional forces of hetero-normativity defining Khan's milieu. Other artists mentioned in Khan's transcript such as William Burroughs might be included in this grouping of *agents provocateurs* with respect to institutions and practices of hetero-normativity.

VIII. Khan's Avant-Garde Bad Boys: Polymorphous Sexuality and the *Effendi-Al-futuwwa* Axis

Khan's reckoning with sexual and gendered subject formation is complex. It is not sufficient to think through the complexities of Khan's understanding of sexual politics and the performance of gender in the terms laid out by Said in *Orientalism*.⁹⁰ That is, it would be inaccurate to think of Khan's interest in underground queer cinema as a kind of symptomatic taste, resulting from an internalization of the Orientalist construction of the emasculated Arab man.⁹¹ Indeed Said's own account of this aspect of the colonial project is premised on a hetero-normative indignation regarding the feminization of Arab men that resulted from the political and economic "penetration" of the Near East by the West. More recent and nuanced accounts of male subject formation in the Arab and specifically the Egyptian context are available in Joseph Massad's *Desiring Arabs* and in Wilson Chacko Jacob's *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity*.⁹² I want to briefly pause on some key

ideas from these two sources that are useful in accounting for Khan's interest in the filmmakers mentioned above.

Massad's book *Desiring Arabs* is a work of literary and intellectual history that details discourses on sex and sexuality in the Arab world since the so-called *Nahda* or Arab Renaissance of the nineteenth-century. Massad traces the Arab intelligentsia's views on sexuality in relation to two forces – one remote and strictly cultural and the other immediate and political. These forces are, on the one hand the distant tradition of Arab-Islamic poetic and literary reflection on polymorphous sex practices (exemplified by the poet Abu Nawas), and on the other hand the pressing colonial context of the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries.⁹³ Massad argues that nineteenth-century *Nahda* authors had internalized Orientalist notions of Arab and Islamic backwardness, notions that include qualities of excessive virility and hedonism, with respect to a progressive, rational and prudent European cultural tradition. In order to purge their own cultural heritage of this putative backwardness, *Nahda* authors produced condemning accounts of poets such as Abu Nawas. In such accounts, stereotypes of Oriental decadence and colonial European decorum are upheld, and a rich Arab and Islamic tradition of reflection on polymorphous sexuality is suppressed or disavowed. This tendency to moralize sex practices in the Arab world (always by comparison with Western “progressive” standards) for Massad persists in the late twentieth-century as a result of the influence of the “gay international” (a neo-colonial influence for Massad) and its binary approach to sexuality.⁹⁴

In Jacob's *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* Massad's controversial critique of the imposition of colonial notions of sexuality (and masculinity by implication) within the Arab world is vindicated to an extent. Jacob focuses on the case of colonial Egypt, and specifically on discourses of masculinity within the *Effendi* class (upper-middle class) to show how mainly British concepts of manhood were not strictly imposed but rather assimilated within the long-established Arab-Islamic culture of fitness or "*al-riyāḍa*."⁹⁵ Jacob shows how this concept, and its various acquired prescriptive and normalizing powers were absorbed in popular print culture and in institutions for *Effendi* male instruction such as The Boy Scouts. Such codes of conduct and "cultivation" were deployed as aspects of a modernizing project by Arab writers, and as an aspect of a colonial project by British writers. But their symbolic appropriation by Egyptian men and boys left much room for interpretation and re-purposing. It is in this performative and semiotic sense that Jacob narrates a "working out" of *Effendi* masculinity. Crucially, his account of the instability of concepts of masculinity enables an analysis of emergent and non-normative male subjectivities.⁹⁶ As Jacob notes, the free-floating signifiers of *Effendi* or middle-class masculinity could be adopted by "sons of small merchants, students, unemployed graduates... anyone who was able to affect the proper look."⁹⁷

This corresponds with the first part of Massad's critique – namely that heteronormativity or concepts of disciplined masculinity were fed if not imposed by colonial authorities. But unlike Massad, Jacob shows how such concepts

accumulated meanings not intended by, and indeed abhorrent to their colonial authors. Though much of the print culture Jacob considers appears highly homoerotic, there is no suggestion in the book that instructions for (*Effendi*) male sociality and self-styling encouraged homosexual relations. Rather Jacob shows how a concept of masculinity was constructed, always precariously, at the level of signification (through fashion, body building, etc.), and not derived from fixed notions of sexual object choices.

In Khan's references to underground gay cinema and gay authors, and authors like William Burroughs, it should be said, there is no explicit reference to homosexual practices. Rather the appeal of filmmakers such as Warhol and Waters, and writers like Burroughs for Khan would seem to have to do with a taste for mischief, obscenity, and deviance. Khan does not specify in the transcript that it is the representation of sexual deviance he is interested in. It is this spirit of deviance in general that Khan seems to identify with, and indeed enact in his Funhouse misadventures with friends.

How then can we position Khan's interest in gay filmmakers and authors in the terms laid out by Massad and Jacob? To begin with Khan's apparent indifference to the specific sexual orientation of Waters, Warhol and Burroughs, and the explicitly homoerotic content of their work can be regarded as a refusal of a binary concept of sexual desire. With Massad we might say that for Khan an exclusive focus on the homosexual practices and motifs in Waters's, Warhol's and Burroughs's work would render their general spirit of refusal and deviance (a spirit shared by Khan and the heterosexual artists in his list of influences) in

narrow and binary sexual terms. They would be claimed, in the manner of a kind of tokenism, as gay artists if this were the case. Khan is interested in them rather as deviant avant gardists, or perhaps as queer artists.⁹⁸ I contend that Khan's performance of gender through a selective engagement with gay underground films betrays a kind of queer (not gay) sensibility. Furthermore, his mostly male collaborators and declared artistic influences contextualize his practice within a homosocial (not normatively masculine) sphere. Finally, Khan's taste, as a self-identified heterosexual man, for these gay artists' work refuses the binary terms of a representational identity politics. Khan does not commit himself to an affiliation with Warhol, Waters and Burroughs on the basis of a shared interest in gay rights for example. In this respect Khan refuses the sexual politics and "epistemic violence" of what Massad controversially calls "the gay international."⁹⁹

So Khan's affection for underground gay cinema could be regarded as motivated by that subculture's permission for and indeed encouragement of deviance and obscenity – by its provocative and mischievous exploitation of the freedom of speech. This spirit of mischief and refusal of normative prescriptions (sexual and otherwise) is common to the gay and straight artists in Khan's list, and enacted by Khan and his collaborators in their projects and experiments. But if it is not homosexual "deviance" that is at issue for Khan, what kind of a concept of masculinity do his eccentric tastes betray?

In this connection, Jacob's theses seem relevant. To be sure, Khan's work is highly staged and thus attuned to the performative conditions of its production. But what kind of a performance of masculinity emerges from Khan's work? What

is especially helpful about Jacob's analysis is his account of the discursive and symbolic space for mischief and dissent which normative discourses on *Effendi* masculinity generate. Jacob notes in his study a kind of structural relationship between the place of the *Effendi* and that of "youthful masculinity" (*al-futuwwa*) in gendered Egyptian discourses on modernization. *Al-futuwwa* is in the first instance a kind of constitutive other to the figure of the *Effendi*.¹⁰⁰ Whereas the *Effendi* is a marked or favored and relatively stable term in the discourses Jacob analyses (even if it is destabilized at the level of interpretation), *al-futuwwa* is polyvalent, referring to the unruly energies of the urban, usually working-class youth, and covering a range of meanings from *ibn al-balad* (the native son, "good guy," everyman) to *al-baltagi* (gangster, thug). Crucially for Jacob, this figure of *al-futuwwa* in the hands of writers such as Naguib Mahfouz expresses a conflicted desire for national liberation and anti-colonial resistance on the one hand, and materialistic and sensual comforts on the other hand.¹⁰¹

This at least dual sense of the term *al-futuwwa* is invoked, albeit indirectly in Khan's list of influences. Khan's and his friend's misadventures expressed a vaguely anti-authoritarian spirit of resistance and sensualist drives which are reflected in the work of Waters, Warhol and Burroughs. While it would be pushing the point to characterize these *American* artists and filmmakers along the *Effendi-al-futuwwa* axis described by Jacob, it seems an appropriate axis for explaining Khan's and his friends' *attraction* to these artists. Jacob claims that prescriptive and normalizing discourses on *Effendi* masculinity produced an "unexpected excavation of *al-futuwwa*" which revealed an unruly and non-

normative “internal Other.”¹⁰² In Khan’s list of influences, and in his and his friends’ misanthropic social experiments, I contend, there is a will to explore and even indulge this threatening figure of the internal Other. As a typically working-class, urban figure, the *al-futuwwa* describes Khan’s and his friend’s refusal of the middle class (*Effendi*) and suburban strictures of AUC life. And as a figure of unruly “youthful masculinity,” the *al-futuwwa* describes Khan’s and his friend’s will to mischief and obscenity. Khan’s list of influences then, although international and remote from the sphere and discourse of the *Effendi-al-futuwwa*, expresses, and to some extent aesthetically legitimates the culturally-specific spirit of refusal embodied in the figure of the *al-futuwwa*. Waters and company in this respect enable Khan’s and his friend’s “excavation” of an “internal Other” specific to their Cairene and Egyptian cultural context.

IX. Khan’s Emergent Masculinity and the Cairene Homosocial Order

What then are we to make of Khan’s exclusive interest in male artists as influences and collaborators? Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s theory of male homosocial desire, elaborated in her 1985 book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, provides a helpful rubric for dealing with this aspect of Khan’s work and biography.¹⁰³ Kosofsky Sedgwick introduces her approach to the analysis of selected eighteenth and nineteenth-century English novels (written by men) with a paradox:

‘Male homosocial desire’... is intended to mark both discriminations and paradoxes. ‘Homosocial desire’... is a kind of oxymoron. ‘Homosocial’... describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with ‘homosexual’ and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from ‘homosexual’... to draw the homosocial back into the orbit of desire... is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual – a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted.¹⁰⁴

With this Kosofsky Sedgwick makes clear a vital premise of her study, and one that has been contested by subsequent feminist scholars, concerning a difference in the degree to which an erotic bond is recognized in relationships among women and relationships among men. In the former the continuum between homosocial and homosexual bonds is more readily acknowledged, and in the latter it is disavowed.¹⁰⁵ While it is socially permitted for women to express something like an erotic desire for one another in otherwise platonic relationships, Kosofsky Sedgwick observes that relationships between men are constrained by a patriarchal norm of “obligatory heterosexuality.”¹⁰⁶ Crucially this asymmetry for Kosofsky Sedgwick is a structural feature of patriarchy that maintains women in a subordinate political, economic and domestic position with respect to men. Her study is meant to reveal and historicize this asymmetrical character of patriarchy, and the managed relationship between sex and politics it implies, in the European literary tradition.¹⁰⁷

Kosofsky Sedgwick encourages an expansion of the analysis of male homosocial relations beyond the Euro-American cultural context. In the final section of her “Introduction” Kosofsky Sedgwick offers the following qualified invitation to her reader:

Perhaps what one can most appropriately ask of readers who find this book's formulations useful is simply to remember that... any attempt to treat them as cross-cultural or (far more) as universal ought to involve the most searching and particular analysis.¹⁰⁸

The contextual and historical lens of Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory is well illustrated in her analyses of the passive and emasculated figure of the East in T.E.

Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and in Charles Dickens's (unfinished last novel) *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.¹⁰⁹ According to her own methodological commitment (to historicize and contextualize the literature she deals with) the analysis of male homosocial desire in eighteenth and nineteenth-century England must take account of the British colonial experience. In these examples we have an analysis of a figure of the East in the circuits of European homosociality. It is an analysis that is akin to Said's in *Orientalism*. To be sure, the very tropes of Orientalist literature that so interested Said (of the feminized Orient for example) are at the center of Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis. But like Said, Kosofsky Sedgwick restricts her literary analysis of homosocial desire to the European canon. Must the theory be adapted to account for homosociality in the Middle East, and specifically in the case of Khan's work?¹¹⁰

Although the basic features of the theory describe well the homosocial dynamics of Khan's practice as it is represented in *17* and in *AUC*, he seems to be performing and developing, perhaps unwittingly, a critique of the patriarchal norms on which, in Kosofsky Sedgwick's reckoning, male homosociality is based. That is to say, whereas the writing of Dickens and Lawrence are analyzed by Kosofsky Sedgwick as symptomatic, and ultimately supportive of English

patriarchy, Khan's work seems to critically and reflexively examine patriarchy and male homosociality in the Egyptian context.

Khan's homosocial sphere is populated with artistic misfits, queer or gay filmmakers and authors, highly alienated protagonists and heterodox Sufi mystics. If we return to Kosofsky Sedgwick's guiding premise regarding the homosexual-homosocial continuum among males and females respectively, an interesting feature of Khan's list of influences turns up. One of Kosofsky Sedgwick's insights concerns the way in which, in a male homosocial order, an effective (political or professional) exclusion of women is compensated for by dividing representations of masculinity between two poles – one active and conventionally male and the other passive and effeminate. Whereas there is continuity between women's sexual and platonic expressions of affection for one another, in the case of male-male relations there is a radical break between sexual and platonic expressions of affection. Male-male relations are once again structured in Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis by an "obligatory heterosexuality." In other words, the *discontinuity* between male homosocial and homosexual desire is enforced.

In Khan's list of influences the feminine or passive element of male subject-formation is given a kind of pride of place. The queer or gay artists in Khan's list of influences are regarded as provocative artists whose sexual orientation is incidental to their accomplishments as provocative, counter-cultural artists. The list of accomplished artists includes heterosexual artists as well, also assessed on the basis of merit or the disruptive and anti-normative force of their work. In this way Khan's list instates a kind of *continuity* between the

homosexual and homosocial poles of male desire. This continuity, or the marginal society of men Khan thereby imagines, and to some extent claims as his community, is underwritten not by sexual object-choices but rather by a common avant gardist spirit of refusal. Regarding Khan's list of artists in this way, via Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of homosociality, this shared spirit of refusal can be specified as a refusal of a narrowly patriarchal notion of masculine subject formation.

The question remains, how is this refusal of patriarchy particular to Khan's cultural context? Or to put it differently, how are we to read Khan's institution of a homosocial-homosexual continuum "cross-culturally" in the Cairene and Egyptian context? To begin with, it might be said that by drawing resources and motifs of a non-normative masculinity from the Anglo-American underground film culture, Khan neutralizes the terms of Dickens's and Lawrence's rendering of a discontinuous British-Arab homosociality. That is, for Khan the Anglo-American cultural tradition is not positioned as a foil to Arab (un-English) passivity or compromised masculinity, rather it is situated as a potential source for such a non-normative masculinity.

To develop this cross-cultural application of Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis the work of Massad and Jacob is once again useful. As has been mentioned, Massad's critique of imperial concepts of masculinity and homosexuality refuses the binarism of the criterion of sexual-object choice, and by extension sexual identity politics. Such binarism is for him a result of the enforced visibility of sex practices in the Middle East by the so-called "Gay

International.” The epistemic violence of this visibility is the true target of Massad’s critique. Khan’s indifference to the sexual orientation of the artists in his list of influences similarly resists drawing sex practices into explicit view. In so doing Khan restores the more fluid and private notion of (polymorphous) sexual desire with which Massad identifies the Arab homosocial sphere. In this respect, the cultural specificity (and limit) of Kosofsky Sedgwick’s guiding distinction is exposed. If Massad is correct, male homosocial desire in the Arab context is, in spite of pervasive hetero-normative and patriarchal forces in the region, not as discontinuous as Kosofsky Sedgwick claims it is in the European and American context.

If we return to Jacob’s claims about the structural relationship between *Effendi* and *al-futuwwa* figures of masculinity another interesting feature of Khan’s rendering of homosociality turns up. In the Egyptian context the figure of the *Effendi* is deployed as a kind of regulative instrument in discourses on modernization. As such it is a figure of ideal masculinity – heteronormative, virile, active, etc. But in Kosofsky Sedgwick’s terms one would expect the constitutive other of the *Effendi* to carry a passive and feminized value. As Jacob demonstrates, it is rather the also masculine *al-futuwwa* that marks the discursive limits of *Effendi* masculinity. By effectively identifying with the unruly and potentially destabilizing forces of *al-futuwwa* – an active and virile figure of “youthful masculinity” – in his list of influences and in his teenage misadventures with friends, Khan produces an internal critique of the Egyptian, male homosocial sphere. Khan’s critique here does not function along a homosocial-homosexual

axis so much as it indicts the class-conscious, regulative and normative power of the *Effendi* masculine ideal. The figure of difference within this ideal is not the repressed, passive and excluded feminine term, but rather the suspicious, anti-authoritarian, urban working-class contingent of the *al-futuwwa*.¹¹¹

X. Khan's Immediate Homosocial Sphere: Peers and Professors

It has been seen thus far in the content analysis of *17 and in AUC* that Khan's personal and artistic influences have in common a general spirit of refusal and heterodoxy. This refusal is wide ranging. By way of his influences Khan refuses the cultural orthodoxy of Sunni Islam, the heteronormative sexual politics of middle-class Egyptian life, etc. In what follows this same spirit of refusal can be discerned. But whereas Khan affiliates with the artists named above (from El Tohamy to Burroughs, Lynch and Waters) by means of an unqualified admiration for their works, in what follows the affiliative bond (with peers and professors) is more strictly personal and consequently, more thorny. Khan registers both admiration for and in some cases suspicion of his closest associates. In other words, in this second personal network of names Khan's spirit of refusal is manifested as a strategy of qualified identification and occasionally outright dis-identification.¹¹²

In order to explain this second manifestation of Khan's spirit of refusal I will again draw from the theory of homosocial desire outlined by Kosofsky Sedgwick and applied in a specific (albeit remote for the present purpose) art-historical case. In her chapter on "The Body Politics of Homosociality" art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau describes the dynamics of the studio of Jacques-Louis David in the terms laid out by Kosofsky Sedgwick. Solomon-Godeau details a kind of double disappearance of women in post-Revolutionary French culture: a political disappearance (in the public sphere) and an iconographic one (in painting).¹¹³ She contends, following Kosofsky-Sedgwick that there is a strong relationship between these two inscriptions of women in post-Revolutionary France. The appearance of "avatars of masculinity" in paintings by David and his associates (sometimes effeminate and passive and sometimes heroic and active) is for Solomon-Godeau "symptomatic of 'male-trouble' – a crisis in and of representation precipitated in the wake of revolution and large scale political, social and cultural transformation."¹¹⁴

While the status and (dis)appearance of women in the post-Revolutionary French public sphere informs Solomon-Godeau's argument, she focuses on the second more strictly art-historical disappearance mentioned above. There are two relevant aspects of Solomon-Godeau's analysis of this art-historical disappearance of women for the present purpose. Firstly, Solomon-Godeau notes that in works by David and his associates the iconographic disappearance of women is compensated for with an appearance of signifiers of sexual difference inscribed on the male body. In works such as David's *Leonidas at Thermopylae* (1814) and

perhaps most obviously in Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson's *The Sleep of Endymion* (1791) Solomon-Godeau notes:

the masculine ideal is embodied in forms that are either athletically muscled and relatively mature... or in more slender and youthful incarnations... we are clearly in a universe of homosocial and homosexual relations... one in which, as the art-historian Alex Potts has described it... "the ideal male body... needs no female supplement, or one that exists quite apart from the heroic male subject's testing ground."¹¹⁵

This iconographic incorporation of sexual difference in representations of male bodies for Solomon-Godeau reflects a general crisis of masculinity in the post-Revolutionary moment.

The iconographic plasticity of the male nude is also correlated with an atmosphere of homosocial rivalry or admiration within the studio of David and others. This then is the second aspect of Solomon-Godeau's art historical analysis that I want to emphasize. She notes that in spite of the democratic environment of David's studio and the *inclusion* of women there, key accounts of this milieu have emphasized "homosocial relations that run the gamut from awed hero worship... Oedipal rejection... to eager emulation... to open aesthetic rebellion."¹¹⁶ This dynamic is described as one that governs the relationships among men in David's studio. It is possible to identify a culturally specific instance of "male trouble" in Khan's representation of his male network of influences and in his engagement with patriarchal norms at the AUC.¹¹⁷

To return to Khan's transcript, and specifically to his description of a network of professors and peers, the basic features of the homosocial sphere theorized by Kosofsky-Sedgwick and detailed in a specific art historical context

by Solomon-Godeau are in evidence. To begin with most of the peers and professors named in Khan's transcript are men (Prof. Shoukri and Miriam are the exceptions). But as was said earlier, the relationships are described as fraught ones – as alternately reverential or fraternal and antagonistic. Khan's relationships with male professors and peers especially can be understood, in keeping with the theory of homosociality as “doubly charged... along the vertical axis of hierarchy and the horizontal one of peer relations.”¹¹⁸ I will examine some key instances of this in what follows.

Women do appear in the transcript but they are given mostly secondary roles.¹¹⁹ It might reasonably be argued that this limited role of women in Khan's transcript reflects a wider political and cultural problem within Egypt – as Solomon-Godeau argues was the case in post-Revolutionary France and in its culture of high art. But I want to explore Khan's representation of peers and professors below in order to flesh out what I believe to be a critique of the culture of charismatic and patriarchal authority within Egypt in general and within the institutional framework of the AUC. In other words Khan's representation of a homosocial network of peers and professors could be described symptomatically – as a structure that emerges in the absence of women – or it could be described as a knowing representation of “male trouble” to which the artist himself is subject along with his professors and peers. In what follows I will argue that the second course of analysis better describes the stakes and gender critical impulse of Khan's work.

a. Pallbearers and Male Trouble in Khan's Circle

Khan's description – an intrusive memory – of carrying his friend Abe's "heavy" body with other pallbearers is introduced in *17 and in AUC* as an image of vulnerability and containment: "...we were too fragile with all that posing... in the end a bit too fragile... carrying Abe's body with his family into the grave...it was so heavy his body was so heavy it was so strange I dreamt about it so many times after..."¹²⁰

The passage appears toward the end of the transcript after a brief remark on Khan's and his friend's inability to produce a public culture – outside of their homes in Heliopolis.¹²¹ This image of Abe is a powerful one. Indeed, even Khan's living memory of Abe is treated in this iconic fashion – as a "powerful image" around which Khan and his friends in Heliopolis "gravitated."¹²² This nearly hagiographic treatment of Abe as a deeply missed friend and collaborator renders Khan's circle as an almost sacred one. The circle in which Abe figures as a center of gravity is thus marked as a kind of marginal, censored or misunderstood artist's group. Although Khan does not identify Abe as an artist explicitly, and his role in the group's cultural production is limited, the image of this lost friend organizes and sanctifies a memory of producing art in spite of conservative forces in the public culture and within the AUC.¹²³

In her analysis of the representation of "male trouble" in the French post-Revolutionary homosocial sphere Solomon-Godeau draws on images by David and others that serve a similar purpose. Indeed in David's circle martyr paintings were instituted as a genre and propaganda tool with both contemporary and historical iterations. David's *The Death of Marat* (1793) and *The Death of Joseph Barra* (1794) are well-known examples of contemporary martyr paintings. And

the neo-classical funerary painting *The Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons* (1789) is an example of a more historical martyr painting. These images are analyzed by Solomon-Godeau in terms of their effeminate or passive representation of the male body – a representation that emerges as a symptom of shifting conceptions of gender in the post-Revolutionary period and the effective expulsion of women from public life.¹²⁴ They are images that describe the dynamics of rivalry and fraternity in the post-Revolutionary homosocial sphere.

Khan's recollection of Abe's funeral functions, I argue, in a similar way, to simultaneously establish affiliative bonds between Khan and his peers and also to underscore the fragility of those bonds. The contradictions of the post-Revolutionary public sphere are registered in images of ephebic masculinity for Solomon-Godeau. In Khan's transcript the male body is similarly fraught or overdetermined. Abe is described as a powerful icon and a kind of charismatic leader on the one hand, and on the other hand as a car crash victim who is reduced to a "heavy" body for pallbearers. The basic contours of the heroic/active and tragic/passive male body that are traced in Solomon-Godeau's analysis are present here too in Khan's rendering of a homosocial milieu.

b. The Homsocial Sphere of the AUC: Khan's Professors

If Abe's body, an icon of fragile masculinity in Khan's transcript evokes the martyr paintings of Joseph Barra and Marat, the group portrait of Khan's favored AUC professors functions as a kind of Cairene *School of Athens*.¹²⁵ Or, in keeping with the French neo-Classical theme, perhaps David's *The Death of Socrates* is a more apt comparison.¹²⁶ Khan's highest praise is reserved for Prof.

Michael Ruse of the AUC Philosophy Department. The other professors Khan mentions by name are literary scholars: Birairi (Arabic Lit.), Vitkus (English Lit.) and Shoukri (Comparative Lit.).

One might expect that in a recollection of experiences with professors, Khan would clarify the terms of his critique of the AUC. From the perspective of the student, the authority of the institution is after all concentrated in the figure of the professor. Interestingly, Khan's assessment of his professors distinguishes between institutional and personal authority. What emerges in his description of professors is a highly *impersonal* image of the AUC's institutional authority. The AUC remains a kind of abstract and monolithic antagonist in the transcript from which Khan's favored professors mark a distance. Professors in the transcript are described occasionally as agents of the AUC's institutional authority. But for the most part, their authority in Khan's reckoning is a function of their personal engagement with him and their perceived critical *distance* from the AUC. This distance is noted in some cases as a kind of disciplinary anti-authoritarianism – i.e., as receptiveness to Khan's experimental writing and class presentations.¹²⁷ In other cases a professor's perceived feeling of alienation from the AUC is suggested as a basis of Khan's praise or his identification with that professor.¹²⁸

This image of authority in Khan's transcript – personal and institutional authority – can be analyzed in the terms laid out by Kosofsky Sedgwick and Solomon-Godeau. To begin with personal authority is conferred upon Khan's professors to the extent that those professors are perceived as shaking off their role as agents of an institutional authority. As was mentioned earlier, the homosocial sphere is constituted along a vertical axis of hierarchal relations and

along a horizontal axis of peer relations – it is “doubly charged” in this respect.¹²⁹ One can trace in Khan’s rendering of his relationships with professors a kind of reinscription of hierarchal student-teacher relations along a horizontal axis of peer-to-peer relations. Horizontal bonds of peer-relations are secured not just by an identification between Khan and his professors on the basis of a shared feeling of alienation but also in the course of particular off-campus or interpersonal experiences. For example Khan recalls an exchange with Prof. Vitkus on the balcony of an apartment in which Khan and his friends had organized an “evening of whipping and poetry.”¹³⁰ Vitkus’ attendance at Khan’s party seems to grant the professor a kind of credibility in a community of peers. Vitkus’ disciplinary authority as a literature scholar is not thereby undermined. On the contrary the professor’s presence at a student organized “poetry” party lends a special cultural validity to this extracurricular activity.

Another example of this slide in Khan’s relationships with his professors from the formal to the fraternal can be found in a passage on Prof. Ruse and his relationship with a “beautiful but disturbed wife.” To be sure, here the male homosocial bonds at issue are reinforced by a kind of absent presence of a woman. Khan recalls learning about Ruse’s wife as follows:

William Blake just discovering William Blake was good and taking a class with Michael Ruse a philosophy professor and he was married to a very beautiful but from his account a kind of disturbed woman... I don’t know if that was his romanticism... turning her into someone... disturbed I did not know her I only saw her once or twice...¹³¹

As the sudden reference to Blake indicates, this recollection appears in a loosely associated list of positive experiences at the AUC. Immediately before the Blake

reference Khan fondly recalls, again in a near bullet form, an experience in a film class with his friend Attar. Attar, Blake and Ruse are assembled here as a valued community of influences and peers. Ruse appears as a kind of median figure – not quite a peer, like Attar, and not quite as distinguished a thinker/writer/artist as Blake. Nevertheless Ruse partakes of these two conditions – he is introduced as a favored or distinguished professor (i.e., as a figure of authority), and also as a peer to the extent that he shares details of his private life with Khan. The association with Blake, a figurehead of the British Romantic movement in poetry and visual art, is reinforced by Khan’s speculation about Ruse’s own “romanticism.” In the terms laid out by Solomon-Godeau, there is in Khan’s tacit association of Ruse with a key figure of the Romantic movement a mechanism of “eager emulation” that secures the homosocial bond between, on the one hand two important figures in Khan’s positive formative experience at the AUC (Blake and Ruse), and by implication between those figures and Khan himself.

Moments after this fit of nostalgia for Ruse, for the youthful discovery of Blake and for Attar, Khan describes one of the purposes of the performance as follows:

it slowly dies... a slow decay... an echo and the glory of the memory is gone... that’s one effect of this whole exercise... I can never have this... romantic self image of the past it’s gone now it’s dead... chopped away... that was one of my... secret motivations behind this project to kill the nostalgia and to kill the romanticism...¹³²

Khan shakes off the attribute that he identifies, at least nominally, in Blake and Ruse. In this adamant refusal of sentimentality one might identify yet another mechanism of homosociality mentioned by both Solomon-Godeau and Kosofsky

Sedgwick – namely, that of Oedipal rejection.¹³³ To be sure, the violence and morbid evocation of Khan’s language in the above passage indicates as much. But where, to push the psychoanalytic rubric a little further, is “the Mother” in whose name Khan might have pursued this “killing” of a symbolic Father (i.e., patriarchal authority)?

As was mentioned, the “account” of Ruse’s disturbed wife to which Khan was privy secures a kind of peer relation between the two men. There is in the first place a refusal of hierarchal authority in this kind of an association. But the unnamed wife in Khan’s transcript is to some extent rescued from Ruse’s characterization. Khan is skeptical about Ruse’s account (it could have been a romantic embellishment), and he suspends his judgment of her on the basis of a lack of experience. With this he seems to acknowledge the symbolic currency of Ruse’s wife – a currency “between men” to use Kosofsky Sedgwick’s phrase. While Khan is implicated in a symbolic “traffic in women” in his recollection of Ruse’s wife, and to be sure, in his testimony concerning her beauty, he also seems to be conscious of the insufficiency of an anecdotal rendering of her.¹³⁴ He attempts, by means of a posture of skepticism with respect to Ruse’s “account,” to extract himself from the symbolic (homosocial) economy in which such an account circulates. This then is a moment of refusal that functions as a kind of internal critique of male homosociality in Khan’s recollection of Ruse.

In contrast with the unnamed “disturbed wife” of Prof. Ruse, Khan’s literature professor Dr. Shoukri appears in Khan’s telling as a woman who requires no rescue. Dr. Shoukri on the contrary appears as a fearsome figure of authority that Khan evades and provokes by various means.¹³⁵ There is nothing in

the description of Khan's relationship with this female authority that immediately indicates a gender critical aspect to his engagement with AUC authority in general. But Khan's gendered engagement in Shoukri's class appears clearly in an anecdote about a class presentation. In the course of describing a presentation given in her "Post-modern Literature" class – in which Khan first recited then analyzed the lyrics of a Velvet Underground song called "Heroin," and which, incidentally Prof. Shoukri appreciated – we are told that: "(the) literature department is... ninety percent girls... seventy percent (of whom) are very square 'literature-is-for-women-type-women'... it really introduces something very soppy and sentimental into this field and the students were kind of shocked (by the presentation)."¹³⁶

For Khan it was not only the content of the song that he intended as a shock to an overly sentimental, mostly female literature class; the analysis of the song was also intended for this purpose. Khan notes that his analytic approach was underwritten by his mere parroting of a narrative about heroin addiction – he had never tried the drug and was not interested in it. His aim was to "present the pose of someone who is doing heroin" to provide a "shock" and generate an "awkward moment" in class.¹³⁷

Khan does not share the details of his "analysis" of the song in the transcript. Nevertheless this gesture seems significant given his presence as a male in a discipline dominated, to its detriment according to Khan, by women. Khan's grievance with the class and with the gendered culture of the literature department is described in terms of excessive sentimentality or soppiiness. By merely inhabiting the forlorn and tormented role of the addict in the Velvet

Underground song, Khan both exploits and undermines the atmosphere and standard of sentimentality he perceives in the class. The form of the song is confessional, a lament about a life in the process of being lost to drug addiction. Such a narrative should, by rights, be well received in the atmosphere Khan describes. A confession is, after all, a gesture of profound trust, which ought to inspire affection, sympathy and support in a sensitive community of listeners. But a complete identification between Khan and the song's character would have been required for such a transaction to work. Had Khan observed a standard of sincerity in his presentation of the song, it would have functioned as an indirect confession from a vulnerable and trusting male minority. His actual, if concealed *disidentification* with the addict character however, undermines the standard of truthfulness on which a confession is based.¹³⁸ Khan's presentation might be said to function as a disruptive lie in a department that, according to his description, cultivates a kind of emotional transparency.

Khan goes on to point out a "parallel" between the presentation for Shoukri's class and his performance of *17 and in AUC*. He notes that in both cases a *representation of analysis* or the generation of an *analytic environment* is central to his aims. Just as the Velvet Underground "text" is presented for analysis, his performance is transcribed and rendered as text for, in the present study art-historical analysis.¹³⁹ There is an implied psychoanalytic valence here to be sure as well. The transformation of a classroom environment of trust and sentimentality into a laboratory for the analysis of a mock- confession evokes the conditions of the analytic situation. But Khan interferes with this condition by introducing, in psychoanalytic terms, the "resistance" of a lie. In the case of *17*

and in AUC the one-way mirrored box in which Khan performs is similarly a kind of architecture of the mind and its desires and memories (i.e., its psychic data). It is a kind of narcissistic machine.

I want to emphasize the value and centrality of “analysis” in Khan’s experience at the AUC and in his performance. This analytic spirit, I argue, is pitted against the literature department’s gendered atmosphere of sentimentality in Khan’s reckoning. At first this implicit contrast of Khan’s analytic capacity and his female peers’ excessive sentimentality seems like a rehearsal of a stubborn and indeed a patriarchal binary. But if we attend again to the passage in which Khan issues his complaint about the AUC literature department, a more complex picture emerges. He does not suggest that women are responsible for the objectionable atmosphere of the department. Rather his grievance is with an operation of “typing” and socializing women that results in a conventional and patriarchal association of women with literature.¹⁴⁰ As Khan notes, it is not women *per se* - as autonomous promoters of this “feminization” of the field – that are to blame. Rather it is the sociological “case” (in which women are preponderant in the literature department) that “introduces something soppy and very sentimental into this field.” The implication here is that the “field” could be constituted differently. To be sure, Khan’s obdurate and mischievous male presence in the AUC literature department attests to this.

With this we have come quite a distance from the homosocial sphere described by Solomon-Godeau and Kosofsky Sedgwick. And so we should have. The twentieth and twenty-first century Cairene context of Khan’s performance and his recollections is vastly different from that of Solomon-Godeau’s

Napoleonic era French homosocial sphere, and different as well from Kosofsky Sedgwick's nineteenth-century British colonial one. If the theory of homosociality is helpful in framing Khan's engagement with the literature department, and his relationship with Prof. Shoukri it is for the following reason. We have seen so far that Khan seems keenly aware of the gendered dynamics of the culture of the university and, although he does not elaborate on this in the transcript, of the same dynamics within his city and country.¹⁴¹ The gestures of refusal mentioned above in connection with Khan's professors, I argue, indicate a critical awareness of, if not an outright dissatisfaction with the normative (i.e., patriarchal) force of the AUC's institutionalization of a homosocial sphere. Khan's disruption of this order is sometimes only slight. This was seen for example when his hierarchal relation with Prof. Ruse and Prof. Vitkus was merely reinscribed along a horizontal peer-to-peer axis. Khan figures in his representation of those relationships as subject to the dynamics of male homosociality in spite of his effort to escape its hierarchical institutional powers. In the context of the literature department however, Khan seems to demonstrate a keen awareness of this predicament – in communities of men and in communities of women too. In Solomon-Godeau's terms, Khan's "analytic approach" in his class presentation could be regarded as a kind of "open aesthetic rebellion" with respect to the literature department's perceived standard of "sentimentality."¹⁴²

The male-homosocial sphere is implicated in this rebellion too since the association of women and literature is to some extent prescribed by gendered and patriarchal norms concerning education.¹⁴³ Khan is critical ultimately of the ghettoization that results from gendered expectations within his university. As a

student of literature he inhabits such a gendered ghetto as a minority presence and thus embarks on his critique from within.

XI. Conclusion: Khan's Emergent Avant-Garde and Masculine Subject Formation in *17 and in AUC*

In this chapter I have shown how Hassan Khan's *17 and in AUC* offers, in keeping with Said's counterproposal, an artistic alternative to grossly over-politicized images of Arabs. But he also marks a distance from Said's critique in important ways. Khan moves beyond Said's framework for Arab representation and identity politics toward a more nuanced account of the myriad ways in which his experience at the AUC was forged in dialogue with two available languages, several venues for cultural production and display, an array of international artistic influences, and several personal collaborators and associates. These mediations (apparent in the transcript's contents) are mirrored in the structural conditions of Khan's performance – in the form of *17 and in AUC*. In this respect, Said's recommendation – to attend to the formal aspects of artistic representations from the region – is instructive. But the form of *17 and in AUC* does not provide an aesthetic retreat for his practice. Form is for Khan a means of artistic and political reckoning (to use Winegar's term albeit in a different sense).

The mediated form of Khan's work, as I have argued, insists on a separation between the text of the performance and its multiplied and shifting contexts. In this way Khan shows how his artistic subject formation is not rooted or authentic, in national, ethnic or ethnographic terms, but rather negotiated through a process and practice of selective appropriation, identification and dis-

identification. I have argued that this process of artistic subject formation makes use of avant-garde strategies of refusal and engages with norms and figurations of masculinity – but always in a manner that takes account of the specificity of the Cairene context. Khan’s various refusals, in my view enable the artist to establish himself at a critical distance from this municipal, but also institutional, cultural and gendered context. His art is not reducible to or exhaustively explained in terms of the context of its production. Rather, Khan frees his art from such determinants by engaging with them reflexively and critically, and by mirroring such reflection and critique in the formal details of his work. I have argued that the gender-critical subject formation Khan describes is emergent to the extent that it is freed from such determinants. In the following and final section of this study I will examine two of Khan’s works produced after *17 and in AUC* that increase this distance between cultural text and determinate or explanatory context.

¹ The sense of identification and dis-identification I am employing in my analysis of Khan’s work is informed by Amelia Jones’s 2012 study on these mechanisms in the visual arts. See Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification in the Visual Arts*.

² I relied exclusively on the transcript of the performance and my interviews with Hassan Khan in the summer of 2011 in my analysis. My visual experience of the performance is limited to several photographs of Khan in the glass performance space by Graham Waite (d. 2012). The audience is not visible in any of the photographs. I was not present at the performance.

³ While these constructions are outmoded in most recent anthropological studies of the Middle East, the nationalist and social scientific discourses in which they historically circulated are the focus of Winegar’s and El Shakry’s studies as will be seen.

⁴ Hassan Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions* (Paris: Les Cahiers ASSN, Galerie Chantal Crousel, 2004), 3.

⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁶ In this passage Khan describes the conception of his performance. It was proposed for and commissioned by the American University in Cairo. The reference to an audience and context that is “not quite Cairo” is a reference to the intended location of the performance on the AUC campus.

However Khan explains in an interview with curator Neda Ghouse that after securing the commission with Scott Baily of the AUC Art Department the administration withdrew their offer of a space for the performance. Khan's performance, although conceived as a kind of on campus intervention – or an immanent critique of the AUC – was conducted in a rented apartment in Cairo. Nevertheless the performance was recorded and screened daily on the AUC campus. See Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, “Pulmolar” (Day 4), (London: The Delphina Foundation, 2012), 58:00.

⁷ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 7-8.

⁸ Tayeb Salih's novel *Season of Migration to the North*, Denys Johnson-Davies, trans. (Heinemann Press: Portsmouth, 1969) has been identified by Said as “among the six finest novels to be written in Modern Arabic literature.” The novel, which follows the protagonist Mustapha Sa'eed from Sudan to England, where he is responsible for the suicides of three of his lovers and the murder of one more, is certainly a touchstone for “sadistic” post-colonial romances of the kind described by Khan in his transcript. But for Said, such sadism is to be understood, in the post-colonial context as a kind of retributive justice. For Said Salih “appropriate(s)... such great *topoi* of colonial culture as the quest and the voyage into the unknown, claiming them for their own post-colonial purposes. Salih's hero... does (and is) the reverse of what Kurtz (the protagonist of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*) does (and is): the Black man journeys north into white territory.” See Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage Books: New York, 1993), 30.

⁹ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 51/112-113.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ This phenomenon of code switching between English and Arabic is dealt with in Khan's documentary film *Transitions* (2002) and in the video *The Hidden Location* (2004) as well.

¹² This aspect of Khan's performance might well be treated in terms of the politics of translation in the English-speaking international art world as was mentioned earlier. While I will not be exploring this fraught context for cultural translation in detail, some useful literature on the history of Arabic-English and English-Arabic translation provides a background for emerging artworld controversies regarding translation. See for example Shaden Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). It may be said that Khan's work succumbs to a pressure to be understood by an English-speaking international art audience. However the unpunctuated and unedited appearance of the transcript might equally be regarded as a refusal of proper English or a kind of mischief with the machinery of a dominant Anglophone artworld. I am grateful to Alice Jim for her helpful remarks on this controversy in Khan's work.

¹³ Here I am anticipating an argument for Khan's work that will be developed later in this chapter, in connection with the discourses of national Egyptian authenticity or rootendness (*aṣāla*) traced by Winegar and El Shakry.

¹⁴ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 1.

¹⁵ It is worth noting here that Khan's critique of the AUC corresponds with Said's in *Orientalism*. Said laments the preponderant role of American research institutes in the region: “the Arab world today is an intellectual, political, and cultural satellite of the United States. This is not in itself something to be lamented; the specific form of the satellite relationship, however, is. Consider first of all that universities in the Arab world are generally run according to some pattern inherited from, or once directly imposed by, a former colonial power.” Said seems to implicate institutions such as the AUC when he notes that whereas it was once British and French interests that dominated the region's “intellectual horizons... it is now the United States that occupies that place.” Chief among Said's concerns, which range from bad teaching conditions in the region to bad pay, is the ‘brain-drain’ that results from this presence of US universities in the region: “the few promising students who manage to make it through the system are encouraged to come to the US to continue their advanced work.” See Said, *Orientalism*, 322-323.

¹⁶ For example, Khan remarks that he is both “taught privilege and cursed by privilege” in a passage which is followed immediately by a reflection on his present act of “speaking into a

microphone”: “yeah we are privileged so fucking what... the first step... is to look at what we are and to critique it...” Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 26.

¹⁷ Khan’s performance was conceived as an intervention on the AUC campus but was eventually moved off campus. Nevertheless Khan projected a video recording of each day’s performance on the AUC campus. Khan’s “internal critique” echoes Said’s in a lecture entitled “On the University” which was given at the AUC in 2000 and published in a special edition of *Alif: The Journal of Comparative Poetics*. See Edward W. Said, “On the University” in *Alif: The Journal of Comparative Poetics* (No. 25), “Edward Said and Critical Decolonization,” (AUC Press: Cairo, 2005), 26-36. It might be argued that, by circulating as a transcript published by his gallerist Chantal Crousel outside the AUC context, Khan’s “internal critique” remains more subversive than Said’s which was published eventually by the very institution at which it takes aim. Indeed Said’s institutionalization at the AUC has since become more assured with their annual “Edward Said Memorial Lecture Series,” inaugurated in 2005. Notable speakers since have included Cornel West (2007), Terry Eagleton (2008) and Judith Butler (2010). The AUC has become a mechanism for Said’s canonization.

¹⁸ It is worth noting here another work on the theme of captivity by Mona Hatoum titled *Under Seige* (1982). Hatoum in the performance places herself covered in clay in a glass container wherein revolutionary music from the Middle East and France plays. During the performance she leaves traces of the clay against the glass by pushing herself into it and drawing her body across it. While this work is comparable to Khan’s in terms of its structure – both performances are conducted in glass boxes – Hatoum is dramatizing an experience of Palestinian captivity and exile. The political references and indeed specific references to land (i.e. clay) in Hatoum’s performance however contrast with what I contend is a will to transcend the limits of a physical and cultural context in Khan’s work. I am grateful to Christine Ross for her remarks on the similarity and difference between Hatoum’s and Khan’s meditations on captivity.

¹⁹ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 81. The specific professor’s name is not given here but elsewhere in the transcript Khan mentions two professors of literature by the names of Vitkus and Shoukri.

²¹ Concerning the first of these two characterizations of the subject, other of Khan’s works indicate a preoccupation with what might be characterized as a Foucauldian understanding of authorial subject formation. Khan interrogates the construction of his authorial identity in an ongoing lecture series entitled *I Am Not What I Am* (2005-ongoing). His radio play based on Michel Foucault’s work *Of Other Spaces* and entitled *Improvisation with voice Talent: Michel Foucault’s Of Other Spaces as Domestic Radio Play* (2005) also indicates such a preoccupation. The relevant text by Foucault on these issues are several but Khan’s works seem to deal squarely with the issues concerning “author-functions” in Foucault’s “What is an Author?” See Foucault, “What is an Author?” (1969) in Paul Rabinow ed. *The Foucault Reader*, 101-120. Khan discusses these works in a dialogue with art historian and curator Hans Ulbrich Obrist in *Dubai Global Art Forum Transcripts, 2007* (Dubai: Art Dubai, 2007), 214-216. The second of these two characterizations of the subject indicates an interest in the Lacanian notion of subject formation in the field of vision. See Lacan *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 67-105. While Khan does not directly refer to Lacan or his formula (i.e., algebra) for subjectivity in his work, several of his works deal extensively with the psychodynamics of vision and with dreams. See especially his *G.R.A.H.A.M* (2008) on the former and *KOMPRESSOR* (2006) on the latter.

²² This aspect of Khan’s performance might be described in terms of a trope of performance art from the 1970s, namely the trope of endurance. Two key examples of this are Adrian Piper’s *Food For the Spirit* (1971) in which the artist read Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* while fasting and doing yoga. A very different kind of endurance performance is Vito Acconci’s *Seedbed* (1972) in which the artist lay hidden beneath a gallery floor masturbating, for eight hours a day over a three week period, while visitors walked over head. On Piper’s work see John Parish Bowles, *Adrian Piper: Race, Gender and Embodiment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 205-230. On Acconci’s practice in the 70s see Christine Poggi “Following Acconci/Targeting Vision” in Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson eds. *Performing the Body/Performing the Text* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 237-253. On the gendered aspect of Acconci’s work

see Amelia Jones "Body in Action: Vito Acconci and the "Coherent" Male Artistic Subject," in *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 103-150.

²³ Khan attempts something akin to Said's self description in *Orientalism* in so far as he attempts in *17 and in AUC* to compile an "inventory of traces." Following Antonio Gramsci, Said describes a "personal dimension" to his project in *Orientalism*: with Gramsci, Said asserts that the "starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is knowing thyself as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory... it is imperative... to compile such an inventory." For both Khan and Said it is consciousness and a critical consciousness that seems to be at issue. Whereas Said examines the way in which his consciousness was constructed first as an effect of Orientalist discourse and then in opposition to it, Khan is rather more tentative about his prospects of compiling such an exhaustive inventory. Consciousness for him remains precarious or "on the brink." However for both Khan and Said it is consciousness (with its abstract spatial and temporal dimensions) and not mind or character (with its ethnic or national determinants) that is interrogated.

²⁴ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 54.

²⁵ The field of Middle Eastern Studies, not unlike area studies of any kind is vast. Contributions to the field are made by anthropologists, historians, art historians, political scientists, literary scholars and so on. The authors from this milieu that I dealing with in my analysis of Khan are cultural historians. Omnia El-Shakry's work deals with the history of social science in colonial and post-colonial Egypt, and with the literary and artistic traditions that developed in a relationship of exchange with social scientific writing and research. She also writes about Modern Arabic art and the contemporary art of Hassan Khan. Jessica Winegar's work, as will be seen focuses more narrowly on Egyptian art and cultural history. However Winegar, like Shakry is interested in the traffic of ideas between social scientific disciplines (especially anthropology) and the traditions of modern and contemporary Egyptian art. Joseph Massad and Wilson Chacko Jacob write within their disciplines of political science and history respectively about constructions of masculinity in the Middle East. Both Massad and Jacob work on aspects of the cultural history of such constructions. Massad is concerned mostly with literary representations of masculinity while Jacob is interested in print culture representations of the same. All four of the authors I will take up in what follows, it should be said, are dealing with a couple of key themes that have preoccupied researchers across the sub-disciplines in Middle Eastern Studies, namely colonialism and modernity. Some key works by other specialists in the field dealing with these themes include Khaled Fahmy's *All the Pasha's Men: Memed Ali, his Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Timothy Mitchell's *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Massad's and Jacob's work on gender take a particular approach to the histories of colonialism and modernity in the Middle East. Other key works on the subject of gender and Arab feminism in particular include Lila Abu-Lughod's *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1998) and Leila Ahmed's *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

²⁶ Omnia El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 5.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 6.

²⁹ Ibid., 8.

³⁰ Ibid., 18.

³¹ Ibid., 11.

³² Ibid., 12.

³³ Ibid., 101. On the persistence of this literary genre in the post WWII period and into the Nasser years see also Samah Selim's "The New Pharaonism: Nationalist Thought and the Egyptian Village Novel, 1967-1977," in *The Arab Studies Journal*, Vol. 8/9 No. 2/1 (Fall 2000/ Spring 2001), 10-24. Timothy Mitchell's recent study on the colonial foundations of the modern Egyptian technocracy also explores this figure of the peasant in nationalist discourses. See Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity*. (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 2002). Michael Gasper has also written a recent study on the rhetorical uses of this figure in modern Egyptian politics and in relation to Islamic discourses. See Michael Ezekiel Gasper, *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants and Islam in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

³⁴ The concept of “survivals” is derived from anthropological studies such as Winifred Blackman’s 1927 study *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt: Their Religious, Social and Industrial Life Today With Special Reference to Survivals From Ancient Times*. Studies such as these, El Shakry notes, were intended in the Orientalist fashion described by Said to document “old customs and beliefs before their extinction.” See El Shakry. *The Great Social Laboratory*. 47-53.

³⁵ The authors and works El Shakry mentions as instances of this mode of literary Orientalism are ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi’s *al-‘Arḍ (the Land)*, Haykal’s 1914 novel *Zaynab* (subtitled “*Manāzīr wa akhlāq rifīyya*” or “Countryside Scenes and Manners”), Taha Husayn’s 1932 autobiographical work *al-Ayyam* (The Days), Tawfik al-Hakim’s 1937 *Yawmiyyat nā’ib fi l-‘aryāf* (Diaries of a Prosecutor in the Countryside) and Sayyid Qutb’s *Ṭīfl min al-qarya* (A Village Childhood).

³⁶ El Shakry. *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt*, 30-31.

³⁷ El Shakry traces the construction of this empirical Egyptian subject in her chapter entitled “Anthropology’s Indigenous Interlocutors: Race and Egyptian Nationalism”. See El Shakry. *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt*, 55-88.

³⁸ As was the case with the trope of endurance, Khan seems to be rehearsing an established trope of performance art in his staging of a hyper-articulate “native informant.” See for example the work of Mexican-American performance artist Guillermo Gomez Pena and indigenous California-based performance artist James Luna. Guillermo Gomez Pena’s “Philosophical Tantrum” project is perhaps the best point of comparison as it is a fully transcribed monological performance. However Guillermo Pena’s work is perhaps more preoccupied with nativist identity politics than is Khan’s. See Guillermo Gomez Pena “Philosophical Tantrum #7,” *TDR/The Drama Review* (Fall, 2012) Vol. 56, No. 3 (T215), 7-8.

³⁹ See Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, “Egyptian TV: Strategies Learned from the World’s Worst TV” (Day 3), 25:00/40:40- 46:00. Beginning in 1998 as a contributing editor to the English language, Cairo based magazine called *A-Live* Khan embarked on several social documentary projects with Sherif El Azma. El Azma’s *Dunya-Qamar* (2001), produced by *A-Live* but conceived and filmed independently by El Azma, received special mention by the jury at The 2nd Arab Independent Screen Festival in Doha the same year. Khan’s *Transitions* (2002) was also well received, winning the Short Documentary Film Jury Award at the 6th Ismailia International Film Festival in 2002. El Azma’s film is described by Hani Mustafa as an “audio-visual comparison between one modern pop and one *sha’abī* singer.” Khan’s documentary follows several Cairenes: an actress recently returned to Cairo from England, a young veiled woman and her family, a drug addicted friend and fellow AUC student from Heliopolis (mentioned in the transcript of *17 and in AUC*) named “Jimmy” and a downtown hustler named “Ahmad Armando,” to name a few, through their various existential, religious and class conscious struggles. In both cases an interview format is central to the work. And this technique was refined partly during the pair’s time at *A-Live*. On El Azma’s film see Hani Mustafa, “Brave New Screen” in *Al-Ahram Weekly*, April. 2001, Issue #528, 5-11. Khan’s film *Transitions* is discussed several times with Neda Ghouse and screened during the Delphina talks. See especially Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, “Egyptian TV: Strategies Learned from the World’s Worst TV” (Day 3), 51:00-1:30:00.

⁴⁰ See Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse *14 Proper Nouns*, “Egyptian TV: Strategies Learned from the World’s Worst TV” (Day 3), 25:00/40:40- 46:00.

⁴¹ Omnia El Shakry, “The Hidden Location: Art and Politics in the Work of Hassan Khan,” *Third Text Asia: Special Issue on Arts, Scholarship and the Arab/Muslim World*, Volume 1, Number 2 (Spring 2009), 71-85.

⁴² El Shakry's sets up her analysis of Khan's work as follows: "I argue that the complexity of the local political and social landscape which Khan's work reflects, theoretically disrupts the purity of categories and the prevalence of binaries that have dominated the globalized study of the Middle East and its cultural production, namely: politics/aesthetics, religion/politics, Islamist/liberal-secular, and public performance/private self. Such binaries and their Orientalist corollaries, have propelled some Middle Eastern artists, such as the Iranian-born Sherin Neshat and the Egyptian-born Ghada Amer, whose work has reified the public/private split as particularly heightened in an Islamic context, to the forefront of globalized artistic production in the biennale circuit." See El Shakry, "The Hidden Location," 72.

⁴³ Ibid., 73. Winegar's account of the art scene in Cairo has been central in debates about the nature of cultural production there. Her structuring binary between "authentic" (*aṣīl*) and contemporary (*mu'āṣira*) artists is given at the outset of her book and structures the entire analysis that follows. Whereas the former is concerned with representing the Pharaonic, Coptic and Islamic cultural heritage of Egypt (often in traditional media such as painting and sculpture), the latter contemporary artist addresses a global audience through new media forms such as installation and video arts. See Jessica Winegar *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 97-8, 337-8. For a very good recent study of debates in Egyptian and Arab art, especially those concerning the relationship between national styles of Arab art and the European modernist idiom see Nada Shabout, *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007).

⁴⁴ El Shakry. "The Hidden Location," 73.

⁴⁵ Winegar, *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, 91.

⁴⁶ These more traditional artists incorporate Islamic and Ancient Egyptian motifs in their work – "survivals" in El Shakry's more social scientific language – but they are also interested in exploring European Modernist styles. This dilemma (of negotiating between an imported European Modernism and a repertoire of "authentic" Egyptian motifs) is described well by Winegar and Shabout as well.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 118.

⁴⁸ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 113.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 53.

⁵⁰ Interestingly this fantasy of political participation was identified by student organizers on campuses within Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt shortly after the time of Khan's performance in 2003. The campuses where alternatives to the state sponsored Student Unions were sought were not American or foreign universities such as the AUC. Rather a Free Student Union (FSU) emerged (claiming independence from state pressures and agendas) in November, 2005 out of Helwan University and Cairo University with a small presence at Ayn Shams University. With the assistance of the Muslim Brotherhood with whom the FSU allied itself in the wake of rigged student elections at Al Azhar University, new branches of the FSU were established at Al Azhar, Mansoura University and Alexandria University. See Hossam El-Hamalawy, "Comrades and Brothers," *MERIP* 242 Vol. 37 (Spring, 2007).

⁵¹ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 114.

⁵² Ibid., 179.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ There is perhaps a specific reference involved in the flag burning scheme, taken from the British punk sub-culture of the 1970s with which Khan was engaged. In the Cairene context, the gesture is of course differently inflected. The gesture might be referred to precedents in the long history of anti-colonial activities in Egypt – from the Urabi revolt of the late 1800s to the Free Officer's Movement of the 1950s. The provenance of the meat stunt is less certain. It is possible that Khan and Hosny were aware of Czech-Canadian artist Jana Sterbek's *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic* (1987). Khan does mention in an extended artist's talk at the Delphina Foundation with curator Neda Ghouse the source of the proposed title of the exhibition "El-Gazireen" ("The Butchers"). It was taken from the name of a prominent Egyptian Surrealist painter from the 1950s - El Gazzar. See Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, "The

Funhouse” (Day 1), 18:00. This is an important reference in Khan’s practice to an Egyptian painter – the only reference to a modern artist in his conversation with Ghouse.

⁵⁵ Concerning activities in private spaces, Khan recalls excitedly a “video-experiment” carried out in his bedroom in Heliopolis with his friend Abe’s camera: “I (made) a rope out of cloth and tie(d) the camera to the rope and suspended it from the ceiling of my room in my family house... twist the camera and then leave it and let it rewind unwind itself very fast and shoot the room...”. See Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 162. Khan’s activities with Hosny at the “Funhouse” are described mostly as social experiments rather than artistic experiments. One such experiment involved Hosny and Khan in a fit of injurious window breaking and inebriation that, we are told, tested the bonds of trust the pair established with their girlfriends who shared the space. As an aspect of Khan’s artistic formation specifically it is notable that the pair’s destructive misadventure, recalls the on-stage antics of Stooges frontman Iggy Pop. Given the name of the space, such behavior is given a degree of sub-cultural authority. See Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 175.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 205.

⁵⁷ See Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, “Cairo Atelier: The Haunt of the Corrupt Intellectual” (Day 13).

⁵⁸ See Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 33.

⁵⁹ See Hassan Khan and Nida Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, “Cairo Atelier: The Haunt of the Corrupt Intellectual” (Day 13), 15:00-18:00.

⁶⁰ Peter Burger dedicates a chapter section to precedents for the technique in Pablo Picasso’s collages and in the counter- (Nazi) propaganda posters of John Heartfield in his foundational *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. See Peter Burger. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Michael Shaw trans., *Theory and History of Literature* Vol. 4. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984/2011), 73-82.

⁶¹ In this view the Atelier audience’s charge would have been provoked by the foreign character and inauthenticity of Khan’s (*mu’āṣira*) montage. Indeed Khan’s use of images from the Egyptian Museum alongside contemporary city scenes suggests some sympathy with the *mu’āṣira* artists’ goal of transforming traditional (Pharaonic) iconography through an engagement with the “cosmopolitan” landscape of Cairo.

⁶² Khan’s more recent interventions in the official Cairene artworld have been both more impactful and more ambitious. Most controversially perhaps, in 2009 Khan, curator and artist Bassam El Baroni and artist Wael Shawky were invited to act as jurors at the 20th Annual Youth Salon. They formed a voting block of three within a ten-person jury in an attempt to restructure the traditional and state-sponsored art event. Established in 1989 as a venue for the professionalization and marketing of Egyptian artists (working mostly in painting and sculpture) the Salon was controversially re-structured by Khan et al. for the 2009 edition along the following lines: new media and installation works were to be included, fewer works overall were to be selected on the basis of clear and articulate justifications, and arranged with a well worked out curatorial strategy in mind. The resistance from art professors and Ministry of Culture officials to Khan’s and his allies’ approach – an approach intended to prevent favoritism and accurately reflect the full range of art practices in Cairo at the time - was severe. Khan discusses the controversy with Neda Ghouse in their conversation at the Delphina Foundation. See Hassan Khan and Nida Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, “Cairo Atelier: The Haunt of the Corrupt Intellectual” (Day 13), 24:00-44:00. For a very good account of the political context of the Salon controversy see Omnia El Shakry “Artistic Sovereignty in the Shadow of Post-Socialism: Egypt’s 20th Annual Youth Salon” *E-Flux Journal* #7 (June-August, 2009).

⁶³ Recent critical studies of Salih’s novel have focused on the frequent appearance in it of stereotypes of Arab women, and on its theme of cultural contamination. On Salih’s often patriarchal (if ironic) constructions of women in the novel see Oladosu Afis Ayinde, “The Female,

the Feminist and the Feminine: Re-reading Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North," *Studies in the Humanities* 35.1 (June, 2008), 99-117. On the anxiety of cultural contact in the novel see Patricia Geesey, "Cultural Hybridity and Contamination in Tayeb Salih's 'Mawsim al-hijra ilā l-Shamāl' Season of Migration to the North)," *Research in African Literatures* Vol. 2, No. 3 Arabic Writing in Africa (Autumn, 1997), 128-140. Khan's engagement with the novel is not extensive, and certainly not critical as are these recent studies of Salih. But his reverence for the author, his descriptions of sexual conquests and the mostly secondary roles given to women in his transcript suggest that a post-colonial feminist critique of Khan's work as well is possible. I will explore this tension in Khan's performance later in this chapter in connection with his emergent masculinity.

⁶⁴ In his essay "Egyptian Surrealism and 'Degenerate Art' in 1939" Don La Coss takes a close and insightful look at the discourse around the reception of European surrealism among a group of Egyptian writers and artists calling themselves "The Art and Liberty Group." Debates about the authenticity/derivativeness of this group – misnamed the "Degenerate Art Group" in an *Al-Risāla* article which appeared in July, 1939 – were bound by a civilizational logic (as the misnomer, taken from a Nazi sponsored exhibition of Modernist art by the same indicates). The question in press debates about the group, La Coss notes, concerned its Egyptian authenticity. In the course of his analysis of this discourse and the groups' composition and activities La Coss finds that this West/East civilizational binary simplifies the complex transformations surrealist ideas underwent in their absorption within Egypt. See Don La Coss, "Egyptian Surrealism and 'Degenerate Art' in 1939" in *Arab Studies Journal*, "Special Issue: Visual Arts and Arts Practices in the Middle East," (Spring, 2010), 79-110. This approach to Khan's work also seems appropriate. His transformation of surrealist strategies is considerable, as is his transformation of Egyptian Surrealist art history in stunts, such as the one visited earlier concerning an exhibition of meat, which was to be named after one of Egypt's leading surrealist painters El Gazzar.

⁶⁵ Indeed for Said the polemical and binary character of Orientalist thought and institutions is premised on this very separation of cultural traditions into Arabo-Islamic and Euro-American types. Said describes this habit of Orientalist mind (which is internalized in Middle Eastern Studies conducted by Arabs as well) as based on a "culturalist theory" (after A.L. Kroeber), and an understanding of cultures as monoliths or "syntheses." See Said *Orientalism*, 105, 298.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Harney has argued persuasively for a globalized reformulation of the art historical category of the avant garde. She notes, following work done on non-Western avant gardes by Okuwi Enwezor, Geeta Kapur and others that the strategies customarily described as avant gardist (montage, institutional critique, etc.) are transformed in non-Western art contexts. Furthermore, she argues that the European avant-garde itself was characterized by a profoundly historical and globally oriented interest in re-contextualization and re-capitulation. She cites Picasso's use of African masks in his analytic Cubist works and the Balinese influence on Artaud's "theatre of cruelty" as examples of such re-contextualization. See Elizabeth Harney, "Postcolonial Agitations: Avant-Gardism in Dakar and London," in *New Literary History*. Vol. 41, No. 4. (Autumn, 2010), 731-751.

⁶⁷ Paul Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Susan Emanuel trans. (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1996), 47.

⁶⁸ Bourdieu rehearses here a familiar narrative of the emergence of form as a guiding value for advanced art. Form was to be sought in art for Bourdieu, but also in more strictly art historical accounts such as Greenberg's, by concentrating on the specific capacities of a given medium. So it is that the quest for autonomy in late nineteenth-century France found writers shaking off pictorial language, and painters dispensing with literary themes and narrative devices. See Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, 138-9.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 54-57.

⁷¹ Ibid., 47.

⁷² There is some contextual overlap between Bourdieu's French avant garde and Khan's post-colonial Egyptian one. The figure of the "East" makes frequent appearances in the work of artists

at the center of Bourdieu's narrative such as Flaubert and Maxime Du Camp. Flaubert's *Salammbô* is among the handful of canonical French Orientalist literary works considered by Said in *Orientalism*. Du Camp's photography of Egyptian monuments (taken during a tour of the country with Flaubert) is part of the same Orientalist canon. Bourdieu's account of the emergence of the French avant garde does not take account of these and other artists' particular investments in the "Orient." This is an oversight in Bourdieu I think. It is however understandable in so far as Bourdieu's analysis is not focused on artworks per se – he does not examine the appearance of the Orient in Flaubert's novels for example. But the economic and political determinants of the 'field' in which Flaubert operated are only isolable from the colonial context analytically.

⁷³ Khan's invited but controversial role at the 20th Annual Youth Salon too suggests his awareness of the importance of the institution of salons – and his wariness of that institutions' appropriation by normative forces.

⁷⁴ Khan, 17 and in *AUC – the transcriptions*, 116.

⁷⁵ On the appearance of Sufism in literature from the region see Ziad Elmarsafy, *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012). Although Winegar considers the appearance of religious motifs in contemporary Egyptian art, no study to my knowledge deals specifically with the reception of Sufism in that context.

⁷⁶ Khan interestingly also mentions the entrepreneurial savvy of El Tohamy in his discussion with Ghouse. He recalls being particularly impressed with El Tohamy's highly effective means of disseminating audio or cassette tapes. Khan's obsession with El Tohamy was nurtured by an engagement with the singer's music on tape. See Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, 14 *Proper Nouns*, "Yassin El Tohamy: The *Munshid* Who Made Philosophical Poetry as Popular as *Coca Cola*" (Day 2), 00:00-26:00.

⁷⁷ Khan, 17 and in *AUC – the transcriptions*, 116

⁷⁸ The individuating value of Khan's experience seems to challenge Winegar's claim that the European avant garde requires of its adherents a withdrawal from social life, while the Egyptian artist (both *aṣīl* and *mu'āṣira*) is concerned to forge links between the individual and the collective. Here Khan enlists an experience of an Egyptian ritual and musical form to describe his isolation from, and individuality with respect to his friends. This is an avante garde gesture worked through an Islamic cultural form. In his interview with Neda Ghouse, Khan also describes a feeling of communion or community forged in the context of Sufi *mīlids* (a shared ritual in which dancers and singers lead participant/adherents toward an ecstatic state). In this way he seems to partake of both of the conditions of willed alienation and belonging that Winegar describes as distinct features of the European and Egyptian art contexts respectively. A further confusion of categories is at work in Khan's interest in what he sees as an intimate relation between the *sacred* Sufi musical form and the *profane* and popular Egyptian *sha'abī* music form. See Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, 14 *Proper Nouns*, "Yassin El Tohamy: The *Munshid* Who Made Philosophical Poetry as Popular as *Coca Cola*" (Day 2), 00:00-26:00.

⁷⁹ Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage Books: New York, 1996), 104.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 104.

⁸¹ Ibid., 246.

⁸² This is a reading of Khan's interest in Sufi music that supports my claim about his spirit and strategies of refusal. It is also possible to read Khan's interest in El Tohamy and the Sufi *moulids* as a kind of populist identification with working-class Egyptians who attend the *moulids* in droves, and a disidentification with middle and upper-middle class AUC students in Khan's midst who are happily insulated from such street culture. Khan's story about the *moulids* and Tohamy in the AUC context might well be intended to emphasize his sympathy with working-class Egyptians and shake off his middle class affiliation with AUC students. I am grateful to Laura Marks for this suggestion.

⁸³ Interview with Hassan Khan, recorded in Heliopolis in July, 2011. This is an odd and ironic lesson – concerning the artifice of film – to be taken from watching a New Realist filmmaker at work. Khan's taste for artifice is everywhere in evidence in his video production and in his writing on filmmaking. See the chapter in *Nine Lessons Learned From Sherif El Azma* entitled "Don't Trust Voiceovers Even if You Use Them All the Time," (Cairo: CIC, 2009), 24-28. Hassan

Khan's films and videos too make clear his interest in the filmmaker's technical manipulation of the film medium's indexical field. This can be seen in works such as *Conspiracy: Dialogue/Diatribes* (2006/10) and in his latest film *Blind Ambition* (2012) for example. In the former Khan re-orders the sequence of a scripted dialogue between two men in a living room in several scenes (I will return to this work in the Conclusion). In the latter several disconnected scenes are rendered formally consistent through Khan's use of a voice-over technique and by removing the ambient sounds of the recorded interaction (i.e., street-sounds). This interest in artifice is an aspect of Khan's more recent work. There is perhaps a more direct influence of the New Realist style (a mode of documentary realism) in Khan's earlier collaborative works with Amr Hosny and Sherif Al Azma; films such as *Lungfan* (1995) (with Amr Hosny) and *fuck this film* (1998) (with Sherif El Azma).

⁸⁴ Two points should be made here. First, the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman and the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky are two major but anomalous influences in national and generational terms, Khan acknowledges. Secondly, it is perhaps not a coincidence that most of the filmmakers Khan mentions (Lynch, Meyer, Warhol, Waters) are all of his parent's generation. This may be an indirect way of acknowledging the importance of his parents' generation's artistic and cultural contribution to his own practice. This could be read as a kind of displaced note of gratitude, or as a will to find and claim rather than simply inherit a legacy. I gratefully acknowledge Clare Davies's astute observations on this apparent anxiety of intergenerational influence in Khan's work.

⁸⁵ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 175.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 175-6.

⁸⁷ On Warhol's role in the gay subculture of the 1960s – 1980s see Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley and Jose Esteban Munoz eds. *Pop Out: Queer Warhol* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

⁸⁸ Hassan Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 176.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Khan says that he saw all of Meyers's films "in one go" in London. He notes that they were not as obscene as Waters's but remarks on Meyer's "playful fucking around" and associates this with Warhol's film *Lonesome Cowboys*. It is the spirit of play in Warhol's queer film oeuvre and in Meyer's "sexploitation films" that seems to hold Khan's interest.

⁹⁰ This aspect of Said's critique is important but perhaps overemphasized in the secondary literature. Nevertheless his hetero-normative bias seems clear in a section towards the end of the book on the use of sexual metaphors in classic and neo-Orientalist literature that figure the Arab man as "impotent" politically but threatening in numerical terms on account of his procreative capacity. Sex and gender are hopelessly confused it seems in Said's critique. On the one hand, the Arab man is imaginatively feminized in Orientalist art and literature (see Gerome's *The Snake Charmer* – a painting used for the cover illustration of Said's book). This seems to invite a reflection on the *constructedness of gender* in representations of the Orient. But what seems more urgent for Said is the quasi-social scientific construction of the Arab man as a threat, albeit an "impotent" one, on the basis of his capacity to reproduce, that is, on the basis of sex not gender. See for example, Said's discussion of "sexual metaphors" in the political analyses of Arab revolutions in work by P.J. Vatikiotis and Bernard Lewis. Said, *Orientalism*, 311-316.

⁹¹ This trope of the emasculated Arab man is not entirely avoided in Khan's performance. The condition of relative captivity the performance describes is an appearance of this trope in Khan's oeuvre but it is not the only one. His films *The Hidden Location* and *Transitions* too are full of such representations. Particularly the hustler character "Armando" in Khan's *Transitions* is a classic embodiment of the self-Orientalizing Arab man. "Armando" is shown seducing wealthy female tourists in Cairo with his guitar and his perfume shop. After successfully seducing a British tourist "Armando" appears sitting on her lap at a bar as she attempts, in a rather predatory gesture, to lick his cheek. The trope of the emasculated Arab man appears as well in *17 and in AUC* in the scene described earlier wherein a gay neighbor is found dead in "Sari's" apartment building, and Khan and several of his friends are questioned about the crime. Above I focused on this scene's association of state and institutional authority (and abuses of authority) and the crime's welcome intrusion in Khan's "boring" AUC experience. In connection with Khan's sexual subject formation

the scene seems to indicate in Khan's recollection of his AUC days a relationship between sexual identity and state power. The association of abuses of state power and the victimization of gay men – or their representation as passive – is identified by Hanadi Al-Samman in his study of modern Arabic literature dealing with the subject of homosexuality. He identifies this tendency to associate homosexuality and state politics (especially dysfunctional state politics) as a relatively recent phenomenon that betrays an internalization of Victorian homophobic sexual mores. See Hanadi Al-Samman, "Out of the Closet: Representation of Homosexuals and Lesbians in Modern Arabic Literature" *Journal Of Arabic Literature* 39 (2008), 270-310. For recent work on sexuality in the Arab world in general see Samir Khalaf and John H. Gagnon, *Sexuality in the Arab World* (London: Saqi Books, 2006).

⁹² Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). Massad and Jacob, as well as Sheehi make an important gain on Said in the following respect. While they employ in their work a Foucaultian approach to the analysis of discourses, they differ from Said in their insistence that European and Arab writing on the Arab world interpenetrate at the level of concept formation. While Said renders the European writing on the Arab world as a monolithic Orientalist enterprise, Sheehi, Massad and Jacob demonstrate that there was and remains a reciprocity (between Arab and European writers) that hybridizes key concepts in this literature. The point is made most convincingly by Jacob in his conceptual history (the method is taken from Reinhard Kosseleck) of "*al-riyāda*" or "fitness" in the nineteenth and twentieth-century Egyptian press. While Said issues an appeal in Orientalism to recognize the polyglot and hybrid nature of culture, he does not show how such hybridity is generated in the exchange between Arab and European writers and thinkers. On this interaction also see Ibrahim Abu Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963). In Khan's work, which is ultimately what I wish to examine by means of these authors' respective analytic strategies, an account of how hybrid and polyglot cultural products emerge is indispensable. As has been seen already, Khan's work is forged through an encounter with authors, filmmakers and artists from Europe and America on the one hand, and through a thorough engagement with his own local, national and cultural context in Cairo.

⁹³ Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 98. See especially Chapter One titled "Anxiety and Civilization."

⁹⁴ Ibid., 167. See Chapter Three titled "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." Massad's controversial category of "the gay international" is said to include gay rights groups and NGO's. Massad notes disapprovingly that these groups are staffed and funded largely by white, gay, male Americans or Europeans and operate on the basis of a kind of missionary impulse to bring enlightened sexual and identity politics to the Arab world. This missionary goal in the first instance reinforces the Orientalist civilizational dichotomy between Eastern backwardness (in this case, repression) and enlightened Western tolerance. But the more specific problem with this approach and *discourse* for Massad is that it is premised on a binary concept of "bounded sexual object choice" and aimed at "outing" and making visible a narrowly conceived gay community in the Arab world. As a result, for Massad the gay international does not account for the private phenomenon of polymorphous sexual practices and identities in the Middle East.

⁹⁵ Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940*, 24-5. The concept is explained provisionally in Jacob's introduction and then developed along several lines throughout the book. In its modification from the pre-colonial to the colonial era, Jacob notes provisionally that the traditional concept of *al-riyāda* (cultivation) took on the senses of "sporting" then "self-fashioning... in order to produce a genuinely modern national subject." The concept and discourse on *al-riyāda* was further developed in the popular press, as Jacob demonstrates through a close analysis of the magazine *al-Riyāda l-Badiniyya* (Physical Culture). In this magazine the concept was elaborated in a kind of pedagogical direction which implied prescriptions concerning sexual deviance and morality, the status of women, care of the body and normative heterosexuality. It is worth noting that Said's account of Palestinian physical culture – pictured in *After the Last Sky*, and in the description of the "karate expert" cited earlier – might be usefully read through Jacob's research on the colonial roots of physical culture in the region and male self-styling. I am grateful to Laura Marks for suggesting this connection.

⁹⁶ For example Jacob shows how the British informed and administered Boy Scout's movement of the early twentieth century was modified by the contemporaneous nationalist ideology of the *Wafd* to produce "junior *effendis*" who would rail against the British colonial authority and even incite the British to "hysterically scold" them as a "paedocratic regime." This effective queering of the figure of the Boy Scout attests to the instability of the signifiers of masculinity Jacob analyzes. See Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940*, 97.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁸ The category and feminist discourse of "queerness" is not engaged in Massad's book. This is an oversight pointed out by Francis S. Hasso in his review of the book and in an article entitled "Problems and Promise in Middle East and North Africa Gender Research," *Feminist Studies* 31, no. 3 (2005), 653-78. Hasso's review appears in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Volume 20, Number 3 (September, 2011), 652-656. For Hasso this oversight is a result of Massad's refusal to engage seriously with feminist authors on the subjects of the performance of gender. As a corrective to this oversight, I will supplement Massad's helpful recovery of a repressed Arab-Islamic tradition of polymorphous sex practice and poetry with key concepts from the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler concerning gender/queerness and homosociality.

⁹⁹ Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 41.

¹⁰⁰ The figure and term is a complex one for Jacob. He notes that it serves a purpose of "constitutive exclusion" in the "historical process of working out modern Egypt." See Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940*, 229.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 238-245.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of "homosocial desire" is derived from three methodological roots. Her Marxist-feminist approach enables an analysis of the relationship between gender, the family and class. Her source for this is Marx's treatment of ideology in *The German Ideology*. By considering sex and gender as features of ideology, Kosofsky Sedgwick aims to show how the asymmetrical relationships between men and women, and the homosocial dynamics that maintain this asymmetry are naturalized or constructed according to the norms of late-Capitalist, industrial society. Her second key source is Rene Girard's book *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*. From Girard's work, Kosofsky Sedgwick takes a "triangular graphic schema" meant by Girard to characterize the dynamics of erotic relationships in major European novels. The most important aspect of Girard's study for Kosofsky Sedgwick is that it shows how, in triangular erotic relationships, typically between two men and their shared female object of desire, the bonds that link the two rivals are as strong as those that link the rivals to their beloved. This then is the theoretical insight from which the theory of homosocial desire is directly drawn. But Girard's study is limited to the novelistic tradition. In order to prepare this strategy of primarily literary analysis for a broader social and political application, Kosofsky Sedgwick develops her model of homosociality in dialogue with readings of Levi-Strauss, Engels, Freud and Lacan. Key among these is Gayle Rubin's reading of Levi-Strauss in which the anthropological notion of "traffic in women" (between men) is discussed in social and symbolic terms as a key feature of patriarchal heterosexuality. See Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Chapter One: Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles," in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, 21-27.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁰⁹ In Lawrence's work, Kosofsky Sedgwick notes, the author dedicates his fight for the cause of Arab independence (against the British) to a young and enchanting Arab boy. In *Drood*, the figure of the East is more metaphorically inscribed in the protagonist's passifying and emasculating experiences on opium. See her chapter "Up the Postern Stair: *Edwin Drood* and the Homophobia of Empire" in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, 180-200.

¹¹⁰ The applicability of the concept of “homosociality” in the Middle Eastern context has been explored in work on Modern Arabic literature. Al-Samman explores homosocial dynamics in Egyptian author Sun’allah Ibrahim’s *Sharaf (Honour)* (1997). The story follows a disastrous and brief relationship between an Australian (*khawaga*/foreigner) named “John” and an Egyptian named Sharaf. John invites Sharaf to visit his apartment under false pretenses. Sharaf ends up killing John in self-defense after John attempts to rape Sharaf. Al Samman notes that John’s invitation, in the Egyptian homosocial context, would plausibly have been interpreted by Sharaf as a gesture of generosity from one man to another with no sexual overtones. The implicit critique in the novel turns on John’s awareness and exploitation of male homosocial bonds in Egypt (a greater degree of male to male affection is observable in the Egyptian context than in the European, American or in this case Australian context) for his sexual gratification. Al-Samman notes that “evidence of homosociability in Arabic literature is almost always interpreted as a form of latent homosexuality by Western scholars who are really projecting the West’s own homophobic obsession with homosexuality rather than remaining within the behavioral norms of Arabic culture.” See Al-Samman, “Out of the Closet: Representation of Homosexuals and Lesbians in Modern Arabic Literature,” 290. A more systematic and detailed study of Arabic homosocial context is available in Fedwa Malti-Douglas’s “Woman’s Body, Woman’s Word” *Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 15, 110, 146. The concept is very recently starting to be explored by artists and curators in the region. See work by Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari, Egyptian artist Mahmoud Khaled and a recent edited volume by Aleya Hamza and Edit Molnar, *Indicated by Signs: Contested Public Space, Gendered Bodies and Hidden Sites of Trauma in Contemporary Visual Art Practices* (Bonner Kunstverein, 2010).

¹¹¹ In art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau’s work on the French Napoleonic homosocial sphere the figure of “youthful masculinity,” at least as it appears in painting of the period, is “ephebic” or “androgenous.” For Solomon-Godeau, following Kosofsky Sedgwick, this iconographic splitting of the male subject between a heroic/virile and a passive/effeminate ideal type was a compensation for the progressive exclusion of women from the French public sphere. This process of exclusion culminated with the death of Marie Antoinette; a Jacobin purging that cemented the identification of the *ancien regime* and the aristocracy with the powers, hedonism and corruption of a feminine-ideal. This political purging was registered, as Solomon-Godeau notes in art history of the period as well with an iconographic purging of women from the canvases of Jacques-Louis David and the artists in his circle. I want to argue that the purpose served by the ephebe in Solomon-Godeau’s analysis finds an echo in Jacob’s treatment of *al-futuwwa*, and in Khan’s rendering of his homosocial sphere in which the forces associated with the *al-futuwwa* are privileged. On the “ephebic” figure of “difference-within” see Solomon-Godeau’s chapter “Ephebic Masculinity: The Difference Within,” in *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 98-175. For explicit inscriptions of the androgenous figure of youth in Khan’s work see *Rant* (2009).

¹¹² By way of anticipation, Khan’s peers and professors seem to alternately impress and repel him. The mechanisms of identification and dis-identification between Khan and his peers and professors differ as will be seen. The manner of identification and dis-identification I have in mind involves mediations. For example common musical and artistic interests mediate Khan’s identification with certain of his peers and collaborators. His disidentifications as well, are often described as a consequence of differences of taste or political orientation between Khan and his peers or professors.

¹¹³ Solomon-Godeau notes that the “obliteration of the feminine” in the public sphere was begun under the Jacobin dictatorship and “legally formalized with the promulgation of the Napoleonic Code.” She outlines this political fate of women in a chronology at the beginning of her book. It begins with the Revolutionary *Declaration of the Rights of Man* on Aug. 27, 1789 and Olympe de Gouges’s supplementary writing of *The Declaration of the Rights of Women* two years later, and concludes with the affirmation of a “principle of paternal authority” in the Napoleonic Code of 1804. See Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*, 15/47.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 45. The phrase “male trouble” is attributed in a note to a special issue of *Camera Obscura* 17 (May, 1988), but it is also a gloss on Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* published two years later. In both sources, and as Solomon-Godeau notes, at

issue primarily is the “denaturalization of masculinity” and the recognition that “it is not only femininity that is constructed (or subverted) within representational systems.” See Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*, 232.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 63-65

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 51. The account from which Solomon-Godeau draws most heavily is that of E.J. Delecluze in his memoir *Louis David: son école et son temps*.

¹¹⁷ Paul Amar’s work on masculinity within the Middle East has been helpful in setting parameters for the application of this notion of “male trouble” within the region. He notes that evolving figures of masculinity should be contextualized carefully to avoid generalizing a universal mode of male-trouble worked out initially in Euro-American scholarship on masculinity. He proposes for this purpose three broad discursive categories for organizing constructions of Arab masculinity. “Paternafare,” “workerist” and “security” discourses in Middle East masculinity studies for Amar have specified a kind of “emergent masculinity” in the Arab context that works against Orientalist etiological analyses of male dysfunction (sexual, political) in the region. See Paul Amar “Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of ‘Men in Crisis’ Industries of Gender in Revolution” in *Journal of Middle Eastern Women’s Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Fall, 2011), 36-70. Although Amar mentions important work being done on Arabic literature (Al-Samman’s work visited earlier for example) his three categories are primarily concerned with the relationship between state power and male subject formation. Among the most useful approaches to untangling this relationship for Amar is Jacob’s social historical approach in *Working Out Egypt*. As Al-Samman notes, a strictly political lens on masculine subject formation does not account for the full range of literary and artistic representations of male-male relations in the Arab-Islamic cultural tradition. Khan’s work, by contrast offers a representation of an “emergent masculinity” in the specific cultural and institutional context of the AUC and through an engagement with artistic collaborators and influences. Other approaches to the study of “emergent masculinities” in the Middle East focus on the figure of the “New Arab Man.” Marcia Inhorn has described this figure as a counterpoint to stereotypes of threatening, terroristic or otherwise unsavory Arab men in the mass media and dated ethnographic literature. Her study takes up the emergence of a “New Arab Man” in the age of biotechnology – and age in which infertile Arab men are increasingly going to great lengths to overcome infertility through various techniques of assisted reproduction. See Marcia Claire Inhorn, *The New Arab Man: Emergent Masculinities, Technologies, and Islam in the Middle East*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹¹⁸ Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*, 50.

¹¹⁹ In his conversation with curator Neda Ghouse at The Delphina Foundation in 2012 Khan does note this asymmetry but neglects to provide an explanation or justification for it. He recalls simply and unapologetically that although women were present at various performances and events organized by Khan and his male peers, “they were not producing the cultural material.” See Hassan Khan and Nida Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, “Ard El Golf” (Day 11), 59:30. This remark is prompted by a cheeky but provocative question from the audience concerning the absence of women in Khan’s and his friends’ bedrooms-cum-studios in Heliopolis. Ghouse adds in conversation with Khan she too noticed that the entire network of not only peers but also artistic influences in the transcript is male. The “fact” as Khan puts it, is simply acknowledged but not examined in the conversation.

¹²⁰ Hassan Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 205.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 185.

¹²³ Abe is mentioned as a contributor of the means of Khan’s group’s artistic production. Sherif El Azma and Khan use Abe’s bass guitar for their noise music experiments and Khan’s earliest bedroom video recordings were done on Abe’s camera. Khan remarks on an impressive “feedback” system Abe contrived with his video camera and TV. Here it seems Abe is not just a provider of means of artistic production but an artist in his own right. Nevertheless it is Abe’s image for Khan that seems most powerful. See Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 162/185.

¹²⁴ See Solomon-Godeau's treatment of David's *The Death of Joseph Barra* – it is a painting that for her functions to resolve “real social and sexual contradictions and conflicts” by figuring the male body at once in an ideal mode, a child-like mode, a utopian mode and a feminized mode. Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*, 138-139.

¹²⁵ Raphael's *The School of Athens* was painted between 1510-1511. It features a large group of philosophers, scientists, historians, mythological figures and political leaders from Classical antiquity to the Renaissance. Interestingly perhaps for the present purpose is the inclusion in the painting of the Andalusian-Muslim polymath and Aristotelian Ibn Rushd (Averroes, 1126-1198). He is featured looking over the shoulder of the Greek mathematician Pythagoras. I do not intend to push the comparison between Raphael's inclusion of a great Arabo-Islamic thinker in a picture of the Greek and European philosophical/scientific canon, and Khan's presence in a kind of group portrait of his peers at the American University. However the atmosphere of reverence in Raphael's work is I think approximated in Khan's as well.

¹²⁶ Jacques-Louis David painted *The Death of Socrates* in 1787. In it The Greek philosopher Socrates is pictured, as per the description in Plato's *Apology*, bravely accepting his punishment of death-by-hemlock for corrupting the Athenian youth. Here again the comparison with Khan's portrait of Abe's funeral is trained on a general atmosphere of reverence.

¹²⁷ Khan recalls Prof. Michael Ruse's fondness for an assignment in which the artist made use of a kind of cut-up writing technique (after that of William Burroughs and the Beat Poets). The same technique, used in a paper on John Donne, was less well received by Prof. Vitkus. Khan's praise for Vitkus is accordingly less enthusiastic. See Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 107/118.

¹²⁸ Khan's identification with Prof. Ruse is represented as being very strong. For Khan Ruse “was not just critical of the institution... because everybody is... he was really alienated from it... just a young professor who was doing it... I think maybe that's why I was interested in him and that's why he was interested in me.” A more subtle vote of confidence for an alienated professor appears in Khan's recollection of Prof. Birairi – an Arabic Literature professor who is described as “decent” in spite of working at the AUC. See Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 54/186.

¹²⁹ Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*, 50.

¹³⁰ Khan recalls the party vaguely. It was either a “whipping and poetry” event or a “cannibal love festival” – both of which were organized by Khan and his friend Sari. It is interesting to note that the only visual detail given regarding Vitkus concerns his *authoritative* stature: “I just remember him standing on the balcony he was very tall and I was talking to him... there was... an old chair with stuff put on top of it and I was standing on top of that talking to him...” See Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 138.

¹³¹ Ibid., 118.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Abigail Solomon-Godeau outlines a spectrum of male-to-male relations within the homosocial sphere, “running the gamut from awed hero worship to Oedipal rejection.” Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*, 51. A longer discussion of this aspect of the theory of homosociality appears in Kosofsky Sedgwick's first chapter entitled “Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles.” Of particular importance for the present purpose is Kosofsky Sedgwick's interest in anthropological interpretations of the Oedipal relation among men that emphasize the patriarchal function of a symbolic and actual “traffic in women.” Kosofsky Sedgwick singles out Gayle Rubin's readings of Levi-Strauss, Freud and Lacan in this connection. See Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, 25-6.

¹³⁴ On the concept of a symbolic and actual “traffic in women” see Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, 25-6.

¹³⁵ Khan describes a ritual before Shoukri's 8:00 a.m. class whereby he would arrive at school early to smoke a marijuana “joint.” Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 101.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 107. Khan does not specify what “it” is exactly that introduces this element to the literature department. He thereby runs the risk of reinforcing a stereotype concerning the attraction of women to literature (as opposed to social sciences and hard sciences). I would like to examine a more gender critical possibility in this passage. But the risk of stereotyping is in no way thus

neutralized. Indeed my account of Khan's emergent masculinity is premised on a tension between patriarchal and gender critical positions that he seems to occupy alternately in *17 and in AUC*.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Khan's manipulation in and of the mostly female class (or his disidentification with the confessional form of the song) might be equally regarded as identification with a normative masculinity. Once again for all Khan's gender critical efforts there is a persistent risk in his transcript of reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes of women. I gratefully acknowledge Amelia Jones's careful observations on this point.

¹³⁹ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 107.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ This wider cultural critique is perhaps most in evidence in Khan's essay on "The Corrupt Intellectual" – he embarks there on an interrogation of the figure of the intellectual specifically and by implication the male figure of charismatic authority within Egyptian political culture. See Hassan Khan, "In Defense of the Corrupt Intellectual," in *E-flux Journal* #18 (September, 2010).

¹⁴² Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*, 51.

¹⁴³ See Anouar Abdel Malek on Nasser era socialization of education and Egyptian technocracy. Anouar Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society, The Army Regime, The Left and Social Change Under Nasser*, (New York: Random House, 1968). On the colonial and post-colonial technocratic culture in Egypt see Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

Conclusion: Six Characters and a Post-Colonial Critic

I. Two “Exemplary” (Hybrid Arab) “Positions”

In his paper “The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions” published in 1978, the year before *Orientalism*, Said critically examines the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida.¹ In the paper, as was already mentioned, Said argues for the superior critical and political power of Foucault’s spatially and institutionally attuned position as compared with Derrida’s overly textual one. Nevertheless, Said’s criticism of the textual attitude in particular and Orientalist dogmas in general involves strategies derived from both of these French writers’ thought, namely the strategies of discourse analysis and deconstruction. That is to say, the *problem* of the textual attitude is described in Said’s work in spatial and institutional terms as a function of (French, British and later American) imperial/neo-imperial interests in the Middle East, and as a function of writing styles in philological and language-based studies of “Arab mind” and “character” (in the work of Renan, De Sacy and later Bernard Lewis and his colleagues in the Euro-American Middle Eastern studies establishment). Said’s critique of these Orientalist constructions involves both a searching analysis of the discourses in which they circulate and a deconstruction of the language with which they are articulated.

In this dissertation I have tried to show how, in addition to Said’s well-known critique of Orientalism, a special place is reserved in his thought for the critical task of artistic self-representations of Arabs. These self-representations for Said, as described in his work on Arabic prose and prose fiction, and in *ATLS*

constitute a “counter-proposal” to Orientalist dogmas. As I have argued certain aspects of this counter-proposal are taken further in work by Hassan Khan.

My aim in this dissertation has been, in a sense, to describe two other exemplary positions: Edward W. Said’s and Hassan Khan’s. As has been seen both Said and Khan enlist or allude to strategies of (Foucaultian) discourse analysis and (Derridean) deconstruction in their respective work. Foucault is invoked at the beginning of *I7 and in AUC* in Khan’s account of the “I that speaks,” a reflection on Foucault’s analysis of enunciative positions and authorship. And Khan’s deconstructive strategies are plain to see in the highly mediated nature of the performance, in his memory, recording and transcription of his university experience. Furthermore I have argued that Khan’s work deconstructs the concept of rooted authenticity (*aṣāla*) on which ethnographic discourses of national Egyptian identity have historically been based. The positions at stake here are not primarily those of the French writers Derrida and Foucault. I have tried to bring into dialogue Said’s and Khan’s work in order to describe their respective but comparable positions as complex Arab-American and Anglo-Arab subjects respectively. If their positions are *exemplary*, it is because such hybrid subject-formations contest, and, as I have tried to show, refuse the essentializing constructions of “Arab mind,” “temperament,” “character,” etc. on which Orientalist dogmas are based.

In the course of describing these two exemplary positions however, it has been seen that Khan’s work is best understood in dialogue with recent literature in Middle Eastern studies of/in anthropology (El Shakry and Winegar) and gender (Massad and Jacob). In this respect Khan’s position, I argue, exceeds the terms of

Said's critique of the culture of Middle Eastern studies before and up to the time of *Orientalism*'s publication in the 1970s. Khan's work nevertheless responds to Said's call for Arab artistic self-representations in crucial ways. And Said's attunement to formal details of such representations (in Arabic prose and in the photographs of Jean Mohr, if these latter can reasonably be said to constitute Arab *self*-representations) has provided a useful guide in my analysis of the formal details of Khan's work.

In part, I have focused on Said's and Khan's exemplary *hybrid* positions to avoid the traps of generalizing, in the manner of Orientalist scholarship, an exemplary or essential Arab identity. As was mentioned in the Introduction, I have been concerned with a characterization of their critical *imagination and narration of Arabs* rather than with their "*Arab*" *imaginations* (whatever this might mean). Against this latter and related construction of Arab identity, my analysis has emphasized the numerous and fraught *identifications* and *disidentifications* that structure Said's and Khan's respective works. I have endeavored, through such a focus, to show how Said and Khan by different means and in their different historical, institutional and cultural contexts, emerge as complex subjects and thinkers who share and embody a spirit of refusal (i.e., a refusal of Orientalist constructions of Arab identity).

Such a double portrait has involved the use of several theoretical frameworks - from Foucault's discourse theory, to Barthes's semiotic theory of myths, to Bourdieu's structuralist theory of the avant-garde, and finally to the theory of homosociality in Kosofsky Sedgwick's and Solomon-Godeau's work. My analysis of Said and Khan has also involved critical reflections on several

figures: from stereotypical figures of Semitic and Arab-Islamic alterity, to figures of Palestinian resistance and emergence, to Winegar's figures of the *aṣīl* and *mu'aṣira* artistic types, and finally to figures of *Effendi* and *Al-futuwwa* masculinity. In the course of the study, I have argued that the work of Said on Arab representations in literature and photography, and Khan's performance art practice oblige a more nuanced account of "Arab presence" than one finds in the Orientalist writing critiqued by Said. The theoretical framework and corresponding figure that have emerged as primary in this study are Anglo-American speech-act theory and the figure of the speaking subject in what Austin calls a "total speech situation" or context.

Such a framework has, I hope, clarified the stakes of both Said's and Khan's approaches to Arab representations. It has also specified the nature and direction of Said's and Khan's respective *refusals* of Arab/Orientalist stereotypes. By attending to the historical and everyday *contexts* of literary and photographic representations of Arabs in the essay on Arabic prose and in *ATLS* Said refuses both decontextualized and ahistorical constructions of "Arab mind," "temperament," etc. and grossly over-politicized representations of Palestinians. The speech act framework also suggests that Said, in spite of this effort, locates Arab and especially Palestinian life perhaps too inflexibly in a geographical, national and cultural context. This is understandably a requirement of his work of advocacy on behalf of Palestinians. But as has been seen, the strategy leads in Said's writing to a somewhat essentialized (and gendered) account of Palestinian and Arab experience.

Khan's refusal, I argue, is directed at the speech act-theoretical coupling of speech (or text) and context. By means of various strategies of mediation Khan's *17 and in AUC* holds in suspension and separates the elements of his speech situation. These separations and mediations constitute the form and critical power of his work. I argue furthermore that these separations correspond with a form of cultural politics – an avant-garde politics of heterodoxy, and a gender critical politics of emergent masculinity. By bringing *17 and in AUC* into a dialogue with the work of El Shakry and Winegar, I have also argued that Khan's separation of his performative speech act from the immediate and remembered context of its production achieves a critical uprooting of the historically rooted (or culturally and geographically contextualized) Egyptian and Arab ethnographic subject.

This strategy of separation (and refusal) in Khan's work moves beyond the curatorial use of the speech act framework in Harutyunyan's program for *You Tell Me*. As has been seen, Harutyunyan's program, and specifically her sequencing of works in *You Tell Me* runs the risk of pathologizing and then redeeming an ideal Arab subject that is conceived as tightly bound to an Arab cultural and linguistic context. In what follows, and to conclude this study, I will place Khan's work *17 and in AUC* in a sequence with two of his later works to illustrate a movement in his practice against and away from such a coupling of speech acts and their contexts (linguistic, cultural and geographic).

I argue that this movement in Khan's oeuvre can be traced across the 2003 performance *17 and in AUC*, the 2006-2010 video *Conspiracy (Dialogue/Diatribes)* and the 2010 digital animation *Dead Dog Speaks*. By way of anticipation, I contend that in these latter two works Khan goes considerably

further than he does in *I7 and in AUC* toward a representation of Arabs in which speaking positions and speech acts are held apart from their national, cultural and geographic contexts. In this way Khan develops the critique of rooted Arab or Egyptian authenticity I have detailed in connection with the work of El Shakry and Winegar.

As has been my approach throughout the dissertation, I will be making use of a *theoretical framework* in what follows, to show how particular constructions or *figures* of Arabs are interrogated and ultimately refused by Khan. The speech act framework will serve the purpose in the following analysis of distinguishing speech acts and speaking contexts, and of gauging the critical distance Khan's art inserts between these two aspects of the "total speech situation." This distance or separation, once again, derives its critical power through an engagement with the figure of the rooted Egyptian ethnographic subject visited in the work of El Shakry and Winegar. However I aim to show how Khan, in *Conspiracy* and *Dead Dog Speaks* goes further than he does in *I7 and in AUC* toward deconstructing such an ethnographic subject. In this connection, the relevant *figure* will be that of the "native informant" -- a general category for the ethnographic subjects described in El Shakry's and Winegar's studies, but also in much of Said's work on Orientalism. This is the key theoretical *figure* that will guide the analysis to follow.

There is also, in *Conspiracy* and *Dead Dog Speaks* a specific historical context from which Khan withdraws such a figure, or in relation to which he interrogates the figure of the "native informant." Whereas the key context of Khan's performance piece *I7 and in AUC* is that of The American University in

Cairo and greater Cairo (contexts from which Khan attempts to gain a critical distance as I have shown), in my analysis of *Conspiracy* and *Dead Dog Speaks* I will be examining the way in which Khan marks a critical distance or withdrawal from the historical context of the *Naksa* or Arab-Israeli war of 1967. This particular context was crucial as well in Said's account of Arabic prose and prose fiction visited in Chapter One. In showing how Khan develops a strategy of representation in his work that both engages this particular context and exceeds it (by *formal* means as I will argue) Said's work will once again be useful. In particular I will be considering how the critical power of Khan's work depends in part on his use of the formal strategies of reflexive narration, nonperiodic scene structures, and substitutive characterization described by Said in Arabic prose after 1967.² Here too then, and in conclusion I aim to show how Said's and Khan's exemplary positions can be coordinated to produce a critique of a particular construction of Arab identity.

II. Khan's Fighting Words and Floating Figures in *Conspiracy*:

***Dialogue/Diatribes* (2006/10) and *Dead Dog Speaks* (2010)**

Khan's video *Conspiracy: Dialogue/Diatribes* (fig. 39) follows an alternately fraternal, hilarious, and hostile conversation between two middle-aged and apparently middle-class Egyptian men in the comfortable setting of a sparsely decorated bourgeois apartment. The work is divided into six scenes, across which Khan edits and recomposes the two characters' assigned scripts. The dialogue/diatribes is almost schizophrenic in its jarring turns from expressions of affection, from nostalgia, to exchanges of colorful insults. The actors, Mahmoud

El Lozy and Mohamed Safa' Amer, converse over cups of coffee (*ahwa*) and cigarettes—their ritual consumption adds a degree of continuity to an otherwise rambling exchange. Khan's lingering shots of the pair's able handling of cups, lighters, and other instruments of leisure, especially at the opening of each scene, add a material and fetishistic dimension to the dialogue. The pair's words, which command undivided attention initially, emerge over the course of the six scenes as an effect of the (physical and filmic) environment in which they are uttered.

The immediate domestic context of the pair's dialogue conceals a displacement from the public space of a Cairo café (*ahwa*), Khan's source and inspiration for the script, to a private one.³ The polemical structure of the script as well is derived from interminable debates Khan observed over the years in such public places between socialist-oriented Nasserists and their capitalistic opponents whose sympathies were with Nasser's successor Anwar Sadat and his "open door" (*Infitāḥ*) economic policies.⁴

There are also a number of references in this work to the psychosocial, economic, and political legacy of 1967.⁵ The by turns conspiratorial, excessively fraternal, nostalgic, and combative tone of the conversation corresponds with the heady and paranoid atmosphere of 1967, a moment that was infused with the psychodynamics of the Cold War. The particular structural effects of this moment are also registered in two of the pair's anecdotes, about nepotism in the supposedly free market and a total lack of transparency in the Egyptian bureaucracy.⁶ These stories are offered without context; still, Khan seems to suggest, perhaps by means of this vagueness, that they are typical or generic experiences for Egyptian citizens and business people.

The pair's grievances about socioeconomic and governmental problems then turn to objects of more petty and personal griping: about "a coffin-like table," "a crooked collar, small buttons and a terrible fabric," a "hairstyle," a "tie," and a figurine of a carousel horse, a "terrible horse (with a) spike jutting out of him" on a base for which the pair can find no aesthetic justification.⁷ These refusals of the domestic and sartorial mainstays of Egyptian bourgeois existence give way to personal attacks: from nearly corporal insults such as "have you forgotten yourself, I am your master" and "when you see me you should stand up and salute," to more class-specific ones such as "I was never a bureaucrat but you have always eaten from other people's hands."⁸ It is not difficult to discern in these fighting words traces of a complex post-1967 reckoning with the residues of military society, and indeed with the more distant cultural memory of colonial subjugation.

In this piece, too, Khan's art is shaped by strategies of mediation and separation. Whereas in *17 and in AUC* Khan's monologue was technologically mediated (the isolation of the speaker from his audience) and ultimately presented as a transcribed version of the performance itself—as physical text—in *Conspiracy*, too, the pair's heavily edited dialogue is often shaped by the materials and objects that surround them. The work's references to the legacy of 1967, and indeed to any particular Egyptian context, be it the *ahwa* that provided a model for the work or the pair's frustrated experiences in the market and with the Egyptian bureaucracy, have their basis in a specific material context rather than in abstract historical references.

In the digital animation *Dead Dog Speaks* (fig. 40), Khan simulates a dialogue between digitally rendered interlocutors. The figures float against a monochromatic background that changes imperceptibly over the course of the animation from red to orange, exchanging positions on the screen and even voices. In this work Khan achieves a total separation of the speaking figures from their contexts by digital means.

Whereas *I7 and in AUC* reveals a taste for reflexive and excessively mediated narration, and whereas *Conspiracy* exploits and interrogates the unit of the scene to satirize middle-class political discourse in Egypt, *Dead Dog Speaks* is structured around the principle of substitution. Here Khan's formal, that is, nonreferential and context-free, rendering of language reaches its logical and indeed most absurdist limit. The dialogical and often argumentative form of the *Conspiracy* script is dominant in *Dead Dog Speaks*, too. But this time around the interlocutors are digital animations: a bodiless, mustachioed man, a legless woman in a black dress, and a Pekinese exchange quips, positions on the screen, and voices.⁹ Their interaction is translated in a speech box at the bottom left of the screen, where a further substitution takes place—each figure is rendered there as a pixelated icon. The video begins with the following exchange: “me/me/you/who?/ you/why are you standing here?/why are you standing here?/get out of my way/you get out of my way.”¹⁰ The dialogue continues in this fashion for a few brief seconds, before the figures are shuffled on the screen and a new, equally unresolved dialogue commences.

The script's language is almost completely emptied of propositional content. It is replete with verbs—looking, going, standing, saying, meaning,

etc.—but the action never refers to a direct object. Khan’s use of language here is nameless and objectless, but made lively by means of imperatives, exclamations, frequent moments of conflict, and fleeting moments of resolution. In *Dead Dog Speaks* Khan satirizes popular discourse, its constantly renewed struggle for consensus, by ventriloquizing part humans and a dog in a sort of gendered, interspecies symposium (perhaps Beckett’s tragicomic and absurdist oeuvre is a more apt comparison than Plato’s *Symposium*). Khan’s satirical impulse, it might be argued, manifests a political frustration (as satire always does) and indeed a withdrawal from conventional politics into art.

III. Khan’s “Six Characters” and the Time of the Native Informant

Against any fixed or essentializing notions of Egyptian and, by extension, Arab identity, Khan stages, often playfully, a highly mediated process of artistic and political identity formation. The six characters who populate Khan’s *17 and in AUC*, *Conspiracy* and *Dead Dog Speaks* do not describe an ideal or emergent Arab or Egyptian identity. Rather they imply a withdrawal from such constructions and the discourses, both nationalist and ethnographic, on which they are based. In place of a monolithic concept of Egyptian identity, Khan offers fleeting but powerful portraits of mediated and interminable processes of identity formation - his own within the AUC, those of the two men in *Conspiracy* in the confines of a middle-class Cairene apartment, and those of three digitally animated avatars in the simulated space of a video artwork (*Dead Dog Speaks*).

In Khan’s work, strategies of separation are used to hold the problem of Egyptian identity in suspension. Perhaps most famously, Egyptian President

Gamal Abdel Nasser had projected himself into the heroic role of regional liberator, and nominated himself as an exemplary Arab consciousness in the process. In his *Philosophy of the Revolution*, Nasser imagines his role in Egypt's national emergence through a gloss on a play by Luigi Pirandello. He writes:

[A]s I sit alone in my study with my thoughts wandering away...I...recall...a well-known story by the Italian poet Luigi Pirandelli [sic]...called 'Six Personalities in Search of Actors.'...The annals of history are full of heroes who carved for themselves great and heroic roles and played them on momentous occasions on the stage. History is also charged with great heroic roles which do not find actors....I always imagine that in this region...there is a role wandering aimlessly about seeking an actor to play it.¹¹

This gloss on Pirandello's farcical and proto-absurdist play betrays the ambition and insecurity that characterized Nasser's political career and the entire project of pan-Arab nationalism. The interlude in Nasser's essay follows several attempts at a more sober and less figurative narrative of Egypt's national emergence—from Mohamed Ali's 19th-century Mameluk purge to Colonel Arabi's 1881 drive for a constitution and parliamentary government and Saad Zaghloul's *Wafdist* resistance to British occupation. However, the key moment around which Nasser elaborates his account of Egypt's history is July 23, 1952, the date of the Free Officers' seizure of the government of King Farouk. This date appears throughout the essay as a touchstone, organizing the view of Egypt's future and fulfilling the struggles of its past. It is a teleological device for Nasser that inscribes him in the Pirandellian motif visited above, as the personality or, in his words, the "Arab consciousness" best fit for the beckoning role of regional liberator.

By contrast Khan stages the impossibility of an authentic Arab or Egyptian consciousness in his work. Such a figuration of impossible Arab identity not only constitutes a withdrawal from the *Naksa* and its memory in Egyptian nationalist discourses; Khan further develops his politics in relation to another critical figure, the so-called *native informant*. Native informants have been indispensable in historical and recent ethnographic studies of the Middle East. Perhaps one of the better-known “native informants,” described by Said as a “principle informant” in his book *Orientalism*, was Sheikh Ahmad, who secured Edward William Lane’s access to “Muslim behavior” for his proto-ethnographic study, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*.¹² Like Said’s, Khan’s engagement with this figure, as I will argue, interrogates the mechanisms of its discursive construction.

In *17 and in AUC*, *Conspiracy*, and *Dead Dog Speaks* Khan variously problematizes the figure of a reliable and geographically or nationally embedded Egyptian informant by resolving that figure into the different parts (linguistic, visual, etc.) out of which it is constructed for and by the ethnographic gaze. By presenting the figures in his work (including his own) as uprooted and inauthentic, Khan sends up the ethnographic concept of a culturally and geographically rooted authenticity (*aṣāla*) on which the claims and counterclaims to Egyptian national and ethnic identity have traditionally been based.¹³

Khan’s refusal to present an exemplary Arab or Egyptian subject short-circuits any attempt to cast his characters as native informants or transparent sources of ethnographic information. Khan ultimately turns the native informant into a kind of obdurate *form*, a figure that presents linguistic and visual content but withholds *information* of the kind sought by ethnographers: in Khan’s work

the “native” is a form in excess of the kind of *information* the native informant is expected to provide.

Khan’s use, in *I7 and in AUC*, of an autobiographical mode also responds critically to the ethnographic tradition of the “native informant.” Khan offers an autobiographical narrative rather than mere testimony for a possible ethnography. That is, he offers the reader an autobiographical *form* (of the transcript) rather than ethnographic *information*. In this respect Khan’s performance reclaims what is denied to the native informant in ethnographic literature, namely autobiography.¹⁴ To be sure information could be extracted from the transcript for ethnographic purposes. But Khan takes care to present the information about his experience at the AUC as something that is unsuited for such purposes. The artist carries out his remembering under the adverse conditions of a fourteen-day performance, and he relies on friends to supplement and correct his partial recollection of his undergraduate years at AUC.

A sample taken from Khan’s transcription of the performance indicates how information in the work is made, if not useless for ethnographic purposes, then at least opaque:

I went to this guy’s house once some guy hung around with us for a bit he used to wear cowboy boots and he lived somewhere in Zamalek I went to his house which was all aristocratic it was an old house it had the aura of what was supposed to be aristocratic but somehow was easily just bad taste he had a pool table I watched Live at Pompeii at his house it wasn’t so interesting so anyway I feel like I’ve covered a lot of ground over the last four days every time it’s a surprise where the attack comes from...¹⁵

The passage to be sure is colorful but not quite specific enough to provide a basis for any concrete analysis, ethnographic or otherwise, of the significance of this

relationship or experience in Khan's formation. The anecdote is located in Zamalek, but otherwise not contextualized. The memory is intrusive and out of sequence with the rather cryptic reference to "surprise attacks" that follows. We are not told any more about the attack Khan refers to here. The man referred to in the passage is not named, and Khan's memory of him seems to be hung mostly on a vivid but unexplained image of cowboy boots, some "uninteresting" concert footage and an apartment that offends the artists' subjective taste. This passage is in many respects a characteristic for the entire transcript. The lack of punctuation and coherent sequencing of ideas constitutes a kind of noise (in the cybernetic sense) that undermines the reader's effort to organize the information given.¹⁶ At the level of the text, Khan overwhelms the reader with information about his AUC years. The text and transcription thus mark the graphic element—the *grapheme*—in Khan's autobiography as an unsettling force.¹⁷

The notion of a geographically located, fixed, and unique collective or empirical Egyptian subject is complicated in Khan's works. As El Shakry notes, such a subject is at the center of civilizational nationalist discourses and indigenous ethnographic writing in Egypt.¹⁸ Khan's figures, as has been seen, are separated from their contexts—institutional, geographical, historical and otherwise. In place of a subject fixed geographically and inserted in a teleological drift toward national emergence, Khan stages his figures as suspended from their immediate environments and as caught in an often cyclical time. This cyclical temporality is perhaps most in evidence in *Conspiracy* and *Dead Dog Speaks*. Furthermore, Khan's employment of a nonperiodic and nonteleological time constitutes a refusal of the teleological (colonial and civilizational) premise of

nationalist and ethnographic discourses on Egyptian identity (as described by El Shakry).

The concept of authenticity and its cognates (rootedness and location or *aṣāla* in the discourses reviewed by El Shakry and Winegar) appear in *17 and in AUC*, *Conspiracy*, and *Dead Dog Speaks* in isolated but important moments. In the transcript of *17 and in AUC* Khan debunks the concept by associating it with the “illusion” and the posture of being a “radical” student.¹⁹ Khan here offers a reason (among several) for his refusal of student politics described in the last chapter. In the second instance where the notion of *aṣāla* makes its appearance in *17 and in AUC*, Khan, in a similarly skeptical tone, reflects on the way in which his performance engages with and cultivates an “image” that has “nothing to do with authenticity...nothing to do with being real at all.”²⁰ Rather he describes his recollection of his university years as an attempt at “reading the surface.”²¹ Far from laying claim to a rooted Egyptian national identity, Khan views authenticity as a function of subcultural belonging at the AUC and among his peers.

In *Conspiracy* the concept of rooted authenticity is invoked in a characteristically hostile (and humorous) exchange between the two actors. In the first moments of the dialogue, one actor attempts to put his friend in his place: “stop play acting, you can’t fool me, you know your roots as well as I do.”²² The discussion is not continued, and the charge or threat is passed over on the way to a more amiable moment in the dialogue. Khan’s satirical vision of an unproductive polemics suggests once again his skepticism with regard to rootedness. In the

dialogue that makes up *Conspiracy*, rootedness is a form of deterministic constraint that recalls the idea of *aṣāla* as a “pure” or “noble” inheritance.²³

Finally, in *Dead Dog Speaks* there is a less hostile but equally unresolved appearance of the concept of rootedness in the figures’ debates regarding their relative locations on the screen: “why are you standing here?/why are you standing here?/get out of my way,” and later “here or there it doesn’t matter/ it does matter/ it always matters/ok fine.”²⁴ In this work, the concept of geographical or environmental rootedness gives way to a highly abstract and always relative or relational concept of position. Not only do the figures float over a shifting red-to-orange monochromatic field (a far cry from the ethnographic field to be sure), their voices as well are uprooted and swapped or substituted. Physical and speaking positions are thereby unhinged from any explanatory ground or context.

The formal features of Khan’s work— reflexive narration (in *17 and in AUC*), nonperiodic scene structures (in *Conspiracy*), and substitutive characterization (in *Dead Dog Speaks*)—correspond with those of Arabic prose and prose fiction after the 1948 *Nakba* and the 1967 *Naksa* as this literature is described by Said.²⁵ The forms and devices in question, according to Said, would address a “paradoxical (Arab) present” generated by the experience of 1948 and its repetition in 1967.²⁶ While Khan employs the strategies (of reflexive narration, nonperiodic scene structures, and substitutions) identified by Said in the fiction of Ghassan Kanafani, Naguib Mahfouz, and others, unlike these writers he does not make claims on behalf of a lost or threatened Arab or Egyptian identity. His art thus complicates the testimonial function of the literature Said discusses.

Nevertheless, reflexive narrative strategies, nonperiodic scene structures, and various forms of substitution enable Khan to describe a temporality of withdrawal from the legacy of the 1967 *Naksa*. Nasser's triumphal reflections on the 1952 revolution describe a process of national emergence. The temporality he invokes is thus teleological. The *aṣāla/mu'āṣira* artists discussed by Winegar as well, by virtue of their respective claims to an authentic Egyptian national cultural identity, inscribe themselves in a teleological historical narrative. By contrast, history in Khan's three works is not conceived as teleological or progressive, but rather mediated (mnemonically and institutionally in *17 and in AUC*) and cyclical (in *Conspiracy* and *Dead Dog Speaks*). Khan stages his uprooted and inauthentic "native informants" in just such a mediated and cyclical time.

In *17 and in AUC* Khan does not view himself as an authentic Egyptian artist, but rather as a consciousness at once embedded within and cut loose from a particular Egyptian context—by his own description "a consciousness on the brink."²⁷ His techniques of staging are to be found in the details of the built environment of the performance. The one-way-mirrored-glass box in which the performance is carried out disrupts visual access to a hypothetical "interlocutor" (ethnographer), and indeed the monologue of the performance forecloses the possibility of any dialogical exchange. With this separation of speaker and listener, Khan seems to dramatize and undermine the ethnographic relation. But he also separates his narrative from a historical, geographical, and cultural ground of explanation.

Unlike *17 and in AUC*, *Conspiracy* is broken up into a nonperiodic scene structure, with the scenes not strung along a conventional narrative trajectory from beginning to middle to end. The dialogue is rather reordered from one scene to the next: parts of the dialogue that appear early in one of the scenes might make an appearance in the middle or end of another scene. In each of the work's six scenes the same speaking parts appear. The entire script is used in each scene, but its parts are recomposed from one scene to the next. The time of the pair's dialogue is thus cyclical insofar as the script is recycled from one scene to the next. Khan's reiteration of the elements of the script in the work's respective scenes encourages a consideration of the work for its style rather than for the content of its dialogue. The artist is less interested in *what* the actors say than in how and where they speak, their style and the sincerity and effectiveness of what they say. With this emphasis on manners of speaking over the contents of speech, Khan exposes the pair's language as a medium and instrument of idiomatic communication—as a pragmatic rather than a veridical tool of representation.

Khan's most heavy-handed manipulation of the script of *Conspiracy* appears in the fifth scene. After some introductory exchanges of vitriol, the scene unfolds in quick cuts as follows: "no/yes/maybe/yes/no/for sure/god willing/like that/of course/alright/I wish/how/is that it/it's done/ exactly/fine/what/ok/what."²⁸ This rapid exchange of speech-acts, completely free of propositional content, shows language as a highly abstract medium, an idiomatic *form* in which the pair's differences, ambivalence, wishes, religiosity, and magnanimity are contained—but without expressing any particular disagreement, ambivalence, wish, and so on, that is, without conveying ethnographically useful information.

At the beginning of the fifth scene Khan recomposes the dialogue on the basis of a logics of opposition. Clearly, this abstract aspect of the dialogue in *Conspiracy* falls short of the ideally veridical testimony of a paradigmatic “native informant.”

In his conversation with curator Neda Ghouse, Khan explained that *Conspiracy* was conceived as a “coded social portrait” of a polarized and staid national debate on the legacies of Presidents Nasser and Sadat.²⁹ Khan’s shot/countershot strategy and the oppositional logic of the dialogue highlight the polemical nature of this debate. In this respect Khan takes up the discourse on authenticity in a rather oblique and irreverent manner. Instead of rehearsing claims and counterclaims to rooted authenticity, Khan uproots and abstracts the dialogue in such a way that only the bare claims but not the evidence typically rallied in support of them are made to appear. In this social portrait of middle-class Egyptian identity, Khan withdraws from the Egyptian middle class’s endless debates about the relative merits of Nasser and Sadat. Through his representation of the pair’s dialogue as cyclical (rather than linear), Khan highlights the repetitious and unproductive nature of these debates. No resolution, it seems, is possible.

In *Dead Dog Speaks* no references, explicit or oblique, to 1967 or its aftereffects can be discerned. In fact, the very possibility of a social-historical or an ethnographic interpretation of the work is foreclosed since the dialogue is carried on entirely free from contextual determinants. This may be a gesture of withdrawal that describes a specifically negative relation to the political and cultural history of 1967. By his own admission Khan penned the script for *Dead Dog Speaks* “in ten minutes in a coffee shop in Brussels, and there were no

edits.”³⁰ Perhaps this physical distance from Cairo enabled what he describes as a “metaphysical” rendering of speaking positions in a “coded social portrait” of contemporary Egypt.³¹ The hovering avatars of Yusef Shaban, Khan’s mother, and his family dog are uprooted and mobile, as was Khan himself during the conception of the work.

In *Dead Dog Speaks* Khan works against the ethnographic desire to extract information about an authentic Egyptian identity by staging elusive and simulated speakers. The presumed rootedness of the “native informant” in ethnographic research is nowhere to be found in Khan’s animation of the uprooted and floating figures that make their appearance in *Dead Dog Speaks*. As was the case in *Conspiracy*, Khan uses a cyclical temporality: the different scenes are marked by the figures’ frenzied rearrangement on the screen following passages of unresolved and combative dialogue. *Dead Dog Speaks* provides a summary of the various strategies of separation and abstraction Khan deploys in *I7* and in *AUC* and *Conspiracy*. On a technological level, *Dead Dog Speaks* reveals an even higher level of mediation through his use of digital animation. Khan’s insistence that *I7* and in *AUC* be transcribed returns here in the text box element at the bottom of the screen. The text box associates passages of dialogue with iconic renderings of the speakers—it is a technology that directs the viewer/listener through the work’s disorienting decoupling and recoupling of voices and speakers. Khan’s abstraction of a typical coffee shop conversation in *Conspiracy* is also pushed further in this work as the figures are abstracted first from Khan’s frame of pop cultural references and family experience and second, more generally, from the artist’s experience of social life in Egypt. As the artist

explains, the avatars of Khan's mother and family dog seemed necessary as a "referential minimum" and a "personal investment" that would anchor the thoroughly abstract social portrait that he ultimately sought.³² As in all the works I have discussed, Khan aims at an art that departs from a contextual and explanatory ground.

IV. Conclusion

In Khan's work, perhaps more than Said's, one searches in vain for a stable authorial presence or an exemplary Arab consciousness. By presenting his figures as obdurate *forms* rather than compliant and transparent *informants*, Khan imagines a nonteleological time in the wake of the particular historical context of the 1967 *Naksa*. At the same time, Khan's withdrawal enables him to delve more deeply into his own particular personal experience, and into aspects of the cultural and political landscape that exceed the set parameters of the narrative of national emergence. While Said endeavors in his work, especially *ATLS* to refuse gross political characterizations of Palestinians, he reinforces, quite understandably, a narrative of (Palestinian) emergence or national liberation. It is perhaps on account of this teleological angle in Said's writing, that he tacitly constructs gendered or essentialized Palestinian and by extension Arab types. Khan's more thorough uprooting of his subjects from a specific national context amounts to a more radical refusal of the same gross political, or worse, Orientalist and ethnographic characterizations of Arabs that Said takes up in his work. It is this refusal—of an ethnically or nationally specific author, and by implication of an

ethnic or national authority—that represents Khan’s achievement and his critical gain on Said’s work.

¹ See Said, “The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions,” in *Critical Inquiry*, 673-714.

² Said, “Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction after 1948,” in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 41-61.

³ Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns* “Egyptian TV,” 1:28:00–1:32:00.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:28:00–1:32:00.

⁵ The most clear-cut though oblique of these appear in the work’s title, *Conspiracy: Dialogue/Diatribes*, and in the character’s longest monologues.

⁶ The story about nepotism goes as follows: “[M]ay god forgive him, the moment we started making some money, he employed his relative, in the accounting department—it all got fucked, I tried to talk to him and he left, and see what happened, the bank confiscated the property, debtors on our door and all our goods in the market, I bore the responsibility alone and that cost me a lot—if that son of a bitch had greased some palms none of that would have happened.” The story about the bureaucracy goes as follows: “[C]an anyone believe this, how can something like this get stolen, it’s all done in the files—so that it exists and does not exist—it’s there only on paper—but these papers had passed through my hands, and I never miss something like that—but this one seemed like a big hit, how can they hide it—media which means PR, which is Public Relations, which is distribution, which is marketing and everything passes.” Hassan Khan, *Conspiracy: Dialogue/Diatribes* (2006/10). I am using the subtitles provided by Khan here. The actor’s scripts however are delivered in Arabic.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Khan explains that a kind of referential minimum was sought in the development of these figures. The figures are modeled on Khan’s mother, his family dog, a Pekinese, and the Egyptian actor Youssef Shabaan. These figures, however, are described by Khan as abstracted “speaking positions.” It is interesting to note that Khan discussed this minimal and abstract approach to *Dead Dog Speaks* during an conversation with curator Neda Ghouse organized around the subject of John Cage. See Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, “John Cage: The Tapes That Came after Reading Silence” (Day 5), 1:02:00–1:20:00.

¹⁰ Hassan Khan, *Dead Dog Speaks* (2010). I am including here the English translation provided by Khan in the video’s translation boxes. The lines are however delivered in Arabic.

¹¹ See Gamal Abdel Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution* (Buffalo, NY: Smith, Keynes and Marshall, 1959), 61.

¹² Said uses the phrase also toward the end of his book to describe a “latest phase” of Orientalism in which U.S. universities attract the graduates from often American universities in the Middle East to teach Arabic language courses. He uses the phrase “native informant” cynically in quotation marks to draw a connection between the politics of the colonial relation and the culture of Middle Eastern studies (in the 1970s). His point, perhaps a dated one, is that these precarious language instruction positions are the only ones available since “power in the system (in universities, foundations and the like) is held almost exclusively by non-Orientals.” See Said, *Orientalism*, 160–61, 324–25. For a more detailed study of the uses of native informants in both indigenous and European social scientific studies of Egypt, see El-Shakry’s *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt*, 23–89. See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 6, 49.

¹³ This maneuver in Khan’s work is especially important since, as Spivak notes, the “native informant” as a figure serves the needs of imperialism when “theorized as functionally (though incompletely) frozen in a world where teleology is schematized into geography.” See Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 30. By uprooting himself in *17 and in AUC* and distancing his figures in *Conspiracy: Dialogue/Diatribes* and *Dead Dog Speaks* from a definite terrain of Egyptian identity, Khan, I argue, frustrates just this will to read the native informant as a determined function of place.

¹⁴ According to Gayatri Spivak, the denial of autobiography is a consequence of the ethnographic construction of a native informant. “In that discipline the native informant, although denied autobiography...is taken with utmost seriousness. He (and occasionally she) is a blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or a Western-model discipline) could inscribe.” Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 6, 49.

¹⁵ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 59.

¹⁶ To be sure, a more explicit interest in noise is described in the transcript in Khan’s many recollections of noise music experiments pursued with his friend and collaborator Sherif El Azma. See, for instance, his description of a noise music concert planned with El Azma for an “Oriental nightclub” in Cairo (probably Arizona nightclub). Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 80. The cybernetic sense of noise in the transcript was helpfully brought to my attention by Sven Spieker.

¹⁷ Once again, the Derridean angle on Khan’s work here was suggested helpfully by Sven Spieker.

¹⁸ El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 6–8. As has been noted in the previous chapter, the construction of an authentic Egyptian subject in such discourses involved a teleological account of Egyptian historical and civilizational progress. The task for nationalist and reformist Egyptian writers was to argue for the distinctiveness and capabilities of the (often rural) Egyptian subject with respect to Europe. Such distinctiveness was premised on an assumption about the intimate relationship between the Egyptian subject and his/her physical and cultural environment.

¹⁹ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Khan, *Conspiracy*.

²³ The concept, as Winegar notes, has been central to debates concerning the history and prospects of Egyptian culture. She lists several senses of the term to set up her analysis. “The noun *aṣāla* comes from the Arabic root *a-s-l* meaning ‘to be firmly rooted.’ Another variant of the root signifies nobility of descent or lineage (*aṣl*). *Aṣala* itself often means pure or noble descent or roots, and its adjectival form, *aṣīl*, most directly corresponds to the English ‘authentic.’” In a lengthy footnote on the difficulty of establishing a firm definition of the concept, Winegar remarks that all variants of the concept entail some relation to the phenomenon and perception of modernity in Egypt. “Authenticity is a dilemma of modern selfhood.” See Winegar, *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, 97–98, 337–38.

²⁴ Khan, *Dead Dog Speaks*.

²⁵ Said, “Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction after 1948,” in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 41–61.

²⁶ Ibid., 47–48

²⁷ Khan, *17 and in AUC – the transcriptions*, 1.

²⁸ Khan, *Conspiracy*

²⁹ Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, “Egyptian TV,” 1:28:00–1:32:00.

³⁰ Hassan Khan and Neda Ghouse, *14 Proper Nouns*, “John Cage,” 1:04–1:20.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 1:20.

Figures

(5)

the arts - motifs -
 expression } entered in Western society
 middle class

Caravaggio - travel / Pizginage
 slave girl / courtesan / dancer / female figure
 - magic figures - Rimsky
 & narrative

belly dancing / spectacle or display - ~~Cerone~~ X
 universal expo - 1867 & 1889
 - criticism and lecture // Oriental & exotic, somewhat
 distant definitions

- in music after David -
 X Verdi: Aida
 X Saint Saens: Le Carnaval
 Delibes: Carmen, Djanietch
 Bizet: Hamlet & Arabian Nights
 even Wagner - Parsifal & Tristan & Isolde

background
 in La Fontaine
 & French
 ethnology

- influence of China & Japan
 expo. 7 1889

- McPhee: ethnomusicology

- Bantre - Oriental music influence in Cairo 1932 X

- Hollywood & today: T.V.
 The Sheik - Arabian Nights film

- personality images and positions
 - exchange of cultures?
 interest always involved.

Arabian Nights

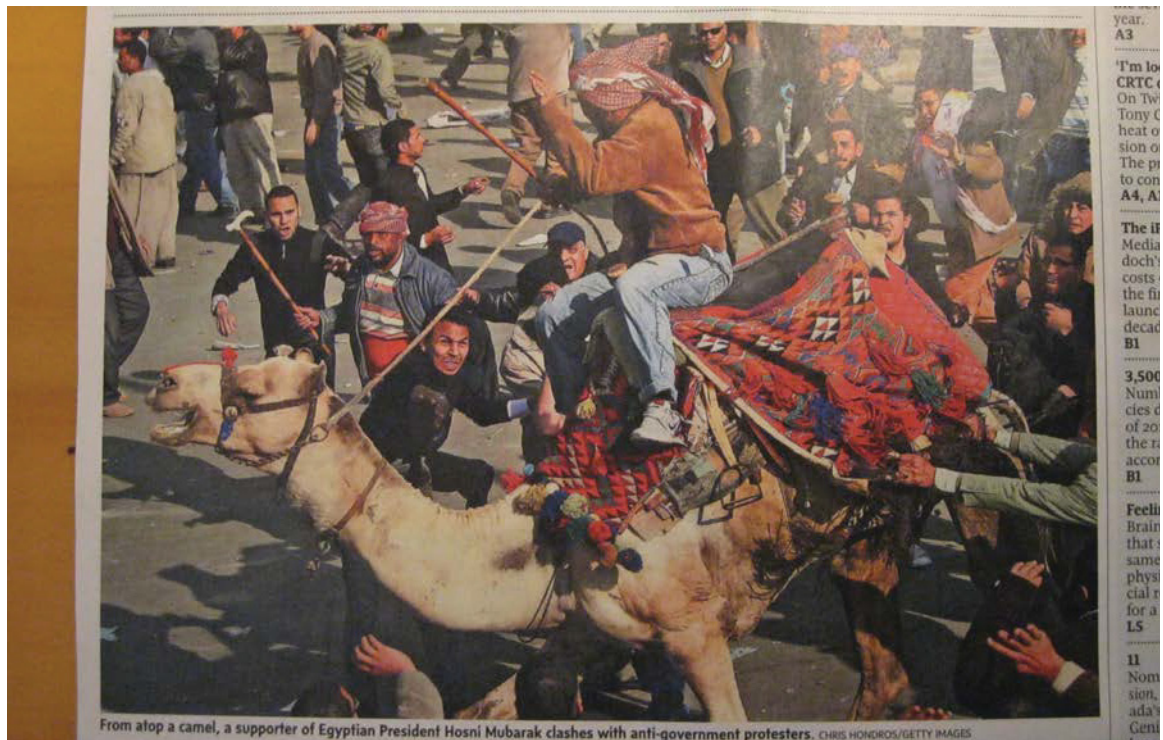
Figure 1. “Orientalism and Art” in The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said, (New York: Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library).



Figure 2. Hassan Khan, *17 and in AUC*, 2003. Fourteen-day performance action in Cairo, Egypt. Photograph by Graham Waite. Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

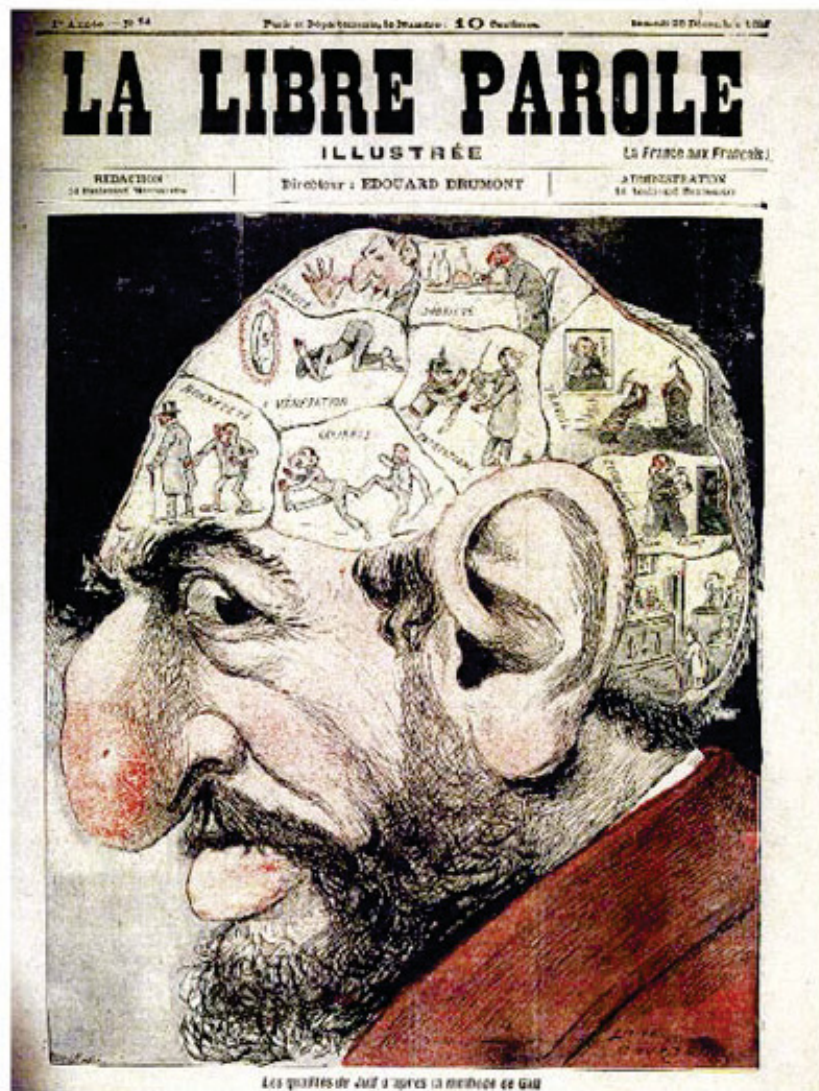


Figure 3. Jean Mohr, “Bersheeba, 1979. Near a Bedouin encampment, a little kitchen garden and a scarecrow of bits and pieces,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 27.



From atop a camel, a supporter of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak clashes with anti-government protesters. CHRIS HONDROS/GETTY IMAGES

Figure 4. Chris Hondros, *Globe and Mail*. Cover photograph. Feb. 3, 2011. Getty Images.



Les qualités du Juif d'après la méthode de Gall
 Qualities of the Jew after the method of Gall (the inventor of phrenology)
 Front cover of the illustrated magazine *La Libre Parole* – Free Word, 'France for the French' December 1893

Figure 5. Anon. “*Les qualités du Juif d’après la method de Gall.*” Cover of the illustrated magazine *La Libre Parole*. December, 1893.

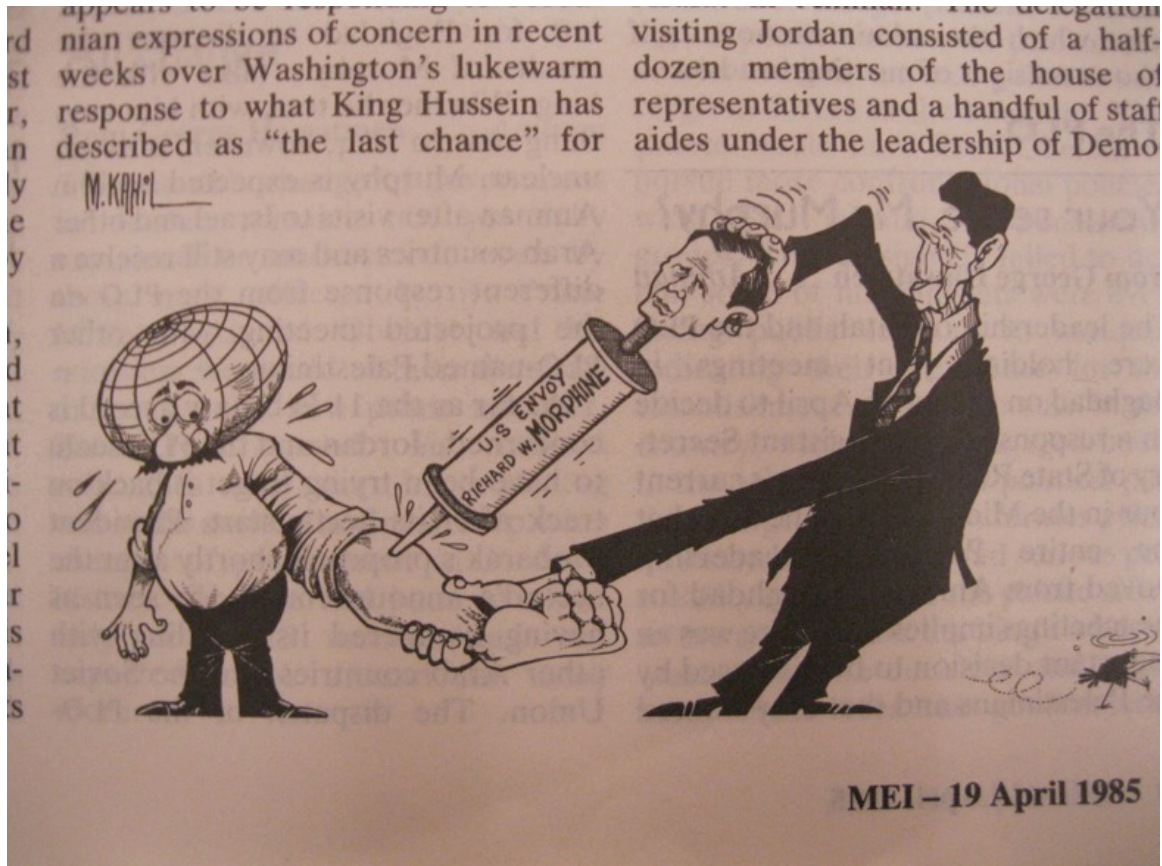
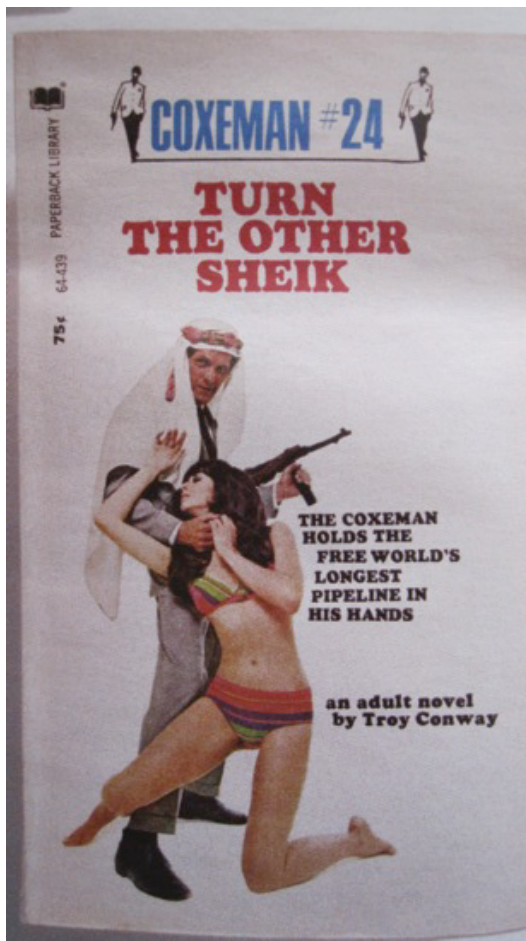


Figure 6. Mahmoud Kahil. Illustration in Fred Axlegard, “A Step in the Right Direction?” *Middle East International*, April 19, 1985.



a.



b.

Figure 7. a) George Melford (dir.), *The Sheik*, 1921. Film still with Rudolph Valentino and Agnes Ayres. Paramount Pictures. b) Anon. Cover illustration. Troy Conway, *Turn the Other Sheik*, Coxman #24 (New York: Paperback Library, 1970).



Figure 8. Anon. Photograph. André Malraux amid photographs for his *Le Musée imaginaire*. *Paris Match*, 1947.



Figure 9. Jean Mohr, “Tripoli, Badawi camp, May 1983,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1985), 10.



Figure 10. Jean Mohr, “Amman, 1984. A visit from the former mayor of Jerusalem and his wife in exile in Jordan,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1985), 15.



Figure 11. Jean Mohr, “Gaza, 1979. Refugee camp. A boy of unknown age,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 24.



Figure 12. Jean Mohr, "Nazareth, 1979. Portrait of Om Kalsoum." in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 30.



a.



b.

Figure 13. a/b. Jean Mohr, "Jerusalem, 1979. A snapshot," in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 30.



Figure 14. Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Behind the Gare Ste. Lazare*, 1932. Gelatin silver print.

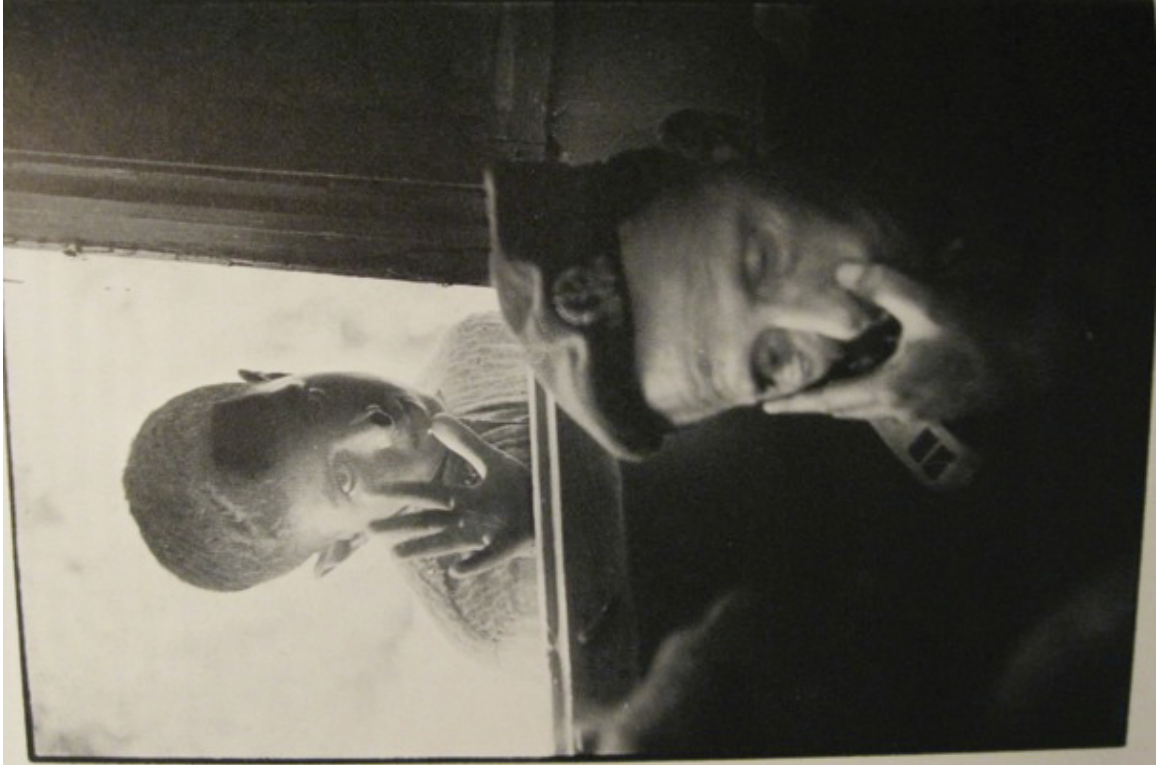


Figure 15. Jean Mohr, “Kalandia (near Ramallah), 1967. A few days after the end of the June War: in the foreground an Israeli officer, lost in thought. Behind the window, a young villager,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 42.



Figure 16. Jean Mohr, “Aligarh, India, 1968. A stranger who imitated animals,” in John Berger, *Another Way of Telling* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 10/12.



Figure 17. Jean Mohr, “Near Senjel, a village between Ramallah and Nablus, 1979,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 47.



Figure 18. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, “The Drawbridge,” Carceri Plate VII, from the series *The Imaginary Prisons* (*La carceri d’invenzione*), 1761. Copperplate etching on white laid paper. 55.7 × 41.3 cm. Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, New York.



a.



b.

Figure 19. a) Jean Mohr, “Sidon, 1983. Ein El-Hilwe Camp.” b) “Ramallah, 1979” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 54-55.



Figure 20. Jean Mohr, "Nazareth, 1979," in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 60.



a.



b.

Figure 21. a) Jean Mohr, “Ramallah, 1984. Portrait on a crowded wall.” b) Jean Mohr, “Amman, 1984. Memories of Jerusalem: Pictures, picture books, looking at pictures,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 61-2.



Figure 22. Jean Mohr, “Ramallah, 1984. Proudly displayed, the picture of a man first sentenced to life imprisonment, then expelled to Algeria and then to Jordan,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 69.



Figure 23. Jean Mohr, “At home in a refugee shantytown, outside the village of Ramah, Galilee, 1979,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 80.



Figure 24. Jean Mohr, “Tel-Sheva, 1979,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 64.

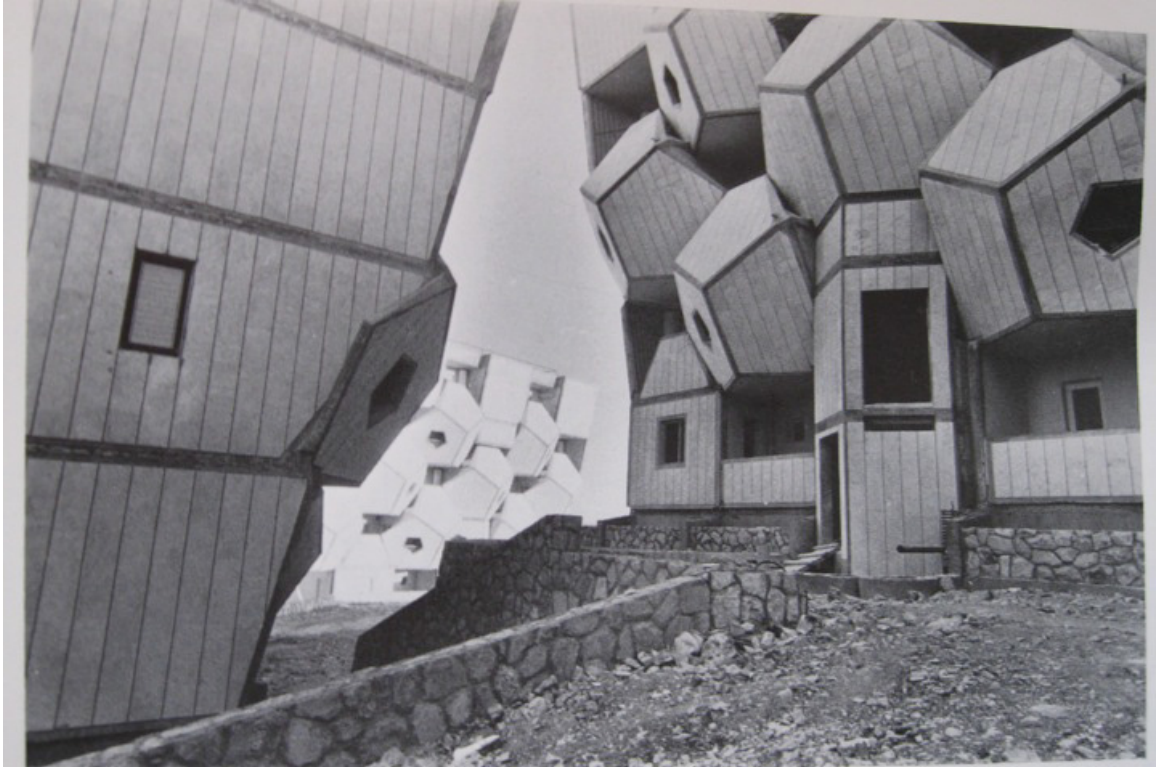


Figure 25. Jean Mohr, “Settlement of Ramot, near Jerusalem, 1979. As the buildings neared completion, tenants were in short supply,” in Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 72.



a.



b.

Figure 26. a) Jean Mohr, “Amman, 1984.” b) Jean Mohr, “El-Birreh, 1984.” Unpublished photographs from “After the Last Sky: Subject File,” in The Collected Papers and Correspondence of Edward W. Said (New York: Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library).



Figure 27. Édouard Manet, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882. Oil on canvas. 96 × 130 cm. Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, London.



Figure 28. Jeff Wall, *A Picture for Women*, 1979. Cibachrome print; aluminum lightbox. 142.5 × 204.5 cm. Collection of the artist.

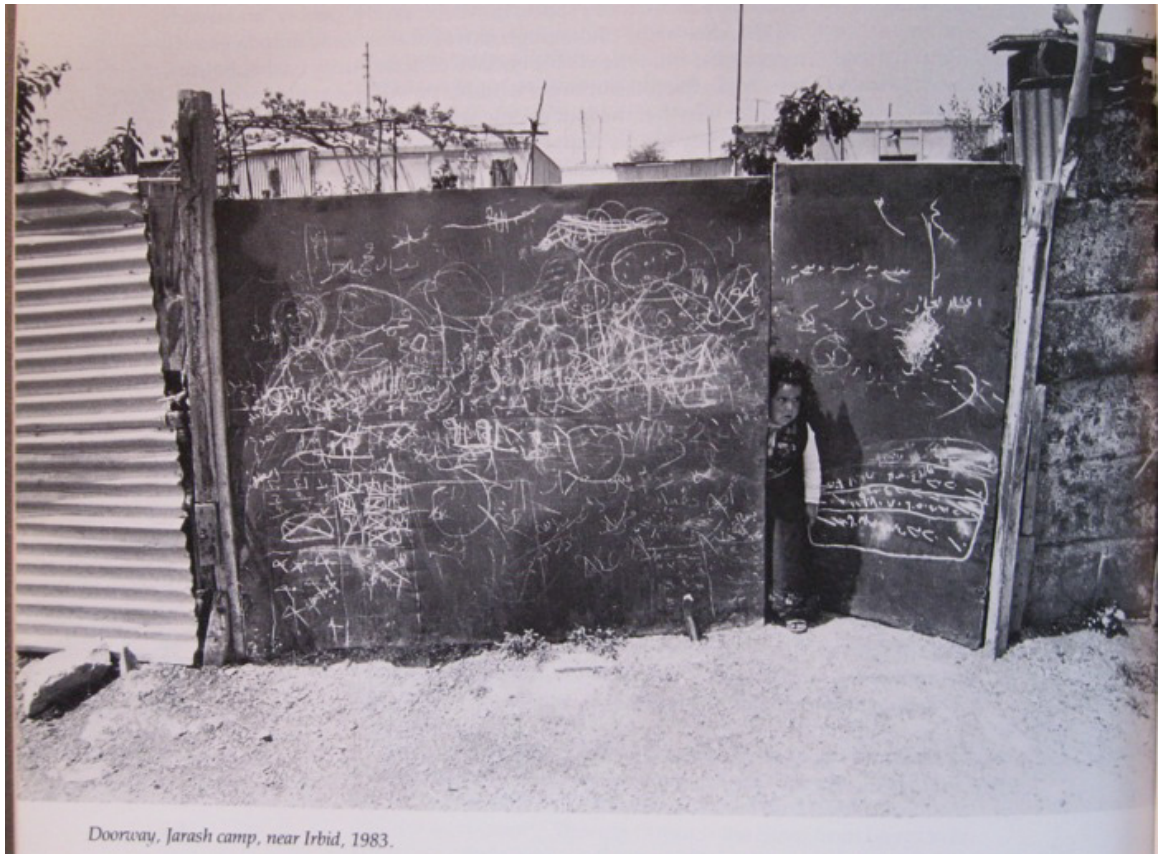


Figure 29. Jean Mohr, “Jarash Camp, near Irbid, 1983” in *Edward Said, After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 50.

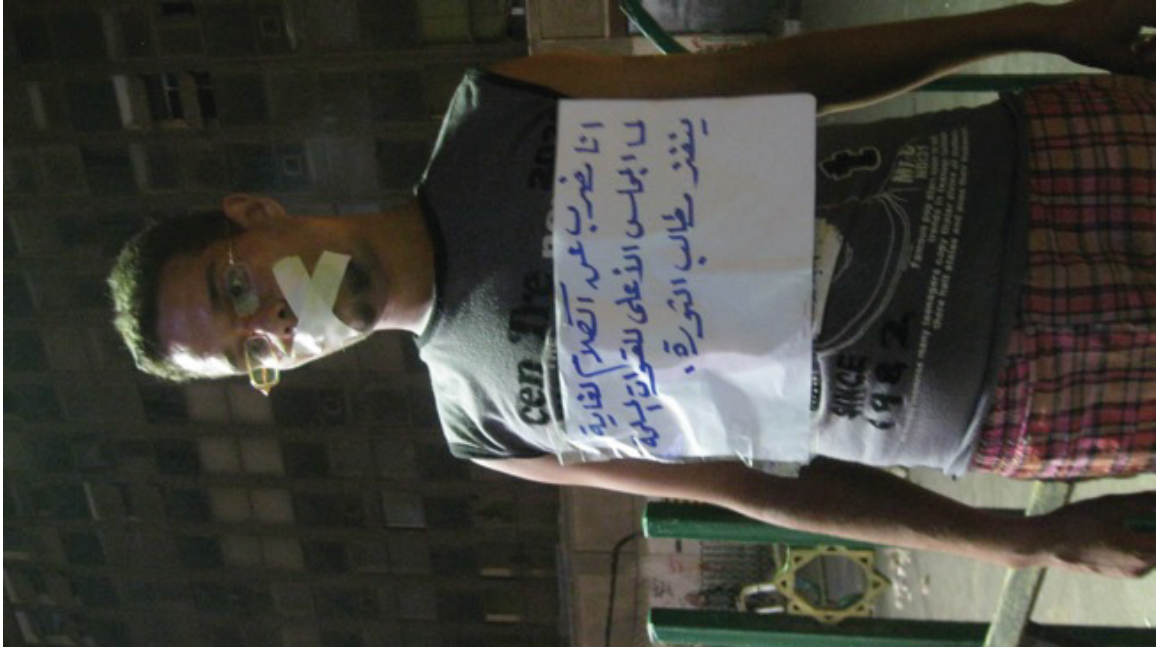


Figure 30. Anon. protester, Cairo Egypt, July, 2011. Photographed by author.



Figure 31. Site of Malek Helmy's "wish" project, Cairo, Egypt, July, 2011.
Photographed by author.



Figure 32. A tree hoarding for demands of the revolution. Midan Al Tahrir (Tahrir Square), Cairo, Egypt, July, 2011. Photographed by author.

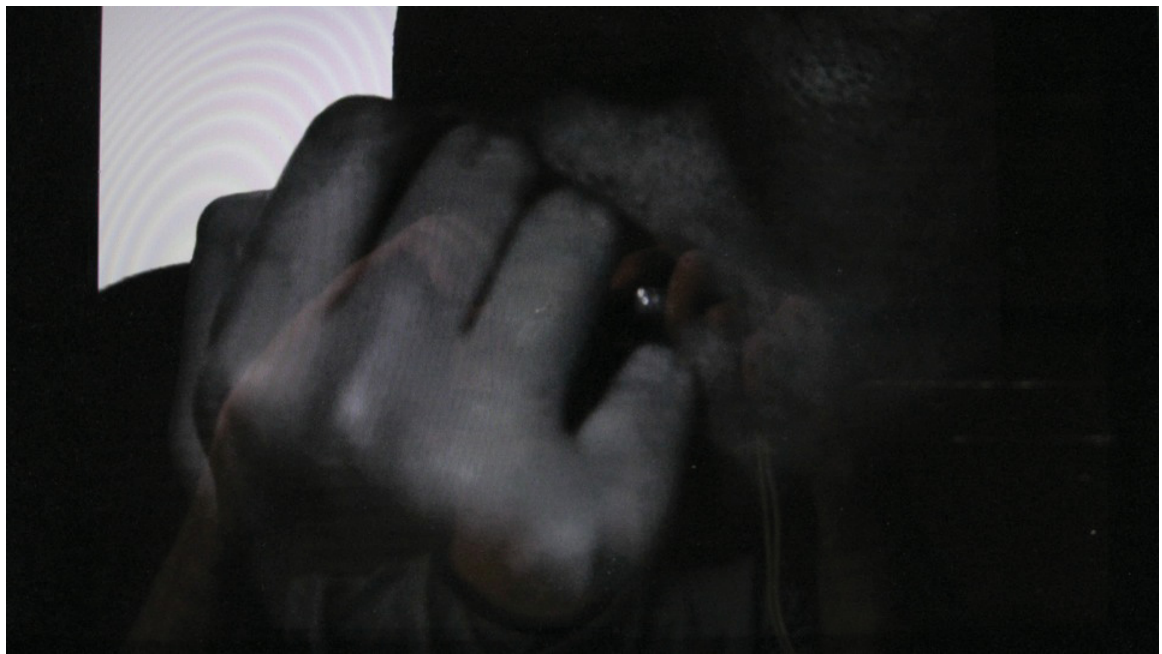
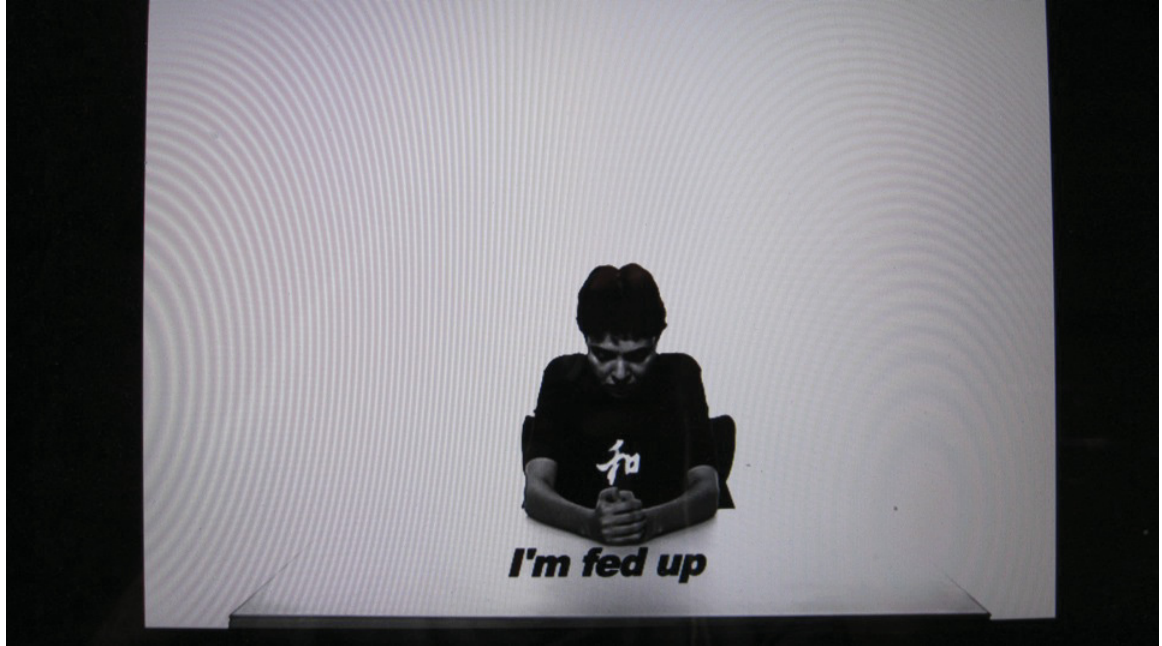


Figure 33. Hassan Khan, *Rant*, 2008. Video stills. Single channel video, 6:45. Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

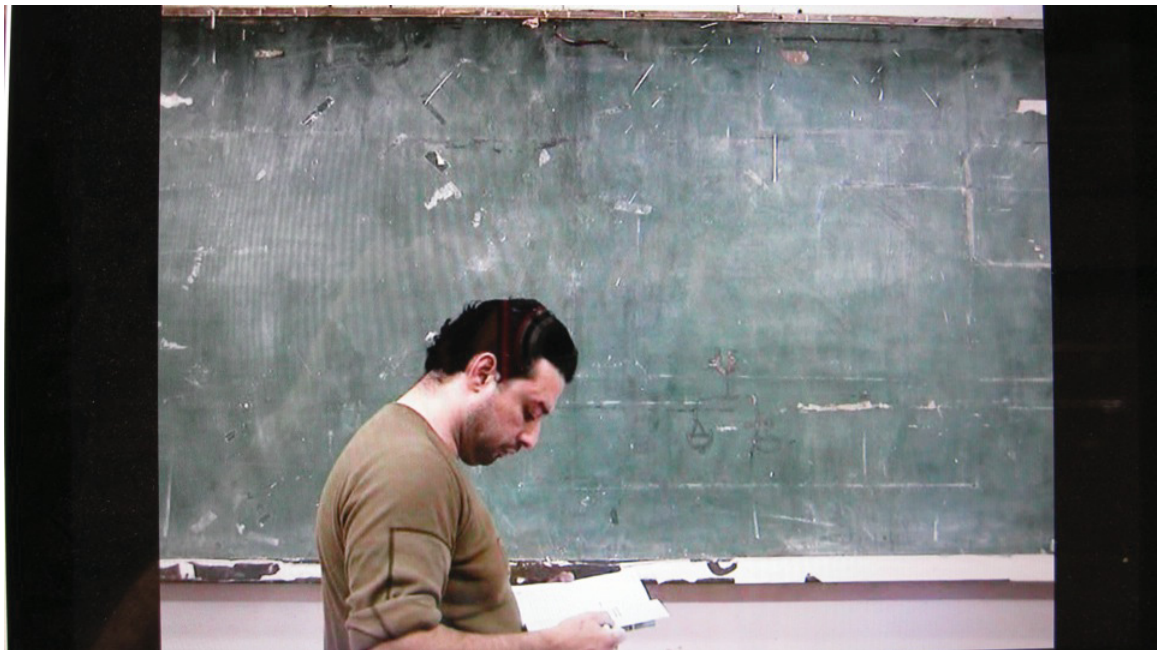
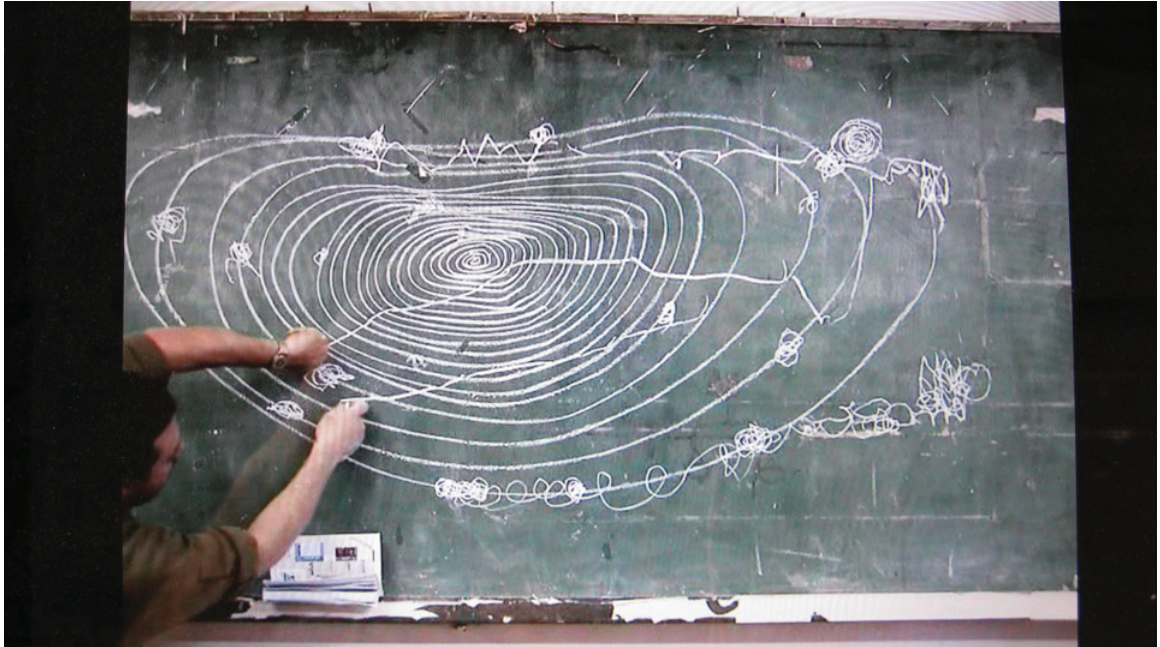


Figure 34. Shady El Noshokaty, *Stammer: A Lecture in Theory*, 2007. Video stills. Single channel video, 11:48. Shady El Noshokaty, Cairo.



Figure 35. Wael Shawky, *The Cave*, 2005. Video still. Single channel video, 12:43. Wael Shawky, Alexandria, Egypt.

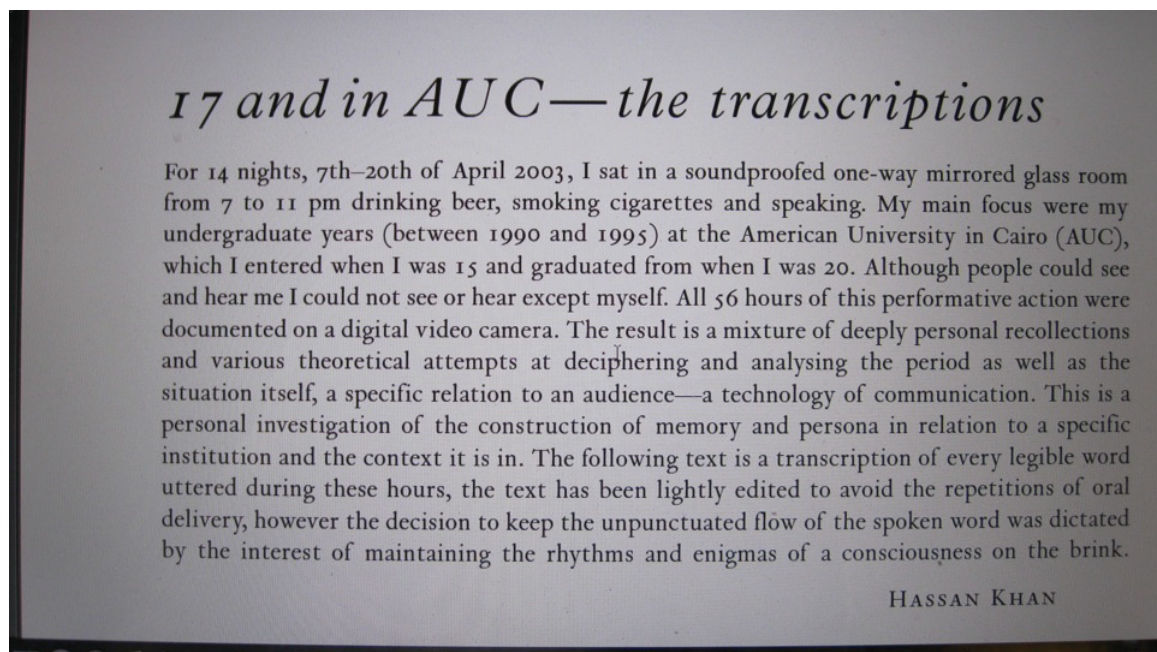


Figure 36. Hassan Khan, *17 and in the AUC – the transcriptions*, (Paris: Galerie Chantal Crousel, 2003), 1.



Figure 37. Hassan Khan and Amr Hosny, *Lungfan*, 1995. Video still. Single channel sequence of images with sound, 13:30. Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.



Figure 38. David Lynch, *Eraserhead*, 1977. Film stills with Jack Nance and Charlotte Stewart, 1:29. American Film Institute, Washington.



Figure 39. Hassan Khan, *Conspiracy: Dialogue/Diatribes*, 2006/10. Video stills. Single channel video, 31:05. Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.



Figure 40. Hassan Khan, *Dead Dog Speaks*, 2010. Video stills. Digital animation with voiceovers, 4:02. Galerie Chatal Crousel, Paris.

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