

Philosophising the Saidian Notion of 'Subjectivity' in Exile

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Abstract:

This study examines the philosophical concept of 'subjectivity in exile' in the selected works of Edward Said. Rethinking his writing in relation to exile, this article contends that subjectivity emerges through displacement, memory, and historical consciousness as a process of formation. It employs a poststructuralist reading, drawing on Derridean deconstruction, Foucauldian discourse theory, and Kristeva's concept of otherness to analyse the formation of exilic subjectivity. The analysis suggests that Said's exilic subjectivity articulates a decentred critical consciousness that challenges essentialist identity formations while maintaining a reflective sense of agency. Within this perspective, the intellectual exile occupies a transnational position from which ethical responsibility and critical resistance become possible in postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: Edward Said; subjectivity; exile; poststructuralism; philosophy.

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1.INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the twentieth century, a number of influential critics and theorists significantly contributed to postcolonial studies, including Homi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft and Edward Said who is specifically the focus of this study. Edward Said (1935–2003) is a well-known and controversial theorist, author, critic and a public intellectual who used his academic position to address many issues and to promote many theories like poststructuralism, postmodernism and postcolonial studies (Ashcroft and Pal 1). Beyond his role as a theorist of *Orientalism* and imperial discourse, Said also developed a profound reflection on subjectivity; one that emerges from lived experience, particularly the experience of exile. This experience, however, is to be associated with “the pain of recollection” of the self-looking for an adequate state (Said,2000, xv).

Dealing with Said’s writing, this article argues that his exilic experience contributes to connect his awareness of subjectivity with memory about the events of his life, displacement and his understanding of the world with its history. Using other terms, Said presents subjectivity as a decentred process produced through displacement, narrative, and engagement with multiple cultural contexts. This conception, in turn, shapes his experience of temporality, as his intellectual development unfolds in relation to historical change, where shifting external realities continually reconfigure and reconstruct the self into an unfixed and evolving form. This study approaches Edward Said’s subjectivity through a poststructuralist and philosophical lens, drawing in particular on Derrida, Foucault, and Kristeva. Their concepts are used to clarify how Said understands subjectivity as decentred, historically situated, and formed through displacement. Indeed, exile, in this sense, creates a condition in which the self remains open, unfinished, and critically engaged. What emerges in Said’s work is philosophical position that resists essentialist definitions of identity and refuses closure. Thus, across his writings, exile functions as a key condition that shapes a relational and

historically conscious subjectivity, sustaining ethical engagement and intellectual resistance beyond fixed cultural or national frameworks.

2. Philosophical Background on Subjectivity

2.1 The concept of subjectivity

The objective of this section is to provide a brief overview of the conceptual and philosophical foundations of subjectivity. Subjectivity has occupied a central place in Western philosophical thought, evolving from a stable foundation of consciousness to a historically and discursively constituted process. In classical philosophy, Descartes grounds subjectivity in the thinking self, where the cogito "I think, therefore I am" establishes consciousness as the basis of existence (Descartes vii; Hall 20). Kant extends this framework by linking subjectivity to rational autonomy, where reason enables moral judgment and self-determination (Rabinow 36–37; Hall 29, 55).

Freud challenges the idea of a unified, rational subject by introducing the unconscious as a force that disrupts self-coherence (Badiou 280). Foucault extends this by defining subjectivity as produced through discourse and power relations, rather than grounded in an essential self (Hall 91–92). Levinas further shifts the concept by locating subjectivity in ethical relations, where the Other precedes the self (Cauchi-Santoro xiii). Together, these positions mark a shift from a stable subject to one that is historically produced and relational. It is worth noting that Said's intervention follows from this shift, as he redefines subjectivity through the condition of exile.

2.2. Reconfiguring Subjectivity: Toward a Decentred Entity

Poststructuralist thought shifts the understanding of subjectivity away from stability and toward process. As Hall argues, subjectivity involves both self-awareness and limits that cannot be fully known, which makes identity something ongoing and not fixed (Hall 3–4). This idea becomes clearer when linked to knowledge and context. In Marx, intellectual work

reflects the subject's position within material and ideological conditions (McLellan 55, 172). Likewise, the Sophists treat subjectivity as something shaped through discourse and experience, not universal truth (qtd. in Strozier 22). While humanist views still emphasize autonomy and self-authorship (qtd. in Strozier 53), later theory questions this stability. For instance, Poster points out that representation can reduce and fix identities (Poster 65), and Derrida shows that identity cannot be grounded in a stable origin but is always shaped through difference (Derrida 158). In this way, subjectivity appears as something produced through relations, history, and shifting conditions.

Subjectivity as Said projects in his writing is complex and antithetically mixed. For instance, in *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, he questions subjectivity or individuality whether it can be brought out distinctly through emphasizing on the group or class to which the subject belongs, or on its "portrait" of individuality (51). However, he develops this perspective through exile. Exile, on the other hand, places the subject between different cultural, socio-political and historical contexts such as Palestine, Cairo, Lebanon and the United State, making identity unstable but also more self-aware. As Said (1999) writes in his memoir, exile creates a sense of discontinuity that reshapes his self through memory, culture, history, and even political attitudes. This condition reflects what Foucault, Derrida, and Kristeva describe in different ways: subjectivity is formed through power, shaped by difference, and marked by internal division. Exile makes this process visible in lived experience. It produces a subject that is not unified, but conscious of its own formation. In this sense, subjectivity becomes a decentred form of critical awareness, grounded in history and sustained through reflection.

2.3. Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva and Edward Said: A Unified Theoretical Framework

Edward Said's conception of exilic subjectivity can be elucidated through a concise synthesis of Derrida, Foucault, and Kristeva, each of whom theorizes the subject as decentred,

produced, and internally divided. From a Derridean perspective, subjectivity is constituted through displacement and difference rather than stable origin. Deconstruction "resists the move towards simple elements or origins" and operates through a "double movement: both disordering... and also re-arranging" (Collins and Mayblin, 91, 95). It "means facing the contradiction rather than trying to eliminate it" (Stocker, 67) and proceeds by "overturning and displacing a conceptual order" (188–189). Said's exile exemplifies this logic: identity is not grounded but continuously rearticulated across shifting cultural and linguistic contexts that his writings reflect. Foucault situates this instability within discourse and power. His project is "to create a history of the different modes by which... human beings are made subjects" (Foucault, 777), where discourse "systematically form[s] the objects of which [it] speak[s]" (54). Power "categorizes the individual... attaches him to his own identity... [and] makes individuals subjects" (781), while operating only over "free subjects" (790). Said's exilic condition exposes this production: positioned across competing discourses, the subject becomes both constituted and critically responsive to power. Kristeva provides the internal dimension of this process, and writes, "The foreigner is within us" (Kristeva 176). Such that the subject is "in process" rather than unified (88). Exile renders this division explicit: otherness is not external but constitutive, producing a reflexive and fragmented self.

Edward Said emerges as an influential figure within this intellectual context. By situating subjectivity within the lived condition of exile, he not only draws on these philosophical developments but also reconfigures them through the lenses of displacement, memory, and historical experience. The following section therefore examines how Said transforms exile into a productive power for rethinking subjectivity beyond fixed identity and stable belonging.

3. The Saidian Concept of Subjectivity in Exile

3.1. Exile and the Displacement of Origin

Edward Said's reflection on exile begins from a simple but radical point: ideas do not emerge from fixed origins but "enter discourse" under specific historical conditions (Said, 1983, 227). Origin, therefore, is not stable. Exile makes this instability visible. It is not only a geographical condition but a structural one that unsettles the ground of identity itself. This logic parallels Derrida's notion of *différance*, where meaning is never present in itself but constantly deferred (1976, 158). The self follows the same structure: it does not precede displacement but is produced through it. At this level, exile exposes the subject as fundamentally de-centred.

Kristeva sharpens this insight by shifting the problem inward. The foreigner is not only outside; it is internal to the subject. Exile thus becomes an experience of inner division. Said's "wanderer," who "typifies the fate of the wanderer" (Said, 2000, 554), does not simply lose a home; rather, the very idea of home loses coherence. Identity is no longer something one possesses but something negotiated across distance, rupture, and difference. Said's engagement with exile is inseparable from this deconstructive logic. In "Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals," Said believes that displacement is a cruel experience, as he is caught in-between his origins and the host country. In this context, he writes, "The exile therefore exists in the median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old" (114). In other words, Said grapples with a feeling of in-betweenness because he fails to forget his Palestinian origins. In the same vein, in

Out of Place (1999), that this section focuses on, gives this structure a concrete form. Said's identity fractures first at the level of naming. In this context, he writes: "the rationale of my name broke down... I would rush past 'Edward' and emphasize 'Said'; at other times... do the reverse" (3). The name does not unify him; it splits him. This is not just cultural

hybridity but a structural division: the self is caught between incompatible systems of meaning. Derrida helps explain why this division cannot be resolved, identity is always deferred, while Kristeva shows how it is lived as estrangement from oneself. Clearly put, Said grapples with a sense of self that cannot be fully situated within either side of his identity, but must instead move between them. This division is not temporary; it becomes a lasting condition that shapes how he understands himself. His subjectivity thus emerges as a continuous negotiation between different cultural, linguistic, and historical positions and affiliations.

This instability extends to place. Said recalls that "I was always slightly out of place," a condition that persists across Jerusalem, Cairo, and later spaces. In Cairo, it intensifies as he declares, "I was an odd fit everywhere I went" and "school was a place where I was never quite right." Even memory fails to stabilize his identity: "my memory of it...was no longer accurate...There was a new uncertainty" (272). Memory itself becomes unstable, no longer a secure point of reference but part of the same shifting process that unsettles the self. The past does not secure the present; it shifts with it. Exile thus disrupts not only space but time, producing a subject that cannot anchor itself in either. This example highlights Said's feeling of in-betweenness, as he struggles to find the appropriate place and time for himself.

Displacement also alters perception. In this sense, he contends, "Palestine acquired a languid, almost dreamlike, aspect for me" (21), while life in Egypt lacks "closely organized space and time" (21). What was once concrete becomes distant or unreal. Kristeva's insight is clear here: the familiar turns foreign. At the same time, family structures fail to provide stability. The paternal "domain...was...threatened with discontinuity and evanescence" (261), and "the gap between my father and me was sealed with a longstanding silence" (262). Even moments of ease, such as in Lebanon, collapse: "The easy and friendly association...was soon to be eroded" (170). Continuity is repeatedly broken; identity cannot consolidate. What

emerges from this repeated disruption is not fragmentation alone but a sustained condition of dislocation. Consequently, identity takes shape across these breaks, rather than in spite of them.

This sense of instability is not only personal but rooted in broader historical events that reshape both place and the self. The rupture of 1947–48 gives this condition a historical force. Said recalls: “I left Palestine in December 1947...‘No one,’...this triggered a sensation of such sadness and loss” (xii). This is not only personal loss but collective displacement: “my entire extended family had been swept out of place” (xvi). The transformation of Palestine into “a series of Israeli locales” (xii) shows how geography itself is rewritten. Exile becomes permanent, re-structured by ongoing control at “borders, checkpoints, and airports” (xvi). Identity here is not simply fragmented; it is continuously reconfigured by political conditions.

Cultural and linguistic tensions deepen this division. The question “You’re an Arab after all, but what kind are you? A Protestant?” (5–6) exposes identity as externally imposed and internally unstable. Language reinforces this split: “The travails of bearing such a name were compounded...when it came to language” (4). The subject is formed across competing systems that never fully align. Political divisions add another layer: “Arab politics...leaving us...with very little positive history” (268–269). Identity emerges not as unity but as contradiction. That is to say, this contradiction reflects the way subjectivity is produced through competing discourses that both define and divide the self. Identity does not resolve into coherence but remains suspended between positions. In Said’s case, exile turns this tension into a condition of decentred consciousness.

In *Out of Place*, it is enough to go through the first pages to feel the conflict, almost painful, of the young Said trying absolutely to frame himself, to frame his identity: between Arab, European, and American poles; depending on whether he feels Muslim or Christian; he struggles in this existential battle of “self-location,” a notion detailed by McCarthy as well

(McCarthy 5). This kind of ambivalence is also experienced by his precursor Joseph Conrad. For example, the development of Said's subjectivity parallels his treatment of Conrad on the intellectual level (197). The parallel between Conrad and Said further undermines the notion that subjectivity collapses entirely under displacement. In both cases, exile generates not silence but narrative urgency.

Said's intellectual formation does not resolve this instability. At Harvard, Said (1999) encounters "Conventional history and a wan formalism" that leaves little room for critical engagement (289). Rather than grounding him, this experience reinforces his distance from institutional structures. The exilic condition extends into intellectual life. Said ultimately abandons the idea of a unified self. He clarifies that his subjectivity is unsettled because he has "retained this unsettled sense of many identities—mostly in conflict with each other—all of my life" (5). This can be linked to what he considers himself and how things contributed to the emergence of his complex subjectivity. Yet he is not looking for a unified self. He writes: "I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self..." and adds that these elements "require no reconciling...They are 'off' and may be out of place" (295). This is not fragmentation as failure but as condition. Derrida's deconstruction appears here as lived experience, while Kristeva's divided subject becomes explicit. The self is not resolved; it is sustained in movement. What might appear as instability becomes, for Said, a "form of freedom" (295). This form of freedom that Said's subjectivity celebrates is to be linked to scepticism. He writes, "scepticism too is one of the themes I particularly want to hold on to. With so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place" (295). Therefore, Said's subjectivity is 'out of place' as it is in constant evolution, fluid and ever-changing. This suggests that his sense of subjectivity embraces both forms of existence: the personal and the intellectual.

3.2. Subjectivity, Discourse, and the Position of the Critic

Said's writing develops a specific understanding of subjectivity through the figure of the critic. The critic "often appears as an originating subject...only to disappear...as a subject who is an inscribed function of discursive and institutional structures" (qtn. in Strozier 52). Subjectivity is not prior to discourse; it is formed within it. This position is central to *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, where Said insists that criticism is always "worldly," shaped by political and cultural conditions, and "burdened with its occasion" (Said, 1983, 35). The critic does not stand outside history but emerges within it. This recalls directly with Foucault's claim that discourse produces the subject rather than expressing it (Foucault, 1972, 18). What can be said, and who can speak, are determined by discursive formations. Said the critic occupies such a position: shaped by institutions, ideologies, and power relations, yet able to reflect on them. At the same time, this position is not stable. Derrida's logic of deferral unsettles any fixed identity of the intellectual, while Kristeva's notion of internal division reveals that this instability is also lived as estrangement. The critic is neither fully inside nor outside discourse but operates within a tension between inscription and critique.

Said's early work on Conrad marks the emergence of this position. In *Joseph Conrad and the Autobiography of Fiction* (1966), questions of identity and displacement appear through literary analysis. Conrad's uncertainty, "he was so many people" (viii), mirrors Said's own intellectual ambivalence. His engagement with Conrad is not neutral; it is a site where his own subjectivity takes shape. Writing within a structuralist framework while resisting it, Said exposes the limits of methodological coherence. Subjectivity here appears as a problem of narration: it forms through interpretation, hesitation, and self-reflection rather than through a stable standpoint.

As Foucault (1982) notes, power works by classifying and attaching individuals to identities, thereby producing them as subjects (781). Said's engagement with Conrad shows

how the critic constructs himself through the texts he reads. The intellectual is not the origin of meaning but one of its effects. Yet this does not eliminate agency. Said defines the intellectual as "an individual endowed with a faculty for representing...a message...to, as well as for, a public" (Said, 1996, 11). This role involves intervention. The intellectual speaks within discourse but also against its dominant forms.

This tension defines Said's practice. The intellectual must seek "relative independence" and "speak the truth to power" (Said, 1996, xvi), refusing to "serve any power or authority at all" (82). Criticism becomes an ethical position grounded in opposition. In *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam* (1981), Said shows how knowledge is tied to power, describing Orientalism as "the affiliation of knowledge with power" (ix). Meaning is not fixed but produced within changing contexts. Derrida's deferral is at work here, but within a Foucauldian field where discourse organizes what can be known and said.

In *The Question of Palestine*, Said's position shifts again. He writes explicitly as a Palestinian, asserting that "Palestinian experience is an important and concrete part of history" (1992, xxxix). Subjectivity here is neither purely discursive nor purely personal. It emerges at the intersection of historical experience and representation. Foucault's insight remains central: discourse does not reflect reality but forms it. Said's writing participates in this formation by rearticulating a marginalized history.

Exile intensifies this structure. For Said, exile is not only a condition but a position that allows distance. The intellectual as exile becomes a "nay-sayer," resisting dominant narratives (Said, 1994, pp. 52–53). This distance is not outside power but produced within it. Foucault helps clarify this: power operates through subjects, not over them. The exilic critic is shaped by discourse but also able to interrogate it. Derrida's deconstruction appears here as a refusal of fixed positions, while Kristeva's foreigner within explains why this distance is also internal. The critic is divided, never fully at home in any discourse.

Said's *Beginnings* (1975) marks a shift from origin to process. He asks, "What is a beginning?" (xi), redefining it not as a foundation but as an act. A beginning is "a will, a desire, and a freedom to reverse oneself" (34). This breaks with the idea of origin as given. Subjectivity is not something one returns to but something one produces. The image of the "wanderer, going from place to place" (8) reflects this movement. The self develops through transitions rather than continuity. Kristeva's perspective brings out the cost of this movement. Exile is not only critical distance but fracture. It produces what she describes as a "shattering of the former body" and a "shattered sense of belonging" (Kristeva, 1991, 30–34). Said's *Out of Place* (1999) confirms this: "I was always out of place" (3). His identity remains divided, "mostly in conflict with each other" (5), across languages, cultures, and histories. Even mastery of English does not resolve this: "I remained a foreigner" (295). Exile is internalized as a permanent condition. Derrida, Foucault, and Kristeva converge here. There is no stable origin (Derrida), no subject outside discourse (Foucault), and no unified interior (Kristeva). Said's subjectivity forms at the intersection of these conditions. It is produced through discourse, divided from within, and displaced from any fixed centre.

Actually, exile does not simply fragment the self; it reorganizes it. It creates a position from which the subject becomes aware of its own formation. Said describes exile as "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place" (2000, 173), but this rift also generates reflection. Subjectivity becomes a practice rather than a state—an ongoing negotiation between history, discourse, and internal difference.

Said insists that exile is not chosen. He confirms, "you are born into it, or it happens to you," and the subject "must cultivate a scrupulous...subjectivity" (184). This condition prevents closure. Binary oppositions: home/exile, centre/margin, do not resolve but remain tense. The subject emerges within this tension, not beyond it. Subjectivity, then, is neither unified nor dissolved. It is a shifting position formed through discourse (Foucault), deferred

across difference (Derrida), and divided from within (Kristeva). In Said's work, exile makes this structure visible. It produces a critical consciousness grounded not in stability, but in displacement, contradiction, and continuous rearticulation.

3.3 Exilic Subjectivity and the Formation of the Transnational Intellectual

How does Said's subjectivity in exile develop into a transnational intellectual identity?

Said's subjectivity in exile develops through writing into a transnational intellectual position. Writing does not merely express identity; it shapes how the self understands itself in relation to history, culture, and power. His early work on Conrad already signals this movement. In *Joseph Conrad and the Autobiography of Fiction* (1966), Said begins within a New Critical and phenomenological framework, but his analysis gradually unsettles structuralist assumptions. When he observes that "a movement from the present into the past causes the gloom of the past to engulf the whole of the present" (101), he challenges the separation between past and present. Identity here is not stable; it is formed through temporal overlap. This instability marks the beginning of a decentered consciousness, where the self no longer relies on a fixed origin but becomes aware of its formation across time.

This development becomes clearer in *Beginnings* (1975), where Said defines subjectivity as an ongoing process. He writes: "In writing there is no longer any proper starting or stopping, only activity resumed or interpreted—and this because for the self there is no starting or stopping, only a selfhood resumed or interpreted at some risk to the individual's security" (229). The self is not complete; it is continuously reworked through interpretation. Instability does not weaken subjectivity; it becomes part of its formation. Here, subjectivity takes the form of a reflective activity, where consciousness emerges through the awareness of its own instability. Exile intensifies this condition, as the subject is forced to rethink itself across shifting contexts.

With *Orientalism* (1978), Said's subjectivity takes a critical turn. He moves beyond

textual analysis to examine how knowledge is tied to power. His claim that Orientalism is “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3) shows how representation produces fixed identities. His reading and analysis of Western discourse, it appears that Said is influenced by Michel Foucault’s knowledge-power relationship that is elaborated in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and *The History of Sexuality*. At this stage, Said’s subjectivity becomes oppositional and engaged. Exile allows him to read Western discourse both from within and against it. This double positioning produces a critical consciousness: the subject recognizes the structures that shape identity and actively interrogates them.

This position becomes explicitly political in *The Question of Palestine*, where Said links identity to representation and power. He writes that “the Palestinians are still perceived...as a collection of negative attributes” and adds that “Palestinian self-determination is an extraordinarily difficult one since self-determination is only possible when there is some clearly seen ‘self’ to determine” (118). Subjectivity here is not only fragmented but also denied. It must be articulated in a context that refuses to recognize it. Consciousness, in this sense, becomes critical because it is formed in struggle: it reflects on the conditions that obscure or erase it.

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said extends this perspective across cultures and histories. He argues that “resistance...is an alternative way of conceiving human history” and insists on “breaking down barriers between cultures” (216). Subjectivity is no longer tied to a single location but operates across multiple cultural frameworks. His contrapuntal reading brings different histories into relation, showing how identities are formed through interaction rather than isolation. This movement across cultures defines a decentered subjectivity: consciousness is not located in one center but develops through multiple, intersecting perspectives. At this stage, Said emerges as a transnational intellectual.

This development continues in *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994), where exile is directly linked to political struggle and representation. In his earlier works, Said engages with politics in a more general and critical manner. In this book, however, his position becomes more direct and interventionist. He appears not only as a critic but as a politically engaged intellectual, especially in relation to Palestinian leadership. This shift is already signalled when he admits that "I began to feel that what happened in the Arab world concerned me personally and could no longer be accepted with passive political engagement" (xiv). It marks a movement from observation to involvement. This is further evident when he recalls that "Yasir Arafat appeared at the UN, which is where I first met him" (xvii), and in his sustained critique of the corruption within the PLO (415). At this stage, Said writes from within the political field while maintaining a critical distance from it. His position is neither fully internal nor external, but transnational, shaped by exile and movement across contexts. He aligns with De Jong's observation that "the Palestinians have still not even formulated a strategy to resist" (417), which leads him to insist that "Palestinians must start thinking collectively and stop reacting individually...the main question is how to resist, not how to profit" (419). Here, Said's subjectivity takes the form of an exilic political consciousness: grounded in displacement yet actively engaged in shaping collective struggle. His role as a critic expands into that of a transnational intellectual who speaks across borders while remaining accountable to a specific historical and political condition. "I began to feel that what happened in the Ara world concerned me personally and could no longer be accepted with passive political engagement" (xiv).

Across these selected works, Said's subjectivity develops through distinct but connected stages: from literary interpretation to theoretical reflection, and then to political engagement. Exile remains the condition that connects them. It removes the self from fixed origins and places it between cultures, histories, and discourses. *This condition produces what can be*

defined as a decentered critical consciousness: a form of awareness that emerges from instability, reflects on its own formation, and engages critically with the structures that shape it. Said becomes a transnational exilic intellectual precisely because his subjectivity operates across boundaries while maintaining this reflexive and critical awareness.

In a nutshell, Said's subjectivity takes the form of a decentred critical consciousness, and this consciousness also becomes the basis of Said the transnational intellectual: positioned between cultures, historically aware, and committed to critique across borders. Said's writing therefore articulates subjectivity as practice. It unfolds through writing, consciousness, and historical experience. Exile provides the condition that renders this process visible and operative. Subjectivity emerges as a dynamic configuration that engages its own formation, transforming displacement into a site of critique and reflection

4. CONCLUSION

This study has argued that Said's understanding of subjectivity cannot be reduced to identity or origin. What emerges instead is a form shaped through displacement, memory, and historical experience. Read in relation to Derrida, Foucault, and Kristeva, this subject does not hold together as a unified center but takes shape across difference, discourse, and internal division. Said's writing makes this visible. From his early work to his later political texts, subjectivity appears as something worked through rather than given. Writing does not simply express the self; it exposes its instability while also holding it in a form that can reflect, revise, and respond. What looks like fragmentation is not collapse, but a way of sustaining thought across conflicting positions. Exile sharpens this condition. It places the subject between locations and forces a relation to history that cannot be settled. The result is not loss alone, but a form of awareness that remains attentive to its own limits and conditions. In this sense, Said's work points to a decentered critical consciousness: a mode of thinking that does not claim stability yet does not dissolve into dispersion. It moves across cultural and political

boundaries, which is what allows Said to occupy a transnational intellectual position. His subjectivity is not outside power, but engaged with it, and it is this tension that gives his work its critical force.

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