

Narrating the Palestinian in Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock: A Confession*.

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Abstract

Within the framework of contemporary postcolonial theory, the paper critically examines *Operation Shylock : A Confession* (1993) by the Jewish-American writer Philip Roth, in order to express the entanglements of colonial and Orientalist trajectories in the novel. The paper argues that Roth's fiction, like other American novels dealing with the Middle East conflict, is an attempt to silence the Palestinian subaltern or conflate this with a status of cultural decadence and backwardness. The paper also illustrates that Roth's fictional text blends the legacies of the ex-colonized and the ex-colonizer to reconstruct a biased narrative integral to his vision of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Failing to introduce a balanced view of the Palestinian question, Roth emphasizes significant colonizer / colonized constructs engaging cultural dynamics which lead to conflict rather than dialogue between both sides. Instead of deploying a plethora of voices as reflection of the attitudes of a multi-ethnic community, the incidents of the novel are historicized by a narrative mechanism and a hegemonic discourse which confine the colonized Palestinians to the historical ghetto of barbarism and fanaticism replacing the discourse of the real with that of the imaginary in order to make the latter desirable and render history consumable.

Introduction : Jewish American Literature and the Arab/Israeli Conflict

Irving Howe argues that Jewish American literature in general is the result of a confrontation between "an immigrant group and the host culture of America" (Howe 1977:3). Apparently the immigrant experience in America of marginality and alienation emerges as the basic subject of the American Jewish writer in the present time, however, there are many American-Jewish narratives located in an Israeli landscape. This reveals that "the subject of Jewish identity is increasingly being set against an Israeli background" (Solotaroff 1992: XXII). The interest of Jewish and Zionist American writers in Israel drives critics to come to the conclusion that since America is a multi-ingredient nation rather than a melting pot "one can look forward to a new renaissance of Jewish-American fiction about Israel in the next decade"(Pinsker1993:8x).

Unfortunately in both American and Israeli / Hebrew literature on the question of Palestine, there is a trend which emphasizes "the intolerance and hostility toward Jews of Arabs who refuse to acknowledge any possibility for coexistence" (Coffin 1982: 321). The hostile image of the Arabs/ Palestinians prevalent in Israeli literature is echoed in Jewish

American fiction about the Arab / Israeli conflict. In both cases, the Palestinian subaltern is eliminated except as negative values and is seen as synonymous with everything fanatic, degraded and vicious. For example in Roth's *Operation Shylock : A Confession* , the author creates a Palestinian character, George Ziad or Zee , a friend of the novel's protagonist , the speaking voice of the author. Ziad is aesthetically articulated to introduce the Palestinian narrative of the Arab-Israeli conflict from a perspective which fits his image in western colonial culture as an anti-Semitic fundamentalist . He attempts to challenge the Israeli mythology of victimization claiming that the Zionists in Israel have manipulated the holocaust propaganda to justify the occupation of the Palestinian territory in Gaza and the West Bank and the annexation of land from neighboring Arab countries. Ziad's argument that "Israel has drawn the last of its moral credit out of the bank of the dead six millions" is condemned by Roth's central narrator as false allegations. The author underestimates the Palestinian counter- narrative posited by Ziad by viewing him as a fanatic who degrades the holocaust memory : "Marlboro has the Marlboro man; Israel has its holocaust man" (Roth 1993 : 269), says Ziad .

In "*Imperialist Nostalgia*", Renato Rosaldo states that "in imperialistic narratives, descriptions of character attitudes are fertile sites for the cultivation of ideology." This process is integral to the narrative discourse of *Operation Shylock : A Confession*, therefore Ziad's claim that Israel has exploited the holocaust – related guilt of the world community to justify its aggression against the Palestinians is rendered as a maniacal perspective and his vision of the Arab / Israeli conflict is viewed as nothing but "anti- Zionist crab" (289). By identifying Ziad as an anti-Zionist fundamentalist, the protagonist of Roth's novel exercises his power as a colonizer. In other words, the colonizer uses his power to classify, categorize and represent the colonized Other. By calling the displaced Palestinian a terrorist or a fanatic, the protagonist/narrator utilizes his strength as a colonizer who is able to name and identify. Since naming and addressing , to use colonial / theoretical terms, is an act of possession performed by the dominant oppressive culture, any name attributed to the colonized Palestinian is a hegemonic act of naming, i.e. erasing the real or original name . It is then a re-naming intended to deprive the native Palestinian from his identity in order to affiliate him or obliterate his identity. In other context, the colonized Palestinian is dealt with as a newborn baby appropriated by the father / colonizer when given his name. This process also aims at stereotyping the victim by placing him at the bottom of the Darwinian hierarchy. On this basis, the credibility of Ziad's voice is undercut and his counter – narrative is viewed as "a pungent ideological mulch of overstatement and lucidity, of insight and stupidity, of

precise historical data and willful historical ignorance. The intoxication of resistance has rendered [Ziad] incapable of even nibbling at the truth, however intelligent he still happened to be” (Roth 1993: 129).

By making the whole tale narrated by a pro-Israeli narrator, the native Palestinian voice is either marginalized or muted. Further, the dispossessed Palestinian is reduced to an object, a horrible simulacrum of a human being. Due to Roth’s narrative strategy which obliterates the identity of Ziad enclosing him into a racist classification, the Palestinian counter-narrative is underestimated. As a strategy of presentation rooted in colonial discourse and racist degeneration, Roth’s narrative apparatus places the colonizer at the center of the text marginalizing the colonized because he represents the horrible side of the human being. As a monster, the colonized Palestinian is humiliated by appropriating his land and subverting his history.

In the entire novel, Roth dramatizes only one Palestinian perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict through the character of George Ziad. By narrowing the Palestinian viewpoint, Roth seeks to silence the Palestinian subaltern restricting the space in which “the colonized can be re-written back into history” (Benita 1987:39). In a novel, shaped by authorial pro-Zionist tendency, the Palestinians exist in, what Edward Said refers to as, “communities of interpretation” ultimately without form until they are reconstructed by the American author. Moreover, the character of Ziad is introduced in a way that fulfills doubtful authorial agenda. For example, Ziad’s ostensibly radical perspective on the question of Palestine, according to the author, is undermined by Roth’s insinuations which indicate that Ziad may be a Mossad operative or an informant for Israel who plays the role of the Palestinian militant activist. Casting doubts on Ziad’s loyalty to the cause of his people, the author attempts to distort history and obscure the hegemonic policies of the Israeli colonization.

Through the slippery and ambiguous character of Ziad, which raises questions about his attitude and identity as an enemy or ally to Israel, Roth replaces what Hayden White calls “the discourse of the real” with “the discourse of the imaginary” (White 1987: 20) in order to make the imaginary desirable and obscure history. In a related context, Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, points out that colonial hegemony is fulfilled in the lands of the colonized not only by military domination but also through the process of writing history from the viewpoint of the colonizer. This process is a basic aspect of colonialism which has a tremendous impact upon the colonized even after national liberation. Moreover, the process of history – making which aims to mute the colonized subaltern is an instrument of colonial

hegemony since the colonizer plans not only to dominate a country but also to impose his own history and cultural paradigms.

According to Fanon, colonialism “turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts it, disfigures it and destroys it” (Fanon 1967:169). In this context, the Palestinian native who is supposed to be the signifier turns out to be the signified. It is obvious that the illusory existence of the Palestinians as delineated in Roth’s novel is emphasized by the incidents of a narrative which attempts to mystify reality. In addition to distorted characterization, the events of the novel are historicized by a narrative dynamics which emphasizes the Zionist perspective on the Palestinian question. Therefore, the image of the Palestinian as an anti-Semitic activist fits the fantasy of the author and fulfills the horizons of expectations of western readers. Instead of viewing the Palestinian as a fellow human being with all the potential and frailties that condition implies, Roth introduces Ziad as a repulsive activist of a Mephistophelian nature. In his attempt to Orientalize the Palestinian subaltern, Roth portrays Ziad as a fanatic who wants to subjugate Israel through a reign of terror. Dehumanized and demonized, Ziad is anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish and anti Israeli, a representative of a backward race, according to the novel. Attempting to degrade and defame the Palestinian subaltern by delineating him as an enemy to humanity, Roth’s novel not only encourages occupation and colonization but also disseminates pro-Zionist political ideology.

Between History and Myth: The Colonial Discourse of *Operation Shylock* : A Confession

In his discussion of the relationship between East and West , Edward Said defines Orientalism as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient: “dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism [is] a western style for dominating, restricting and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1978: 3). Located in the discourses of Orientalism and colonialism, Roth’s novel aims to distort the identity of the Palestinian people by transforming them into people “without history” (Said 1979:23). On this basis, the novel provides support for the powerful at the expense of the powerless equating between the brutalities of the colonizers and the humble resistance of the colonized, humiliating those who are historically humiliated. Shaped by western monolithic discourse on the Orient, the Palestinian subaltern in Roth’s novel , remains the colonized victim of racial representations which “repress the political history of colonialism” (Jan Mohamed 1986:79).

In *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, Roth's representation of the Arab Israeli conflict is marred by a narrative strategy that favors the colonizer and deprives the colonized from entering the text except as a total non-entity or as an embodiment of terror and hatred. On the surface, *Operation Shylock: A Confession* seems to be an attempt to offer a critique of the Zionist master narrative widely accepted in the West about the Arab / Israeli conflict, however, the author fails to provide an alternative to such hegemonic narrative due to a strategy of narration which mutes the colonized Palestinians or removes them out of the text. In other words, Roth's attempt to castigate the Israeli occupation of THE Palestinian territories is thwarted by a narrative dynamics which advocates the principles of orthodox Zionism. Failing to undermine the central premises of Zionism, Roth places Israeli / Zionist characters at the center of the text preventing the colonized Palestinians from introducing their counter-narrative of the conflict in an appropriate manner.

Moreover, the narrative allows Israeli characters to criticize American Jews who reject the Zionist project in the Middle East. By the end of *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, Mr. Smileburger, the Mossad agent, blames the American Jews for their attitudes toward the Arab Israeli conflict:

You are free to indulge your virtue freely. Go to where ever you feel most blissfully un-blamable. That is the delightful luxury of the utterly transformed American Jew. Enjoy it. You are that marvelous, unlikely, most magnificent phenomenon, the truly liberated Jew. The Jew who is not accountable. You are the blessed Jew condemned to nothing, least of all to our historical struggle (Roth 1993:532).

Since the novel is a colonial and Pro-Zionist reconstruction of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, American critics, commended Roth for his representation of the Palestinian question. For example, Hillel Halkin points out that the "sheer, almost abstract passion for being Jewish seems to grow stronger in Roth's work all the time" (Halkin 1994:48). Further, Sanford Pinsker, in a short article, on Roth's fiction, praises Roth's skill in depicting the Arab-Israeli conflict and in "wrenching Jewish-American fiction about Israel from the conventional pieties into which they have too often fallen" (Pinsker 1993: 8x). The American novelist, John Updike, reveals an interest in Roth's sophisticated engagement in the historical struggle in the Middle East. In his discussion of Roth's fictions on the Middle East conflict, Updike comments: "relentlessly honest, Roth recruits raw nerves, perhaps, because they make the fiercest soldiers in the battle of truth" (Updike 1993: 111). Even, Cynthia Ozick, the militant Zionist writer argues that *Operation Shylock: A Confession* "is totally amazing in language, intellect, plotting, thesis, analysis, reach, daring." Though disappointed by the

incorporation of radical Palestinian arguments in the text, she considers Roth “the boldest American writer alive” (Ozick 1993: 370).

Nevertheless there are critics, like Hayden White, Daniel Lazare and others, who criticized the pro-Israeli/pro-Zionist attitudes integral to American literature about Israel. Lazare castigates the attitude of the American writers who are interested in the Zionist enterprise in Israel because Israeli Zionism resulted into dramatic consequences: “Out of the nationalistic, embattled, ethnically cleansed existence in Israel has come-what? The invasion of Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza strip settlements and the Intifada” (Lazare 1993:42). Further , Hayden White denounces the Israeli brutal policies against the Palestinian people in the West Bank:

The totalitarian, not to say fascist, aspects of Israeli treatment of the Palestinians on the West bank may be attributable primarily to a Zionist ideology that is detestable to anti-Zionist, Jews and non-Jews alike. But who is to say that this ideology is a product of a distorted conception of history in general and of the history of the Jews in the Diaspora specifically? It is, in fact, fully comprehensible as a morally responsible response to the meaningless of a certain history that spectacle of “moral anarchy” that Schiller perceived in world history and specified as a “sublime object.” The Israeli political response to this spectacle is fully consistent with the aspiration to human freedom and dignity that Schiller took to be the necessary consequence of sustained reflection on it (White 1990: 80).

Whereas Haden White attempts to attribute Israeli policies and “moral anarchy” to historical contexts, Roth rejects any historical approximation of the Palestinian question. Instead he made vague indications and hints about the possibility of establishing a double nationality state in Palestine where the Palestinians could be assimilated into the mainstream Israeli society. Due to Roth’s slippery perspective on the question of Palestine and his integrationist vision of the Arab-Israeli conflict, some critics ironically consider *Operation Shylock: A Confession* as anti-Zionist presentation of the political situation in the Middle East. However, a scrutinized reading of the text reveals an undercurrent Zionist agenda pervading the novel particularly the treatment of the relationship between the Palestinian subalterns and the Israeli oppressors and the equation between the colonized (the stone-throwing Palestinians) and the colonizers (the gun-wielding Israeli soldiers) in addition to the holocaust motif and the issue of anti-Semitism. By the end of the novel , the protagonist , who personifies the authorial voice , simultaneously observes from his hotel room Palestinian rock gatherers and armed

Israeli soldiers heading toward the West Bank to be involved in violent confrontations. The equation between the victim and the oppressor aims to obscure reality and distort history by revealing Palestinian resistance as acts of fanaticism and hatred.

Explicitly, the enthusiastic critical reception of the novel in western circles is due to its Orientalist treatment of the crisis in Palestine. The Palestinian subaltern, in *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, is reduced to one mass of Arab terrorism that must be encountered, an image so pervasive that it seems to be “an almost platonic essence inherited in all Palestinians” (Said 1988:52). Even the narrative strategy of the novel is shaped by the author’s biased perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict, which turns the novel into what Jean-Francoise Lyotard calls a “grand narrative” (qtd. in Gohar 2001: 29). While the Israeli perspective on the question of Palestine in *Operation Shylock: A Confession* is presented by different characters who introduce a variety of viewpoints, the Palestinian vision of the conflict is represented through the character of George Ziad, a marginal character, who is accused of anti-Semitism and fanaticism. In this context, the Palestinians and Arab people are seen only as non-entities which remain voiceless until being reinterpreted and reconstructed by the Zionist author. Paradoxically, the more one reads the text of *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, the more s/he becomes familiar with Arab images as viewed in the West and the less s/he learns about the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

In *Operation Shylock: A Confession* there is no space from where the subaltern subject can speak because his voice is muted by the Zionist author. Apparently, Roth attempts to suppress the voice of the Palestinian subaltern by equating between the stone-throwing Palestinian children and the armed Israeli soldiers ignoring the wide difference between armless / hopeless civilians and armed troops equipped with the most sophisticated arsenal provided by western allies. Deploying a narrative dynamics through which the colonized Palestinian is allowed only to utter militant statements which reveal both hatred and desire for revenge, the author aims to acquit the colonizer from any accusation of racism and brutality. Moreover, the incidents of *Operation Shylock: A Confession* take place in the West Bank where the Israeli moral being is under constant threat, according to the author. A potential threat to the Israeli community in the West Bank comes from Palestinians like George Ziad, a militant Orient who utters anti-Zionist slogans. The author demonstrates that Ziad has committed a fatal mistake when he castigated Israeli politicians who used the holocaust as justification for inflicting pain on the Palestinian and Arab citizens, not only in the West Bank but also in neighboring countries.

In *Operation Shylock : A Confession* , Ziad criticizes what some western historians call “the holocaust industry” :

This is the public-relations campaign cunningly devised by the terrorist Begin: to establish Israeli military expansionism as historically just by joining it to the memory of Jewish victimization; to rationalize – as historical justice , as just retribution , as nothing more than self-defense – the gobbling up of the Occupied Territories and the driving of the Palestinians off their land once again. What justifies seizing every opportunity to extend Israel’s boundaries? Auschwitz. What justifies bombing Beirut civilians? Auschwitz (Roth 1993:132).

There is no doubt that , the ultimate aim of Ziad’s speech is not to undermine the holocaust narrative but to argue that past Jewish suffering in Europe at the hands of the Nazi regime does not give warranty for contemporary acts of violence against the Palestinian refugees . Nevertheless, Ziad is described as a Palestinian fundamentalist who abuses the holocaust memory. When Ziad evokes the language of the Shoah / holocaust , he implicitly intends to call attention to the plight and victimization of the Palestinian refugees and the brutalities of the Israeli military in the West Bank . But since Roth’s novel is characterized by the predominance of the ideological import of the text’s hegemonic/ Zionist master narrative, Ziad’s statements are introduced to emphasize his image in the western iconography as an anti-Semitic Orient .

Regardless of Ziad’s attitude toward the holocaust which is condemned in Roth’s novel , it is noteworthy to argue that many western scholars explore the holocaust issue from a non-Zionist perspective introducing several historical narratives about the significance of that event . Discussing the politics of the historical interpretation of the holocaust, Hayden White argues : “ In fact, its [Zionist interpretations of the Holocaust] truth, as a historical interpretation, consists precisely [in] its effectiveness in justifying a wide range of current Israeli policies that, from the stand point of those who articulate them, are crucial to the security and indeed the very existence of the Jewish people. Whether one supports these policies or condemns them, they are undeniably a product, at least in part, of conception of Jewish history that is conceived to be meaningless to Jews insofar as this history was dominated by agencies, process, and group who encouraged or permitted policies that led to the “final solution” of “the Jewish Question” (White 1990 : 80) . Apparently , Haden White integrates Israeli brutal policies (against the Palestinians) and misreading of the holocaust into historical factors , nevertheless , he condemns the Zionist narrative of the Arab/Israeli conflict expecting the Palestinian to respond to the Zionist project in their own ways : “So far as I can see, the effort of the Palestinian people to mount a politically effective response to

Israeli policies entails the production of a similarly effective ideology, complete with an interpretation of their history capable of endowing it with a meaning that it has hitherto lacked (a project to which Edward Said wishes to contribute “ (ibid).

The Distortion of Palestinian History

In *Operation Shylock : A Confession* , Roth utilizes several narrative subtleties which aim to silence the voice of the Palestinian subalterns and re-inscribe negative stereotypes about a colonized and marginalized people. Such stereotypes, according to Paul Brown contribute to a “discursive strategy” which aims to “locate or fix the colonial other in a position of inferiority” (Brown 1985: 58). Reveling in colonial descriptions of the Palestinian (the colonized Orient) where scenes of violence and elaborate accounts of suicide bombers prevail, Roth attempts to reconstruct an imaginary enemy who fits the western colonial concept of inferior races.

This Orientalizing process requires the aesthetic function of stimulating the western reader’s fantasy. Thus, Roth’s representation of the Middle East conflict is a vivid example of the American invention of the Palestinian as an Orient. In Roth’s fiction, the Palestinian colonized is viewed as violent, cruel and anti-Semitic, a stereotype which is repeated in western literature and culture until it becomes integrated into the popular and collective consciousness of the American people . After being Orientalized and exhibited to the readers , the Palestinian has to conform to the American norms of the Arab: he should be a replica of Satan, an incarnation of evil. Therefore , in *Orientalism* , Edward Said argues that in western literature and culture, the Orient is nothing but “a European invention” (Said 1978:2)

Moreover , American culture mythology is replete with negative Arab images manufactured and disseminated by the American cultural industry which had a great impact on writers dealing with Arab – Israeli conflict like Philip Roth. Edward Said , in **Culture and Imperialism**, points out: “I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class or even economic history but authors are, I also believe, very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure” (Said 1993:XXII). Due to the impact of the American cultural mythology about the Arab Orient, the Palestinian appears in Roth’s fiction as a marginalized and self-destructive individual who bears no resemblance to the typical Palestinian citizen. Apparently, the distorted image of the Palestinian and the faked historicity of the Arab-Israeli conflict aim to stereotype the colonized Palestinian and obscure the realities of the oppressive colonizers.

There is no doubt that Roth's fiction is explicitly dominated by a hegemonic narrative and the tale is narrated by Zionists and sympathizers with the Israeli colonization of Palestine whereas the native Palestinians are introduced as personification of evil and fanaticism. As a monster, the colonized Palestinian is humiliated by appropriating his land and his history. When Ziad, the Palestinian subaltern, is allowed to speak, his utterances conform to his stereotyped image in western colonial iconographies. In addition to the narrow space given to the Palestinian subaltern in the textual canvas of Roth's novel, the ultimate fictional discourse reveals the existence of racial and ideological demarcations separating between colonized and colonizer. As a reproduction of discourses advocated by colonial powers in the era of imperialism, Roth's narrative reinforces Rudyard Kipling's famous statement: "let the white go to the white and the black to the black" (Kipling 1987:48).

Combined with the technique of one-sided dialogue, Roth's narrative strategy aims to distort history subverting Ziad's allegations about the Israeli brutalization of the Palestinian in the refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza strip. Instead of lamenting the atrocities and violence committed by the Israeli army against the Palestinians, Roth's narrator highlights the humanity of the Israeli army and its civilized treatment of the Palestinian children who are accused of throwing Molotov cocktails on Israeli military vehicles. Further, the narrator speaks in sympathetic tone about an Israeli army officer who tells his family the following statement: "Look, you want to know if I personally beat anyone, I don't. But I had to do an awful lot of maneuvering to avoid it" (Roth 1993 :169). As an incarnation of heroic and moral values, the Israeli officer expresses his reluctance to participate in any violent activities against the Palestinians and he despises the political agenda of his government. In order to revise the Israeli history of violence in Palestine, Roth introduces a new image of the Israeli military which does not exist in reality.

In addition to the idealistic representation of the Israeli army lieutenant, Roth provides a vivid description of the Israeli courtroom, a symbol of justice, with its Jewish flags, judges and lawyers where the fate of the Palestinians, accused of using violence against the army, will be determined. The deliberate attempt to ignore the brutalities and atrocities committed against the Palestinian activists in Israeli prisons and detainees camps by viewing the Israeli courtroom as an epitome of justice is part of the colonial discourse of the novel which aims to justify occupation and put the blame on the victim. Throughout his falsified representation of reality, Roth seeks to create a kind of cultural amnesia ignoring the real discourse of violence and replacing it with an alternative discourse which reproduces the Arab-Israeli conflict in a new form to fulfill dubious political purposes.

By delineating the colonized Palestinian as despicable in his character and totally blameworthy for the suffering of the Jewish community in the West Bank, Roth negotiates the possibility of his transfer which subverts the author's early hints about the possibility of assimilating the Palestinians in the mainstream Hebrew state. In his depiction of the Palestinian subaltern, Roth incorporates what Noam Chomsky identifies as "garbage language" (Chomsky 1971:65) which "is not only the voice but also the deed of suppression". As Herbert Marcuse argues in "*An Essay on Liberation*": this language not only defines and condemns "the Enemy", it also creates him, and this creation is but rather as he must be in order to perform his function for the establishment (Marcuse 1969:74). There is no doubt that in different parts of the novel, Roth attempts to degrade the Palestinian subaltern categorizing him as a fanatic in order to justify his displacement. In other words, the destruction of the humanity of the Palestinian Other is achieved in different ways in *Operation Shylock: A Confession* either by muting his voice or by assigning him roles which confirm to his stereotyped image in western culture or by conflating him with a degraded status reflecting his position in the colonial taxonomy of inferior races.

In his analysis of colonial politics, Frantz Fanon points out that the colonial system functions by deploying racial paradigms which widen the gap between colonizer and colonized leading to psychological colonization: "you are [civilized] because you are [colonizer] and you are [colonizer] because you are [colonized]" (1967:40). Fanon also demonstrates that there is a time in which "the colonialist reaches the point of no longer being able to imagine a time accruing without him. His eruption into the history of the colonized is defied, transformed into absolute necessity" (qtd. in Gohar 2001:85). In *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, Roth advocates what Edward Said calls "the moral epistemology of imperialism" (Said 1979:18) where the approved history of colonial nations such as America, South Africa and Israel, starts with what he identifies as "a blotting out of knowledge" of the native people or the making of them "into people without history" (Said 1979:23). Thus, the Palestinian people in Roth's novel, remain the colonized victims of the author's political ideology and cultural representation which aim to banish them from collective memory. By suggesting either the evacuation of historical Palestine of its native inhabitants – the transfer option - or the establishment of one Hebrew state where the native Palestinians will be assimilated into the mainstream Israeli community – the integrationist option - the author aims to deprive the Palestinians of their history. Once the colonized Palestinians are banished from collective memory as a people of cultural heritage, the

colonizer's moral and intellectual right to conquest is claimed to be established without question.

Conclusion : Resistance or Terrorism

In his analysis of the concept of terrorism , Robert Fisk draws an analogy between the French occupation of Algeria and the Zionist occupation of Palestine:

The reality is that the Palestinian/Israeli conflict is the last colonial war. The French thought that they were fighting the last battle of this kind. They had long ago conquered Algeria. They set up their farms and settlements in the most beautiful land in North Africa. And when the Algerians demanded independence, they called them “terrorists” and they shot down their demonstrators and they tortured their guerilla enemies and they murdered in “targeted killings” – their antagonists (qtd. in Barlas 2003: 55).

In addition to the cited – above analogy between the French / Israeli colonizers and the Algerian / Palestinian colonized , an application of what Edward said calls “contrapuntal reading” of the text of *Operation Shylock : A Confession* reveals the colonial dimensions of the novel. The contrapuntal approach includes a discourse dynamics disseminated by Said to prevent hostility between East and West by incorporating a counter - discourse mechanism able to expose colonial constructs in western texts (Said 1993:92) .

Obviously , the central narrator in *Operation Shylock : A Confession* ignores the fact that occupation and colonization would naturally lead to resistance and struggle not to terrorism . By viewing the protest of the colonized Palestinians against the inhuman practices of the Zionist colonizer as acts of terror and anti-Semitism , Roth's fiction justifies the violence of the Israeli army against Palestinian civilians as necessary military activities to protect the Israeli community in a volatile West Bank. In this context , Edward Said argues that challenging Zionism , in the West , means simply that one is either “anti-Semitic or an apologist for Islam and the Arabs” (Said 1979: 25). Therefore , the depiction of the Palestinian resistance as a kind of terrorism is part and parcel of the colonial / Zionist agenda integral to the novel.

In a related context , Roth's colonial portrayal of Ziad , a representative of the Palestinian community, as a militant fanatic aims to deflect attention from Zionist atrocities committed against the Palestinians or what Frantz Fanon calls “violence in its natural state” (Fanon 1967: 61). In *The Wretched of the Earth* , Fanon argues that the colonizer usually “owes its legitimacy to force and at no time tries to hide this aspect of things” (Fanon 1967: 84). In *Operation Shylock: A Confession* , the radical situation of fanatic Israelis like Merkin and his friends who advocate the policy of transfer which seeks to evacuate the West Bank of

the Palestinian population, is mystified whereas Ziad's defensive perspective is underlined and amplified. To Roth's central narrator, all massacres committed against the Palestinians do not lend credibility to Ziad's angry comments on the Arab Israeli conflict.

This situation is reminiscent of Albert Memmi's famous discussion of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. Memmi demonstrates that "all that the colonized has done to emulate the colonizer has met with disdain from the colonial masters. Everything is mobilized so that the colonized cannot cross the doorsteps, so that he understands and admits that this path is dead (Memmi 1974:125). While the colonizer's violence against the colonized is justified on moral grounds, the self-defense of the colonized is condemned as terrorism, an evidence of his barbaric and primitive nature. By advocating this approach, the colonizer ironically teaches the colonized the importance of using violence as the only means to reach one's ends: "he of whom they (colonizers) have never stopped saying that the only language he understands that of force, decides to give utterance by force. In fact as always, the settler has shown him (the colonized) the way he should take if he is to become free" (Fanon 1969: 84).

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