Deconstructive Journalism:

The Influences of Jacques Derrida and Edward Said on the

thought and writing of Robert Fisk

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Declaration of Originality

Declaration: I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and does not contain the work of any other individual. All sources that have been consulted have been identified and acknowledged in the appropriate way.

Signature of Candidate:

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Fayez Alsane

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Dedication

I like to dedicate this to all of those who fight for the truth

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Introduction

Through a deconstructive critique which uses the work of Robert Fisk, the respected journalist and writer on the Middle East, this thesis will examine how his work has consistently exposed the means by which hegemonic elites exploit language, religion and culture for the purposes of maintaining power. While Fisk's work is normally studied as journalism, and is regarded primarily in terms of whether one agrees with his perspective on events or not, in this thesis, his work will be seen as an example of deconstruction in action. The thesis will suggest that his writing is an example of a form of postcolonial deconstruction, and will use the writing and thoughts of Jacques Derrida and Edward Said as points of theoretical reference. This study will focus on the manipulation of language, the use of religion against its followers and the formulation of laws in order to justify their own quest for power. This power is achieved both through ideological and military force. In order to justify their actions, rulers exploit an ideological conflict between centre and margin or selfhood and alterity. This is achieved through representing the self as the centre and all that is good and noble, while the other is invariably represented as the enemy, and is portrayed as being a corrupt entity that operates illegally. This binarist mode of thinking has been the subject of much discussion as it is seen, by Jacques Derrida, as the cornerstone of the binary oppositional logic that defines Western thought. He makes it clear that such thinking is not confined to philosophical discussion, but has strong real-world implications, because these oppositional terms are not equal in any sense:

> To do justice to this necessity is to recognize that in a classical philosophical
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> opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis,
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> but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other

(axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment (Derrida, 1981: 41-42).

In a postcolonial context, the opposition between colonial self and colonised other has been a central trope in the work of Edward Said, and both of these thinkers will be used in this study to underpin the work of Robert Fisk. The aim will be to show how Fisk's writing is a deconstructive agent in the portrayal of, and deconstruction of, the power structures created by western powers in the Middle East, but also by some local power structures in the region.

Fisk recalls a conversation in which Amira Haas, the renowned Israeli journalist who writes on the occupied Palestinian territories, reminded him that the duty of all journalists is to attempt to produce impartial reports on major conflicts. This at times presents difficulties, especially for journalists reporting on conflicts involving their own government that can often be in control of the very media organs within which the journalists are employed. The sense of journalism as speaking the truth to power is a significant ethical demand, and can be seen in Fisk's work:

> I suppose, in the end, we journalists try, or should try to be the first impartial witnesses to history. If we have any reason for our existence, the least must be our ability to report history as it happens so that no one can say: 'We didn't know-no one told us'. I was insisting that we had a vocation to write the first pages of history but she interrupted me. 'No Robert, you're wrong', she said. 'Our job is to monitor the centres of power'. And I think in the end that is the best definition of journalism I have heard; to challenge authority – all authority – especially so when governments and politicians take us to

war when they have decided that they will kill and others will die (Fisk, 2006: xxiii).

This quotation was a seminal stage in this study as I, being an Arab and a student of literary criticism and theory, was attracted to Fisk's writings regarding Middle-Eastern affairs due to his ongoing adherence to the criterion as outlined by Hass, which he employs when he challenges and exposes the nature of hegemonic elitist regimes. Fisk's aim, like that of Said and Derrida, is to 'speak the truth to power' and to unravel the structures that maintain and retain power in the Middle East. Said has a chapter with this very title in his book Representations of the Intellectual (Said, 1996: 85-104), and he further stresses this point in his book *After the Peace Process*:

> [That] there is a great difference between political and intellectual behaviour. The intellectual's role is to speak the truth, as plainly, directly, and as honestly as possible. No intellectual is supposed to worry about whether what is said embarrasses, pleases, or displeases people in power. Speaking the truth to power means additionally that the intellectual's constituency is neither a government nor a corporate or a career interest: only the truth unadorned. Political behaviour principally relies upon considerations of interest—advancing a career, working with governments, maintaining one's position (Said, 2000: 283).

Similarly, Derrida also saw the role of the intellectual as one that was oppositional in terms of his or her relationship with power, be that power political or religious. Derrida advocates, the right to speak and to resist unconditionally "everything that concerns the question and the

history of truth, in its relation to the question of man, of what is proper to man, of human rights, of crimes against humanity and so forth…above all *in* the Humanities" (Derrida, 2002b: 113).

By paying close attention to Fisk's work, this thesis aims to argue that the role of binary oppositions in the guise of the self and the other is entirely dependent upon a centre which systematically defines itself in terms of the dominant part of the binary, and has done so, in real-world terms, throughout the history of western discourses. This thesis will suggest that Fisk will suggest that the idea of a centred structure is fluid, and thus, can either be moved, or manoeuvred in order to provide a moral and ethical justification to any given power structure. By analysing Fisk's texts through the lens of Jacques Derrida, Edward Said and to a lesser extent, the philosopher and cultural theorist Noam Chomsky, an alternative view of the manner in which ideology has been manipulated during many of the conflicts which involved the 'East and West, the self and the other', will be set out. A critique of the power regimes of the Middle East has been sustained in Fisk's work, and he provides a powerful antidote to many of the orientalist stereotypes that still pertain in our interaction with the Middle East.

Through the application of the theories to the writings of Robert Fisk, this thesis aims to show that powerful nations have used, and are still using, various manipulative tactics that take advantage of emotive issues in order to justify their own political power systems from an ideological perspective. This dissertation intends to illustrate this with examples, in order to illuminate certain issues; for example, it will analyse why, since the attack on New York's Twin Towers in 2001, the West's view of the East has been altered dramatically. Equally, and staying with Fisk's texts, it will examine why most of the perpetrators came from Saudi Arabia, and also why that country has been seemingly immune from reprisals. This thesis will simultaneously question the others' authority and show how, according to Fisk, Islam is used as a commodity by Middle Eastern leaders, purely so that rulers can manipulate 'Islamic laws' in such a way that allows them to justify their existence and retain their power, which is centred

on inequality and oppression. When it suited their political objectives, rulers such as these supported a jihadist war against the 'Infidels'. However, when opportunities arose to advance their own political ambitions, they supported the western imperialists' involvement in the affairs of the Middle East in a manner that could be seen as contrary to Islamic law. Fisk's writing suggests that, far from being controlled by Islam, certain ruling dynasties such as the royal family of Al-Saud, are in fact using it as an ideological discourse of control and domination. A concise analysis of the works of the aforementioned authors will also probe the manner by which western elites, in the pursuit of their own political goals, justify their involvement in such conflicts by declaring a war against terror, as opposed to the people of the Middle East who are bombed and killed, and who have their countries invaded. Indeed, as this thesis will argue, such invasions have only led to a climate in which the demonised other feels the need to resort to the use of 'terror' more often than ever before.

Thus this thesis will look at how the western – other binary opposition has been critiqued by Fisk, as well as examining how within the region, this self-other dialectic has been repeated to the same ends, namely the gaining and maintaining of power. It will also look at how Fisk's own work self-deconstructs in places as for Derrida, deconstruction is always already present in all writing:

> The very condition of a deconstruction may be at work, in the work, within
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> the system to be deconstructed; it may already be located there, already at
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> work…participating in the construction of what it at the same time threatens
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> to deconstruct. One might then be inclined to reach this conclusion:
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> deconstruction is not an operation that supervenes afterwards, from the
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> outside, one fine day; it is always already at work in the work…. Since the
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> disruptive force of deconstruction is always already contained within the
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> architecture of the work, all one would finally have to do to be able to

deconstruct, given this always already, is to do memory work (Derrida 1989,

73).

This dissertation provides an alternative contribution to the large corpus of work regarding the troubles that have beset the Middle East throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This thesis culminated in 2014, which coincided with the centenary of the outbreak of World War I, a conflict that concluded with the victors carving up the Arabic world into the states and countries with which we are familiar today. Artificial boundaries were created, and sovereigns of one form or another were put in place, but in reality, one form of foreign imperialism, the Ottoman Empire, was simply replaced by a slightly more sophisticated form of native colonialism whereby the native dynasties acted as proxies for the hegemony of western imperialism. At times, in order to retain their positions of power, these native imperialists aligned with western superpowers and allowed them to interfere in the affairs of other sovereign Arab states. Furthermore, through additional analysis of Fisk's writings, this dissertation will illustrate the ever-increasing role played by both British and United States imperialism in the affairs of the Middle East, which in America's case, has increased considerably since World War II. It will also demonstrate the ongoing critique that coheres throughout Fisk's writing as he attempts to tell the truth to power.

In that respect, this thesis aims to fill a part of the void that exists between writers who portray the continuous interference by Western governments in the affairs of the Middle East as being a justified war on terrorism, and writers like Fisk, whose works provide a critique of the political imperatives that underlie such interventions. According to Fisk, in words that echo those of Derrida and Said:

Power and the media are not just about cosy relationships between

journalists and political leaders, between editors and presidents. They are

not just about the parasitic-osmotic relationship between supposedly honourable reporters and the nexus of power that runs between White House and State Department and Pentagon, between Downing Street and the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence, between America and Israel (*UK Independent*, June 2010).

This study of Fisk's work demonstrates that for politicians, regardless of whether they are Middle Eastern or Western, the overriding purpose of the self is the outright control of the resources of its nations. This may be in terms of monetary value, or it may lie in the form of natural resources such as oil, or else in terms of its strategic importance to both the native rulers and their allies (whoever they happen to be during any particular conflict). The role of the intellectual and the serious journalist is to point out the underlying motives of political power structures.

Since the outset of this thesis in 2012, conflict in the Middle East has significantly increased, further deteriorating the already poor relationship between East and West. This thesis offers a new theoretical reading that paves the way for a new and long overdue discussion, which allows for constructive criticism aimed at bringing about the possibility of what Jacques Derrida terms 'justice to come' (Derrida, 2002a: 256), one that could lead to a peaceful coexistence with the other. However, such a state of being can only come about when justice can be free from the ideological and political control of the centre. Thus, given that the essence of this thesis is to expose the manner through which language, identity and laws are manipulated so that political entities can maintain their power, I have chosen Fisk's writings as the basis for my work as they analyse and critique these points.

Fisk's reporting, which covers the four decades that he has spent in the Middle East, provides much of the material for the construction of this thesis. His correspondence includes amongst many others, his seminal work, *The Great War for Civilisation*: *The Conquest of the*

Middle East, published in 2006, which concentrates mostly on conflicts in the Islamic world. Herein, the author traces how wars of conquest are often presented as wars of moral good, as part of an ideological struggle between good and evil, and between selfhood and alterity. They are represented as almost culturally necessary projects, when in reality, wars reflect the ultimate failure of human spirit, inflicting death and suffering on a massive scale. In his other book, *The Age of the Warrior*, published in 2009, Fisk collects much of his reportage on major wars and insurgencies during the countless conflicts that he witnessed. In my analysis of Fisk's political writing, I have employed writings of Jacques Derrida, such as the collection of essays published in *Writing and Difference*, and especially his chapter entitled, 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences'. In this essay, Derrida explains how ideology is used by those that control the centre of power and shows how linguistic and ideological control and sustain that pursuit of power. Similarly, when analysing Fisk's work from a literary perspective, I have referred to the writings of Edward Said, such as *Orientalism*, in which he claims that the ordinary citizens in the west have come to view the east through the disruptive techniques used by western elites in their representation of the oriental. Likewise, in formulating the deconstructive argument contained within this thesis, the works of other authors, such as John D. Caputo and Martin McQuillan, have been consulted, as well as articles from *The* [*UK*] *Independent* newspaper for which Fisk has been Middle Eastern correspondent for the last twenty-five years. Noam Chomsky's website has provided extremely valuable insights that relate to the subject being discussed, as have various Arabic language sources that I have translated and referenced where appropriate.

The thesis will be structured so that the critique of Fisk's writing will be traced through different theoretical and contextual paradigms. His work will be located in the same intellectual orbit as that of Derrida and Said, specifically in terms of analysing power structures. Then there will be a line traced from this to Fisk's writings on identity and to how notions of

identity are both constructed, and deconstructed, by language and by notions of ideology. This leads to a discussion of how language can be used to create the concept of the other, and indeed towards a demonization and attenuation of that entity, before coming to a close with what could almost be seen as a case study of this process. This structure is enacted in the thesis through four chapters.

Chapter one will focus on the theoretical aspects that connect Derrida and Said, and which can also be seen to involve some of the thinking of Fisk. It will briefly explain the significance that their backgrounds have had upon their theoretical work. Their marginalised upbringings encouraged them to be wary of the systems and power structures that control the language through which we see the world around us, as they themselves had been the object of the centre's gaze and had been represented as other. This is a possible explanation of their attentiveness to the detail of texts in order to reveal the silent, oppressed and omitted voices within them, and their work has given us a new and enlightened way to critique texts. This chapter will demonstrate how both writers read texts against their overt meaning (a process, I would contend, that would have emancipatory political consequences), while being always already aware of the hidden ideology of the governing centre. It will illustrate that, in being critical of the system and the structure that produces the ideological constructs of 'self' and 'other', both theorists' praxis can stand as a shield for humanity, for justice, and for language itself.

The second chapter will deal with the concept of identity and with the political and ideological motivations that can often lie beneath this much-abused term. Identity as a concept is often a means of separating self from other: us from them. This chapter will examine various methods that hegemonic groups apply to try to push east and west apart in their affirmation of an 'identity'. It will illustrate, through the examination of Fisk's texts, that identity is an illusion put in place to limit the liberation of the mind by restricting and reinforcing the boundaries that

the structural system has designed to maintain the delusion that gives authenticity to their power. Thus, this chapter will discuss how colonial and neo-colonial structures are using identity to their advantage by inventing an 'other', a voiceless entity that occupies the second term of the binary opposition 'good versus evil', so that the 'self' can rationalise its continuing domination of, and expansion of their invasion of, the invisible 'other'. The ultimate manifestation of this is to represent a demonised, non-human other, through its signification by an abstract noun: it is not a war against Iraq or Afghanistan, but against 'terror'.

Chapter Three will examine the use of language in shaping our knowledge of the created and 'absent' other. This chapter will challenge the creation of others, and will illustrate how this is done by focusing on the 'war on terror', to critique the language used and the narrative positions that are attached to it. Furthermore, it will go on to question why such hegemony is directed against the other, and equally why language is the means of doing so. We will look at how the ideological structure changes language to suit its needs, which in turn changes the western perception of the east, a change that has political and ideological dimensions. Indeed, this special and unnatural relationship between power and language will serve as the prime focus of this section, as we examine how it shapes our knowledge and limits our understanding of the other.

The final chapter will examine the dictatorial systems of power in the Middle East, and discuss how laws are manufactured and enforced so that the authority can stay in power for much longer. This section will be aimed at critiquing the system of rules that govern the Islamic other, particularly in Saudi Arabia, and at examining its dynamic dominant alliance of mutual ideological interests with its western counterparts. It will suggest that there is a process of transference at work here as, just as the west saw the oriental as the 'other', so the ruling elite in Saudi Arabia see any form of internal opposition in a similar light. This chapter will analyse the 'forced law' and its legitimacy, as it determines the role of justice and the effects of this

form of law on its subjected people. It will argue that many Islamic rulers in that respect have played a major role in radicalising many Muslims, and have therefore contributed to the western self's 'legitimate' invasion of the Islamic other under the pretext of the 'war on terror'. Hence, it is my hope that such a work will contribute significantly to resolving the issues that stand in the way of our understanding of the other in its purest form.

Over all, this thesis will undertake a theoretical and political approach to the work of Robert Fisk. Central to this will be the connection between the maintenance of power and the philosophical logocentrism that defines how citizens view the world. Thus, Derrida and Said's thought will be powerful tools in the examination of such issues, as they embody the philosophical underpinning of Fisk's own writings, which are largely focussed on critiquing the level of injustice in the Middle East. Hence, the application of deconstruction and post-colonialism to the study of his work will sanction a better, more considerate view of the definition and representation of alterity, and of Fisk's role as a journalist. By using the thinking of Derrida and Said, this thesis will analyse major issues that stand in the way of understanding the east. In analysing subjects that have had an obvious effect on how we perceive the other, this study allow the reader to gain a better understanding of the conflicts that exist between west and east, conflicts that indubitably need to be brought to light especially in terms of how one side understands, or rather is led to misunderstand, the other. Thus in the opening chapter, the ideas and thoughts that connect the writing of Jacques Derrida with that of Edward Said will be examined, as will their connections with the thinking and writing of Fisk.

Chapter One: Connections between Derrida and Said

This chapter will look at adequations between the thinking of Derrida and Said, and will postulate further connections between their work and the thinking and philosophy that underlie the work of Robert Fisk. Both of these thinkers could be broadly seen as being post-structuralist in orientation, as they share in a broad intellectual constellation of perspectives on the indeterminacy of language, of the pervasiveness of ideology and of the political and ideological motivation that has long been beneath the binary oppositional logic through which the western world sees and understands reality. At this juncture, it is important to demarcate the theoretical perspective of the thesis, and to explain the theoretical matrix through which Fisk's work will be analysed. It will not be the function of this thesis to inquire into post-structuralist theory as a general movement, nor will it offer a broad analysis of the writing and thought of Jacques Derrida and Edward Said. I will be looking at very particular aspects of their thought, specifically at Said's notions of a worldly oppositional criticism, and at Derrida's attempts to decentre discourse, and also to reconstruct the context of binary oppositions in a manner that will be emancipatory of the lesser term. In the context of this study, the core binary opposition will be that of self and other, standing in metonym for coloniser and colonised. Thus, this thesis will focus on very specific aspects of the work of Derrida and Said where there are strong areas of intellectual cohesion between them, and I will use these areas to outline connections with Fisk's own thinking. It is crucial for readers of this thesis to note the parallels between the background of Jacques Derrida and Edward Said. Both were from marginal societies, margins that were colonised, and this is a significant factor in their respective works. Derrida 'came from the so-called indigenous Jewish community originally expelled with the Moors from Spain' (Young, 2001: 414), and referred to himself as an 'over-acculturated, over-colonized

European Hybrid' (Caputo, 1997: 114). His comments on his background show that he was aware of the system and logocentrism (the fundamental values around which a society revolves) of the western world, which, through a discourse of binary oppositions, exalted its own moral practices above those of the 'others' who were, as a result, left vulnerable on the margins. This was certainly the case when Algeria was invaded, as the 'French invaders destroyed the local administrative system and replaced it with a *centralized* (my emphasis) administration, based on the production of *écriture*' (Young, 2001: 417). Indeed, as Cixous has argued, the history of Western thought 'is the history of this constructed inequality passing for fact' (McQuillan, 2000: 9).

It is possible to argue that Derrida's notion of logocentrism has its roots in being seen as an other, or as an absence, in these formative years. Here he was a Jew in an Arab world, and a Frenchman in an Arab world, and yet not a Frenchman in the sense of being a European as he would have been seen as North African. His own critique of logocentrism is certainly informed by this sense of not being part of the centre of presence from which all knowledge and writing could be seen to derive. European philosophy can be seen to begin with Plato, what Derrida termed 'the epoch of the logos' (Derrida, 1976: 12) which posited the 'absolute proximity' of voice and thought – 'of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning' (Derrida, 1976: 11). In other words, the idea that some form of truth could exist outside of language, culture, perspective and ideology was posited as a form of metaphysical presence. This sense of presence almost self-defining, and can be seen as a transcendental form of meaning, what he terms 'the determination of the being of the entity as presence' (Derrida 1976: 12). This form of presence is almost a pre-reflective essence, something that is intrinsically present and beyond ideology: it is the very selfhood of the self.

Derrida, whose project has been in large part to interrogate logocentric notions of presence, talks of the 'self-presence of the *cogito*, consciousness, subjectivity' (Derrida, 1976:

12) as the cornerstone of the transcendental subject. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida writes about how the voice as the vehicle of understanding, of '"hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak"' (Derrida, 1976: 7), has merged:

> with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence* ... (presence of the thing to the sight as *eidos*, presence as substance /essence /existence [*ousia*], temporal presence as point [*stigmè*] of the now or of the moment [*nun*], the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth) (Derrida: 1976; 12).

For Derrida, the logocentric formulations of the humanist paradigm deconstruct themselves when subjected to a rigorous reading. Text is differed/deferred into textile, which, in turn, is unravelled into a play of *différance* which opens the text to a number of different readings. The Saussurean equation of signifier/signified is problematized, as, for Derrida, the signified:

> always already functions as a signifier....There is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying references that constitute language....The signified is originarily and essentially...trace, that it is *always already in the position of the signifier* (Derrida: 1976; 7, 73).

Derrida, in an interview with Richard Kearney, refers explicitly to this issue in a tone which makes his exasperation at various textualist misreadings of his project clear. In response to a question on language as reference, Derrida had the following points to make:

> Deconstruction is always deeply concerned with the 'other' of language. I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that

there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in language; it is, in fact, saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above all else the search for the 'other' and the 'other of language' (Derrida, 1984: 123).

This other of language is something that was very real to Derrida in his youth. While living in the midst of an Arabic culture, Derrida was raised in a monolingual (French) *milieu*. Hence, French was his only language. However, in the 'culture of the French in Algeria and in the Jewish community of the French in Algeria', he points out, that 'France was not Algeria…the authority of the French language was elsewhere'. He goes on:

> And in a certain manner, confusedly, we learned it. I learned it as the language of the other – even though I could only refer to one language as being mine, you see! And this is why I say that it is not a question of language, but of culture, literature, history, history of French literature, what I was learning at school. I was totally immersed, I had no other reference, I had no other culture, but at the same time I sensed clearly that all of this came from a history and a milieu that were not in a simple and primitive way mine (Derrida, 1995: 120).

Derrida tells of how, despite speaking French, and being immersed in French literature and culture, 'the Frenchman of France was an other' (Derrida, 1995: 204). Much of his writing stresses this feeling of being at home, and yet not at home, in French culture. In *The Other Heading*, he speaks of himself as someone 'not quite European by birth' (Derrida, 1992b: 7), and he sees his cultural identity as 'not only European, it is not identical to itself' (Derrida, 1992b: 82-83). Thus his sense of otherness, and of the need to deconstruct senses of identity

that are monolithic, has strong connections with his own biography, and the same point can be made about the thought of Edward Said.

In a manner that is very resonant of Derrida's experience, Said also refers to his childhood:

> ... as a child growing up in two British colonies. All of my education, in those colonies (Palestine and Egypt) and in the United States, has been Western, and yet that deep early awareness has persisted (Said 2003a: 25).

His education in the West gave him the opportunity to view this 'condition of unevenness' (Karavanta and Morgan, 2008: 2) between the West and the 'others' in the East. As Walia argued: 'like Stephen Dedalus, Said is a product of a colonial environment and "must develop a resistance consciousness" for the affirmation of intellectual freedom' (Walia, 2001: 11). This sense of inequality and unevenness was created by the power structure, using both power and knowledge to manipulate the image of the other to suit their own agenda, through what Said refers to as the discourse of 'Orientalism':

> Thus all of Orientalism stands forth and away from the Orient: that Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, 'there' in discourse about it (Said 2003a: 22).

Thus we can see that use of language is the main factor for both Derrida and Said, as its depiction as being under the control of an influential group suggests that while things are seen as natural and normal, in fact they are not. The version of the colonised as other is something that has been carefully created, but this creation has been obscured through a logocentric

imperative. Said sees the discourse of orientalism as creative of a distinct racialized version of Arab world, a version which seems to be obvious and natural, but is in effect highly ideological:

> 'the Orient' is itself a constituted entity, and the notion that there are geographical spaces with indigenous, radically 'different' inhabitants who can be defined on the basis of some religion, culture or racial essence proper to that geographical space is equally a highly debatable idea (Said 2003a:322).

For Said, texts are always already culturally, politically and linguistically inscribed and embedded: 'in short, they are in the world, and hence worldly' (Said, 1983: 35). This is very much the point that Fisk is making as he teases out the textual and ideological connotations and sources of much of the violence which he has seen, first-hand, in the Middle East. As we will see, not taking texts at face value is central to Said's project, as is the dialectic between how their sources, origins and ideological contexts influence texts, as well as how these contextual areas are, in their turn, influenced and changed by texts.

Ashcroft and Ahluwalia make this point very clearly:

> The key challenge for Said is to negotiate between two attitudes to the text which in different ways misrepresent how texts have a being in the world. On the one hand the classical realist position sees the text as simply referring to the world 'out there'. Such a view fails to take into account the ways in which language mediates and determines what is 'seen' in the world by framing the way it is talked about. On the other hand, a structuralist-inspired position sees the world as having no absolute existence at all but as being entirely constructed by the text. This view would not allow for any non-

textual experience of the world, nor for any world outside the text (Ashcroft

and Ahluwalia, 2001: 22).

It is my contention that, just as Derrida deconstructs any notion of an ideologically-free text, or of a transcendent meaning beyond language and politics, so Said sees texts as both part of hegemonic ideology and also as possible vehicles for change within that ideology. Of course there are also significant areas of disagreement between Derrida and Said, with Said being far more politically engaged than Derrida, who has often been seen as someone who gets lost in philosophical abstractions. However, at the level of their ideological implications of texts, there are significant points of intersection between them, and it is these points of connection that will be the focus of this thesis. As Said has put it the 'text's status as an event having sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency' is a necessary part of its mode of being and is an 'infrangible part of its capacity for conveying and producing meaning' (Said, 1983: 39). This is precisely what Fisk does in his ongoing analysis of the 'texts' of the Middle east conflict. He is well aware that he is working within narratives which are ideologically-constituted and that the text, be this his own narrative, the ideologically-focused narratives of colonisation, or the narratives which the centres of power use to justify their own power in the Middle East, is 'produced by the world, a concert of the material forces of power in that world, and the situatedness of which it specifically speaks' (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001: 24-25). In this sense, there is a strong coalescence of thought between Said and Derrida.

Although neither will provide us with definitive answers, they will each make us look at the system in a critical way. Derrida argues that language itself is an ideological infrastructure; that western philosophy, within this confined structure, has attempted to explain world affairs in black and white: 'while sending everything else off to the periphery as mere rhetoric or ornamentation' (Caputo, 1997: 83). We are born into this world, our parents give us our identities and introduce us to their language, and in turn, through this language, we see

everything; in other words our presence is the defining factor in our view of the world, as it determines so much of how we interpret, and are interpreted by, the world. As Tyson has argued, language has become: 'our ground of being, or the foundation from which our experience and knowledge of the world is generated' (Tyson, 1999: 248). However, this very language is under the influence of a hegemonic system, which dictates and shapes what we see and experience, and thus we unconsciously fall prey to the logic of the 'centre' which is a seminal aspect of logocentric western philosophy. Thus, a black man living in Alabama, in the 1960s who wanted to use the bathroom, would automatically go to the bathroom above which the sign stated 'coloured'. At that time, this was seen as 'normal', as the ideology of a system made it normal for both 'coloured' and 'white' bathrooms to exist, and so, people accepted this as a normal way of life: it is hegemony in action. It took the actions of Rosa Parks when she said '*no*' to standing up and giving her seat to a white man, to begin to deconstruct this system that made others feel that it was 'normal' to separate the two. Similarly in Africa, when Nelson Mandela stood in a courtroom in October of 1962, before he was sentenced to spend the total of twenty seven years in prison, he asked the following questions:

> It is fit and proper to raise the question sharply, what is this rigid colour-bar in the administration of justice? Why is it that in this courtroom I face a white magistrate, am confronted by a white prosecutor and escorted into the dock by a white orderly? Can anyone honestly and seriously suggest that in this type of atmosphere the scales of justice are evenly balanced? I feel oppressed by the atmosphere of white domination that lurks all around in this courtroom. Somehow this atmosphere calls to mind the inhuman injustices caused to my people outside this courtroom by this same white domination (Benson, 1994: 102).

Rosa Parks and Nelson Mandela simply fought for equal rights and no more, nevertheless they were almost treated as 'terrorists' because they opposed the legitimacy of a logocentric authority – the forces that originated from the hegemonic centres of their discourse, and interestingly that were enforced by language and by ideology as much as by military or police force. However, both so called 'terrorists' are now regarded as freedom fighters, as celebrities, and as icons of their times. The attendance of most of the world's leaders at Nelson Mandela's recent memorial service has confirmed this. This underlines the point that this logocentric structure is fluid, that it can be decentred, and is able to adjust itself in order to force its unnatural 'truth' upon us. Naturalizing what is not natural is the opposite of what Derrida wants us to do. He wants us to read: 'texts very much against the grain of their overt meanings and intentions' (Norris, 2000: 109). Hence 'deconstruction is the preparation for the incoming of the other, making it 'open' and 'porous' to the other' (Caputo, 1997: 108), and as we have seen, this process is also at the core of Fisk's journalism. It is interesting that the deconstructive tools used by Parks and Mandela, namely the power of language, are at the core of colonial and neo-colonial systems of power. In a binary opposition of signifying self and signified other, language seems to be in a mono-directional flow. It is the self, who categorises the other as other; the west, which depicts the east as oriental, and those in power who signify what is just and unjust – legal and illegal. What happened with Parks and Mandela was that the silent other found its voice, and in both cases, reversed the binary oppositional hierarchy that had placed them as absences from the signifying system as opposed to presences. Now, to paraphrase Gayatri Spivak, the subaltern does speak, and in so doing, challenges the binary hierarchy. So language can act as a powerful deconstructive lever, just as it can also be an instrument of imposing ideological hegemony. Derrida, Said and Fisk are all fascinated by how language can be both an agent of restriction, and simultaneously an agent of emancipation.

In addition, the centre of which we have been speaking, has been referred to by 'different forms or names' (Derrida, 1993: 279) – God, man, nature, being, presence, truth, consciousness. These 'central' concepts are structured in terms of binary oppositions, which rely on a fixed perception of difference. They are often hierarchical, allowing one aspect of the binary opposition to be superior to the other (man over woman, white over black, good over evil, coloniser over colonised and west over east). However, according to Derrida this 'is western philosophy's greatest illusion' (Tyson, 1999: 249). As a result, Derrida introduces deconstruction (the examination of the values at the core of a text in order to view and critique its basis in logocentrism) as a method, although we must keep in mind McQuillan's point that 'there is no *theory* to be followed in deconstruction' (McQuillan, 2000: 4), to help us overcome the western belief that:

> the history of logocentrism in which the inequality of binary opposition
> (privileging one term to the detriment of another) depends upon the
> representation of such inequality within discourse (philosophical, literature,
> and so on) (McQuillan, 2000: 10).

Furthermore, an analysis of Derrida's most quoted, and arguably, the most misunderstood axiom: 'there is nothing outside of the text' (Derrida, 1976: 158), will perhaps demonstrate this. Derrida's point here is that the link between text and the real world is a construction which is culturally conditioned and in no way prior to or transcendental with respect to language, ideology and thought. In this sense: 'the world is text' (Leitch, 1983: 58), and one is immediately struck by the similarity to Said's sense of the worldliness of texts in terms of their production and meaning. Derrida wants us to be open to the 'others' 'in a way that does not involve binary logic at all' (McQuillan, 2000: pp. 12–13). The reason is that this hierarchical power is violent, as it is responsible for the inequality that is created in discourses where a man

is superior to woman, where the west is superior to the east, where wealth is superior to poverty and where presence is privileged with respect to absence. Thus Derrida would emphasize that it is crucial when deconstructing the opposition: 'to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment' (Derrida, 1981: 41), as doing so will emancipate our thoughts and emotions and unite people in the name of a broader notion of humanity. For Derrida, deconstruction can prevent 'totalitarianism, nationalism, egocentrism, and so on' (Caputo, 1997: 13). As Eagleton stated with regard to Derrida: 'deconstruction is for him an ultimately *political* practice, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought, and behind that a whole system of political structures and social institutions, maintains its force' (Eagleton, 1996: 128). Of course, while looking at connections between the two, the point must be made that and while Derrida's politics might be quite nuanced, those of Said are far more overt.

We can see Derrida's aim is similar to that of Said, as each wishes to increase our understanding of the 'other' in their respective ways. Said has used the concepts of both the French theorist Michel Foucault (1926–84), and the Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), in his writings. From Foucault, he takes the most celebrated idea of power/knowledge, because as Foucault has stated: 'power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth' (Foucault, 1991: 194). Power and knowledge, when taken in unison, can produce a narrative that generates a belief in what is natural and normal; as Said argued in *Orientalism*, the 'other' has been created in order to produce a belief in the 'self': 'the East thus becomes a surrogate "self" that Western scholars do not choose to acknowledge' (Walia, 2001: 40). This is evident in Said's writing as he stated: 'Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analysed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved' (Said 2003a: 207). Moreover, he would argue that the affiliation between West and East is one of power, and indeed, one can even go so far as to say that it is a regime-changing power. We have seen this recently with the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, in search of 'Weapons of Mass

Destruction'. This brought about the execution of Saddam and a civilian death toll whose estimations vary 'from just under 100,000 dead to well over a million' (*The Guardian*, March 2008), while from the twenty five million civilians that remain: '1.6 million Iraqis have fled the country and a further 1.5 million are displaced within Iraq' (*UK Independent*, October 2006). Indeed as this thesis nears completion, a further threat to the people of Iraq has emerged in the ISIL movement which has arisen and has brought further instability to that war-torn country.

The one thing that many in the 'west' constantly ignored was the opinion of the Iraqi people. After watching various debates prior to America's 1990 'Operation Desert Storm' invasion of Iraq, Said recalled that: 'rarely in the debate was there mention of the Arabs as having something to do with the war, as its victims, for instance, or (equally convincingly) its instigators' (Said, 1994: 355). This is reminiscent of what he said in his earlier book, that: 'Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient' (Said 2003a: 3). Thus Gramsci's ideas also come into play, most notably his concept of hegemony, which as McCarthy explains: 'meant the ability of the ruling elite to retain power by manipulating public opinion in the realm of civil society, so as to obtain the organised consent of the masses' (McCarthy, 2010:36). This is evident in Gramsci's view because:

> To his mind, is that governments can often mobilize the support of the mass media and other ideological instruments, partly because the various élite, political or otherwise, share similar world-views and life-styles, and partly because the institutions of civil society, whether or not they are directly controlled by the state, must operate within a legal framework of rules and regulations. (Femia, 1981: 27-28).

From this perspective, Said draws the link that the West's knowledge and understanding of the 'others' in the East is very much the result of biased propaganda, controlled by those in power, through various machines, subconsciously teaching us while we remain unaware that:

> it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by an exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values) power moral (as with ideas about what 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do or understand as 'we' do) (Said 2003a: 12).

Thus, just as Said has argued, Orientalism 'is a part of and contributory to Western *hegemony*' (McCarthy, 2010: 71). It allows the dominant ideological position to remain dominant and to seem almost naturalised, and thus discourse, language, and the media are not just reporters of opinion, but are creators of opinion. Thus a critical media, a media that can speak the truth to power, is a significant agent in the politics of culture, and Said and Derrida, in their different ways, offer this critique. Said offers an overt critique of the binary oppositional culture of self and other, and Derrida engages with this, but in a manner which is 'a way of giving things a new twist' (Caputo, 1997: 42), by interrogating and deconstructing the philosophical premises upon which these hierarchical distinctions rest.

Initially, the reversal of prevailing hierarchical binary oppositions is a necessary step in a deconstructive reading. As Derrida himself notes: 'to deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment' (Derrida, 1981: 41). But this reversal is only

the first step in the deconstructive project. Making the point that an opposition of metaphysical concepts is never the face-to-face of two terms, but a hierarchy and an order of subordination, Derrida goes on to say:

> Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to a neutralization: it must, by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an *overturning* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is only on this condition that deconstruction will provide itself the means with which to *intervene* in the field of oppositions that it criticizes, which is also a field of non-discursive forces. Each concept, moreover, belongs to a systematic chain, and itself constitutes a system of predicates. There is no metaphysical concept in and of itself. There is a work – metaphysical or not – on conceptual systems. Deconstruction does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the non-conceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated. (Derrida, 1982: 329)

The attempt to displace the conceptual order that privileges the Eurocentric self, and diminishes the oriental other clearly connects Derrida with Said in terms of their political projects. For Said, this single binary opposition was at the core of his writing, whereas for Derrida, it was one example of a whole raft of such foundational logocentric assumptions that underwrote Western culture. Such conceptual orders were ratified by an almost impersonal structural centre (the power structures, and repressive state apparatuses and ideological state apparatuses that controlled and mediated the processes of empire and colonisation), and both Derrida and Said worked hard at dislodging such a hegemonic structure.

It should come as no surprise, then, that both Derrida and Said were writing in critical mode, as they were critiquing the establishment and critiquing the naturalised notion of the stable 'centre'. Derrida, in his efforts to undo the binary logic, introduces the term *différance*, (borrowed from the French language, meaning both to 'defer' and to 'differ') to outline the differential meaning in language – because according to Derrida, every word is inscribed in a chain or in a system. To explain this in detail would require a brief look at the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of the signifier and the signified. Although, on one hand Saussure would accept the fact that the relationship between signifiers is differential, on the other, he would argue that the relationships between signifiers (words) and the signified (images or concepts) are stable in terms of social agreement on their connection: in language-use, they are as inseparable as the two sides of a coin (Saussure, 1983:111). In addition, we as individuals tend to use words to imply positive meaning to our lives at all the times, and thus Saussure's argument is persuasive, because it shows us a foundation and a 'centre' which we can then invoke.

This is exactly what Derrida refers to when he 'encourages us to be especially wary of the notion of the centre' (Royle, 2003: 15). For Derrida, the signifier/signified differ, not just from each other, but also from themselves; their nature consists in the traces that are left by chains of infinities. Thus this idea of trace is what makes the signified/signifier a presence with an absence in the form of internal difference and deferral, the limitless deferral of any final meaning. As Royle argued: 'a text is a "fabric of traces" governed by a logic of the 'nonpresent remainder', which suggests the 'impossibility of pure presence, the impossibility of absolute plenitude of meaning or intention' (Royle, 2003: 68). Nevertheless, *différance* as McQuillan puts it: 'is not the difference between signifiers but is the system of play itself' (McQuillan, 2000:18). As Derrida further argued, *différance* is not just a concept *per se*: 'but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general' (Derrida, 1982:

11). Thus a text must be understood in its context; both the historical and modern context. Here we can see that we are entering Said's territory and the idea of 'worldliness', as is evident from his book *The World the Text and the Critic* that a text to Said, be it political, literal, or cultural, exists in: 'circumstance, time, place, and society-in short, they are in the world, and hence worldly' (Said, 1984: 35). The core of this worldly system is Europe which is 'firmly in the privileged centre' (Said 2003a: 117), and it is to the power to this centre, a power that is linguistic and ideological as well as military and political that Said writes in opposition. Derrida, in his writing, deconstructs that centre by speaking about how over time, different discourse have decentred the notion of centrality. He speaks of a form of decentred discourse where, 'there are only contexts without any centre of absolute anchoring' (Derrida, 1982: 320). He goes on to explain that once issues of language had invaded the general problematic:

> it became necessary to think both the law which somehow governed the desire for a centre in the constitution of structure, and the process of signification which orders the displacements and substitutions for this law of central presence - but a central presence which has never been itself, has always already been exiled from itself into its own substitute. The substitute does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it. Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre, that the centre could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the centre had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse – provided we can agree on this word – that is to say, a system in

which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never

absolutely present outside a system of differences. (Derrida, 1978: 280)

For Derrida, a deconstructive critique can unsettle the fixity of the centre and can allow for a

more emancipatory and egalitarian range of discourse between self and other. Linguistically

and philosophically this has profound implications, as it frees inquiry from a centripetal force

of established centres of power. Politically, such a philosophical deconstruction would have

even more profound implications. As Michael Ryan says:

> Such a politics would not have a centre in the sense of a consciousness in
>
> command of its intentions, a singular subject (the urban industrial
>
> proletariat) which excludes all other possible subjective centres, or a Party
>
> office, the ultimate arbiter of truth and the source of decreed political
>
> intentionality. (Ryan: 1982; 115)

In other words, there would be no centre, no transcendental signified. Structures (post-

structures) of such a politics would be characterized by their 'resistance to axiomatic

foundationalism' (Ryan: 1982; 115). Such resistance is what both Derrida and Said attempt,

in their different ways, in their work.

In *The World the Text and the Critic*, Said highlighted the responsibilities of the critic

and the role of criticism in the contemporary world; as he stated: 'were I to use one word

consistently along with criticism it would be oppositional' (and again, the initial quotation from

Fisk springs to mind here). The reason for this was that Said wanted criticism to be life–

enhancing, and thus to be 'opposed to every form of tyranny' in order to induce a 'non-coercive

knowledge produced in the interest of human freedom' (Said, 1984: 29). According to Said,

fields of learning and texts such as literature are constrained 'by cultural traditions, by worldly

circumstance' (Said 2003a: 201). As a result, criticism in the name of 'worldliness', should attend to the political reality and the location of a written text, as he believed in the 'connection between texts and the existential actualities of human life' (Said, 1984: 5).

To simplify this perspective, in the discursive practice of literature, in a democratic system, we have various critical practices which are undertaken by academics when reading texts and looking for meanings. However, oppositional political criticism, while not censored or banned, can often be attenuated by cultural considerations, as critical perspectives are often gradually subsumed into the class discourse. This is precisely what Said meant by worldliness, as he wants us to monitor the gap between a culture and the ruling elite. Walia has asked the following question: 'if texts are relevant to the understanding of "real history", how can they be divorced from the world of time and space and the historical moment in which they are located?' (Walia, 2001: 66). Worldliness exists in the text as much as the text is in the world outside of it. This is evident from Said's statement:

> My position is that texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted. (Said, 1984: 4)

In a manner that has parallels to Derrida's *différance*, 'worldliness' also strives towards liberating the mind and, more importantly, towards allowing us to understand others in a more effective way, so 'that the text is crucial in the way we "have" a world, but the world does exist, and that worldliness is constructed within the text' (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001: pp. 22-23). Consequently, Said made obvious this use of worldliness by analysing the West's view of the Arab people in *Orientalism*, just as Salusinszky has argued:

Orientalism implied that literary studies could apply its explicative

techniques to uses of language that lie outside the literary canon, and could

thus return to and immerse itself in the world by learning to read the

relations between power and knowledge. (Salusinszky, 1987: 126).

Derrida and Said's modes of thought revolutionized the twentieth century for critics and readers

alike. Consequently, when both theories are applied in unison, they can lay bare some of the

ideological shaping of knowledge and meaning that has often been accepted unreflectively.

Furthermore, as we saw with *différance*, and Derrida's process of reasoning against

traditional limits and beliefs, we can argue that the same applies to *worldliness*, for it teaches

us that the reader's: 'responsibilities [lie] in exposing the falsity of representations which

always conceal a subterranean agenda' (Walia, 2001: 64). Similarly *différance* 'reject[s]

concepts such as common sense and reason as merely ordering–strategies that the reader

imposes on literature' (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 215). *Différance* provides the reader with a new

perspective by transforming how we read a text, while remaining aware of the centre and the

'marginal', and more importantly, of what has been omitted from the text and left unexplained.

We can expand this view, and argue that *différance* gives us the opportunity to ask questions

like 'what is literature', and that it also allows us to ask what is criticism and what is its

objective, and how does this interact with the political and ideological? Once again, we arrive

at Said's territory of worldliness, which breaks away from the standard commoditized type of

criticism. As Said sees it:

contemporary criticism is an institution for publicly affirming the values of

our, that is, European, dominant elite culture, and for privately setting loose

the unrestrained interpretation of a universe defined in advance as the

endless misreading of misinterpretation (Said, 1984: 25).

Finally, if *différance* allows us how to see our contemporary world in all its political and discursive complexity, then worldliness encourages us to 'to stand between culture and system' (Said, 1984: 26), for as Walia puts it: 'the text, the critic and the public readership are locked in a dialectal relationship' (Walia, 2001: 68). Thus between *différance* and worldliness, the public and the community at large, can attain a higher level of understanding the world we live in today, by allowing us to burst the systematic bubbles that can limit the scope of inquiry and critique.

This brief comparative examination of both Derrida and Said provides a vantage point from which to study Robert Fisk's writings on the Middle East. Fisk was an overt admirer of the work of Said. In the acknowledgement to one of his most seminal books, *The Great War for Civilization*, Fisk thanks the 'late and brilliant Palestinian scholar Edward Said, and his authoress sister Jean Makdissi for their help and suggestions over many years' (Fisk, 2006: 9), while three years earlier, Fisk wrote an essay tellingly entitled: 'When Did "Arab" Become a Dirty Word? Smearing Said and Hanan Ashrawi' (Fisk, 2003). Clearly, Said, who Fisk had termed that 'majestic Palestinian scholar' (Fisk, 2006: 917) has been an intellectual presence in Fisk's working and writing life, and has influenced his thinking on the Arab world. Derrida, like Said, is non-European, someone whose lineage is Algerian French and Jewish just as Said's own is Arab-Christian and Palestinian. As we have already seen, Derrida tells of how, despite speaking French, and being immersed in French literature and culture, 'the Frenchman of France was an other' (Derrida and Weber, 1995: 204). Much of his writing stresses this feeling of being at home, and yet not at home, in French culture. In *The Other Heading*, he speaks of himself as someone 'not quite European by birth,' who now considers himself to be 'a sort of over-acculturated, over-colonized European hybrid' (Derrida, 1992b: 7); he sees his cultural identity as 'not only European, it is not identical to itself' (Derrida, 1992b: 82-83).

This sense of an identity that is not identical with itself, of an identity that is shifting and plural, is a significant factor in Fisk's analysis of the Middle East. He is constantly probing the received images of the Western narrative of this area, and also probes the constructions of the ruling groups in these countries, by asking questions which have a decentring purpose. We will discover that his goal is similar to that of Derrida and Said, as he believes that the role of the journalist is: 'to challenge authority–all authority–especially so when governments and politicians take us to war, when they have decided that they will kill and others will die' (Fisk, 2006: xxiii). Accordingly, and in a similar approach to that of deconstruction, Fisk pays attention to the marginalized in his writings about the Middle East. His deconstructive readings are carried out in a post-colonial context, since the Arab world was colonized by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire, long before the English and French divided it to its present–day countries. The following chapters will focus on current issues by using the theories of Derrida and Said to critique Fisk's critiques regarding the Middle East. The aim of this project is to bring Fisk's writing a step closer to the critics and scholars of both post–colonialism and deconstruction, by extricating his writings from the media arena, and by placing them in what one can argue is the more appropriate field of critical theory, since his writing mainly discusses culture and society. This approach of using the work of a journalist to gain additional knowledge of other societies and cultures has rarely been attempted by postcolonial scholars. Thus the approach that will be undertaken for this project will effectively provide a picture of the 'real' Middle East. I am optimistic that this will in turn provide the reader with a new perspective of the relationship between West and East.

It is clear, then, that despite their many dissimilarities and despite the differences in their views of the political role of criticism, there are strong confluences of interest in the work of Said and Derrida. Said sees himself as voicing the silenced, oriental other through the

inception of a worldly and politically-engaged discourse that critiques both the western political constructions of the Arab world, and some repressive Arab regimes:

> It would be hard to overestimate Edward Said's importance in providing Western intellectuals with a framework for understanding the contemporary demonisation of Islam and the Arabs (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001: 141).

Derrida provides the philosophical underpinning of this decentring of hegemonic discourse through his deconstruction of logocentrism. In a discourse where there is no centre of power and control but only different centres which can be dislodged, then there is an opportunity for a more open and democratic form of discourse. In the popular press, the writing of Robert Fisk embodies this discourse. He refuses to take for granted the given or normative explanations of the reasons for events in the Middle East, and instead engages in a sustained and ongoing deconstructive critique of structures of power – his work speaks the truth to power, and in the next chapter, we will see how he does this in his writing on the form and nature of identity. The chapter will examine how Fisk, in the sphere of journalism, echoes and parallels the critical and political work of these two writers.

Chapter Two: Identity – Who does it really Serve?

Fisk once said that the Middle East: 'is awash with kings and dictators who are called – or like to imagine themselves – Great Men' (Fisk, 2009: 399). These 'great men' are kings and dictators who were appointed to power with the full support of the Western powers. Once installed, the origins of such dynasties are often omitted; instead, what we hear are 'Media clichés, filtered through the ideological preconceptions of policy makers' (Spencer, 2006: 55). The connection between these Middle-Eastern rulers and the western powers, which are responsible for their power and position, is something required if the truth is to be spoken to power, and this is especially true of the media, which often provides the general information which becomes our accepted knowledge-base about different world issues. To see Arab rulers as intimately connected to western powers suits neither group, but it is necessary 'to monitor the centres of power' (Fisk, 2006: xxiii), in both the Middle East and in the neo-colonial powers of the western world.

This is something with which Derrida would agree, since the 'centre' (that which is dominant in a hierarchical system), is partly responsible for marginalizing others, because in a binary opposition of centre and margin, it is important to recognise that 'we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-á-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy' (Derrida, 1981: 41). We see a similar point in Said's 'secular criticism' essay, where he argued that: 'criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny' (Said, 1983: 29). Thus, in contemporary globalised culture, where knowledge has become commercialized, a theoretical reading is a political one, which in turn will serve to expand our knowledge and understanding of West and East; of 'us' and 'them'. This chapter will scrutinize one of the most fundamental ideas in Western thought, the concept of identity.

Said once had to remind the famous conductor Daniel Barenboim about the importance of works of literature and criticism. He claimed they should be:

> ... about a voyage to the 'other', and not concentrating on one self, which is very much a minority view today. There is more of a concentration today on the affirmation of identity, on the need for roots, on the value of one's culture and one's sense of belonging. It's become quite rare to project one's self outward, to have a broader perspective' (Said and Barenboim, 2004: 11).

Thus, through a reading of some of Fisk's deconstructive writings about the East, we will attempt to connect to the 'other', to spin our thoughts outwards so we see the other, not as they are presented to us, but rather for who they are in themselves. Fisk began the article, entitled 'Hatred on a Map', with the following collective of questions:

> Why are we trying to divide up the peoples of the Middle East? Why are we trying to chop them up, make them different, remind them – constantly, insidiously, viciously – of their divisions, their suspicions, their capacity for mutual hatred? Is this just our casual racism? Or is there something darker in our Western souls? (Fisk, 2009: 351).

The above series of questions are worldly, and must be analysed with careful consideration. We should remind ourselves of what Said has stated, namely that 'the history of thought, to say nothing of political movements, is extravagantly illustrative of how the dictum "solidarity before criticism" means the end of criticism' (Said, 1983: 28). However, the use of 'we' and 'them' here is philosophically problematic; one cannot identify oneself without reference to the existence of others. Identity can only exist as long as there is acknowledgement, however

qualified, of others; hence Derrida has warned us that 'it is dangerous to let a group – a family, a community, or a state – settle back down into self–identity' (Caputo, 1997: 113).

Thus 'identity' is very much dependent on the idea of difference: 'the only thing that could be self-identical is a thing itself, something immobilized that lacks freedom, movement, life, history' (Caputo, 1997: 115). This view that identity (self) is dependent on the difference (other), allows us to see that, by reversing the hierarchical thought, we will begin to find the answer to Fisk's questions, such as: 'why are we trying to divide up the peoples of the Middle East?' Initially, this reminds us of Said's examination of how the 'West' creates the 'other' to suit its own agenda 'which allows the imperialist self to establish itself' (Ben, 2010: 55). This also echoes Frantz Fanon's argument that 'Europe is literally the creation of the Third World' (Fanon, 1968: 102). Isolating the 'other' can enhance the structural illusion that the self's refined, civilized mission is on the right path, and that because of this civilising mission, the self is morally superior to the 'other'. Simultaneously, this encourages the idea of *inward* thinking, which is the opposite of Derrida's and Said's aspiration to be open to the other. Said believes the role of criticism is to question this idea of inward thinking, as:

> A knowledge of history, a recognition of the importance of social
> circumstance, an analytical capacity for making distinctions: these trouble
> the quasi-religious authority of being comfortably at home among one's
> people, supported by known powers and acceptable values, protected
> against the outside world (Said, 1983: 15-16).

Said's 'criticism' thus advocated the idea of thinking outside the imaginative limits, 'freed from the restrictions of intellectual specialisation' (Ashcroft, 2001: 15).

This concept of thinking outside the imaginative limits is complemented by Derrida, as he would critique a tendency to think and express our thoughts in terms of opposites, as

opposed to binary oppositions, as this way of thinking would exclude the 'other'. For that reason he warned us not to settle back down into self–identity, as doing so will only prove our ignorance of humanity:

> What alerts and alarms Derrida about the form of association described by
>
> the word 'community'…is that, while the word sounds like something warm
>
> and comforting, the very notion is built around a defence that a 'we' throws
>
> up against the 'other' (Caputo, 1997: 113).

However it is worth noting at this point, that the 'other' is not fixed in time and place. A hegemonic ideology will restructure the 'other' with another, whenever necessary, just to reinforce its propaganda. To illustrate this, one can look at the context of the 'War on terror' in Iraq, when shocking pictures and videotapes of abuse inflicted upon prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq were circulating on the internet. Here, the soldiers themselves became the 'others', as they were rapidly disowned by their superiors and by American media commentators, thus enacting the earlier point that the logocentric structure can decentre itself to impose its 'reality' upon us, by rejecting part of itself. Ideology allows aspects of history to be elided in order that the story of self remains both morally and ethically as pure as it can be, in the face of its dealings with the other. By thinking in opposites, it follows that the self cannot be at fault so any actions that are damaging are immediately transferred to a part of the self that can be jettisoned, in other words, that can become part of the other. Noam Chomsky highlighted this in one of his interviews when he spoke of the Abu Ghraib incident:

> Just like My Lai, Abu Ghraib is not being attributed to the people who are
>
> responsible, it's the other who is being blamed, and the other happens to be
>
> in U.S. uniform in this case and in My Lai, but it doesn't matter. He is still

an 'other,' so we can attack him. The reason we can't tell the truth is that

we are the ones who are responsible, not the other (Iskandar, 2010: 380-81).

There are many examples of this. A similar occurrence took place in the Kandahar Massacre, where Sergeant Robert Bales shot seventeen Afghan civilians dead. He too became an 'other', and as someone who had succumbed to the prevailing conditions and context, who had, to use the colloquial term, gone native. Hence, the televised images of the crimes by Bales, and of the soldiers who abused Abu Ghraib prisoners, have left the centre with no choice but to disown them and categorize them as other. Here we once again arrive at the concept of identity, which is continually affirmed to us through ideology. As Said has discussed in his book *Covering Islam*, the Middle East is labelled with the word 'Islam'. He argues: 'these enormous generalizations have behind them a whole history, enabling and disabling at the same time. Ideological and shot through with powerful emotion, the labels have survived many experiences and have been capable of adapting to new events, information, and realities' (Said, 1981: 9).

The oppositional epistemological structure of viewing the 'self' as good, while viewing the 'other' as evil, is at the heart of Western logocentrism, which in turn is responsible for guiding 'philosophy toward an order of meaning–thought, truth, reason, logic' (Culler, 1983: 92). 'Truth, reason, logic' are structures of meaning that the Western world has embraced, and has allowed to control the marginal, who are not only 'voiceless' but are also structurally located in a weaker hierarchical position. As for Europe, Derrida had argued that: 'all metaphysicians have proceeded thus, from Plato to Rousseau, from Descartes to Husserl: good before evil, the positive before the negative, the pure before the complex, [and] the essential before the accidental' (Derrida, 1988: 93). This idea of privileging one term above the other, is feeding into the notion of the transcendental signifier, and affirms the presence of logocentrism as has been seen above, which results: 'in a cultural understanding of the

importance of certain terms and according those terms a privileged value' (McQuillan, 2000: 11). Thus, western man becomes 'pure, positive and perfect', while the oriental man is seen, as Said stated, as an 'oversexed degenerate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low' (Said 2003a: 287). Consequently logocentrism, with its highly defined notion of centrality and the margins, is contributing to the building of language barriers, between the 'us' and 'them'; between self and other.

One way of accomplishing this is to deny the complex or nuanced presentation of the other, as outlined by Spencer: 'they are shielded from a complex and heterogeneous reality by a thick wall of imprecise language. The real human suffering behind that wall is either unseen and unheeded or else is legitimized by the use of abstract terms to plan and prescribe outcomes, destinies, and fates' (Spencer, 2010: 398). Ideological narratives like this, which reify self and other in fixed, oppositional positions, vary 'from the nice people who run Fox News' (Iskandar, 2010: 381), to the repressive regimes of the Middle East, against whom their people are rebelling, in seeking freedom and justice, in what has become better known as 'Arab Spring'. Returning to Fisk, he continues:

> Passing a book stall in New York this week, I spotted the iniquitous *Time* magazine, and there on the front–and this might truly have been a 1930s Nazi cover–were two cowled men, one in black, the other largely hidden by a chequered scarf. 'Sunnis vs Shi'ites,' the headline read. Why they hate each other.' This, naturally, was a 'take–out' on Iraq's civil war – a civil war, by the way, that America's spokesmen in Baghdad were talking about in August 2003 when not a single Iraqi in his worst nightmares dreamt of what has now come to pass …. Buy *Time* magazine, dear reader, turn to page 30, and what will you find?' How to Tell Sunnis and Shi'ites Apart'. Helpful, uh? And after this are columns of useful, divisive information.

'Names', for example. 'Some names carry sectarian markers... Abu baker,

Omar and Uthman men with these names are almost certainly Sunni. Those

called Abdel-Hussein and Abdel-Zahra' "are most likely Shi'ite" Then there

are columns headed "prayer", "Mosques", "Homes", "Accents" and

"Dialects", even – heaven spare us – "cars"' (Fisk, 2009: 353).

In any other cultural context, remarks such as these would be seen as racist; however they are not seen as such simply because of their source. These prejudiced remarks, which were published by one of America's best-selling magazines, are feeding into the unconscious minds of its readers. This once again brings us back to Said and his book *Orientalism*, which was not about the 'Orient' and its identity and culture, but was in fact about the sense of the Orient as an identity which the 'West' has created; in the words of Said, it is 'a kind of Western projection' (Said 2003a: 95). Consequently, through this Foucauldian discourse of the power/knowledge relationship: 'such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe' (Said 2003a: 94). The *Time* magazine article 'informed' the public that 'we' gave the Iraqis a chance to rule themselves and now they have turned against each other – hence the title on the cover of *Time* magazine stated: '*Sunnis vs Shi'ites*', and by extension against us, the benevolent power which tried to help them without any issues of self-interest. As a result, the public will have unconsciously perceived their own democratic system as a success in comparison, again enforcing the concept that 'self' is far superior to any 'other', in both moral and political terms, as well as reinforcing the unconscious notion that 'self' is defined by a contrastive and often inferior 'other'. Here we see an ideology at work, using different means to present its people with a 'lie' dressed as truth.

Différance will allow us to see another usage of language which is free from a rigid structure which values one word above the other, because after all it, 'boils down to this: in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies

positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*' (Derrida, 1982: 10-11). Thus, he suggests that a word such as 'good' (presence), is actually equal to the word 'evil' (absence), and neither is dominant. Moreover, both are simultaneously related, because of past events, as they are now the 'results of prior speech acts' (Culler, 1983: 95). Hence, regardless of how far we go back in time, we will never reach the point where language began. Instead we will see that a word's meaning is always determined by previous events. Here the idea of 'trace' comes into play; where neither 'good' nor 'evil' is ever dominant, simply because each is dependent on the existence of the other; as Derrida explained: 'there are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces' (Derrida, 1981: 26). Further to this, Derrida has assured us that neither the term '*différance*' nor the term 'trace' could ever possibly be the centre in itself (Derrida, 1981: 40). Thus far, one can see that this has provided us with a new way in which to view language and abstract thinking, a way in which an individual need no longer unquestioningly conform to an ideology, where one no longer thinks of 'identity' as being separate from 'difference' as they are related and are equally dependent on each other. As Caputo stated, Derrida 'wants such identity to be internally differentiated, so that one is *not* identical with oneself, but rather marked by a 'difference with itself'; this would mean that the very idea of univocal identity, of a notion of '"we" is destabilized' (Caputo, 1997: 114-15).

Therefore, we can see that Derrida's work is about letting the 'other' become part of the 'self', and likewise the 'self 'become part of the 'other', to a point where we can no longer think of self-identity without the inclusion of the 'other'. This is significant especially in the context of the European/Oriental metonymy of the self/other dialectic that is at the core of this thesis, because Said has made the very same point about one of the foundational tenets of western European culture. Speaking in one of his last lectures about Freud's seminal work *Moses and Monotheism*, Said stressed the sense of a self which was permeated by alterity that

so fascinated Freud as he pondered one of western thinking's most seminal figures and law-givers. He speaks of how Freud, himself a Jew, offered 'deliberately provocative reminders that Judaism's founder was a non-Jew, and that Judaism begins in the realm of Egyptian, non-Jewish monotheism', and goes on to tease out 'Freud's carefully maintained opening out of Jewish identity towards its non-Jewish background' (Said, 2003b: 44). This is precisely the kind of open and fluid form of identity that Derrida has spoken of, and clearly, both he and Said are in favour of a hybrid form of identity that avoids the self/other binary that both writers, and also Fisk, have seen as so potentially destructive in the political world. Fixed, logocentric cores of identity with no room for the other, invariably become embroiled in opposition, a point made by Fisk in terms of the geography of the Middle East. Fisk writes:

> Take the maps, am I the only one sickened by our journalistic propensity to
> publish sectarian maps of the Middle East? You know what I mean. We are
> now all familiar with the colour-coded map of Iraq. Shias at the bottom (of
> course), Sunnis in their middle 'triangle' and the Kurds in the north. Or the
> map of Lebanon, where I live. Shias at the bottom (of course), Druze further
> north, Sunnis in Sidon and on the coastal strip south of Beirut, Shias in the
> southern suburbs of the capital, Sunnis and Christians in the city, Christian
> Maronites further north, Sunnis in Tripoli, more Shias to the east. How we
> love these maps. Hatred made easy. (Fisk, 2009: 251)

The constant highlighting of invisible boundaries is aimed at pushing the East and West apart, and simultaneously, at affirming the status quo of logocentric thinking, that only speaks in the language of the same. As if page thirty of *Time* magazine, with the essay on 'How to Tell Sunnis and Shi'ites Apart', was not enough, we now need to show where they live, and this needs to be fixed in our minds. These people live in other places, with other religious beliefs

and they are very different from us. This echoes what Said told us in *Orientalism*: 'the construction of identity *is* finally a construction – involves establishing opposites and 'other' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and *re-interpretation* [*my emphasis*] of their differences from "us"' (Said, 2002: 332). This one-sided relationship, which excludes and oppresses the 'other's being a different form of identity, comes down, as Derrida stated, 'to affirming "democracy"' (Caputo, 1997: 122), so that 'self' (the Western hegemony) can justify their leadership at the cost of the 'other', and yet still call the process democracy. Imagine if someone drew a map of London or Birmingham showing where the 'other' lives. What would happen? Clearly, no one would publish it. However 'we' allow our journalists to 'publish sectarian maps of the Middle East' in the name of democracy. If anything this tells us that hegemony will go a great deal of effort to 'have the effect of painting the non-western world as inferior, dependent, requiring and even positively beseeching the intervention and tutelage of more advanced power' (Spencer, 2010: 396-397). To base our knowledge of the 'other' on abstract ideas is the opposite of what both of these theorists want us to do, as they feel, as does Fisk, that our knowledge of the 'other' must be based on reason and on some form of openness to the other. For Said, 'criticism must intend knowledge and, what is more, it must attempt to deal with, identify, and produce knowledge as having something to do with will and with reason' (Said, 1983: 202).

'Will and reason' are crucial because, to have any chance of being acquainted with other cultures, interpretations must be based on evidence and on thinking and not just on an existing system of beliefs. Such an intellectual hermeneutic process will gesture towards the reality that the 'us' and the 'other' are closely imbricated 'the identity of a culture is a way of being different from itself' (Caputo, 1997: 13). What Derrida is trying to tell us is that identity is an illusion, it is a creation of groups as a way of maintaining the collectivity of the group; however, these thinkers feel that if we must live with it, then we ought to see ourselves as

different from what we are deemed to be by logocentric logic. Only in this way can new structures be created to replace oppositional and Manichean notions of self and other, which have caused so much conflict. So much so that even, when:

> you pay attention to the other and you understand that fighting for your own
>
> identity is not exclusive of another identity, is open to another identity. And
>
> this prevents totalitarianism, nationalism, egocentrism, and so on … [hence]
>
> in the case of culture, person, nation, language, identity is a self-
>
> differentiating identity, an identity different form itself, having an opening
>
> or gap within itself (Caputo, 1997: 13-14).

This brings us to the core of deconstruction, which demonstrates how cultural hegemony can tend to avoid these linguistic and philosophical complications in order to achieve political dominance. This creates an illusion, as the world we are presented with is not the 'same as the way the world actually is' (McQuillan, 2000: 11), and these are the issues which Fisk continually points up in his writing on the Middle East.

To combat the pull of the ideological centre, Derrida suggests that: 'one would have to be able to *invent oneself* without a model and without an assured addressee' (Derrida, 1996: 55). Otherwise, notions of the centre will become dominant in the structural system that forever entices us to its own advantage, and this centre, as Derrida tells us, can be surrogated by 'essence, subject consciousness, God, man, and so forth' (Derrida, 1978: 280). However, if one is captured by such a 'centre', this can 'limit what we might call the *play* of the structure' (Derrida, 1978: 278), which means that the 'other' on the margins will suffer. This is contrary to a deconstructive view, which advocates 'respect for the other, a respectful, responsible affirmation of the other' (Caputo, 1997: 44). This is precisely the perspective enunciated by Fisk in an article entitled 'God and the Devil', which begins with the following paragraph:

That fine French historian of the 1914-18 world conflict, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, suggested not long ago that the West was the inheritor of a type of warfare of very great violence. 'Then, after 1945,' he wrote, 'the West externalised it, in Korea, in Algeria, in Vietnam, in Iraq... we stopped thinking about the experience of war and we do not understand its return [to us] in different forms like that of terrorism We do not want to admit that there is now occurring a different type of confrontation' He might have added that politicians – even Prime Minsters – would deliberately refuse to acknowledge this. We are fighting evil. Nothing to do with the occupation of Palestinian land, the occupation of Afghanistan, the occupation of Iraq, the torture of Abu Ghraib and Bagram and Guantanamo. Oh no, indeed 'An evil ideology', a nebulous, unspecified, dark force. That's the problem (Fisk, 2009:329).

According to Fisk, the French historian claimed that after 1945, ideas of war had moved away from selfhood and the consequences for selfhood, and instead, been transferred to the locus of the other. For Fisk, this externalisation of war allowed for a clearer binary opposition, as the people against whom 'we' were fighting were somehow less valuable than we were. It is interesting to note that World Wars One and Two, were wars fought mainly by Christians against Christians, and more to the point, took place largely in Europe. Thus, people saw and understood its grim consequences. However fighting the 'other' becomes different, as it is fought far away from home, and can be seen as a clash of cultures, and as a case of 'good versus evil'. It is 'used to justify expansion and invasion abroad and, at home, permit the vilification of minorities and the execution of a long-planned crackdown on civil liberties' (Spencer, 2006: 58). As Fisk explains, the war is not against people, who are similar in type to ourselves, but rather against an 'evil ideology', which is other in terms of race, outlook and religion. The fight

is not against an army but against evil, and this is proleptic of the war on terror that followed the attacks of 9/11.

As Spencer noted: 'the mainstream media, dominated by a handful of deferential multinationals, are in thrall to their corporate sponsors and to politicians with the power to make laws to swell their profit' (Spencer, 2006: 58-59). Filtering how 'we' see the 'other' is a way of manipulating the masses, and of moulding opinions and attitudes towards what is normal and acceptable. It is no wonder that 'we do not understand the war's return'. One only sees what an ideology had decided one should see:

> They marginalise progressive voices, present events without elucidating their context, describe matters in glib slogans and rely for 'analysis' on phoney 'experts', insiders and retired top brass whose role is not to unravel the causes or probable consequences of events but to make them fit a preconceived view of the world based on the bogus myth of America's rectitude (Spencer, 2006: 59).

Therefore, these ideological centres are created to deceive; to make one believe what they say is true, while in fact the whole idea of a centre is an illusion. To critique this view of a stable centre and a stable margin, it is necessary to suggest 'that there was no centre, that the centre could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the centre had no natural site'. Having raised this question, it was then necessary to go further and argue that it was not a 'fixed locus but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play' (Derrida, 1978: 280). To demonstrate what Derrida is saying, the use of the word 'evil' is an interesting example. It was used first in this political context to describe the Soviet Union, which was labelled as an 'evil empire' by the American President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989). The word 'evil' is now used in reference to so called Muslim fundamentalists, who were

famously declared by George W Bush (2001-2009) to be the 'axis of evil', as Fisk cynically commented; 'Oh no, indeed "An evil ideology"' (Fisk, 2009: 329). A similar point can be made with respect to House of Saud, in Saudi Arabia. They use religion, not only to disallow women from travelling on their own (either inside or outside of Saudi Arabia), but also to prevent women from driving automobiles. However, recently they have made an exception, so that some female athletes could represent them in the London Olympics. The point is, that these centres being manmade, can be changed, altered and even reversed in terms of what they allow and disallow. The aim is to define, demarcate and control our space, and to instil in us the feeling that such restrictions and rules are normal and natural: that the centre holds, in other words. In reality, as Derrida has pointed out, 'the centre had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function' (Derrida, 1978: 280), and this function can serve in texts, cultural systems, ideologies, symbols, or conventions. From this perspective, there is no 'pure' knowledge of reality. In fact, we live in a world of language and discourse, all of which structures our sense of being and meaning.

Moreover, the idea that structures are initiated by 'centres' tricks people into believing what they are told through language, to a point where: 'the notion of a structure lacking any centre represents the unthinkable itself' (Derrida, 1978: 279). However, the centre that gives birth to structure escapes the rules and play of that structure; for example one could ask where the word 'God' stands with respect to the discourse of religion? Simply outside of it, as Derrida said: 'since the centre does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its centre elsewhere' (Derrida, 1978: 279). The centre is merely to 'limit what we might call the *play* of the structure' (Derrida, 1978: 27). Fisk's writing understands this new sense of centrality as a non-locus, and this is clear from a story he tells of a Muslim student in England:

> I was very struck some years ago when the son of a Lebanese friend of mine
>
> went off to study for three years at a university in the south of England.

When I passed through London from Beirut, I would sometimes bring audio tapes or letters from his parents – these were the glorious days before the internet – and the student would usually meet me in a pub in Bloomsbury. He would invariably turn up with a girl and would drink several beers before setting off to her flat for the night. Then in the last term at college, he called home and asked his mother to find him a bride. The days of fun and games were over. He wanted Mummy to find him a virgin to marry.

I thought about this a lot at the time. He was – and is – a most respectful, honourable man who has passed up much wealthier job[s] opportunities abroad to teach college kids in Beirut. But had he been a weaker man, I can imagine he might have quite a few problems with his life. What was he doing in Britain? Why was he enjoying himself like 'us', only to turn his back on that enjoyment for a more conservative life? (Fisk, 2009: 330).

This man is a clear example of how an ideology can affect an individual. The young man left the Islamic structure, and while in England had a girlfriend, drank beer and lived, as Fisk said, as 'one of us'. What was wrong for him in his home country became right while he was away forging a new life, different from the one that had been his norm in Lebanon. This man did nothing wrong, he merely fulfilled his needs, just as many people would, regardless of whether they are one of the 'others' or one of 'us'. However, he knew this would not be acceptable under the Islamic ideology and structure of his home, and so when returning home, he reverted to his former way of life, as Fisk puts it; 'the days of fun and games were over'. One can argue that, this man's actions while he was in England gives us a different view point, a reason to question this ideology of 'self' and 'other'. Fisk notes that had he been a weaker man, the change of structures might have caused him some problems, but in fact, he was quite happy to adapt to the different rules of different situations – one could see him as a classic example of

the other, which is always a part of any identity of the self. However, when it came to making a permanent lifestyle decision, it was to the old ideology that he turned. Women as sexual partners ultimately could not be the women whom he would marry – such a woman had to be a virgin.

This man is no different to another Lebanese Muslim, named Ziad Jarrah, as Fisk continues writing:

> He lived in Germany with a Turkish girlfriend – not just dating but living
> with her – and then on 11 September 2001 he called up the girl to say 'I love
> you'. What's wrong, the young women asked? 'I love you,' he said simply
> again and hung up the phone. And then he went off to board an airliner and
> slash the throats of its passengers and fly it into the ground in Pennsylvania
> (Fisk, 2009: 331).

This story is also a luminous example of how ideology can influence an individual's plans, in this case to kill the 'other' who happened to be living in America. What did Jarrah mean by saying 'I love you'? Whom did he love? Was it his Turkish girlfriend or God, who he believed he was serving by ending the lives of innocent civilians, and taking his own life in the process? To this day, Jarrah's father still denies his son's involvement: 'he is even waiting for him to come home' (Fisk, 2009: 331). However, if such centres, are allowed to infest our societies and dividing 'self' and 'other', in such an exclusionary binary form, then such atrocities will continue to happen. When such a hierarchical structure is allowed to divide humanity, whether using a religion, a flag or an institution, this is what will happen. It is happening now in Iraq, Syria, China and numerous other countries. Posing these questions about the permeable and plural nature of identity could well be seen as the role of literary and cultural theory. It is a discipline whose aim is to critically interrogate relationships between self and other and

simultaneously, or in Fisk's words, to 'monitor the centres of power' that forever guide society to their advantage.

There are strong similarities between the Lebanese student, who wanted 'Mummy to find him a virgin', and Ziad Jarrah, who flew an airplane into the ground in Pennsylvania. Both were answering the call of their structural system's centre, a centre which they saw as immoveable and given, and beyond question. Similarly, there are parallels between Lynndie England, Charles Graner, Ivan Frederick and the others who committed the horrific torture at Abu Ghraib prison, and Robert Bales who committed the Kandahar Massacre. They too were answering the call of their structural system's centre. When interviewed, Noam Chomsky commented on the American soldiers:

> What was in the minds of these people? They were taking revenge on the
> "ragheads" who bombed the World Trade Centre. Where did they get this
> idea? From the nice people who run Fox News. That's the story, but that
> part is being cut out (Iskandar, 2010: 381).

This thesis suggests that this part is 'cut out', so that the centre of power, in this case the United States, can continue with its overall strategic policies, while the 'self', the majority of the people, continue living in an illusion at the expense of the 'other'. Fisk is attempting to reconnect these 'cut out' portions by means of a form of writing which is acutely aware of the ideological nature of hegemonic narratives in the political world. It is a form of deconstructive writing in that, like Derrida, he would see a necessity to:

> avoid both the overtly self-enclosing, isolationist, protectionist nationalism
> and also the crypto-nationalism of thinking that 'we' are the exemplary case,
> the central site of worldwide web, the international paradigm, charged with

setting the course that the rest must follow, that we – French or Germans,

Americans or Europeans, scientists or philosophers, etc. – *are* the

'universal' or 'reason' set down on earth in order to set the course, to lead

the way, to provide the heading (Caputo, 1997: 122).

Rather, we should be doing the opposite, projecting ourselves outward in order to have a better understanding of 'others', and accepting others for who they are, in spite of the barriers that are sketched out for 'us' by the centralized authority that allowed Bales, England and Jarrah to believe their actions were justified. Thus, in looking at the two examples of young Islamic men being pulled back to their identitarian centres, Fisk is spelling out the problems of such fixed and controlling notions of identity. Structures of identity which insist that women are either people with whom one can have pleasure, or suitable marriage partners but never both, and ones which see self as implacably opposed to the other so as to justify an attempt to crash a plane into a building, are, as Fisk has pointed out, highly dangerous. They will, inevitably, give rise to war and to discrimination against women, something that is happening with ISIL even as this thesis is being concluded, as the images show us women being enslaved and killed, and all those who are not part of the self of the caliphate being seen as expendable. Fisk, in his journalism, is paralleling the critiques of Said and Derrida, in questioning the valence of such unexamined centres of identity. One of the most important elements in the constructions of such centres, and indeed, in the maintenance of their hegemonic control, is language. Language is central in establishing ideological control and in creating narratives that people can believe and in which they trust. In the next chapter, the restricting and controlling aspects of language will be discussed, as will the attempts by Said, Derrida and Fisk to deconstruct such notions of language.

Chapter Three: Power, Language and its Consequences

'Listen how I speak in my language, me, and you can speak to me in your language; we must hear each other, we must get along [*nous devons nous entendre*]' (Derrida, 1992a: 61). With this exhortation, Derrida is not only calling upon the recognition of the 'other', but is also offering a searching critique of the logocentrism of Western thought and the concept of the centre that it supports. He is also critiquing how such a logocentric linguistic structure conveys very fixed notions of self and other which become ideologically reified into centres of truth. Language is effectively what allows the mind to build images of others that are created by an ideology; hence, it is responsible for the way we think. The vast majority of contemporary information is written in the English language, and carries with it, as Derrida had to remind his interviewer in Oxford, 'not English hegemony, as you know, but mainly American hegemony' (Montefiore, 2001: 183). Surely then, it is appropriate to examine the relationship between words and authority, and how, when unexamined, this relationship can form what Fisk has referred to as the 'language of power'. In this, he is echoing what Foucault said before him, namely that power produces 'things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, [and] produces discourse' (Foucault, 1980:119), which can then be used to amplify the distance in our world between the 'self' and the 'other'. This in turn plays a critical role in the ideology of a self with is de facto in opposition to, and separate from, the other. After all, this language of power, not only silences the voice of the other: it also speaks on behalf of the other. Such a discourse: 'has fabricated an arid landscape ready for American power to construct there an *ersatz* model of free market "democracy", without even a trace of doubt that such projects don't exist outside of Swift's Academy of Lagado' (Said 2003a: xiv).

Thus we only *hear* the discourse of the dominant self, celebrating its 'democracy' at the cost of the silent other, which reminds us of what we discussed previously, that: 'identity is in fact constituted by the other' (Baas in Derrida 1992: xivi) [*original emphasis*]. On reading about the other, it is necessary to be aware of these modalities of construction through language and ideology. As Said has noted: 'to treat the text as merely a structure of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic', is to 'divorce the text from the relations of power within which it is produced' (Ashcroft, 2001: 18), and by this, he means that language is never only language – it is intimately connected with the representation and more accurately, the construction, of reality. By using terms in a normative manner, we gradually become enculturated into taking language at face value and this enables the use of words as instruments of ideological control, which can 'program us without our being aware of them' (Tyson, 1999, 249).

Consequently, through this power-language nexus, the relationship between West and East appears as a discourse of binary oppositions. One of these oppositions sees the self as a signifier of pacifism and civilisation, with the other signifying their opposites, namely terrorism and barbarism, and this is a dynamic which we will examine in this section through some of Fisk's texts. Again, we should remind ourselves that the world in which we live is presented through language; thus, it is neither natural nor is it given, something that is at the core of Derrida's credo: '[t]here is nothing outside of the text' (Derrida, 1976: 158). All three writers – Derrida, Said and Fisk – share this view, realising that 'language is our "ground of being,"' or the foundation from which our experience and knowledge of the world are generated' (Tyson, 1999, 248). Consequently, language is the key to our understanding of our selves and the world. For that reason, Said has argued that being 'mesmerized by the text, and convinced that a text is only a text, without realizing how saying that is not only naive, it is worldly-blind' (Said, 1976: 41). Nevertheless, the 'self' has unquestionably accepted the 'other', through the boundaries and barriers that are set up by language, which indisputably leads to the

marginalisation of this other. Hence, this thesis uses both Said's and Derrida's ideas, to 'dismantle the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work... not in order to reject or discard them, but to reinscribe them in another way' (Derrida, 1976: ixxv). This reading will allow us to be more aware of the ideologies that work all around us, as affirmed by McQuillan, when he notes that 'when we read we must be open to the otherness in and of the text' (McQuillan, 2000: 5) which is built into the language we use each and every day. Fisk's journalistic essays do this on an ongoing basis.

Fisk, in his article: 'Fighting Talk: The New Propaganda', gives his account of how the word 'terror' is used in the western world, and how prevalent it has become in recent years in relation to the Middle East. As he stated:

> We are in love with the word, seduced by it, fixated by it, attacked by it,
> assaulted by it, raped by it, committed to it. It is love and sadism and death
> in one double syllable, the prime time-theme song, the opening of every
> television symphony, the headline of every page, a punctuation mark in our
> journalism, a semicolon, a comma, our most powerful full stop. "Terror,
> terror, terror, terror". Each repetition justifies its predecessor (*UK
> Independent*: June 2010).

The word 'terror' is carefully selected in order to bring fear to the self, a fear that has yet *to come,* and hence it serves the purpose for which it was chosen by President George Bush and his administration (2001-2009), namely as a tool to control information to their own advantage in pursuing their strategic plans. The word 'Terror' became fashionable following the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, better known as *9/11*, which, as Derrida has commented: 'gave us the impression of being a *major event*' (Borradori, 2003: 88) [*original emphasis*]. This was indeed a major event that won public support for the 'war against terror',

which emphasizes Derrida's point that, the 'organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *play* of the structure' (Derrida, 2001: 352) [*original emphasis*]. This *limitation* of knowledge, serves as a means to empower the system that seizes every opportunity to influence the minds of the self against others. As Fisk suggests, the word dehumanises the enemy and by extension, as terror is a bad thing, all actions are justified in fighting it. To fight terror is not to envisage or take account of the men, women and children who may die in wars and battles. Fisk points to how this word masks the political and economic choices that motivate wars and invasions as ethical and moral acts. His deconstructive readings are very alert to this.

The hegemonic power thus uses various techniques to associate the other with 'terror'. One method, which Fisk pointed out, is to saturate the media, where we have seen 'terror' become 'the opening of every television symphony, the headline of every page' (*UK Independent*: June 2010). Consequently, the original act of terrorism was gradually transformed into a justification for invading terror itself, a suitably abstract term that once formed and set in motion could be transposed onto countries like Afghanistan and Iraq as a reason for their invasion. This is despite the fact that these countries had no hand act or part in the original attack on the USA. By placing the 'other' as undoubtedly dangerous and evil, the self has been deluded into thinking that protection from the other is necessary, as argued by George Lakoff: 'the mention of "terror" activates a fear response, and fear activates a conservative worldview, in which there is a powerful leader, willing to use his strength, who offers protection and security' (Lakoff, 2008: 126). Terror has no location and thus cannot be defeated, and as put by Fisk above: '[e]ach repetition justifies its predecessor' (*UK Independent*, June 2003). One can see that terror, in this context has also signified the idea of a long war, which in turn has caused trauma to become an adjunct to it, as in the words of Derrida:

> There is traumatism with no possible work of mourning when the evil comes
>
> from the possibility to come of the worst, from the repetition to come –
>
> though worse. Traumatism is produced by the *future*, by the *to come*, by the
>
> threat of the worst to *come*, rather than by an aggression that is 'over and
>
> done with (Borradori, 2003: 97).

Thus, under a hegemonic policy, this trauma sets the scene for introducing the 'war on terror' by allowing the self to destroy the other on a large scale wherever it sees fit (examples can be seen in Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan). Terror, by definition, is not transient but always already lurking in the future, and so the justification of repressive and punitive measures is very much that of protecting the future. George Bush once declared that: '[e]very nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists' (*Washington Post*, September 2001). In this case, the enemy is unidentifiable, as Derrida has noted:

> Bush speaks of "war," but he is in fact incapable of identifying the enemy
>
> against whom he declares that he has declared war Bush speaks of "war,"
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> but he is in fact incapable of identifying the enemy against whom he
>
> declares that he has declared war (Borradori, 2003: 101).

This is a classic example of binary opposition, with the West being a centre here, setting itself up in order to create a hierarchical structure, and this is done through whole set of language that privileges the Western world and its perceived democracy, while unquestioningly denouncing the other.

Thus far, one can see that language is unstable and can easily limit our knowledge when tied to the centre. Therefore, logocentrism is not only encouraging fear, but is also continuously dehumanizing the other through language:

> Today, bookstores in the US are filled with shabby screeds bearing
> screaming headlines about Islam and terror, Islam exposed, the Arab threat
> and the Muslim menace, all of them written by political polemicists
> pretending to knowledge imparted to them and others by experts who have
> supposedly penetrated to the heart of these strange Oriental peoples over
> there who have been such a terrible thorn in "our" flesh (Said 2003a: xvi).

Here is the political payload of the binary opposition of fixed identities; of a fixed unchanging self, and a fixed unchanging other with whom the self can have nothing in common except antipathy and fear. This is an example of ideology at work, by continuously portraying the other as violent and ready to kill, and thus generating 'a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world' (Said 2003a: 287). The language used makes this fear appear well-founded and hence, as pointed out by Fisk, terror has become:

> a sonata, a symphony, an orchestra tuned to every television and radio
> station and news agency report, the soap-opera of the Devil, served up on
> prime-time or distilled in wearyingly dull and mendacious form by the right-
> wing "commentators" of the American east coast or the Jerusalem Post or
> the intellectuals of Europe (Fisk, 2006: 464).

The imagery used by Fisk here is interesting – the sense that the discourse on terror has become like music means that it works on our aesthetic as oppose to our rational or ethical faculties. It has become the text of a soap-opera, meaning that it is familiar, predictable, and something that we now take for granted, without needing to subject it to too much analysis, in the same manner as we watch *EastEnders* or *Coronation Street*. In short, it is ideology at work. It is fear, driven by language, which creates a reality for the general public, while in fact this is no more than,

in the words of Derrida: 'a horrible linguistic hegemony [that] is taking over the earth' (Chérif, 2008: 80). This dominant and pervasive discourse 'tends, repressively and irrepressibly, to reduce language to the One, that is, to the hegemony of the homogeneous' (Derrida, 1998: 40). This means that allowing it to be used in an institutional setting has paved the way for language to produce the ideological hegemony in a given state, against the other: hence, the war on terror was born.

To place such an argument in context, when the IRA bombs were detonated in London and Birmingham, language was used differently, there was no call for a 'war on terror' in Belfast; instead, the decision taken was to capture those responsible and allow justice to take its course. This self's differentiation clearly emphasises the point of difference between itself and the other, in that, although these Irish men were on the periphery, their marginal position was still seen as part of the centre. They were ethnically similar to the British, and thus despite the fact that they were 'other' in a colonial and empirical perception; they retained elements of the self from a racial, ethnic and even a linguistic sense. Ireland's long-standing service of the 'centre' in its 'imperial enterprise' at various levels, distinguished them from 'others' and thus as the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* pointed out, this made it, 'difficult for colonized peoples outside Britain to accept their identity as post-colonial' (Ashcroft, 33: 1989). Here again we see an example of how the system's 'centre' uses its language and structure to its advantage, in order to influence the masses. This recalls Derrida's comment that the concept of a centred structure is 'contradictorily coherent' (Derrida, 2001: 352).

Consequently, this hegemonic ideology that is directed against the other is 'built into' (Tyson, 1999: 249) the structure of logocentric language. One can take the Oklahoma City bomb attack which took place in April 1995 as an example. The initial response and language was directed against 'other', as former director of both the CIA and FBI William Webster, had observed that the Oklahoma bombing 'had the "hallmark" of Middle Eastern terrorism'

(Linenthal, 2001: 18), and again, the prevalence of the word 'terror' is significant here. As Connie Chung informed her viewers on America's most popular TV channel: 'U.S. government sources told CBS news that it has Middle East terrorism written all over it' (Linenthal, 2001: 18). This in turn ignited a reaction against the other, and as Chomsky remembers, there were major headlines reading sentiments such as, 'let's Bomb Beirut' (*Chomsky*. 2001). This was exactly what the political hierarchy wanted, and language here was used to maintain the distance between the self and its other, and to demarcate the two very clearly without any degree of blurring or interpenetration. The locus of terror must be that of the other – this was the only way in which the bombing could be understood initially. Said recollects that day:

> I recall (with residual chagrin) that I must have received twenty-five phone calls that afternoon from different newspapers, the major networks, and several resourceful reporters, all of them acting on the assumption that since I was from and had written about the Middle East that I must know something more than most people. The entirely factitious connection between Arabs, Muslims, and terrorism was never more forcefully made evident to me (Said, 1997: xiv).

Chomsky pointed this out clearly in one of his interviews when he stated that: 'It was assumed that it had some Middle East connection and if it had some Middle East connection, the U.S. probably would have gone to war, like it's doing now' (*Chomsky*, 2001). However, the attackers happened to be white Americans, and once this had been ascertained, the language used changed; there could no longer be calls to attack Beirut or any part of the Middle East. Subsequently, when the attacker was caught, he was brought to court and sentenced, following which there was great deal of time spent trying to understand the motive for his crime, and the

psychological drive that led him to commit such an offence. Preoccupations with motive are a normal part of criminal investigation and justice, but in cases where the other, in this case the Islamic other are involved, such preoccupations are supplanted by other questions: '[t]he who and the how are of essential importance. But the 'why' is something the West usually prefer to avoid' (Fisk, 2009: 22). In other words, when it is someone who identifies as part of the identity of the self who has committed the crime, it is not a case for a war on terror, but rather for investigation as to how one of 'us' could do such a thing. Fisk points to the very different scenario involved when the perpetrator is an other, someone who is not one of us. It is as if their very alterity is reason enough for them to want to bomb a building – they are so different from us that their very existence is explanation enough for their actions. The west avoids the 'why' because the fact of the other being an other is reason enough for their actions, according to the language of oppositional ideology.

The centre is in control here, it steers words to suit its own agenda posing the question as to why so many in the Middle East are anti-American would provoke complex answers and such complexities are responses that they 'prefers to avoid' it (Fisk, 2009: 22). Fisk knows this only too well, since he was attacked for daring to ask 'why' on the night of 11 September 2001. Alan Dershowitz of Harvard School of Law was infuriated and 'roared over Irish radio [that Robert Fisk] was a dangerous man' (Fisk, 2009: 412). Dershowitz claimed that Fisk was 'pro-terrorist' was 'anti-American' and that, Dershowitz announced to the listeners 'is the same as anti-Semitism'. Fisk had asked the 'Why' question' (Fisk, 2009: 412) in terms of what might have motivated the attackers of 9/11. In addition, asking 'why' helps to dismantle the foundation of a dominant structure. By simply asking 'why', we invite the other in by asking of him or her the same questions that we might ask of the self, and thus the possibility of a limitless dialogue is feasible, which parallels Derrida's comment that 'I cannot know the other from the inside' (Caputo, 1997: 14). Thus, this 'why' also allows a system to deconstruct itself

from within, because it pushes the boundaries so that individuals can connect with others, and thus be: 'open to new work, new objects, new fields, new cultures, new languages' (Caputo, 1997:11). This new perspective, while it can never fully transcend logocentric ideology, nevertheless allows us to see connections between selfhood and alterity, and perhaps to deconstruct the logocentric discourse of oppositional identity.

Evidently, the logocentric discourse's effectiveness is not only limiting the self within a confined space, but also in constructing the 'marginal' other, and hence shaping the very identity of the self. This idea of projecting the 'other' to the self in the ways which we saw above, through a smoke screen, is the reason why Derrida said: 'I cannot know the other from the inside' (Caputo, 1997: 14). Since our perceived knowledge of others is produced from within, and controlled from within, it is governed by the 'repressive logic of presence' (Derrida, 2005: xi), that feeds the dominant structure. It is the view of the hegemonic ideology that the other should stay outside, because it is easier to control and easier to maintain within limits, and it governs the 'fear' to ask 'why' that Fisk speaks of when remembering the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The enquiries by leading media representatives that contacted him wanting: 'to know what no one could yet know. Who did it? How did they do it? No one – but no one – wanted to know *why* "they" might have wanted to do it, for this was the forbidden question' (Fisk, 2005: 1034), are interesting in themselves as it is one of us, a member of 'our' community that is being asked, as opposed to one of the others. That would have allowed questioning of the other, and thus could have led to unmasking the illusion of presence, by inviting the other in and being open to seeing the other as an entity with whom some form of dialogue could be reached. This could be the beginning that Derrida is looking for, because: '[t]he movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures' (Derrida, 1967: 24), and this once again, can only happen by critiquing the establishment, who

through the knowledge of others is produced to the self. Of course, this is precisely what Fisk was attempting in his questioning of the motives for 9/11; he was in no way attempting to justify or ameliorate the horror of these actions. What he was doing was attempting to look for motivations, which might offer some idea as to how America was perceived by some elements in the Middle East, and perhaps to prevent further attacks. He was also suggesting that, rather than see the terrorists as other, they should be seen as people whose actions, like our own, are subject to agency, cause and effect and can be dealt with through dialogue. This was highly dangerous to logocentric ideology, as it made the other seem to be held to the same standards of rationality and ethical responsibility as the self, and this way the destruction of ideology lay.

Interestingly, one notes here the similarity of Derrida and Fisk's positions; Derrida was born on the margins, and when he was asked by Chérif, if his upbringing alongside the other has influenced his works, he replied:

> All the work I have pursued, with regard to European, Western, so called Greco-European philosophical thought, the questions I have been led to ask from some distance, a certain exteriority, would certainly not have been possible if, in my personal history, I had not been a sort of child in the margins of Europe, a child of the Mediterranean, who was not simply French nor simply African, and who had passed his time travelling between one culture and the other (Chérif, 2008: 31).

Derrida's move from the marginalized 'other' to a centre, allows him to develop his philosophical work. Fisk on the other hand travelled from Britain to Beirut in Lebanon, to be a Middle East correspondent, and this has allowed him to not only to write about the 'other', but also to live amongst them, and consequently witness first-hand and experience events from the perspective of the other. He has described the actions of the west in this area as the 'arrogance

of power' (Fisk, 2005: xxii), a power that sees itself as superior to others, where selective words are used to convey its message while the others are kept voiceless.

Fisk, like Derrida, saw a reason for critiquing the establishment that steers and divides cultures to its own advantage, and hence he saw it as his duty to stand up to authority through his reports, as he claimed that: 'what journalism is really about – it's to monitor power and the centres of power' (Fisk, 2005: 558). So, if Derrida's passing from one culture to another caused the 'earthquake' that shaped his knowledge, and consequently the radical approach of his studies, then Fisk's move from the centre to the margins has had a similar effect. When looking back to his early days as a trainee journalist in Newcastle upon Tyne for the *Evening Chronicle*, he recalls:

> I had a suspicion that the language we were forced to write as trainee reporters all those years ago had somehow imprisoned us, that we had been schooled to mould the world and ourselves in clichés, that for the most part this would define our lives, destroy our anger and imagination, make us loyal to our betters, to governments, to authority. For some reason, I had become possessed of the belief that the blame for our failure as journalists to report the Middle East with any sense of moral passion or indignation lay in the way that we as journalists were trained (Fisk, 2009: 89).

His use of the image of imprisonment is significant here, as he is acutely aware of the dynamics of ideologically-driven language to imprison the mind in a binary oppositional paradigm within which self and other are set, fixed and in conflict, with self being seen as morally superior, and other seen as morally inferior. As he saw it, he was trained to conform to authority and to be obedient to its ideology, to the centre that denies its culture the opportunity to be open toward the other, through the ideological use of words such as 'freedom', 'equality', 'democracy' and

'regime change'. Neither the other nor the self can change who they are in terms of sex, colour or even their geographical location; however, allowing for a less logocentric knowledge of one another would allow a change in attitude that could lead to openness and understanding that is long overdue.

Following the 9/11 attack, the Bush administration decided to engage in an all-out 'war on terror' with both Afghanistan and Iraq. At this point, it is worth noting how both Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden were previously close to the centre of the self, in this case, America's own Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In Iraq, Saddam was chosen to be a CIA agent when plotting to overthrow Iraq's Prime Minister Qasem. Consequently, as pointed out by Sale, Saddam's:

> first contacts with U.S. officials date back to 1959, when he was part of a
>
> CIA-authorized six-man squad tasked with assassinating then Iraqi Prime
>
> Minister Gen. Abd al-Karim Qasim (*United Press International*, 2003).

He had chosen to fight what the self (in this case America) had defined as the other, and thus was supported by the self through his worst atrocities; he obeyed Western hegemonic commands and for that, he was given full control, simply because he: 'was applying his atrocities to U.S. enemies, namely the domestic Communist parties. After that, the U.S. backed him, as did Britain, in his war against Iran; he invaded Iran, and Iran was a U.S. enemy by that time' (*Chomsky*, 2001). He was 'our' man back then, instructed to destroy the other, and thus the self, both in terms of discourse and also political power, went to great lengths to advance his authority:

> President Ronald Reagan and the previous Bush administration provided aid
>
> to Saddam, along with the means to develop weapons of mass destruction,

back when he was far more dangerous than he [was in 2003], and had already committed his worst crimes, like murdering thousands of Kurds with poison gas (*Chomsky*, 2003).

Indeed as Fisk pointed that, when: 'Saddam gassed 6,800 Kurdish Iraqis at Halabja (that's well over twice the total of the World Trade Centre dead of 11 September 2001) the Pentagon set out to defend Saddam by partially blaming Iran for the atrocity' (Fisk, 2009: 52). Morally, there was no question of calling him to account for these killings of innocent men, women and children; nor was there any attempt to see this as an act of terror. Hence, it is not the amount of dead people in the wake of 9/11, nor their innocence, that was the cause of especial anger; it was the fact that the dead were western civilians as opposed to Iraqi Kurdish civilians.

Saddam's story can be paralleled with that of the Al-Mujahideen case in Afghanistan, for just as he fought Iran, so they too had been used to fight against the Soviet Union. In one of Chomsky's interviews he said:

> The CIA did have a role, a major one in fact, but that was in the 1980s in recruiting, training, and arming the most extreme Islamic fundamentalists it could find to fight a 'Holy War' against the Russian invaders of Afghanistan (Chomsky, 2002: 18). Hence other forces (including Al-Qaeda) according to Chomsky were: 'established by the United States and its allies for their own purposes and supported as long as they served those purposes' (Chomsky, 2002: 37).

We see a startling difference between then and now, in how the discursive and political centre willingly had both men well within its inner circle, and then without hesitation pushed them to the periphery: they very swiftly became other.. When referring to this, Chomsky mockingly

says that: 'clients aren't supposed to disobey orders' (*Chomsky*, 2001). Throughout their cooperation with the centre, they were seen as part of the self, despite all of the atrocities they had committed, but when Al-Mujahideen opposed the royal family of Saudi Arabia keeping American soldiers on their soil, and when Saddam attacked Kuwait, they both changed from allies to enemies and thus became others. Chomsky, like Fisk, is alert to the uses of language as a suasive tool of ideology, as opposed to a way of communicating seemingly ideologically free values such as 'truth' and 'justice'. In both cases, the language changed very rapidly when these two agents were no longer serving the needs of the centre.

Simultaneously, it is important to note the change in language, where the Islamist war against the Soviet Union was formally seen as a 'Holy War', but paradoxically is now seen as 'unholy' because it is no longer in the interests of the centre: a classic binary reversal. Similarly, with Saddam, language was used to prepare for his shift from an ally to an enemy:

> 'He's a dictator who gassed his own people,' Bush reminded us of Saddam
> Hussein in numerous broadcasts, omitting as always to mention that the
> Kurds whom Saddam viciously gassed were fighting for Iran and that the
> United States, at the time, was on Saddam's side (Fisk, 38: 2008).

Clearly then, ideological constructions of self and other are contextually dependent, and such ideological structures should '[n]o longer [have] truth value attributed to them' (Derrida, 2001: 359). When fundamentalists were needed, they were called freedom-fighters, and when the communist regime attacked areas of the Middle East, Saddam was the Western powers' man. This was not the case however when, prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, an American congresswoman appeared on national television saying: 'we'll go in there, take out Saddam, destroy his army with clean surgical strikes, and everyone will think it's great' (Said 2003a: xxi). Or as Fisk put it: 'if Iraq has become a hell on earth for its people, recall how awful

Saddam was. If a dictator is on our side, call him a 'strongman'. If he's our enemy, call him a tyrant or part of the 'axis of evil' (Fisk, 2009: xiv). While such comments were becoming the norm in literary and cultural theory, Fisk was one of the very few journalists who consistently deconstructed the linguistic redefinition of Saddam and the Mujahedeen in terms of an oppositional discourse of identity. He also consistently made the point that such altered definitions meant that our discourse could no longer validly use moral and ethical imperatives to justify attacks on these two former clients: it was not so much a war on terror as a war of expediency.

Therefore, one can see that this power-language can either alienate the self from, or connect the self with, the other. However, in a Middle-Eastern context, the 'other' is represented while it is silent and while it is invisible, because the discourse, which is central in understanding the other, is 'produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power' (Said 2003a: 13). Accordingly, allowing the marginalisation of the other to occur through language can give rise to a whole range of discourses that arguably comfort the self with a sense of justifiable moral right. This in turn, could explain why the 'Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization' (Said 2003a: 109). The self's logocentric desire for a centre, is being underwritten by a linguistic ideology that is turned into discourses which build a cultural hegemony against the other, echoing Said's argument that the language of: 'realism was upgraded and became not merely a style of representation but a language, indeed a means of creation' (Said 2003a:87).

Fisk has reported that when Iraq was invaded in 1917, the language being used at the time was similar to what we hear now. Indeed, the then Lieutenant General of the British Forces in Iraq, Frederick Maude, had issued and signed a poster which he requested be hung on Baghdad's streets. It read:

Our military operations have as their object the defeat of the enemy and the driving of him from these territories [meaning Turkey]. In order to complete this task I am charged with absolute and supreme control of all regions in which British troops operate; but our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators. It is the wish not only of my King and his peoples, but it is also the wish of the great Nations with whom he is in alliance, that you should prosper even as in the past when your lands were fertile. But you, people of Baghdad are not to understand that it is the wish of the British government to impose upon you alien institutions. It is the hope of the British Government that the aspirations of your philosophers and writers shall be realised once again, that the people of Baghdad shall flourish, and shall enjoy their wealth and substance under institutions which are in consonance with their sacred laws and with their racial ideals. It is the hope and desire of the British people that the Arab race may rise once more to greatness and renown amongst the peoples of the Earth. Therefore I am commanded to invite you, through your Nobles and Elders and Representatives, to participate in the management of your civil affairs in collaboration with the Political Representative of Great Britain so that you may unite with your kinsmen in the North, East, South and West, in realising the aspirations of your Race (Fisk, 2006: 172).

The ideologically suasive language here, speaking of 'prosperity', 'fertility', 'greatness' and 'renown' was an attempt to mask the reality of the situation, as what was in effect happening was the division of the middle east into zones of influence which were decided and drawn by the western powers. Fisk is reluctant to offer a synchronic analysis of the situation, which takes as read the givens of ideology. Instead, he analyses the situation diachronically, traces the roots

and origins of the current conflicts, and follows the strands right back to the logocentric European powers. Now, two generations later, one can hear what is arguably the same language being spoken about the other, 'to liberate, to give freedom, to democratize and above all to civilize'. The promises of 'liberation' made to the Iraqi people were the 'false promises of the world's greatest empire, commitments and good intentions and words of honour that were to be repeated in the same city of Baghdad by the next great empire' (Fisk, 2006: 172). Hence, just two days before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, President Bush gave a speech where, just like General Maude, he promised the Iraqis 'liberation' when he said: 'the day of your liberation is near' (*The Guardian*: March 2003). Ten years have passed since that promise was made, and one can argue that the situation in Iraq now is even more desperate than it was before, with the country split radically between Shia and Sunni. Here we see how on two separate occasions, ideological language has been used to amplify the centre's power, at the expense of the others, and to cloak political action under the guise of moral action..

The other's creation through language is merely to benefit the centre that organizes the entire system, to keep the self in a delusion, by 'limit[ing] what we might call the *play* of the structure inside the total form' (Derrida, 2001: 352) [*original emphasis*]. To do so limits the way in which the self can access the world, because lenses have been applied to make this world appear to be efficient and intelligible, and these lenses change the attitudes of the self in order to make it compliant with the structure that benefits the system. It is interesting to note the way in which the Middle East is presented to the West nowadays; most headlines would read, 'Islam and the West' or 'Islam and Christendom', rather than 'The Middle East and the West'. Islam, since its beginning, has been used for political advantage in representing the other. Middle-Eastern rulers have also used it, as we will examine in the next chapter. However, this metonymic representation has become significantly more popular since the 9/11 attack in 2001, which as Derrida has argued is 'still part of the archaic theatre of violence aimed

at striking the imagination' (Borradori, 2003: 101). This perception of Islam associates it with such words as 'violence and terror': 'which reminds us of this obvious fact: the effects and repercussions of these cataclysms are also conditioned, in their breadth and their impact, by a politico-economic situation, and therefore by the power of the media, a signifying power' (Derrida, 2009: 65). Reminding Western culture of the 'violence' that Islam supposedly signifies indubitably filters the imagination of Western perceptions. Such a language is: 'most often subservient to the rhetoric of the media and to the banter of the political powers' (Borradori, 2003: 102), and allows this psychological fear to continue to self-justify an ideology's cause. Rather than looking at individuals as in the Oklahoma bombing, 9/11 is seen as an Islamist plot, thereby ascribing negative motivations to a whole religion, and proleptically justifying violent action against all followers of Islam, regardless of their complicity in attacks on the west.

This is power-language at work, and it has been used for many years as a psychological motive that triggers 'fear and anxiety' in Western culture. William Shakespeare used a similar ploy of fear in *Henry IV Part 1*, with King Henry's opening speech which aimed to construct the English nation as a band of brothers against the other: 'March all one way, and be no more opposed / To chase these pagans in those holy fields' (1.1.15 & 24). Henry's desire for a Holy Crusade articulates an ideological solution to a political problem, and language was the means of making the English action seem God-directed as opposed to being an overtly political attempt at seizing territory. Thus, the religion of the self is used to demonise the other, a representation that makes the other somehow less than human and therefore easier to treat in an aggressive manner. It is another example of language being used, not to define a pre-existing meaning, but rather to create meaning through the telling.

In his speech quoted above, days after the 9/11 attack, Bush asked the American nation a question in relation to Islamists; he asked: 'Why do they hate us?', to which he gave an

answer: 'They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech' (*Washington Post*, Bush). This idea that the other hates the self's varied freedoms serves to maintain – as we saw above – a hegemonic ideology, thus, affirming a fixed notion of identity and difference, and validating attacks on 'them' because they fear and hate our freedoms. One of the leading philosophers in the western world, Slavoj Žižek followed Bush by asking a similar question in his 2008 book *Violence*: 'why should they feel threatened by non-believers, why should they envy them?', to which he himself answers that they are: 'fascinated by the sinful life of the non-believers. One can feel that in fighting the sinful other, they are fighting their own temptation' (Žižek, 2008: 85), once again demonstrating how a moral dimension makes a war seem more justifiable. The relationship between power and language has never been more apparent, and even the educated class seems to be in agreement with the hegemonic power of media in not questioning centres and their ideological cores.

Derrida critiques this view, arguing that there should be: 'responsibility to the other' (Caputo, 1997: 113), in order to overcome this hierarchical ideology which imposes the 'fragmented knowledge' (Said 2003a: xx) that is responsible for structuring Western thoughts, and the inequality that is consequently created. Said's *Orientalism* went to great lengths to highlight this power-creating knowledge mechanism, which uses discourses to create the impression that a man is superior to a woman, that the west is superior to the east, that wealth is superior to poverty and that presence is privileged as opposed to absence. Said has argued: '[t]here is, after all, a profound difference between the will to understand for purposes of co-existence and humanistic enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purposes of control and external dominion' (Said 2003a: xv). The CIA analyst Michael Scheuer, whose knowledge of the other (in this case referring to jihadists), is far greater than that of Bush and Žižek, writes that it is 'blatantly obvious from the evidence the authorities have presented to date that the attackers were motivated by what the U.S. government does in the Muslim world

and not because of our freedoms, liberties, and gender equality' (*non-intervention*, Scheuer).
In other words, he maintains that these attacks are politically as opposed to religiously or
morally motivated. However, this exercise of power is aimed at steering the public to see their
advantage in gaining and holding their influence for longer, simply through language. This can
be for any number of reasons, but especially in attempting to justify invasions or attacks on
individuals, or to justify the use of drones that terrorised many villagers in Yemen, Iraq and
Afghanistan, all the while under the banner of the 'war on terror'.

Accepting logocentrism is falling into to the trap of an ideology, of a centre that sees
itself as 'pacifist', while continually denouncing the other as 'terrorist'; thus 'the superior term
belongs to *logos* and is a higher presence; the inferior term marks a fall' (Culler, 1983: 93). An
ideology takes this further to advance its position by using language to convince a society that
there are moral reasons to fight the other, examples of which we have seen above. As Senator
John Edwards stated during his national television presidential debate in May 2007: 'it is now
clear that George Bush's misnamed "war on terror" has backfired – and is now part of the
problem' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, 2007). America's spearheading of the 'war on terror'
has given countries around the world a motive to follow its lead in dealing with their own
Islamic other. This is evident in China, Russia and Europe; however most interestingly, the
Middle East's leaders also saw an advantage in joining the 'antiterrorist' collation, echoing
Fisk's comment that; 'everyone is cashing in on the "war against terror"' (Fisk, 2009: 37), and
once again, his choice of imagery is telling. Oil, wealth and power are the economic base that
drives and organises the ideological superstructure throughout this region. This however, could
explain John Edwards's statement above, that the 'war on terror has backfired – and is now
part of the problem', because the centre's manipulation of its people to convince them that a
'war against terror' was necessary has failed because if anything it has actually generated terror,
as can be seen by the rise of ISIL in Iraq and in Syria. Unquestioned, ideological language can

cause atrocities; the centre uses this language as an ideological means to justify a specific political end, as Senator Edwards continues:

> The war on terror is a slogan designed only for politics, not a strategy to make America safe. It's a bumper sticker, not a plan. It has damaged our alliances and weakened our standing in the world. As a political "frame," it's been used to justify everything from the Iraq War to Guantanamo to illegal spying on the American people. It's even been used by this White House as a partisan weapon to bludgeon their political opponents. Whether by manipulating threat levels leading up to elections, or by deeming opponents "weak on terror," they have shown no hesitation whatsoever about using fear to divide.
>
> But the worst thing about this slogan is that it hasn't worked. The so-called "war" has created even more terrorism – as we have seen so tragically in Iraq. The State Department itself recently released a study showing that worldwide terrorism has increased 25% in 2006, including a 40% surge in civilian fatalities (*Council on Foreign Relations*, 2007).

This 'lie' or 'slogan' as Edwards put it, which is known as the 'war on terror', was initiated by Bush, and continues to be used under the Obama administration. All the while, it serves as a recruiting agent and motivation for the Mujahedeen, and for ISIL, which is evident from the staggering growth in their numbers, increasing the popularity of the movement since 2001 despite the killing of the 'suspect' bin-Laden, and the march of ISIL across Iraq and Syria.

Thus, one can see that the 'war on terror' has not only revived the idea of jihad within radical Islamist circles, but has also moved the centre of jihad from Afghanistan, to countries such as Iraq, Somalia, Yemen and Syria, and consequently, the number of atrocities in these

countries have grown. Hence the 'war on terror' as Edwards said, has 'created even more terrorism' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, 2007).

This oppositional form of binary identity turned Osama Bin Laden, and his group of jihadists, into a philosophy fuelled by the Western governments' policy of imposing laws upon the other, which as a result has left both Afghanistan and Iraq to rue the continuing cost. The 'war on terror' has not only justified the self's attacks on the other, but as Edwards has stated, has also been used as a political frame to justify 'illegal spying on the American people' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, 2007). It is as if the 9/11 attack provided the self with a licence to develop a spy system from which even its own people cannot escape, as we have learned from recent leaks by a former National Security Agency (NSA) employee, Edward Snowden. He deconstructed that part of the system, by demonstrating that some of the surveillance measures that were used to monitor the other were also being used to monitor aspects of the self. In other words, he was showing how the centre's desire to control language and information meant that it was indulging in practices that were dubiously legal. He was subsequently made homeless, as he reveals in his statement:

> For decades the United States of America has been one of the strongest defenders of the human right to seek asylum. Sadly, this right, laid out and voted for by the U.S. in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is now being rejected by the current government of my country. The Obama administration has now adopted the strategy of using citizenship as a weapon. Although I am convicted of nothing, it has unilaterally revoked my passport, leaving me a stateless person (*UK Independent*: July 2013).

The revoking of his passport is the ultimate signifier that he is no longer part of the self, he is now other. The very structure that he served has ejected him, making him an 'other', just

because he opposes a system that values its control and ideological structure above all else. This is understood by Richard Barnet's words, when he said in 1972 that: '[t]he imperial creed rests on the theory of law making' (Said: 1994: 345, quoted in *Culture and Imperialism*). Thus far, one can see that even the law itself can be moulded so that an ideology can achieve its aim, this time; the 'war on terror' was the chosen 'event'. This brings us back to Derrida in that, it is evident that events and words should be read with the intention of making them question themselves, in order to widen the limits that are imposed by hierarchy. One way of doing this he has said, is: 'to think, to rethink the foundations, the philosophical foundations of this international law and these international organizations' (Caputo, 1997: 12), because these produce language to suit their own strategic aims which are to communicate, regulate and even change all aspects of understanding the other. This is precisely what Fisk has done by his posing of the 'why' question, and by his ongoing pursuit of the reasons as to why this question is never asked when dealing with the Islamic other.

As Derrida said above, we have to 'rethink the foundations of this international law' that breeds violence, and limits mass culture by laws that are imposed by hierarchical authority, and which have very little to do with justice. Derrida has argued that this hierarchical authority amends laws to suit a given structure, 'since the origin of authority, the foundation or ground, the position of the law can't by definition rest on anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without ground' (Derrida, 1992a: 14). Consequently, atrocities can be seen in many different forms around the world, with the cases of Saddam and bin Laden being clear examples of how language, when aligned to power, can authorise violent changes of alliance and enmity in order to protect "the new world order" (Caputo, 1997: 12). As we saw above, the 'war on terror' activates 'fear and anxiety', which indoctrinates the masses in favour of whatever political action is defined by the centre. This in turn, was received and celebrated by extremists across the Islamic world, who took advantage of invasion and used it to grow their numbers as

Edwards pointed out above. This can be seen to validate Chomsky's prediction that a 'massive assault on [the] Muslim population would be the answer to the prayers of bin Laden and his associates' (Chomsky, 2001: 5).

The American-led operation of the 'war on terror' revived the idea of jihad in the Islamic world, and hence it has given rise to many Islamist and jihadist groups, the most recent and powerful of which is the 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria', formally known as ISIS, and now known as ISIL. This resistance was initially established by a Jordanian man named Abu Musa'b Al-Zarqawi, who was based in Afghanistan but travelled to Iraq for this reason. His aim was to drive the foreign troops out of Iraq, and by doing so, unite all jihadists under the one banner, which he had named Al-Tawheed Wal-jihad (which means 'The Unity and jihad'). Though he was killed in 2006, the philosophy of the movement was kept alive and eventually came to fruition under a new leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, who recently announced a new Islamic Khilafa, with the intention of uniting, not only Muslims in Iraq and Syria, but also Muslims from around the world. This no doubt will give the western political powers reason to once again, cleanse the world of 'fanatical terrorists', while remaining largely blind to the notion that they themselves have created these fanatical terrorists in the first place.

In this chapter, the use of language as a tool of ideology and as an instrument of power was examined and it is clear that language as a discursive mode of control over people, and as a way of framing the reality within which people live, is extremely important in the contemporary world. We have seen how the work of intellectuals and thinkers like Said, Derrida and Chomsky has critiqued and deconstructed the fixed binary oppositions which some of this language has created. We have also seen how the language of politics, and the politics of language, are very closely imbricated, and how Fisk's journalism, imbued with the same deconstructive energy, has posed questions of the west and of America in particular, as to how the other is depicted and ultimately dehumanised. His writing has also demonstrated how moral

and ethical imagery has been used to mask nakedly political and neo-imperialist actions. In the next chapter, the oppositional dialectic of self and other will be traced through a particular example of how a normative discourse uses ideology to achieve a political aim. The works of Robert Fisk once again serve to deconstruct and analyse this discourse, and to show how a seemingly stable centre rests on foundations that are malleable and transient. I refer to the founding myths of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Chapter Four: The House of Saud and the Manipulation of Law

Fisk's writing regarding the Arab world is mostly directed at critiquing the level of injustice that was created by imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century, and also to probing the connections between this injustice and the retaliation campaigns undertaken by those whom the West describes as 'terrorists'. Unlike most journalists who write about the Middle East, Fisk actually lives there. This gives him an advantage, as he often reports on events that he has personally witnessed as they are unfolding, which gives added credence to his writings regarding the severe levels of injustice faced by ordinary citizens of this region. He differentiates between different groups within Middle-Eastern societies and is able to provide situationist and particularist critiques of events and their consequences. His writing could thus be seen as a form of immanent critique of the situations that he is describing. As he stated:

> After the Allied victory of 1918, at the end of my father's war, the victors divided up the lands of their former enemies. In the space of just seventeen months, they created the borders of Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia and most of the Middle East. And I have spent my entire career—in Belfast and Sarajevo, in Beirut and Baghdad—watching the peoples within those borders burn (Fisk, 2006: xxiii).

Fisk is a writer who is not afraid to trace symptoms back to their origins, and his historicizing of the artificially-constructed borders of the post-war world add a sense of objectivity to discussions of present day consequences. Like Derrida, Fisk will follow a thread back to its ultimate source and is happy to read against the grain in terms of issues of contemporary politics. Fisk tends to frame events by studying them in a connected context that is both

historical and political, and in this sense is closely aligned to Derrida's thinking, as he has said that 'there is nothing outside the context' (Derrida, 1988: 136). He has spent almost forty years in the Middle East, observing people that are ruled by its dictators. He points out that just as its borders have been artificially drawn by the western powers, so the Middle East is ruled by dynasties who have been chosen strategically by these same powers. Mostly these rulers tended to oppress and dominate, leaving their people powerless, living under the rule of what Fisk claims are 'largely squalid, corrupt, brutal dictatorships. No surprise there. We created most of these dictators' (*Information clearing house*: 2004). Fisk constantly deconstructs the self/other binary by reminding his readers that the terrorists, Islamists and jihadists who are seen as demonised others, come from repressed cultures, whose borders and rulers are western in origin. We are imbricated in all of these movements even as our ideological discourses attempt to tell us that this is not the case.

Following the 9/11 attacks on America, the Muslim world leaders met to offer their condolences to the American nation, and to show their objection to the atrocities, which were committed *largely* by Arab Muslims. Fisk offers a synopsis of the meeting that exposes the positions of the Arab leaders:

> The response of Arab leaders to both the atrocities in America and the American bombing of Afghanistan was truly pathetic. Listening to the speeches of the Muslim leaders at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference emergency summit on 10 October, it was possible to believe that bin Laden represented Arabs more faithfully than their tinpot dictators and kings. Please give us more evidence about September 11, besought the emir of Qatar. Please don't forget the Palestinians, pleaded Yassir Arafat. Islam is innocent, insisted the Moroccan foreign minister. Everyone—but everyone—wished to condemn the September 11 atrocities in the United

States. No one—absolutely no one—wanted to explain why nineteen Arabs

decided to fly planeloads of innocent people into buildings full of civilians

(Fisk, 2006: 1055-6).

Once again, Fisk, like Derrida, Said and Chomsky, is asking that 'why' question. He is

deconstructing the consensus reactions and instead is attempting to look for a motive that would

drive nineteen men to kill themselves and thousands of others in an action that shocked the

world. For Fisk, to say they are Arabs, or Islamists or terrorists is simply not enough, and he

goes on to question the motives and the reactions throughout his writing.

Clearly, the Arab leaders at the conference, or the 'tinpot dictators' as Fisk labels them,

felt that focusing on why most of the attackers happened to be Arabs would lead to a

questioning of their own legitimacy, and thus draw unwanted attention that could lead to further

criticism of their widespread abusive of power in their own countries. As ever, the general Arab

populations were voiceless in the process, as they were never given the opportunity to offer

their opinions, thus giving rise to the 'prevailing fantasy' of the traditional argument, that 'there

is nothing wrong; [in the Arabic world and that] everything is under control' (*Chomsky*. 2011).

Corruption, injustice and repression are endemic traits shared by these Arab leaders, which

have led their own people to rebel against them as a result.[1] During an interview in which Fisk

was asked about his opinion on the roots of terror, he answered that terror's existence is largely

to do with injustice, and further went on to say that '[t]he Middle East is heavy with injustice'

(*The Progressive*: 2001). In this case, he is deconstructing the ideological myth that Arabs are

just alien, other, and different from us; instead, he is positing connections between people, in

different societies, who react to injustice in broadly similar ways.

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[1] Oppression and injustice were the real cause of the Arab Spring, and Mohamed Bouazizi the Tunisian fruit and vegetable seller was merely the spark that the Arab nations needed to kick start the revolutionary wave.

Derrida has argued in his text '*Force of Law*', that for the 'idea of justice' to function at its best, it should be 'without calculation and without rules, without reason and without theoretical rationality' (Derrida, 2002a: 254). In this context then, justice would unshackle itself by opening 'law' up to the outside world through a displacement of its strictly societally deterministic role. He further argued that: 'there is no justice except to the degree that some event is possible which, as an event, exceeds calculation, rules, programs, anticipations' (Derrida, 2002a: 257). He makes the point that it should be unfeasible for justice to be calculated, and furthermore, as a result of being open to the other, that its *very* essence should be governed by an absence of structure. In this scenario, justice would become what one can call 'impossible', because it is not fixed, but rather is beyond all calculation; it would be a justice that would restructure:

> … the whole apparatus of limits within which a history and a culture have
>
> been able to confine their criteriology' (Derrida, 2002a: 247). In being open,
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> it would surpass all calculation, and as a result it would undermine all the
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> ideologies that are at work, and so Derrida further theorized, justice should
>
> always remain 'to come' (Derrida, 2002a: 256).

Hence in a similar fashion to *différance*, he would argue that justice is 'infinite' (Derrida, 2002a: 254), in the sense that it deconstructs itself. By having 'law' displaced and opened up to the other, rather than as a structure which is controlled by the centre for the benefit of that centre, law determining justice, we would see justice as guiding the law, but doing so without restriction – devoid of 'violent enforcement', would mean that, as Derrida has argued that:

> ... for a decision to be just and responsible, it must, in its proper moment, if
>
> there is one, be both regulated and without regulation, it must preserve the

law and also destroy or suspend it enough to have to reinvent it in each case,

rejustify it, reinvent it at least in the reaffirmation and the new and free

confirmation of its principle (Derrida, 2002a: 251).

Thus, even though justice would operate under the law, it would do so merely to 'preserve the

law', by constantly reinterpreting it – to suit a given case (or event), while simultaneously being

open to the other, and thus unlike law it would be unpredictable. This is the premise that

underlies Fisks's retelling of history and of his location of the origins of the contemporary

Middle East as being firmly within the ambit of the western powers. If we in the western

democracies blame the Arabs for being other, we are quietly etiolating our own complicity in

the creation of states that are profoundly anti-democratic. We are also masking the fact that

the motives in the creation of these states was not to create free and democratic nations, as the

rhetoric of World War One would suggest, but rather to suit our own economic interests. Fisk's

writing deconstructs this process in an ongoing and searching critique by looking

diachronically at origins and causes.

Accordingly, as we have previously seen, deconstruction offers a searching critique of

logocentrism (the notion of centre), and its scheme to present us with an image of the world

through the self's own lens, what Derrida calls 'the process of imposing itself upon the world'

(Derrida, 1967: 3). This presentation of the ideological image as ratified by the centre of power

shapes both the image, and the individual who perceives the image, as such, control will

necessarily constrict our view of the other. In this sense, it functions in the same way in which

Derrida believes that 'law' does. This is because it obeys a given authority, one that existed

prior to law, and thus its accuracy and legitimacy can be questioned: 'since the origin of

authority, the founding or grounding, the positing of the law cannot by definition rest on

anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without ground' (Derrida, 2002a: 242).

A law that emerges from a system where it is designed to suit its makers' interests, and can be

'forced' upon its culture, as Derrida further argues 'cannot become justice legitimately or *de jure* except by withholding force or rather by appealing to force from its first moment, from its first word' (Derrida, 2002a: 237-8). This makes the moral (if not the political) authority of law questionable, since the very act of instituting 'law' is underscored by violence through the threat of enforcement. This deconstructive differentiation between law and justice validates and empowers the possibility of examining institutional authorities and political discourses that take 'law' as their source of justice or legitimacy in terms of that violence as opposed to any ethical or juridical warrant. The rest of this thesis will go on to discuss the idea that 'fanatical Islamists' (terrorists) are not only the self's creation, but largely, that they are the product of their own authority, and the very laws that guarantee that authority. It will also examine the normative account of the creation of one of the western power's most prominent allies in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, and will trace how Fisk offers a deconstructive critique of this by providing the historical context of the beginnings of the kingdom that are starkly at odds with this received account.

The latest Arab uprising (awakening) has helped to uncover serious levels of tyranny in the Arabic world, as shown by how violently the long-standing 'Islamic' authorities have acted to enforce the law, in order to stay in power. Fisk has written an article called 'Bonfire of the Dictators', where he once again presents western readers with a very 'legitimate' question, which is significant for my own view of him as an essentially deconstructive writer and thinker. He asks:

> European autocrats could sometimes manage a few decades: Hitler lasted
> only 12 years, Mussolini 21; Franco at 39 years, Salazar at 36 and Stalin at
> 31 years were exceptions. But Gaddafi survived for 42 years, Ali Abdullah
> Saleh 33, Mubarak 30, the Assad family 41 years (also counting), the House
> of Saud – as rulers of Saudi Arabia – has so far lasted 69 years and the al-

Khalifa family (rulers of modern Bahrain) a mere 228 years. How do these

guys cling on? (*UK Independent*, December *2011).*

What is interesting about this piece is the way in which, from the outset, he is deconstructing

the oppositional binary of self and other 'These guys', referring to Middle-Eastern dictators

and kings are compared to European dictators and politicians and this is a very deconstructive

comparison as it sees them all as political opportunists. There is no racial, cultural or religious

differentiation here – this comparison is about people wanting power and keeping it for

different durations. In itself, it is Fisk at his most deconstructive, and he is once again posing

that 'why' question. Questioning of this type brings to mind the notion of justice, and

consequently that of violence, as both are very much linked. The idea of a leader staying in

power for such a length of time, behoves one to examine the justice system and the legal

structure that plays a great part in sustaining the lasting authority of the Arab rulers who have

been described as 'intolerant of everything except [their] own fantasies and appetites'

(Marrouchi, 2004: 69). Therefore, notions such as 'justice' and 'equality' are risky subjects to

discuss while people who are designated as the other are governed by rulers who 'cling on',

through their repressive, nationalistic regimes, that 'have allowed political passions and an

ideology of conformity to dominate' (Said, 1991: 8). Interestingly, the notion of Islam, so often

used as an ideological signifier to make Middle-Eastern people seem alien and other from a

western ideological perspective, is also used ideologically by these Middle-Eastern rulers

themselves.

Accordingly, this has brought to the surface the first of many contradictions, in that the

above Arab leaders are rulers of 'Islamic countries' and yet, none seem to be applying the 'law'

of Islam to themselves.[2] Rather, the leaders selects certain sections of Islamic law, which they

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[2] This is neither a defence of, nor an attack on, Islamic law itself; rather I aim to merely highlight its selective
usage by the above respective leaders. For example, former Libyan president Gaddafi: 'used to apply the Islamic

then manipulates to make it suit their own ideology, to justify their own legitimacy and to control their citizens. Thus when Fisk entitles an article 'Why does life in the Middle East remain rooted in the Middle Ages?', he is able to supply the answer very quickly in terms of the power of law. He explains that is because Arabs in general, 'do not feel that they own their countries', because 'the moment a movement comes along and – even worse – becomes popular, emergency laws are introduced to make these movements illegal or "terrorist"' (*UK Independent*: July 2009). For the most part, this has been ignored, and consequently it is important that it be considered when attempting to understand the Arabic other, since: 'deconstruction is the vigilant seeking-out of those blind spots or moments of self-contradiction' (Norris, 1987:19). The Middle East is the way it is, suggests Fisk, not because of any racial or cultural essentialist factors of identity. Rather, it is due to the social, ideological and political structures that govern it. He is also at pains to point out that the self, the powers of the western democracies, are hugely complicit in the inception and maintenance of these structures. The force of law, both political law and the law of Islam, is used as a constrictive ideological tool to maintain power and inequality. In this sense, it is the binary oppositional logic of self and other*,* the same logic that devalued and objectified the east as 'orientalist' that is being enacted here by one group which seeks to retain ideological and political power over another group. The force of law, with little relation to ethical or moral concerns, is a tool for hegemonic control.

This forced law is a double-edged sword. On one side, there is the authority of the local ruler, the ruler of the Middle East, which writes the law – and on the other, there is the Anglo-American and European power structure that is quite happy to continue to support the existing Arab power-system. This is done in order to ensure that there is no call for justice, for as

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law to those who drank alcohol, thus, just as in Saudi Arabia; [those who consumed it] were whipped as a consequence' (Al-Maqdisi: 2000: 17) (My translation). While at the same time, Gaddafi kept Amazonian female security guards at his service, thus indicating that for him, the Islamic laws, and extra laws, are merely chosen to allow the leaders to sustain their authority, and not to acquire justice.

Chomsky has pointed out, the Arab uprisings and their call for democracy is partly unsuccessful because: '[t]hey are crushed by the dictators we – mainly the US, Britain, and France – support. So sure, there is no democracy because [we] crush it all' (*Chomsky*, 2011). This is not surprising, considering that following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Britain and France were the powers who divided the Middle East into its current formation under the infamous Sykes-Picot agreement, before the newly powerful United States became involved. As argued by Said: 'France and Britain no longer occupy centre stage in world politics; the American imperium has displaced them' (Said 2003a: 285). It is sufficient to say thus far, that the Middle East is a classical structure of colonial control, (with its long-standing authority) systematically structured to give the illusion that a fair system of government is at work. In reality, however, 'democracy in any real sense of the word is nowhere to be found in the still "nationalistic" Middle East' (Said, 1994: 363). Instead, the region is strongly influenced by an imperial power that is indirectly active. Originally this power was the Franco-British axis but since the 9/11 attack, this foreign pressure (on Arab cultures) has been American, as opposed to European.

As Fisk has put it 'a hundred years of Western interference in the Middle East has left the region … cracked with fault lines and artificial frontiers and heavy with injustices' (Fisk, 2008: 339). Once again, he is stressing western complicity in the creation of the Arab states, as they now exist. Consequently, this has led to Arab hostility and hatred toward the West, and as Aburish has accurately argued: 'most Arab leaders who have been accepted by and celebrated in the West are often rejected by their own people' (Aburish: 2005: 11). This unpopularity of their rulers has created a void within the Arab nations that in turn has left many with no choice but to stand up and let their voices be heard (as evidenced by the present revolutions on Arab streets). The radical Islamists or 'terrorists' as they are known, are only one of the groups who are thriving and inventing their own 'version' of law, in their 'own' way. These groups, in many ways also created by western interference in these areas, make it even easier for western

hegemonic ideology to continue to demonise the Arabic other, and to make the 'war on terror'

seem to be a legitimate and logical response.

However, this dynamic dominant alliance between western power and local rulers is,

for the most part, maintained in order to justify the retention of power and to sustain the status

quo. Above all, it serves to uphold the discourse of power and to serve the centres' ideological

interests, for as we have seen, the 'war on terror' is but one of many examples of ideological

apparatuses, both institutional and repressive, at work. Thus, to make the argument that

'fanatical Islamists' are to some extent the creation of their own authority, it is crucial to begin

by examining this dominant relationship. Derrida's attempts to deconstruct law in 'The Force

of Law', are not merely to show that: 'law is not justice' (Derrida, 2002a: 244), but rather to

attempt to tease out the legitimacy of an authority that has formed itself through the

enforcement of the law, and the implied threat of violence. As Derrida puts it: 'in the beginning

there will have been force' (Derrida, 2002a: 238). Therefore, in a similar fashion to the

previously discussed issue of Saddam and his place in power, the region's rulers have largely

been placed in power with the agreement of the west. It is almost a case of a centre seeking a

local surrogate centre, which will be sufficiently locally strong to enforce the control of the

centre, to enact the force of law in the local region so that obedience can be enforced. Such a

strong local centre will ensure control as it becomes '*necessary* that what is strongest be

followed (enforced)' (Derrida, 2002a: 238). Moreover, this 'force' which is responsible for

implementing the law, also has an ideological dimension as it can persuade, through the power

of selected usages of language and identity, as well as compel. In these contexts, the force of

law ensures that those who make the law remain in power. As Fisk correctly stated 'we are so

keen to analyse the revolutions that tore the Middle East's dictatorships apart this year that we

have forgotten the record of endurance of these vicious men and their sheer, dogged, ruthless

power to survive' (*UK Independent*: December 2011).

Hence, it is essential to read about and trace the regional rulers' 'terror' back to its beginning, and one way of doing this is by examining the Islamic world, and specifically, the case of Saudi Arabia and its ruling family, the 'House of Saud'. Primarily, this family is worthy of study because they are the oldest and most valued allies of the Western centre, but also because they are the leaders of one of the most fundamental states in the Islamic world, one which serves as an ideological centre of radical Islam. Bizarrely, this state is both a bulwark of western power in the region but also a centre of radical Islam. Again, the 'why' question needs to be posed, and again Fisk, through his writing, is keen to pose it. His method of so doing is to trace the connection between the attackers and their origin, and of that society's immense impact on their actions, others did not. As he pointed out:

> Reporters continued to avoid the 'whys.' We could examine the 'hows' —
> the hijackers had learned to fly, taken business class seats, used box-cutters
> — and the 'whos.' The fact that the hijackers proved to be all Arabs — and
> that most of them came from Saudi Arabia — posed no problem to reporters
> or readers. This fell into the 'where-and-what' slot. 'Arab terrorists' are,
> after all, familiar characters. The sin was to connect the Arabs with the
> problems of the lands they came from, to ask the 'why' question. All of the
> mass murderers came from the Middle East. Was there a problem out there?
> (Fisk, 2006: 1035-6).

For Fisk, the origin of so many of the hijackers is a significant aspect of his 'why' question, as clearly there must be some causal factor that has given rise to their jihadist sensibilities, and this can be traced, at least in part, to their home in Saudi Arabia. By pointing this out, he is deconstructing the consensus that the Saudis are the allies of the west, whereas countries like Iraq and Afghanistan are not, and yet the men who flew the planes on 9/11 were mostly Saudis.

According to Derrida: 'Saudi Arabia, while maintaining its ties with its American "protector," "client," and "boss," fuels all the hotbeds of Arab Islamic fanaticism if not "terrorism" in the world' (Borradori, 2003: 111). The 'House of Saud' has, from the very beginning, used the 'customs and the traditions' of a thousand and a half year old religion (Islam), as a 'force'; predominantly to legitimize their authority upon the throne. As Derrida put it 'custom creates the whole of equity, for the simple reason that it is accepted' (Derrida, 2005: 239). Yet once again, this is done jointly with the west's full approval and protection. Thus, despite the fact that most of the 9/11 attackers were Saudi's, according to Lippman, 'the United States [still] retains its responsibility for the Kingdom's security' (Lippman, 2012: 7), and has steadfastly refused to lay any blame at the door of that country.

This is ironic, given that the essence of 'Islamic law' (according to the Qur'an) discourages Muslims from forming alliances with, or seeking protection from, non-Muslim persons or countries, as it states: 'O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them' (*International*: Qur'an. 5-51). Therefore, even as Islamic law is used as a tool of hegemonic ideology in the kingdom, that very law is being broken by the kingdom. Similarly, even though the country has been a hotbed of terrorist activity, it again escapes blame, as it is very much a surrogate centre, serving the interests of the Euro-American power block. Because the Saudi regime is compliant with western ideology, western governments seldom criticize the level of repression in Saudi Arabia. Instead, critiques are directed towards radicalism/jihadist movements without attempting to understand the motivation behind them, or to probe the financial support, which allows them to function,

support that is often sourced back to the Saudi regime. In a sense, the United States is merely continuing what was initially carried out by British imperialism.

Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud who 'founded' Saudi Arabia was chosen, and brought to power, by British imperialism. As Fisk has informed us: 'after all, they were – like Saddam – created by the West' (*UK Independent*: May 2003), and by making this comparison, he is essentially deconstructing the west's polarised view of both states. This comparison is one that is seldom made in the western media, even though both states had strongly repressive policies and practices that would seem to be inimical to the political philosophy of the United States and Europe. In addition, as long as both states remained loyal to western policies, there was no mention of repression or injustice in either Iraq or Saudi Arabia. Thus, when Saddam invaded Iran, the west was happy to aid him because he was fighting an Islamist theocracy that was avowedly anti-American. However, as soon as he invaded Kuwait, which was an ally of both the western powers and Saudi Arabia, he became the synecdoche of evil, and the attacks on him were immediately given a moral dimension by invoking tales of his repressive regime, and the injustices that were meted out to ordinary Iraqis. So, from being similar client states of Britain and America, these two countries now became very much instances of self and other, with Saudi Arabia being seen as friendly to the west, whereas Iraq now became a rogue state.

Indeed, Saddam has become a personification of evil, as signified by the almost comic pantomime-villain aspect of using just his first name, whereas the Saudis are seen as very much a barometer of an Arab state that is friendly to the west. The Euro-American axis is happy to continue to ignore their repressive policies as long as they remain 'our' surrogate. By imbricating them together in comparison, Fisk is making the point that in many ways, both states are creations of the western powers, and their records on human rights and issues of justice and equality are both very poor. He is also drawing our attention back to the drawing

of the current borders of the Middle East, and to the seminal role of western powers in defining the Middle East as we know it today.

This took place when the First World War was looming. Britain saw an advantage in taking a strategic interest in the Arabian Peninsula, and ousting the long-standing Turkish Ottoman rulers. However, due to the traditional close-knit culture of tribal Arabs, Britain was faced with a struggle, until they were introduced to Ibn Saud. As the least popular amongst the tribal leaders 'Ibn Saud, homeless and hungry, was there for the asking, cheap and willing to accommodate any sponsor' (Aburish, 2005: 18). However, despite being 'homeless and hungry', his dynasties were already connected to Al-Ikhwan (followers of Wahhabi's teaching of Islam),[3] who were ruthless Islamist fighters. As Fisk has pointed out, it was the Ikhwan's strictness when following the Wahhabis' version of Islam that attracted Ibn Saud and his western allies. He knew this meant that they would be obedient to their leader, even though other parts of their philosophy had 'threaten[ed] the modern-day House of Saud because of its corruption, yet secured its future by forbidding revolution. The Saudi ruling family thus embraced the one faith which could protect and destroy it' (*UK Independent*: August 2005). Fisk is accurately pointing to the ideological use of Islam here in a manner that parallels the ideological use of moral and ethical reasons for going to war that we have already discussed in the case of the USA and the western powers. He is also aware of the bifurcated nature of the relationship between Islam and the Saudi royal family: just as it is able to protect them, so also can it hurt them, and this awareness could well be a reason for their toleration of jihadists in their country as a type of escape valve.

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[3] *Al-Ikhwan* is an Arabic word meaning 'brethren'. They were Bedouin followers of a man named Muhammad Ibn Abdul Al-Wahhab, (1703 – 1793). He was famous for his revival of the Islamic teachings, which, after his death, became known as the Wahhabi movement. (It is worth noting that the naming of this movement came a long time after his death; and more importantly, it was given by people outside of this movement, merely to identify it, or to distinguish it from other movements.)

It is ironic to think that the very first thing Ibn Saud did was to go against his own political authority, namely the Ottoman leadership, with the Ikhwan fighters providing 'the backbone of [Ibn Saud's] conquering forces and whose savagery wreaked havoc across Arabia' (Aburish, 2005: 19). This provided an opportunity for the west to impose its agenda from afar, by having Ibn Saud as a surrogate centre and local representative of that agenda, and by using the Al-Ikhwan fighters (Islamists) to defeat other Bedouin (Muslims) tribes as far away as Yemen and Iraq in order expand Ibn Saud's, and by extension British, territories, power and wealth. Consequently, Ibn Saud had the best of both worlds: from the western or occidental self he was provided with power and a 'decisive technological advantage in the form of armoured cars and military aircraft' (Silverfarb, 1982: 7). Similarly, from a religious perspective, the backing of the Al-Ikhwan allowed him to be the 'strongest', in terms of Islamic ideology, and to be followed throughout Arabia. Hence, he knew from the outset that it would be necessary to use a Machiavellian style of authoritarianism, and thus as both Campbell and Yetiv have argued, 'from the beginning the principle goal of the House of Saud was to give off the appearance of being legitimate rulers, rather than the usurpers' (Campbell, 2007: 139). He did this by employing Islam as a force to justify his regime, while simultaneously accepting all he could from the colonial powers, in order to strengthen his position. This echoes Derrida's suggestion that 'it is *necessary* that what is strongest be followed' (Derrida, 2002a: 238), because at the turn of twentieth century, Ibn Saud was *made* to be the strongest, because it suited British policy at the time. In this sense, his was the force of law because it was following the law of Britain, the strongest and most powerful force of that time.

When imperialist Britain were satisfied with Ibn Saud's progress in 'forcing his authority' and gaining the required power and strategic control which was their object, they acted to further secure their prize in the peninsula of Arabia, by drafting an agreement that came to be known as the 'Anglo-Najd (Saudi) treaty'. This was signed in 1915 by the chief

political officer for the Mesopotamian expeditionary force, Sir Percy Cox, and by the ruler of the Ikhwan, Ibn Saud. The treaty contained seven articles; the summary of which reads as follows:

> (1) Britain recognizes Ibn Saud as the independent ruler of Najd and Hasa and his descendants after him, 'but the selection of the individual shall be subject to the approval of the British Government'; (2) 'In the event of unprovoked aggression by any Foreign Power the British Government will aid Ibn Saud to such extent and in such manner as the situation may seem to them to require'; (3) Ibn Saud renounces diplomatic relations or correspondence with any foreign power other than Britain; (4) Ibn Saud will not cede, sell, or mortgage his territory or grant concessions to any foreign power or its subjects without the consent of the British government, 'whose advice he will unreservedly follow'; (5) Ibn Saud will keep open the pilgrimage routes through his territory to the holy places and will protect the pilgrims; (6) Ibn Saud will refrain from interference with Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Trucial Oman, and any other tribes and chiefs under British protection, and (7) a more detailed treaty will be concluded later (Silverfrab, 1980: 172).

Britain was aware that creating a puppet state whose leader it controlled was not viable in the long term. Thus in 1917, in order to ensure Ibn Saud's political survival, they provided him with a: 'valuable subsidy of £5,000 per month from the British government plus considerable quantities of arms and ammunition' (Philby, 1998: 257), which he continued to receive for eight years, to assist him in asserting his authority over the inhabitants of the land. To give their chosen man status he was described as 'prophet like', or as was claimed by the Orientalist

Harry St John Philby, following his mission to visit Ibn Saud in 1917, [he is] 'probably the greatest of Arab leaders who have acted in a desert setting' (Safran, 1988: 28). Here again we see how the ideology of the centre and of the western self will go to great lengths to attain their strategic aim, regardless of the consequences, even if that means portraying the other to be exotic as opposed to threatening. Of course, this is because this 'other' is being groomed to be a proxy or local surrogate for the self in a place where the west cannot any longer maintain a military presence.

Thus, whether or not he was 'prophet like' or the 'greatest Arab leader', one thing is evident; Islam was being used as an ideological commodity to extend the power relationship and sustain the force that drove Ibn Saud's legitimacy. Consequently, when colonial satisfactions were met, they decided to create a border to Ibn Saud's newly acquired land. However, the Al-Ikhwan fighters did not approve of this [as Islam disagrees with topographical borders],[4] a standpoint that they paid for with their lives. As Juhayman, the grandson of one of the Ikhwan put it:

> King Abdul-Aziz… upon asking the Ikhwan (who came from various tribes, under the banner of Islam) to fight for the cause of God, found that they were unhesitatingly willing partners. They fought many heated battles and gained an abundant wealth for their respected leader [Ibn Saud]. However, when Ibn Saud's establishment grew stronger to the satisfaction of, and to a level that his allies the Christians had agreed upon, he asked them [Al-Ikhwan] to discontinue their jihad outside of his newly bordered [by the British] land. When they disobeyed his rules, [based on their belief that

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[4] Mohammad and Ibrahim before him are highly regarded prophets in the Islamic world. Neither of whom attempted to draw a map of Arabia. Nowhere in Islamic history is there evidence of a prophet attempting to draw borders.

Islam disagrees with borders] they were labelled by Ibn Saud and his 'invented' scholars as 'The 'Khawārij', [a word that describes people who reject/disobey their authority] while in reality they never rejected him (merely continued on as they had been), however, he rejected them (Al-Maqdisi, 2000: 11) (my translation).

Hence without further delay, in March 1929, Ibn Saud, armed with British artillery and machine guns fought the Ikhwan in what came to be known as the 'Battle of Sabila'. The result was a victory for Ibn Saud and annihilation for the Ikhwan: 'like all groups, which act as a dictator's instrument of suppression during his rise to power, they fell victim to Ibn Saud's quest for respectability' (Aburish, 2005: 33).

This gave Ibn Saud the space and time to rewrite and 'restructure the law' to suit his leadership; however, he ensured the retention of the original teachings of Muhammad Ibn Abdul Al-Wahhab and his followers the Ikhwan intact, because loyalty to one's leader is at the heart of his teachings. The result of this, as Fisk explains in his article, 'The terrible legacy of the man who failed the world', is that:

Saudi Arabian society is not – and cannot be – a 'modern' society in our sense of the word as long as Wahhabism holds its power. But it must be allowed to do so – to protect the king. And since it increasingly becomes a poor country, the Wahhabi authorities and the religious police grow stronger (*UK Independent*: August 2005).

Fisk is asking his 'why' question again, as he attempts to tease out how Saudi Arabia has become the kind of society that it has become. He is well aware of the aporetic relationship between politics and religion in this country and of the ideological power of religion as a

conservative and restraining force on the people of the country. His reading deconstructs the normative view of the kingdom as a state, which, while repressive, is slowly moving into the ambit of the western democracies. His reading of the structural necessity for a conservative mode of Islam in the country means that this can never happen. Ibn Saud went on to hire an army of academics and scholars who specialized in Islam, and who could reword and restructure teachings that would be useful for the purposes of enhancing his power, echoing Campbell's argument that: 'Islam [became] the force by which the regime [the Saudis] justifies itself' (Campbell, 2007: 140). This proved a successful process, and in 1932, he proclaimed himself absolute monarch,[5] and called the territory 'Saudi Arabia'.

With the naming of 'Saudi Arabia', a new identity had begun, where both power and religion were in the hands of the House of Saud. In this sense, there was control over both the force of law, and also the ideological compliance which conditions compliance to the law. This process of control was consolidated by employing Islamic scholars to restructure Islamic laws in order to create a centre that is shielded and protected from its other. As pointed out by Al-Maqdisi, since 'Saudi Arabia's establishment', the House of Saud has been using 'a selected [bought and paid for by the system] *Ulama* (scholars of Islam) as a shield to justify their actions and hence, (the *Ulama*) stand as one of the main pillars that they [the authorities] rely upon' (Al-Maqdisi, 2000: 231). Al-Maqdisi further went on to make the point that this ideological use of chosen aspect of Islamic law functions like an:

> anaesthesia machine [that] works to hypnotise the people, by conning and
> by deceiving the public in order to legitimize the way in which the
> government operates… for as long as these 'scholars' are in place, and are

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[5] An absolute monarch means that authority is passed through inheritance within a family group, which once again illustrates that Ibn Saud took the law into his own hands. Islam began with Mohammad, and following his death, the *khilāfa* (succession) was given, not to family members, but rather to someone that was chosen by the people.

in the 'comfort of their makers'… people will follow the structures' uncritically (Al-Maqdisi, 2000: 231) (my translation).

The force of law here is being used, both overtly in the form of police and army, and ideologically, in the form of religious ideology, which ensures compliance. As an example of this force of law that has no opening to the other, the Saudi ministry of defence has initiated a new law, this time though a 'police court',[6] that deals *only* with matters pertaining to the centre of power. For example, in Islam, it is stated that the hand of a thief would be chopped off, as a verse of the Quran stated: '[As for] the thief, the male and the female, amputate their hands in recompense for what they committed as a deterrent [punishment] from Allah. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise' (*International*. Qur'an: 5-38). However, in Saudi Arabia, if one happens to be serving the state, then the law tends to be applied in a more lenient manner. As clearly stated in the 'Army Penal system of Saudi Arabia', article (112):

> Non-commissioned officers and soldiers who steal money or anything from other officers, who happen to be staying in the same place [building, or compound] regardless of where it is [location wise], ought to pay the equivalent or the cost of what he stole, and also be imprisoned [which varies] from a month and a half to three months. (*Homatalhaq*: 1995) (My translation).

This in a way instantiates the above point, that the centre, the self, the source of power, will use any means possible to shield itself against its other, while simultaneously protecting its own interests. In this case, there is literally one law for the centre of power, and those who are

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[6] In Islam, the only law acceptable is God's law, known as 'Sharia law', anything else is considered fraudulent.

necessary to the retention of that power, and another for those who need to be controlled. Justice, in the Derridean sense, is not an issue here, as the force of law is the force of authority.

There is a reason why Fisk gave his article the title, 'The corrupt, feudal world of the House of Saud', and why his writing poses questions of the regime that are generally not posed by Western media outlets. In a way, it is the other side of the 'why' question; just as motivations are not interrogated when acts of violence are committed by Islamists, similarly, the democratic credentials of Saudi Arabia are never questioned. Fisk subverts this trend by his constant deconstructive probing of motives, practices and agendas. He began by saying:

> The Saud family is a real House that Jack built. Its thousands of princes are
>
> sublimely unworthy of rule….Poor old Saudis. It takes quite a lot to evoke
>
> sympathy for the head-chopping, hand-severing, anti-feminist, misogynist,
>
> feudal, anti-democratic Saudis (*UK Independent*: May 2003).

His use of compound adjectives to describe some of the qualities of the regime is deliberately Tabloidesque, as he attempts to shock the reader out of the normative largely positive view of the regime, into a real awareness of the kind of regime that it actually is. The adjectives might seem to be excessive, but interestingly, there is now a law in Saudi Arabia that makes it a crime to criticise anyone in authority. Those who have been bold enough to do so are now in prison; they are popularly known as (سـجناء الـرأي), meaning 'Opinion Prisoners'. This law is known as (حد ةالحـراب) which means 'Limit Banditry', whereby if one criticizes the House of Saud's establishment, one is by extension criticising God and his prophet, and so ideologically, religion and power mutually condemn such actions. Given that freedom of opinion and expression is a *sine qua non* of democratic societies, Fisk's adjectival condemnation of the regime seems more justified. This, and many other laws, exist merely to enhance the structural

powers control over its people, thus forcing upon them a 'justice' that suits the hegemony's agendas.

Moreover, and more importantly, this manipulation of 'laws' extends beyond internal matters, and as Fisk's writing further demonstrates, by tapping into this 'fear factor' the Saudi authorities were once again able to use the *Ulama* to validate 'jihad' and to justify its purpose to the international Muslim community (though only when it suited them). Consequently, when it suited the central authority of the state, the ideology of Islam was used to fight the chosen enemy. To put this in context, we need only look to the ten year war between Communist Russia and Afghanistan (1979-1989), where it suited the west to finance and advocate 'jihad' against the 'enemy', and to encourage the notion of a holy war. As Fisk stated:

> These, after all, [the House of Saud] are the folks who bankrolled the
> Islamist resistance to the Soviet army in Afghanistan. This is the nation
> whose interior minister used to have cosy chats with Osama bin Laden in
> the Saudi embassy in Islamabad. Indeed, this is the country that chose
> Osama to be its 'prince' in the campaign against Soviet atheism (*UK
> Independent*: May 2003).

The Saudi authority with their new ally America, had chosen Osama as their representative 'prince' to lead the Arab jihadists, while as Fisk informs us, Saudi's own 'real princes, including 7,000 official and unofficial ones, preferred the bars of Monaco or the whores of Paris to drawing the sword for the religion in whose lands stood their greatest shrines, Mecca and Medina' (*UK Independent*: August 2005). This further emphasises the point that Islam is treated as an ideological force by the Saudi regime, and that there are vast differences between different versions of Islam that are often not seen by the west. Again, by asking that 'why' question, Fisk is forcing the reader to look awry at the normative account of the Saudi Arabian

government as relatively benign and pro-Western. The same rulers, who put their faith in Allah (God) when Osama was fighting Soviet Russia, chose to put their faith in America when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Allah was no longer centre stage.

As a result, Osama was no longer required to fight the Soviet Union, and become an outcast, an enemy and an unwanted 'prince'. The realignment of the centre and its local surrogate had turned him and his followers from anti-Russian to anti-American, from proxies of the self to the demonised other, as Chomsky stated in an interview titled, *War Crimes and Imperial Fantasies*:

> Osama bin Laden himself was not anti-American until about 1991, when he
>
> changed, for several reasons. The U.S. and Saudi Arabia refused to allow
>
> him to carry out a jihad against Saddam Hussein. He wanted to lead an
>
> attack against Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War. The Saudis and
>
> the U.S. didn't want him to (*Chomsky*: September 2004).

The Islamic laws which the Saudi authority are quite content to use for the purpose of ruling and controlling their country, were put aside when they do not suit their ideology. One could make the point that idea of selecting where and when the beliefs and imperatives of Islam, and the idea that jihad should be politically and pragmatically controlled when it suits an authority, is arguably what gave rise to the birth of 'Al-Qaeda' as an ideology. This is an argument put forward by Fisk:

> When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990 [a year after the Russian –
>
> Afghan war had ended], bin Laden once more offered his services to the
>
> Saudi royal family. They did not need to invite the United States to protect
>
> the place of the two holiest shrines of Islam, he argued. Mecca and Medina,

the cities in which the Prophet Mohamed received and recited God's message, should be defended only by Muslims. Bin Laden would lead his Arab mujahedin, against the Iraqi army inside Kuwait and drive them from the emirate. [However] King Fahd of Saudi Arabia preferred to put his trust in the Americans. So the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division arrived in the north-eastern Saudi city of Dhahran and deployed in the desert roughly 500 miles from the city of Medina (Fisk, 2009: 4).

It is ironic to think of a country that is so strict (or portrays itself so to be), that it will not allow a female to drive her own car (claiming that it is not Islamic), simultaneously allows a non-Muslim army to come and fight to defend its interests. The enforcement of anti-female laws is used to hide the fact that this most holy of countries in effect, uses Islam as a pragmatic ideological and political tool. Fisk makes this point very clearly. And in terms of the restrictions on women, nowhere in Islam or in its holy book the Quran, is there a law (or proof) that disallows a female to drive her own car, horse or camel.

In fact Mohammad's first wife was a merchant trader, an independent woman who, even after their marriage, continued with her profession. On the other hand, there is plenty of detailed scripture in the Quran to discourage Muslims from seeking guidance or help from non-Muslims. This suggests that the House of Saud manipulates various aspects of Islamic laws to suit its own ideology, even if it means leaving God aside, in order to achieve its hegemonic strategic aim.

As we mentioned above, the ideological jihadist war which they funded against the Russian 'infidels' was problematic when considered alongside the fact that both the west and Saudi Arabia bankrolled Saddam's Iraq war against fellow Muslims in Iran (1980-1988), which resulted in thousands of deaths as a consequence of Muslims killing Muslims. As Fisk noted:

This was the king [Fahd was Saudi Arabia's king from 1982 – 2005] who

had poured his vast coffers into Saddam Hussein's war chest against Iran,

studiously saying nothing about the gassing of up to 60,000 Iranian soldiers

and civilians during that conflict, in the hope that the Beast of Baghdad (our

friend at the time, needless to say) would overthrow that far more terrible

beast, the revolutionary Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (*UK Independent*:

August 2005).

Once again, Fisk, by posing the 'why' question, is deconstructing static notions of the Saudis

as being 'good' while Osama bin Laden, and Saddam Hussein (interestingly often both referred

to by only their first names), are seen as evil. He probes how alliances are not governed by

some Orientalist fealty to a religious identity, but rather by shifting and pragmatic political

imperatives that use Islam and its laws to suit the prevailing political and strategic needs of the

time. It is also worth keeping in mind that this was a ruler who called himself, as Fisk stated

'the custodian of Mecca and Medina', but Fisk's reading of his actions make it clear that this

sobriquet has become ironic in the extreme. His (Fahd's) expenditure on the Iraq-Iran war was

revealed when Saddam invaded Kuwait in 1990, when Fahd wrote to him: 'reminding him of

how much the Saudis had contributed to his brutal war against Iran. 'Oh Ruler of Iraq,' Fahd

wrote, 'the Kingdom extended to your country $25,734,469,885. 80 cents' (UK Independent:

August 2005).

Further analysing the behaviour of the House of Saud, Fahd had the gall to write to

Saddam in order to condemn his invasion of Kuwait (he invaded Kuwait based on his belief

that it was originally part of Iraq), telling him:

You committed the most vicious crime in the history of mankind when you

crept in with your army in the darkness and shed blood and expelled an

entire nation [in] to the desert in violation of all norms and values… you have…insisted on continuing aggression, claiming that Kuwait was part of Iraq. God knows that Kuwait was never under the Iraqi rule and the members of the family of Sabah were rulers of Kuwait since about 250 years. Who authorised you to kill [a] million Iranian and Iraqi Muslims? Who authorised you to occupy Kuwait and kill its sons, rape its women, loot its property and destroy its landmarks? (Fisk, 2006: 752-53).

In a footnote, Fisk deconstructs this reading of the territorial integrity of Kuwait, once again looking to the diachronic context of history:

> this was pushing the envelope of history a little too far. Kuwait was part of the Ottoman governorate of Basra and the Turks regarded the Sabah family as Ottoman governors even after a new sheik, Mubarak Sabah – who had killed his two half-brothers – agreed in 1899 to make Kuwait a protectorate of Britain for £15,000 a year. After the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958 Iraq demanded a union with Kuwait and was only dissuaded from invading when British troops were rushed to the sheikdom – much as US forces flew to 'save' Saudi Arabia in 1990 (Fisk, 2006: 253).

His point here is that Kuwait, like most states in the Middle East, is very much a western creation. Again, there is the payment by Britain of a local proxy who would rule the country, but guarantee British interests, and again, there is the *laissez faire* application of Islamic law as non-Muslims intervened to save the country in 1958. This paints a very different picture to the narrative set out by King Fahd about the 250-year rule of the Sabah family.

Of course, the point could well be made that the House of Saud is equally responsible for the killing of thousands by funding two major wars. Thus, in similar fashion to Osama, Saddam too was made to pay for stepping beyond his created boundaries. America was called to 'liberate Kuwait' in a process that by contrast, according to Fisk, cost Saudi Arabia '\$27.5bn on paying for America's liberation of Kuwait – slightly more than they paid to Saddam' (*UK Independent*: August 2005). Thus, even though '[t]he invasion of Kuwait [was] one of Saddam's lesser crimes' (*Chomsky*: 2002), it seems that it was enough reason to make him an international outcast, and to label him an enemy just like Osama, an unwanted 'prince' whose country has been in turmoil ever since. Fisk traces the demonising of each man, not to his actual actions, which involve violence and murder, but to the target of those attacks. Therefore, Osama bin Laden was seen as a hero when he attacked the Soviet Union, but not when he attacked the USA. Similarly, when Saddam Hussein attacked Iran, he was bankrolled by the Saudis and by the west, but when he attacked Kuwait, he became an enemy.

It suited the House of Saud to encourage 'jihad' in Afghanistan against the Russians, but not when it was invaded by the coalition forces headed by America for two reasons: it voiced their central role in the Islamic world, and it also placed them as allies of the United States in fighting a Communist regime.. It placed them as champions of Islam and as It suited the regime to support Iraq for eight years against Iran, but when Iraq itself was invaded 2003, jihad, or at least the funding of it, ceased to exist. To underscore this *volte-face*, the Islamic scholars of the House of Saud wrote a 'new law', which was sworn in by the king. This law empowers the authorities to imprison any individual who physically participates in the act of jihad, supports it, or even 'thinks' or 'writes' about jihad. Any such person can be jailed for anything between three and twenty years (*Aljazeera.net*: 2014) (my translation). The colossal irony here is that the House of Saud, whose legitimacy is dependent upon the rules and existence of Islamic laws, is trying to prevent people from embracing an act that they

themselves used to establish 'Saudi Arabia'. In this sense, Saudi Arabia is a paradigmatic example of the force of law as set out by Derrida, as the initial acts of violence that set up the structures of law, are subsequently outlawed to ensure that there will not be a threat to the structure itself. In this sense, the force of law is profoundly political, and has very little to do with any kind of search for justice, as Fisk untiringly points out. Jihad, from an Islamic perspective, is seen as the duty of every able-bodied person,[7] so creating laws that make it illegal is contrary to Islam. Even more interestingly, Saudi Arabia provides a safe haven for people who have committed much worse crimes, on a larger scale. Fisk outlines this in his article 'The dumping ground for despots welcomes another'. When commenting on Saudi Arabia's self-contradictory laws that seem to apply only when they suit the House of Saud's purposes, he informs us that:

> Saudi Arabia is a great dumping ground for despots. Remember Idi Amin? We Brits loved him once, but when he turned against us and started eating his enemies – and keeping the occasional head in the fridge – we were happy he fled into exile in Saudi Arabia. Then there was Ben Ali of Tunisia who flew off to the kingdom with his wife and an awful lot of money this year when the people could no longer tolerate him. We used to like Ben Ali – the French more than others – because he was a 'symbol of stability'. And now Ali Abdullah Saleh – who also used to be our hero in the 'war on terror' – is wounded in the chest and freighted off to hospital in Riyadh (*UK Independent*: June 2011).

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[7] Islam derives most of its laws from the Qur'an. Jihad is a duty upon every able bodied Muslim to defend themselves. It is mentioned on numerous occasions throughout the Qur'an.

Once again, Islamic law, which is the ideological corner stone of the kingdom, is flouted for political and financial gain, and once again, Fisk deconstructs the received narrative of a friendly and pro-Western Arab state. In in March 2011, by order of the House of Saud, a new law was introduced stating that, from that date onward, 'any demonstration of either small or large gathering, would be deemed illegal'. This law was based upon the argument (which unsurprisingly was written by Ibn Saud's own Islamic scholars), that such activities are 'not compatible with Islamic laws' (*Alriyadh*, March 2011) (my translation). Given that the Saudi regime has financed jihadist operations, once again, this indicates that Islam is being used as a control-mechanism to empower the Saudi ideological centre of authority, whether by financing major wars, or silencing the majority, and if needs be imprisoning them, and Fisk's writing has brought this very much into the open. Such inequalities are part of the *modus operandi* of regimes in the Middle East, and Fisk has continually brought them to account at the court of public appeal – he continues to speak the truth to power.

The Arab awakenings and their demands for justice will indubitably result in more 'forced laws' to control the masses (which is already evident in Egypt, Iraq, Yemen and now also in Jordan). Fisk is constantly pointing out these inequalities and aporias in the regimes, while at the same time, tracing the role of the west in the creation of these hegemonic elites. This is a very deconstructive strategy, as he is making sure that responsibility for the current situation is not attenuated or elided by ignoring the origins of these situations. It can be seen that the force of law in these countries has given rise to a violent reaction and has unleashed aspects of other forces of radicalism and extremism. Where opposition and questions are silenced and repressed, the return of the repressed is invariably violent. The use of law to deliver 'calculable' justice is doomed to fail because, as Derrida's *Force of Law* suggests, justice should go beyond the calculable logic of 'law', in order to create a justice that applies to all members of society equally because:

law is not justice. Law is the element of calculation, and it is just that there

be law, but justice is incalculable, it demands that one calculate with the

incalculable (Derrida: 244).

Thus, for a decision to be just, it should come from an unattached source so that it may produce

what Derrida calls a 'fresh judgment' (Derrida, 251). This is one that, although it conforms to

pre-existing laws, does so while remaining open to the other by constantly deconstructing the

calculability of laws in order to allow for a justice to come, and 'such justice, which is not law,

is the very movement of deconstruction' (Derrida, 254). Fisk's writing on the Middle East is

motivated almost entirely by a desire for such a fresh judgement. Having lived in the Middle

East for so long, his is an immanent critique that is acutely aware of the many differences and

divergences that are present in Arab societies. He is aware that the term 'Arab' as a signifier

of value or identity is almost valueless, such are the many and diverse iterations of Arab identity

in the Middle East. He is also aware of the undemocratic nature of many of the region's systems

of government, and his writing offers a searching and informed critique of this, and stresses

the need for more just societal structures. This is the underlying imperative behind so much of

Fisk's writing on the Middle East and on Saudi Arabia in this case.

This chapter has examined how his ongoing deconstructive critique, his persistence in

posing that 'why' question, has resulted in uncovering a very different originary narrative of

the Saudi regime to that which is generally accepted. It has looked at how Islam, far from just

being a signifier of identitarian and cultural difference, has been used as a political and

ideological tool, taking the example of Saudi Arabia. Fisk's accounts of how the Saudi regime

uses Islam for its own purposes, as well as his account of the origin of the kingdom, offers a

very different narrative from that which is normally found in the Western media. Like Derrida

and Said, his deconstruction of the normative reception of the Saudi regime is focused on

achieving a more just and equitable society, and given his popularity as a writer, he has definitely added to our understanding of the sheer complexities of the Middle East.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I examined the influence of the works of Jacques Derrida and Edward Said on the writing and thought of Robert Fisk. The core argument suggested that Fisk was writing a type of deconstructive journalism that was offering an ongoing critique of important connections between power and ideology, especially in the case of the Middle East. This thesis has seen one of Fisk's central projects as viewing the other as other, that is, as detached from its constructed role by central structure and the resultant ideological implications. Thus, I have endeavoured to analyse the journalistic view he holds, which is 'to challenge authority – all authority – especially when governments and politicians take us to war when they have decided that they will kill and others will die' (Fisk, 2006: xxiii).

I have traced the epistemological and philosophical connections between Said, Derrida and Fisk in the opening chapter, suggesting that their thinking on the philosophy and politics of the expression of selfhood and alterity has points of comparison. I further suggest that Fisk, in his journalism, is paralleling the work that Derrida and Said are doing in the academic sphere, namely the questioning of power and the holding of those in power accountable to intersubjective notions of truth. All three writers pose the 'why' question, they probe beneath the surface to look for reasons and consequences that have been occluded by language and ideology.

In chapter two, I have looked at how all three writers have probed the notion of identity in all of its aporetic complexity. I have looked at how identity is used to justify the self's existence in contrast to its other, and have gone on to demonstrate how hegemony utilises identity as an illusion in order to serve its own agenda. Fisk traces how Western ideology seeks to set out fixed and oppositional senses of identity so that self and other are fixed in a

Manichean binary struggle that precludes any opening to the other. The examples of the young Arab men who were eventually pulled back to their seemingly authentic, given identity were used to show the power of such identitarian thinking.

The third chapter has examined how language is a seminal tool in ideological enculturation, and how Fisk's writing is acutely aware of this. Fisk's texts make it apparent that language itself is used to maintain the illusion of fixed and polarised modes of identity, and hence it plays an important role in shaping our knowledge of the non-existent other. When analysing the term 'war on terror', we were encouraged to adopt a set of languages to which power has attached to itself in order to concretise this abstract term, and to equate a 'war on terror' with wars on Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus, the hegemonic power's designed language is there to make deliberate choices of policy seem almost natural and morally driven. This ideology of language, which Fisk attempts to unravel, that it may prescribe its agenda through which it presents its ideology of who, and how the other ought to be, and how they are seen.

The final chapter examined his thoughts on Saudi Arabia and the way in which his deconstructive probing has revealed aspects of this society that are at odds with its general perception. Fisk carefully traces how the West created the kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a surrogate local centre which would ensure that Western interests would be protected, and he traces the transfers of weapons and money from the British to the house of Ibn Saud as means to ensure hegemonic political and ideological control. Fisk deconstructs the western support of Saudi Arabia, and poses a number of questions about issues of justice, equality and the ideological capitation of Islam for political purposes. Thus, although most of the 11 September 2001 attackers were Saudi citizens, the United States has actually provided more security to that country than ever before, and invaded two other countries. Hence the ordinary and marginalised others are still without voice, trapped beneath an oppressive regime and a

language that speaks on their behalf, where resentment has become so deep seated that some believe that justice can only be obtained by taking up arms against those in power.

Overall, this thesis suggests that Fisk's critique is one that analyses how power uses any means possible to retain its control, and in the context of this argument, identity, language, and even law are the ideological tools of domination that are structured and manipulated in a certain way so that those on top can maintain that power. The Middle East as it stands is quite problematic, and the rise of ISIL may well change the Western view of it for some time to come; however, although the thesis may not change anything, what it can do is allow us to re-examine our understanding of otherness in others in the writings of Robert Fisk. It will allow us to look at power and see through its ideological propaganda and manipulation of the ideology that suits its leadership, and as this thesis has suggested, it will allow us to expose the manner by which language; identity and laws are manipulated in order to gain and retain political power.

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