Hatoum, Said and Foucault: Resistance through Revealing the Power-Knowledge Nexus?

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In September 2005, John Tusa met with Mona Hatoum for a conversation which was part of a series of interviews with great artists that he conducted for BBC Radio 3 that year. In the interview, Tusa wondered if Hatoum's "rootlessness—Beirut, London, Berlin" impacted on her aesthetics. Hatoum confirms that her exilic identity does stand at the core of her art. Indeed, her uprooted identity makes her see through power politics, which is reflected in her works. She exemplifies an archetypal intellectual who critiques the inhibiting system through her oppositional stance. In this regard, she shares a significant aspect of intellectual resistance with Edward Said. Both Hatoum and Said are Palestinian exiles who transform the pain of physical separation from their native land into a privilege of intellectual freedom. The privilege is attained through scepticism towards systems of power. Hatoum de-familiarizes familiarity through her imaginative endeavours to reveal the nature of power-knowledge networks that engulf "home," just as Said combats the naturalisation of a fabricated identity of "the Other." Notably, Said utilizes Foucault's methodology of "archive" and "genealogy" in order to disjoin the power-knowledge mechanism underlying "the Other." In this paper, I argue that Foucault's methodology ultimately discredits the power mechanism by revealing the precariousness involved in its operation. I believe that such oppositional views emanate from Foucault's self-imposed separation from his "home" culture. Seen from this perspective, Said, Hatoum and Foucault become "exilic" intellectuals who are oppositional in a distinct way. However, there are differences in the style, manner and medium through which they execute their resistance. Because of the differences, Foucault's exile is not brought into focus in discussions about Said's use of his methodology. But in this paper, I parallel Said's "exile" with that of Hatoum and Foucault in order to bring out the convergences and differences in their respective "exilic" positions against power. I conclude by showing that Hatoum's works link Said and Foucault in such a way that they challenge aesthetics to transcend its prescribed circumference in order to merge with politics.

Physical Exile Transformed into Intellectual Exile

The Tusa interview introduced Hatoum as follows: "Mona Hatoum is a Palestinian artist who works in sculpture, conceptual and situational art. She was born in Lebanon, educated in Britain, and now works in Berlin. In 1995 she was short-listed for the Turner Prize, and she has exhibited at galleries such as Tate Britain, the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art, White Cube and many, many others around the world" (Tusa, 2005). In addition, Stephen Deuchar writes in 2000, "Mona Hatoum has been acknowledged as an artist of major standing in Britain for more than a decade" ("Forward" 5). In fact, Hatoum's art works have earned renown for their unconventional forms, contents and messages that create a powerful poetics and politics of identity. The range of media she uses is both unconventional and diverse and includes installations, sculptures, videos, and photography, for example. Starting with graphic design and visceral performance art, she gradually moved towards sculptures and large scale installations. The hallmarks of her works have been unsettling paradoxes: they are attractive but provocative, inviting but mysterious, familiar but puzzling, and fascinating but fearful. In fact, the experience of homelessness makes her see everyday reality from an estranged perspective. That is why an egg-cutter becomes a *Marble Slicer* (2002), an innocent grater gets the shape of a giant *Grater Divide* (2002) or a household doormat is transformed into an *Entrails Carpet* (1995) through her art. Her art continuously challenges the viewers' worldly realities from an exilic point of view that makes the art paradoxically beautiful and shocking.

Since Hatoum's vision of the world is irrevocably transformed by her exile, her art reflects this vision, gets inspired by it and even comes to depend on it. Talking about Hatoum's unconventional vision of the world including her own body, Tusa asks her to comment on her non-belonging.

When you left London you said even after twenty-seven years I don't know where I really belong. Do you belong anywhere yet, has that feeling of not belonging changed?

Well I have to struggle to think of times where I felt like I did belong somewhere and maybe I would have to go to very, very early childhood, maybe before I even started going to school or something where the home environment, you know being with my parents and my sisters and wherever was, there was a sense of belonging in, inside the home, because as I was saying growing up in Lebanon, being Palestinian, going to school, having students my, my student friends sort of making fun of my accent as whenever you know a few words came out pronounced differently to the Lebanese accent, all these things were always making me and my sisters and my family of course feel like foreigners living in the Lebanon . . .

But has it been useful, has it been useful to you as an artist?

Well I, I always say that I'm not really complaining about the fact of being you know a foreigner or being displaced or whatever, and I don't really like to get sentimental about it because as a foreigner I feel extremely privileged because I always have at least two perspectives on every situation, which gives me a feeling that I can

transcend the local situation and I can always have a wider perspective on things and it makes me feel very privileged in that sense (Tusa, 2005).

This is where Hatoum resembles Said the most. Like Said, she transforms the pain of her physical exile into the intellectual "privilege" of seeing things from a "wider perspective," that is an independent universal viewpoint. Though Said experienced the unsettling distress of exile in various ways, he explains his "Out of Place" state, to borrow a title of his book, as an intellectually rewarding condition. In "Between Worlds," Said evokes his memory of unconnectedness when he was diagnosed with leukaemia; the feeling of being connected to neither Jerusalem nor Cairo nor Lebanon, the places he had lived in as an adolescent boy, came back to him:

> I found myself reliving the narrative quandaries of my early years, my sense of doubt and of being out of place, of always feeling myself standing in the wrong corner, in a place that seemed to be slipping away from me just as I tried to define or describe it (558).

However, Said is never bogged down by the crushing feeling of permanent uprootedness. Rather, he seizes exile as a means of attaining intellectual freedom through analysing his identity and (lack of) belonging. If Hatoum universalizes her marginality and imagines a contemporary world where nothing is absolute due to constructed boundaries, Said creates a similar intellectual revolution from his exilic position in the United States: he reveals how culture is connected to (colonial/imperial) power. In effect, such a revelation resists connection and boundaries. Because of this resisting power that exile endows intellectuals with, Said transforms homelessness into a significant idea of "exile." Therefore, Said's "exile" does not necessarily mean physical deracination from a homeland. Rather the "exile" implies intellectuals' disconnection from pre-existing dominant notions. The "exile" utilizes his/her critical faculties for forming unattached and non-discriminatory judgements on identity, culture, as opposed to being at "home" with unexamined notions about them. Exile thus enables intellectuals to uphold truths that are not jejunely formed to serve any unjust powers. Said clarifies:

> For objective reasons that I had no control over, I grew up as an Arab with a Western education . . . Yet when I say "exile" I do not mean something sad or deprived. On the contrary belonging, as it were, on both sides of the imperial divide enables you to understand them more easily (*Culture* xxvi-xxvii).

In other words, Said's "exile" is an empowering idea that allows intellectuals to transform their pain of border crossing, homelessness, and marginal identity into the paradoxical pleasure of achieving intellectual freedom through a deeper and broader understanding of culture, identity and home.

It is notable that Jerrold Seigel argues that Foucault's search for freedom makes himself an exile too. In fact, Seigel shows how Foucault was very much an exilic being in his personal life. He records:

> In an interview published in 1983 [Foucault] attributed his leaving the country to the fact that "I have suffered and I still suffer from a lot of things in French social and cultural life." But the freer personal life he sought outside France disappointed him . . . (285)

Evidently, a feeling of "the entire world as a foreign land" became part of his psyche. Through self-imposed homelessness, Foucault, "the analyst of modernity," however, went through an "intellectual transformation" in order to reach the freedom he desired so much, adds Seigel (285). The "evolution" he achieved intellectually "was tied to the personal problems that he sought to escape by leaving France" (Seigel 285). Seigel concludes that because of the unsettled background, Foucault was at last enriched with "'a truth that unmakes itself, an object that destroys itself, a science that seeks only to demystify itself'" (286). As discussed earlier, Said's "exile" emphasises the demystification of truths in the same way. Through the capability of unmasking constructed views, Foucault thus becomes a Saidian "exile." Clearly, the physical exile is transformed into an intellectual exile in Foucault as well.

However, as an "exile," Foucault is more akin to Hatoum than Said, I believe. Despite being a captive of war, cultural conflicts and marginality, Hatoum is very much in a war of her own kind against powers that uproot and put her in a prison of titular identity. An inherent alien-ness emerges at every stage of her creation in order to reveal the workings of unjust power. Hatoum illustrates how the artist's *alternative power* to see through the power game that seizes our identities is materialised through her "exilic" opposition. Put another way, Hatoum's silent resistance against power is heard through the unuttered language of art. Likewise, Foucault's theory discovers the possibility of emancipation through his "exilic intellectualism," though it never speaks out against the subjugating power it combats. Said, however, is robustly committed towards "speaking truth to power" by speaking out against imprisoning ideologies in a decisive and articulate way.

Said and Foucault: Convergences and Divergences

Foucault's silence on speaking out against oppressive power forms the centre of discordance between him and Said; this is where they diverge on their "exilic" avenues. As I said earlier, Foucault's resistance against power remains ambiguous due to his lack of declared protest against it. On the contrary, Said is one of the most formidable forces in resisting unjust powers irrespective of how dominant they are. Foucault's apparent lack of agency in resisting power politics makes his theories anti-humanistic and politically inactive, on the surface. Though Said uses the Foucauldian methodology in *Orientalism*, he does not want to be encircled by an

apolitical theoretical wall, as Foucault seemingly does. Said then proclaims that "*Orientalism* is a partisan book, not a theoretical machine" that opposes the Orientals' subjection to the colonial identity (340). Of course, Said's anti-colonial politics prevails in his writings, whereas Foucault's oeuvre may be seen to lack politics altogether, as it were. Therefore, I think that Said's major objection to Foucault's theories lies within the debate about intermixing aesthetics and politics. In an interview with Imre Salusinszky, however, Said unfolds an interesting viewpoint on this (134). Being asked whether "Foucault and Chomsky represent the two poles" in his thinking, he replies: "I think so, partly." Said describes Chomsky as "a solitary worker. He writes out of some sense of solidarity with oppressed people . . ." However, compared to Chomsky, Foucault *appears* to be more cynical and he is disinterested in "direct political involvement." But Said concludes, ". . . I've always felt that one in fact could incorporate both of them." Clearly, Said is attracted to the potential of resistance in Foucault's theories, despite the absence of a pronounced resistance against power in his oeuvre.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* Foucault problematises the conventional notions of *subject, discourse or knowledge* so as to *reveal* their limitations. He rejects concepts like an author or work because these are complex segments of an archive "bound together by 'discursivity' whose rules evolve a collection of semantic elements, and a collection of operative strategies of getting things said" (Said, "Michel Foucault" 56). As Foucault analyzes these elements and their operations, he discovers that the practice of knowledge conceals its constructed nature. Foucault's revolution takes place in *exteriorizing* this concealment. Consequently, rather than being an author, Foucault prefers to be an archaeologist/seer who takes up the duty of elucidating how formations, discontinuities, strategies are shaded into folds of knowledge. His archaeology is "an attempt to *reveal* discursive practices in their complexity and density" (*Archaeology* 34). Later on, he successfully proves that these complexities undoubtedly serve coercive power.

In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault examines discourse and institutions and proves that the technique of statement formation certainly works for the benefit of the power/knowledge network. Foucault shows that power is not simply "a set of physico-political techniques"; it has a cyclical relationship with the production of knowledge (223). He calls the discursive field of knowledge "an epistemological "thaw" through a refinement of power relations" (224). For Foucault, knowing and power go hand in glove. Because we know the world through our knowledge of it being archived in a certain way, knowledge always belongs to the groups with the power to authenticate *their* versions of information in *the archive*. Archives thus become weapons in a circulatory power/knowledge yoke. Said is at one with Foucault on this point:

> Foucault shows how the struggle for domination can be quiet, systematic, hidden, all because discourse (which is always a symbol of victory in language) appears to be

inevitable and systematic . . . There is an unceasing and meaningful interaction between forces . . . seeking to dominate and displace each other; now what makes the struggle something more than a random tooth-and-claw battle is that values (moral and intellectual) are involved (Said, "Interview" 36).

Following Foucault, Said shows how Orientalist values are created to serve colonial power. Through Foucault, Said is able to prove that texts are not just combinations of paradigmatic or syntactic citations or mere structural features; they are inextricably interlinked with cultural productions of "values" that the readers imbibe.

However, there is a rift between Said and Foucault on the question of "values." Said believes that the battle for inserting power's own "values" in discourses cannot be absolute or all-pervasive, though Foucault's theories *apparently* render the discursive network indomitable. Foucault proves one aspect of what Said calls the worldliness of texts by showing that texts are worldly items and they construct our knowledge of the world or our "values" about it. But Said points out that Foucault fails to recognize that the worldliness of writers are very much part of the worldliness of texts too; and the writers/critics simply cannot go on *unquestioningly* improvising with the customary intonation of "values" depicted in texts; nor can their experiences and ethics be entirely determined by discourse. Said believes that worldly experience produces ethics and resistant thoughts which are neither determined inexorably nor engulfed overwhelmingly by discourse. Said, therefore, disapproves of Foucault's "archive," on the grounds that it does not allow any room for the writer/critic to exercise his/her resistance. Said argues that the writer/critic's "critical consciousness" is a cornerstone of resistance and it must be foregrounded in his/her oeuvre. Said's aesthetics is, therefore, dedicated towards highlighting the concrete possibility of resistance. However, Said thinks that Foucault's "archive" never gives vent to this aspect of "exilic" thinking. Since resistance is political, Foucault believes that it exists on the exterior of discursive aesthetics. Contrary to this theoretical limitation, Said proposes "secular criticism" through which the "exiles" not only analyze the power-knowledge nexus but also form oppositional criticisms of power from *within* discursivity, according to the perspective of their worldly experiences. Therefore, Said brings into focus what Foucault's theory of criticism leaves out:

> If criticism is reducible neither to a doctrine or a political position on a particular question, and if it is to be in the world and self-aware simultaneously, then its identity is its difference from other cultural activities and from systems of thought or of method . . . For in the main—and here I shall be explicit—criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination and abuse; its social goals are non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom (*The World* 29).

Clearly, the pivotal disagreement between Foucault and Said is not methodological but ideological. Ironically, Foucault is unwilling to compromise the traditional boundary of criticism, even though his

thoughts are radically opposed to traditional systems and mechanism. Said's concern is situated on a completely different pole. He wants criticism to move beyond doctrines, positions, and systems in order to uphold "human freedom." Foucault and Said then disagree on the question of a politics of freedom. Foucault's critical writing never appears to be explicitly interested in politics, since liberation from political tyranny is not his mission. On the other hand, Said is all for politics of emancipation. Foucault's oeuvre depicts his sole obsession: the construction of subjectivity; he exiles himself from Western discourses in order to reveal what constructs him as a subject there. This is evident from his position of an archaeologist/seer from which he exposes the discursivity that imprisons him as a modern subject. But Said's commitment is to a different cause, namely Palestine. Said transforms the Palestinian struggle for self-determination into a persistent *symbol* of resistance against power-knowledge tyrannies. As Said's "exile" is based on his Palestinian experience of resistance, "Palestine" becomes synonymous with an anti-discourse that opposes the power-knowledge nexus. This also proves that if theory/criticism is detached from resistance, they will become mere tools in power's hands by allowing the unjust power-politics to continue forever. Therefore, as opposed to being an archaeologist or a professional in a Foucauldian fashion, Said's "secular criticism" turns the "exile" into an "amateur" who pursues knowledge and justice by exceeding the walls of theories and specializations.

Said's "amateurism" becomes poignant when he employs a methodology of classical music called "contrapuntal reading" into literary criticism. "Contrapuntal reading" explores texts with an awareness of their background histories so as to validate no fixed analyses without weighing them against their counterpoints. Said derives the technique from the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould through which he ends a univocal reading of Western discourses:

> In the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work (*Culture* 59-60).

To translate this musical method into reading, the "exile" creates a harmonious admixture of disparate perspectives *within* the arena. "Contrapuntal reading" thus purges discursivity of a one-track refrain through infusing it with a polyphonic display of interpretations. Interestingly enough, Foucault's methodology named "genealogy" established in *Discipline and Punish* is very similar to Said's "contrapuntal reading" in their oppositional forces. As Foucault *exposes* how the power-knowledge nexus constructs our values, ideas and identities through his "genealogy", he aims at proving that we can see beyond the binding of a historically fixed discursivity, if we change the perspective of viewing it. By this assertion, Foucault creates "an art of

trying to see what is unthought in our seeing" (Rajchman 96). The genealogist's task is not to follow the archive unquestioningly but to *reveal* the *hidden* relationship between power and the strategies of knowledge formation lodged in there. Similarly, the "contrapuntal reading" is not about following the archive thoughtlessly; it is about thoughtfully inserting suppressed points of view back into discourse. Both the "contrapuntal" and "genealogical" methods then are oppositional by highlighting hidden and suppressed discursive aspects.

Where, then, do Said and Foucault differ? Once again, the incongruity between Said and Foucault's opposition to power centres on their dissent over incorporating politics into the bounds of theory. Foucault eludes politics in the name of theory but Said combines an aesthetics of criticism with politics by moving beyond the conventionally imagined boundaries of theories:

> [Said] politicises the discussion of literature to liberate literature from unreflective entanglements with power, and uses the liberated ideal of literature as a model for advancing political change . . . one [thus] develops an understanding of how the possibility of social awareness and therefore political praxis is already embedded in aesthetic experience. (Etherington, "Said, Grainger" 227)

Based on the exemplary similarity between Said's "contrapuntal reading" and Foucault's "genealogy" in exposing power, I consider Foucault's theories to also contain a "political praxis" that is "embedded in" their "aesthetic experience." To my mind, Foucault is not far from humanistic politics at all. However ironic it is, Foucault's unheard politics, ingrained in his methodology, never ceases to be as "oppositional" and "life-enhancing" as Said wants theory/criticism to be:

> Temperamentally, and no doubt because he (Foucault) is an intellectual uniquely gifted to see that intellectuals are part of the system of discursive power, he has written his books in solidarity with society's silent victims, to make *visible* the *actuality* of discourse and to make *audible* the repressed voice of its subjects. (*The World* 216)

In order to establish how Foucault, despite himself, unites aesthetics and politics for upholding intellectual freedom through his *supposedly* non-resistant theories, I now draw a parallel between Foucault's methodology and Hatoum's resistance against power politics in her aesthetic/artistic works. Foucault *reveals* the strategies of power-knowledge systems in an oppositional way, as seen above. Similarly, Hatoum *reveals* the ways power operates. Unlike Said, however, neither Hatoum nor Foucault crosses the threshold of their specific aesthetics. Their *modus operandi* is the same, as they defeat the power-knowledge trap by forming counter discourses from *within* its boundary. In fact, their artistic/aesthetic power forms an oppositional politics against the power mechanism by making its processes "visible." Thus both of them create forces that counteract power from *within* the limits of art/theory.

Revelation is then transformed into resistance. How this happens is discussed below.

Hatoum and Foucault: Revelation as Resistance

> Hatoum's work is the *presentation* of identity as unable to identify with itself, but nevertheless grappling the notion (perhaps only the ghost) of identity to itself. Thus is exiled *figured* and *plotted* in the objects she creates (Said, "Art of displacement" 17).

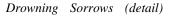Hatoum's *Drowning Sorrows* distinctly exemplifies the "exile" Said denotes above.

Drowning Sorrows

(Hatoum, 2001-2)

Drowning Sorrows displays the pain and beauty of being an exile without *overtly* supplying the tools with which to unhinge the paradox attached to it. It creates *suggestive* effects which ultimately lead the viewer towards its paradoxical ambiance. The work contains a circle of glass pieces drawn on a floor. The circle is made up of different shapes of glass flasks and, as they appear on the floor, it seems that the circle holds them afloat. The disparately angled glasses imply cuts from their sharp edges and their appearance is associated with a feeling of pain from the cut. This circle of glasses, therefore, signifies an exilic ache and embodies an authority to "figure" and "plot" the pain.
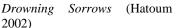
Drowning Sorrows (detail)
(Hatoum 2001-2)

The work signifies the reality of being unmoored from a fixed identity as the flasks are ambiguously put on a ground where they are perceived to be ungrounded. The appearance of the glasses is also unusual—we do not get to see their full shapes. As the artist's imagination endows them with a symbolic meaning, they have been cut in triangular and rectangular forms of different sizes. These varieties of cut glasses speak of an undying pain that the exile suffers. In an exile's life, irresolvable pain comes from dispossessions, uncertainty, and non-belonging. Being uprooted from a deep-seated identity, an exile finds him/herself catapulted into a perpetual flux; neither going back "home" nor a complete harmony with the adopted environment through adopting internally the "new" ideals is easily achievable. There exists an insuperable rift between his/her identity and locales which both are nevertheless integral parts of their identity. Hence, Hatoum portrays the exilic "identity as unable to identify with itself," as Said puts it.

Drowning Sorrows (Hatoum 2002)

However, the glass edges above also represent that an exile's experiences are nonetheless beautiful and worthy of celebration. The glass pieces show the experiences that an exilic traveller gathers in the journey of life. The

journey is all about *brokenness and difference*. But an exile's life becomes enriched in many ways by being filled up with varieties of knowledge and strengths accrued through encountering differences. Hatoum's creation, therefore, befittingly captures these benefits by transferring them into an art work that bewitches the viewer through an unknown beauty. Being an expression of beauty, the art work is transformed into a celebration of "exile." Despite "*Drowning*" in "*Sorrows*," Hatoum's work demonstrates an authority to give vent to the exilic pain through a work of beauty. Ultimately, we see that an exile is not entirely drowned by the sorrows of loss. Notwithstanding the anguish, the exile gains the privilege to explore the conditions that create the pain; because the painfulness zeroes in on the very nature of identity formation. The exile has the privilege of reflecting on the reality surrounding his/her identity. Therefore, Hatoum's glasses are not pieced together purposelessly; they depict the ambiguity that the exile feels towards identity. Her creative ambiguity makes us both enjoy the art and question the reality which we ourselves, exiles or not, find ourselves in. *"Drowning Sorrows"* shows a way to *question* the reality by being ambiguous towards it. Hatoum thus transmutes her exilic pain into a work of imagination which becomes an emblem of her artistic power through such *suggestiveness*.

From this point of view, Hatoum is an exemplary Saidian "exile" as she turns the reality of being uprooted from "home" into an intellectual power against the systematisation of identities. In *Orientalism*, Said distinguishes the dividing line that severs the supposedly superior Western culture from the ostensibly inferior one of the "Others." He examines the *modus operandi* of such a disjunction. He *studies* power-structures to reveal how they dissociate cultures. Thus the Saidian "exile" develops independent criticisms of cultures in order to defeat the debilitating effects of discursivity that disconnect cultures. The "exile" thus sees the whole world as a foreign land captured in the power-knowledge nexus.

This is where Foucault's "archive" takes on a new dimension. In order to establish the power-knowledge nexus, Foucault the "exile" positions himself at the edge of the archive to enable a critical viewing of its systems through objective eyes. He instrumentally uses episteme, archives and their relationship in language. He writes with an awareness that he *is in the discursive matrix*. But he decidedly writes to *defy it* through *language itself*. For this to happen, he successfully utilizes his "exilic" position of being at the border of discourse. Foucault explains how he works "all the time in that very space that has long been known as 'the history of ideas'" (*Archaeology*, 136). Despite this, he "wanted to do something quite different" by his use of language within its boundary (*Archaeology*, 136). " . . . Foucault therefore describes language *ethically*, in the literal sense . . ." (my italics, Said, "An Ethics" 35). Though he does not have Hatoum or Said's physical pain of exile, as a *self-exile*, he denies falling into the matrix of history of ideas. By detaching himself from the discourse, he presents "an invitation to the intellectual to see knowledge practically as a collective responsibility" in investigating the way it works

("An Ethics" 37). That is why he himself *discloses* the archival organization of history of ideas *through language*. Through this, however, he delineates some tension of being both in and out of discursivity. Just as Hatoum's cut glasses are both grounded and afloat on the space provided, Foucault is seen to be both an insider and outsider to *the discursive matrix*. Said believes that

> As an author then he dramatises a vacillation between writing as discourse (the author is a function of the discourse, in this case, of interpretation) and writing *against* discourse. ("An Ethics" 37)

But I disagree that Foucault vacillates between his insider/outsider positions. I think that the paradox of both "writing *as* discourse" and "writing *against* discourse" is part of the "exilic" consciousness (Said's *Orientalism* itself is part of the Orientalist discourse while being oppositional to it). As discussed earlier, Hatoum's art concretises this paradox in a powerful way. Like the tension of identity displayed in Hatoum's art emanating from her marginal position, Foucault's questioning of discourses also takes place *from the edge of* discursivity. Therefore, the question is not whether Foucault vacillates between being in and out of discourse; it is about how Foucault constructs his anti-discourse from *within* discursivity by dint of his "exilic" vision. Foucault plays the power of his "*archive*" in *suggesting the ambiguity of language,* just as Hatoum employs the power of her *cut glasses* in *suggesting the uncertainties of belonging*. Just as Hatoum *questions* her identity, Foucault *questions* the discursive reality that constructs his identity. However, Said fails to recognize the "exile" in Foucault, though he applauds its existence in Hatoum. Arguably, it is due to Foucault's silence in articulating his resistance that he nevertheless crystallises through his revelatory anti-discourse. My understanding, therefore, is that whether or not Foucault pronounces his politics against oppressive power, it is very much entrenched in his aesthetics. By examining the similarities between Foucault and Hatoum's revelatory resistance further, we would arrive at a more comprehensible understanding of this.

Homebound (Hatoum 2000)

Homebound delves deeper into the question of identity by illustrating that our notions of identity and home are insecure and "provisional," as Said affirms below. In this sense, the art work above is a transfiguration of Saidian "exile":

> A seminal text for Hatoum entitled *Reflections on Exile* (1984) by Edward W. Said, refers to the meaning of "home" in a way which presciently describes *Homebound:* "The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons . . ." (Wagstaff, "Uncharted Territory" 36)

In "Homebound," Hatoum depicts how a "familiar territory" resembles a "prison." The structure resembles a home environment more than it does an actual prison. In fact, it is made to appear harmless to *unquestioning* eyes that are unable to see through the irony of systematization working behind the imprisonment. Hatoum deliberately displays through the dangerous electric wires running through the day-to-day materials how "homes" have bindings, be they conceptual, cultural or social, which individuals are not necessarily aware of. The artist, therefore, wants "home" to ambiguously appear in order to shake our secure notion about it. Along with Said, Hatoum believes that "homes" are not simply cherished sanctuaries; they can become unwelcome confinements that need to be brought into focus through "exilic" eyes, as the "exilic vision" is always critical as opposed to being unquestioningly accepting.

In this connection, Susan Strehle's recent book is worth mentioning, as this illuminates how a number of feminist writers from different continents critically portray "unsettling home and homeland," as Strehle's subtitle has it. Though Hatoum critiques "home" from an artist's point of view, she illustrates the same disillusionment about "home/land" that Strehle highlights. Strehle states what Hatoum artistically exposes but cannot assert. Hatoum *represents* the imprisoning aspects of "home," whereas Strehle *points out* the limiting facets of "home":

> Erecting borders and boundaries to enclose the exclusive space of home/land enables the construction of a homogenous "identity" (one single "us" or "fraternity"). From this perspective, discriminations of race, gender, class, caste, religion and nationality are basic to home and homeland—put simply, home/land is constitutionally racist, sexist, and chauvinistic. (*Transnational* 6)

However, because of the *suggestive* language of art that Hatoum speaks in, her works remain more universal than Strehle's analyses. Strehle captures postcolonial feminists' common perception of "home" as a restrictive sphere, as she portrays this through an investigation of their diverse cultural experiences. Strehle is interested in scrutinizing the processes of emotional, economic, physical, and socio-political oppression that women suffer from in the Third World and also in the West by being caught in a power-network. Understandably, Strehle's method is *analytical* as

opposed to Hatoum's *symbolic* approach. Hatoum's art aims to symbolically represent the *method* through which the power-network subjugates both women and men, rather than specifying the nature of injustices endured by women alone. From this perspective, Hatoum's art is akin to Foucault's method, as their *revelatory* nature *represents* resistance against subjugation rather than proclaims it.

Furthermore, Hatoum's *Homebound* shares Leela Gandhi's stance against community formation on the basis of sameness. Gandhi's *Affective Communities* discusses an anti-imperialistic resistance both at the metropolis and periphery. She builds her argument on specific examples like that of C. F. Andrews who showed marvellous dedication to Indian Nationalism. Despite being a member of the English colonial community, he formed a profound friendship with Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore and others by breaking down the barriers that colonialism erected between "the self" and "the other." Leela Gandhi terms the circle created by Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore an "affective community," as this is based on an emotional bonding as opposed to state-sponsored connections that emphasise "divisions and exclusions." Therefore, such friendship

> exposes, we could say, the meditative and antirelational operatives at the heart of modern imperial and totalitarian governmentality recently foregrounded by Giorgio Agamben, among others. "The State," in his words, "is not founded on a social bond of which it would be the expression, but rather on the dissolution, the unbinding it prohibits." (20)

Likewise, in the details of *Homebound* on page 15, we can see that "home" limits individuals' freedom of choice (e.g. about friendship, movement, etc.), binds individuals with boundaries, and expects no resistance to them. Hatoum places the symbolic boundary of the electric fence below as a shock generating barrier for anyone wishing to break it. Thus Hatoum questions the binding that "home" imposes on its inhabitants:

> I called it home bound because I see it as a work that shatters notions of wholesomeness. The home, the domain where the feminine resides is supposed to be about nurturing, giving, loving or whatever. Having always had an ambiguous relationship with notions of home . . . I often like to introduce a physical or a psychological disturbance to contradict those notions (Hatoum 2004).

In the same way, Gandhi's notion of "affective communities" questions "Homophilic loyalties," a "self-identical subjectivity" and stable cosmopolitanism that thrive on the common ground shared by nationalist subjects. As opposed to a stable cosmopolitanism, the "(affective) community ferments its non-violent resistance (to the prescribed boundary) through an anarchist politics of immediate conjunction, coalition, and collaboration 'between' the most unlikely of associates" (20). Therefore, Gandhi's "affective communities" that take the risk of transcending the secure national boundaries run parallel to Hatoum's "exile," because this also threatens the power-grids that Hatoum creates

below. Describing the unsettling nature of the cosmopolitanism practised by the "affective communities," Gandhi adds:

> In its affective mutation, however (as a form of anti-communitarian communitarianism, as a variation on "guest-friendship," as cosmophilus), cosmopolitanism may well be the means to punctuate those fantasies of security and invulnerability to which our political imagination remains hostage. (29-32)

Homebound (detail)
(Hatoum 2000)

Homebound (detail) portrays how the boundary of "home" holds "our political imagination" "hostage" and renders our sense of security in the arena to be mere "fantasies," as Gandhi describes it. Arguably, Hatoum's *resisting politics* thus comes out through her art that *reveals* how individuals are subjected to a power-network running through "home." However, Gandhi goes further in analysing the nature of the subjectivity in our time. Her proposition is that post-modernism can be no antidote to this subjugation. By trying to break away from "Kantian notions of ethical agency" and "Marxist notions of political agency," post-modernism falls into a trap of "an empirical or hybrid subject of desire" (21). The danger of such desire is that it turns solely towards self-fulfilment. Consequently, it ends up repeating the political danger of turning the subjects into the "hostages" of homely prisons; because the self-fulfilling desire slides into "a politics of similitude—privileging separation over rationality, demanding uniformity as the price for belonging" (25). Shunning post-modernism, therefore, Gandhi searches for a solution to the problem of belonging. In the end, Gandhi points out the resisting politics of the "affective communities" as her solution. However, Hatoum's art does not allow her to state a solution to the problem. Since art is a platform of *representation*, Hatoum's solution lies in *revealing* the problem of belonging through *signification* alone.

Hatoum's *suggestiveness* of our subjection through the "homely" objects above, however, is intended to change our outlook of "home." The visitors are kept away from these objects by the electric fence so that Hatoum can communicate the impact of its binding to them. If we look at the detail, the objects in the art work become un-acknowledgeable entities being wired to one another, and the lamps situated inside are illuminated at irregular intervals to signal heat, strangeness and disturbance. Kitchen utensils, furniture, electric wire, light bulbs, computerized dimmer switch, and amplifier work together to create a commotion in our perception by giving this portrait of a habitat a threatening dimension. Overall, the effect is a paradox of belongingness and estrangement that the name, *Homebound*, implies. In other words, Hatoum *discloses* the anxieties that are unreflected in a naïve acceptance of "*home*." Hatoum thus disconcerts the ordinary acceptance. As the work is manifested, the individuals ironically can neither enter into nor exit from "home" culture. On the one hand, the art work shows how belonging to "home" implies being imprisoned by the familiar structures and systems. On the other hand, it projects how severance from "home" means being face to face with the precarious framework hidden behind the familiarity. *Homebound,* therefore, signifies the faulty way of perceiving cultures: we think we are part of "home," though our cultural home is the machinery that entangles us. Thus, our belonging to any culture is liable to be tense and taut. Like Foucault's theoretical *exposure* of individuals' discursive subjection, Hatoum's art thus *reveals* the system that imprisons them. However, as I have been arguing, both intellectuals *unmask* the system *without* stating the rebellion embedded in their works.

By making the process of subjugation crumble under the intellectual power of revelation, Hatoum and Foucault *demystify* the nature of our incarceration at "home." The resistance they create, therefore, has to be perceived through the *effects* of the oeuvre.[1] Foucault's gaze at Western discourses *exposes* subjugating structures but such disclosure *most certainly* does not strengthen the subversion. Rather, such an opus is an example of his intellectual power to object to subversive power. On the surface, Foucault's theory annihilates any counteraction against the power game, just as Hatoum's works make us quite downhearted while we face the catastrophic *Drowning Sorrows* or *Homebound.* The first impressions from Hatoum's and Foucault's works are that they cancel out any possibilities of opposing the situations they recreate. But, as discussed above, the oppositional power inherent in the works lies with their *suggestive ambiguities.* Hatoum translates *Homebound* into a tense surrounding with which she traps "the viewer in disorientation" (Zegher,

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[1] Jerrold Seigel in "Avoiding the Subject: A Foucaultian Itinerary" explains the *effect* of the Foucauldian method (or itinerary as he calls it). Seigel perceives that Foucault brought resistance "by means of an avowedly Hegelian interpretation of a dream considered by Binswanger (whose thought, 'I do not, I *think*, distort'), depicting 'the threefold movement of a sea, first agitated then caught and as if fixed in a deathlike immobility, and finally, let loose in a joyous freedom.'"

"Hatoum's Recollection" 100). Similarly, Foucault questions even "the solidity of the ground you walk on" to point out the precariousness attached to a secure self-hood ("Uncharted Territory" 41). Such projection of "Visibility (as) a trap," by no reasoning whatsoever, encourages the entrapment of identities (Foucault, *Discipline* 200). To the contrary, it *challenges* the certainty we enjoy without being analytical about systems of identity. That is why Foucault emphasises *our* responsibility to *read* and *recognize* the *effects* of his *exposures* of our identity formation. As discussed above, Hatoum conveys her resistance by challenging the viewers with the representation of their subjectivity, not by forming an alternative to it. Likewise, Foucault's disruption of the readers' comfort in conventional notions of individuality *is* the materializing of his resistance. Thus the *disconcerting* aspect of Foucault's work becomes an *un-stated* assertion against power relations. This is how both Hatoum and Foucault make the power of *revelation* synonymous with *resistance.*

In fact, Foucault shows how *intellectuals' power shakes power relations by inserting new liberating "configurations" into discourse.* Seigel clarifies:

> The radical pre-figuration (set to be achieved through disconcerting the present "configuration") was Foucault's final message. Freedom was the essence of "man" and . . . [he] pointed forward to a world in which the freedom would be realized . . . (283)

If Hatoum illustrates the binding of "home," Foucault uncovers how knowledge formulation "belongs to that field in which the questions of the human being, consciousness, origin, and the *subject* emerge, intersect, mingle, and separate off" (*Archaeology* 16). He accomplishes the "systematic description of a discourse-object (Man)" (*Archaeology* 140). He "bursts open the other, and the outside (of discourses)" in order to illustrate that our subjective consciousness, or the Man in us, is always represented through differences in rules whose objective status is never guaranteed (*Archaeology* 131). Through the *revelation* that our knowledge and identity are discursive constructs, Foucault silently *revolts* against their domination over our consciousness of identities. Foucault's revelation "that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks" ultimately invalidates the *discursive knowledge and subject* (*Archaeology* 131). As Foucault realizes that the moment he accepts the discursive knowledge, he "will enter our game," he revolts against it through his *power* of *revealing* its mechanism (*Archaeology* 205). Effectively, his

> apparent purpose is to dissolve the subject, to dismantle the founding notion of a subjective consciousness; then, in the void thus created at the centre of discourse, it becomes possible to develop a new kind of awareness that will radically alter our thinking about discourse (and subject-hood) (Racevskis, "The Paradox" 30)

Interestingly enough, what Foucault does with our subjectivity is exactly what Hatoum renders in her representation of our sense of

geography. As Foucault nullifies the discursive subject to create a "new kind of" subject in its void, Hatoum distorts the known contours of the world map in order to replace its design with an imaginative version from her.

Continental Drift (detail) (Hatoum 2000)

Historically, maps are the symbol of conquest: "the cartographic gaze" is interpreted as wielding immense power, held by those unnamed individuals who have drawn and re-drawn maps throughout history . . . *Continental Drift* is *not an anonymous* depiction of the world so much as an abstracted *representation of how the world could be seen* ("Uncharted Territory" 39)

Maps are powerful, as the above quote suggests; they determine boundaries of our cultures. But Hatoum exposes an intrinsic instability attached to cartography and explains why we should question the flux, especially as power has "drawn and re-drawn maps throughout history," according to the quote. She constructs a conceptual presentation of our world through the *Continental Drift*. This creation makes us experience a world where fixed maps, assured boundaries, and known identities are threatened by the waves of power politics.[2] For example, the resemblance of the continents is disturbed through a motor created wave in the imaginative world map below. *Continental Drift* thus surveys the earth in its entirety and situates its totality in an alarming flux. The suggestion is that when the history and power politics shift in the world, our ways of comprehending the reality change accordingly. Therefore, Hatoum disfigures our affinity with the known shape of the world. She creates an "abstract" representation of the world map to make us realize that our existence is caught up in a power play.

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[2] Continental Drift is a horizontal map of the world in clear plastic with metal filings filling the seas. A magnetized bar circles like a watch's second hand below, creating a tidal "wave" of filings, which lap up onto the continents. In "Uncharted Territory: New Perspectives in the art of Mona Hatoum," Sheena Wagstaff comments: "In a recent conversation between Edward W. Said and Mona Hatoum, Said elaborated on the 'transformative dislocation' suggested to him by Hatoum's work . . . Continental Drift allows the possibility of seeing the world in its entirety—just as Gulliver encountered the miniature foreign land of Lilliput."

Continental Drift (Hatoum
2000)

Naturally, Hatoum's transcendental and powerful art *enables* us to
perceive the discomforting drift of the power matrix. The transcendence
takes place because her imaginative intellect surveys the world with an
"exilic" detachment from it that ultimately makes the illustration of the
power-mechanism possible. Therefore, like Said's "contrapuntal reading"
and Foucault's "genealogy," Hatoum's *Continental Drift* dislocates
established "truths," as she counterpoints the validity and substantiality of
the "truths" with the swerves of power politics. As a result, Hatoum
claims:

> In a very general sense I want to create a situation where reality itself becomes a
> questionable point, where [people] have to *reassess* their assumptions and their
> relationship to things around them. (Qtd. in "Uncharted Territory" 41)

Once again, through the "exilic" vision, Hatoum questions and encourages
us to examine our very reality. Thus the vision itself becomes an
opposition to the systems and structures that constitute the reality.
Hatoum's compelling opus implies that the power-game sponsored
version of the reality exists unopposed because of our unthinking
"assumptions" and our readiness to be captured unaware by the ironic
undamaging nature of the devices of power. Hatoum, therefore, exposes
the irony to pull us out of the trap by resisting the power-game.

Evidently, Hatoum's resistance to the devices of power is achieved
through *revealing* the irony of our captivity through the suggestiveness of
her works. The same applies to Foucault. Hatoum uses the insignificant
pieces of goblets, household goods or geographical maps to symbolise
resistance against the politico-cultural strategies that somersault our
identities, whereas Foucault uses *language* to construct an emblematic
anti-discourse from within discursivity. Making un-troublesome matters
seem complex and *disclosing* the entrapment created by them gives
Hatoum an extraordinary power to oppose the reason behind the

complexity, namely the power game. Likewise, Foucault turns discourse upside down to give it a unique force against power; thus he highlights the unacceptability of present discourses and the notion of subjectivity. In effect, there is no traditional categorization of his discourse as "Either it does not reach us, or we claim it" (*Archaeology* 205). Rather, we have to be able to comprehend the *elusive* but *deep-seated suggestiveness effects* of Foucault's writings that bring about the change in our perspective. This is how Foucault stands up for a human agency against inhuman power:

> I have not denied—far from it—the possibility of changing discourse: I have deprived the sovereignty of the subject of the exclusive and instantaneous right to it (that has so far been present). (*Archaeology* 209)

In other words, Foucault's resistance is achieved not through a conspicuous opposition to discursivity but by *exposing* the dangers of believing in an "exclusive and instantaneous right to" our discursive subjectivity.

Apparently, Foucault announces the death of an author because the moment one speaks, one falls into the discursive game through which, "(one) will not be reconciled to death," as Foucault puts it (*Archaeology* 211). For that reason, Foucault may wish not to appear as an author but, arguably, his presence as an intellectual wields power that defies the power game. Therefore, he does not at all withdraw himself from the game. Rather, he disrupts it in order to modify its present construction. His exposition of the way an author becomes an instrument in discursivity is synonymous with his revolutionary re-insertion of his authorial voice *as a power* that pierces the process. It is as if Foucault thus answers the accusations against his work:

> Still, Derrida's question plagues Foucault's enterprise: How can Foucault differentiate himself from the discourses he analyzes? Where in the grid of power and knowledge is Foucault himself situated? How can Foucault hope to do more than reinscribe the relations which he has exposed to scrutiny? (Sprinker 90)

As discussed so far, Foucault's differentiation comes from being in and out of discursivity at the same time. This means he stands at the edge of "the grid of power and knowledge." Therefore, Foucault is tongue-in-cheek in wondering about the puzzle that surrounds his work:

> What, do you imagine that I would take so much trouble and so much pleasure in writing, do you think that I would keep so persistently to my task, if I were not preparing—with a rather shaky hand—a labyrinth into which I can venture, in which I can move my discourse, opening up underground passages, forcing it to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary, in which I can lose myself and *appear* at last to eyes that I will never have to meet again (*Archaeology* 17).

In other words, Foucault "more than reinscribe(s) the (discursive) relations" by venturing an anti-discourse out of the "labyrinth" of traditional discourse; his anti-discourse does not only expose how the

"itinerary" of a conventional discourse is deformed but also change its deformed nature from within the field by making it "go far from itself," that is resist its reductionism. This is how Foucault prevents the machinery from deforming or reducing his author-voice for its benefit. This is also how Foucault is out of the discursive power-matrix, by "exiling" himself from its conventional rules. Therefore:

> For Foucault there is no position outside the general distribution of truth and power/knowledge within society . . . This process of distribution can be analyzed, but only from the *inside out, not the outside in* (Barker, *Michel Foucault* 72-3).

As I discussed earlier, Hatoum's works show how her "exilic" vision forms resistance "from the *inside out, not the outside in*" through their *suggestiveness*. Foucault's "exilic vision" becomes a *resistance par excellence* in the same way, as he renders the enslaving discursive strategies ineffectual through his anti-discourse. For Foucault, therefore, the power game is an action upon another action. It does not operate through the rules of violence. And so, the resistance cannot be inflicted on it from outside. Intellectuals should, as Foucault exemplifies, insist on keeping the power game open so that *their power of exposure* can be *exercised from within* the power-knowledge network in order to obstruct its autonomy. This is exactly the technique that Hatoum so noticeably uses in the works above. Hatoum builds up an impenetrable system in *Drowning Sorrows*, *Homebound* and *Continental Drift* in order to make it hinder the familiar system. Just as Hatoum alienates us from known set-ups, Foucault disorients us from familiar concepts.

If Hatoum's or Foucault's works allegedly benumb *us*, they do so to make *us* aware of our captive subjectivity inside the power game—not to "glorify" the game but most certainly to oppose it. Hatoum asserts in an interview that "Neither of [the] works is about the glorification of power structures, but rather a critique of those dehumanizing institutions and their effect on our existence" (Archer, "In Conversation" 30). Evidently, Hatoum's and Foucault's depictions of the power-matrix thoroughly *invalidate* it. They provoke us to protest against its entrapment. Hatoum's art and Foucault's theory thus constitute *a remarkable force* against the subversion of human freedom. Moreover, if Hatoum's and Foucault's methods of hindering the power-game are achieved through the force of their oppositional intellectualism, Said's way of speaking out against unjust power upholds exactly the same strategy. Their "exilic" intellectualism of exposing power-structures, therefore, *stands up to* the mechanism of our subjugation. In effect, intellectuals like Foucault, Said and Hatoum refuse to take any *ideas* for granted by inspiring us to re-examine our cultural, political, or historical assumptions and affiliations through which we become *subjects* of systems. Such rejection forms Saidian "exile" that opposes uncritical subjection of every kind in order to retain intellectual freedom.

Unification of Aesthetics with Politics

Why does then Said recognize Hatoum's resistance against power but not that of Foucault? As we can comprehend the answer now, let us consider the question below that Hatoum was asked during the BBC Radio 3 interview.

> *I wonder what you felt when Edward Said said that he thought that you had expressed more vividly than anybody else the Palestinian condition. Now from what you've just said that's exactly what you're not doing, so when Said said that did you mind?*
>
> Well people interpret these works depending on their own experience, so his experience of exile and displacement is that of the Palestinians so he read specifically the Palestinian issue in my work, but it's not so specifically to do with the Palestinian issue. It could be related to a number of people who are exiled, who are displaced, who suffer a kind of cultural or political oppression of, of any kind . . . critics are writing about my work to actually *value the form as well and to talk about the possible readings*, *or the possible meanings that come through that form, but that can be a kind of multiple, that can be not necessarily fixed or, because I think the language of art is very, very slippery*. It never, you can never say this work is about this. (Emphasis added, Tusa 2005)

Once again, it is evident that Said's humanist stance is very much dedicated to speaking out against unjust powers, that lead to suffering, as in the Palestinian case. However, Foucault's mission is never focused on such worldly politics but on unmasking unjust discursive power. Interesting ironies are involved here. Though Foucault's revelatory theories prove that the discursive power is never detached from worldly power, he refrains from claiming resistance against power-politics. Besides, despite asserting that power can subjugate resistance, Foucault exemplifies a *revelatory resistance* that unsettles power and not vice versa. Foucault's resisting revelations are even used by Said to impede the Orientalist power-game in the real world. Put differently, Said uses Foucault's methodology but fails to highlight its elusive centre, that is its resistance against the power game. Because Foucault and Said view politics differently, the dissimilarities of their opinions are always highlighted but not the ironies of their positions regarding resistance.

   Foucault shies away from politics because it is not supposed to go along with aesthetics, though he ironically interconnects them. In the same way, because of Said's concern for the politics of emancipation, he fails to see the Foucauldian connection between politics and aesthetics. However, through the lens of Hatoum's art, we can break down the impasse between politics and aesthetics that Foucault and Said struggle with. Following Hatoum, we can assert that language *"is very, very slippery"* and it takes "multiple" holdings in representing reality. That is why "you can never say this work is about this" or that Foucault's work is solely about aesthetics. Just as Hatoum wants us to consider the *message* of her art along with its *form*, Foucault wants us to recognize his *theory* including its *effects,* that is the changes it creates in our minds about the nature of our

subjectivity. From this viewpoint, Foucault is never far from Said's stance against power. Both of them *challenge* its authority, though the mode and intensity of the challenge differ considerably. Foucault and Said ultimately prove that their worldly writings combine politics and aesthetics in the same way as Hatoum's art. Therefore, Hatoum, Said, and Foucault become iconoclastic intellectuals by breaking down the restricted boundary of aesthetics and politics through successfully intermixing them in their "exilic" *works*.

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