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EXILE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY IN H. MATAR'S *THE RETURN* AND

E. SAID'S *OUT OF PLACE*

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The work presented in this MA thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and my own work, except as acknowledged in the text. The work in this thesis has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a study of the identity issues that displaced people face while in exile, and of how literary works help in illustrating such struggles. To provide practical examples of exilic struggle and identity challenges, the study centers on two memoirs, Hisham Matar's *The Return* and Edward Said's *Out of Place*. With the increased hostility in the political and economic context internationally, the number of people living in exile is likely to be on the increase in the next few decades around the world. This study underlines the role of literary works in describing and exposing different types of social injustices and identity issues in relation to the violation of the human rights generally faced by people living in exile. The analysis centers on Matar's and Said's memoirs to delve into several literary and cultural elements, such as multilingualism, space and place, and multiculturalism, that the authors use to explore identity issues of people in exile.

Keywords: exile, identity, and injustice

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INTRODUCTION

The personal and cultural identity of an individual is an essential characteristic of their lives in contemporary life. According to Anderson (36), everyone has a unique identity that resonates with his or her country of residence. The abrupt loss of a national identity due to punitive or political reasons, subsequently leading the individual into exile, has a great impact on the person's sense of self. Individuals moving into exile have to deal with uncertain futures and shattered pasts to face the new realities in a new world where they have to confront different cultures, languages, and ways of living. Having been separated from their certainties at home, they face the task of 'homemaking' in their country of asylum.

It may appear complex to point out any obvious connections between displaced, fragmented communities and the social empowerment and engagement concepts. The exploration of such connections is additionally exacerbated by non-integrative and restrictive policies that socially segregated asylum seekers generally encounter. Exile, deportation, and emigration are all terms that refer to the movement from one country to another. However, the motives and drives for such movement inevitably differ. Exile refers to the experiences of people being barred and expelled from their native countries characteristically due to punitive or political reasons. In contrast, emigration generally refers to voluntary movement from one country to settle in another across geographical boundaries, mainly for work-related, family-related, or personal issues. On the other hand, deportation usually involves the host country sending a person back to his/her country of citizenship. This paper, however, focuses on identity issues concerning people in exile, which involves an involuntary movement of people from their country of citizenship to another country. There are different forms of exile, including the political, social, and intellectual exile (Camuri 45). Currently, the contemporary globalized world

is witnessing a high rate of political and economic instability in different regions that has led to the exile of many people from their home countries. Some of the challenges include having to learn the host country's languages, cultural, and social operations. Such difficulties cause exiles to face serious identity challenges while trying to fit in the new environment as they shed off their old identity.

The present study undertakes a theoretical analysis of Matar's and Said's memoirs, which provide a perspective of the categorization and migration process. Hisham Matar's memoir is a significant example that demonstrates the experience of the issues of identity in exile. The memoir provides insight on Matar's traumatic experience as a young person in exile and the identity challenges he faced while growing up in a foreign land. Matar's father was a critic of the Gaddafi regime, and therefore, he sought asylum for his family outside Libya through the politically motivated exile. Matar's challenges related to identity issues in exile emanate from the cultural, social, and political disconnect that he faced with his family. He felt that he could not get back home, though he was equally suffering while in the new country. The memoir presents a collection of the experiences that Matar went through in exile up to the point when he returned to Libya to look for his father.

Similarly, Edward Said also narrates his estranging experiences while in exile. One of the confusing aspects for the author was that while he is an American by nationality, he referred to the mixture in his identification where the British name was placed as his first name, and the Arabic name as the second (Said 113). Said also had the experience of living in different nations and as such, faced a divided identity in his life. The author sets out to narrate his experiences in trying to understand his identity through different personality expressions.

The present study undertakes an analysis of the real-life struggles and issues that people in exile face regarding their identity. The literature review will provide an analysis of the previous studies on aspects of identity such as mobile identity, identities in exile, language as home, and as an exile, among others. Further, the analysis shall involve the two memoirs in illuminating the practical application of real-life narratives in understanding and addressing identity struggles and challenges when in exile. The study will, therefore, center on highlighting the role that literary works can play in underlining the identity struggles and challenges individuals face while in exile.

Chapter One: Identity, Language, and Exile

This chapter explores theoretical approaches related to issues of identity, mobile identities, identities in exile, language as home, and language as space of exile. The theories provide methodological and philosophical models that help relate the work within the research context. They provide a context for the research and analysis of the literary texts.

1.1 Identity Issues in Exile

As a general experience, exiled individuals have the feeling that they belong to their home nation more than they are in the host country (Stangor 215). Most people living in foreign nations face diverse cultural identities based on the disparity between their homelands and the host country. Therefore, they are under pressure to create the space and the environment in which they are likely to operate and temporarily have a sense of belonging. There are constant changes in the individual identities depending on the fluidity and the relations the person will develop over time (Doku 298). The nature of the struggle between the dominant political system and the disfranchised groups determines the process by which the exiles will get recognition in a foreign nation. The identity of an individual depends on the relationship they create and the situations that they find themselves while in the country. To overcome the identity issues, those in exile are confronted with the need to develop intrinsic mechanisms of recognizing host nations as part of their home to elicit a sense of belonging in the new countries. In addition to the cultural aspect, Doku et al. (296) add that there is a political identity in the context of operation in a new country. The nature of politics in a country is a major determinant in how the country operates which subsequently determines the native's attitudes towards foreigners and experiences of those in exile. While supporting this observation, Stangor (211) posits that the presence of the dynamics

in the political leadership of the society is instrumental in shaping how the individuals would need to define themselves in the new society.

There are social identity issues that those in exile inevitably experience. It is therefore imperative for the refugees in the host nations to develop strategies that would allow them to acquire the local status, and must change their habits in a way that creates the right impression among the members of the host community (Eze 885). Mangum (41) argues that social identity means fitting into the system and having elements of actions that are acceptable to the people in the new country even when one is not comfortable with the social practices and norms. However, Van Dijk (135) disputes this argument by noting that in an exilic situation, social identity issues occur when one struggles to entrench their social norms into daily activities and practices. Notably, there are crucial elements that would fit into the social identity aspect within a society. According to Eze (880), the nature identity, which involves natural traits such as the skin color or gender, would be an issue of contention among the people in exile.

Further, institutional identities refer to a situation where the people in exile need to identify and recognize the specific authorities in the host country. Therefore, they have to ascribe and adapt to the political, legal, and regulatory frameworks of the host country. Additionally, the people in exile experience discourse identity issues, where the exiled try conform to the social behaviors, religious beliefs, and practices of groups in the host nations (Van Dijk 136). Therefore, Van Dijk concludes that social identity is a significant issue that would define the interaction of the people in exile.

1.2 Mobile Identities

In some regions of transit, such as the Mediterranean area, there are many cultural groups represented by people from different regions who are in motion. Mobile identities refer to the

ability of the people in exile to adopt new identities in the world of globalization. Over time, the identity issues around those people in new countries are always changing. Van Dijk argues that as one enters a new state, there are considerable challenges of nostalgia as well as the feeling of the loss of loved ones, which demands significant lifestyle changes (136). Van Dijk (135) posits that the movement of a person to a new country and the sweeping changes in the location drive one to explore different possibilities in a fictional world that would define their identity.

McCauley (406) supports Van Dijk's argument by noting that throughout the time one moves, the personal experience is instrumental in helping to examine the reality of geographical displacement, spirituality, and ideological changes, as they adapt to the new realities. In the process, one is forced to embrace new ways of changing how personal identity is shaped, which slowly becomes entrenched into the new socioeconomic life.

Llen (360) explains that the contemporary forms of identity issues require the interconnection between reality and the location rather than underlining the element of separation. Using Colum McCann's novel *Let the Great World Spin*, the author explains that the concept of identity in the 21st century is about the ability of a person in exile to connect beyond the differences they have with the existing societies. In agreeing with Llen, McCann (178) suggests that one should participate in multiple communities and move through the center and margins in the process. On this basis, it is clear that mobility helps in facilitating the multi-dimensional apprehension of the events and meditating among the differences in the relationship between the people in the country of origin. As such, mobile identity can be defined as the transnational dialogue where one can create a cosmopolitan reality that will be useful in enhancing cultural universalism and pluralism.

1.3 Language and Identity in Exile

Notably, Llen (365) has contended that millions of people in exile take the option of using language as the only tool of communication while living in foreign nations. Llen is of the view that it is through the use of languages that there is a fundamental understanding of the plight of the refugees, which plays a pivotal role in illuminating the reality around the place where they find themselves. However, McCauley insists on the communicative aspect of a language. According to him, using various languages as communication tools, one can remain real in the times of deprivation, pass information about the conditions of homelessness, and equally develop the feeling of belonging amidst all the challenges (McCauley 401). The development of new connections through language helps solve the problems experienced during exile.

The solutions to some of the main challenges while in exile require adaptability and strategies that would be useful in coping with a new socio-economic and political system. McCauley (406) claims that the exiled need to get used to the influence the local activities have on them, the social status that they acquire in their new country of adoption, and the motivation to creatively act in the new country. McCauley adds that foreigners should integrate the stringency they face in exile through the language so that they gain admission and acceptance among the host community and the people they interact with (406). Ghinea (468) supports this observation by arguing that the people in exile should learn how to communicate and evaluate the possible cultural aspects in society and identify where to fit appropriately. Equally, it is through language that one can read the artistic life of the host country and listen to various ways that would fasten the rate of adaptability while in exile.

Erdinast-Vulcan (441) emphasizes that the process of getting to exile is an ultimate experience. According to him, most victims are forced into exile when they were happy at home

and had no imagination about the possibility of being forced to migrate to a foreign country. On this premise, the biggest challenge would be that of finding the most favorable environment where they can seek asylum. In the process, the exiled require solidarity from those they meet while in the new host nations. Erdinast-Vulcan (443) suggests possible solutions to such challenges while in exile. According to him, the elimination of the hostile nature of the adopting country is possible using the native language, which is significantly pivotal in understanding the cultural aspects during their stay. Therefore, understanding the language prepares those in exile to consider personality traits and enhances their ability in coping with the new environment and taking a position on different social-economic and political issues.

1.4 Language as Home and Language as Exile

Language is a particularly effective tool for the people in exile and is useful in identifying the social status of a person. Sharing a common language makes people feel at home and welcome. In supporting this argument, Li (262) illustrates that there is a direct relationship between identity issues and the language for the people that live in exile. Language is a symbolic resource center for the people in exile, which they use in exploring the differences between the host nation and the country of origin. Li (265) extends this statement by noting that language is a badge of identity and can be a significant element to explore different ways in which it is possible to get resources that qualify an individual to become a member of the new society. Samovar et al. (25) are also of the view that knowing the language of the host nation helps the exiled to maneuver their way into accessing the essential facilities and services, which is a way of developing the sense of identity.

Social strains naturally attract people to the extent where they slowly develop a sense of membership and fitting to a particular cluster. The membership is derived from knowledge of all

of the values and the norms that define the new society (Browaeys, Marie-Joëlle, and Roger Price 313). Identity is the most useful phenomenon in the development of the person, leading them to realizing their dreams and goals while in exile. According to Samovar et al. (27), the exiled person should get a group through which the element of identity can be built and developed. It is through belonging to such groups that exiled individuals can feel socially safe. Notably, Samovar et al. (26) argue that safety sets in when one can communicate and share their experiences by learning the language of the host nation, which can be considered as the second language. Binderbir et al. (531) support this argument by noting that remaining within the first language as the only tool of communication not only fails to give the sense of identity while in exile but also places a significant challenge in the interaction and communication process. On the other hand, learning the second language eases the process of interaction and facilitates the development of social networks within the society, thus minimizing identity challenges.

While supporting the above observation, Ghinea (465) argues that there are further issues connected and associated with the language that one uses while in exile. For example, learning an additional language is a symbol of the need to not only have the additional resources for the people in the new country but also acts as a catalyst towards cultural imitation and integration. While building on this argument, Binderbir et al. (531) posit that political participation of the people in exile offers impetus to the element of identity, especially when taking part in the political systems and operations of the new society. Based on the above discussion, a language is a tool that provides safety when one experiences challenges of life while in exile. Further, in exile, language is useful in creating an understanding of the new environment and facilitating safety at times of uncertainty.

Chapter Two: Language, Identity and Place in Matar's and Said's Memoirs

This chapter centers on H.Matar's and E. Said's memoirs to provide a historical account of the various issues facing people living in exile. It helps synthesize and connect with powers beyond ourselves by relating real-life experiences of people living in exile with other experiences. The chapter exposes a different experience and a broader perspective of the issues, thereby opening the reader to more possibilities. The two memoirs explored in the chapter resonate with the different life experiences of people a multiplicity of exilic conditions. The study of the people's experiences in exile provides a sense of connection that breeds a greater understanding of the subject.

2.1 Hisham Matar's memoir

The Matar memoir epitomizes the experiences of most people while in exile and their various identity issues. Through storytelling, Matar depicts struggles in exile and explores a multiplicity of identity issues. Narrating stories of human rights provides one with the feeling of vulnerability and fragility faced by people living in exile. The exilic situation and experience has been the epitome of Matar's attempts to discover his identity, which he offers as the representation of untold stories of millions that undergo victimization and mistreatment while in exile. Matar's dehumanizing geopolitical and cultural space of Libya, as his homeland, acts as a key identity marker that played an instrumental role in forging the exiled writer from the oppressive history and several migration incidents (Browaeys et al. 69). Matar noted that grief should not be taken as a puzzle to be solved or a whodunit story, but rather as a vibrant and an active enterprise (167). According to his poetic, even mystical understanding, grief is part of an initiation process into dying and despite the extraordinary events that take place, the heart naturally aligns towards the light (167).

Aristotle referred to catharsis as the cleansing and purging of emotions of fear and pity that are aroused after watching tragedies. Aristotle noted that the concept of catharsis has a metaphorical connection to the positive psychosocial humanizing imaginary or functionary of rehabilitation and renewal of human subjects or persons through art. On this basis, memoirs can be written within the same efforts and dimensions since the inherent objective of narrators is to attract some hearing to stories of victims of human rights violation, which acts as a healing catharsis for readers. Along the same lines, Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith attested to the fact that personal stories or memoirs are among the most powerful literary genres when denouncing the abuse on human rights insomuch as they magnify and disseminate the voices of the dissent to the local and international audiences (15). They add that the application of storytelling and narration in memoirs is crucial in the case where the pressures of the traumatic memories of the past and hopes for a better future need to be balanced (8). According to them, the storytelling process marks the starting point of the healing journey for the victims since it is a significant element in the establishment of a new identity of simultaneously longing for the past and belonging towards the future (19).

The struggles in exile become evident when Matar dwells on the significant role of storytelling. For example, Matar observes that through the power of storytelling, people can travel over time and share in imaginations of their past struggles and experiences, as well as learn how to survive and endure suffering (62). As he strives to identify and rediscover himself, Matar emphasizes that storytelling is crucial for reconciliation and reparation. For example, through his father's principles, he revives himself when noting that uncertainty and need are excellent teachers. According to Matar, while in prison, his father survived annihilation in the oppressive environment since he found consolation in recitation and creation of poetry. In this

instance, Matar sought to depict how storytelling can be used as a source of relief for the victims of human rights violation and as one of the significant factors that provide life's rejuvenation in times of struggle and difficulties. The importance of storytelling is also evident when Matar notes that his uncle "had not been erased" as well and that he was able to forgive and love everyone since he secretly wrote letters and poems to the children on the pillowcase he had stealthily smuggled during prison release (34).

Matar's struggles are depicted when exile infantilizes him and replaces the grief of his absent father's disappearance as a central feature of the text. Consequently, Matar seems to be motivated in writing about life, thus mapping the disruptive impacts of stunting and disempowered life in a dictatorial and repressive regime. He relates his life to a perfect depiction of history that is personalized as injustice statement that is seeking to address the problem of human rights violation. According to Schaffer and Smith (136), Matar is part of the human rights writers or activists who have personally experienced the victimization and who intend to redeem themselves from their pains, grieves, and losses for the attainment of approximate catharsis of the sufferings, thus positioning themselves as world citizens in the international sphere of civility.

2.1.1 Different levels of Multilingualism in Narrating Atrocities and Suffering

An element of single consciousness, resulting in a certain monological dimension in relation to personal struggles and identity issues is apparent in Matar's work. For example, Matar provides first-hand information about the courtyard, where he notes that much "blood was spilled (45). The use of monologism in this instance is primarily helpful in addressing the truth regarding the torture and the trauma that prisoners and other victims of the dictatorial regime had to undergo. Consequently, Matar manages to invite his readers into the dark chamber that is filled with

historical trauma where many Libyans were forcefully constrained. As one of the styles of multilingualism within the narrative, Matar has used monologism to reveal the erosion and injustice of identity as he provides a personal account of the experience in the Mouth of Hell (236). For example, he uses symbolism in emphasizing his sole authority in narrating the general picture of victimization. According to Matar, the place had horrific noises (53) and “absolute darkness (55). Mikhail Bakhtin is one of the scholars that introduced the application of multilingualism in discourse analysis. As an important theorist of discourse in the 20th century, Bakhtin provided his notion of the role that dialogism, monologism, polyphony, and heteroglossia play in the presentation of literary works (Bindebir, 572). In this sense, Matar uses different voices in his text to illustrate the level of atrocities and suffering that he encountered while in exile.

Notably, the knowledge Matar depicts on victimhood emanates from the smuggled letter he received while in jail, as well as from the evidentiary memories of his survived relatives, including the experiences of the prison inmates, which he referred to as the “infamous courtyard”. In many instances throughout the text, Matar would use monologism as his vehicle to examine his personal experiences. In his work the “Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, Bakhtin embarked on the development of different concepts that would later inform much of his work. In reference to Dostoevsky’s work, Bakhtin would note that while various voices emerge as a single perspective, they are not subordinated to the author’s voice (217). According to Bakhtin, each of the voices carries their narrative weight, validity, and perspective within a literary work (211). As one of these voices, monological perspective, also called “homophony”, includes the entrenchment of a single-thought approach in the narrative (Mangum, 41). In monologism, a transcendental consciousness is used to integrate a specified context of the entire story, thus

helping to expose the signifying ideologies, practices, desires, and values that are considered as critically important in the advancement of themes or plot of a literary piece. While elucidating on the significance of monological narrative, Bakhtin noted that characters in such works solely exist within the plot to contribute to the transmitting of the writer's ideology. The author represents their ideas in the narration. The difference noted among characters is visible within the single-consciousness perspective. According to Bakhtin, such works are flat and featureless since they apply a single tone (215). However, Bakhtin failed to emphasize that monologism entrenches itself in some contexts within a narrative or a story as observed in Matar's account.

While realizing the criticism of using monological approach throughout the work, Matar also applied dialogism in describing his experience in exile. Bakhtin argues that unlike monologism, dialogism, which is also known as multi-voiced or double-voiced narrative, appreciates the multiplicity of voices and perspectives (251). From these multiple voices, the psychological and emotional perspectives of suffering in exile become evident through other characters. Bakhtin observes that as a principle, dialogism can apply as the main point of reference to a specific aesthetic field. While using this approach, each character can have the finality of personal narrative or account; he or she can relate and interact with other characters (256). Notably, Matar used other people's stories to enrich his account of life in exile. Stories from witnesses form part of his narrative to facilitate his readers access to experiences of what happened while providing the legitimate element of extremity. For example, prisoners act as a critical source of information for Matar's narration. They are deliberately present in the narrative as victims and witnesses of victimization that encouraged people to seek asylum. In their words, they describe the inhuman incarceration practices, which resulted in cognitive failure, insanity, and physical disability, as these practices intended to erode the corporeal and psychological

integrity of individuals' (125). Further, the prisoners account painted the grueling picture of physical pain they underwent. For instance, they refer to the latest handcuffs with a thin plastic wire that the military tightened around the prisoners' wrists. The prisoners could feel the pain "not so much around the wrists, but inside their heads (266). When such prisoners seek asylum, the mental torture they went through affects the way they identify with their original home country.

Identity issues that Matar faces demonstrate that it is easy to note the workings of polyphony in the narrative. Unlike the dialogical approach that entails two or more voices, polyphony recognizes the use of only multi-voices in literary works. According to Bakhtin, the application of the polyphonic approach is one of the central aspects observed in a wide range of discourse analyses (215). In the polyphonic narrative, the authors ensure that their narrative voice allows the characters to subvert and shock (Samovar et al.47). One of the instances of the use of the polyphonic concept is when Matar notes that in unlimited occasions, prisoners experienced physical and verbal torture, as well as the deprivation of the basic privileges of medical care, sleep, and food. According to Matar, the torturers would spill cockroaches on the chest of the prisoners, and that they could bleed from several places. In such expressions, while he takes a personal perspective as a narrator, one would argue that Matar had information about the suppression and victimization from another source, which could be the prisoners or another witness. Therefore, a hidden voice that is unrevealed to the author is evident. Further, Matar used the feelings, physical and emotional torture of the prisoners and other Libyans as another voice that described the level of inhumanity. For example, the injured bodies of the prisoners provided an indisputable picture of how the victims looked from the abyss after two decades (66). These inhuman acts on the relatives of the exiled affected how they could relate and identify

themselves with the released prisoners. The extent of torture is clear from their inability to recognize their friends and loved ones, thus causing identity issues among the prisoners and the exiled people who came to reconnect with the prisoners. According to Matar (65), this was a systematic approach by the regime to cover up the long list of social, economic, and political injustices (65).

2.1.2 The Role of Literary Works and Disappearance on Mobile Identity

In Hisham Matar's *The Return*, disappearance is one of the key examples that carry the features of mobile identity. The kidnapping of Matar's father, Jaballa Matar, marked the beginning of the long journey of finding a person that would boost his efforts of self-identity. After the disappearance, the author's father started to exist only in letters, photographs, and stories that he composed. Matar would also assume the presence of his father through memories and stories that his brother, mother, cousins, uncles, and ex-prisoners narrated. According to Ghinea (467), his father's voice in the form of an audio-letter and as a ghost haunted his imaginations and memory, which to some extent acted as a sensory presence that he could only realize through an unsuccessful search of identity in Libya. Notably, the knowledge gained from the smuggled letters, audio, and other sources played an instrumental role in enhancing Matar's belief that his father's last location was in the infamous Abu Salim prison, commonly referred to as The Last Stop. Matar also learned that prison was where Libya's regime "sent those it wanted to forget (10).

While the literary sources positively contributed to the author's efforts of personal identification, the disappearance was the regime's approach to limit self and collective identity. According to Nayar, the element of disappearance in Matar's text empowered the regime in operating the "Endo-colonial policies and practices to destroy subjectivity" (25). Nayar adds that

people viewed such practices as a legitimate process of the state in protecting its authority against the real and perceived enemies (25). The process includes emplacing and classifying individuals that appear as a threat to the State into different categories (Doku et al. 295). Endo-colonialism was evident in Jaballa Matar's disappearance. In this perspective, the dissident identity of the author's father and his family was a threat to the Libyan regime. While many dissidents vanished under horrific conditions, the government agents ensured that no traces of their victims remained after the murder (Kebede 58). The disappearance affected Matar immensely. For example, the burden and grief of the unavailable father changed Matar as a subject. According to Smith and Watson (216), Matar's identity became vulnerable given the absence of the personal and communal social organization and the long history of the writer's kinship. Additionally, the absence of the physical connection to cultural constructs made the will to pursue dreams and self-realization futile and "impotent" (34). On this premise, the inability of Matar to abate the fate of his father contributed to the former's placement in the genocidal imagery where the dehumanizing process aims at eroding his subjectivity.

2.1.3 The Use of Space and Place in Matar's Memoir

In the literary perspective, Matar used space and place to emphasize how he identified with the tribulations that his father, himself, ex-prisoners, and the general Libyan society were going through. In many discourse analyses, place has been the reference point in the definition of space. As a concept, place may change based on different functions and uses, such as in the cultural, political, and social context. Matar's life in exile placed a significant space between him and his father. The difference in place and space waned off the identity that he shared with his father. From the narration, Matar compensated for the space and place disconnect by having hope that his father was okay and trying to identify himself with his father through objects and

stories concerning him. While using the super-modernity approach, the French anthropologist, Marc Augé, took the perspective of the anthropological place with movement and language elements in the definition of space (75). However, he first defined place as historical, relational, and concerned with one's identity (Auge 76). Consequently, the places specificity should be the reference point when defining and identifying those who live in the vicinity. Therefore, according to Auge, memory and emotions of people are central elements in the understanding of place as a concept. However, he went further to claim the existence of the opposite of place, the non-place (78). Auge argued that non-place is the space without relational or historical identity or connotation, thus lacking memory or an emotional attachment (77). The observation of Augé has the support of Varnelis and Friedberg's argument. The two agree that places provide for spaces and that the former should be locations where those with distinct identities form and develop close relationships (3). While supporting this perspective as well, Gieryn (465) adds that the definition of space and place should take into consideration the compilation of objects or things at a specific location within the universe, which brings people with distinct characteristics together.

In the Matar's account, he refers to Abu Salim prison and generally the state of Libya as two unique places in the text. Although the prison provides his father with a place and space to "stay" in exile, it was a source of grief for both of them. According to Matar, the prison provoked inexplicable grief" (247). As a center of focus, it may be prudent to consider the prison as occupying virtual space in Matar's heart. Therefore, based on Auge's argument, the prison was not a dislocated non-place, a place of misidentification and loss; it was rather a place that provided historical and relational connotations that Matar could identify with.

2.2 Edward Said's Out of Place

The lyrical, compassionate “Out of Place” memoir chronicles Edward Said’s feelings of displacement in both his family and cultural settings while exposing the roots of the author’s political, intellectual, and personal unfolding. As a distinguished cultural critic, Said has attracted a reputation as a public intellectual and a writer who championed the Palestinians’ cause. This section seeks to analyze memoir, *Out of Place*, in terms of the use of literary skills in revealing exile identity struggles.

2.2.1 Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Said's Identity and Metaphoric Exile

The life of migration, travel, and exile characterized Said’s identity throughout his life. According to Said, there was nothing more paradoxically sought after and painful than his life of constant displacements from cities, countries, environments, and languages, a condition that helped to keep him in motion for many years (216). Notably, Said lived in four different countries and cities: the United States, Lebanon, Egypt, and Palestine. On this premise, the memoir sheds light on the different multilingual and multicultural environments that shaped his identity over time. In naive words, Said notes that he cannot remember the last language that he spoke. However, he emphasizes that the two languages, English and Arabic, have been critical linguistic elements in his life (216). The depth of multilingualism in his account appears when he states that ironically and nostalgically, the two languages would resonate, comment, and correct each other. While both are seen as his first language, he notes that such primal and noble instability originates from his mother, who spoke Arabic and English as well (4). Gieryn (52) argues that the closeness of Said to his mother is notable in his admission that the two wrote to each other in English. In Egypt, Said’s family was part of the privileged Arabic groups known as the Shami. He depicts Cairo as a vibrant and cosmopolitan city in his description. In reference to

his account, Said's family has overlapping and porous cultures and melding of the new and old traditions. On this basis, the environment of the author's family acted as the antithesis of the Orient concept, which is somehow homogenous, static, and backward. However, Gieryn (56) opposes this position by noting that while Said's family has the characteristics of the Orientalist's 'Orient' concept, categorizing it as backward is disputable.

With a Lebanese mother and a Palestinian father who later became an American citizen, Said illustrates the unforgettable experience of multiculturalism. For example, he remembers the remarkable memories of his life in Palestine: "a place that I could take for granted" (Said 215). Additionally, the impact of living in foreign and multicultural society on Said's identity is significant. Said seemed to struggle in identifying himself and setting his priorities on the life goals he wanted to achieve while in a new country. For example, after moving to the United States, he states that the background, nationality, real origins, as well as past actions, haunted him, making him unable to settle in the new country. In his deliberately naïve suggestion, Said wishes that we all be Arab, or all-European and American, or all-Muslim, or all-Orthodox Christian, or all-Egyptian...(212) According to him, such identification will help to counter the challenge of recognition, and exposure, and easily answer the question, What are you (5).

2.2.2 Space and Place in Said's Memoir

In his memoir, Said describes various homes he occupied in life, which include homes in Jerusalem, Cairo, Lebanon, and the United States. Therefore, the use of space and place becomes instrumental in highlighting his attempts at reconstructing the creation of personal identity over time and space. Writing as a homeless and displaced subject, the author sought to use the literary work to ground himself in a specific space. According to Kebede (14), Said used space and place to understand and classify his nomadic life across different countries and cities. On this basis, the

memoir is instrumental in the illumination of bigger identity questions for the displaced, transplanted, relocated, and dislocated individuals. The connection of space and place to the author's narration appears when Said questions his identity as an American, non-Muslim Arab, and a Palestinian at the beginning of the memoir. In Said's writings, he considered his identity as rootless (225). Therefore, he uses the memoir to not only provide for the chronology of the transnational existence, but it also offers an opportunity to explore the 'place' of identity. O'Beirne (62) argues that the element of transnational identity in Said's memoir is not centered on the geographical spaces that the author occupied, which made him consistently remain an outcast and an individual who was always absent at home. Camurri (65) supports this argument by noting that the equivalence of Said's out of place to being transnational should be highlighted and that such alignment is disastrous to the author's sense of identity.

2.2.3 Displacement as a Crisis or Said's Exile

Reading the memoir *Out of Place* as the narration of a transnational and displaced subject is further justified from Said's biography and other writings. There is a clear revelation of his struggle to forge his identity in the memoir through challenges that he experiences because of displacement. Said's struggles started from the early stages of his life after having two distinct names: Edward and Said. The pairing of the two names was meant to create disconnection to any single and singular identity. The author notes that Said was a name unlinked with any of the relatives, such as grandparents, as per the Arabic tradition. His sense of discontentment of this contradiction in his naming is observable when he states that, I have retained this unsettled sense of many identities all my life an acute memory of the despairing feeling (5). He regrets not living in Palestine after being denied official citizenship. Although he was born in Palestine, he bemoans the loss of this State, thus feeling like an outsider, even as he champions its cause.

While Said expresses the sense of extraordinary departures that have unsettled his life, characterization of himself as a foreigner in different countries does not emerge (217). However, Assad Al-Saleh argues that the memoir illustrates Said's self-narrative in a text that seeks to reassert his relationship with Palestine as his homeland, which is the central place of the author's identity and belonging (75). Therefore, Al-Saleh considers Said as a displaced Palestine, but not an individual in exile. In refuting this argument, Fawaz Turki's autobiography refers to Said as Palestine in exile, which condemns his denial to enter into Palestine as a citizen (83). This observation is in tandem with the definition of exile as a sense of expulsion and of being chased "Out of Place" from where one calls home (Gieryn 55). The conclusion is that there are different types of displacements, including being exiled. Since expulsion leads to displacement from one country, Said's memoir needs the reading perspective of a displaced and an exiled individual who struggles to find his identity.

Conclusion

The Thesis analyses the various identity issues, challenges, and struggles that people in exile have to face. The analysis of Hisham Matar's *The Return* and Edward Said's *Out of Place* offered case studies in illustrating how the two authors incorporated literary works in advancing their narratives of identity. In his narration, Matar used storytelling to highlight the victimization of his father and of other prisoners in Libya. In this state, they faced daily experiences of human rights violation. The communication of the loss of the father is useful in dealing with the problems family members undergo while in exile. Notably, the loss of the sense of being human is apparent. Matar and his father risk failing to understand the reason of being human as a result of living in a deplorable state. In the narrative process, the author employs different voices in the form of monologism, polyphony, and dialogism. At a personal level, he struggles to establish identity, especially from the story of his father, who died in the custody of the Libyan regime. The father's disappearance contributes to the significance of work, by giving relevance to such traces as letters and audio voice, powerful instruments in remembering and connecting to his father. The elements of space and place are also instrumental in informing the reader of the relationship that Matar has with Abu Salim prison and, in general, with the State of Libya. By describing the victimization in prison and the mistreatment of Libyans, Matar shows his prowess in the use of space and place to expose human rights violations.

Edward Said also uses literary skills in telling his story. The title of the memoir, "Out of Place", illustrates his challenge to identify with a country of origin, Palestine. The role of multilingualism and multiculturalism in his identity struggle is also highlighted through the representation of his experiences in the different countries and cities where Said lived. The use of space and place exemplifies the author's ability to create a line of controversy among critics on

whether he was displaced or exiled. However, the study has argued that Said's memoir escapes from such binaristic thinking by depicting simultaneously a displaced and an exiled subject. The two memoirs, Matar's and Said's, confirm that literary works can be particularly relevant to describe the identity struggles of individuals while in exile.

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