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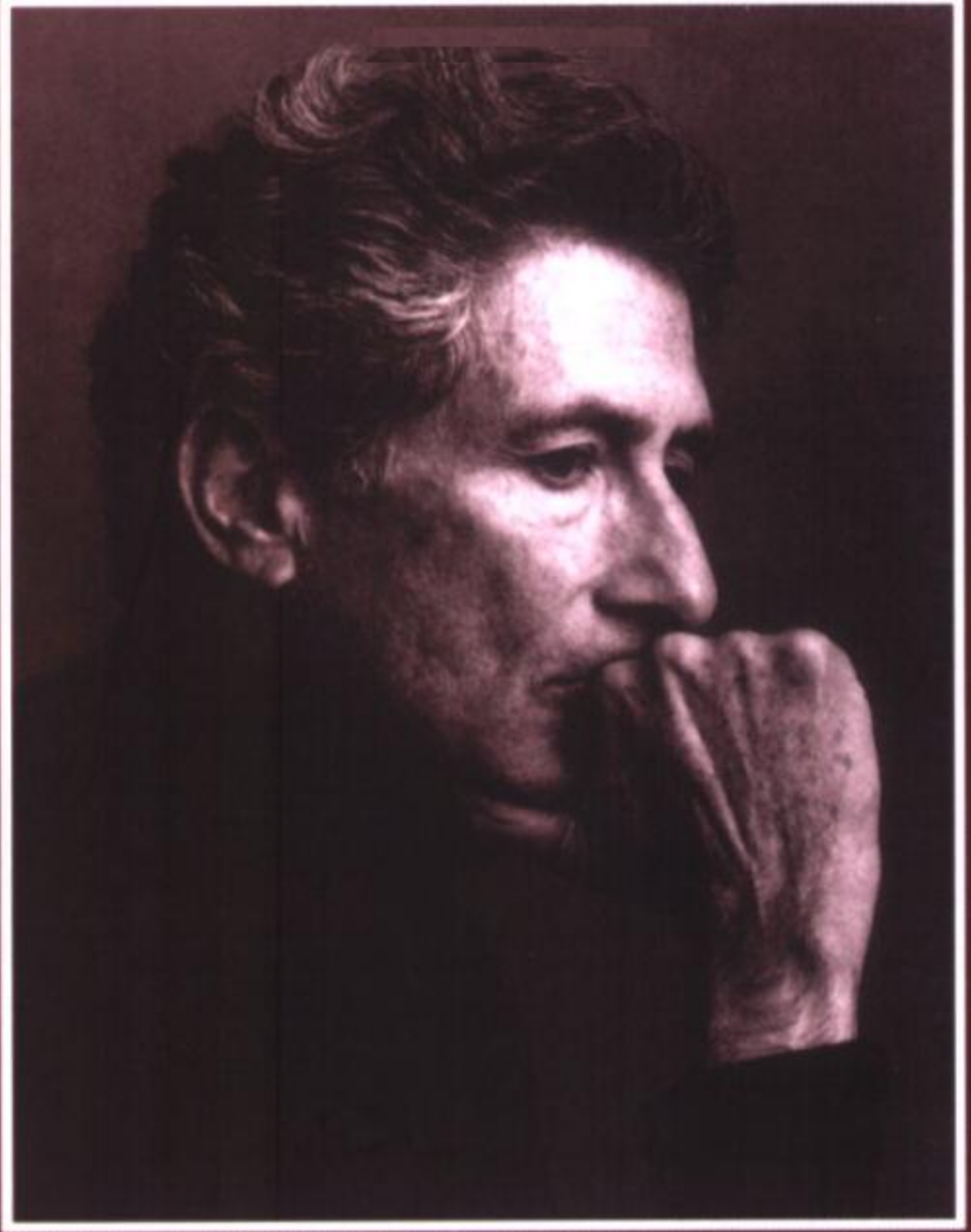
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Edward Said *and* Critical Decolonization

Edited by Ferial J. Ghazoul

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Ferial J. Ghazoul

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Contents

Preface	7
Remembering Edward Said	8
Hoda Guindi : “Of the Place”.....	9
Michael Wood : Desperate Youth.....	12
Andrew N. Rubin : Edward.....	15
Ananya Jahanara Kabir : Becoming Minor: On Some Significant Encounters with Edward Said.....	18
Najla Said : Tribute to My Father.....	21
Edward W. Said : On the University.....	26
Stathis Gourgouris : The Late Style of Edward Said.....	37
Moustafa Bayoumi : Reconciliation without Duress: Said, Adorno, and the Autonomous Intellectual.....	46
Yumna Siddiqi : Edward Said, Humanism, and Secular Criticism.....	65
Rubén Chuaqui : Notes on Edward Said’s View of Michel Foucault..	89
Richard H. Armstrong : Last Words: Said, Freud, and Traveling Theory..	120
David LeHardy Sweet : Edward Said and the Avant-Garde.....	149
Fadwa AbdelRahman : Said and Achebe: Writers at the Crossroads of Culture.....	177
Youssef Yacoubi : Edward Said, Eqbal Ahmad, and Salman Rushdie: Resisting the Ambivalence of Postcolonial Theory.....	193
Rokus de Groot : Perspectives of Polyphony in Edward Said’s Writings..	219
Daisuke Nishihara : Said, Orientalism, and Japan.....	241
Terry Eagleton : Edward Said, Cultural Politics, and Critical Theory (An Interview).....	254
Yasmine Ramadan : A Bibliographical Guide to Edward Said.....	270
Notes on Contributors	288

I take criticism so seriously as to believe that, even in the midst of a battle in which one is unmistakably on one side against another, there should be criticism, because there must be critical consciousness if there are to be issues, problems, values, even lives to be fought for. . . . Criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are noncoercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom.

Edward W. Said

Preface

Edward W. Said (1935–2003) was one of the most respected academic scholars in the field of literary criticism and cultural studies as well as one of the most charismatic Third World intellectuals. His contribution to the theory and practice of decolonization and resistance to hegemony has been global. His ideas have inspired and moved people across borders and in various disciplines.

Writing both for specialists in academia and for average readers in periodicals and newspapers, Said was able to chart new roads with his scholarly works and to mobilize world opinion in his more popular writing and lectures. His background as a Palestinian Arab and his education in British and American elite institutions gave him a bi-focal vision and an understanding of the dispossessed as well as the privileged. This book aims at revealing Said's multi-faceted career and his complexity and richness as a writer, activist, theoretician, musician, and above all as a humanist. There are touching testimonies by friends, relatives, students, and colleagues, which throw light on his personality. There are articles situating Said in relation to other minds that have marked his thought in the context of contemporary debates: Theodor Adorno, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, and Eqbal Ahmad, among others. An interview with a prominent Marxist critic, Terry Eagleton, on the politics and poetics of Said throws further light on how Said is perceived in leftist circles. Contributors to this book come from the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa, attesting to the wide interest in Saidian thought.

Said's view of the University and its role in society—a subject that was dear to him—was encapsulated in his commencement address, delivered when he received an honorary doctorate from the American University in Cairo in 1999, and reproduced here. An extensive English bibliography of works written by, and on, Said is provided with the latest updates. This book is based on the English section of the special issue of *Alif* (published in 2005). For other articles in Arabic on Edward Said, consult *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 25.

My sincere thanks to dozens of people in the *Alif* team and at the AUC Press who helped in publishing this book, and in particular to Walid El Hamamsy, Editorial Manager of *Alif*, Neil Hewison, Associate Director for Editorial Programs at the AUC Press, and Tarek El-Elaimy, Editorial Assistant at the AUC Press.

Ferial J. Ghazoul

Remembering Edward Said

“Of the Place”

Hoda Guindi

I would like to stress at the outset that what I am going to say is drawn from—probably—collective memories because the Saids and the Guindis (Edward’s and my families) have been friends for over sixty years—and through three generations: grandparents, parents and children, i.e. Edward and his sisters and us—through all the vicissitudes of life. Even death has not, and cannot, sever the bonds of friendship.

Elsewhere,¹ my sister has written a personal memoir of Edward’s *Out of Place* and thus we share some of the same memories but have somewhat different interpretations!

I take *Out of Place* as my point of departure and one particular sentence from the Preface:

Along with language, it is geography—especially in the displaced form of departures, arrivals, farewells, exile, nostalgia, homesickness, belonging, and travel itself—that is at the core of my memories of those early years.²

This struck an immediate chord in my memory; I suddenly realized that my first memory—perhaps “fictionally historical”—(as I was a mere tot!) of the relationship between the Saids and the Guindis, Edward and his two sisters and my sister and myself (there were further additions to both families later), were of departures and farewells, arrivals and welcomes. On this occasion, fortunately, the departure of the Saids at the time of El Alamein (1942) was followed, not long after, by an “arrival”—to us, a return.

In the first paragraph of his first chapter, Edward writes of his “overriding sensation . . . of always being out of place.”³ Ironically, and perhaps paradoxically, my early memories of Edward are grounded on and rooted in places—for even that first departure is indelibly associated with a particular place—the lift and stairwell—in a particular building in a particular district of Cairo: Zamalek.

The Saids and the Guindis were friends and neighbors—we lived, respectively, on the fifth and second floors of the building—which meant that there was a continual toing and froing between flats.

Whilst our parents visited each other decorously *in* the flats, we, with Edward as the ringleader, ran up and down the stairs with much clamor and clatter, much to the despair of our parents and the dismay of the other tenants. To my shame, now, the ancient (even then) and beautiful *Art Deco* lift was also subjected to thankless thumping during our illicit games.

The lift and landing of the building were the scene of yet another occasion which is fixed in my memory—as it added another dimension to the place of place in our lives and in literature. On that occasion, Edward and I met on the second floor landing as I was going up and he was coming down; I happened to have been carrying Eugene O’Neill’s *Desire under the Elms* and Edward briefly commented on it, highlighting the human desire and greed for place. He, by then, had become, to the rest of us left behind drearily continuing our schooling, an object of romance and envy as he was being “educated abroad,” a phrase oft repeated in hushed awestruck voices. He had already graduated from Princeton and was now on the path to fame—and hardship.

Earlier, Edward had already been the subject of much envious mutterings as he was the first, ostensibly because he was the eldest, to be given a room of his own! I realize now with hindsight, that this must have caused the first stirrings of feminism in the gaggle of girls who were, sometimes, vouchsafed, by Edward’s lordly magnanimity, a glimpse of the room and even, on extremely rare occasions, the right to cross the threshold of the sacrosanct space and gasp at his books and, in pride of place, his piano. (Of course, we knew that it was because he was male that he had a room of his own!)

The Grotto Gardens—a place of mystery—(more prosaically known as the Fish Garden) was our haven across the street from our house; here we played, wrangled, and scrambled in and out of the cool dark grottos to the detriment of the artificial rocks and with total disregard of the fish. We had one special rock which we regarded as being almost as high as the Himalayas and which when we reached the pinnacle we crowed with triumph and glowed with achievement. On the rare occasions when Edward was with us he invariably arrived at the top long before us and danced and sang that most colonial of songs that we had learned at school: “I’m the king of the castle and you are the dirty rascals”! When, years later, à propos of *Out of Place* we talked about the Grotto, and how he had always managed to “rule” us, he said to me: “You always were the rebellious one.”

Edward continued to come to the old building in Zamalek, that had housed the two families and nurtured their friendship, every time he was in Cairo. Every time, in spite of the trials and tribulations—both individual and national, it was a most joyous occasion for all of us.

Edward's association with his erstwhile building came home very poignantly at the time of his death. Our current "*bawab*"—a young man who knew Edward only through his visits—came to pay his condolences to us, saying proudly: "One of the greatest Arab thinkers lived in this house"!

Edward Said's almost obsessive concern with belonging and not belonging, and, perhaps, his yearning to transcend place are evident by his quoting the "hauntingly beautiful lines" by Hugo of St. Victor—twice—once in "Reflections on Exile" (1984) and once in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993): "The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land."⁴ Edward's "overriding sensation" was being "out of place," but to us, if he were not "in place," he was overwhelmingly "of place"—and always will be.

Notes

¹ Nadia Gindi, "On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said's *Out of Place*," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 20 (2000): 284-98.

² Edward W. Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), xiv.

³ Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*, 3.

⁴ Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2000), 185; *Culture and Imperialism* (NY: Vintage, 1994), 407.

Desperate Youth

Michael Wood

For a month or so after Edward Said's death the only documentary images I happened to see were fairly recent and very familiar photographs. They didn't add to the pictures already in my mind. Edward stood at his desk, he looked over his glasses, he looked thoughtful, he looked stern, he looked amused. He had a beard, he was gaunt and hollow-eyed, like a wild and fasting sage. He was beardless, he looked healthier, only rather tired. In most of the images he was wearing a jacket and a tie, the intellectual dressed for continual encounters with the public world. Even the pictures of the child in *Out of Place*, solemn, solitary, already a little haunted, seemed familiar to me, so what I am talking about is not strictly the passage of time.

Then one day I saw a film clip which showed Edward and Salman Rushdie and others on a panel, at Columbia I think. The footage wasn't that old, from the mid-eighties, I assume. But Edward looked so desperately young that I was completely bowled over. It was as if he had died again.

What had happened, and why do I say desperately young? I believe several rather different elements were in play. One was that although I thought of Edward a lot in those months, and thought back a lot over the time I'd known him—since 1964, almost 40 years—he was more a voice and a personality to me, a source of energy and friendship and ideas, than a visual image. I felt him and heard him rather than saw him. Or I saw him, but I saw only the soft-edged, invisibly aging self we lend to people we have known for a long spell.

Another element was the medium. Films and photographs are both forms of memory, but they don't have the kindness or the continuity of the purely mental mode. They remorselessly remember the marks of the moment, styles of dress, gestures, postures, and what Luis Buñuel once called the physical geography of faces. They chronicle detail as if they were time's own recording agents. They say not just "that has been," as Roland Barthes says of photographs, and not just "this person was here," but "this person at this instant was this very person and no other." But then perhaps we need to distinguish further, and look at the difference between still and moving pictures.

A photograph is a *memento mori*, as Barthes also says, its message is that this person, caught in time, will never return to this

moment and will one day die. A film image offers the same message, but with a different pathos. “Motion is the essence of life,” Jules-Etienne Marey proclaimed, even though he was at the time busy freezing movement in order to see how it worked. Because film images move, they seem to certify active life as well as sheer existence, and they just go on living, weirdly and animatedly indifferent to the later avatars (and death) of their subject. It is as if film itself were a hollow immortality, a procession of former selves unable to die.

But none of this takes us beyond the fact of film, so to speak. This was part of my shock, but there is more. What I saw in that film clip of the Rushdie panel, what I could have seen in many other images of the various stages of Edward’s life, what I did see later as new and old film compilations were screened on recurring memorial occasions, was not simply the past, examples of Edward’s changing life, reminders of time. I hadn’t forgotten time and change except in their details. What I saw were figures in an encounter that was full of invisible, but easily intuited, historical density: everything that brought Edward and Salman Rushdie together from Egypt and India and America and England; a lot of things that separated them, too. The past ran right up to the present and was folded into it. But the film image was also full of what had not happened yet, or perhaps it was separated from me by the weight of what I knew was to happen. It’s not that what happened later was all terrible—some of it was, both politically and personally for Edward—only that history had kept accumulating since the picture was taken, piling up the debris that Walter Benjamin’s angel so helplessly watches.

I think this is what I meant when I said to myself that Edward looked desperately young. He wasn’t desperate, and in the mid-eighties he wasn’t as young as all that, but he was living in another world, a world that had once been his and ours. This was a world where the store of future possibilities, not endless but not clearly registered as finite either, made life itself seem like a form of youth; and make it seem in retrospect, now that those possibilities are all fulfilled or cancelled, even more like a form of youth. What is desperate, or will be desperate if we can’t shake ourselves out of this mood, is the loss of these possibilities, or the belief that they were not, and are not, followed by others.

This is where we need to put our shock and sorrow to work rather than merely enduring them. Edward liked to quote Adorno on the subject of modern music as “the surviving message of despair

from the shipwrecked.” Edward had seen shipwrecks, especially political ones, and he acknowledged the authority of Adorno’s own despair. But he acknowledged it only to move on, and his work and life invite us to think chiefly not of lost youth or vanished possibilities, but of the persistence of hope in dark times. We shall become really desperate, and really old, not when we lose hope—we all do that on occasion—but when we lose the idea of hope, and so forfeit all chance of its return.

Edward

Andrew N. Rubin

Edward W. Said, the sixty-seven year-old man, who was to turn sixty-eight on November 1, was buried on the top of a mountain slope overlooking a forest of trees in a cemetery in Broummana, a village in Metn where his wife Mariam Cortas grew up and to which he would often go in the autumnal period of his life. At the funeral, Karim Said, Edward's cousin, performed Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* in A-Flat. Condolences were received for three days at the Protestant Evangelical Church from hundreds of people who came from morning to night.

Shortly before his death, we spoke about Elgar's Concerto in E-Minor performed by the miraculously gifted cellist Jacqueline Du Pre, who played the piece with the terrible eminent feeling of death and immense loss with a vitality that defies its silence. In the end he asked a dear friend for Elgar's *Organ Sonata* in G (1895) which he never had a chance to hear before he died from a blood infection that put him quietly into a coma. He was pronounced dead on Thursday, September 25, 2003, though his final days were reportedly animated with a life that gave his close friends and family the sense that he would continue to defy death—the sword of Damocles which, he always pointed out, hung ominously over his head.

To Edward, I was Andjevsky, Edward's nick-name for me, the origins of which always remained a strange but amusing mystery. "Andjevky Rubinsky!" he would declare when introducing me to his colleagues. Yet in some ways, it was much more than a nick-name. He would utter it, as if in crescendo, announcing the inventory of traces that had been left behind by a historical process that the very name to him partly and properly embodied. Indeed, my grand-parents were Russian and Ukranian Jews who had immigrated to the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. Edward seemed aware of that, even though we never spoke about my family and its history: we didn't need to. In the literature seminars I took with him at Columbia University, I recall the sense of urgency, immediacy, and the flawless fluidity with which he would discuss the writings of Joseph Conrad, the music of Beethoven, or the way he would recount his personal impressions of C. L. R. James in the twilight of his life. No one less perspicacious than Edward Said could make such a con-

vincing and eloquent argument for the theoretical connections between postcolonial historiography, classical music, and anti-imperialist politics that speaks not simply to his exceptional gifts as a comparative critic and an intellectual, as it does to the development and reinvention of the scope of this new humanism, which late in his life he aimed to explicitly define.

What I came to learn about Edward, as his last doctoral student, his research assistant, and friend, was that both his life and his work were part of a willful human and humane endeavor. “Everyday seems like the first day of school,” he would say. Indeed, his unrelenting commitment to the world and to knowledge can be best understood in terms of an embattled contradiction between his own particular human exertions—his repeated and physical defiance of his prognosis, his challenges to authority and the ideas which help to sustain it—and the processes by which universal principles such as freedom, justice, and truth were placed in the service of their antithesis. His writings, and even his presence, always seemed to express and embody a kind of will. It was not simply that Said was extraordinarily talented at exposing the hypocrisies that are an inherent part of the prevailing way in which the world is mostly understood. Through his writing and lectures, Said had the ability to make the most complex worldly and historical processes so simple and graspable, without ever reducing their sophistication or producing new orthodoxies that could somehow explain and comprehend everything. What was most inspiring about him is that he made us all feel like intellectuals, rooted in the hard and material world of literature, politics, and culture.

His demystifying and explanatory powers were gifted, at times entrancing and inspiring. His style of writing, argumentation, and even insult (of which he was also a master) was to draw a series of tightly and increasingly critical circles around his object; yet insofar as his strategy was one of elaboration, it persistently denied objectifying itself as a method that could be repeated and rehearsed, like some sort of chorus, over and over again. Yet history and experience were not beyond comparison for Said, and throughout his life he was a great friend of the South African anti-apartheid movement.

Though he saw significant differences between the Palestinian movement for national self-determination and the struggle against apartheid, he viewed the latter as an exemplary one. For Edward, the international moral outrage against the white supremacist government—founded on a policy of demographic separation, emergency

decrees, white supremacist death squads, and the daily degradation of South African blacks—held a deep relevance. Most of all, the anti-apartheid movement’s great achievement was the fact that it made its cause an international one. He viewed the struggle as an enormous human effort that had effectively undermined apartheid’s international support by forcing nearly everyone to acknowledge our common humanity.

Yet for Edward, there were distinct differences between the experience of black South Africans and Palestinians. Unlike the white settlers of South Africa, a great many of the Jewish settlers were the survivors of one of the most horrific crimes of the twentieth century. Their sheer presence shrouded the circumstances in Palestine with a complexity that Edward would once ingeniously and ironically summarize by declaring that the Palestinian people were “the victims of the victims.”

Edward always saw reconciliation in the form of its antithesis or opposite. Humanity was capable of remarkable achievements, among the most significant of which is the fact that despite Israel’s ongoing policy of mass arrests, torture, political assassinations, endless curfews, detentions, housing demolitions; despite its contravention of countless UN resolutions, as well as the charter of the Geneva Convention; in spite of what amounts to the collective punishment of an entire people and their way of life, Palestinians have, over and over again, proven their ability to survive amid the gloomiest and most terrible of odds.

For Edward, post-apartheid South Africa loosely provided a model of coexistence, interdependence, and reconciliation. What was crucial for him was that Israel accept its responsibility for the effects of 1948: that the Israelis’ War of Independence was also the Palestinians’ War of Dispossession. How to critically account for the process that precluded the reconciliation between two seemingly irreconcilable histories, in other words, how to put an end to this parallel and paradox, was, in my opinion, the overriding theme throughout Edward’s work of some twenty-three books.

**Becoming Minor:
On Some Significant Encounters with Edward Said**

Ananya Jahanara Kabir

During my undergraduate days at that grand edifice of colonial education, Presidency College, Calcutta, I came across a book, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. I can't remember whether I picked it up from the bright and smart British Council Library, whose shelves we students of English Literature regularly browsed for secondary criticism, or whether I had requisitioned it from the far dustier, crumbling, but definitely more atmospheric, College library. What I do remember is looking at the book, and its spine, and wondering about the name of its author, "Edward Said." *Edward*, I remember pondering, alongside *Said*? What kind of a hybrid name was that? And I remember also not thinking much more about it, but turning to the book itself to take notes about what it said about reading English Literature—returning, in short, to being a good, diligent Indian student of English Literature, as we were back then in the late 1980s.

Why that moment remains significant in my mind, of course, is because of all the new things I was going to learn about literature, life, politics, and Said as the new decade would unfold. From the hindsight of almost two decades later, I can see that remembered moment as laden with ironies. It seems astonishing now that a time could have existed when undergraduate students of English Literature at a premier Indian institution would not have heard of Edward Said; that a teaching practice could have once existed where *Orientalism* had not been mentioned in the classroom. (In fact, I think I remember reading in the blurb to *The World, the Text, and the Critic* that this strange-sounding Edward Said was also the author of the strange-sounding *Orientalism*.) But most astonishing is that I, the bearer, too, of a "hybrid" name, a name which signaled the optimistic secularism of Indian Muslim parents and a nationalist grandfather, could not recognize the burden of such "hybridity" when it came attached to someone from someplace else. And the related, third astonishment: how cut off we were, as middle class Indian youth in the 1980s, from the troubles of those elsewhere, which were so unknown to us then and yet were so parallel in the capacity to produce pain, dislocation, and a sudden emptiness of the spirit through the questioning, and denial, of the right to belong.

I left India in 1992. That was the year in which the Babri

Mosque in India was demolished by the Indian Right Wing, and also when globalization and liberalism hit the country in full force. Ensnared in the golden stone buildings, gleaming spires, and green parks of Oxford, I felt the impact of these events at one remove but no less keenly. In tandem, I was opened up to the world. I saw, for the first time, students in *hijab*. I experimented with *iftar* parties at the Oxford University Muslim Society and heard people speak passionately about Bosnia and Palestine. I heard mentioned, in the same breath too, Kashmir—whose status within India I had never questioned until then. My eyes were opening. Somewhere, along the way, I read *Orientalism*. By the time I came to Cambridge and started my PhD, I was reading *Culture and Imperialism* and *The Politics of Dispossession*. I was not using Edward Said consciously for my academic work—my PhD was on Old English—but I was using him unconsciously for my political awakening. Though I cannot pinpoint the moment when that process gathered momentum, he was seeping into my conscious self. Reading his “purest” literary criticism, such as *Beginnings*, alongside his newspaper articles on Palestine, I was ignited by a hunger to be an intellectual in the world, an intellectual who used knowledge of how words worked to expose the workings of all discourse and representation.

When Edward Said arrived at Cambridge to give his lectures on Opera, I was in the throes of my PhD submission. So immersed was I in dissertation-mania that I did not go to any of them, but I did (thankfully) make time to attend the one lecture on Palestine, queuing for over an hour to get a seat inside the biggest lecture theater in Cambridge. Such was the feeling of being overwhelmed by the power of the moment, in that completely packed house, that I cannot remember anything specific but that feeling, the face of Edward Said, and the anger of young Arab students who attacked him for his utopianism. The next day, I went to the seminar that the English Faculty had organized in his honor. One of the most cherished moments of my academic life must be when I raised my hand and asked him a tentatively phrased question about aesthetics and ideology—something about the possibility of aesthetic beauty existing in a tainted world. That was the first time I had been prompted to think seriously of this issue that now preoccupies most of what I do. And the answer? “Read what Adorno has written about the lyric.” That one injunction sent me on a personal mission. The first thing I did after submitting my PhD was to read Theodor Adorno.

That year was definitely *annus mirabilis*: in December, back in Calcutta for a celebratory holiday—I had just won a research fellowship, and my PhD had been submitted—I had the incredible good fortune of listening to him again. This time, it was the Netaji Memorial Lecture organized by the grandnephews of the revolutionary Bengali freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. A warm December night under the colorful Indian-wedding style *shamiana* (marquee)—and Said speaking on the misrepresentations of Islam: I could feel semi-mystification in the air—perhaps this was not quite what the Bengali Hindu intelligentsia had expected of Professor Edward Said? I felt not a little glee at the realization that my minority double-consciousness had enabled me to pick this up. As one minority within a minority helped empower, through his very presence, another one such sitting in the audience, the wheel had come full circle from the late 1980s: when an unglobalized, un-postcolonialized student could sense, but not recognize, the painful parallels that underlie minority subjectivities everywhere. This realization in turn helped me understand what the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have termed as the empowering potential of “becoming minor.”

If I am a postcolonialist today rather than a medievalist, I am so because of Edward Said. If I am an intellectual today who works on a conflict zone, Kashmir, it is because of what he did for Palestine. But above all, I keep in mind the image of the intellect who wrote as passionately about art, beauty, and literature as he did about injustice and hegemony, and that is the ultimate inspiration. It is one of the bitter-sweet contingencies of life that, the day he was to die, I had posted a book to my new friends in Kashmir, in the hope that they would find it useful in their own attempts to work through conflict, trauma, and the possibilities of healing: this was the conversation between Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim on the West-Ostlicher Divan. As I returned to my e-mail after finishing this task, in my inbox were messages announcing that Edward Said was no more. I retraced my steps to the newsagent and bought copies of all the British newspapers. A sense of significance filled the air, as I cut out the obituaries from each. Let me keep them, I thought, for, one day, I would want to have children to show them to.

Tribute to My Father*

Najla Said

He held my small, soft hand in his big, calloused one and walked me to nursery school. He taught me to stomp my boots to get the snow off, dressed me in itchy wool “trousers” and tartan button downs, made me scrambled eggs for every meal, and scratched his head at what to do to get the splinters out of my knee when Mommy was stuck in DC during that snowstorm in 1978. He sent me to an all girls school where I learned, primarily, that I wasn’t a WASP and then held me when I cried that I “have no friends and nobody likes me.” He came to Parents’ Day, made friends with my Irish science teacher, and beamed at me when I raised my hand and squirmed in my seat with eagerness and hyperactivity, emitting an “oh oh oh” so I would be called on. I knew the answers, and I wanted to impress him.

He drove me to ice-skating and took me out for hot chocolate on Lexington Avenue and picked me up from Carolyn Davis’s house on Beekman Place and adored her because she kissed me goodbye, lightly, sweetly, on the cheek. And there was always classical music in the car, and he always carried me inside the house when I fell (or pretended to fall) asleep on the way home.

He bought me dresses from Bergdorf’s and Mary-Janes’s and patent leather shoes with bows on them and “party coats” from Austria, and then he always sat and watched eagerly, attentively, as I modeled them in the living room. And when I was older, there were trinkets, accessories, scarves, watches, sunglasses, shoes, with fancy names on them like Chanel and Cartier and Tiffany; and there were always COLORFUL things, when I wanted BLACK (which was generally always); and there were expensive LOAFERS when I wanted black platform shit-kicking boots; and it was tweed when I wanted it PLAIN; and baggy when I wanted it FITTED, but I secretly loved and love and cherish it all. He appreciated the finer things, yes, but I think that they really meant nothing to him. If he saw that you liked something, it was yours. He gave so much to others; he loved to make everyone smile—“I want you to have it!” he would always say, and, hand outstretched, he would give something away.

* This essay first appeared in *Mizna* and is reprinted here with the journal’s kind permission: Najla Said, “Tribute to My Father,” *Mizna* 6.1 (2004): 1-5.

Daddy became my best friend when I was 12 years old, obsessively, ravenously reading *Jane Eyre*; funny that it was the Brontës that brought us close. He talked to me about books, listened to my ideas, told me I was “such a clever girl” and “so gifted with words.” It had started before; he had laughed and applauded when, at the age of about 7, I tapped my finger against my nose and declared saucily, “she knows.” He adored this expression, and the fact that it came out of my head. From that day forward, it became part of our secret code. He would say it when I said something smart, or just for a giggle, and then mischievously use it as weapon against me when I was fuming and fiery—when the “Said” steam was coming out of my ears. He would offer a smile, a smirk, and with a tap of his own finger atop the crown of his nose, Daddy would crack my icy shell.

Throughout school and college, he read every single paper I wrote before it was handed in. He rearranged some words, peppered it with semi-colons and perhaps a series of emphatic adjectives joined by commas (very much his style), and, finally, added some smart phrase that was to be followed by a colon and my (much more mundane) title (which was usually just a statement of the subject of my paper). He always returned it to me with a smile and a declaration that it was “brilliant.” And when I had that first assignment for French class, the fall of my freshman year at Princeton (an oral report on Proust and the story of the madeleine), he guided me through it. I was so diligent, so conscientious, so young. I had gone to the library, and looked up “Proust.” I found the stacks and immediately collapsed into a heap of tears on the floor. There were aisles upon aisles of books about Proust! And then, as I always did in a panic, I ran to a payphone and called my Daddy. “Naj,” he said sweetly, “how could you think you could just go look up Proust? He’s the most written-about writer in the Western world!!!” He found the episode entirely endearing, and sat with me on the phone for hours, talking through the text with me, listening to my analysis, and adding some thoughts and ideas as I went along. This private tutorial session was the first of many many more. By the time I graduated, we had chatted about, and taken apart, the works of Flaubert, Balzac, Proust, Zola, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Genet, Beckett, Racine, Virgil, Homer, Dante, to name just a few. He always lit up when he talked about literature with me. His voice rose and fell emphatically, and I was amazed at the detail with which he could recall the words, the phrases, the scenes depicted in any given work. I also *always* took pleasure in the fact that my ideas and assign-

ments seemed to reignite his passion for a particular novel or play: “You know I haven’t read it in a long time; it really is quite brilliant. I must read it again.”

I only disappointed him once during my academic career when I signed up for an English class on “Postmodernism,” a class whose required texts included, among other “atrocities,” Batman comic books. Oh, how Daddy was outraged! “No daughter of mine is going to Princeton to read comic books; *my* daughter reads Shakespeare and Virgil. That class is a waste of time; it’s utter rubbish. I will not allow it!” I think he even threatened not to pay my tuition. “Daddy! you are so old! The reason the class has comic books is because it’s a class on *Postmodernism*. You don’t even know what that is.” “Know what that is, Najla? I invented the field!”

That was the end of that. I took some class where I read *Don Quixote* instead.

But even though Daddy could have told you anything you wanted to know about a lot of things, he was entirely hopeless when it came to pop culture; he thought Jonbenet Ramsey was “the man who killed Versace,” wouldn’t be able to distinguish Michael Jackson from a chair, and knew only one thing about Madonna: that “she’s the one who always shows her belly button, right Naj?” (I apparently told him this when I was 10.) He knew, and liked, a total of four “pop” songs, none of which had any commonalities as far as I can tell. These were: “Sympathy for the Devil” by the Rolling Stones, “What’s Love Got to Do With It?” by Tina Turner, “Iko Iko” but only the version from the movie *Rainman*, and “Axel F”—the theme from *Beverly Hills Cop*. He was extremely curious to know who “this Bjork” was (I have a slight obsession), and asked me time and again “what is Eminem?” When I gave him an audio example, Daddy gasped in horror after bobbing his head along to the hip-hop beat for 30 seconds; he suddenly realized there were expletives in the lyrics. One of our ongoing conversations had to do with Ani DiFranco, a folk singer whom I have admired since I was in college. He wanted to know who she was, since he had heard her name time and again. After carefully listening to her left-leaning lyrics and acoustic guitar melodies, which I again played for him on demand, Daddy declared that she was “quite something” and most certainly a reincarnation of Ania Francos, a Jewish intellectual who was an outspoken anti-Zionist.

“Whatever Daddy!” was all I said to that.

But Daddy WAS so curious and interested in everything and EVERYONE. He had such an amazing way with people, a charm and warmth that I cannot even begin to describe. I would be happy to have inherited one tenth of his amazing ability to welcome and listen to and love each new person he encountered, whether he be a hot dog seller on a New York City street corner, a Palestinian refugee, or the king of Spain. He treated everyone equally and had an endearing, childlike curiosity about everyone's background. His eyes would sparkle and light up whenever someone new walked in a room; it was almost as if you could see *their* light shining in *his* eyes. He could absolutely bring a light out in anyone. I wish with all my heart that I could convince my mother of the fact that I never ever saw Daddy's eyes sparkle as much as they did when he was looking at, or listening to, her. Since Daddy died, I keep going back, in my mind, to the night of August 14th, 2003, when the great blackout struck New York City and much of the eastern United States. It was, I now realize, the last night that all five of us (me, Mommy, Wadie, Jennifer, and Daddy) spent together as a family. Although, at the time, I was annoyed that I had to walk 40 blocks in the sweltering heat, and then up 12 flights of stairs to spend the night with my *family*, I now think of that crazy night as a gift. Daddy was in typical Edward form. As Mommy and Wadie and Jenn and I went up and down the stairs numerous times in order to stock up on water and other provisions, Daddy lay on the couch in the family room, gossiping away on the phone. He was talking to someone in Europe, and I recall him declaring in a loud voice, "No—it's *unbelievable*," and then adding, a bit melodramatically—of course—"It's outrageous; we have to go FORAGE FOR FOOD!" as he glanced over at the three of *us* lugging packages into the apartment. My best friend called from LA—"Why am I not surprised that there is no power in the entire eastern half of the United States but, for some reason, Edward Said's phone is still working!?"

After our simple dinner, we all sat in the living room by candlelight, and talked; there was nothing else to do. Mommy had a sly smile on her fatigued face; she was secretly overjoyed that we were all together. Daddy, uncharacteristically in a pair of shorts (it was *that* hot), declared that we had to have a serious discussion. He said that he could not survive without air-conditioning and that the four of us would have to work in *punkah-wallah* shifts (yes, he used that word), fanning him in groups of two during the night. He then launched into the telling of a "famous" Tolstoy story as we all sat around and lis-

tened. As usual, Daddy added details and changed character names to make the story more interesting, and, as usual, nobody said anything (except me). Eventually, it grew so dark that we all retired to our rooms. In the nightstand by my bed, I found a letter that Daddy had written me when I was 17 years old, anorexic, and depressed. The diagnosis of his illness had devastated me. And I was only to get worse after my first (and last) trip to Palestine the following summer. The letter was—of course—articulate and beautifully written, and I remembered how he had slipped it under the door at some ungodly hour of the morning. It ended with the following words:

“There is no greater or better thing, I believe, than trying to make life better for others who are less fortunate or who may be in pain and suffering. Naj, you have a wonderful and noble spirit, I know. Give in to *that*; let that and your best instincts guide you, not the other, the petulant, the disparaging, the defensive and pessimistic. Think about this, and let’s discuss it. Above all, learn to accept and forgive yourself. Learn to love yourself so that you can love and appreciate others. You know how much what I am saying comes from my heart, and it is not meant to be anything but a way for us to help each other.

Yours most lovingly, E.”

One month and 11 days later, Daddy was gone. I have read this letter to myself every day since. It reminds me that on top of all of the amazing things that “Edward Said” was, he was also one phenomenal daddy. Every time I am overwhelmed with pain and sadness and fear, I hear his voice in my head, saying what seemed to be his two favorite phrases: “Pull yourself together, Naj; you just have to PRESS ON.”

On the University

Edward W. Said*

Mr. President, Senator Hatfield, members of the AUC Board of Trustees, members of the AUC faculty and administrative staff, members of the graduating class, distinguished guests, parents, relatives and friends, ladies and gentlemen:

I don't mind admitting to you as a sign of my almost biblical age, that I grew up in Cairo fifty years ago during the 1940s, and that the American University in Cairo was the first university I had anything to do with. Two of my Jerusalem cousins were students here, my father was a close friend of John Badeau, AUC's president then, later John Kennedy's Ambassador to Egypt, and, finally, Ewart Hall was Cairo's main concert hall, where the rudiments of my musical education were formed. I was also gradually aware of AUC's great national counterparts, Cairo University, and al-Azhar, each of them, like AUC, doing something very valuable for generations of Egyptian, Arab, and Muslim students. I am also proud to say that in 1994 my son Wadie perfected his quite extraordinary command of Arabic at CASA here, a major achievement for a New York City kid who, as a matter of solidarity with his Arab origin, made himself remarkably fluent in the language and culture of his heritage, at a time when both were objects of cultural hostility in the United States, the land of his birth and upbringing.

I am honored and pleased to be here today, first, as an Arab Palestinian and a child of Egypt's immense and unparalleled cultural history, and, second, as an American. The combination of these two different strains in AUC, and of course in you, the class of 1999, the last class of the century, is both highly challenging and even enriching, but

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it is also quite problematic. Anyone who knows both societies knows what kinds of differences exist between American and Egyptian societies, so I won't dwell here on what is obvious. What is worth noting is that in institutions like AUC, and its counterpart AUB, the idea of a secular liberal education, pioneered in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the great colleges of the United States, was implanted with very positive results in mostly Islamic, Arab, and, in terms of sheer longevity, extremely old societies in the process of renewing and liberating themselves after long periods of outside domination.

Whatever the results of this bold mixture, they are neither simple nor entirely predictable. Each of you, teachers and students alike, must have your own assessment based on your years of interacting with dizzyingly different ideas, different personal experiences, expectations, frustrations, and fulfillments, but I can't imagine that anyone of you would say that the results were anything less than interesting, rich, and, yes, unsettling. The main thing, though, is that this collective, mixed experience of yours has taken place, and for future students and teachers will continue to take place, in a very special location, namely, a university. As someone who has spent all his adult life working in, and for, the university, let me assure you, as one of my own teachers once said it, it's certainly a lot more fun than working. Many of you, graduates with real jobs in the real world, will certainly discover that.

But that isn't my main point, which is that in every known society—from the ancient Near East, the Arab world to China, India, Greece, and elsewhere—the academy, as Plato called it, was a protected, almost utopian place. Only there could collective learning and the development of knowledge occur and, as in recent years we have discovered, it could occur only if academic freedom from non-academic authority was somehow guaranteed and could prevail. It is an extraordinary thing to discover via George Makdisi's remarkable book *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* that the origins of the modern system of knowledge that we call humanism did not originate, as Jakob Burkhardt and many others believed it did, in Italy during the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Renaissance, but, rather, in the Arab colleges, *madrasas*, mosques, and courts of Iraq, Sicily, Egypt, Andalusia, from the eighth century on. And in those places were formed the traditions and the curricula of legal, theological, as well as secular, learning—the so-called *studia adabiya*—from which European humanists, like Pico della Mirandola, Ficino, Aretino,

and Thomas Moore, derived many of their ideas, not only about learning itself, but also about the environment of learning, where disputation, dissent, and argument were the order of the day.

For those of us who are of Arab origin, and who in the modern period have gotten used to the notion that Europe and the West gave rise to modes of study, notions of academic discipline, and the whole idea of what in Arabic we call *ijtihad*, or the central role of individual effort in study and interpretation, it is salutary indeed to realize that our Arab-Islamic culture contributed substantially to what later was to become the whole system of education, which today we call modern, liberal, and Western. I have very little patience with ethnocentrism of the kind trumpeted by Samuel Huntington, and others like him who claim that all ideas of democracy, freedom, and enlightenment are Western ideas, since the facts of history are, as we now know with reference to education, very mixed, very various, very much a matter of the contribution made by all humankind, all peoples, all cultures. There isn't a single source for anything: All peoples share in the making of history, all peoples make history. So let us agree, then, that whether we look to the time of Ibn 'Abbad or Ibn 'Arabi, or that of John Dewey in the twentieth century, we will find serious thinkers suggesting more or less the same thing, that the place of education is a special province within the society, a place where freedom of inquiry and thought occur and are protected, and where—it must be said—the social and political context plays an important role, by defining the limits and expectations of the learning process. The American University in Cairo is in Cairo, therefore, not in New York or London. That is obvious. Cairo is a specific environment with its own history, laws, language, and norms: Not to take account of all of that is plain wrong.

Yet, the status of university or school, as well as what goes along with them intellectually and socially, is special, is different from other sites in society, like the government bureaucracy, the workplace, or the home. The fact is, I believe, that all societies today assign a special privilege to the academy that, whether it exempts it from intercourse with the everyday world or whether it involves it directly in that world, says that unique conditions do, indeed ought to, prevail in it. To say that someone is educated, or an educator, is to say something having to do with the mind, with intellectual and moral values, with a particular process of inquiry, discussion, and exchange, none of which is as regularly encountered outside as they

are inside the academy. The idea is that academies form the mind of the young, prepare them for life, just as—to look at things from the point of view of the teacher—to teach is to be engaged in a vocation or calling having principally to do, not with financial gain, but with the unending search for truth.

These are very high and important matters, and for those of us who have made education our life, they testify to the genuine aura surrounding the academic and intellectual enterprise. There is something hallowed and consecrated about the academy: There is a sense of violated sanctity, experienced by us when the university or school is subjected to crude political pressures. Yet, I believe, to be convinced of these genuinely powerful truths is not entirely to be freed of the circumstances—some would call them encumbrances—that impinge on education today, influence our thinking about it, shape our efforts in the academy. The point I want to make is that, as we consider these situational or contextual matters, the search for academic freedom, to which such occasions as this are so manifestly dedicated, becomes more important, more urgent, more requiring of careful and reflective analysis. So whereas it is universally true that contemporary societies treat the academy with seriousness and respect, each community of academics, intellectuals, and students must wrestle with the problem of what academic freedom in that society at that time actually is, and should be.

The best definition of a university that I know is by John Henry Cardinal Newman, who in 1854 came from England to Ireland to establish what has since become University College, Dublin. Here is what he said on the occasion:

A university has this object and this mission; it contemplates neither moral impression nor mechanical production; it professes to exercise the mind neither in art nor in duty; its function is intellectual culture; here it may leave its scholars, and it has done its work when it has done as much as this. It educates the intellect to reason well in all matters, to reach out towards truth and to grasp it.

Perhaps you young graduates don't feel that you had this experience, or perhaps you feel that, now that you have finished your course of study, you need no longer be concerned with the university, except as an alumnus. That would be a mistake. You are not only graduates

and former students, you are citizens, and citizenship requires resolute attention to what is most important about the life of your society. And surely there can be nothing more important in the long run of Egypt's life than education, and the life of the mind, especially here in our part of the world, where, alas, we lag behind in democracy, the freedoms of expression, opinion, and the press, and full participation in societies so long dominated by national security concerns, and not the intellectual and civic health of the people. So the freedom of the university is a lifelong concern, and it requires your sustained support and concern.

But to return to Newman. Note the care with which he selects his words for what actions take place in the pursuit of knowledge: words like *exercise*, *educates*, *reach out*, and *grasp*. In none of these words is there anything to suggest coercion, or direct utility, or immediate advantage or dominance. "Knowledge," Newman says in another place, is "something intellectual, something which grasps what it perceives through the senses; something which takes a view of things; which sees more than the senses convey; which reasons upon what it sees, and while it sees; which invests it with an idea." Then he adds: "not to know the relative disposition of things is the state of slaves or children; to have mapped out the universe is the boast, or at least the ambition, of philosophy," which Newman defines as the highest state of knowledge.

These are incomparably eloquent statements, and they can only be a little deflated when we remind ourselves that Newman was speaking to, and about, English men, not women, and then also about the education of young Catholics, not of Egyptians or Arabs. Nonetheless, the profound truth in what Newman says is, I believe, designed to undercut any partial, or somehow narrow, view of education whose aim might seem only to re-affirm one particularly attractive and dominant identity, religion, and authority, that which is the resident power or authority of the moment. Perhaps, like many of his Victorian contemporaries, Newman was arguing earnestly for a type of education that placed the highest premium on English, European, or Christian values in knowledge. But sometimes, even though we may mean to say something, another thought at odds with what we say insinuates itself into our rhetoric, and in effect criticizes it, delivers a different and less assertive idea than on the surface we might have intended. This happens when we read Newman. Suddenly we realize that, although he is obviously extolling what is an overwhelmingly Western

conception of the world, with little explicit allowance made for what is African, or Arab, or Latin American, or Indian, we realize that he says that education should *map out the universe*, thus letting slip the notion that even an English or Western identity wasn't enough, wasn't at bottom, or at best, what education and freedom were all about, which are about "the universe."

Certainly, it is difficult to find in Newman anything like a license, either for blinkered specialization or for gentlemanly aestheticism. What he expects of the academy is, he says, "the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence." This synthetic wholeness has a special relevance to the fraught political situations of conflict, the unresolved tension, and social as well as moral disparities that are constitutive to the world of today's academy. He proposes a large and generous view of human diversity. To link the practice of education and, by extension, of freedom in the academy directly to the settling of political scores, or to an equally unmodulated reflection of real national and religious conflict, is neither to pursue knowledge nor, in the end, to educate ourselves and our students, which is an everlasting effort at understanding. But what happens when we take Newman's prescriptions about viewing many things as one whole, or referring them to their true place in the universal system, and we transpose these notions to today's world of embattled national identities, cultural conflicts, and power relations? Is there any possibility of bridging the gap between the ivory tower of contemplative rationality, ostensibly advocated by Newman, and our own urgent need as Arabs for self-realization and self-assertion with its background in a history of repression and denial? Can the university survive as a real university if its governance and teaching mission become the objects of scrutiny and direct interference, not of its teachers, but of powers outside the university?

I think not. I will go further and say that it is precisely the role of the contemporary academy to keep open the gap between itself and society, since society itself is too directly ruled by politics to serve so general and so finally intellectual and moral a role as the university plainly must. We must first, I think, accept that nationalism or religion resurgent, or even nationalism and religion militant, whether it is the nationalism of the victim or of the victor, such a nationalism has its limits. Nationalism and religion are the philosophy of identity made

into a collectively organized passion. For those of us just emerging from marginality and persecution, our traditions constitute a necessary thing: A long deferred and denied identity needs to come out into the open and take its place among other human identities. But that is only the first step. To make all, or even most of, education subservient to this goal is to limit human horizons, without either intellectual or, I would argue, political warrant. To assume that the ends of education are best advanced by focusing principally on *our own* separateness, or what accords with our own ethnic identity, culture, and traditions ironically places us where, as inferior or lesser races, we had been placed by nineteenth-century racial theory, unable to share in the general riches of human culture. To say that women should read mainly an approved women's literature, Muslims should study and perfect only approved Muslim techniques of understanding and interpretation, that Arabs should return to a set of acceptable works for all knowledge and wisdom, that they should in a university read only what is considered safe and orthodox, is in fact to keep us back, to prevent us from participating in the march of humanity. There is room for all at the *rendezvous* of victory, said Aimé Césaire; no race has a monopoly on beauty or intelligence.

A single over-mastering identity guided by a religious or secular authority outside the academy at the core of the academic enterprise, whether that identity be Western, African, Islamic, Arab, or Asian, is a confinement, a deprivation. The world we live in is made up of numerous identities, numerous ideas, lives, philosophies interacting, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes antithetically. Not to deal with that whole—which is in fact a contemporary version of the whole referred to by Newman as a true enlargement of mind—is not to have academic freedom. We cannot make our claim as seekers after justice, if we advocate knowledge only of and about ourselves, knowledge only that is approved by a team of referees who decide what can and cannot be read. Who then will referee the referees? Now, one of the innovations of an American University in Egypt is precisely that it encourages its students to experience not only their culture and traditions, but another set as well. This, I believe, is deeply enriching, perhaps unsettling, and the very opposite of homogenizing learning into only one approved form. But it is being challenged, and it must resist attempts at book banning or prohibiting ideas.

Our model for academic freedom should therefore be the migrant or traveler: For if, in the real world outside the academy, we

must needs be ourselves and only ourselves, inside the academy, like this one, we should be able to discover and travel among other selves, other identities, other varieties of the human adventure. But, most essentially, in this joint discovery of self and other, it is the role of the academy to transform what might be conflict, or contest, or assertion into reconciliation, mutuality, recognition, creative interaction. But, rather than viewing the search for knowledge in the academy as the search for coercion and control over others, we should regard knowledge as something for which risks must be taken, and we should think of academic freedom as an invitation to explore knowledge, in the hope of understanding, and perhaps even assuming, more than one kind. We must always view the academy as a place to voyage in, owning none of it, but at home everywhere in it. There can be no forbidden knowledge if the modern university is to maintain its place, its mission, its power to educate.

An altogether different challenge to the concept of academic freedom is found in national universities in much of the contemporary Arab world. I speak here, generally, of most of the large public universities in countries all through the area. Most of these countries are, in fact, run by secular governments. What is important to understand, however, is that, with few exceptions, Arab universities are not only nationalist universities, but are also political institutions, for perfectly understandable reasons. In Palestine, Bir Zeit and al-Najah, for instance, have resisted Israeli occupation and preserved Palestinian identity admirably. Elsewhere, the Arab world which had been dominated, either by Ottoman or by European colonialism, became independent after World War II. National independence, for countries like Egypt and Syria, meant that young people at last could be educated fully in the traditions, histories, languages, and cultures of their own particular Arab countries. In my own case, for instance, I was educated entirely in British colonial schools, in Palestine and Egypt, where everything was focused on the history of British society, its literature, and values. Much the same was true in the main British and French colonies, such as India and Algeria, where it was assumed that native elites would be taught the rudiments of intellectual culture, in idioms and methods designed, in effect, to keep those native elites basically subservient to colonial rule, the superiority of European learning, and so forth. Until I was about sixteen, I knew a great deal more about the eighteenth-century enclosure system in England than I did about how the Islamic *waqf* operated in my own part of the

world, and to me—irony of ironies—colonial proconsuls, like Cromer and Kitchener, were more familiar to me than Haroun al-Rashid or Khalid ibn al-Walid.

So that when independence was achieved, as a result of anti-colonial struggles, one of the first things to be changed was education. I recall, for instance, that after the Revolution of 1952 in Egypt, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the Arabization of the curriculum, of intellectual norms, of values to be inculcated in schools and universities. The same was true of Algeria after 1962, where an entire generation of Muslims were, for the first time, entitled and enjoined to study Arabic, which had been forbidden except as a language in mosques, while Algeria was considered and ruled as a department of France. It is important to understand, therefore, the justified passion that went into reclaiming the educational territory, for so long dominated by foreign rulers in the Arab world, and it is equally important to understand the tremendous spiritual wound felt by many of us, because of the sustained presence in our midst of domineering foreigners who taught us to respect distant norms and values more than our own. Our culture was felt to be of a lower grade, perhaps even congenitally inferior, and something to be ashamed of.

Now it would be both wrong, and even absurd, to suggest that a national education based on Arabic norms is, and of itself, either trivial or impoverished. Of course not. Yet, it is also true to say that in the newly independent countries of the Arab world, the national universities were often re-conceived, I believe, as (rightly or wrongly) extensions of the newly established national security state. Once again, it is clear that all societies accord a remarkable privilege to the university and school, as crucibles for the shaping of national identity. This is true everywhere, at sometimes too high a price. In the US there was a great deal of pressure on universities to benefit the defense department, especially during the Cold War and the Vietnam War.

Yet, all too often in the Arab world, true education has been short-circuited, so to speak. Whereas in the past young Arabs fell prey to the intervention of foreign ideas and norms, now they were to be remade in the image of the ruling party, which, given the Cold War, and the Arab-Israeli struggle, became also the party of national security, and, in some countries, the only party. Thus adding to the vastly increased pressure on universities to open their doors to everyone in the new society—an extremely admirable policy pioneered in Egypt—universities also became the proving ground for earnest

patriots. This was also true during the McCarthy period in the US, when anyone suspected of left-wing ideas was persecuted. Professorial appointments were, as they are in many places in the world today, the equivalent of civil service appointments. Yet, alas, political conformity, rather than intellectual excellence, was often made to serve as a criterion for promotion and appointment, with the general result that timidity, a studious lack of imagination, careful conservatism came to rule intellectual practice. This is a danger everywhere—in the US, Europe, the Third World, etc. Often the atmosphere of the university has changed from freedom to accommodation, from brilliance and daring to caution and fear, from the advancement of knowledge to self-preservation.

Not only did many brilliant and gifted people leave the Arab world in a massive brain drain, but I would say that the whole notion of academic freedom underwent a significant downgrading during the past three decades. It became possible for one to be free in the university only if one completely avoided anything that might attract unwelcome attention or suspicion. I do not want to make of this occasion a long, anguished recital of how badly demoralized and discouraged a place the Arab world, in most of its contemporary aspects, has become, but I do think it is important to link its depressed situation with the lack of democratic rights, the absence of a free press, and of an atmosphere bereft of well-being and confidence in the society. No one can say that these things are not connected to each other, because they so obviously are. Political repression has never been good for academic freedom, and, perhaps more importantly, it has been disastrous for academic and intellectual excellence when such things as book banning and censorship are practiced. My assessment, as I said, is that too high a price has been paid where political or religious passions, and an ideology of conformity, are allowed to dominate, and perhaps even to swallow up, civil institutions, such as the university. To make the practice of intellectual discourse dependent upon conformity to a pre-determined political or religious ideology is to nullify intellect altogether.

It comes, finally, to two images for inhabiting the academic and cultural space provided by the university. On the one hand, authority is there in order to reign and hold sway. Here, in such a conception of academic space, the academic professional and the public authority is the sultan and potentate. In that form, teaching teaches students not to question, but to follow authority, not to be

skeptical—which is to continue searching—but to cling to dogma. The other model is considerably more mobile, more playful, although no less serious. The image of traveler depends not on power, but on motion, on a willingness to go into different worlds, use different idioms, understand a variety of disguises, masks, rhetorics, and be free to do so, and to be critical, to think for oneself. Travelers must suspend the claim of customary routine, in order to live in new rhythms and rituals. Most of all, and most unlike the sultan who must guard only one place and defend its frontiers, the traveler *crosses over*, traverses territory, abandons fixed positions, all the time. To do this with dedication and love, as well as a realistic sense of the terrain, is, I believe, academic freedom at its highest, since one of its main features is that you can leave authority and dogma to the sultan. Academic freedom is risk and danger. It means allowing oneself a few years where the conventions of society are suspended, so that the search for knowledge can go on for the love of knowledge alone. To be a life-long member in the academic world, as you new graduates and your teachers are, is therefore to enter a ceaseless quest for principles and knowledge, liberation, and finally justice.

The Late Style of Edward Said

Stathis Gourgouris

Edward Said's interest in "late style"—a concept drawn from Theodor Adorno's account of Beethoven's late music—can be traced back to the early 1990s. It represented initially the next in a line of writings on literary and musical criticism, following *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and *Musical Elaborations* (1991). But it would also be fair to say that "late style" was conceptualized by Said out of the disruptive experience of his illness, and the consequent confrontation with mortality. Because Said had always been adverse to religious or transcendental solutions, his personal encounter with mortality was unlikely to have led to intellectual projects that exemplify some sort of spiritual quest, an exercise in philosophical redemption, or a retrospective settling of affairs.

The writing of his memoir *Out of Place* (1999)—which, by his own account, proved difficult to complete—was hardly an attempt to round out the contours of his life or provide a retrospective reference for some sort of Saidian totality. In addition to being, in a concrete and avowed sense, an attempt to recall and reconfigure in writing a social world now lost forever, the memoir strove to map a network of beginnings, and hardly to account for a totality of life from some endpoint of thought. It might be said that *Out of Place* was Said's first exercise in late style, much as it signified, *de facto*, the deferral of writing the envisioned essays that would make up the book on late style. As a narrative of beginnings—and much like Said's first exercise in literary criticism, *Beginnings* (1975)—the memoir was an extensive meditation on the parameters of secular life, on a person's struggle to create meaning solely within this world, even in historical instances when the world seemed recalcitrant and adverse to any sort of meaningfulness.

The book on late style was never completed, though various essays or bits and pieces in lectures and occasional writings over the last fifteen years suggest that the project was always alive and imminent. The recent publication in the *London Review of Books* of an

essay “Thoughts on Late Style,” a fragmentary but brilliant exposition of the problem Said was pursuing, puts forth a whole other framework in which to perceive Edward Said’s last works.¹ (We might note, incidentally, that the graduate seminar Said occasionally taught at Columbia University during those years carried the double title “Last Works/Late Style.”) By last works, I refer to his book *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004), and the political journalism of the last years, collected posthumously as *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map* (2004) and published with an insightful introduction by New York University historian Tony Judt and an elegant and moving afterword by Wadie Said, the author’s son.

Even the most elementary account of Edward Said’s life and work makes evident that his literary and political worlds were intertwined in a delicate but persistent fashion, though kept intact in their disciplinary parameters, conducted simultaneously as distinct but interrelated elements of a life project, which he explicitly authorized as the task of *secular criticism*. But what exactly distinguishes these last works within the protracted project of secular criticism that might enable us to speak of the late style of Edward Said?

In the aforementioned essay, Said gives the most succinct descriptions of an otherwise elusive concept. Returning to Adorno’s interpretation of the late Beethoven, Said singles out the insistence on Beethoven’s intransigent subjectivity in relation to his musical material which disregards the rigorous integrative logic that was the composer’s signature symphonic style in favor of “wayward and eccentric” or “episodic” approaches that reveal Beethoven’s final resignation from the possibility of synthesis. Said points to Adorno’s conclusion that the style of Beethoven’s late works, far from achieving harmonious synthesis, produces an internal tearing, which leaves these works suspended in time and imprints them with implacable and catastrophic awe.

Said agrees that Beethoven’s late works “remain unco-opted by a higher synthesis” as “they do not fit any scheme, and they cannot be reconciled and resolved, since their irresolution and fragmentariness are constitutive, neither ornamental nor symbolic of something else. The late works are about ‘lost totality,’ and it is in this sense that they are catastrophic” (TLS n. pag.). But Said underlines that Adorno’s reading seeks to define lateness as a specific relation to form which goes beyond the mere biographical element of an artist late in life striving to leave his last mark. Whatever might be the relation to the biographical dimen-

sion—no one suggests it is not relevant—and hence whatever might be the relation of art to a specific reality, late style testifies to art at an extreme point that disregards conventions (including the artist’s own) and breaks through the muted assurance of contemporary reality, which, until then, had provided the artist with a cogent identity.

Lateness thus becomes a condition in its own right: a disruptive response by a creative intelligence to the irreversible finitude of life, on the one hand, and to one’s assimilation by the enormous memorializing forces of history, on the other. Said recognizes Adorno’s own gestures of late style in his characterizations of Beethoven before proceeding to two cases suffering from the same condition but drawn from the fringes of a Mediterranean universe so dear to his own imagination: the Sicilian novelist Giuseppe di Lampedusa and the Alexandrian Greek poet Constantine Cavafy. He identifies in both an anachronistic sensibility that, paradoxically, denudes the present of its elusive and inscrutable character, and thus sharpens its force as history-in-the-making. This anachronistic imaginary is conducted by taking great pleasure and confidence in the skewed and exilic position of a literature that disregards the authority of its present time and, therefore, does not get absorbed in the unresolved tension between what is presently trivial and what might end up being historically shattering. Such position configures instead, eccentrically and inimitably, the terms of a critical understanding of present history to be actualized in the future. Said concludes that “the prerogative of late style” is

to render disenchantment and pleasure without resolving the contradiction between them. What holds them in tension, as equal forces straining in opposite directions, is the artist’s mature subjectivity, stripped of hubris and pomposity, unashamed either of its fallibility or of the modest assurance it has gained as a result of age and exile. (TLS n. pag.)

Late style is thus characterized by definite bravery but never naïve audacity, by remaining committed to one’s singular vision but never losing touch with either the absolute limits of mortality or the defiance of limits that enables humanity to make history in the face of an indeterminate future. No careful reader, I believe, can miss the resonance of this final paragraph in Said’s definitive essay on late style. It is implicitly as self-referential as it is explicitly pertinent to a literary form and a social condition.

The essays on humanism were famous years before they found their way into print. In certain circles in the humanities, they were downright infamous, configured to bear the most concrete evidence of Said's alleged turn against theory. The argument circulated at the most simplistic level: insofar as the high days of French theory, in the spirit of 1968, had made their mark through a devastating critique against the assumptions of the humanist tradition, any attempt to defend and re-authorize the discourse of humanism was tantamount to being anti-theory. This syllogism is not merely simplistic; it is entirely inaccurate in respect to both sides. Neither was Said ever simply "anti-theory," nor were the so-called post-structuralist theorists simply "anti-humanists." There is nothing *a priori* compatible or incompatible between the terms "theory" and "humanism." Their interrelation is, and has always been, historically contingent, before even the terms bore any recognizable coherence, before even being thus named, from Heidegger extending backwards to Nietzsche to Marx.

Said, of course, never hid his frustration with what he perceived to be the fetishism of theory, the specific sort of academic self-fashioning by means of a rarefied language that ultimately undercut any frame of reference other than itself. He found this indeed to betray the political purposes of theory—which, from his earliest avowed allegiances to Georg Lukács and Antonio Gramsci, had meaning only in a dialectical relation to praxis—and he assailed such tendencies in both Europeanist and postcolonial literary studies, over whose theoretical parameters he had, at one time, presided. Hence, the charge against him about a turn of face. The lectures on humanism were met, practically everywhere in American universities, with a sense of betrayal by those who had been counted among his allies in the humanities during the 1970s and 1980s, and a sense of triumphalism by various adversaries, who had once inaugurated themselves as the defenders of Anglo-American humanist principles against the foreign onslaught.

A careful reading of *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, however, shows Said to confound both sides yet again. He initiates the argument with a relentless critique of latter-day American humanism of the likes of Allan Bloom, William Bennett, or Saul Bellow, who represent "the anti-intellectualism of American life" and are characterized by "a certain dyspepsia of tone" and "the sour pursing of the lips that expresses joylessness and disapproval," all of it driven by the "unpleasant American penchant for moralizing reductiveness" and the stern conviction that "the approved culture is salubrious

in an unadulterated and finally uncomplicatedly redemptive way.”² At the same time, Said does not mince words about “lazy multiculturalism” and “specialized jargons for the humanities.” He rejects “ideological anti-humanism,” which he identifies as a negative practice that nullifies *a priori* the sovereignty of the Enlightenment subject, instead of dismantling the assumptions this subject mobilizes in the ever-changing landscape of the post-Enlightenment world, precisely in order to wrest subjectivity away from its presumably impermeable ideological trappings.

This double-sided rejection speaks of an equally double-sided purpose. Said initially proclaims his undertaking to be “critical of humanism in the name of humanism” (H 10), and yet, later on, professes his aspiration to achieve the position of “the non-humanist humanist,” which, by his own account, is a “dialectically fraught” position that takes humanism to initiate “a technique of trouble” (H 77). Any careful reader of Said over the years knows that his language can achieve the most extraordinary intertwining of the skeptical with the utopian, but is never equivocal or sophistic. These apparently self-contradictory assertions are not driven by some perverse desire to confuse, but, on the contrary, by a stern commitment to elucidate the underhanded and deceitful ways in which identities—here, both the “humanist” and the “anti-humanist,” but in essence *all* identities—are produced and cultivated.

For a man who had once said, simply and succinctly, “imperialism is the export of identity”—in an essay on Jean Genet,³ which was to be included in the book on late style—the critique of identity is not merely an occasional political stance (as in the critique of “identity politics,” for example), but a philosophical position that interrogates any practice of exclusion. Without ever adopting an ontological framework, Said consistently attacks any structure, discourse, or institution that renders itself unaccountable of forming identities, no matter what might be the historical necessity or political strategy. Hence, his tireless dismantling of authorities that demand strict obedience and adhesion to *a priori* principles: nationalism, imperialism, religion, the State, or those definitions of culture that bind societies in conceptual frameworks of “civilization”—this was, of course, the impetus of *Orientalism*.

The essays on humanism follow this line of thinking against identity, but focus on the core figure that drives identity production: the human as such. This focus is relentlessly sharpened by brushing aside abstract philosophizing about the ‘nature of the human’ in order

to foreground the range of human practices—the making of society, the making of history—as constitutive boundaries of the human. In this respect, Said’s antinomian humanism is yet another elaboration on the task of secular criticism, which must be understood to work on both grounds of what is secular and what is critical. The text is full of descriptions of this task. I choose two: “To understand humanism at all is to understand it as democratic, open to all classes and backgrounds, and as a process of unending disclosure, discovery, self-criticism, and liberation. . . . Humanism *is* critique” (H 21). And: “Humanism should be a force of disclosure, not of secrecy or religious illumination. . . . [It] must excavate the silences, the world of memory, of itinerant, barely surviving groups, the places of exclusion and invisibility, the kind of testimony that doesn’t make it into reports. . .” (H 73, 81).

Taken together, these phrases target both particularist and universalist practices by demanding a disclosure—Said is fond of using just as often the word “exfoliation”—of all exclusionary strategies, whether their authority is achieved in the name of the Self (and its global expanse) or in the name of the Other (and its narrowing essence). We may thus understand Said’s call “to practice a *paradoxal mode of thought*” (H 83; his emphasis) as a call to subvert any *orthodox* tendencies, no matter what their purpose or justification. It is not so difficult to see why both dogmatic traditionalists, who defend the purity of the literary canon or of human rights, and dogmatic multiculturalists, who refuse to affirm anything other than their own minoritarian niche, would find much to be sour about in this book. But they are likely to miss that Said’s presumed objection is not against their position in political, historical, or even theoretical terms, but against the orthodoxy of their position, against their entrenchment, their inability to consider that their position, after all, bears as well the mark of its worldliness, of being made in a specific moment *in* the world. This inability undermines and occludes the historical accountability of such positions because it denies them the realization that they remain open to being, just as easily, unmade (and made anew, made otherwise) when worldly conditions demand it. Said certainly deserves the credit of being a global intellectual, but he achieved it by being always a worldly intellectual.

It is this worldliness that grants meaning to both humanism and criticism (which are, in any case, interwoven) as practices invariably engaged in the struggle to accept and embrace the new, the emergent, the not yet known, the unthought, the as-yet-to-be imagined. This atti-

tude is crucial to Said's argument about humanist practice, but resides also at the core of his characterization of late style. At the point when one is "getting old"—the point of the body aging, works maturing, life-experience reaching the fullest—one is even more persistently open to the new, often to the new against the old, against the grain of what is already in place, comforting and assuring. This disquieting and restless *modernist* spirit—"rendering pleasure and disenchantment without resolving the contradiction between them" (TLS n. pag.)—permeates the argument throughout and explains precisely why this book, written presumably at the summit of the author's intellectual wisdom, is so annoying to so many, so subversive.

The volume *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map* collects Said's political journalism of the last three years of his life. The title resonates with his call for dismantling "the technical and ultimately janitorial rearrangement of geography" (H 143). Most of these pieces were written as regular columns in the weekly English language Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram Weekly*, and almost all the pieces, which are short, concise, and widely accessible, were syndicated and reproduced in various newspapers around the world or broadly distributed through the Internet. In this mode of writing for large audiences, Said strives to achieve the ultimate power of the essay form to capture the demands of the transient and the ephemeral—the world of real, daily politics—as forces of history that have lasting effect, as events that exceed their temporal lifespan. Only a masterful essayist, like Said, could draw from the transient and the ephemeral a concrete sense of the unknown future: "One *invents* abductively; one hypothesizes a better situation from the known historical and social facts" (H 140).

What distinguishes this set of writings, however, is, on the one hand, a greater sense of urgency, a fierceness of energy remarkable given the author's already awe-inspiring indefatigability, and, on the other hand, an explicit and deliberately cultivated politics of self-critique that shadows the critique of the adversary in ways hitherto unexplored. This gives these writings—which are, of course, focused on the Palestinian question but with an eye poised on its global repercussions—a distinct style, if I am permitted to address political writing with a literary term: a writing style distinguished by its sharpness and intransigence, not merely with respect to its content, but in its very form. Only the complex personality of Edward Said, a student of Adornian writing who clearly surpassed the lesson, could have produced a late style of writing in the context of political journalism. And my sense of these

pieces, as a reader in retrospect and at a distance from the historical immediacy that generated them, is that Said's long-term involvement with the Palestinian struggle served to sharpen his intellectual focus in ways that even the most rigorous and self-reflexive theoretical thinking could not.

The main gesture in these texts is to speak to Arab audiences, to raise the stakes of discourse and reflection in and with Arab audiences. Hence, we see a great deal of energy spent on examination and critical elaboration of things Arab, not merely Palestinian. This happens in conjunction with attempts to convey the complexities of American reality and to dispel the naïve and narrow-minded (pre)judgment of American society, culture, and politics. It hardly means that Said's criticism of Israeli policy and the cowardice of Israeli intellectuals is any less relentless than it has been consistently. It is just that whatever the critique of Israel, Said strives to show, it must take place in the context of self-critique. For two reasons: first, self-critique will sharpen the critique of the adversary and make it more useful, moving it closer to the realm of praxis; and second, self-critique and critique of the adversary must coincide because the two societies are irretrievably co-implicated and complicit, both in their history and in their present reality. This, I think, is the most radical of Said's positions on this matter in the later years of his writing, echoing his general conviction that "cultures are intertwined and can only be disentangled from each other by being mutilated" (H 52).

For this reason, Said will assail the contemporary mode of conducting politics, addressing American or Israeli policies of conquest and occupation, as well as Islamist responses, with a statement that exemplifies the secular criticism he pursued throughout his life: "Demonization of the Other is not a sufficient basis for any kind of decent politics."⁴ We could add, just as well, that demonization of the Other always bespeaks of a 'religious politics' whose indecency is the least of its problems. In this kind of politics, the inequities of power, regardless in which position in the equation one finds oneself, assume a metaphysical aura and are thus maintained (even if the intention is to subvert them) by fostering some sort of dogmatic exclusion or erasure of the adversary's actual existence. It is, in other words, a politics of annihilation.

Against the demonization of the Other, which is bound to leave behind real traces of atrocity and destruction (including self-destruction), Said's journalism exemplifies the politics of humanist

resistance. It fosters a democratic criticism that does not make mockery of its (abused) name: a criticism that inhabits and speaks to the world, disregarding set constituencies and their approval ratings—indeed, continuously (re)shaping constituencies around the interrogative assessment of the issues, which thus lose their righteous authority and open themselves to subversive rethinking. In this world, where God is allegedly occupying the mind of political players worldwide—which hardly excuses the mindlessness and cynicism they shamelessly try to pass off as righteousness and morality—Edward Said’s voice, preserved in these quick and sharp meditations on history-in-the-making, continues to provide us with arms of defiance. And though his adversaries have been all too eager to celebrate his corporeal absence, they cannot outmaneuver the altogether actual presence of his legacy. Whether writing of past history or of events unfolding in the present, Edward Said never wavered from his avowed conviction that “all criticism is postulated and performed on the assumption that it is to have a future.”⁵ Late style is precisely the form that defies the infirmities of the present, as well as the palliatives of the past, in order to seek out this future, to posit it and perform it, even if in words and images, gestures and representations, which now seem puzzling, untimely, or impossible.

Notes

- ¹ Edward W. Said, “Thoughts on Late Style,” *The London Review of Books* 26.15 (August 5, 2004): 3-7. Henceforth, cited in the article as TLS. Citations here are from the *London Review of Books*’s website: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n15/said01_.html>
- ² Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (NY: Columbia UP, 2004), 18-21. Henceforth, cited in the article as H.
- ³ Edward W. Said, “On Genet’s Late Works,” *Grand Street* 36.9 (1990): 38.
- ⁴ Edward W. Said, *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map* (NY: Pantheon, 2004), 111.
- ⁵ Edward W. Said, “The Future of Criticism,” *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000), 165.

Reconciliation without Duress: Said, Adorno, and the Autonomous Intellectual

Moustafa Bayoumi

Even occasional readers of Edward Said's impressive and substantial *oeuvre* will recognize that he never suffered from a Bloomian anxiety of influence. Throughout his work, Said freely names the philosophers, writers, and critics from whom he borrows certain ideas and concepts, and he then openly animates, assimilates, and—to use his word—*affiliates* himself to them in his own inimitable fashion.¹ The list is long and distinguished, and it indicates Said's particular intellectual genealogy, one that largely combines a critical Marxist Humanism (found, say, in the work of Raymond Williams) with his own notion of *worldliness*, allowing Said to extend the reach of Marxist theory into the realm of imperialism and its culture.² While the sources and influences are unmistakable, it is important to underline, nonetheless, how the work remains always and altogether Said's own. In fact, the key to understanding Said and his use of theory and philosophy is ultimately not found only in drawing out his affiliations with past thinkers but in recognizing his hostility to any kind of slavish obedience, even to past masters. More than anything, Said's work can, and ought to be, described as anti-authoritarian, that is to say, he remained skeptical of *all* kinds of authority, even the authority of other thinkers whom he admired. The ethical note sounded in Said's work then is for his readers to challenge his own authority as well, and thus to engage them critically and not unthinkingly or reflexively. While it is certainly true that Said, far from following intellectual fads, had a knack for creating them, it is also true that he largely rejected the term "postcolonial" as a description of his work and preferred instead the moniker of "secular criticism,"³ a phrase far less assimilable into doctrine, precisely out of his aversion to systems and schools of thought.

Nevertheless, we do have an unambiguous sense of who makes up Said's particular pantheon of scholars and writers, and something can be gained by tracing this genealogy, if only to understand the particular rhythms and modulations, in fact, the imaginative scope of

Said's thought, and to note how, when theories travel into Said's work, they are often criticized, reformulated, and reinvigorated.⁴ Standing clearly in the wings of *Orientalism*, for example, are the figures of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci, two significant twentieth-century European philosophers who come, albeit rather differently, out of the Marxist tradition. But even here, Said's use of their work and ideas is highly specific, one might say strategic, and is employed largely for the ends of the argument of *Orientalism* rather than for indicating membership in a school of thought.

Consider, for example, Said's use of Foucault and the notion of discourse in *Orientalism*. While he is often credited with introducing the work of Michel Foucault into American academic thought, Said, interestingly enough, seems to have been largely finished with Foucault by the time of *Orientalism*'s publication, going so far as to draw the gap between him and the French philosopher in the introduction to that work. "Yet unlike Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted," Said explains, "I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like *Orientalism*."⁵ Here Foucault's influence is willingly acknowledged, but Said's own humanism (found in the idea that Foucault's notion of discourse tends to deny how humans make and can thus change their own destinies) is asserted and takes precedence. Foucault's method is enabling to Said, but that does not mean he has to go wherever Foucault goes. "Never solidarity before criticism,"⁶ writes Said in *Representations of the Intellectual*, and this is as much an intellectual prescription as it is a political one.

Gramsci is more useful to Said in the long run, but Gramsci's ideas too are relevant in particular ways. For Said, Gramsci's uses can be summarized in three specific areas: the notions of "hegemony" and "personal inventory," as Said describes in the introduction to *Orientalism*; the idea in Gramsci of developing a "critical consciousness"⁷ and of locating the "intellectual, and not social classes, as pivotal to the workings of modern society";⁸ and the depth of Gramsci's analysis deriving substantially from his ability to examine the world not only out of a sense of history but also through a consideration of geography.⁹ Despite the variety of these areas, Gramsci's influence and deployment remain largely consistent throughout Said's intellectual life.

In fact, a particular strength of Said's work has always been

how he seems to have fully thought through his influences before engaging them in his work, giving his interventions their unique stamp, remarkable consistency, and individual energy along with an almost belated quality of recognition. The work, in other words, always seems both refreshingly new and rigorously traditional at the same time, precisely because the thinking is so complete and always has been. Perhaps in no other major thinker of our era do we witness the presence of a fully formed body of thought virtually from the outset and then observe how the reach of the career has been to mine that terrain more deeply to create fresh modes of thinking and new means of perception. In total, Said's work invites a particular analysis of cultural politics that is novel and historical concurrently and that aims to take culture and politics seriously, both individually and at the level of their profound interaction, and it does so through thirty years of unswerving labor.

Other influences beyond Gramsci and Foucault of course abound, and one gets a sense of Said's dynamic and complete *repertoire* when considering them all together. Owing in part to Said's training in comparative literature and his impressive mastery of literatures and languages, they come unsurprisingly from around the world. Among the Italians, we find not only Gramsci and the idea of hegemony but also a lasting debt to Giambattista Vico (who comes to Said by way of Erich Auerbach) for the very notion that the secular (and not the sacred) world is where human life happens and in the secular world history is made by individual humans.¹⁰ Raymond Williams figures impressively in Said's work, to the point that Said adopts and adapts Williams's analytical formulation of the "structures of feeling"¹¹ of a society into "structures of attitudes of references" as a reading strategy in *Culture and Imperialism*.¹² The German comparatist Erich Auerbach is also referenced throughout Said's work, from *Beginnings* all the way to *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*,¹³ likely through the influence of Said's teacher R. P. Blackmur.¹⁴ Here too, however, Auerbach is used strategically and deployed to indicate the benefits of exile, the pleasures of comparative literature, and the idea of universal belonging. Said was fond of quoting Auerbach quoting Hugo St. Victor: "the man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land."¹⁵ This idea of the gains and not just the losses of exile becomes regularly associated with Auerbach throughout Said's career, to the point that what we

are basically left with in the end is not Auerbach in his entirety but Said's specific version of Auerbach, particularly as it is associated with exile and belonging.¹⁶

Revolutionary thinkers from the non-European world also inform Said's thought, particularly from the mid-1980s forward. Mahmoud Darwish is frequently cited and a line of his poetry, of course, is the title of Said's meditative essay on Palestinian lives, *After the Last Sky*.¹⁷ Aimé Césaire and C. L. R. James play large and important roles as critical Third World intellectuals, in *Culture and Imperialism* in particular. Said is drawn to Césaire's magisterial poem *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* and to the brilliance of James's thought, particularly in his engaged works of historical investigation like *The Black Jacobins*. It may seem like the non-European intellectual is a newly developing concern for Said since Césaire and James are mostly investigated in the 1980s, but close readers will note that Frantz Fanon has been a steady influence throughout for Said, where the first mention of the Martiniquean psychiatrist can be found all the way back in *Beginnings*.¹⁸

And of course other literary figures consistently recur, most notably Jonathan Swift, W. B. Yeats, and Joseph Conrad (all of them, of course, insiders and outsiders of Europe in their own ways). Swift is important for his own anti-authoritarianism (his "Tory Anarchy") and his intellectual independence (see Said's chapter entitled "Swift as Intellectual" in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*). In Yeats, Said uncovers all the needs and problems of nationalism and colonial liberation, and with Conrad, his lifelong literary companion, Said probes multiple ideas: the ambivalences of colonialism, the productive life of exile, and the fiction of autobiography.

And there we have it, an abbreviated but (I think) largely accurate compilation of Said's intellectual genealogy, one that is secular, humanist, Marxist, literary, and Third World. Furthermore, while he was a student of all of these figures, he was never a follower of any of them. To be a follower, after all, would negate Said's anti-systematic and anti-authoritarian stance. Yet, do we observe a shift, a puzzling if not downright mystifying change in the later Said when he begins to identify so closely to the German philosopher Theodor Adorno? Sympathetic references and theoretical alignments to Adorno's work are claimed repeatedly in Said's later work, and he consolidates this allegiance when he declares in an interview published in *Ha'aretz* in 2000, that he is "the only true follower of Adorno," writing today.¹⁹

This pronouncement, along with Said's almost unqualified loyalty to Adorno in this last phase of his career, is perplexing in at least two ways: the independent critic claims he is a follower—and of Theodor Adorno, the Frankfurt School prophet of pessimism, no less. Why a follower? And why Adorno?

Perhaps a brief detour through Adorno's biography will be useful. Born as Theodor Wiesengrund in 1903 (he adopted the surname Adorno from his mother's maiden name in 1938) in Frankfurt-am-Main to an assimilated Jewish father and a Catholic mother, Adorno was to become an extremely prolific writer, especially in his music criticism, and one of the twentieth century's most challenging philosophers. As a teenager, Adorno was schooled by Sigfried Kracauer in Kant, and later he would meet Max Horkheimer and Walter Benjamin, two enormously influential friends, while completing a doctorate in philosophy (which he finished at age 21) at Frankfurt's Johann Wolfgang Goethe University. Adorno was also a musician and, as a young man, he lived briefly in Vienna to study under Arnold Schönberg before returning to Frankfurt. In 1923, he began associating with the Institute for Social Research (what was to become known as The Frankfurt School after the Second World War) while preparing his *Habilitationsschrift* upon which the possibility to teach in German universities rested. Supervised by the theologian Paul Tillich, Adorno's *Habilitationsschrift* was accepted in 1933 on the same day Hitler came to power.

Shortly thereafter, Adorno's right to teach was revoked by the Nazi government, and he moved first to Berlin, then to England, and eventually to the United States, where he remained during the war, living initially in New York City and then later in southern California. Horkheimer too was in the United States, and during this period of painful exile, with Europe falling into ruin, they co-wrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), and Adorno followed immediately afterwards (1944-1947) by composing his meditation on exile and philosophy, *Minima Moralia*, which he dedicated to Horkheimer. After the war, Adorno eventually returned to Germany, where he wrote an enormous amount of material, much of it on music. In 1958, after Horkheimer's retirement, Adorno assumed full directorship of the Institute for Social Research, a position he held until his death in 1969.

It would be a fool's errand to attempt to summarize Adorno's complex thought in a few paragraphs, but one can reasonably point to

some of its general tendencies, nonetheless. First and foremost, Adorno's *oeuvre* can be fairly categorized as an unrelenting critique against the forces of domination in the modern world, whether those forces are the powers of commodification, racism, or Enlightenment reason itself. Critical theory is the name of the practice associated with the Institute for Social Research and with Adorno's work. Neither a methodology nor a school, critical theory is best understood as an *Ansatzpunkt*, a point of beginning, that incorporates Kant's notion of examining both the limits and the possibilities of rational criticism with Marx's historical critiques of ideology. Critical theory, moreover, aims for a high degree of self-consciousness, contemplating the act of thinking while the thinking occurs. At bottom, critical theory desires to embed its practice and its philosophy in the social world in opposition to the reified positivism of the past. It is, in short, critical of objectivity.

One of the most self-reflexive of thinkers, Adorno also added to critical theory by combining the insights of Freudian psychoanalysis with Marxism, particularly when theorizing Fascism. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in fact, should be seen as a high point of critical theory for the way it self-reflexively critiques the concept of the Enlightenment as containing within it the possibility and the limit of both liberation and domination. The Enlightenment is part of the progression of the human world to gain control over nature, similar to "myth" before. However, the Enlightenment also threatens to establish a new "mythology" which rather than delivering humans to liberation leads them instead to barbarism. Fascism, of course, is everywhere in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as is the totalitarian impulse of modern society, exemplified most clearly by the "culture industry." It is the culture industry that defeats individuality, is the "negation of style,"²⁰ and produces pure obedience to social hierarchy. Through the culture industry, "the might of industrial society is lodged in men's minds."²¹

Dialectic of Enlightenment appears to be a bleak text, but there is hope to be found within its pages. "The task to be accomplished is not the conservation of the past, but the redemption of the hopes of the past,"²² write Adorno and Horkheimer, and redemption can be found only through a truly critical philosophy, where reason is deployed in non-instrumental forms. The problem with the Enlightenment has been precisely its instrumentalization of reason, which leads, inexorably, to a totally administered society. Philosophy must carry on regardless, but only autonomously and in the spirit of human rescue. Thus, by the end of *Minima Moralia*, Adorno would write, "The only

philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption.”²³

While redemption can be thought, it cannot be realized in the realm of thought alone. Adorno is suspicious of the positive dialectics found in Hegel, where philosophy marches forward in the world through resolving the contradictions of human history and experience (through the Hegelian dialectic). Adorno adopts instead the concept of “negative dialectics,” where thought has a duty to point to the irreconcilabilities of the world with immanent (as opposed to transcendent) criticism. To understand the concept of immanent criticism as it relates to negative dialectics, it is worth quoting a longer passage:

[Immanent criticism] takes seriously the principle that it is not ideology in itself which is untrue but rather its pretension to correspond to reality. Immanent criticism of intellectual and artistic phenomena seeks to grasp, through the analysis of their form and meaning, the contradiction between their objective idea and that pretension. It names what the consistency or inconsistency of the work itself expresses of the structure of the non-existent. Such criticism does not stop at a general recognition of the servitude of the objective mind, but seeks rather to transform this knowledge into a heightened perception of the thing itself. Insight into the negativity of culture is binding only when it reveals the truth or untruth of a perception, the consequence or lameness of a thought, the coherence or incoherence of a structure, the substantiality or emptiness of a figure of speech. . . . In such antinomies criticism perceives those of society. A successful work, according to immanent criticism, is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure.²⁴

This desire and existential need to discover negative harmony (in the spirit of human rescue) begins to explain why Adorno, a consummate critic of music, is attracted to the difficult twelve-tone music of Arnold Schönberg, who articulates in music much of what Adorno writes as

philosophy. Schönberg crafts a form of art that “moves emphatically towards the dissolution of art,”²⁵ eschewing false reconciliations in spheres of harmony, music, or the world. Adorno is particularly taken with Schönberg’s late style:

The impatience with sensuous appearance in [Schönberg’s] late style corresponds to the emasculation of art faced with the possibility of its promises being fulfilled in reality, but also to the horror which, in order to suppress that possibility, explodes every criterion of that which might become an image. . . . His incorruptible integrity once attained this awareness when, during the first months of the Hitler dictatorship, he unabashedly said that survival was more important than art.²⁶

This is the kind of negative space that Adorno dwelt in. In a degraded present, true art continues to be art by, in a sense, refusing its own artfulness. It self-consciously negates the possibility of being assimilated into the world. Thought too exists under the same pressures, constantly threatened with instrumentalization towards inhuman uses. In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno writes that “when men are forbidden to think, their thinking sanctions what simply exists. The genuinely critical need of thought to awaken from the cultural phantasmagoria is trapped, channeled, steered into the wrong consciousness.”²⁷ What is needed is not socially useful thought or art (which will only be “mythologized” and subsequently turned into barbarism) but instead autonomous thought, autonomous art, and autonomous intellectuals.

All of this is produced in the thickest of languages. Adorno’s prose, so unlike Said’s graceful pen, is deliberately turgid, difficult, and dour. “A writer will find that the more precisely, conscientiously, appropriately he expresses himself, the more obscure the literary result is thought,” explains Adorno, “whereas a loose and irresponsible formulation is at once rewarded with certain understanding.”²⁸ Like the new music of Schönberg that he admired, Adorno’s prose aims for a similar difficulty of reception, born out of a suspicion of advertising and skepticism of ideology. Unlike Said’s writing, Adorno’s prose plays up its difficulty to impede a sense of immediate comprehension in order to *be* a part of as much as *represent* the fragmented, fractured, and unreconciled world in which we currently live.

At first glance, then, there would seem to be unbridgeable differences between Adorno and Said even beyond mere stylistics. Adorno's *oeuvre* is full of a "vast speculative pessimism,"²⁹ while Said's is constantly lifted, even in its bleakest moments, by an always emergent sense of potential in human effort to correct the errors of the past. How else to explain the very existence of *Orientalism*, for example, which is as much an optimistic book of the possibilities of change as it is a devastating critique of past scholarship?³⁰ Moreover, both Said's more blatantly political writing and his scholarship have always been deliberately and explicitly engaged in the muck and mire of the world, while Adorno's criticism, although forever about society, sits overwhelmingly above politics in the quiet space of thought and reflection. One would be hard pressed to call Adorno an engaged intellectual, and he himself would actually abjure the categorization.³¹ Said on the one hand is *engagé*; Adorno on the other is politically quietist. Adorno, furthermore, has no discernable interest at all in the non-European world.

The natural expectation would thus be that Said would have found a greater affinity with, say, Jean-Paul Sartre than with Theodor Adorno. After all, Sartre is the theoretician of *engagement* and of *tiers-mondisme*. Sartre courageously stood for Algerian independence during that bloody war of independence, and he was the foremost philosopher of his era, endowed with a luminescent intellectual presence that meant that everyone had to have an opinion of him and his work. But the near total absence of Sartre in Said's thought could perhaps be attributed at least in part to Sartre's unyielding support for Israel, particularly after 1967, which Said found inconsistent with his humanistic and anti-racist philosophy.³² Furthermore, one could argue that Sartre's very stature in French politics and philosophical thought demanded that he take a position on nearly everything, leaving him in a way oddly stretched and reflexively dependent on both his adversaries and his causes.

For better or worse, the lack of an explicitly engaged and current politics in Adorno allows for no such inconsistencies in his thought, although he was, it must be remembered, his own kind of public intellectual, giving frequent radio (and occasional television) commentaries on contemporary life in post-war Germany after his return from exile. Much of this work concerns "the nature of political culture in the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany]," in the words of Russell Berman,³³ and it includes important essays like "What does 'Coming to Terms

with the Past' Mean?" and "What is a German?" Those predisposed to remembering Adorno as an engaged and committed intellectual frequently point to his comments in 1967 when a student, Benno Ohnesorg, was shot and killed by German plainclothes police while protesting a visit to Berlin by the Shah of Iran. Adorno did in fact offer critical assessment of this event, linking the actions of the police with his analysis of authoritarianism.³⁴ Yet others who aim to illustrate Adorno's lack of direct political nerve point instead to the fact that on 31 January 1969, at the height of the student movement in Germany, Adorno believed that students were ready to occupy the Institute for Social Research. He responded by calling in the police.³⁵

Said's first references to Adorno seem to consider him in this light, namely in the manner of a brilliant but politically quietist philosopher, but it is a quietism with a difference. For Said (as for Adorno), such quietism actually offers its own mode of struggle, a stance Said will return to again and again. In a 1986 interview, Said says, "Adorno's notion of the 'totally administered society' . . . breeds an inner kind of quietism, which is itself a form of resistance. It's very carefully formulated as quietism and resignation, but quietism and resignation as resistance to the onslaught [of modern culture]."³⁶ The parallels between Adorno's thought and the Palestinian predicament are also drawn in 1986, when Said quotes Adorno, from his essay "Resignation,"³⁷ in *After the Last Sky*:

"What has been cogently thought," Adorno says, "must be thought in some other place by other people. This confidence accompanies even the loneliest and most impotent thought." That is another way of phrasing the Palestinian dream: the desire for a perfect congruence between memory, actuality, and language. Anything is better than what we have now—but still the road forward is blocked, the instruments of the past are insufficient, we can't get to the past.³⁸

Thus, one of the major philosophical problems for Adorno—that pure reason is insufficient to displace instrumental reason but it is all we have, and that therefore thought must be cultivated in a world that is not ready for thought³⁹—begins in the mid-1980s to assume a role in Said's own work, particularly for its relationship to the Palestinian situation. While this occurs as early as 1986, it will begin to assume a

more prominent position after 1993, as we shall see.

First, however, it is worth considering Said and Adorno in tandem again, for on second look, one could say that Adorno and Said actually do share a good deal, particularly if we consider their affinities not only from a perspective on the demands and autonomy of thought (to which I'll return) but also from the point of view of simple biography. Both were reared from a position of class privilege, and both had a close connection, cultivated since childhood, to European high culture, especially European classical music. Said and Adorno, furthermore, were both anti-systemic thinkers with an ambivalent relationship to Marxism, drawing extensively on its traditions and its training but refusing to subscribe fully to its orthodoxy or totalizing theories. (With both thinkers, the idea of proletariat consciousness, as just one example, is almost nowhere to be found.) Both, moreover, were moralists (of a sort) in, and of, exile, where the condition of exile produces a kind of vantage point for drawing out one's ethics. Said finds much common ground with Adorno's writing on exile. "[I]t is part of morality not to be at home in one's home,"⁴⁰ writes Adorno in *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, a thought that no one believed more strongly than Edward Said.

But exile is not the only topic through which Said invites us to see his affiliation to Adorno. For Adorno, as for Said, music criticism is a primary area of investigation, and, in fact, most of Said's sustained engagements with Adorno's work are found in the realm of music. In *Musical Elaborations, Parallels and Paradoxes*, or his essay "Adorno as Lateness Itself," Said reveals his debt to Adorno's thought by repeating Adorno's position on modern music (that it—particularly the music of Arnold Schönberg—wasn't meant to be listened to, but instead exists autonomously in an unreconciled fashion to the administered culture around it).⁴¹ Adorno (and Said) was also deeply interested in the idea of "late style," of how the final works of a great artist (especially Beethoven) exist not as a summation of one's own *oeuvre* but in fact in a position of alienation from one's audience. "Beethoven's late-style works constitute an event in the history of modern culture," writes Said, "a moment when the artist who is fully in command of his medium nevertheless abandons communication with the bourgeois order of which he is a part and achieves a contradictory, alienated relationship with it."⁴² (And after 1993, Said too will see himself in a contradictory and alienated relationship with much of the political world.)

Said discusses the idea of late style in Adorno as one that is related primarily to the evidence of one's own mortality. He concludes his essay "Adorno as Lateness Itself," by stating that "in Adorno's own essays, the irony [since Adorno had written that late style does not admit the definitive cadence of death] is how often lateness as theme and as style keeps reminding us of death."⁴³ Certainly, "late style" as an idea grew in importance to Said after his own diagnosis with leukemia in 1991, when he began facing his own mortality with steely courage.

Examined biographically, Said's reasons for growing closer to the work of Adorno, his music criticism, and his concept of late style then begin to have their own specific inflections related through Said's individual history. But this, I believe, is only a partial and in fact unsatisfactory answer to explain Said's growing debt to the dour and difficult Adorno. Rather, we need to note Adorno's constant reiterations of the irreconcilability of art or intellectual thought to modern life, which is increasingly administered and totalitarian in impulse, to get to the heart of the matter. Schönberg is interesting to Adorno for this reason, precisely because his music cannot be reconciled to the listening public (and thus retains a certain status of truth). It is this notion of irreconcilability, along with the idea of the autonomous intellectual who refuses to give in to instrumental reason, that brings Said around to Adorno. The reason for Adorno, in other words, is not only personal but also (and perhaps primarily) political, and we ought to look for Said's interest in Adorno not in New York, Frankfurt, Weimar, or Jerusalem, but in Oslo, Norway.

More than a decade has elapsed since the Oslo Accords and the 1993 Declaration of Principles between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Rabin's Israeli government, and in the span of these years full of failed promises, increased repression, massively expanded settlements, and a second *intifada* replete with enormous human suffering and sacrifice, it is easy with hindsight to see how correct Edward Said was in his opposition to the agreements. What is less easily remembered, however, is how singular his voice was in 1993. "I have kept up a lonely struggle against the intellectual bad faith and governmental shortsightedness and opportunism [of the 'peace process']," writes Said in the introduction to *Peace and Its Discontents*.⁴⁴ Calling the agreements "a Palestinian surrender, a Palestinian Versailles,"⁴⁵ Said accuses the PLO of transforming itself

“from a national liberation movement into a small town government.”⁴⁶ The problems with the agreements were manifold: not only did they force the PLO to “become Israel’s enforcer, an unhappy prospect for most Palestinians,” but they also transformed “the PLO’s sense of identity. From being a partisan against Israeli actions it has now become a (perhaps unwilling) partner.”⁴⁷ In other words, the so-called peace process was a disaster by the leadership on two tiers simultaneously, on one level for the specific details of its arrangement, and on another for selling out the very principle of self-determination, that is to say, the entire history of more than forty years of Palestinian struggle. The last decade has sadly proved Said right.

“Domination delegates the physical violence on which it rests to the dominated,” writes Adorno in *Minima Moralia*,⁴⁸ and this is a tragically apt description of where the Oslo Accords have left the Palestinian national movement. Said’s opposition to Oslo was based on the fact that the leadership could not, or would not, see that this is the case. By contrast, Said presents us in *Peace and Its Discontents* with the inspirational life of Hanna Mikhail, who lived “as an intellectual should . . . according to his ideas and never tailor[ing] his democratic, secular values to suit new masters and new occasions.”⁴⁹ Mikhail, for Said, was an autonomous intellectual, unwilling to be swayed by the pressures of compromise or the marketplace of thought.

It is important not to underestimate the profound sense of loss that the “peace process” brought to Edward Said, precisely because he rightly believed it alienated him and the Palestinian people from both their land and their historic aspirations. The temptation may exist to view the Oslo agreements as merely part of an ongoing political game, but in fact Oslo represented a new phase of Palestinian history, a lengthy promulgation of the Palestinian tragedy and a thwarting of historic justice, something Said recognized immediately. The agreements were never about true “reconciliation,” a term that recurs frequently in Said’s writing during these years. As Said explains,

I sincerely believe in reconciliation between peoples and cultures in collision, and have made it my life’s work to try to further that end. But true reconciliation cannot be imposed; neither can it occur between cultures and societies that are enormously uneven in power. The kind of reconciliation that can bring real peace can only occur between equals, between partners whose independence,

strength of purpose, and inner cohesion allows them fully to understand and share with each other.⁵⁰

The entire “peace process” then can be summed up as nothing but false reconciliation performed under duress, to paraphrase Adorno’s famous essay criticizing the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács.⁵¹ Said repeated again and again in his writings after the Oslo Accords that reconciliation is, and in fact must be, possible, but only with justice and never at the expense of justice. In so doing, he became more committed to his own independence and his own autonomous role, engaging in fierce criticisms of the PLO, Arafat, Israel, the United States, and other Arab regimes. The role of the intellectual, writes Said, is to be “embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant.”⁵² His own bulldog interventions became more pointed, more independent, and more contrary to the status quo during this period. Said’s own criticism ought then to be seen as immanent, adapted from Adorno’s own method. It is worth recalling the Adorno quote found above to understand what this means: “A successful work, according to immanent criticism is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure.” Said folds negative dialectics directly into the political world in order to keep Palestinian aspirations alive, even as an idea, where they were threatened with extinction by the instrumental reason of the leadership.

This is why, it seems to me, Said turns significantly during this period to Adorno, who wrote in another context that “the feeling of new security is purchased with the sacrifice of autonomous thinking.” Adorno continues: “The consolation that thought within the context of collective action is an improvement proves deceptive: thinking, employed only as the instrument of action, is blunted in the same manner as all instrumental reason,”⁵³ which again recalls the Palestinian predicament after 1993. The Palestinian leadership had instrumentalized the struggle, and, by doing so, had, in effect, sold it out. Moreover, Said comes to see that his entire life’s work, now foreshortened due to his own terminal illness, may not bear fruit while he is still living to witness it, but he absolutely refuses to sacrifice any of his principles to political exigency, as the PLO had done, or to the somber facts of mortality. Said then sounds very much like Adorno’s description of Schönberg, lauded for his “incor-

ruptible integrity,” and Said finds a model in Adorno on which to base his incorruptible ethics. The new beacon for Said becomes Adorno, the man who in the words of Martin Jay recognized that “our present totality makes a mockery of true reconciliation,”⁵⁴ and who believed that instead of false reconciliation the only responsibility for philosophy today is “autonomous thinking” that may come to fruition only in some abstract future. “I can’t go on. I’ll go on,” writes Samuel Becket in *The Unnameable* and, in like manner, Adorno says that it is “the uncompromisingly critical thinker, who neither superscribes his conscience nor permits himself to be terrorized into action, [who] in truth [is] the one who does not give up.”⁵⁵ In the loneliness of his position, Said turns to Adorno and finds a partner in the dogged persistence for truth.

Said mentions Adorno at least twice more in relation to the Oslo Accords and current Palestinian reality, once in an interview with Jacqueline Rose and the second time in his essay “On Lost Causes.” On both occasions, Adorno’s words from his essay “Resignation” function as resistance to the false triumphalism of the moment, a chimera that must be counterposed to the brute reality of continuing oppression. Said is particularly fond of quoting these lines (cited above) from Adorno’s essay: “[W]hat has been cogently thought must be thought in some other place and by other people. This confidence accompanies even the loneliest and most impotent thought.” To Jacqueline Rose, Said says, “I borrowed [these lines] from Adorno at a time when I felt that things were going very wrong for the Palestinians, and that being left out of the progress of history is a fate which I didn’t want to settle for.”⁵⁶ And in “On Lost Causes,” Said quotes the same lines again and explains:

Consciousness of the possibility of resistance can reside only in the individual will that is fortified by intellectual rigor and an unabated conviction in the need to begin again, with no guarantees except, as Adorno says, the confidence of even the loneliest and most impotent thought that “what has been cogently thought must be thought in some other place and by other people.” In this way thinking might perhaps acquire and express the momentum of the general, thereby blunting the anguish and despondency of the lost cause, which its enemies have tried to induce.⁵⁷

The continuing dispossession of the Palestinian people from land, nation, and justice leads Said to Adorno, precisely because this conflict cannot be reconciled under duress or thought away simply. The importance for Said, now more than ever, was to remain true to the history of that struggle, which required, in a degraded and instrumental world, the kind of autonomous thought that Adorno championed.

In the end, Said is not really a “follower” of Adorno—both men are too anti-systemic and, in fact, autonomous for that possibility—but he is indebted to, and affiliates himself with, Adorno precisely because of Adorno’s persistent notion that the philosopher must believe that the search for truth will eventually, in some future, overcome the degradations and irreconcilabilities of the world and that this belief must override any desire for an intellectual’s instrumental importance. After all, the philosophical life is one still worth living for Adorno. “Philosophy,” famously begins *Negative Dialectics*, “which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed.”⁵⁸

Through Adorno, Said is able to hold on to the idea that the opposite of political commitment is not apathy but false compromise, most recently represented by the failures of the Oslo Accords. To be sure, this is an inward turn for Said, but is necessitated by the outward betrayal of the Palestinian struggle by the Palestinian leadership, as well as the pressure from Israel, the United States, and in fact much of the world. The test of commitment, then, is not blind solidarity but true autonomy, for only through autonomous thought can the principles that have guided the Palestinian saga from the beginning be maintained. Adorno finds autonomy without false reconciliation to be the true contribution of modern music and believes it is to be the position that the contemporary intellectual should adopt. Said too finds himself increasingly drawn to autonomy without false reconciliation, particularly as it gets expressed in “late style,” that is to say in Beethoven’s late style, in Adorno’s late style, and most tellingly in his own. In the crevice between conciliation and reconciliation lies justice. But in the loneliness of principle, the fight for justice must carry on, despite all the odds. Said, through Adorno, resolves that resistance, even in an individual consciousness, must never think of itself as futile, only patient.

Notes

- ¹ On Said's notion of "Filiation/Affiliation," see my forthcoming essay "Our Philological Home is the Earth," *Edward Said: Emancipation and Representation*, ed. Adel Iskandar and Hatem Rustom (Pluto Press, forthcoming).
- ² On worldliness, see Edward W. Said, "Introduction: Secular Criticism," *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983), 1-30.
- ³ Aamir Mufti, "Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, Secular Criticism, and the Question of Minority Culture," *Critical Inquiry* 25.1 (Autumn 1998): 95-125.
- ⁴ See Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory Reconsidered," *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002), 436-52.
- ⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 23.
- ⁶ Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (NY: Pantheon, 1994), 32.
- ⁷ See Edward W. Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community," *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 118-47.
- ⁸ *Representations of the Intellectual*, 10.
- ⁹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (NY: Knopf, 1993), 48-50.
- ¹⁰ Said's most in-depth look at Vico occurs in Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (NY: Columbia UP, 1975), 347-81.
- ¹¹ See Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: New Left Books, 1979), 159-74.
- ¹² *Culture and Imperialism*, 95.
- ¹³ Auerbach is found throughout *Beginnings* and is discussed in depth in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 2004), 85-118.
- ¹⁴ See Edward W. Said, "The Horizon of R. P. Blackmur," *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 246-67.
- ¹⁵ See "Introduction: Secular Criticism." Said finishes the Hugo St. Victor quotation on the same page: "The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his. From boyhood I have dwelt on foreign soil, and I know with what grief sometimes the mind takes leave of the narrow hearth of a peasant's hut, and I know, too, how frankly it afterwards disdains marble firesides and paneled halls" (7).
- ¹⁶ Said is critical of Auerbach, Williams, Foucault, and Adorno for their fundamental lack of interest in—or in the case of Auerbach, anxiety about—the non-European world.
- ¹⁷ Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky* (NY: Pantheon, 1986).
- ¹⁸ *Beginnings*, 373.

- 19 Responding to the statement that he sounds very “Jewish,” Said says: “I’m the last Jewish intellectual. You don’t know anyone else. All your other Jewish intellectuals are now suburban squires. From Amos Oz to all these people here in America. So I’m the last one. The only true follower of Adorno. Let me put it this way: I’m a Jewish-Palestinian.” See Edward W. Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Gauri Viswanathan (NY: Vintage, 2001), 458.
- 20 Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (NY: Continuum, 1994), 129-30.
- 21 *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 127.
- 22 *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, xv.
- 23 Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. Jephcott (NY: Verso, 1974), 247.
- 24 Theodor Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society,” *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge: MIT P, 1988), 32.
- 25 Theodor Adorno, “Arnold Schönberg, 1874-1951,” *Prisms*, 170.
- 26 “Arnold Schönberg, 1874-1951,” 171.
- 27 Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (NY: Continuum, 1983), 85.
- 28 *Minima Moralia*, 101.
- 29 Edward W. Said, *Musical Elaborations* (NY: Columbia UP, 1991), xvii.
- 30 Consider the final paragraph of *Orientalism* in this regard: “Positively, I do believe—and in my other work have tried to show—that enough is being done today in the human sciences to provide the contemporary scholar with insights, methods, and ideas that could dispense with racial, ideological, and imperialist stereotypes of the sort provided during its historical ascendancy by Orientalism. I consider Orientalism’s failure to have been a human as much as an intellectual one; for in having to take up a position of irreducible opposition to a region of the world it considered alien to its own, Orientalism failed to identify with human experience, failed also to see it as human experience. The worldwide hegemony of Orientalism and all it stands for can now be challenged, if we can benefit properly from the general twentieth-century rise to political and historical awareness of so many of the earth’s peoples” (328).
- 31 Theodor Adorno, “Commitment,” *Aesthetics and Politics* (NY: Verso, 1977), 177-95.
- 32 See Edward W. Said, “My Encounter with Sartre,” *London Review of Books* 22.11 (June 1 2000): 42-43. Josie Fanon, Frantz Fanon’s wife, had a similar reaction to Sartre’s support for Israel, and after 1967 she withheld permission to François Maspero, the publisher of *Les damnés de la terre*, to publish Sartre’s famous introduction to that work. See David

- Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*. (NY: Picador, 2000), 467.
- ³³ Russell Berman, "Adorno's Politics," *Adorno: A Critical Reader*, ed. Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 124.
- ³⁴ Berman, 127.
- ³⁵ In fact, the seventy-six students were looking for a place to meet. See Richard Leppert's introduction in *Adorno on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: U of California P, 2002), 18. To be fair, Berman discusses both events in his essay. See Berman, 130.
- ³⁶ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, 64-65.
- ³⁷ Theodor Adorno, "Resignation," *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978): 165-68.
- ³⁸ *After the Last Sky*, 75.
- ³⁹ "Enlightenment which is in possession of itself and coming to power can break the bounds of enlightenment." *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 208.
- ⁴⁰ *Minima Moralia*, 39.
- ⁴¹ See, for example, Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes* (NY: Vintage, 2004), 42. Also see Adorno's essay "Arnold Schönburg, 1874-1951," 147-72.
- ⁴² Edward W. Said, "Adorno as Lateness Itself," *Adorno: A Critical Reader*, 196-97.
- ⁴³ "Adorno as Lateness Itself," 208.
- ⁴⁴ Edward W. Said, *Peace and Its Discontents* (NY: Vintage, 1996), xxiv.
- ⁴⁵ *Peace and Its Discontents*, 7.
- ⁴⁶ *Peace and Its Discontents*, 4.
- ⁴⁷ *Peace and Its Discontents*, 12 and 24.
- ⁴⁸ *Minima Moralia*, 182.
- ⁴⁹ *Peace and Its Discontents*, 84.
- ⁵⁰ *Peace and Its Discontents*, xxvi.
- ⁵¹ Theodor Adorno, "Reconciliation Under Duress," *Aesthetics and Politics*, 151-76.
- ⁵² *Representations of the Intellectual*, 12.
- ⁵³ "Resignation," 168.
- ⁵⁴ Martin Jay, "The Concept of Totality in Adorno and Lukács," *Telos* 32 (Summer 1977): 131.
- ⁵⁵ "Resignation," 168.
- ⁵⁶ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, 419.
- ⁵⁷ Edward W. Said, "On Lost Causes," *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 553.
- ⁵⁸ *Negative Dialectics*, 3.

Edward Said, Humanism, and Secular Criticism

Yumna Siddiqi

It is difficult to overstate Edward Said's influence on cultural and social thought in the last twenty-five years. Said's work, especially *Orientalism*, radically transformed the intellectual landscape of the humanities and the social sciences.¹ For his students from the post-colonial world such as myself, it gave us a new lens through which to understand our own cultures and our relationship to the West. For scholars in the Western academy, it pointed to the complicity between supposedly disinterested scholarly pursuits and the edifice of Western imperialism. For its many lay readers, it articulated in an accessible way the inter-connections between political power and knowledge. In *Orientalism*, Said drew on the theoretical work of scholars such as Foucault and Gramsci, to interpret literary texts in the light of imperial geopolitics, single-handedly breaking the ground for the field of postcolonial literary studies. Committed to criticism as an oppositional practice, Said became increasingly wary, at the same time, of the solipsism and opacity of the "nouvelle critique." In 1995, he taught a graduate seminar at Columbia University entitled "Last Works, Late Style" that exemplified this shift from what we would now call "post-colonial criticism" to humanistic interpretation. When he died, Said was working on a manuscript on this topic, a brief preview of which appeared posthumously in article form in the August 2004 edition of the *London Review of Books*.² In his presidential address to the MLA, entitled "Humanism and Heroism," Said delivered a paean to the labors of the pen, again in a pointedly humanistic register.³ Just before his death, he completed a book entitled *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, in which he assessed the nature of, and need for, humanistic studies in the present moment. In the following pages, I first briefly sketch his politicizing influence on literary and cultural analysis. I then attempt to make sense of his late engagement with humanistic scholarship, the imprint of which had always marked his work, and his attitude to humanism more broadly.

From *Orientalism* to *Culture and Imperialism*

In *Orientalism*, Said argued that Western cultural representations of the Orient contributed directly to legitimating European rule over imperial territories. Far from being an abstract body of ideas, such representations were a means of exercising cultural leadership or hegemony. Orientalist writers, from different periods and places, employed a relatively set *repertoire* of tropes that “put the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.”⁴ These Orientalist structures of reference and attitude were, what is more, largely self-referential; Said noticed that writers would frequently echo each other. In fact, Orientalist writers often had very little first-hand experience of people and places in the East. According to Said, the discourse of Orientalism—that is, the repeated use and circulation of statements about the Orient—took on the status of “truths” declaimed with authority by Europeans. Orientalists produced this knowledge about the Orient because they enjoyed the unilateral power of representation. This Orientalist production of knowledge was not merely a conceptual exercise; it had far-reaching and profound material effects because it became the basis for imperial policy.

Said’s examination of the operation of Orientalism, as a discourse, directly led to the emergence of a whole field of colonial discourse analysis in literary studies.⁵ Following Said’s example, a number of literary scholars focused on the workings of colonial discourse in texts of the nineteenth century, the period of greatest imperial expansion and the consolidation of European power.⁶ Scholars also turned their attention to the relationship between imperialism and literature in other periods.⁷ Edward Said’s influence quickly extended to other fields in the humanities and social sciences—film studies, art history, music studies, area studies, anthropology, and the like; some of the other essays in this volume map that influence. Broadly speaking, what these studies share is an interest in

how the processes of imperialism occurred beyond the level of economic laws and political decisions, and—by predisposition, by the authority of recognizable cultural formations, but continuing consolidation within education, literature, and the visual and musical arts—were manifested at another very significant level, that of the national culture, which we have tended to sanitize as a realm of unchanging intellectual monuments, free of worldly affiliations.⁸

In a variety of academic fields and disciplines, scholars have undertaken the work of elaborating in detail the complex relationships between the domain of culture and the project of imperialism.

While in *Orientalism* Said argues for the significance of colonial discourse and sketches its contours, in *Culture and Imperialism* he also proffers rich and extended readings of writers such as Austen, Conrad, Kipling, Camus, and Gide, showing how significant the experience of Empire was for writers of the European literary canon. To examine this significance, Said formulates a theory of what he calls “contrapuntal reading”:

As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to read it not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts. In the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work. In the same way, I believe, we can read and interpret English novels, for example, whose engagement (usually suppressed for the most part) with the West Indies or India, say, is shaped and perhaps even determined by the specific history of colonization, resistance, and finally native nationalism.⁹

Said draws on an analogy from music to explain the principle of contrapuntal reading: an attention to the suppressed traces of colonization and of responses to it in literary texts. It is important to note that, in elaborating his model for reading, Said refers to a type of composition that is not driven by any “rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work”—or what one might call “theory.” Said repeatedly voices reservations about the dominance of theory in literary interpretation, a point that I will come back to later. He also emphasizes that, in literary texts as in counterpoint, different themes coexist; the critic can reveal the full complexity of imperial culture by exploring the interplay of metropolitan experience and the experience of the “Other” that can be discerned in the interstices of texts of the colonial era. Said’s

notion of contrapuntal reading is similar to Bakhtin's view of dialogic interpretation—both believe that it is the task of the critic to foreground the interaction of different voices.¹⁰ Said elaborates on his view of contrapuntal reading using a number of examples, including that of Kipling's novel *Kim*:

The point is that contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded. . . . Kipling's India, in *Kim*, has a quality of permanence and inevitability that belongs not just to that wonderful novel, but to British India, its history, administrators, and apologists and, no less important, to the India fought for by Indian nationalists as their country to be won back. By giving an account of this series of pressures and counter-pressures in Kipling's India, we understand the process of imperialism itself as the great work of art engages them, and of later anti-imperialist resistance. In reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded.¹¹

According to Said, *Kim* draws on the rhetoric of sport to cast imperial rule in India as part of the "Great Game," itself a direct reference to the geopolitical rivalry at the time between Great Britain and Russia. Also, it portrays a vision of the permanence and native acceptance of British rule, precisely at a time when Indians were mobilizing for national independence. To extend Said's contrapuntal reading, one might add that the novel traces Kim's transformation from a boyish adventurer to a cog in the wheel of colonial information-gathering and administration, in a belated acknowledgement of a shift in Britain's imperial focus from conquest to administration. A fully contextual reading of *Kim*, with due attention to elisions and revisions, reveals the complex negotiations between Englishmen and Indians of what "India" was, who was to rule it, and how.

Said's Ambivalent Humanism

In both *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, and at regular intervals throughout his scholarly career, Said critiques certain aspects of humanism, yet identifies himself as a humanist. As W. J. T. Mitchell puts it,

Humanism for Said was always a dialectical concept, generating oppositions it could neither absorb nor avoid. The very word used to cause in him mixed feelings of reverence and revulsion: an admiration for the great monuments of civilization that constitute the archive of humanism and a disgust at humanism's underside of suffering and oppression that, as Benjamin insisted, made them monuments to barbarism as well.¹²

Before elaborating upon Said's deep and extended engagement with humanism, for which he has been criticized on a variety of fronts, it is helpful to distinguish between different meanings of humanism. Leela Gandhi, in her discussion of the relationship between postcolonial scholarship and humanism, identifies two streams of humanism that overlap in some ways, yet are historically and philosophically distinct.¹³ Sixteenth-century Renaissance humanism, associated with scholars such as Petrarch, Erasmus, Montaigne, More, and Bacon, denotes an emergent program of belletristic learning that spawned what today we call "the humanities." Enlightenment humanism, by contrast, refers to the loosely linked eighteenth-century European philosophical movement whose proponents—among them Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alembert, Turgot, Condorcet, Hume, Rousseau, and Kant—championed the power of human reason to triumph over superstition and ignorance, and to better the lot of humankind.

Said's relationship to humanism, in the first sense, is equivocal. On the one hand, as we have seen, he identifies in the "great works of art," that are at the center of humanistic scholarship, Orientalist structures of representation that, more or less, explicitly denigrate Europe's "Others." On the other hand, he applauds the value of these great works. While he mounts a critique of Orientalist patterns of representation, he by no means rejects the study of "dead white men," as more hostile detractors of the European literary canon might. Indeed, he seems little interested in the domains of popular culture and everyday life, where imperial ideology arguably has its fullest elaboration and impact. As for the second connotation of humanism, Said whole-heartedly subscribes to the core legacy of Enlightenment: the belief that the rational, secular, critical pursuit of knowledge can lead to human emancipation and progress. In this respect, Said differs from post-structuralist critics such as Lyotard and Derrida, who have identified in the very structures of Enlightenment rationality a logic of domination, and have fed into one

stream of postcolonial criticism that exhibits an “inherited deconstructive bias against Enlightenment humanism.”¹⁴ At the same time, he briefly gestures towards the need for other ways of knowing the Other, and asks the question of how to study other peoples and cultures from a nonrepressive and nonmanipulative perspective. Here, he imagines the possibility of a kind of knowledge that traverses cultural difference and serves the end of liberation without being falsely universalist.

In *Orientalism*, Said, for the most part, follows Foucault’s lead in dissecting the operation of Orientalist discourse and showing its collusion in imperial domination. Said’s own critical practice has a distinctly humanist flavor, with his invocation of the universal value of great works and the genius of individual writers and composers. James Clifford’s trenchant, yet sympathetic critique of *Orientalism* teases out the contradictory stance Said takes towards Foucauldian discourse analysis. As Clifford points out, Said draws on the theoretical insights of Foucault with respect to the relationship between power and knowledge, and the operation of an archive, yet insists, in distinctly un-poststructuralist fashion, that the individual imprint of the author matters:

What is important theoretically is not that Foucault’s author counts for very little but rather that a “discursive formation”—as opposed to ideas, citations, influences, references, conventions, and the like—is not produced by authorial subjects or even by a group of authors arranged as a “tradition.”¹⁵

Said, unlike Foucault, is interested in the ways authors commonly participate in the production and perpetuation of an idea of “the Orient,” an idea that has a specific political implication: the validation of imperial rule.

Said’s commitment to humanist scholarly analysis is evident, not only in the way he characterizes the so-called discourse of Orientalism, but also in the contrapuntal methodology he proposes for reading. In using the musical metaphor of counterpoint, he emphasizes a compositional form that involves “the combination of two or more independent melodies into a single harmonic texture in which each retains its linear character.”¹⁶ Said favors a mode of interpretation that is attuned to the interplay of different voices, in what is a harmonious whole. In this, he expresses a humanist vision of what texts are and how they should be read. This endorsement of humanism is also evi-

dent in his account of the literary achievements of non-Western, anti-colonial writers. One of the sharper critiques that have been made of *Orientalism* is that Said neglects to acknowledge the cultural production of people who endured European rule. In fact, Said suggested in *Orientalism* that European writers were able to represent the Orient “with very little resistance on the Orient’s part.”¹⁷ In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said complements his readings of European texts with discussions of writers who did in fact “write back” to Empire: Fanon, Césaire, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, C. L. R. James, George Antonious, and many others. He describes the literary efforts of these writers as “the voyage in,” which he characterizes as “an especially interesting variety of hybrid cultural work.”¹⁸ He argues that:

The ideological and cultural war against imperialism occurs in the form of resistance in the colonies, and later, as resistance spills over into Europe and the United States, in the form of opposition or dissent in the metropolis. The first phase of this dynamic produces nationalist independence movements, the second, later, and more acute phase produces liberation struggles. The basic premise of this analysis is that although the imperial divide in fact separates metropolis from peripheries, and although each cultural discourse unfolds according to different agendas, rhetorics, and images, they are in fact connected, if not always in perfect correspondence. . . . The connection is made on the cultural level since, I have been saying, like all cultural practices the imperialist experience is an intertwined and overlapping one. . . .¹⁹

Said emphasizes the dialogic relationship between the cultural discourse of the colonized and that of the metropole. He observes that those who wrote from the vantage point of colonized subjects neither reproduced metropolitan discourse uncritically nor were completely detached from it; rather, writers from the periphery had a complex, angular relationship to metropolitan culture. In describing “the voyage in,” Said thinks again along humanist lines of an interactive and mutually transformative cultural engagement. To illustrate his claim, Said discusses the work of two pairs of writers, C. L. R. James and George Antonious, and Ranajit Guha and S. H. Alatas, the first pair writing in 1938, and the second well after decolonization. Said argues that the

historical differences between these moments influence the work of the two sets of writers. C. L. R. James and Antonious take the European discourse of Enlightenment on its own terms. C. L. R. James, in *The Black Jacobins*, shows how the Haitian revolutionary Toussaint L'Ouverture applied the principles that underpinned the French Revolution to French colonial territories to lead a liberation struggle. George Antonious, a Syrian who was closely connected to elite circles of the British colonial government, decried the failure of the British to keep faith with their promise of freedom to Arab peoples after their service to the Allies in the First World War. Said distinguishes these thinkers from a later generation of postcolonial scholars, such as Guha and Alatas, who provide detailed critiques of imperial discourse and practice in *A Rule of Property for Bengal* and *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, respectively. Edward Said himself ranks among these thinkers in that he interprets metropolitan texts and theorists, not with the aim of telling an "Other" story, but of being a critical interlocutor of imperial culture.

Said gives particular thought to those writers who made "the voyage in" and turned their pens to anti-imperialist struggle: Gandhi, Nehru, Fanon, and Cabral, among others. He distinguishes thinkers who articulated their anti-imperialism in nationalist terms from those anti-imperialists who framed their agenda in terms of liberation. Anti-imperialists such as Nehru and Gandhi ultimately fell back on a political form that reproduced and perpetuated many of the depredations of colonialism: the postcolonial nation-state. Fanon, by contrast, also took a sharply anti-imperialist stance, but mounted a thorough-going appraisal of the pitfalls of nationalism in his liberationist manifesto *The Wretched of the Earth*. Said notes:

Fanon was the first major theorist of anti-imperialism to realize that orthodox nationalism followed along the same track hewn out by imperialism, which while it appeared to be conceding authority to the nationalist bourgeoisie was really extending its hegemony. To tell a simple story therefore is to repeat, extend, and also to engender new forms of imperialism.²⁰

Said indicts nationalism for its simplifying narratives, and applauds Fanon for his vision of national liberation as a dynamic process without a clear teleology. Said also lauds Fanon for his critique of a

Eurocentric universalism, and his gestures towards a new humanism, a point that I will return to.

Humanism and Secular Criticism

If Edward Said's influence on literary scholarship was to underscore—in a humanist vein—the political stakes involved, his own work shifted during the last years of his life to a more traditional form of humanistic scholarship. Said had always argued for a secular criticism that eschewed jargon and engaged with the world at large, and was not the domain of specialists. In *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, as early statement of his methodological principles, Said insisted:

In its suspicion of totalizing concepts, in its discontent with reified objects, in its impatience with guilds, special interests, imperialized fiefdoms, and orthodox habits of mind, criticism is most itself and, if the paradox can be tolerated, most unlike itself at the moment it starts turning into organized dogma. . . . For in the main—and here I shall be explicit—criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are noncoercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom.²¹

For Said, criticism must, if it is to maintain its commitment to non-coercive knowledge and freedom, guard against its own consecration. Aamir Mufti's essay on the significance of Auerbach for Said's thought traces what precisely Said means by "secular" in his criticism.²² Mufti argues that Said articulates his notion of secularism from a minority position. For Said,

secular criticism insists upon the possibility of emancipation even as it expresses profound skepticism about the transparency of all such claims. Secular criticism does not imply the rejection of universalism per se. It implies a scrupulous recognition that all claims of a universal nature are particular claims. Furthermore, and most importantly, it means rescuing the marginalized perspective of the minority as one from which to rethink and remake universalist (ethical, political, cultural) claims, thus displacing its assignation as the site of the local.²³

That is, for the secular critic, the minority bears a supplementary relationship to universalist constructs, showing them to be incomplete and destabilizing them in a mutually productive way. For Said, secular criticism is of the world and in the world; it also shows the world to be a place of productive and mutually destabilizing oppositions and tensions. It is this understanding of humanist scholarship that Said advanced, rather than a celebration of humanist values *per se*.

Before I turn to the pieces on humanism and heroism and on late style, I want to map in a schematic way his shifting view of theory, and, specifically, of Foucault's work. This view, I believe, is homologous to his attitude to humanism and to humanistic scholarship. In his introduction to *Orientalism*, Edward Said acknowledges his debt to Michel Foucault for his notion of discourse, adding,

My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.²⁴

At this point in his scholarly career, Said is primarily interested in how—in the concrete medium of discourse—cultural forces acted in a systematic and disciplined way, not merely to buttress imperial rule, but to “produce” the very objects of European control. He values Foucault's work for its detailed attention to the generative relationship between power and knowledge, and his shrewd analysis of the operation of discourse. In a commemorative essay published on Foucault's death in 1984, Said commented on the hybrid and iconoclastic quality of Foucault's scholarship, “ironic, skeptical, savage in its radicalism, comic and amoral in its overturning of orthodoxies, idols, and myths.”²⁵ In this piece, Said notes Foucault's preoccupation with otherness: “For Foucault, otherness is both a force and a feeling *in itself*, something whose seemingly endless metamorphoses his work reflects and shapes.”²⁶ This scholarly interest in otherness is of course one that Said shares. At the same time, Said criticizes Foucault for his failure to pay any attention at all to Europe's Others: “His Eurocentrism was almost total, as if history itself took place only among a group of German and French thinkers.”²⁷ Said notes that Foucault fails to avoid the pitfalls of

a false universalism, making broad generalizations on the basis of French evidence; and he criticizes Foucault even more trenchantly for his lack of “interest in the relationships his work had with feminist or postcolonial writers facing problems of exclusion, confinement and domination.”²⁸ In another brief essay on Foucault, that appeared two years later, Said is even more pointed in his criticism, arguing that Foucault’s prison-house view of power is politically disabling:

I wouldn’t go as far as saying that Foucault rationalized power, or that he legitimized its dominion and its ravages by declaring them inevitable, but I would say his interest in domination was critical but not finally as contestatory, or as oppositional as on the surface it seems to be. This translates into the paradox that Foucault’s imagination of power was by his analysis of power to reveal its injustice and cruelty, but by his theorization to let it go on more or less unchecked.²⁹

According to Said, Foucault’s vision of a pervasive, micro-capillary power, and his failure to imagine—or lack of interest in imagining—any counter-force to the operation of power fosters a certain quiescence. Said contrasts this attitude with that of oppositional intellectuals, such as Fanon, Alatas, Ngugi, Rushdie, and others who “show, in Fanon’s words, the violence done to psychically and politically repressed inferiors in the name of an advanced culture, and then afterwards to begin the difficult, if not always tragically flawed, project of formulating the discourse of liberation.”³⁰ These intellectuals not only do the work of critiquing institutional structures and discourses of oppression, they seek to overcome or subvert this oppression. Said is even more explicit in his criticism of Foucault in *Culture and Imperialism*, where he compares Foucault unfavorably to Fanon:

Fanon represents the interests of a double constituency, native and Western, moving from confinement to liberation; ignoring the imperial context of his own theories, Foucault seems actually to represent an irresistible colonizing movement that paradoxically fortifies the prestige of both the lonely individual scholar and the system that contains him.³¹

Said's criticism is twofold: on the one hand, he faults Foucault for neglecting to follow through upon the ramifications of his analysis of power for postcolonial subjects; on the other hand, he objects to the fact that Foucault's analysis of power actually has the effect of inhibiting the theorizing of resistance. In fact, it is difficult to see where resistance would come from if power is dispersed, discursive, and capillary, as Foucault so powerfully argues. Famously, Foucault's own response to this commonplace objection was to maintain in an essay entitled "The Subject and Power" that where there is power, there is resistance.³² However, this gesture towards the omnipresence of resistance is a long way away from, and possibly precludes, any concrete theory of liberation, as Said rightly objects. For Said, the aim of an analysis of power is not only to lay bare the pernicious implications of imperialist knowledge practices, but to imagine or, at least, gesture to the possibility of alternative discourses and practices.

Perhaps more than Foucault, Said admires the work of Gramsci and Williams, both of whom attempted to understand how political domination was exercised, with a view to challenging and overcoming it. Most of all, it is in Fanon's writing that Said finds an explicit attempt to conceive of a relationship that is liberatory in this sense, and that arises specifically out of the historical experience of Empire:

. . . Fanon reads Western humanism by transporting the large hectoring bolus of "the Greco-Latin pedestal" bodily to the colonial wasteland, where "this artificial sentinel is turned into dust." It cannot survive juxtaposition with its quotidian debasement by European settlers. . . . National consciousness, he says, "must now be enriched and deepened by a very rapid transformation into a consciousness of social and political needs, in other words, into [real] humanism." . . . How odd the word "humanism" sounds in this context, where it is free from the narcissistic individualism, divisiveness, and colonialist egoism of the imperialism that justified the white man's rule.³³

According to Said, Fanon points to the hollowness of humanist principles when they are transposed to an imperial context. At the same time, Fanon sees the possibility of a real humanism emerging from the struggle for liberation. In an essay on Fanon's imagining of a "new humanism," Robert Bernasconi argues that Fanon did not merely critique

the old humanism for the Eurocentric assumption that European values were universally valid; nor did he simply point to the failure of Europeans to adhere to those values when dealing with native people.³⁴ Rather, he proposed that out of anti-imperialist nationalism would grow a truly liberatory consciousness, a new kind of humanism. Bernasconi argues that in Fanon's view, it is the violence of the colonized that would dialectically produce this new humanism. Edward Said makes a similar case: "For Fanon violence, as I said earlier, is the synthesis that overcomes the reification of white man as subject, Black man as object."³⁵ In Edward Said's reading of Fanon, one can see his interest precisely in the possibility of a humanism emerging that is truly universal:

Liberation is consciousness of self, "not the closing of a door to communication" but a never-ending process of "discovery and encouragement" leading to true national self-liberation and to universalism . . . in the obscurity and difficulty of Fanon's prose, there are enough poetic and visionary suggestions to make the case for liberation as a *process* and not as a goal contained automatically by the newly independent nations. Throughout *The Wretched of the Earth* . . . Fanon wants somehow to bind the European as well as the native together in a new non-adversarial community of awareness and anti-imperialism.³⁶

Said's own interest in a new humanism that bridges difference and is liberatory speaks through this discussion of Fanon. As Anthony Allessandrini has argued, Said shares with Fanon a critical stance towards humanism, as well as a belief that it can be refashioned for truly liberatory ends.³⁷

Humanism in Said's Late Work

Humanism, then, is a positive term that runs through Edward Said's career. However, as I have suggested, it takes on a greater importance, and also a different significance, in his late work. On the face of it, the kind of humanism that Said advocates in his last years looks very much like traditional humanism. Given that Said had himself pointed to the shortcomings of a Eurocentric humanism, it would seem oddly regressive for him to embrace an unreconstructed humanism himself. Certainly, critics who believe that he did precisely this might argue that, late in life, Said returned to the strongly humanist

roots of his own intellectual formation at Princeton and at Harvard, roots that in his focus on European canonical texts he had never entirely repudiated. Or, and this is born out by his own statements, one might conjecture that Said was disenchanted with the extreme opacity and solipsism of contemporary literary criticism in general and postcolonial studies in particular, and reasserted the value of scholarship that was secular in the sense of being worldly in its concerns and widely accessible in its idiom. While these explanations are in part persuasive, I want to suggest that Said turns to humanism so keenly because he believes it provides a critical edge against the alienating effects of modernization and modernity, broadly speaking.

In his MLA presidential address, Said imputes a heroic quality to the activity of humanist scholarship. He speaks to “the gradual loss over the past few decades, but also the prospects for recovery, of a critical model for humanism with a heroic ideal at its core.”³⁸ For Said, the handwritten text serves as an expression of this heroic ideal. Said is speaking quite literally: He emphasizes that the fruits of the pen are the solid material product of intellectual labor. He distinguishes writing done laboriously by hand from the products of the wordprocessor, which enables one to

save, modify, adapt, and incorporate huge numbers of words seemingly without labour or sweat. . . . The result is a standardization of tone that has more or less done away with the quirkiness and carefully nurtured gestation of handwritten writing that one associates symbolically as well as actually, not only with Freud, but with great literary figures contemporary with him such as Proust, Mann, Woolf, Pound, Joyce, and most of the other modernist giants.³⁹

Here, as in much of his criticism, Said expresses high praise for the “giants” of the English literary canon, but what is interesting is that he sees these writers as part of a literary confraternity that is at risk of dying out because of the mechanizing and leveling tendencies of modern technology. Said appears to embrace a non-Marxist, even patrician, materialism, literally seeing in the ontology of labor the possibility of a transcendence of the homogenizing and depersonalizing effects of modern conveniences. Said also characterizes the writer with pen in hand as a figure for the humanist enterprise. He sees the

quagmire of contemporary literary scholarship, with its “vast disagreements,” “ill-formed” inter-disciplinary arrangements, and “new jargons” as possibly

traceable to the loss of an enabling image of an individual human being pressing on with her or his work, pen in hand, manuscript or book on the table, rescuing some sense for the page from out of the confusion and disorganization that surround us in everyday life.⁴⁰

In a consummately modernist vein, he views the wielder of the pen as a bulwark against the tide of non-sense and un-reason. The role of the humanist scholar is, in these conditions, to engage in rational critique:

Humanism is disclosure; it is agency; it is immersing oneself in the element of history; it is recovering what Vico calls the topics of mind from the turbulent actualities of human life, “the uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor,” and then submitting them painstakingly to the rational process of judgment and criticism. . . . For what is crucial to humanistic thought, even in the very act of sympathetically trying to understand the past, is that it is a gesture of resistance and critique.⁴¹

Said attributes to humanism a dynamic, secular, and critical quality that, he fears, is being eroded in the sphere of learning, and in the world at large. He extols the humanist scholar as a historically attuned critic who is not so much interested in preserving a European tradition, as Said’s invocation of “great” European scholars might suggest on a superficial reading, but is, rather, committed to the pursuit of human freedom in a truly expansive sense that is based on an “[expanded] . . . understanding of human history to include all those Others constructed as dehumanized, demonized opponents by imperial knowledge and a will to rule.”⁴² In singling out the figure of Freud as representative here, Said is following a logic that Mufti traces so well in relation to Auerbach: the figure of the exiled German Jew who faces world catastrophe and who—as Said notes—comments: “But the struggle is not over yet.”⁴³

Reflecting in 2003 on *Orientalism*, twenty-five years after its publication, Said again identifies himself as a humanist:

My idea in *Orientalism* is to use humanistic critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us. I have called what I try to do “humanism,” a word I continue to use stubbornly despite the scornful dismissal of the term by sophisticated post-modern critics. By humanism I mean first of all attempting to dissolve Blake’s mind-forg’d manacles so as to be able to use one’s mind historically and rationally for the purpose of reflective understanding. Moreover humanism is sustained by a sense of community with other interpreters and other societies and periods: strictly speaking therefore, there is no such thing as an isolated humanist.⁴⁴

Said speaks with a sense of tremendous urgency of the need to revivify humanism as a rational, secular, historically-minded communitarian enterprise that may stand as a shield against the “fragmented knowledge available on the internet and in the mass media” which

nationalist and religious orthodoxies often disseminated by the mass media as they focus ahistorically and sensationally on the distant electronic wars that give viewers the sense of surgical precision, but in fact obscure the terrible suffering and destruction produced by modern warfare.⁴⁵

Said directly connects the decline of humanistic studies with the depredations of Western and especially US foreign policy. In the same essay, Said writes: “. . . [H]umanism is the only and I would go so far as saying the final resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history” (n. pag.).

Edward Said engages explicitly with the question of humanism once more in a collection of essays entitled *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, completed just before his death. In the first of these essays, “Humanism’s Sphere,” Said reflects on the historical and cultural circumstances that demand what he calls a critical humanism: the perennial “crisis” of the humanities (the question of their relevance), the influence of French theory on the American academy, the emergence of resistance movements to racism and imperialism, and

the corporatization of universities. In this context, Said argues, it is vital to conceive of humanism as a dynamic critical practice:

Humanism is the exertion of one's faculties in language in order to understand, reinterpret, and grapple with the products of language in history, other languages and other histories. In my understanding of its relevance today, humanism is not a way of consolidating and affirming what "we" have always known and felt, but rather a means of questioning, upsetting, and reformulating so much of what is presented to us as commodified, packaged, uncontroversial, and uncritically codified certainties, including those contained in the masterpieces herded under the rubric of "the classics."⁴⁶

Said emphasizes that humanism, properly understood, has an unsettling rather than a stabilizing effect. He rejects the dominant model of humanism advanced by conservative intellectuals such as Allan Bloom, one that aims to protect a traditional European canon and so-called "European values." The latter is in a continuum with an earlier American strand of "New Humanism," the exponents of which make "a surreptitious equation between popular and multicultural, multilingual democracy, on the one hand, and a horrendous decline in humanistic and aesthetic, not to say also ethical standards, on the other."⁴⁷ Said reproves the elitism and close-mindedness of these trumpeters of cultural doom. At the same time, he once again distances himself from the views of postmodern critics, such as Foucault and Lyotard, whose arguments, according to Said, in their anti-essentialism and rejection of grand narratives, are antithetical to possibilities of resistance to political oppression and willed human liberation movements.

In a second essay in the book, "The Changing Bases of Humanistic Study and Practice," Said rehearses the cultural and political changes that require a radical rethinking of humanism, and highlights the work of "the new generation of humanist scholars [that] is more attuned than any before it to the non-European, genderized, decolonized, and decentered energies and currents of our time."⁴⁸ In this essay, Edward Said emphasizes the multicultural basis of contemporary American culture, and characterizes humanism as a mode of scholarship that repudiates Eurocentrism and is committed to exploring and harnessing the critical and transformative potential of cultural differences.

Said's last work, of which we have only the briefest of sketches in published form, puts him squarely in the tradition of humanist scholarship. In his essay "Thoughts on Late Style," he discusses canonical European writers and artists, and turns to proverbially timeless and universal themes: art and death. Again, I would suggest that Said's project is not primarily to affirm the greatness of canonical European art; rather, he is specifically interested in certain artists and writers who, at the end of their lives, are at odds with the world and express this variance in their late works. These writers depart from the commonly held notion that the dusk of one's life is a period of mellowness and reconciliation. Rather, they convey a sense of detached alienation in their last years. Their late work has an intransigent quality, "an increasing sense of apartness and exile and anachronism."⁴⁹ Said sees the late work of Beethoven, Lampedusa's sole novel *The Leopard*, and Cavafy's late poetry as exemplary of this kind of late style. He turns to Adorno's essay "Late Style in Beethoven" to expand on the fragmentariness of Beethoven's late work with its characteristic repetitiveness, carelessness, and distraction:

Adorno's thesis is that all this is predicated on two considerations: first, that when he was young, Beethoven's work had been vigorous and organically whole, but became more wayward and eccentric; and second, that as an older man facing death, Beethoven realized that his work proclaims that "no synthesis is conceivable": it is in effect "the remains of a synthesis, the vestige of an individual human subject sorely aware of the wholeness, and consequently the survival, that has eluded it for ever." . . . Beethoven's late works remain unco-opted by a higher synthesis: they do not fit any scheme, and they cannot be reconciled or resolved, since their irresolution and fragmentariness are constitutive, neither ornamental nor symbolic of something else. The late works are about "lost totality," and it is in this sense that they are catastrophic.⁵⁰

Whereas in his reading of Fanon, Said identifies a dialectic that is projected into the future, a process of liberation the end point of which is not known, in his account of Beethoven's late style, Said sees (as does Adorno) a refusal of synthesis, an eschewing of dialectical resolution. Beethoven's late compositions stand apart and confound incorpora-

tion. In the same vein, he interprets Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard* as the work of an organic intellectual of a dying southern Italian aristocracy, and its protagonist, the Prince Don Fabrizio, as a personification of this decline. Unlike Gramsci, who in "The Southern Question" envisioned the possibility of a revolutionary synthesis of the rural southern peasantry and the northern industrial proletariat, "the Prince stands for a pessimism of the intelligence *and* a pessimism of the will."⁵¹ At the same time, the Prince does not compromise his dignity or his style; he has no desire to change, but, rather, stands apart, an anachronism. Said views the Alexandrian poet C. P. Cavafy as a third exemplar of late style: "His poems enact a form of minimal survival between the past and the present, and his aesthetic of non-production, expressed in a non-metaphorical, almost prosaic unrhymed verse, enforces the sense of exile which is at the core of his work."⁵² Said observes in Cavafy's poetry an equable expression of contrary emotions without any attempt to forcibly resolve the tension between them. He attributes to all of these artists a degree of mature detachment and absence of egotism that enables them to forego any strained resolution of antipathetic forces.

Edward Said's comments on late style shed light on his own last works. In his early and middle career, Edward Said eschews the false universalism of Eurocentric thought and gestures, towards a new humanism that is truly inclusive; at the same time, he maintains a commitment to humanism over and against the objections of its postmodern and poststructuralist critics because he believes it to be politically enabling. He understands humanism as a philosophical stance that transcends and breaks down boundaries and affords a model of agency. Said extols the humanist scholar for being committed to rational critique in the face of growing economic inequalities, hostile political conditions, confusing experiential landscapes, and a self-regarding and obscurantist tendency in scholarly discourse. In his late work, Said embraces the style of the artists he admires for their "deliberately unproductive productiveness, a going against." Like that of these artists, Said's work manifests "an increasing sense of apartness and exile and anachronism."⁵³ In his work, the tensions between humanism and the *nouvelle critique* are not resolved. More appalled than ever by the aggressive intensification of American imperialism, disheartened by the continued and unremitting inhumanity with which Palestinians are treated, and disenchanted with the direction scholarly discourse has taken, Said distances himself from postmodern theory

and turns towards an “anti-humanist humanism” that, though it is not able to achieve cultural and political transformation in the conditions of postcolonial modernity, nonetheless refuses to compromise.

If in his work on late style Said embraces a form of negative dialectics, this is not to say that he retreats altogether from a transformative vision. One of his last projects, the setting up of the East-West Diwan Orchestra with Daniel Barenboim, is a living testament to his belief that, despite their differences, people—in this instance Arabs and Israelis—can come together in contrapuntal fashion to form a harmonic whole. Said and Barenboim describe the first meeting of the Orchestra in Weimar in 1999 in *Parallels and Paradoxes*, a collection culled from their conversations together.⁵⁴ Said writes of this experiment:

It was remarkable to witness the group, despite the tension of the first week or ten days, turn themselves into a real orchestra. In my opinion, what you saw happen had no political overtones at all. One set of identities was superseded by another set. There was an Israeli group, and a Russian group, and a Syrian group, a Lebanese group, a Palestinian group, and a group of Palestinian Israelis. All of them suddenly became cellists and violinists playing the same piece in the same orchestra under the same conductor.⁵⁵

Said suggests that the musicians spontaneously moved beyond political differences by identifying not along ethnic lines, but as musical performers playing in concert with each other. He implies that, in the right circumstances and with the right leadership, people can set aside their divisive political identities and assume new forms of identification that allow for collaboration and unity. Discussing the East-West Diwan project and other musical interests in a joint interview with Barenboim broadcast on National Public Radio in December 2002, Said describes the transcendent power of music:

Beethoven in the first place really transcends the time and place of which he was a part. He was an Austro-Germanic composer who speaks to anyone who likes music no matter whether that person is African or Middle Eastern or American or European. And that extraordinary accomplishment is entirely due to this music of striving and

development and of somehow expressing the highest human ideals, ideals of brotherhood, of community, of yearning, also, perhaps in many instances, unfulfilled yearning. . . . Music making and listening at the same time present a kind of fascinating dialectic between the individual and the collective, and that back and forth is very precious and gets over a lot of ground that is not commonly traversed in everyday life.⁵⁶

Said imputes to the work of the great composer the ability to appeal to universal human ideals, across the differences of nationality and location. An anti-humanist humanist to the last, Said sees in the process of collaborative music-making the possibility of moving beyond the prison-house of political differences and creating new forms of identity and community.

Notes

- ¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (NY: Vintage, 1978).
- ² Edward Said, "Thoughts on Late Style," *London Review of Books* 26.15 (August 5, 2004): 3-7.
- ³ Edward Said, "Presidential Address 1999: Humanism and Heroism," *PMLA* 115.3 (2000): 285-91.
- ⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 7.
- ⁵ Edward Said was not by any means the first scholar to study writers from the former European colonies. In fact, the study of so-called "commonwealth literature" had long been a staple of university curricula, in Britain and in its former colonies. The Commonwealth of Nations, formerly the British Commonwealth, a voluntary association of the former colonies of Great Britain, saw as its mandate the promotion of cultural ties between members, and in 1987 the Commonwealth Foundation established a writers' prize "to encourage and reward the upsurge of new Commonwealth fiction and ensure that works of merit reach a wider audience outside their country of origin" (from the Website of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize: <<http://www.commonwealthwriters.com>>). However, Commonwealth Literature had, by and large, been approached with a view to its appreciation and transmission. Edward Said definitively shifted this focus in an overtly political direction, to the study of the relationship between literature, colonialism, nationalism, and decolonization. Following his lead, scholars took up the challenge of reading

such literature in the light of political struggle and transformation. In general, postcolonial critics and theorists have focused on the operation of discourse, ideology, and representation in postcolonial writing. They have coined and adopted terms such as 'national allegory,' 'diaspora,' 'ambivalence,' 'mimicry,' 'hybridity,' 'creolite,' 'negritude,' 'syncretism,' 'globalization,' 'modernity,' 'hegemony,' and 'subaltern' to interpret colonial and postcolonial experience.

- ⁶ Some of the important studies in this vein are: Abdul R. JanMohamed's *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (Amherst, MA: U of Massachusetts P, 1983), Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988), Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (NY: Columbia UP, 1989), Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (NY, London: Routledge, 1995), and Christopher Miller's *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985).
- ⁷ For example, Kim Hall's *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995) addressed the discourse of alterity in relation to Renaissance literature; Laura Brown's *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993) focused on texts such as Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* from the eighteenth century; Nigel Leask's *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1993) explored Orientalist representation in writing of the Romantic period; and Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby, eds. *Modernism and Empire: Writing and British Coloniality 1890-1940* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000) demonstrated the significance of Empire in a number of texts of literary modernism.
- ⁸ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (NY: Vintage, 1994), 12-13.
- ⁹ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 51.
- ¹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1983).
- ¹¹ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66-67.
- ¹² W. J. T. Mitchell, "Secular Divination: Edward Said's Humanism," *Critical Inquiry* 31.2 (Winter 2005): 462.
- ¹³ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998).
- ¹⁴ Gandhi, 42. There is another strand of postcolonial criticism that is Marxist and humanist in its orientation—for example, the work of Fanon, Stuart

- Hall, Neil Lazarus, the early Subaltern Studies work—that Gandhi does not adequately recognize.
- 15 James Clifford, "On Orientalism," *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998), 269.
 - 16 Entry for "counterpoint" in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*, <<http://m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=counterpoint&x=16&y=9>>.
 - 17 Said, *Orientalism*, 7.
 - 18 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 244.
 - 19 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 276.
 - 20 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 273.
 - 21 Edward Said, *The World, The Text and the Critic*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983), 29.
 - 22 Aamir Mufti, "Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, Secular Criticism, and the Question of Minority Culture," *Critical Inquiry* 25 (Autumn 1998): 95-125.
 - 23 Mufti, 112.
 - 24 Said, *Orientalism*, 3.
 - 25 Edward Said, "Michel Foucault, 1926-1984," *After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge, Postmodern Challenges*, ed. Jonathan Arac (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1988), 5.
 - 26 Said, "Michel Foucault, 1926-1984," 5.
 - 27 Said, "Michel Foucault, 1926-1984," 9-10.
 - 28 Said, "Michel Foucault, 1926-1984," 9.
 - 29 Edward Said, "Foucault and the Imagination of Power," *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000), 242.
 - 30 Said, "Foucault and the Imagination of Power," 243-44.
 - 31 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 278.
 - 32 Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, eds. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982), 208-26.
 - 33 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 268-69.
 - 34 Robert Bernasconi, "Casting the Slough: Fanon's New Humanism for a New Humanity," *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, eds. Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renee T. White (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 113-21.
 - 35 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 270.
 - 36 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 274.
 - 37 Anthony Alessandrini, "Humanism in Question: Fanon and Said," *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds. Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta

- Ray (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000,) 431-50.
- ³⁸ Said, "Humanism and Heroism," 286.
- ³⁹ Said, "Humanism and Heroism," 288.
- ⁴⁰ Said, "Humanism and Heroism," 288.
- ⁴¹ Said, "Humanism and Heroism," 290.
- ⁴² Said, "Humanism and Heroism," 291.
- ⁴³ Said, "Humanism and Heroism," 286.
- ⁴⁴ Edward Said, "Orientalism 25 Years Later: Worldly Humanism v. the Empire-builders," August 4, 2003, <<http://www.counterpunch.org/said/08052003.html>>.
- ⁴⁵ Said, "Orientalism 25 Years Later," n. pag.
- ⁴⁶ Edward Said, "Humanism's Sphere," *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (NY: Columbia UP, 2004), 28.
- ⁴⁷ Said, "Humanism's Sphere," 19-20.
- ⁴⁸ Said, "The Changing Basis of Humanistic Study and Practice," *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, 47.
- ⁴⁹ Said, "Thoughts on Late Style," 4.
- ⁵⁰ Said, "Thoughts on Late Style," 2-3.
- ⁵¹ Said, "Thoughts on Late Style," 5.
- ⁵² Said, "Thoughts on Late Style," 8.
- ⁵³ Said, "Thoughts on Late Style," 4.
- ⁵⁴ Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (NY: Vintage, 2004).
- ⁵⁵ Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, 9-10.
- ⁵⁶ Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said, "Interview on NPR," December 28, 2002, <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=892575>>.

Notes on Edward Said's View of Michel Foucault

Rubén Chuaqui

Bird, my sea-bird, rising from the depth of darkness,
God's blessings upon you for the good news you bring.
For I know now
Something happened . . . the horizon parted, and the house
greeted the light of day.

Fadwa Tuqan¹

The Context: Texts, Discourse, and the World

Texts are in the world. That is a recurring, far from trivial theme in Edward Said. For the statement is not a truism. It lies at the core of a secular outlook. There are different ways of being, and of being in the world. To some people, being and being-in-the-world are indistinguishable, so long as one conceives of the world in a sufficiently broad sense. However, one can set apart symbols from what is not symbolic. To a large extent, culture is a matter of symbols. Through symbols and signs we can invent, and imagine, especially through language. What humans imagine may have no counterpart in the already existing, but when that is the case we still put something in the world: at least our imagining itself, be it transient or fixed in a relatively permanent medium. We can imagine in order to make: to create objects, artifacts, physical or otherwise, works of art, for instance, but also institutions (parliaments, universities, etc.).² Texts, in general, have connections to the physical environment, to society, to culture. Literary texts certainly do. This connectedness really matters for literary studies; it does not deny the autonomy of literature, however.

We can speak (or write) diversely. Let us go back to one of the ancients, Apuleius, in his booklet on logic, known as *Peri Hermeneias*. In it, he recounts various species of discourse (*oratio*), according to the purposes they serve (we might as well speak of speech acts):

ut imperandi, vel mandandi, narrandi, succensendi, optandi, vovendi, irascendi, odiendi, invidendi, favendi, miserandi, admirandi, contemnendi, obiurgandi, poenitendi, deplorandi, tum voluptatem afferendi, tum metum incutiendi. . . . Est una inter has ad propositum potissima, quae pronuntiabilis appellatur, absolutam sententiam comprehendens, sola ex omnibus veritati aut falsitati obnoxia.³

The question of referring is significant for truth or falsehood, and so is representation, one of the sign's functions according to Karl Bühler, in his *Organonmodell*:

[Das sprachliche Zeichen] ist Symbol kraft seiner Zuordnung zu Gegenständen und Sachverhalten, Symptom (Anzeichen, Indicium) kraft seiner Abhängigkeit vom Sender, dessen Innerlichkeit es ausdrückt, und Signal kraft seines Appells an den Hörer, dessen äusseres oder inneres Verhalten es steuert wie andere Verkehrszeichen.⁴

As expected, he recognizes among the three the dominance of representation (*Darstellung*: the representative or presentative function of language).⁵ It is the nature of the relationship between representation and states of affairs which makes the difference in telling the truth (or failing to do so), as when *speaking truth to power*,⁶ where the speaker expresses his/herself and appeals to his/her interlocutor in a generally asymmetrical way.

Why, if the existence of entities referred to in literary texts is not supposed to be relevant for the reader—at least in modern times⁷—do critics sometimes, or frequently, search for real experiences in those texts? Traditionally, it has been thought that literary texts, no matter how fictitious they are, carry (some) truth in them. Quite often, Said uses a particular art form—mostly the novel—as a witness to reality (in addition to its other values), specifically regarding the colonial-imperialist venture. The world enters into the critic's activity through the pragmatic dimensions of literary texts (therefore including their connotations), not necessarily because of their referents, which can be wholly imagined and purposely so. Among the pragmatic dimensions are, naturally, situation, context, emitter, receptor, and culture.

The overall sense of what a text (and its producer) purports to do is decisive in judging that text. In this respect, one of the relevant factors to have in mind is the crossing of borders between disciplines and genres, something discussed by many writers and critics nowadays. Both characteristics are usually described (wrongly) as having been initiated by post-modernism. The example of J. L. Borges could be illuminating. The phenomenon of mixing genres is many-sided and has different functions and effects. Once again, one should look at the writer's intention. As illustrations, we could cite the essays which formally merge disciplines, incorporating rhetorical techniques from the short story, or we might bring up the works of fiction, incorporating the mode of the essay or the scholarly study—or Dos Passos's technique of the newsreel *collage*. Certainly, there are many literary essays by Borges where fiction is absent from the composition itself (e.g., on Nathaniel Hawthorne or the Nordic Eddas, just to mention a couple). It is not implausible that some readers (not exclusively novel ones, certainly), faced with the huge number of names brought forward by the Argentinian "fictioner," can get confused once in a while. On the one hand, there could be fictitious narratives mistaken for real ("Pierre Menard," say); on the other hand, once the readers have had the experience of hybrid fictions—recognized as such—in the form of learned essays, there could be critical essays taken for fictions (*viz.* Borges on Marcel Schwob or Evaristo Carriego). This has something to do with the different, somewhat non-canonical, formation of present readers, writers, and critics alike in respect to previous generations, as Said comments in *Beginnings*. But no doubt, that is not the whole picture.

Sometimes it is not easy to discern what sort of text one is dealing with. One can even devise ambiguous texts (riddles, in a sense), as a sort of entertainment, so that the listeners or readers must guess whether what is being told really happened or has been made up. To that end, traditional marks of the fabulous can be used to disguise real events, like the formula *Kan ma kan fi qadim az-zaman* (there was, there wasn't, in ancient times)—or you can go on inventing, weaving around real people, so to speak. Needless to say, such exercises do not abolish the boundary between truth and falsehood.

The critic can choose all sorts of texts as his/her field of attention, no matter how complex or straightforward, no matter how particular or general. Consequently, critics sometimes choose to limit themselves to the study of literary works traditionally fashioned, or of more or less hybrid modern forms, and, in their activity, produce formal arti-

cles or books, or avail themselves of the essay, or even allow themselves to mix several sorts of genre.

The Humanist Drive

Edward W. Said's work is multidimensional, as almost everybody knows, spanning literary and musical criticism (or, more broadly the cultural realm), criticism of culture and its standards or norms, and political activity, chiefly—but not exclusively—advocating the Palestinian cause.

In this multiplicity of interests, he is one among a number of contemporary intellectuals and past writers. The plurarism of Said's interests is not at all a new phenomenon. One can say that for centuries this has been a usual occurrence. Maybe the difference in recent time lies in the stress put on the reflection around texts and non-texts, and language versus non-language, including the relationship within sets of terms. But the tone and the general outlook of Said belong to some recognizable currents in the contemporary critical scene. One of the pluralistic currents looming large in West European thought during the last few decades has been led by some outstanding authors active in France. In such a trend, too, a wide range of subjects is treated, both from the world of fiction and from the non-fictional domain. It is pertinent to recall that criticism is expected to tell the truth about what it comments on, even when it deals with fiction (from a second-degree viewpoint, in this case), and even though the tools it marshalls are often insufficient to convince everybody. Critics are not expected to make up their essays through and through, nor to put forward arbitrary interpretations of a text, nor to leave in the dark part of the evidence.

Said is multidimensional, albeit not disparate. I think his vision of humanism plays an integrating role, without becoming a full-fledged theoretical framework, nor claiming to do so. Humanism in what sense?—one may wonder. In a plurality of senses, some traditional; some less so. It is close to philology, as practiced by Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus, for example, but not yet fully secular, or as practiced in the twentieth century by Curtius, Spitzer, or Auerbach. In all of these humanists the search is for knowledge of man as a creative (and sometimes conflictive) being, and not merely as a creature reducible to the physical world, a creature that can be apprehended completely through the natural sciences.⁸ “Worldly humanism v. the

Empire-builders” is the subtitle of an article written by Edward Said on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Orientalism*, published a little before his death; it is a sort of recapitulation and vision for the future.⁹ On some points, his positive valuation of humanism in the article is in sharp contrast, one might say, to Foucault and a few of the structuralists (the less tradition-minded, probably), who, more often than not, show some disdain for humanistic values. In particular, there is the critique by Foucault concerning the Enlightenment, a movement whose indebtedness to West European Renaissance is undeniable.¹⁰ I have the impression that Sartre’s “L’existentialisme est un humanisme” is more congenial to the way Said sees the tasks of modern humanism. Said does not defend, in the aforementioned article (nor elsewhere), every kind of humanism, especially not the nation-centered variety, or those varieties subservient to one’s own culture.¹¹ He specifically insisted on condemning ethnocentrism in his notion of humanism.¹²

Said’s stance is somewhat similar to Noam Chomsky’s, who has not attempted to put forward a unified theory encompassing both language, on the one hand, and politics and public matters, on the other, but whose views in both realms are consistent, mutually compatible. It is possible to make some connection between Chomsky’s activity as a linguist and his political views; in each the responsibility of the human individual is particularly relevant, even decisive. Concerning both these fields, in Chomsky’s conception, there is a rejection of behaviorism, and the affirmation of the subject’s autonomy in normal circumstances, even though individuals and groups can be manipulated and deceived.¹³ For both Said and Chomsky, the notion of expertise is largely out of place in public matters, because, barring secrecy, every citizen has the capacity to be in command of all the facts relevant to almost any public issue. But, of course, one should keep in mind the workings of the power system that not infrequently makes sure that ordinary citizens do not have access to the process of taking important public decisions, as Chomsky and Said have so often proposed.

This does not mean that specialists should not exist. Said points out:

No one can know everything about the world we live in, and so the division of intellectual labor will have to continue foreseeably. The academy requires that division, knowledge itself demands it, society in the West is

organized around it. But most knowledge about human society is, I think, finally accessible to common sense—that is, the sense that grows out of the common human experience—and is, indeed must be, subject to some sort of critical assessment. These two things, common sense and critical assessment, are in the final analysis social and generally intellectual attributes available to and cultivatable by everyone, not the privilege of a special class, nor the possession of a handful of certified “experts.” Yet special training is necessary if one is to learn Arabic or Chinese, or if one is to understand the meaning of economic, historical, and demographic trends. And the academy is the place for making that training available: of this I have no doubt at all. The trouble comes when training produces guilds who, losing touch with the realities of community, good sense, and intellectual responsibility, either promote the guild at all costs or put it too willingly and uncritically at the service of power.¹⁴

From Said’s perspective, such critical ability or independent assessment is altogether essential in the case of the intellectual, whether toward cultural creation or society as a whole. In this connection, the figure of Michel Foucault and his *milieu* represented an important point of reference and contrast for Said.

The French Intellectual Scene and Said

Maybe fifty years from now it will seem striking that during the later decades of the twentieth century so much weight was given in literary studies to authors like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida, or the *Telquelians*, etc. This has not been a phenomenon limited to France and the United States, naturally. Some of the attraction these intellectuals have exerted abroad relates to the need felt to renew a field perceived as stagnant, and mostly preoccupied with aesthetic and formal matters. Many saw in such authors, and in contemporary French thought generally, a salutary freedom and a will to engage in the issues of the hour. The ubiquitous Richard Rorty has this to tell us:

It was not a dialectical necessity, but rather an historical accident, that post-Nietzschean European philosophy entered the universities of the English-speaking world through literature departments rather than philosophy departments. The main reason those departments served as ports of entry for the books of Derrida and Foucault was that everybody in them had become, by 1970, bored stiff with New Criticism, with Marxist criticism, and with Freudian criticism. Graduate students who read Frederick Crews's *The Pooh Perplex* were determined never to write anything remotely reminiscent of the books that Crews had parodied. New gurus were desperately needed.¹⁵

Of course the story was not so simple.

Beginnings includes a whole chapter, "*Abecedarium Culturae*," devoted to the figures of the French intellectual scene (but mainly about Foucault and structuralism and their overlap). In the Introduction to *Reflections on Exile*, there is a personal and telling note:

Fred Dupee [to whose memory the book is dedicated], a real subversive . . . in the intellectual as well as political sense, . . . a deracinated, adventurous, and hospitable native-born American, . . . [has] encouraged my interest in the new styles of French theorizing, in experimental fiction and poetry, and above all, in the art of the essay as a way of exploring what was new and original in our time regardless of professional hobbles.¹⁶

Not everyone, naturally, is convinced by those writers' outlook, singly or collectively. Some would extend their criticism to the environment surrounding them. George Steiner begins his review of *The Order of Things* with these words:

French intellectual life is a scenario. It has its stars and histrionic polemics, its claue and fiascoes. It is susceptible, to a degree remarkable in a society so obviously literate and ironic, to sudden gusts of lunatic fashion. A Sartre dominates, to be followed by Lévi-Strauss; the new master is soon fusilladed by self-pro-

claimed “Maoist-structuralists.” The almost impenetrable soliloquies on semantics and psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan pack their full houses. Now the mandarin of the hour is Michel Foucault. His arresting features look out of the pages of glossy magazines; he has recently been appointed to the College de France, which is both the most prestigious of official learned establishments and, traditionally, a setting for fashionable charisma.¹⁷

This review caused a rough exchange between author and reviewer. Equally surprised by the French intellectual scene, but offering a somewhat different appraisal, was Perry Anderson.¹⁸ According to Said, Foucault and his peers

emerged out of a strange revolutionary concatenation of Parisian aesthetic and political currents, which for about thirty years produced such a concentration of brilliant work as we are not likely to see for generations. . . . Yet all of these Parisian intellectuals were deeply rooted in the political actualities of French life[:] . . . World War II, response to European communism, the Vietnamese and Algerian colonial wars, and May 1968.¹⁹

On the politically oppositional character of a conspicuous part of French twentieth-century intellectuals, it might be pertinent to gauge the risks at stake in connection with the different times and situations. For instance, during the Algerian war of Independence, Sartre’s apartment was bombed by elements from the right.²⁰ Those active in 1968 and after incurred risks, no doubt, that their more conformist peers did not. However, they rarely suffered the way oppositionists in Third World countries, or fighters for independence and against dictatorship, did, and continue to do.²¹

All those French intellectuals had been trained in the study of classical Western thinkers. Perhaps Piaget’s remarks about philosophical studies in France are appropriate here. The Geneva psychologist considers excessive the attention devoted in French philosophy departments to texts, whereas, in his opinion, scarce attention is paid to the world of experience, and no regard whatsoever is shown for

ways of testing findings and theories. The criticism seems to be addressed in the first place to the *normaliens* (some of whom, among many others, were J.-P. Sartre, S. de Beauvoir, M. Foucault, P. Bourdieu and J. Derrida).²²

It is worthwhile to consider Georges Mounin's *Clefs pour la linguistique*, an introductory book which appeared in France when structuralism was in its heyday, after it had already spilled from linguistics over to the humanities at large, including the social sciences, and, especially, anthropology and sociology.²³ Philosophers from certain currents linked to Marxism, psychoanalysis, and phenomenology were also attracted to the new method. Mounin welcomes some of the contributions, including those of Lévi-Strauss, but warns the reader to be wary of the defective understanding they exhibit when it comes to linguistic notions, the basis on which they build their projections.²⁴

Said celebrates in Foucault and other French intellectuals the overlapping (and even fusion) of disciplines.²⁵ This positive valuation of the crossing of borders is shared by many writers and critics nowadays. The problem with some of the border-crossers is that they tend to get adrift in fantasy, no matter how much they claim that they are not presenting imagined entities, but realities.

I would like to highlight in Said the passion for knowledge and the distrust of postmodernism's champions (Lyotard, for one), and of the textual formalism of the deconstructionists (Derrida and disciples), whose viewpoints some consider facile alibis advanced by those writers in order not to commit themselves. This can be compounded by "traveling theory" in the sense used by Said.²⁶ He points out the metamorphosis of theoretical positions when they move from one context to another:

By the time "theory" advanced intellectually into departments of English, French, and German in the United States, the notion of "text" had been transformed into something almost metaphysically isolated from experience. The sway of semiology, deconstruction, and even the archaeological descriptions of Foucault, as they have commonly been received, reduced and in many cases eliminated the messier precincts of "life" and historical experience.²⁷

Michel Foucault in Said's *Orientalism*

More than once, and early on, Edward Said acknowledged his debt to Michel Foucault,²⁸ in whom he saw a source of inspiration and a powerful innovator, "a great and original mind."²⁹ Elsewhere, he observed: "Quite apart from its real historical discoveries, Foucault's archaeological research has a profoundly imaginative side to it."³⁰ On the positive side of the balance sheet:

His major positive contribution was that he researched and revealed "technologies" of knowledge and self that beset society, made it governable, controllable, normal, even as these technologies developed their own uncontrollable drives, without limit or true rationale. His great critical contribution was to dissolve the anthropological models of identity and subjecthood underlying research in the humanistic and social sciences.³¹

They met at least on one occasion. In addition, Said saw Foucault "lecture once at the College de France in the early spring of 1978, when he addressed a very large and quite motley crowd drawn from the beau monde all the way through the academic ranks down to the clochards (or tramps) who had wandered in for shelter."³² I am not aware that Foucault ever referred to Said, either in his writing or interviews. It is true that Foucault, in his research and in the published interviews, rarely mentions his peers and contemporary intellectuals. Exceptions are the reviews he now and then wrote. On the other hand, there are abundant references the other way around. Running the risk of overgeneralizing, I would say that earlier references to Foucault by Said are more enthusiastic.

As a matter of fact, in the Saidian outlook, there is a substantive presence of Foucault's conceptions. Perhaps it is in *Orientalism* where it is most operative, although it is in *Beginnings* and *The World, the Text, and the Critic* where a more detailed treatment is found, the former being limited to work previous to 1975, when the book was published, and the latter reaching up to near the end of Foucault's life. In addition, as late as in *Culture and Imperialism* one can see that Foucault's views are very much present. In *Orientalism*, the most widely known text among Said's writings, several Foucauldian concepts are invoked: *archaeology*, *genealogy*, *archive*

and, foremost, *discourse*.³³ All of these concepts are related to power in one form or another, or, more properly, to limits of action. Undoubtedly, the presence of these concepts is one of the aspects that singles out Said's outlook on Orientalism and its practices, as opposed to studies carried by previous authors. Anouar Abdel-Malek, Maxime Rodinson, and many others come to mind, as well as scholars of pre-*Orientalism* (so to speak), like Richard William Southern and Norman Daniel.³⁴ An important characteristic of Said's contribution, in this regard, is the synthesis that is achieved in *Orientalism*, where images, prejudices, scholarly enterprise, and the role of imperialism are examined from a unified perspective, which seeks to do justice to the connections among them. But one should not ignore the author's own points of view and perceptions.

Said goes so far as affirming that without the concept of discourse, *Orientalism* could not have been written:

I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity “the Orient” is in question.³⁵

In my opinion, the notion of discourse advanced by Foucault is important in giving the text its physiognomy, as it were. However, the investigation, in general, would not have lost very much if a

different approach had been chosen. Evidently, the conceptual framework used in the book is much richer, bringing in some insights from an enlightened (and broadly understood) sociology of knowledge (a discipline mistrusted by Foucault, as Said himself notes³⁶), i.e., from a perspective originating in scholars and social activists critical of capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism—a perspective originating in many of the same authors which were so important in Said's work at large (such as Gramsci). It is even possible that shorn of the Foucauldian scaffolding, the book would have convinced some of its critics more readily, who are not *over*-enthusiastic about what they (erroneously) see as *over*-deterministic constraints. Conceivably, some would even claim that in *Orientalism* Said's debt to Foucault is something which subtracts solidity from the book.

In intellectual studies, and in social thought generally, the notion has been widespread that individuals act and live within limits, set by an epoch or by the particular community to which they belong.³⁷ Durkheim deems *la contrainte* something essential to the social, to *le fait social*.³⁸ In cultural matters, it is more usual to speak of dominant ideas, or of norms or standards which leave some leeway for the creativity of the subjects. Alfred North Whitehead, who ranges widely in his cultural (and spiritual) interests, remarks that it is possible to configure an intellectual climate retrospectively, but, in contrast to Foucault and some structuralists, he does not claim that those living in a certain epoch are unable to take ready cognizance of the prevailing ideas.³⁹ Wellek and Warren, too, speak of dominant views in an epoch.⁴⁰ Instead of rules, one could speak of norms or standards. It is relevant to recall here a couple of further concepts advanced by Chomsky for the study of language: rule-governed creativity and rule-changing creativity.

In connection with such constraints, Said holds that:

[Anyone wishing] to intervene in a field of rational activity [is aware] that his field—whether history, sociology, linguistics, literature, philosophy, the sciences—is disposed, or laid out and ordered, not by calendars but according to structures ordered internally by rules, sets, impersonal groupings.⁴¹

He adds:

This is not entirely a qualitative observation, since it is quite possible to argue that the proliferation of information (and what is still more remarkable, a proliferation of the hardware for disseminating and preserving this information) has hopelessly diminished the role apparently played by the individual. The analysis of the knowledge revolution and of the scientific revolution by Michel Foucault and Thomas Kuhn, respectively, assigns greater importance in transmitting and recording information to impersonal orders, the *epistémé* and the paradigm.⁴²

Particularly, as regards culture, Said enhances its potential for productivity, in spite of the constraints:

[T]o believe that politics in the form of imperialism bears upon the production of literature, scholarship, social theory, and history writing is by no means equivalent to saying that culture is therefore a demeaned or denigrated thing. Quite the contrary: my whole point is to say that we can better understand the persistence and the durability of saturated hegemonic systems like culture when we realize that their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers were productive, not unilaterally inhibiting. It is this idea that Gramsci, certainly, and Foucault and Raymond Williams in their very different ways have been trying to illustrate.⁴³

A few lines earlier Edward Said had stated that Orientalism makes one realize “that political imperialism governs an entire field of study, imagination, and scholarly institutions—in such a way as to make its avoidance an intellectual and historical impossibility,”⁴⁴ an avoidance which I understand in the sense of starting from scratch, paying no heed to the parameters set by such a field.

On the ways discourses are created, Said specifies an instance, while speaking of what he calls the textual attitude (“to apply what one learns out of a book literally”):

A text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual [and arising out of certain circumstances just described a few lines above] is not easily dismissed.

Expertise is attributed to it. The authority of academics, institutions, and governments can accrue to it, surrounding it with still greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. More important, such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it. This kind of text is produced out of those preexisting units of information deposited by Flaubert in the catalogue of *idées reçues*.⁴⁵

What about the author, then? Up to a point, the texts an author has already written can serve as a relative constraint, something susceptible to leave room for innovation. In the domain of literary creation, there seems to be a dialectic between the given and subjectivity:

For the writer the eternally present moment arrives when his text can speak as a discursive formation “bringing out . . . subjectivity” in language, *his* subjectivity. . . . To use Foucault’s terminology, the text volume is a sort of historical a priori fact permitting the formulation of new statements. It is a rule-bound order that does not, however, deny the writer the power to innovate. The writer’s role, paradoxically, is to use the subtle constraints of his discourse (the text’s volume) to expand their reach, to make his discourse capable of repeating its present and its rules in new ways: thus the dialectic of repetition and innovation seems to announce the writer’s presence to the reader, to the text, to the institutions (professional, economic, social, political) that sustain it. Nevertheless—and this cannot be overemphasized—the writer is not at liberty to make statements, or merely to add to the text at will: statements are rare, and they are difficult, so strong is the text’s anterior constraint upon him.⁴⁶

That “statements are rare” is an exaggeration, I think, even allowing for the non-canonical way Foucault understands them. Besides,

authors create through multiple kinds of utterances, too, not only by means of statements.

Much later, in a comprehensive assessment, the essential view is maintained, with some important additions:

Foucault propounded fascinating, highly original views about such matters as the history of systems of thought, delinquency, discipline and confinement, introducing into the vocabulary of history, philosophy and literary criticism such concepts as discourse, statement, episteme, genealogy and archaeology, each of them bristling with complexity and contradiction such as few of his imitators and disciples have ever mastered or completely understood.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, he did not accept wholesale Foucault's thought and research, both of which were not static, as is well known, but were transformed and enriched along the years,⁴⁸ not always consistently. So, besides remarking on the controversiality of Foucault's writings,⁴⁹ Said asserts both that "one thing is never in doubt: he was a prodigious researcher, a man driven by what he once called 'relentless erudition'" and that "[t]here are many problems and questions that come to mind as one reads Foucault." More particularly, concerning discursive formations, Said writes: "[U]nlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise collective anonymous body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism."⁵⁰

Concerning rules, the fact that they exist does not mean that for people to follow them amounts to becoming *automata*, a point of which Edward Said is very much aware, as is shown, for instance, in "Foucault and the Imagination of Power." In fact, even though community and language predispose people to follow the official ways of viewing things, the chapter entitled "Holding Nations and Traditions at Bay," in *Representations of the Intellectual*, is an example of how the oppressed can contest the cultural and political *status quo*.⁵¹

From a more general perspective, Said seems to have usually had towards Foucault the same complex stance, at once admiring and critical, that is often perceptible when Said deals with outstanding intellectuals, women and men, and is especially elaborate when he puts forward his opinions about those who have been decisive in his formation as a critic. It is a feature, I think, whose source lies in

the very substance of the role the intellectual should play, according to Said. This view is displayed in a number of writings, such as *Representations of the Intellectual*, particularly, and is apparent also in the review articles he wrote on literature, culture, politics, and music. In a number of these articles, the text begins on a positive note, and sooner or later brings out an exposition of shortcomings, within an overall setting of enthusiastic approval, as is the case with Eric Hobsbawm.⁵² A prominent case of the unsimplifying manner in which Said tended to regard other intellectuals is that of Sartre.⁵³ Charles Malik, for his part, is an example of a complex personality that Said got to know well.⁵⁴ In Malik's case, once again, we see Said's recognition of both a person's achievements and his or her shortcomings. We can follow dynamically the transformations of the individual, the way he responds to circumstances, so that a basic—in this case adverse—outlook is unfolded when it had not previously been obvious.⁵⁵

As for Michel Foucault, Said presents nuanced shades of his contributions and image. For instance, although Michel Foucault was not inert in politics, and generally can be regarded as left-leaning, he did not act consistently in favor of the liberation of groups and individuals. Furthermore, Foucault showed a brilliance in expression that often conceals a lack of rigor. In my opinion, this is transparent in *L'Archéologie du savoir*, among his major methodologically conscious works, and in a few of the lesser ones as well. In connection with the compilation under the title *Power*, Said remarks: "In order to make shorthand generalizations about major social and epistemological shifts in several European countries, Foucault resorts to maddening, unsupported assertions that may be interesting rhetorically but cannot pass muster either as history or as philosophy."⁵⁶ He also writes:

Too often, grand statements about society as a whole or at its extremes are presented without evidence or proof (Foucault seems to have had an addiction for the beginnings of centuries, as if history ran in hundred-year periods, of which the first part was usually where the important events occurred).⁵⁷

Said points out Foucault's Eurocentrism repeatedly ("his Eurocentrism was almost total"⁵⁸), and his lack of adequate atten-

tion to material conditions and interests which are relevant to historical change.⁵⁹ Said states:

Without exceptions I know of, the paradigms for [the development of dominant discourses and disciplinary traditions] have been drawn from what are considered exclusively Western sources. Foucault's work is one instance and so, in another domain, is Raymond Williams's. In the main I am in considerable sympathy with the genealogical discoveries of these two formidable scholars, and greatly indebted to them. Yet for both the imperial experience is quite irrelevant, a theoretical oversight that is the norm in Western cultural and scientific disciplines except in occasional studies of the history of anthropology—like Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other* and Talal Asad's *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*—or the development of sociology, such as Brian [Bryan] Turner's *Marx and the End of Orientalism*. Part of the impulse behind what I tried to do in my book *Orientalism* was to show the dependence of what appeared to be detached and apolitical cultural disciplines upon a quite sordid history of imperialist ideology and colonial practice.⁶⁰

In *Covering Islam*, the final chapter is entitled "Knowledge and Power." The French thinker is mentioned only once in the chapter, but his ideas are unequivocally present in the discussion. Yet the approach seems not to conform to Foucault's position on the subject, ambiguous at best on the matter of truth. Said, on the contrary, defends clearly the possibility of attaining knowledge, in spite of the ineluctability of interpretive mediation in human matters, and of the fact that humans are immersed in space, time, and culture, etc., so that the interpreter is in a multiple situation of which s/he must be conscious in order not to fall victim to its givens.⁶¹ I have the impression that it is rather the Establishment (either canonical or orthodox) intellectuals who, according to Said, would fit better in Foucault's picture of epistemes and archives. Intellectuals of that sort produce what officially passes for knowledge, whereas "people who quite consciously consider themselves to be writing in opposition to the prevailing orthodoxy" bring forth antithetical knowledge.

Said, Foucault, and Resistance

Said perceives a change of heart in various radical French intellectuals, among them Foucault and the postmodernists, during the 1970s and 1980s. In Foucault's case, disenchantment sets in—not coincidentally—with the Iranian revolution and its excesses. But Said is cautious not to leave out other motivations for the change, both personal and theoretically-guided. Basically, in Foucault the shift is twofold: a growing conviction of the ineluctability of constituted power in Western societies, and a willingness to utter simplifying political pronouncements. The two aspects are linked. It was “sad to think of him as yet another ‘progressive’ who had succumbed to the blandishments of often hackneyed pronouncements against the Gulag and on behalf of Soviet and Cuban dissidents, given that he had in the past so distanced himself from any such easy political formulas.”⁶² For Lyotard and Foucault seem to feel as if “[t]here is nothing to look forward to: we are stuck within our circle.”⁶³

Said concludes: “In short, Foucault's imagination of power is largely *with* rather than *against* it. . . . [H]is interest in domination was critical but not finally as contestatory or as oppositional as on the surface it seems to be.” But alternative visions of power, “stimulated and enlivened” by his work, do exist: a) “classical ideas about ruling classes and dominant interests” (as the studies by C. Wright Mills witness), b) counter-discursive testimonials by confined and elided groups, and c) “the vulnerability of the present organization of culture.”⁶⁴

In spite of trying to avoid “the practice of saving Foucault from himself”, according to Said some paradoxes emerge. The first of these is between Foucault's analysis of power (which reveals its injustice) and theorization (which shows it as unbound). Further would be his recognition that discourse is “that for *which* struggles are conducted” and, on the other hand, his not being willing to accept that the discourse of liberation can succeed. In the end, a sort of “antithetical engagement” is discovered in the way Foucault imagines power, manifest in what explicitly or implicitly his work does not deal with, and expressed most enthrallingly in the discord between “Foucault's archaeologies and social change itself”.⁶⁵

In this respect, an overall comparison between Fanon and Foucault, who were contemporaries (although practically Fanon had already passed away when Foucault began his career), is quite unfavorable to the latter: “Foucault's work moves further and further away

from serious consideration of social wholes, focusing instead upon the individual as dissolved in an ineluctably advancing ‘microphysics of power’ that it is hopeless to resist.” He seems to justify an equally irresistible colonialism; he avoids using against authoritarianism the heterodox intellectual heritage he shares with Fanon.⁶⁶

The Question of Palestine

In “Sartre and the Arabs: A Footnote,”⁶⁷ Said tells of his encounter with the French existentialist, in connection with a seminar “on peace in the Middle East,” although soon “it became clear to [Said] that Israel’s enhancement (what today is called ‘normalisation’) was the real subject of the meeting, and neither the Palestinians nor the Arabs.” The seminar was sponsored by *Les temps modernes*; it took place in Foucault’s home. Said was prompted to publish the encounter, he tells us, by “two fascinating if dispiriting reviews [in *Al-Ahram*] about his visit to Egypt in early 1967” [in the company of Simone de Beauvoir and Claude Lanzmann], during the days of Gamal Abd al-Nasir as President. Said writes:

Foucault was there, but he very quickly made it clear to me that he had nothing to say about the seminar’s subject, and would be leaving directly for his daily bout of research at the Bibliothèque Nationale. I was pleased that my book *Beginnings* was readily visible on one of his bookshelves, all of which were brimming with a neatly arranged mass of books, papers, journals. Although we chatted together amiably, it wasn’t until much later (in fact almost a decade after his death in 1984) that I got some idea why Foucault had been so unwilling to say anything to me about Middle Eastern politics. . . . [I]n the late 80s, I was told by Gilles Deleuze that he and Foucault, once the closest of friends, had clashed finally because of their differences over Palestine, Foucault expressing support for Israel, Deleuze for the Palestinians. No wonder, then, he hadn’t wanted to discuss the Middle East with me or anyone else there!⁶⁸

It has been commonly known that a large part of the left has shown a weakness for Israel in their conceptions of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict.⁶⁹ Paradoxically, such weakness has been shared by Third World

parties and intellectuals.⁷⁰ It is interesting, but not surprising, that dependency theory (or what remains of it) could be applicable to the world of ideas as well.

Edward Said was able to situate the Palestinian predicament in a larger setting, from a point of view oriented to mankind at large, in agreement with his overall outlook. In fact, the question of Palestine does not exclude paying attention to oppression anywhere and everywhere. Far from his homeland, Said had first-hand experience of living in the midst of imperialism, like such libertarians as José Martí. New York, the (eccentric) heart of the USA, is one of the bulwarks of Zionism, but also the home of a counter-culture of immigrants and exiles.⁷¹ Within the US macro-environment, Edward Said experienced the micro-climate of its universities, that extraordinary hybrid of liberalism and respect for ideas, on the one hand, and compliance to the power Establishment, on the other.

It is worth noting, I think, that Foucault is virtually absent (not quite, though) from such remarkable works as *The Question of Palestine*, *The Politics of Dispossession*, *Peace and its Discontents*, and *Blaming the Victims*, books devoted mostly to the contemporary Palestinian experience. The same can be said of most of the articles that appeared in newspapers and magazines during the last two decades of Said's lifetime. There may be several explanations of the fact. To begin with, we could bring up the growing distance from Foucault's death, rather marginal as a reason, for the tendency was observable when Foucault was still alive. Other, more or less, plausible reasons, combined or taken singly, are: the difference in what sort of public was intended and (partially) the dissonance produced by citing positively a person who is hostile to the Palestinian cause. But one should not dismiss the possibility that, in general, the Foucauldian outlook could simply be dispensed with in exposing the dispossession of the Palestinian people. Naturally, a deeper examination of those texts (an archaeological enterprise of sorts) may reveal an underlying presence of concepts and interpretations originating in Michel Foucault.

Notes

¹ Fadwa Tuqan, "The Seagull and the Negation of the Negation," *The Palestinian Wedding*, trans. A. M. Elmessiri (Washington, DC.: Three Continents P, Inc., 1982), 223.

² Cf. the concept of *Verum ipsum factum* (Rodolfo Mondolfo, *Verum factum*:

Desde antes de Vico hasta Marx [Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1971]). Without stretching matters too much, it is possible to perceive some analogies between Vico's notion of *verum factum* and what Karl Popper has called World Three.

- ³ *The Peri hermeneias of Apuleius*, trans. David Londey and Carmen Johanson (Leiden: Brill; NY: København-Köln, 1987), 82- 83: "[There are various kinds of speech: for the purposes of,] for example, ordering, commanding, inflaming, wishing, vowing; expressing anger, hatred, envy, favor, pity, amazement, disdain, reproof, penitence, lamentation; as well as producing pleasure and inflicting fear . . . the one of these which is the most important for my topic is that which is called statemental [*pronuntiabilis*]. It expresses a complete meaning and is the only one of them that is subject to truth or falsity." Obviously, this is an expansion of views contained in Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias* and *Poetics*. Although the second part of the passage seems to refer to sentences rather than to speeches, the broader interpretation does not do violence to the spirit of both excerpts. (Incidentally, in addition to specializing its meaning to a particular type of discourse, the word *oratio*—acquiring the sense 'prayer' in some languages, for instance in Spanish—means chiefly 'sentence.')
- ⁴ Karl Bühler, *Sprachtheorie. Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache*, 1934 (Jena/Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1982), §2.2. "[The language sign] is a *symbol* by virtue of its coordination to objects and states of affairs, a *symptom* (*Anzeichen, indicium*: index) by virtue of its dependence on the sender, whose inner states it expresses, and a *signal* by virtue of its appeal to the hearer, whose inner or outer behaviour it directs as do other communicative signs." Translation by Daniel Fraser Goodwin, *Theory of Language: The Representational Function of Language* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1990), 35.
- ⁵ Daniel Fraser Goodwin, *Theory of Language*, §2.3, 37.
- ⁶ Cf. Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994), chapter V and Tom Paulin, "Writing to the Moment," *The Guardian* (September 24, 2004). The playwright Tom Paulin was Said's colleague in Columbia.
- ⁷ Giambattista Vico's beautiful reconstruction on epic poetry states that the Ancients believed myths were true. See Edward Said, "Vico on the Discipline of Bodies and Texts," *Reflections on Exile*, 83-92.
- ⁸ Ferial Ghazoul, "The Last Book" [a review of *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*], *Al-Ahram Weekly* (8-14 July, 2004).
- ⁹ "I have called what I try to do 'humanism,' a word I continue to use stub-

bornly despite the scornful dismissal of the term by sophisticated post-modern critics. By humanism I mean first of all attempting to dissolve Blake's mind-forg'd manacles so as to be able to use one's mind historically and rationally for the purposes of reflective understanding. Moreover, humanism is sustained by a sense of community with other interpreters and other societies and periods: strictly speaking, therefore, there is no such thing as an isolated humanist." See Edward Said, "Orientalism 25 Years Later: Worldly Humanism v. the Empire-builders," *Counterpunch* (August 3, 2003), <<http://www.counterpunch.org/>>, n. pag. Said goes on pleading for a rational secular discourse taking advantage of interpretive skills provided by humanism, so as to make sense of a history made by man, in a collective endeavor of intertwined civilizations: "And lastly, most important, humanism is the only and I would go so far as saying the final resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history" ("Orientalism 25 Years Later," n. pag.).

¹⁰ See, for Foucault's critique of the Enlightenment, Jürgen Habermas, "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present," *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), 103-08, and Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, "What is Maturity," *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, 109-21.

¹¹ Said wrote: "It seems to me that unless we emphasize and maximize the spirit of cooperation and humanistic exchange—and here I speak not simply of uninformed delight or of amateurish enthusiasm for the exotic, but rather of profound existential commitment and labor on behalf of the other—we are going to end up superficially and stridently banging the drum for 'our' culture in opposition to all others." See Edward Said, "The Clash of Definitions," *Reflections on Exile*, 584.

¹² Cf. Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1981), 153: "[U]ntil knowledge is understood in human and political terms as something to be won to the service of coexistence and community, not of particular races, nations, classes, or religions, the future augurs badly."

¹³ See, for example, Noam Chomsky, *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use* (NY: Praeger, 1986); and *Language and Responsibility, Based on Conversations with Mitsou Ronat* (Sussex: Harvester, 1979).

¹⁴ Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam*, 162.

¹⁵ Richard Rorty, "Looking Back at 'Literary Theory,'" *ACLA State of the Discipline Report*, <<http://www.stanford.edu/~saussy/acla/rorty-essay.pdf>>: "De la grammatologie and *Les mots et les choses* were translated into English at exactly the right time" (2). "Reading their books gave people a

sense that new horizons were opening” (2). Needless to say, neither Marx nor Freud were displaced by the “new gurus.”

¹⁶ Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, xiii-xiv.

¹⁷ George Steiner, “The Mandarin of the Hour—Michel Foucault,” *The New York Times* (February 28, 1971). We can place Steiner’s comment side by side with Merquior’s remark on the usual way to do philosophy in France (*Foucault o el nihilismo de la cátedra* [Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988]).

¹⁸ “The arrival of the Fifth Republic coincided with the full flowering of the intellectual energies that set France apart for two generations after the war. Looking back, the range of works and ideas that achieved international influence is astonishing. It could be argued that nothing quite like it had been seen for a century. Traditionally, literature had always occupied the summit on the slopes of prestige within French culture. Just below it lay philosophy, surrounded with its own nimbus, the two adjacent from the days of Rousseau and Voltaire to those of Proust and Bergson. On lower levels were scattered the *sciences humaines*, history the most prominent, geography or ethnology not far away, economics further down. Under the Fifth Republic, this time-honoured hierarchy underwent significant changes. Sartre refused a Nobel Prize in 1964, but after him no French writer ever gained the same public authority, at home or abroad. The Nouveau Roman remained a more restricted phenomenon, of limited appeal within France itself, and less overseas. Letters in the classical sense lost their commanding position within the culture at large. *What took their place was an exotic marriage of social and philosophical thought, at the altar of literature* [my emphasis]. It was the products of this union that gave intellectual life in the decade of De Gaulle’s reign its peculiar brilliance and intensity. It was in these years that Lévi-Strauss became the world’s most celebrated anthropologist; Braudel established himself as its most influential historian; Barthes became its most distinctive literary critic; Lacan started to acquire his reputation as the mage of psychoanalysis; Foucault to invent his archaeology of knowledge; Derrida to become the antinomian philosopher of the age; Bourdieu to develop the concepts that would make him its best-known sociologist. The concentrated explosion of ideas is astonishing. In just two years (1966-67) there appeared side by side: *Du miel aux cendres*, *Les mots et les choses*, *Civilisation matérielle et capitalisme*, *Système de la mode*, *Ecrits*, *Lire le capital* and *De la grammaire*, not to speak—from another latitude—of *La société du spectacle*. Whatever the different bearings of these and other writings, it does not seem altogether surprising that a revolutionary fever gripped society itself

- the following year.” See Perry Anderson, “Dégringolade,” *London Review of Books* 26.17 (September 2, 2004), <<http://www.lrb.co.uk/>>, n. pag.
- ¹⁹ Edward Said, “Michel Foucault, 1927-1984,” *Reflections on Exile*, 188.
- ²⁰ There are a couple of stories (or two versions of the same story) about Sartre and De Gaulle. In 1960, *Les temps modernes* published a letter (the *Manifeste des 121*) calling for Algerian independence. Some officials proposed Sartre’s incarceration; De Gaulle rejected the suggestion with the words “On n’emprisonne pas Voltaire,” or, alternatively, “Sartre, c’est la France.” It was probably relevant that the state and its organs did not perceive a mortal danger in those activities; it may also be that the intellectuals involved were perceived by those holding power as members of the system and the middle class. I do not mean that French administrators (or European governments, generally) respect human life and freedoms at all costs. Three facts will suffice as illustrations, all relating to the Maghrib:
- 1) To begin with, the conduct of the war against Algerian freedom fighters and some Frenchmen who lent them active support. Henri Alleg, a Communist who was tortured in Algeria, wrote a report or memoir on the practice (*La question*; followed by *La gangrène*, by a collective of young Algerians who had suffered the same violation of their human rights). There is a contrast with what happened in the “Hexagon”; in the Maghrib, officials, policemen, and the military had a much freer hand, while the metropolitan Socialist government turned a blind eye. It is not far-fetched to bring to mind the role of some distinguished intellectuals: the specialist in Aztec studies, Jacques Soustelle, was one of the most ferocious.
 - 2) The complicity of the French government in the Mehdi Ben Barka affair.
 - 3) The disastrous policy (abetted by other “Western” governments) of bloody confrontation with the winners of the 1991 Algerian elections.
- ²¹ There are indications that during May 1968 (and the following months) things could have been different. If there had been an insurrection by the workers, perhaps the outcome would have been much worse in terms of violence.
- ²² Jean Piaget, *Sagesse et illusions de la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1965).
- ²³ Georges Mounin, *Clefs pour la linguistique* (Paris: Seghers, 1968).
- ²⁴ A comprehensive, albeit not rigorous, study of structuralism is provided by François Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991): part I, *Le champ du signe* (1991) and part II, *Le chant du cygne* (1992). (Notice the pun in the two titles.)
- ²⁵ Said, “Michel Foucault, 1927-1984,” 188.
- ²⁶ In the sense used in “Traveling Theory,” *The World, the Text, and the*

- Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983), 226-47, and "Traveling Theory Reconsidered," *Reflections on Exile*, 436-52.
- ²⁷ *Reflections on Exile*, xviii.
- ²⁸ The following are some of his important works mentioned by Edward Said: *Maladie mentale et psychologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962); *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique. Folie et déraison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961); *Naissance de la clinique. Une archéologie du regard médical* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); "La pensée du dehors," *Critique* 229 (1966): 523-46; "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur," *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie* 69 (1969): 73-104; *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969); *L'ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971); *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); *Histoire de la sexualité* (3 volumes): vol. I: *La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), vol. II: *L'usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), and vol. III: *Le souci de soi* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984); and *Dits et écrits*, 4 volumes, édités par D. Defert et F. Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).
- ²⁹ Edward Said, "Deconstructing the System," a review of *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984: Volume Three, The New York Times* (December 17, 2000).
- ³⁰ Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (NY: Basic Books, 1975), 289.
- ³¹ Said, "Michel Foucault, 1927-1984," 196. In this respect, it is relevant to recall the famous Nietzschean *jeu d'esprit* advanced by Foucault, "man is dead" ("l'homme est mort"), in *Les mots et les choses*. It is true that there had been an ongoing struggle against anthropocentrism and what its critics saw as the exaggerated role the social sciences and the humanities tended to assign to the subject, in order to question the notion of a Cartesian subject devoid of social dimensions: "[Foucault] shows how the subject is a construction laboriously put together over time, and one very liable to be a passing historical phenomenon replaced in the modern age by transhistorical impersonal forces, like the capital of Marx or the unconscious of Freud or the will of Nietzsche. Each of these explanatory forces can be shown to have a 'genealogy' whose 'archaeology' Foucault's histories provide" ("Deconstructing the System"). "The effect of Foucault's argument, as much probably as the effect of any general account of it that one gives, is that man as we know him is dissolved." (*Beginnings*, 286). Said's position is far more nuanced than that advanced by Foucault and some of the structuralists.

³² Said, “Deconstructing the System.”

³³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (NY: Vintage Books, 1978). Besides the prominent place assigned to discourse and discursive formations, and allied concepts, *Orientalism* includes other Foucauldian themes as well: “A fourth element [alongside expansion, historical confrontation, and sympathy] preparing the way for modern Orientalist structures was the whole impulse to classify nature and man into types” (119); “In natural history, in anthropology, in cultural generalization, a type has a particular *character* which provided the observer with a designation and, as Foucault says, ‘a controlled derivation.’ These types and characters belonged to a system, a network of related generalizations” (119); “The difference between the history offered internally by Christianity and the history offered by philology . . . is precisely what made modern philology possible, . . . whose major successes include the final rejection of the divine origins of language. . . . What Foucault has called the discovery of language was therefore a secular event that displaced a religious conception of how God delivered language to man in Eden” (135); “All of Flaubert’s immense learning is structured—as Michel Foucault has tellingly noted—like a theatrical, fantastic library, parading before the anchorite’s [Saint Anthony’s] gaze” (188 and n. 46, p. 339: “On the library and its importance for mid-nineteenth-century culture, see Foucault “La bibliothèque fantastique,” which is the preface to Flaubert’s *La tentation de saint Antoine*”). Said signals an omission, too in *Orientalism*, n. 44, p. 338: indicating that Renan is not at all mentioned in *The Order of Things*.

³⁴ See, for example, R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1962) and N. Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1960); *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe* (London: Longmans, 1975); and *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1966).

³⁵ Said *Orientalism*, 3. On an outstanding figure in the constitution of French Orientalism in the nineteenth century, Said writes: “Renan was a figure in his own right neither of total originality nor of absolute derivativeness. . . . [He] is a figure who must be grasped, in short, as a type of cultural and intellectual praxis, as a style for making Orientalist statements within what Michel Foucault would call the archive of his time” (130).

³⁶ “His ‘archeologies’ were purposely intended not to resemble studies in the sociology of knowledge” (“Michel Foucault, 1927-1984,” 190).

³⁷ So, Said states: “There has been great interest recently . . . in the quasi-

encyclopedic and esoteric organization of popular knowledge in medieval and Renaissance society. Here, too, regular and total formations of knowledge are seen as dominating the mentality of an era. Karl Polanyi describes in *The Great Transformation* the difference in political economy between what he calls the radical illusion within a marketview of society—"there is nothing in human society that is not derived from the volition of individuals"—and the opposing contention that 'power and economic value are a paradigm of social reality.'" Lévi Strauss seeks to show "how mind's 'seemingly un-controlled inventiveness' nevertheless reveals that 'the human mind appears . . . determined in all its spheres of activity.' This by virtue of 'the existence of laws operating at a deeper level' than that of surface behavior. The interplay between these 'deeper' laws and individual creativity, which according to Noam Chomsky, for example, combine and recombine 'given' elements, is the aspect of this debate most relevant to contemporary understanding, and more specifically to contemporary rationalism. One need only mention philosophies as wholly disparate as those of Freud, Chomsky, and Foucault to document the problem's compelling interest. Fundamentally we can generalize fairly by saying that the issue now seems to be focused on the position of differentiation in human reality: Do the significant or systematic differences that individuate the various activities and productions of mind really begin at the level of self, or are they located more basically (or transcendently) at a general epistemic level, a transindividual level?" (*Beginnings*, 55-56).

³⁸ Emile Durkheim, *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981).

³⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*. Lowell Lectures, 1925 (NY: MacMillan, 1939).

⁴⁰ René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (Harmondsworth: Peregrin Books, 1963).

⁴¹ Said, *Beginnings*, 50-51, referring to *The Order of Things* and Derrida's *De la grammatologie*.

⁴² Said, *Beginnings*, 51, referring to Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and to Foucault's "Réponse à une question," *Esprit*. Cf. Merquior comparing the notions of *episteme* and *paradigm*.

⁴³ Said, *Orientalism*, 14.

⁴⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 14.

⁴⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 94.

⁴⁶ Said, *Beginnings*, 258, referring to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Cf. *Orientalism*, 23, on the notion of authority: "Wherein . . . lies the author-

ity of writing? Either authority is, as Foucault has been trying tirelessly to demonstrate, a property of discourse and not of writing (that is, writing conforms to the rule of discursive formation), or authority is an analytic concept and not an actual, available object. In either case authority is nomadic: it is never in the same place, it is never always at the center, nor is it a sort of ontological capacity for originating every instance of sense. What all this discussion of authority means is that we do not possess a manageable existential category for writing—whether that of an ‘author,’ a ‘mind,’ or a ‘Zeitgeist’—strong enough on the basis of what happened or existed *before* the present writing or where it begins.”

⁴⁷ Said, “Deconstructing the System.”

⁴⁸ Usually three or four stages are distinguished.

⁴⁹ “Of Foucault’s work it is, I think, true that it leaves no reader untouched or unchanged. . . . Even those readers in whom he has produced a distaste that goes as far as revulsion will also feel that his urgency of argument is so great as to have made a lasting impression, for better or for worse” (“Deconstructing the System”).

⁵⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 23.

⁵¹ Edward Said, “Holding Nations and Traditions at Bay,” *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (NY, Random House, 1994), 25-45

⁵² Edward Said, “Contra Mundum,” *Reflections on Exile*, 474-83.

⁵³ “Except for Algeria, the justice of the Arab cause simply could not make much of an impression on [Sartre], and whether it was entirely because of Israel or because of a basic lack of sympathy for cultural and maybe religious reasons, I do not know. In this he was totally unlike his friend and idol Jean Genet, who celebrated his strange passion for Palestinians in extended sojourn with them and by writing the extraordinary “*Quatre heures en Sabra et Chatila*” and in *Le captif amoureux*.” This judgement notwithstanding, Sartre’s death produced in Said a profound feeling of loss. See Said, “Sartre and the Arabs: A Footnote,” *Al-Ahram Weekly* (18-24 May, 2000).

⁵⁴ Edward Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (NY: A. Knopf, 1999), 263 ff.

⁵⁵ Interestingly, in the numerous references to Chomsky in Said’s essays I have not been able to spot a single place where there is a negative comment. On some issues Said sides with Chomsky rather than with Foucault, as in their views on power (“Traveling Theory,” 244-46). Nevertheless, Chomsky figures less ostensibly than Foucault in Said’s writings, a fact which probably has to do with the respective fields of professional activity. I think that this constant positive valuation of Chomsky by Said has

- something to do with the fidelity to principles and the quality of those principles. This is in sharp contrast to Said's opinion of Bernard Lewis, for instance, whom on one occasion he characterized as a "tireless mediocrity." See Edward Said, "When Will We Resist?," *The Guardian* (January 25, 2003).
- ⁵⁶ Cf. Said, "Michel Foucault, 1927-1984": "[I]n the last part of his career he had a tendency to venture comically general observations" (189).
- ⁵⁷ Said, "Deconstructing the System."
- ⁵⁸ Said, "Michel Foucault, 1927-1984," 196.
- ⁵⁹ Edward Said, "Criticism between Culture and System," *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 222. Elsewhere, on the oppositions inside/outside in culture and 'ours'/'theirs': "[W]e must remember that for nineteenth-century Europe an imposing edifice of learning and culture was built, so to speak, in the face of actual outsiders (the colonies, the poor, the delinquent), whose role in the culture was to give definition to what *they* were constitutionally unsuited for" (*Orientalism*, 228). On exclusion and confinement, see *Orientalism*, n. 28, p. 344.
- ⁶⁰ Edward Said, "Discrepant Experiences," *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), 47. Cf. "Consolidated Vision," *Culture and Imperialism*, 132: "The imperial attitudes had scope and *authority*, but also, in a period of expansion abroad and social dislocation at home, great creative power. I refer here not only to the 'invention of tradition' generally, but also to the capacity to produce strangely autonomous intellectual and aesthetic images. Orientalist, Africanist, and Americanist discourses developed, weaving in and out of historical writing, painting, fiction, popular culture. Foucault's ideas about *discourses* are apt here; and, as Bernal has described it, a coherent classical philology developed during the nineteenth century that purged Attic Greece of its Semitic-African roots."
- ⁶¹ Edward Said, *Covering Islam*, 149.
- ⁶² Edward Said, "Michel Foucault, 1927-1984," 195.
- ⁶³ Edward Said, "Two Visions in *Heart of Darkness*," *Culture and Imperialism*, 26-27.
- ⁶⁴ Edward Said, "Foucault and the Imagination of Power," 242-43.
- ⁶⁵ Said, "Foucault and the Imagination of Power," 242-45.
- ⁶⁶ Edward Said, "Collaboration, Independence, and Liberation," *Culture and Imperialism*, 278.
- ⁶⁷ Said, "Sartre and the Arabs: A Footnote."
- ⁶⁸ Said, "Sartre and the Arabs: A Footnote."
- ⁶⁹ Joseph Massad, "The Legacy of Jean-Paul Sartre," *Al-Ahram Weekly* (30

January-5 February, 2003): “What is it about the nature of Zionism, its racism, and its colonial policies that continues to escape the understanding of many European intellectuals on the left? Why have the Palestinians received so little sympathy from prominent leftist intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault or only contingent sympathy from others like Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, Etienne Balibar, and Slavoj Žižek? Edward Said wrote once about his encounters with Sartre and Foucault (who were anti-Palestinian) and with Gilles Deleuze (who was anti-Zionist) in this regard. The intellectual and political commitments inaugurated by a pro-Zionist Sartre and observed by Said, however, remain emblematic of many of the attitudes of leftist and liberal European intellectuals today.” Massad adds: “When these European intellectuals worry about anti-Semitism harming the Israeli settler’s colony, they are being blind to the ultimate achievement of Israel: the transformation of the Jew into the anti-Semite, and the Palestinian into the Jew. Unless their stance is one that opposes the racist basis of the Jewish State, their support for Palestinian resistance will always ring hollow. As the late Gilles Deleuze once put it, the cry of the Zionists to justify their racist violence has always been ‘we are not a people like any other,’ while the Palestinian cry of resistance has always been ‘we are a people like all others.’ European intellectuals must choose which cry to heed when addressing the question of Palestine.”

⁷⁰ Cf. the article by Juan Abugattas, “The Perception of the Palestinian Question in Latin America,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11.3 (Spring 1982): 117-28: “The few [Latin American] intellectuals and politicians who, at the time [of the partition of Palestine], could have detected the deception [equating Zionism with the Jewish victims of Nazism] were finally confused by the support that the idea of partition received both from some progressive governments and from some of the main European intellectuals who served as their spiritual mentors. Concerning the Palestinian Question, as concerning many other questions of international politics not directly or obviously relating to their immediate realm, Latin American politicians have often tended to adopt, almost uncritically, the positions defended and advocated by the European and North American groups which they consider to be their natural counterparts. Even at the time of the Algerian War of Liberation, individuals who in many other respects professed views generally regarded as ‘progressive’ showed themselves very reluctant to support the Algerians and to condemn the policies of the French government” (120).

⁷¹ “[I]t would be disingenuous not to admit that the Palestinian experience

seems retrospectively to have predisposed my own critical attention in favor of unaccommodated, essentially expatriate or diasporic forms of existence, those destined to remain at some distance from the solid resting-place that is embodied in repatriation. Therefore the essay form has seemed particularly congenial, as have such exemplary figures for me as Conrad, Vico, and Foucault. Thus, as a cause, as a geographic, local, original experience, Palestine for me provided affinities with, say, Conrad's radical exilic vision, or with the lonely exceptionalism of a Foucault and a Melville" (*Reflections on Exile*, xxxiv-xxxv). Of course, not everything is explained by personal experience.

Last Words: Said, Freud, and Traveling Theory

Richard H. Armstrong

Among Edward Said's last works is the text of a lecture he delivered at the invitation of the Freud Museum in London on the topic of "Freud and the Non-European."¹ In many ways, the lecture conforms to the basic contours of the Saidian *oeuvre*. A text by a major European thinker, Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) is brought to bear on a real-world problem that remains unresolved—namely, the essentializing notions of national identity at work in Israel that exclude historical others, most especially the Palestinians. Said reads Freud's *Moses* as a work in the "late style"—in conformity with his wider critical interests that bridge the discussion between literature and music—and as a powerful, unsettling meditation on psychological identity. The most biting criticism of Israeli policies that Said draws from Freud's text is conveniently summarized in the following statement:

Quite differently from the spirit of Freud's deliberately provocative reminders that Judaism's founder was a non-Jew, and that Judaism begins in the realm of Egyptian, non-Jewish monotheism, Israeli legislation countervenes, represses, and even cancels Freud's carefully maintained opening out of Jewish identity towards its non-Jewish background. The complex layers of the past, so to speak, have been eliminated by official Israel. So—as I read him in the setting of Israel's ideologically conscious policies—Freud, by contrast, had left considerable room to accommodate Judaism's non-Jewish antecedents and contemporaries. That is to say: in excavating the archaeology of Jewish identity, Freud insisted that it did not begin with itself but, rather, with other identities (Egyptian and Arabian) which his demonstration in *Moses and Monotheism* goes a great distance to discover and thus restore to scrutiny. (44)

Said's lecture ends by characterizing Freud as representative of a line of modern thought traced by Isaac Deutscher through the "non-Jewish Jews" Spinoza, Marx, Heine, and Freud that stresses a dialectical relationship with reality, not a static one, and a relativistic view of human values that still upholds the basic solidarity of humanity as a whole.²

In the final paragraphs, Freud emerges as a kind of cosmopolitan hero, one who was able to contemplate the scary notion that

identity cannot be thought or worked through itself alone; it cannot constitute or even imagine itself without that radical originary break or flaw which will not be repressed, because Moses was Egyptian, and therefore always outside the identity inside which so many have stood, and suffered—and later, perhaps, even triumphed. (54)

This view, Said argues, speaks to us still through its insistence that identity be thought of as "a troubling, disabling, destabilizing secular wound" (54) instead of as a fictional foundation that excludes historical others. In his closing words, Said articulates the hope that acknowledging this secular wound would be a different kind of foundation for a bi-national state "in which Israel and Palestine are parts, rather than antagonists of each other's history and underlying reality" (55).

I propose here to examine Said's invocation of Freud as a kind of limit-case for his *rapprochement* of scholarship with real-world concerns. The notion that Israel should attend seriously to so dubious a text as *Moses and Monotheism* is on the surface quite absurd, as reviewers of Said's book have been quick to point out. But beyond this *prima facie* absurdity, there is much in the Freudian work that deserves a more severe *Saidian* critique than the one Said himself provides. I shall present here the kind of critique of *Moses* that Said, were he applying his own well-tried tools of analysis, *could have* come up with had he taken seriously works by other scholars. All superficial ironies aside, my critique serves a particular purpose here: to show why Freud necessarily emerges as an authorial hero, which tells us a great deal about Said's views of humanism and the humanities at the very end of his life. The second part of this essay in particular will map out Said's heroic characterization of Freud in the light of his own humanistic agenda, and will make the point that Said's reading of Freud is symptomatic of his need for heroic predecessors on whom to found his non-foundational humanism.

Critiquing Said's *Moses*

Moses and Monotheism is by far one of Freud's most criticized texts, not least because it appears to deconstruct Judaism right on the eve of the Shoah. Shortly after its appearance, the Jewish historian Salo Baron dismissed it as a "magnificent castle in the air" (qtd. in Yerushalmi 82), and it has been said that "if *Moses* were merely an essay in biblical history written by some adventurous academic, it would long have gathered dust on the more tenebrous shelves of theological libraries" (Yerushalmi 82). It did gather dust for some time until a certain vogue for discussing Freud's Jewish identity brought it to the fore in the 1990s, when it suddenly became the focus of work by distinguished Jewish scholars such as Jacques Derrida and Yosef Yerushalmi; the latter's *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (1991) is in fact discussed by Said.³ Yerushalmi's book is the most poignant example of how *Moses* remains a point of serious interrogation of Freud's relationship to Jewish culture. It concludes with an open address to Freud by the scholar that shows just how difficult it is for Jews to follow Freud all the way into the construction of a purely "psychological Jewishness" severed from traditional Judaism.⁴ While Jewish scholars have wrestled with the ambivalent legacy Freud leaves in a post-holocaust world, the distinguished Egyptologist Jan Assmann has looked at Freud's book in relation to a whole history of discourse on "Moses the Egyptian," and has even praised the book for its foray into a field he has come to theorize and champion—mnemohistory or the history of memory.⁵ But foraging in the space of memory is *not* the same as investigating history, a distinction rigorously policed by Assmann, and Freud's historical claims remain untenable in Assmann's expert eyes, despite their enormous interest for the student of "Moses discourse." In sum, while virtually all scholars roundly reject the historical thesis of *Moses* and the historical identification of the man Moses with an Egyptian proponent of Akhenaten's monotheistic Aten cult, the book has indeed been vindicated as a major work full of provocative questions about modern as well as ancient Jewish identity.⁶

Right at the outset, then, Said's deployment of Freud's rather patchy historical argument seems a violation of his own championing of good historical research as a method of humanistic understanding. The moral tone he takes in confronting Israelis with the "carefully maintained opening out of Jewish identity towards its non-Jewish back-

ground” rings rather hollow, since Freud’s “careful maintenance” could easily be dismissed as an elaborate fantasy, or even an obsessive projection. Hence, a hostile Jewish reviewer, like *The New Republic*’s Leon Wieseltier, can make short work of refuting Said’s central gesture of marshalling *Moses* as a kind of counter-history with which to shame the Israelis (or, as Wieseltier takes it rather personally, all Jews).

Said remarks that “so much of the material [Freud] is dealing with as he chronicles the aftermath of Moses’s legacy is uneven,” but it is really quite even. It is evenly spurious. Freud’s discussion in *Moses and Monotheism* is nothing like a “demonstration,” as Said calls it. Freud himself concedes in his book—Said does not cite these passages—that “[o]bjective evidence . . . has not been obtainable,” and that he is “accepting what seems to us serviceable in the material presented to us and rejecting what does not suit us,” and that “I use Biblical tradition here in such an autocratic and arbitrary way.” Freud is not restoring anything. He is inventing everything. And Said has a political use for his inventions. (38)

Much has been written about the unfortunate step Freud took in characterizing his work as “history” instead of historical fiction (as he initially did), but Said seems not to have appreciated fully enough the problematic situation this step creates for his own argument. One cannot attack the fictions of foundationalist and essentializing historical narratives with largely fictitious or fanciful counter-examples and still appeal to history as an arbitrator of modern conflicts. Here it is apparent that Said hangs more of his argument on the *auctoritas* of the man Freud than the strength of Freud’s argument, and this, as we shall see, is a symptomatic gesture on Said’s part.

Said characterizes *Moses and Monotheism* as a work in the “late style,” meaning it displays the traces of a difficult and unresolved question that tormented the final years of the author: “Everything about the treatise suggests not resolution and reconciliation . . . but, rather, more complexity and a willingness to let irreconcilable elements of the work remain as they are: episodic, fragmentary, unfinished (i.e., unpolished)” (*Freud and the Non-European* 28). Said is of course aware that the spotty nature of the book has a lot to do with Freud’s declining health as well as its episodic composition, first, in the deeply embittering cir-

cumstances of Austria's final days before the *Anschluss* with Germany; and second, in the exilic circumstances of Freud's sojourn in England, whither he fled with his family in 1938 and where he died shortly thereafter. For Said, the concept of the late style is key to revealing the work's "irascible transgressiveness, as if the author was expected to settle down into a harmonious composure, as befits a person at the end of his life, but preferred instead to be difficult, and to bristle with all sorts of new ideas and provocations" (29). We know for a fact that Freud did see himself as showing considerable transgressiveness in this work, which in the first sentence points out the very damage he is doing to Jewish tradition through this investigation into the origins of Judaic monotheism: "To deprive a people of the man whom they take pride in as the greatest of their sons is not a thing to be gladly or carelessly undertaken, least of all by someone who is himself one of them" (23:7). He had no doubt at the time that Jews would be quite appalled at what he was doing, and that it was historically a very bad time to be undermining the imperiled Jewry of Europe.

On the other hand, one can also argue that the work is not nearly as transgressive as Said makes it out to be, for it is staunchly resting on psychoanalytic notions with which Freud had been toying since the early 1900s. Though it was his first and last foray into history, Freud had been alluding to the analogy between personal and cultural trauma for decades, and, in a sense, *Moses* is a rather mechanical extension of the analogy.⁷ Based on his clinical findings, Freud now deploys the dynamic of trauma-repression-return of the repressed to a historical event that, just as he would for an individual patient, he must reconstruct from the distorted fragments of cultural memory (namely, the Biblical narratives of Moses and the archaeological record). Freud had seen early on that such an application of psychoanalysis was essential to its mission, and his erstwhile devoted student Otto Rank spent a great deal of time applying psychoanalysis in this way to literature, mythology, and art.⁸ Freud himself had produced a biographical-historical study of Leonardo da Vinci along these lines in 1910, in which the analogy between history and personal memory is quite explicit (11:83-84). *Moses* is also full of little gravestones marking ruptures and rivalries with long-lost colleagues. It was in fact Karl Abraham, who died in 1925, who first applied psychoanalytic tools to the study of the heretic Pharaoh Akhenaten way back in 1912. Freud quite shockingly does not even cite Abraham's work, even though earlier he had done much to encourage it. It is also important to note the lingering influence of

Rank, who broke quite openly with Freud in the 1920s. Freud's whole analysis of the Moses story takes Rank's work on the birth of the hero as its point of departure, though he quickly explains that Rank's work was done at a time when he was still under Freud's influence (23:10). Freud later mentions a particular theory of the origins of epic poetry that is clearly indebted to Rank, yet does not mention him in any way at this point.⁹ So there is much recycled business going on in the *Moses* study, but only a Freud scholar would notice the ghostly presence of these *revenants*, since Freud—for whatever reason—is careful not to bring this old business too close to the surface.

In other ways, Freud comes off as stubbornly *doctrinaire* in the book. For one thing, his relentless deployment of Lamarckian genetics—already problematic in his work in the 1910s—suggests a very closed, nineteenth-century frame of mind.¹⁰ He freely admits biologists do not accept the idea of the genetic inheritance of acquired characteristics, but he confesses quite flatly, “I cannot do without this factor in biological evolution” (23:100). His central thesis—that Moses was murdered by the Hebrews—was a tenuous hypothesis espoused by a single scholar, Ernst Sellin, who himself later recanted it (upon learning this, Freud is reported to have remarked, “He was right the first time!” [qtd. in Yerushalmi 83]). The larger contour of Freud's plot in the Moses saga, however, is the most predictable element in the work. First of all, the murder of Moses by the Hebrews is clearly seen as a patricide, an acting-out against the paternalistic Moses's harsh monotheism, on the one hand, and, on the other, a repetition of the murder of the primal father that Freud first reconstructed in *Totem and Taboo* in 1912-1913 (13:125-61). Freud himself admitted privately that *Moses* “is essentially a sequel to and an expansion of another work which I published twenty-five years ago under the title *Totem and Taboo*. New ideas do not come easily to an old man; there is nothing left for him to do but repeat himself” (Ernst Freud 453). Secondly, the real dynamic behind the Jewish religion turns out to be a complex reaction to the return of the repressed event, making, once again, a neurotic symptom out of passionate religious behavior. This was Freud's view of religion as early as the 1890s, and the real source of novelty in *Moses* is the elaborate emplotment required in order to rig up his historical hypothesis to the surface of Hebrew scripture.

While I obviously think Said's use of “late style” as a mode of interrogation for *Moses* is subject to challenge, there is a much deeper point to be made about Freud's trotting out of the oedipal machinery

here. By fixing on the “non-European” hypothesis of Moses’s Egyptian origins, Said is missing the larger point about identity in Freud’s text: Moses, Egyptian innovator though he was, made the drastic error of awakening the *universal* (according to Freud) primal experience of the *Urvater* and paid the price. Moses is thus no trigger for a wounded sense of identity based on “Otherness” and “non-Europeanness,” but rather he triggers something uncannily familiar to the Hebrews (and, supposedly, all of us): the inherited memory of our primal ancestors and the universal quandary of oedipal rivalry. What makes Freud’s Moses foundational in a scandalous way is neither his Egyptianness nor his monotheism, but the fact that he was *a murdered father* and is the dynamic source of latent and inherited guilt. Without the repression of his murder, Moses could never have become so grand a figure of memory in Jewish tradition, nor could his monotheism have developed such a powerful hold on the Jewish people, as Freud states quite explicitly (23:101). There is a direct connection between the self-glorifications of a culture and the enormity of its hidden crimes in Freud’s thinking, and Said—of all people—should be attuned to that idea. So when Freud talks of the ethical heights that the Jews achieved over and above the other peoples of antiquity, he is quick to remind us:

These ethical ideas cannot, however, disavow their origin from the sense of guilt felt on account of a suppressed hostility to God [i.e., the *Urvater*, and his *revenant*, Moses]. They possess the characteristic—uncompleted and incapable of completion—of obsessional neurotic reaction-formations; we can guess, too, that they serve the secret purposes of punishment. (23:134-35)

Since Said also hangs a lot on the “non-Europeanness” of Moses, we might also ask if there is much force behind the cultural “Otherness” he represents. Here Said seems to have skipped over a lot of what is most salient in Freud’s reading of Akhenaten’s religion. Whereas Karl Abraham (1912) took pains to characterize Akhenaten’s monotheistic revolution as an oedipal revolt against his more successful father, Amenophis (or Amenhotep) III, Freud takes a far more positive view of the Aten cult’s content and mentions *nothing* about it being an oedipal revolt—no doubt because he wants to cast Moses as the father, not the son in this drama. By focusing solely on the image of the solar disk and worshipping it as a symbol of a divine being

“whose energy was manifested in its rays,” Akhenaten had instituted a cult that was an “astonishing discovery of the effect of solar radiation” (23:22). The religion grew into a harsh clarity that gradually led to the outright rejection of “everything to do with myths, magic, and sorcery,” which put his monotheism completely at odds with traditional Egyptian religion and popular culture (23:24). The Jews, by adopting this religion with even greater fervor through abolishing all idols and images, thus participate in a great “progress in intellectuality” that clearly puts them on the side of enlightenment as against popular superstition and irrationality (23:111-15). In fact, the gradual acceptance of monotheism among the later Hebrews is likened openly to the Darwinian revolution, the most successful and *truthful* paradigm change in modern times, in Freud’s view (23:66-67).

Akhenaten thus emerges as a daring and demanding innovator who stood apart from the compact majority of his own people; Freud even cites James Breasted’s characterization of him as “the first individual in human history” (23:21, note 1). This exceptional nature, however, also explains his sudden demise and the total disappearance of his novel religion until archaeologists uncovered it in the nineteenth century (unless one agrees with Freud that it survives in Judaic monotheism, of course). Thus this “non-European” Other that stands at the head of Judaism is just as much a non-Egyptian for the utter non-conformity of his views.¹¹ Akhenaten is an untimely and lonely *Aufklärer*, like Freud himself, and like the Moses who takes his cult to the ungrateful Hebrews, only to be killed for it. Here it seems Said has not judged rightly the alterity function that Moses performs. He is not a representative of a different-but-equally-noble culture and civilization, but rather a radical, a heretic (by Egyptian standards), even an “intellectual” one might say, who goes into exile when political circumstances make it inevitable.

There was, to be sure, a keen sense of identification between Freud and his Egyptian Moses. Like Moses, Freud brought his new truth, which is quite uncompromising and idol-smashing, to an audience that quickly revolted in many different directions. In a way, there is a quality of self-pity in the Moses plot that updates the self-pity evident in the primal horde scenario, where the Father is killed and eaten by the sons. *Totem and Taboo*, which launched this horde myth, was after all written in the midst of Freud’s bitter disputes with Jung and other dissenting followers, during which time Freud also wrote his first work on Moses, “The Moses of Michelangelo” (13:211-38). His inter-

pretation of Moses in that earlier work is as a stoic intellectual hero who does not allow his anger at the rebellious Israelites to get the better of him. The parallel with Freud's situation at the time seems clear and rightfully makes us wonder about his continuing fascination with the figure of Moses. But Said seems to have identified even further with the exilic Other, being himself an intellectual who grew up in Egypt yet was neither Egyptian nor Muslim, and who later lived most of his life in New York intellectual circles—which are, needless to say, very Jewish. Did the Zionist hostility that plagued him—especially right at the time of this lecture, as we shall discuss further below—make Said all the more prone to identify with the murdered Egyptian Moses? At the same time, did his warm acceptance by certain liberal Jews make him feel adopted into the American intellectual clan? Would Said have readily identified with Freud's ambivalent view of Jewishness and Judaism from his unique perspective in “Alexandria-on-the-Hudson”? We shall return to these questions later.

Perhaps the greatest problem with using Freud's Egyptian Moses, as an invitation for Israelis to embrace the Other, is that Said misses the highly negative aspects that monotheism brings with it, some of which Freud himself mentions critically while he takes others to be positive in ways that Said might well question. When he first mentions Akhenaten's introduction of monotheism, Freud's ambivalence toward it is clear: “It was a strict monotheism, the first attempt of the kind, so far as we know, in the history of the world, *and along with the belief in a single god religious intolerance was inevitably born*, which had previously been alien to the ancient world and remained so long afterwards” (23:20; my emphasis). Indeed, as Jan Assmann has argued at length, monotheism in its strictest form (what he terms the “Mosaic distinction” between true and false religion) is not a religion but a *counter*-religion, one that relies heavily on the notion that, besides there being just one god, all other gods are false and must be rejected (*Moses the Egyptian, Die mosaische Unterscheidung*). There is built into strict monotheism, in other words, the *necessary* assumption that the Other's religion is false, that all other gods are empty idols.

Freud was very quick to recognize the negative nature of monotheism and to see intolerant exclusivity as an inherent feature of it. And yet, the Hebrews' abstraction of their concept of the deity was, for him, a highly positive move toward a more intellectual form of culture that would be nothing less than *progress* in intellectuality/spiritu-

ality (*Fortschritt der Geistigkeit*). This follows on two key Freudian assumptions: (1) that intellectualization is a form of instinctual sublimation, and this is inherently good for civilization and brings with it heightened self-esteem; and (2) that intellectualization is in fact more *manly* than the polytheistic cult of images, which rely on the evidence of the senses in a manner that associates them with femininity in a highly negative way (23:114). Freud goes to some length to explain the demise of the mother goddesses in this text in a manner that looks rather vindictive, as if maternal deities need to be conjured away in favor of their (superior) male counterparts and eventually banished by the singular Father God (23:45-46, note 2). One thing is clear: He considers the imposition of patriarchy to be a “momentous step,” a “victory of intellectuality over sensuality” to which the Jewish abolition of images is very much aligned (23:113-14). It is odd that Said made note of this in *Beginnings* (171-72) many years before, but here makes no mention of it. So Moses delivers the dubious gifts of intolerance and patriarchy to the Jewish people, and Freud makes no excuse for the first gift and openly applauds the latter.

A reading of *Moses* put forward by Richard Bernstein in *Freud and the Legacy of Moses* (with which Assmann now agrees, *Die mosaische Unterscheidung* 120-24) spells out further the necessary connections: The Jews were in the avant-garde of civilization by adopting monotheism, the exclusive nature of which gave them a heightened sense of election and self-worth, and Freud is deliberately emphasizing this feature as a way of defending the Jews and, by implication, psychoanalysis, the latest “Jewish truth.” Monotheism’s aberration from pagan norms inevitably made others deeply suspicious of the Jews, and herein lie the seeds of anti-Semitism (or what is more accurately termed Judeophobia), which was originally Freud’s point of departure in writing the study (i.e., to find out in psycho-historical terms why the Jews are so hated). Freud’s most brilliant rhetorical flourish in *Moses* is the suggestion that Christians, many of whom were forcibly converted from their “barbarous polytheism,” in fact hate the Jews *because* Judaism is the source of Christianity, the moral strictures of which they unconsciously resent (23:91-92). This turns anti-Semitism, curiously enough, into a kind of Christian self-hatred, which Freud finds evident in the Nazi hostility toward both religions.

Bernstein’s reading helps us to see the positive and defensive side of Freud’s strange study. The Jew who is able to excavate all these truths, Sigmund Freud, is showing himself to be, like his forefathers,

on the cutting edge of civilization by putting forward his psychoanalytic truth in the face of the great traditional authorities (the Bible, Rabbinical Judaism, and the Catholic Church), as well as the reigning nationalistic manias (Nazism, but arguably also Zionism, since he undoes a Jewish “national hero”) that confront him. Thus the Jew is reconstructed as intellectually valiant, not as the effete and denatured creature the Nazis make him out to be; and culturally the Jew is superior to the later Christian monotheists who, through the worship of the Virgin Mary and the Saints, fall back into the errors of polytheistic idolatry and the mother goddess cult (23:88). Freud personally saw *Moses* as an act of authorial heroism on his part that restored the original nature of Jewish character. Writing to Charles Singer, who had warned Freud that these writings would cause misunderstanding, Freud refused to back down from his position saying: “Well, we Jews have been reproached for growing cowardly in the course of the centuries. (Once upon a time we were a valiant nation.) In this transformation I had no share, so I must risk it” (Ernst Freud 454).

In this reading, then, we see how much Freud relies on the *exclusivity* of Judaic monotheism as the feature that tenders the most important advantages (the heightened self-esteem and increased capacity for intellectual sublimation) as well as disadvantages (the hatred and mistrust of others). By turning Freud’s psycho-historical account into a kind of multicultural parable of *inclusivity*, Said loses the tragic edge of Freud’s argument. What makes the inclusion of a “non-European” at the heart of Judaism possible is the Great Truth of monotheism, not some primeval tolerance toward other tribes and other gods, nor even any real sense of shared history between Egypt and Israel. Indeed, there is no possible reconciliation of the real dominant culture of Egypt with Israel after Moses’s momentous adoption of the Jews as his people, since the majority of Egyptians remain staunchly polytheistic and the Jews have become intolerantly monotheistic, like the heretic Pharaoh Akhenaten. If Freud is a hero of heterogeneous identity in Said’s account, he buys this distinction at a very cheap cost, having dusted off a hypothetical “good Egyptian” (i.e., a maverick proto-monotheist, not a nasty traditional pagan) with whom to found the ambivalent legacy of the Law. But as Leon Wieseltier noted in his review, this alterity at the source hardly constitutes a scandal to the Jews: “In the Jewish tradition, it was Abraham, and not Moses, who discovered monotheism, and Abraham was famously a Chaldean, a man who came from across the river and was

therefore an *ivri*, a crosser, a Hebrew” (38). A legend held in common by Jews and Muslims alike reports that Abraham’s father was not only an idolater, but also a maker and seller of idols, against which Abraham waged a clever sabotage in a precociously intolerant way (see the Midrash Genesis Rabbah 38:13 and the Qur’an 6:74-82; and 21:51-71).¹² Here, again, it is the categorical gesture of intolerance toward a common culture that distinguishes the *Urvater*.

To misunderstand the centrality of exclusive monotheistic truth to Jewish identity is arguably to have misunderstood the whole thrust of *Moses* (and maybe the whole nature of monotheism), and yet this is what we must conclude in the case of Said’s reading. Freud’s point of departure was not the question “How can I understand the Other?,” but, rather, “What are Jews that people should hate them so much?”—which might be rephrased more personally as: “Why does the Other hate *me* so much?” The answer is, in part, “Because I smashed his idols and think mine is the only true God.”

Last but not least, we come to another feature in Freud’s view of monotheism that Said, had he not been in such a hurry to let Freud off easy, would normally have put center-stage in his reading: the genesis of monotheism *in imperialism*.¹³ This is introduced early on in Freud’s account and is echoed as a truism throughout, so there really is no excuse for Said to overlook this as somehow inessential to Freud’s understanding of the cult. Initially, Freud echoes James Breasted’s view that there was a tendency toward henotheism (a non-exclusive form of monotheism) already before the time of Akhenaten. In this view, the external cause of monotheism was clearly the political condition of Egyptian hegemony:

As a result of the military exploits of the great conqueror, Tuthmosis III, Egypt had become a world power: the empire now included Nubia in the south, Palestine, Syria and a part of Mesopotamia in the north. *This imperialism was reflected in religion as universalism and monotheism.* Since the Pharaoh’s responsibilities now embraced not only Egypt but Nubia and Syria as well, deity too was obliged to abandon its national limitation and, just as the Pharaoh was the sole and unrestricted ruler of the world known to the Egyptians, this must also apply to the Egyptians’ new deity. (23:21; my emphasis)

So Akhenaten's innovation was not the introduction of the Aten cult *per se*, which was already under way, but rather "something new, which for the first time converted the doctrine of a universal god into monotheism—the factor of exclusiveness" (23:22). Here we see a fascinating irony: By taking this imperialist line of thought, Freud rejected the notion that monotheism, the cult of the one great Father God, was simply the result of an oedipal struggle, which was Karl Abraham's dutiful interpretation back in 1912. Instead, he firmly espouses the political view, repeating later in the work: "In the case of the genesis of monotheism, however, we can point to no external factor other than the one we have already mentioned—that this development was linked with the establishment of closer relations between different nations and with the building up of a great empire" (23:108).

This is, however, not merely an issue of monotheism's original genesis; it is *inherent* in monotheism, as would be borne out by Jewish and Christian history:

If we provisionally accept the world-empire of the Pharaohs as the determining cause of the emergence of the monotheist idea, we see that that idea, released from its native soil and transferred to another people, was, after a long period of latency, taken hold of by them, preserved by them as a precious possession and, in turn, itself kept them alive by giving them pride in being a chosen people: it was the religion of their primal father to which were attached their hopes of reward, of distinction, and *finally of world-dominion* (23:85; my emphasis).

This explains the Judeo-Christian penchant for an apocalyptic vision of the Kingdom of God, but also, in a clever Freudian twist, it explains that the Christian hysteria over the "Elders of Zion" conspiracy is a defensive projection of monotheistic imperialism back onto the Jews, who in fact have long abandoned such fantasies of world dominion under the pressures of their historical subjugation. Once again, Judeophobia reveals more about the Judeophobe than the Jew in Freud's reading.

So, in the final analysis, it seems downright un-Saidian for Said to have missed these points about the "Egyptian" Moses's cultural legacy to the Jews: It brought intolerance, exclusivity, patriarchy, and imperialist fantasies to an obscure nation who would be

forever changed by this dubious patrimony. Exposing this legacy as such would get little traction against Israeli policies of exclusion and expansion; if anything, it might lead simply to a “blame the Egyptians” view of Israeli aggression as the “return of the repressed” Atenic culture. If it is ironic that Freud should have foregone in this instance the Freudian conclusion that monotheism came about as an oedipal revolt, it is doubly ironic that Said missed this irony and, for once in his life, failed to catch hold of the insidious thread of imperialism and the diffuse cultural manifestations of hegemony. Said wants to lionize Freud in the name of resistance to imperialism, yet the real parable of *Moses* is one of a minority’s subtle ingestion of an imperialist ideology. In this history of the “traveling theory” of monotheism, Said risked becoming, as he said of Foucault, merely the scribe of power.

But let us try, one last time, to take Said on his own terms: He is trying to read Freud at a certain remove, to see how his provocative ideas can be reinterpreted in the light of later history and experience. This is a signature gesture of Saidian reading, and it is quite explicit in his opening remarks, where he claims to read figures like Freud “contrapuntally, that is, as figures whose writing travels across temporal, cultural and ideological boundaries in unforeseen ways to emerge as part of a new ensemble *along with* later history and subsequent art” (*Freud and the Non-European* 24; his emphasis). So let us, for the sake of argument, agree that Freud’s *Moses* demonstrates how a non-essentializing, heterogeneous account of national identity will be inherently better in ethical terms and will lead to practical results in the processes of peace and mutual understanding. As an academic liberal myself, I *want* this to be true, but I fear that there is one egregious counter-example that comes immediately to mind that refutes the pat assumption Said is making. For we have the historical precedent of a culture that was *completely open* about its multicultural origins and much more undogmatic in matters of faith than the monotheistic Hebrews, *and yet* belonged to the greatest and fiercest imperialists known to the ancient world: the Romans.

To get a taste of the Romans’ surprisingly non-essentializing view of their own historical identity, one need only read the first book of Livy’s monumental historical work, *Ab urbe condita*. There you will see the accreted myths and traditions that work together to “found” Rome over and over again in order to capitalize on as many cultural and religious associations as possible. There is the eastern saga of the hero

Aeneas, a Trojan (the primal Other of the Greek world), who escapes the destruction of Troy and founds a new civilization in Italy that is an amalgam of Trojan, indigenous Latin, and Arcadian Greek elements. There is the Etruscan current that is openly cited as the source of important forms of religious observance and political culture like the “curule” chair, the twelve lictors, and the purple-bordered toga. There is the clear admission that Romulus opened Rome as an asylum to all fugitives from the neighboring peoples, which led to a huge influx of runaway slaves, criminals, and other riff-raff; yet Livy maintains “That mob was the first real addition of strength toward [Rome’s] future greatness” (1.8.6). There are the complex inter-Italian rivalries that lead to conflict and resolution between Rome and its mother-city of Alba Longa, the Sabines, the Etruscans of Fidenae and Veii, and others—all of which lead to new cultural elements being introduced into the growing city-state. There is the tale of the religious “refoundation” of Rome by the Sabine Numa Pompilius, who tames the warlike rabble of Romulus with austere old Sabine institutions that will later define Roman *pietas*. All of this is laid out in marvelous, heterogeneous detail for the reader of Livy’s book—and yet, at the same time, there is no doubt that there is a single Rome with an exceptional history, a history justified in the eyes of all not by any purity of origins, but rather by the self-evident proof of its military success. In other words, origins mean little to identity-formation in comparison with the successful *wielding of power*. Roman identity was often to undergo an “opening out” toward an Other (the profound Hellenization of its culture, while it was politically hegemonic over Greece, is the greatest instance of this, but not the only one), but this did not blunt the edge of its imperial resolve.¹⁴

Said’s gospel of hybridity also fails to stand up to other historical tests, like the nineteenth-century empires he has written so much about. As with the Romans, the British consciousness of a multicultural past (Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Norse, Danish, and Norman) did nothing to mitigate their enthusiasm for imperial adventures. Such differences can be realigned or sublated by “higher” attempts at unity, like the “white man’s burden” to spread Christian civilization and technological advancement around the world, as Said knew very well. Freud’s social-psychological writings are very much aimed at understanding how antagonisms and animosities are rewired by the cunning of unreason, which give us a common “ego ideal” that forges the strangely *compulsive* basis of

group solidarity. All group identifications, being based on the primary oedipal identification, inherently contain an element of aggression and ambivalence (see especially Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* 18:67-143). Said, as *Orientalism* shows very well, is attuned to how aggression is projected outwards onto an Other, but he is less able to fathom the internal violence identity-formation can effect. But a true Freudian archaeology of a group's past inevitably exposes not the glorious co-existence of diversity, but rather the skullduggery of the group's real conflicts that have been purposefully forgotten under the pressure of historical circumstance. Said forgets, in other words, that *Moses* is really a murder mystery.

Said has often been chided for "essentializing the West" in order to blame it for essentializing the East. That is, he is blamed for lumping together all things Western in order to create a monolith that meets his needs for the sake of argument. I think that is not entirely fair, but here we run into an important issue: Said often fails to acknowledge the way Western imperialisms co-opt their own micro-national conflicts into larger contexts that in some way assuage the loss of autonomy by providing at least the illusion of power. After all, Napoleon, the great imperial progenitor of Orientalism in Said's analysis, was originally a *Corsican* nationalist. Many of the British empire's great engineers, explorers, doctors, and agents were in fact Scottish. And the example of the current world empire—the United States of America, as multicultural as any world power has ever been—ought to teach us that a consciousness of heterogeneity in origins adds up to very little in the exercise of power when vital interests, the will-to-power, and self-preservation are perceived to be at stake. Currently millions of Americans will rally around the vague notion of "freedom" that is not borne aloft by any single tribal history or old-time sense of community. The cosmopolitanism that Said seems to feel is the panacea for modern conflict can, after all, swerve into an *imperialist-consumerist* cosmopolitanism without much effort, as the example of the US clearly shows.

In sum, Said's attempt to refurbish a Freudian archaeology of identity into a new gospel of hybridity reads Freud considerably against the grain; even if his interpretation of Freud's *Moses* is taken as correct, it ultimately overvalues the impact such revelations have on the actual wielding of power. It is at best wishful thinking—*profoundly* wishful thinking, judging from both the historical record and current

events—but therein lies the key to understanding Said’s “contrapuntal” reading of Freud. Said’s uncritical reading builds on a profound inner harmony with twentieth-century Jewish thought.

Freud’s *Moses* and Said’s Jewish Identity

To talk of Said’s Jewish identity seems an obvious provocation, so I shall begin with a statement of his own that shows this was *his* provocation, not mine. In an interview with Ari Shavit for *Ha’aretz Magazine* in 2000, Said had responded to the question “Are you addicted to homelessness?” by citing Theodor Adorno’s dictum that in the twentieth century the idea of home has been superseded. That dictum expressed essentially Said’s problem with Zionism—“it attaches too much importance to home” (*Power, Politics, and Culture* 457). He had to explain that he did not personally feel as though he could return to Palestine, but needed rather to remain in New York, “[w]here there is no solidity of home” (457). Thus his vision of a bi-national state as the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was founded on an inclusive view of territory that *excluded* the sense of home:

. . . I want a rich fabric of some sort, which no one can fully comprehend, and no one can fully own. I never understood the idea of this is my place, and you are out. I do not appreciate going back to the origin, to the pure. I believe the major political and intellectual disasters were caused by reductive movements that tried to simplify and purify. (457)

When Shavit remarked, “You sound very Jewish,” Said then concluded the interview by saying:

Of course. I’m the last Jewish intellectual. You don’t know anyone else. All your other Jewish intellectuals are now suburban squires. From Amos Oz to all these people here in America. So I’m the last one. The only true follower of Adorno. Let me put it this way: I’m a Jewish-Palestinian. (458)

This is, to be sure, a remarkable statement, and if one looks carefully at the intellectual genealogy Said forged for his critical humanism in

his last years, there is a certain truth to it. Adorno, Erich Auerbach, Leo Spitzer, Sigmund Freud, Isaac Deutscher—these are figures that loom large in Said's later years, though their presence had been known in his works earlier on. Their point of view was largely diasporic, exilic, and post-nationalist (and in Deutscher's case, openly anti-Zionist). In sum, Said identifies very strongly with the marooned mandarin of the Jewish intelligentsia.

It is not hard to see why: These figures exhibit the characteristics of the intellectual who stands within and without nations and traditions, a riven condition with which Said was so strongly sympathetic. Hence his recurrent fascination with Auerbach's *Mimesis*, a work written outside of Europe with the coherent vision that comes from displacement and exile, and yet an unabashedly Eurocentric work that is firmly ensconced in a fairly conservative professional discipline: Romance philology. Said was quite open about his desire to return to philology as a grounding discipline for the American humanist (*Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, chapter 3), but it is interesting to note that he steered his vision in his later years more toward the philology practiced by the exiled Jews Spitzer and Auerbach than that of Ernst Robert Curtius, who stayed and worked in Nazi Germany and tried in a sense to unite Europe from within by emphasizing the Latin Middle Ages. As much as Said extols the old-school erudition and learning that characterized the Jewish mandarin, it is really the quality of their *excludedness* and not their exclusivity that Said puts most to the fore.

In the case of many such Jewish mandarins, their excludedness was a matter of a traumatic amputation of their nationalism. Freud was a German nationalist as a young man, but—like most Jewish members of the German nationalist movement in Austria—found himself cut out by the turn toward anti-Semitism that the movement took in the 1880s. Erich Auerbach was a Prussian of the old school and a decorated World War I veteran, but the Nazis clearly did not consider him a real German. Isaac Deutscher was a Polish nationalist as a young man, and broke with his Hassidic background in order to pursue a secular Polish education. The virtue of critical distance that Said ascribes to these men is in part the product of the accidents of history, which have anti-Semitism as their one unifying trend. But it is clear that the historical accident of excludedness is a necessity-turned-virtue in Said's eyes:

It is especially appropriate for the contemporary humanist to cultivate that sense of multiple worlds and complex interacting traditions, that inevitable combination I've mentioned of belonging and detachment, reception and resistance. The task of the humanist is not just to occupy a position or place, nor simply to belong somewhere, but rather to be both insider and outsider to the circulating ideas and values that are at issue in our society or someone else's society or the society of the other. In this connection, it is invigorating to recall (as I have in other places) Isaac Deutscher's insufficiently known book of essays, *The Non-Jewish Jew*, for an account of how great Jewish thinkers—Spinoza, chief among them, as well as Freud, Heine, and Deutscher himself—were in, and at the same time renounced, their tradition, preserving the original tie by submitting it to the corrosive questioning that took them well beyond it, sometimes banishing them from community in the process. Not many of us can or would want to aspire to such a dialectically fraught, so sensitively located a class of individuals, but it is illuminating to see in such a destiny the crystallized role of the American humanist, the non-humanist humanist as it were. (*Humanism and Democratic Criticism* 76-77)

What is disingenuous in his description is that these “non-Jewish Jews” renounced *one* part of their tradition—the Jewish part. The other part of the story, in the case of at least Freud, Auerbach, and Deutscher, is that their original nationalism was *denied them*, which taught them to refrain from Jewish nationalism at a later date. It is clear that this forms the basis of Said's admiration for Deutscher, who says in the book of essays that Said so admires: “To my mind it is just another Jewish tragedy that the world has driven the Jew to seek safety in a nation-state in the middle of this century when the nation-state is falling into decay” (Deutscher 113).

Said also shares with Deutscher the notion that the intellectual's role is to unsettle the settled orthodoxies and *idées reçues* of the time, but here again Said extracts this role away from the context of the unique instance of the Jewish tragedy as Deutscher states it. For Deutscher, the nation-state is to blame for the inevitable recurrence of chauvinism, racism, and, especially, anti-Semitism:

That is why I think that the role of the intellectuals—Jews and non-Jews alike—of those who are aware of the depth of the Jewish tragedy and of the menace of its recurrence, is to remain eternal protesters: to maintain the opposition to the powers that be, to militate against the taboos and conventions, to struggle for a society in which nationalism and racialism will at last lose their hold on the human mind. I know that this is no easy way out; it may be distressing and hurtful; and for those who take it there can be no precise formulation of a set of precepts for action. But if we do not remain protesters, we shall be moving within a vicious and pernicious circle, a suicidal circle. (Deutscher 59)

Said clearly wants to lift this critical stance to a new level, to make all intellectuals aspire to the condition of being Socratic gadflies to the common consensus. It requires the *voluntary* renunciation of one's national and religious affiliations, and he is aware this is a very tall order. It is an attempt to imagine humanism without the human concern for god and country, which may be why Said resorts to calling his ideal practitioner, rather awkwardly, the "non-humanist humanist." It is also very telling that elsewhere, namely in *Culture and Imperialism*, this process of voluntary renunciation is actually stated in *psychoanalytic* terms, again underscoring his affinity with Freud. Using a quotation by Hugo of St. Victor (much loved by Erich Auerbach, so again we have the usual suspects), Said makes the point that one achieves this independence and detachment by "*working through* attachments, not rejecting them" (*Culture and Imperialism* 336; his emphasis). Thus Said's critical stance is not only post-nationalist, it is also post-therapeutic, predicated on the necessary working through of traumatic loss.

Said had obvious existential reasons for such a position. It is clear from his extraordinary memoir *Out of Place* that he interpreted his personal life as a condition of never belonging. As a Palestinian Christian growing up in Egypt, he was caught between the alienating colonialist mentality of his English school masters, the loss of his chthonic Palestinian connections, and the rise of Arab nationalism that eventually led to the further loss of his father's prosperous business in Egypt. At the same time, however, his university studies clearly directed him toward a kind of universalism envisioned along very European lines, a humanistic universalism greatly influenced and

expanded by his highly privileged position as a tenured professor at Columbia University in New York, the city *par excellence* of immigrants and exiles. Such a personal trajectory certainly explains his tendency to raise the general “transcendental homelessness” of modernity to a kind of necessary qualification for the intellectual. It is this personal connection—this *worldly* connection, he would say—that makes him so prone to adopt the thinking of twentieth-century Jewish intellectuals, whose ragged geographical trajectories are so famously a part of their life-stories and projects.

So in the case of Adorno’s sense of homelessness, Deutscher’s paradoxical, non-identical identity, Spitzer and Auerbach’s worldly philology, and Freud’s self-undermining excavations and therapeutic “working through,” we see recurrent instances in Said’s work of what he termed “traveling theory,” more profoundly reinforced by the fact that these were all traveling theorists. Traveling theory refers to a theory divorced from its original real-life moment of articulation and applied to a later time and place, for better or for worse (see *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, chapter 10 and *Reflections on Exile*, chapter 37). Said seems to have taken the notion far more positively upon reconsideration in “Traveling Theory Reconsidered,” which culminates in a paragraph that could quite adequately describe his own affiliation with these wandering Jewish intellectuals:

To speak here only of borrowing and adaptation is not adequate. There is in particular an intellectual, and perhaps moral, community of a remarkable kind, *affiliation* in the deepest and most interesting sense of the word. As a way of getting seriously past the weightlessness of one theory after another, the remorseless indignations of orthodoxy, and the expressions of tired advocacy to which we are often submitted, the exercise involved in figuring out where the theory went and how in getting there its fiery core was reignited is invigorating—it is also another voyage, one that is central to intellectual life in the late twentieth century. (*Reflections on Exile* 452; his emphasis)

It would be normal in psychoanalytic terms to talk of Said’s “identification” with the Jewish intellectuals of the German diaspora, but it seems clear that he moves this further along from an unconscious

mimetic impulse to being a conscious, intellectual alignment—an affiliation, as he puts it. Affiliation, we might say, would be the intellectual's way of working through identification towards a more lucid, self-aware, and voluntary relationship with the past. Affiliation in a sense ratifies identification.

But in the case of Freud, Said's identification was much more pronounced by the circumstances surrounding the text of *Freud and the Non-European* itself, since the venue for the lecture had effectively been "exiled" from Vienna to London, a historical irony certainly not lost on Said himself ("Freud, Zionism, and Vienna" n. pag.). This controversy came in the wake of Said's thorough self-examination in writing *Out of Place*, a work which shows considerable psychoanalytic attention to the oedipal currents of his childhood and that doubtless moved him closer in sympathy to Freud. The fact that both his memoir and *Freud and the Non-European* were composed while Said was undergoing cancer treatment also suggests a strong identification with Freud, who suffered dreadfully from a cancer of the mouth in the last decade of his life.

So let us return to the specific relevance of Freud in this scheme. We have seen how Said turns Freud's account of monotheistic exclusivity into a parable of inclusivity, and it should be clear why such a notion is projected unto the work of an exiled Jewish thinker: excludedness leads to inclusive impulses, in Said's way of thinking, the ability to see things Otherwise. What appealed to Said in the work of Freud, particularly in reference to ancient cultures, was "the universalism of his vision and the humane scope of his work," as well as its "anti-provincialism" ("Freud, Zionism, and Vienna" n. pag.). In a sense, Said has a point. Unlike his contemporary Robert Eisler, Freud was not interested in reclaiming the Jewishness of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Eisler, a fellow Austrian and later fellow exile in England, went to enormous lengths in his work on Jesus to restore the Christian savior to the status of Jewish prophet, i.e., to understand him exclusively in Jewish terms in defiance of Christian tradition (*Jesous Basileus ou basileusas*, 1929-1930).¹⁵ Though he admired Eisler's work, Freud took the more difficult step of undermining Jewish tradition by reconstructing Moses as non-Jewish, as Said rightly emphasizes. By appearing to refuse any safe ground in this respect, Freud obviously appeals to Said's sense of transcendental homelessness, of the need to "work through" any primary allegiance to an essentialist tradition.

More importantly to Said, Freud fulfils very well in *Moses* the function of the intellectual as a provider of counter-narratives, since the only thing beyond questioning is his critical process—psychoanalysis—itself. As Said says in a book written around the same time as *Freud and the Non-European*, “The intellectual’s role is to present alternative narratives and other perspectives on history than those provided by combatants on behalf of official memory and national identity and mission” (*Humanism and Democratic Criticism* 141). Or again in the same work, “The intellectual is perhaps a kind of countermemory, with its own counterdiscourse that will not allow conscience to look away or fall asleep” (142). Though Said knows well that Freud’s *Moses* was not written to refute the Zionists, at the same time, Said can capitalize on the fact that Freud was perfectly aware he was going to upset Jews most of all by writing it. In this sense, Said’s temptation to deploy *Moses* against the Israelis is a quite understandable instance of traveling theory, a desire to reignite the fiery core of that work. However, while Said correctly identifies Freud’s anti-foundationalist argument, he rather tellingly misses the consequences of Freud’s stress on monotheistic exclusivity.

Indeed, Said does not appreciate fully enough the odd conclusion that Freud draws from his excavations: There is an *irrational yet compelling nature* to group identity that has deep and inalienable historical roots. If initially *Moses* was untimely for its insensitivity to the imperiled Jews, it is untimely for Said’s purposes as well because of the peculiar solidarity it expresses—against all reason, it often seems—with the Jews. Moshe Gresser sees this as the real nature of Freud’s turn to Moses, which “embodies Freud’s chosen embrace of his Jewishness, namely, the status of being chosen. It is a Jewishness of chthonic commitment, choosing to accept a fanatical belonging to one’s people independently of and even in opposition to rational assent. That is, Freud chooses to be chosen” (246). Gresser characterizes Freud’s position, then, not as being a “non-Jewish Jew,” but rather as having a “dual allegiance” to Jewry and humanity at large. We might wonder if this also better describes Said, whose passionate commitment to the Palestinian cause would make us doubt that he would be truly comfortable being termed a non-Palestinian Palestinian.

The significance of Freud’s irrational allegiance to the Jews is further brought out in Jacqueline Rose’s response to Said, which is

published in the same volume. She reminds Said that in his 1930-preface to the Hebrew translation of *Totem and Taboo*, Freud had openly defined himself as an atheist ignorant of Hebrew, and as unable to share in Jewish nationalist ideals. Yet he also describes himself as one “who has yet never repudiated his people, who feels that he is in his essential nature a Jew and who has no desire to alter that nature” (qtd. in Rose 70). Freud stresses that, although he has abandoned all the common characteristics of Jews, he retains of Jewishness “[a] great deal, and probably its very essence” (qtd. in *Freud and the Non-European* 70-71). So Freud himself was quite *essentialist* about his own identity, though just what is left for him to espouse as Jewish is obviously an enigma. This suggests, as Rose rightly points out, that “the fixity of identity—for Freud, for any of us—is something from which it is very hard to escape, harder than Said, for wholly admirable motives, wants it to be” (Rose 74). The fixity is a result of historical circumstance, historical *trauma* more specifically, and trauma engenders *unfreedom*, that is, it triggers the compulsion to repeat, “and causes identities to batten down, to go exactly the other way: towards dogma, the dangers of coercive and coercing forms of faith. Are we at risk of idealizing the flaws and fissures of identity?” (Rose 76). Said, in Rose’s view, makes Freud preach the gospel of hybridity prematurely, not just for Freud himself, who clearly did *not* resolve his essentialist allegiance to Jewish identity, but for most of us as well.

In the final analysis, Said’s attraction to the anti-foundationalist Jewish intellectual tradition shows how much he himself is not beyond identities or traditions. He is firmly ensconced in the historical specificity of secular Jewish thought and experience, which he tries to universalize in a manner that risks becoming its own trap, as his invocation of hybridity as a kind of gospel suggests.¹⁶ His worldly position in New York City—the one place outside of Israel where secular Jewish thought might be considered most completely at home—underscores this specificity. Said saw New York as a place where he was “[on] a constantly shifting ground, where relationships are not inherited, but created. Where there is no solidity of home” (*Power, Politics, and Culture* 457). Homeless he may have felt, but he was very *centrally* decentered in the Big Apple, able to pronounce on the precariousness of exile *urbi et orbi* with far greater celebrity than would have been possible from a much more obscure professorship at Bir Zeit. Ivy League tenure may not be the equivalent of the solidity

of home, but it certainly represents a considerable safety net. Said very openly denied himself the status of refugee, but did affiliate himself with the status of exile. But the Jews whose work forms the foundation of his later humanism *were* refugees, and for that reason Said's humanism will have to be defended in the future from accusations of being merely a salaried alienation.

In the end, there is greater truth in his earlier admission of being *specifically* a Jewish Palestinian than in the generic notion of being an American humanist (for as an American, I can attest that there is such a thing as the *depressing* solidity of home over here). It was after all the secular Jewish tradition that showed him how to "work through" the loss of a physical connection to his Palestinian homeland (even though the Israeli state brought this situation about), and to forego the facile consolations of chthonic nationalism without weakening in his demands for justice or wavering in his commitment to history. His adoption of *Moses* even suggests a very Jewish hermeneutics. Freud functions for Said like an old Hebrew *nabi*, a prophet whose vision excoriates the current state of things in Israel and points toward the things to come; his is a voice in the wilderness whose truth only now becomes apparent as the blank pages of history are filled. I doubt Said would have found problematic the exposure of his Jewish affiliations, since it merely illustrates from a different perspective a point he eloquently argued on many occasions: ". . . the truth is that Jewish and Palestinian suffering exist in and belong to the same history: the task of interpretation is to acknowledge that link, not to separate them into separate and unconnected spheres" (*Reflections on Exile* 435).

Notes

- ¹ The circumstances behind the lecture are important to note. Said had been invited by the Freud Society of Vienna to give the annual Freud lecture for May 2001, but controversy surrounding a photograph of him tossing a stone in celebration of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon led the Freud Society to cancel the invitation (for the *New York Times*' coverage, see Dinitia Smith; and for Said's own commentary, see "Freud, Zionism, and Vienna"). Said clearly saw the parallel between Freud's exile and the "exile" of his lecture: "Freud was hounded out of Vienna because he was a Jew. . . . Now I am hounded out because I'm a Palestinian" (qtd. in Smith B9). The Freud Museum in London then invited Said to give his lecture there, where it took place without incident.

- ² Said draws specifically from Isaac Deutscher's essays in *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, which I discuss below.
- ³ We can see an almost annual arrival of important *Moses* studies in the 1990s: Rice in 1990, Yerushalmi in 1991, Grubrich-Simitis in 1994, Derrida in 1995, Paul in 1996, Assmann in 1997, and Bernstein in 1998.
- ⁴ This point is brought up again by Moshe Gresser at some length (chapter 5).
- ⁵ See *Moses the Egyptian* (1997); this book stimulated considerable controversy, as it seemed to be a condemnation of monotheism for being intolerant and, in the eyes of some reviewers, seemed to point toward a need to return to polytheistic points of view. Gravest of all was the accusation that the book is implicitly anti-Semitic. To his great credit, Jan Assmann published several critical reviews as an appendix to a work in which he spells out at greater length his views in response to these criticisms; see *Die Mosaische Unterscheidung* (2003).
- ⁶ A notable exception is Ahmed Osman, who continues to argue for the validity of Freud's identification of Moses as an Egyptian, and goes so far as to identify him with Akhenaten himself (2002). Jan Assmann does see a connection between Moses and Akhenaten, but it is entirely different: The cultural memory of Akhenaten's monotheistic revolution becomes later confused with the memory of the Hyksos invasion and the Jews. Moses is thus identified with a "dislocated memory of Akhenaten" in Manetho's account of a certain Osarsiph (*Moses the Egyptian*, chapter 2).
- ⁷ The first public mention of the analogy between personal and cultural memory occurs in 1907 in material added to *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (6:148).
- ⁸ See Rank's *Das Inzest-Motiv in Dichtung und Sage*, "Homer: Psychologische Beiträge zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Volksepos," *Psychoanalytische Beiträge zur Mythenforschung*, and the anthology in *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero and Other Writings*.
- ⁹ Freud 23:70-72. The Rankian text in question is his study of Homeric epic (1917).
- ¹⁰ There has been a great deal of cleverness exerted to free Freud of the charge that he is a staunch believer in inherited memory and acquired characteristics. The evidence, however, shows clearly that Freud did indeed hold these views. In 1934, Joseph Wortis challenged Freud about the validity of Lamarckism in the eyes of most biologists of the day, to which Freud replied: "But we can't bother with the biologists. . . . We have our own science." When Wortis objected that sciences ought not to be inconsistent with each other, Freud again retorted: "We must go our own way" (Wortis 84).

- ¹¹ Freud stresses throughout the essential alterity of Akhenaten's monotheism to Egyptian culture, particularly when he describes the syncretism of Christianity, which renounced many elements of monotheism and "adapted itself in many details to the rituals of other Mediterranean peoples. It was as though Egypt was taking vengeance once more on the heirs of Akhenaten" (23:136).
- ¹² I am grateful to Mr. Lance Hirsch for pointing this out to me.
- ¹³ Though he avoids this simplistic derivation of monotheism from imperialism, Jan Assmann devotes considerable attention to the "political theology" behind the figure of Moses in *Herrschaft und Heil* (part 4); it is again regrettable that Said was unable to incorporate Assmann's erudition and approach into his reading.
- ¹⁴ Indeed, future studies of Said's work might well probe the issues of militarism and military psychology in relation to imperialism, which he seems less able to address in his discursive approach beyond the matter of the instrumental knowledge generated by military invasions. Here, again, a focus on Rome would be a good point of departure.
- ¹⁵ For a more detailed comparison of Freud and Eisler, see Armstrong, chapter 9.
- ¹⁶ In this regard, we have to see Homi Bhabha's more complex views of hybridity as an essential extension of Said's work.

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Edward Said and the Avant-Garde

David LeHardy Sweet

The purpose of this essay is to identify and analyze the mostly unexamined inter-discursivities between the work of Edward Said and that of the Avant-garde in its various artistic, literary, and critical manifestations. Said's theory will be examined for what insights it may provide into the historical emergence of the Avant-garde over the last two centuries and its relation to both Modernism and Postmodernism. While the task is complicated by a lack of documentary evidence regarding Said's critical responses to specific Avant-garde works and texts, his many writings on modern theorists, novelists, and composers provide sufficient critical resources to ensure a sustained, if somewhat speculative, investigation of his *oeuvre* in relation to this topic. And while it may be objected that the Avant-garde is not the same as Modernism, it certainly constitutes a portion—indeed, the most formalistically radical one—of the modernist sensibility and thus both extends and lays claim to some of its expressive and critical capacities. The essay, then, will compare Said's theories to others that pertain to the Avant-garde (i.e., the movement in both literature and the plastic arts) and various "avant-gardists" (i.e., anyone engaged in modern cultural practice who innovates in an avant-garde way) in order to see how they confirm or resist each other with respect to the role of the critic, the meaning of history, questions of modernity, exile, and Orientalism. In this way I hope to bring to Saidian theory a number of formal and discursive objects otherwise presumed to be beyond or beneath its critical horizon.

Although the essay highlights shared coordinates of intellectual concern between Said and the Avant-garde—i.e., their attitude of transgression and critique of dominant ideologies, institutions, ways of seeing, or "structures of feeling" (Raymond Williams's phrase)—it by no means asserts that Said is part of the Avant-garde or even qualifies as having an avant-garde sensibility. Indeed, the majority of instances show how Said's critical insights conflict with the expressive impulses

of the classic Avant-garde of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the neo-Avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s, or various post-structuralist discourses that some critics, including Said himself, have labeled “avant-garde” in order to disparage, marginalize, or otherwise object to them. In these latter instances of labeling academic discourses “avant-garde,” an intellectual genealogy can be traced between avant-garde and postmodern practice and/or criticism, establishing connections Said seems to regard with suspicion, though on closer inspection his own critical posture occasionally reveals surprising affinities with postmodern formulations of avant-garde attitudes, as I shall demonstrate. A premise on which this pairing of avant-garde and postmodern is based pertains to the comparable relation of both to twentieth-century Modernism, with the Avant-garde’s relation being more synchronic and culturally-inflected, while Postmodernism is more diachronic and historically complex (changed conditions of production, distribution, and consumption related to America’s postwar hegemony).

Theory of the Avant-garde and “Avant-garde” Theory

To start, certain key concepts about the Avant-garde and its sometimes paradoxical relation to other modern cultural practices need to be elaborated as a way of anticipating points of connection, whether sympathetic or antipathetic, to corresponding elements of Said’s discourse. Most importantly, one must recognize in the Avant-garde a distinct species of Modernism that anticipates, though often negatively, aspects of a later cultural and critical *milieu* in which Said’s own theoretical principles were advanced. This is because the Avant-garde—whether that of such nineteenth-century “seers” as Baudelaire, Rimbaud, or Mallarmé, or the Twentieth Century’s more extreme cultural provocateurs, Duchamp, Picabia, Tzara, and Huelsenbeck—is unprecedented as a movement both committed to the future and alienated from the past, a movement that celebrates the new even at the expense of its own productions and cultural durability, and thus both exemplifies and deviates from the modern and from Modernism. In its obsession with the new, the Avant-garde conceives of art in a radically historical way: i.e., not simply as the latest style or fad succeeding another in a process of repetition, variation, and assimilation, but as a desire to change the relations of aesthetic production for the future. It thus constitutes a delirious, existential pursuit that is both romantically self-destructive and parodically mechanistic, involving a

tireless descent, as Baudelaire has written, “au fond de l’Inconnu pour trouver du *nouveau*” (qtd. in Poggioli 215).

The Avant-garde thus constitutes an extreme case—or incipient metamorphosis—of Modernism, accelerating modern principles of artistic production at the expense of the subject and in a way that anticipates aspects of Postmodernism. It is a kind of masochistic revolutionary movement, though its revolutionary zeal pertains primarily to aesthetic form, not content. As a result, its combined manifestations are ideologically ambidextrous, covering a broad range of political positions. The avant-garde attitude is one of deliberate self-alienation, of disgust for the pieties of tradition and the banalities of contemporary culture; but at the same time, its proponents seem to thrive in the kind of humanistic culture that initially disparages, then tolerates, and finally appropriates its hysterical antagonism through marketing, collecting, and celebrating its “products” in a process of capitalist reification. Indeed, it is difficult to decide how much either resistance or capitulation characterizes the Avant-garde, a movement that ultimately, if unintentionally, takes its place within the very tradition it wants to destroy. Thus, with respect to Saidian discourse in its insistence on “speaking truth to power,” the Avant-garde occupies an ambiguous space both at the center and on the periphery of modern capitalist culture, or, as Renato Poggioli has remarked (in a way that seems applicable to Said’s own situatedness), both in “the ivory tower and the ghetto” (Poggioli 31). Furthermore, it occupies this space by way of distinctly affiliative determinations as both Said and Poggioli define them (*The World, the Text, and the Critic* 17; Poggioli 31)—that is, not as the natural, genealogical consequences of traditional or class filiations, but by virtue of intellectual choices, “elective affinities.”¹ In this way, intention and method, as Said has elaborated on them with respect to the modern intellectual, explain the activity and attitude of the avant-gardist despite the anti-intellectual veneer of his or her more outrageous gestures.

Theorist of the Avant-garde Peter Bürger insists that this self-consciousness is definitive (Bürger 29),² though in doing so, he takes issue with Walter Benjamin, who sees the Avant-garde as the sociological consequence of the proliferation of techniques of mechanical reproduction. For Bürger, the politico-ideological ambiguity of the Avant-garde is the conscientious result of the necessary distance of art from life praxis, but also of the movement’s collective desire to reconnect the two in a way that effects art’s disappearance through trans-

forming life praxis itself. Thus, for Bürger, the function of avant-garde art is not the standard functionlessness of art in its full autonomy (the Aestheticist ideal), but that of critique itself—albeit through artistic as well as discursive means. This critique, however, is not the traditional, reflective one of art against society, or of one artistic style against another, but of art against itself as an institution whose distance from society is finally recognized as something neither organic nor essential but historically produced in the late phase of capitalist production and thus susceptible of resolution:

The avant-gardistes . . . adopted an essential element of Aestheticism. Aestheticism had made the distance from the praxis of life the content of works. The praxis of life to which Aestheticism refers and which it negates is the means-ends rationality of the bourgeois everyday. Now, it is not the aim of the avant-gardistes to integrate art into *this* praxis. On the contrary, they assent to the aestheticians' rejection of the world and its means-ends rationality. What distinguishes them from the latter is the attempt to organize a new life praxis from a basis in art. In this respect also, Aestheticism turns out to have been the necessary precondition of the avant-gardiste intent. Only an art the contents of whose individual works is wholly distinct from the (bad) praxis of the existing society can be the center that can be the starting point for the organization of a new life praxis. (Bürger 49-50)

What is especially interesting about Bürger's definition of the Avant-garde as the institutional self-criticism of art is that while twentieth-century works of avant-garde art and literature were presumably becoming more "critical" and "connected" in the manner described above, criticism itself was, by Said's time, becoming more disengaged and thus, according to Said, more "avant-garde" in a way that ultimately contradicted Bürger's claims. In an interview in *Diacritics* in 1976, Said remarked that the label of avant-garde criticism connoted—at least from the perspective of its opponents—a disquieting Francophilia or continental influence that was often sweepingly demonized as "theory." Younger American critics had succumbed to the appeal of new methodologies that took literary criticism beyond its traditional rituals of analysis and evaluation, engaging literary texts on a

new level that seemed to elevate the work of the critic itself by insisting on the textuality of all texts, whether “primary” or “secondary,” “literary” or “critical.” Thus the hierarchical relation between the literary and the critical text was being undermined in a way that unsettled those schools of thought that saw the critic’s role as one of appreciative commentator on the superior achievements of the literary practitioner or author (Viswanathan 5). The polemics against the new style of criticism were often fierce, though the younger critics, as Said characterized them in the interview, were less inclined to aggressive counter-polemics and simply more devoted to their work (5). All of this suggests that the newfangled, French-influenced, “avant-garde” critics of the seventies were, like the avant-garde art movements before them, blurring the boundaries among different disciplines and thus opening them up to alternative practices in a way that now seems analogous not only to Jürgen Habermas’s idea of reintegrating specialist discourses into the public sphere, but to the avant-garde intention of reconnecting art itself with social praxis.

But even in the seventies and early eighties, Said expressed ambivalence towards some of the new, mostly poststructuralist, methodologies. In his view, these methodologies were solidifying into a kind of occult discourse, hermetically sealed from history and the world by treating all forms of intellectual inquiry as autonomous, textual operations, a rhetoric without contents beyond itself, and thus abandoning the subversive interdisciplinarity that had seemed to advance with its initial innovations. In Said’s view, this new emphasis in American criticism on “textuality” quickly became a “retreat from the interventionary movement across lines of specialization” (*WTC* 3), and shifted away from a phenomenon of critical rupture to one of regression and repetition. In response, he proposed an alternative “secular criticism” based on the ideal of a “critical consciousness” that affirmed connections between texts and actualities, between works of literature and the realities of power and authority (*WTC* 5).³ In terms of Avant-garde discourse, Said’s complaint parallels Bürger’s contention that, while Avant-gardism was premised upon the autonomy heralded by Aestheticism, its future lay in transforming life praxis itself and thus dissolving or transcending its apparent separateness.

Yet for Said, this overcoming could not be left to the artist or poet alone. Indeed, his discourse takes a Platonic turn in recommending the critic as the true innovator, or “original,” of cultural endeavor. His critical maneuver continues the avant-garde strategy of institu-

tional self-criticism, but through an appropriation that puts the critic in the cultural driver's seat. In other words, Said echoes the self-criticism of art, but as a critic of the arts, not as an artist. Bürger is no different in terms of elevating the critical impulse of the Avant-garde, a position that leads to the disparagement of certain avant-garde works that fail to meet his standard. As a result, Bürger ends up complaining that the neo-Avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s was basically an aestheticist re-appropriation of avant-garde strategies of the teens and twenties for the sake of a booming art market and thus very different from the provocations of Dada: a kind of farcical repetition of the original Avant-garde that evokes Marx's "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon." The neo-Avant-garde was only the mask of a resurgent Aestheticism in Bürger's view, a contention that echoes Said's critique of textuality as a screen against true critical activism, which he recommends as an antidote.

While Said sometimes saw both the critic and the poet/artist as providing equally valid forms of resistance to the dominant culture, he believed that their different means—the critic's use of rational argument, and the creative writer's deployment of "imagistic, non-rational means" (*WTC* 15)—provided the crux of a theoretical and hierarchical reversal: While criticism was against any form of totalization, it did not question the rational basis of its own narratives nor its formal adherence to the discursive essay. In this way criticism only partly escaped its own totalizing potentiality through cultivating "irony" and "opposition" (*WTC* 29). The critic's ironic use of the dominant culture's primary modes of self-justification—rational discourse and narrative form—thus became a kind of enhancement and burden for Said, while the Avant-garde's association with creative, imagistic, anti-narrative operations became an impediment insofar as such strategies, far from ensuring critical autonomy, seemed to facilitate recuperation by the dominant culture through the academy, the museum, and the market. A certain antagonism emerges between Saidian and avant-garde discourse, with the latter somewhat tiredly insisting on its poetic and aesthetic rights NOT to narrate itself in universally comprehensible forms, and the former interpreting texts in order—if not to silence them by substituting the critique for the thing itself, the idea for the poem—at least to supplement them in a way that sometimes eclipses their avowed autonomy. While Said does not reject the aesthetic or banish the poet from his universe the way Plato did, he does rank them beneath criticism and the critic, who enlightens through rational discourse, while the poet

merely unsettles—as if this unsettling required a more explicit direction or functionality in order to be effective in his view.

In this regard, Said seems to veer away from Theodor Adorno, who was at pains to assert the almost stoic integrity of avant-garde art in its formal, anti-discursive resistance to the “totally administered society” and its culture industry (Bürger 1, 60; *Musical Elaborations* 50), even if, in the long run, he pessimistically forecast an inevitable end to such resistance. Although we will need to examine Said in relation to Adorno again later with respect to the question of artistic autonomy—particularly in the sphere of music—it is fair to say that Said’s attitude toward the Avant-garde, particularly with respect to literature, was closer to that of Georg Lukács, who saw the movement, in its falling away from classic realism, as a form of bourgeois decadence, ineffectual in its strategies of resistance because of its ritual reluctance to explain itself—as if it were some secret society.⁴ For Lukács it was the realistic novel and the discursive essay, not the experimental poem or work of art, that acceded to critical enlightenment. Said approvingly summarizes Lukács remarks on the genre of the essay as follows:

Essays are concerned with the relations between things, with values and concepts, in fine, with significance. Whereas poetry deals in images, the essay is the abandonment of images; this abandonment the essay ideally shares with Platonism and mysticism. . . . What the essay expresses is a yearning for conceptuality and intellectuality, as well as a resolution of the ultimate questions of life. (Throughout this analysis Lukács refers to Socrates as the typical essayistic figure, always talking of immediate mundane matters while at the same time through his life there sounds the purest, the most profound, and the most concealed yearning. What the critical essay does is to begin to create the values by which art is judged. (*WTC* 51-52).⁵

In this respect, Said seems, once again, to agree with Bürger that the Avant-garde’s great merit is its capacity for self-criticism, but that its formal means almost always require discursive supplementation. In effect, rational critical discourse is the cure for what ails the Avant-garde. But what ails it? Answer: its formal antagonism, not to tyrannical discursive regimes, but to the enlightening potential of narrative itself.

There is something subversive in this critical maneuver that is

reminiscent of the avant-gardist's own capacity for producing shock, though Said resorts to the classics to make his point. By suggesting that the "critic" is the true "original" compared to the creative writer or artist (whose association with Bohemia, spontaneity, and glamour is subtly disparaged in the essay "On Originality" [WTC 128]), Said indirectly persuades us that the Avant-garde's own originality is not to be found in its expressive means or formal innovations, but in its critical motivations or beginnings.⁶ In breaking with tradition, the Avant-garde rejects the filiative process of observing genre imperatives, and instead, like the critic, adheres affiliatively to "a set of contingencies and worldly circumstances from which came the [conscious] decision to write" (WTC 130). Thus both the critic and the avant-gardist are "anti-filiatives," acceding to originality through the critical reappraisal of the institution of art itself and the Romantic notions of originality that infuse it. Indeed, their originality is to work against the grain or conventions of originality. In "Secular Criticism" Said attributes this anti-filiative impulse to the great Modernist writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Joyce, Eliot, Mann, and Proust: "Childless couples, orphaned children, aborted childbirths, and unregenerately celibate men and women populate the world of high modernism with remarkable insistence, all of them suggesting the difficulties of filiation" (WTC 17).⁷ The cultural situation is explained again by reference to Lukács who associates the phenomenon of childlessness with alienation, reification, and degeneracy. Yet Said seems less judgmental than Lukács on this point, seeing this disintegration of collectivities and individualities as an analogue, perhaps, to his own enforced exile as a Palestinian. And while he has sometimes remarked on the hyperbole of the modernist complaint that modern experience is a kind of psychological and intellectual *dépaysement*, he has also utilized this argument as a way of poeticizing what might seem, at a distance, the mundane reality of literal exile.⁸ Similarly, the Avant-garde takes this sense of a loss of identity, of absence of self, and literalizes it by transforming literary and artistic production into a series of dehumanized mechanical strategies, displacements, and techniques, not much different from pushing a button or pulling a lever, over and over and over.⁹

While both Said and Bürger assume a certain Lukácsian or judgmental air apropos of Modernism and the Avant-garde, Said is by far the subtler thinker, careful not to reduce art to ideology in the way that Bürger comes close to doing with his *idée fixe* of the self-criticism of art. Said is not opposed to aesthetics or artistic autono-

my, and in this regard seems more in line with Poggioli, who, writing at an earlier stage¹⁰ than Bürger, describes the Avant-garde more in terms of a rich historical phenomenon than a rigid cultural mission only Dada or Duchamp might plausibly accomplish. Though afflicted by, or at least affecting, a psychology of social antagonism and alienation, the Avant-garde, in Poggioli's view, consistently adopts new forms, undergoes credible transformations, and displays its quotient of aesthetic value, even in its most radical, anti-aesthetic guises.¹¹ And while Poggioli insists that on the whole the avant-garde sensibility is historically unprecedented, it does not end history, but rather extends it by assuming new and multiple problems, solutions, dogmas, and schools. In the final analysis—like the ambiguities of repetition and originality, filiation and affiliation of Saidian theory—the Avant-garde, though committed to the new, begins to repeat itself, parody its own gestures, and make a tradition of them in a way that reconciles the movement to history, or at least to the recent past (particularly in the case of the neo-Avant-garde in America). Both Said and Poggioli tentatively assent to the Eliotic paradigm of literary tradition (Poggioli 70, 84; *WTC* 131) as an exchange between the past and the present, collective traditions and individual talents: in short, a cultural dialogics that is primarily affiliative, but which, through a series of linkages and oppositions, gradually comes to seem continuous, genealogical, natural. However, this tendency is consistently thwarted by the critic, who, for Said, has a moral obligation to call attention, as Vico did, to the constructedness of history, something created in response to actualities. Thus while partially accepting the Eliotic schema (a schema most would consider modernist as opposed to avant-garde as Poggioli designates it), Said also criticizes Eliot for not really adhering to the implications of his theory, since the poet largely excises tradition from history—i.e., history not as a series of canonical texts, but as a lived thing, or more specifically, what Said calls “direct experience” or “immediacy”—the very things some theorists of the Avant-garde consider central to its practice:

When we leave the realm of Marxist critical discourse and look at the criticism fostered by some of the modernists, the wish to escape from experience perceived as futile panorama is central. T. S. Eliot is unintelligible without this emphasis on art opposed in some way to

life, to the historical experience of the middle class, and to the disorder and dislocation of urban existence. Eliot's extraordinary powers of codification and influence produced the almost too familiar canon of critical practices and touchstones associated with the New Criticism along with its rejection of biography, history and pathos in the form of various fallacies. . . . By the time "theory" advanced intellectually into departments of English, French, and German in the United States, the notion of "text" had been transformed into something almost metaphysically isolated from experience. The sway of semiology, deconstruction, and even the archaeological descriptions of Foucault, as they have commonly been received, reduced and in many instances eliminated the messier precinct of "life" and historical experience. (*Reflections on Exile* xviii)

Said takes issue with Eliot, the high modernist, on the grounds that the literary and the aesthetic constitute a kind of escape for him, a way of insulating oneself from critical responsibilities. This should not be construed as a simple dismissal of the aesthetic. Indeed, in the same essay, Said criticizes Lukács, too, for abandoning experience—not for poetry, but for "insurrectionary theory" (*RE* xx)—though it would be foolish to accuse Said of being unresponsive to insurrectionary theory where experience called for it. In these two rich, yet distinct, examples of evasion (Eliot and Lukács), one begins to see how both Said and the Avant-garde, as opposed to the modernists, carve out overlapping spaces (experience, immediacy, history) while trying to ameliorate their discontents. For the Avant-garde, experimentation and transgression propel its adherents toward the new, which sets the criteria for its future sublation to the real, the immediate, the actual; nonetheless, a persistent contempt for popular demands, as Poggioli explains, militates against any easy acquiescence to mere fashion and thus helps maintain a condition of autonomy. For Said, there are a broad range of options for how to bring both theory and art back to the "messier precinct" of life and experience without being reductive or absolutist, and he manages to do it even in one of the most formally autonomous areas of aesthetic endeavor: modern music.

Modern Music and the Implications of Parody and Critique

In “Performance as an Extreme Occasion” Said describes Adorno’s *Philosophy of Modern Music*, in which music—Western classical music—is portrayed as moving inexorably, ever since the late style of Beethoven, toward total autonomy from historical reality, a process that culminates in the extreme technicalization of Arnold Schoenberg’s dodecaphonic system, a technicalization that has both modernist and avant-gardist implications. Yet far from being a reduction or nullification of music, Schoenberg’s twelve-tone system captures, for Adorno, “the true meaning of music’s trajectory, a tragic intensification of the separation between music and society” (*ME* 12). This is because the twelve-tone system totally rationalizes form, resulting in a kind of “preprogrammed expressiveness” that, through its dehumanized, technical purity, alienates and shocks the listener into a recognition of the emptiness of the modern world, or as Said puts it: “its very rigor and distance from the everyday world . . . casts a devastating critical light upon the degraded and therefore meaningless world” (*ME* 13-14). While modern music continues to be symptomatic of a Lukácsian notion of bourgeois decadence, it also, according to Adorno, “sacrifices itself to this effort” of total disillusionment in a way that seems analogous to other avant-garde practices. Adorno continues: “It has taken upon itself all the darkness and guilt of the world. Its fortune lies in the perception of misfortune; all of its beauty is in denying itself the illusion of beauty. . . . Modern music sees absolute oblivion as its goal” (*ME* 14).

At this point Said takes issue with Adorno by noting how the almost apocalyptic register in which Adorno discusses the theoretical significance of works by Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg, is vitiated by their more recent and utterly respectful assimilation into the musical repertory of the most prestigious orchestras. Said characterizes this development not as an appropriation of modern music by the institution, but as an ironic adaptation, as it were, by the works themselves to that institution through the eccentric mediation of individual performance, illustrating the impossibility of any system to realize fully the dream of an impervious totality, despite Adorno’s profound pessimism that such is indeed the fate of all modern art. For Said, transgression is always possible (*ME* 55), and even musical performance, while succumbing to the inducements of what some might consider the high-brow end of the culture industry, can discover occasions for the

transgressive production or “elaboration,” in Gramsci’s sense, of civil society. Somewhat surprisingly, Said credits pianist Glenn Gould with no less an achievement in his

restless forays into writing, radio, television, and film [which, for Said] enhanced, enlivened, and illuminated his playing itself, giving it a self-conscious aesthetic to enable performance to engage or to affiliate with the world itself without compromising the essentially reinter-pretive, reproductive quality of the process. This is the Adornian measure of Gould’s achievement, and also its limitations, which are those of a late capitalism that has condemned classical music to an impoverished marginal-ity and anti-intellectualism sheltered underneath the umbrella of “autonomy.” (ME 29)

In this way, Said attributes to Gould’s performance the qualities of avant-garde spectacle in its apparent merging of art and life praxes through the combinatory of critical discourse. Said gets even more explicit when he describes Gould’s innovations as contributing to an “anti-aesthetic Gesamtkunstwerk” producing the effect of a “*déracinement du sens*” (ME 33). In this fusion of references to Wagner and Rimbaud, the autonomous, if theatrical “high art” embraced by the state in the context of Bayreuth comes together with a recalcitrant “anti-art” that deregulates the senses and disorients society in a way that revives and reconfigures the avant-garde agenda for a new era—a “late” or “post-” modern era whose cultural practitioners want to capture the lost feel of the historical sense and the lost feel of a meaningful future. How did Gould’s transgressive manipulation of the conventions of performance come to seem analogous to avant-garde praxis for Said? Did Gould’s “forays” into other media constitute an overturning of aesthetic categories or blurring of boundaries that recalled for Said his initial expectations for 1970s and 1980s “avant-garde” theory in its original tendency toward skewing relations among specializations in a way that implied a new immediacy or openness to historic experience? And what was to prevent Gould’s innovations from ceding to a similar re-aestheticization or insulation that evoked the old formulae of “textuality” by turning all such forays into simply another aspect of “performance” or even “celebrity” in a way that undermined any possibility of immediacy or direct experience?

Indeed, Said seems all too aware of this possibility insofar as his essay on "Performance" is paired with another one entitled "On the Transgressive Elements in Music." In this second essay the reader detects a number of parallels and symmetries that deftly insinuate, if not actually elaborate on, the parodic dimensions of Gould's own eccentricities of performance. Gould's innovations acquire an aura of parody, of a self-conscious reiteration of avant-garde strategies in the interest of reinvigorating a depleted art form, utterly trivialized through social ritualization. After reading the second essay, one cannot help but compare the bravura pianist to the protagonist of Thomas Mann's *Faustus*, a novel Said discusses at length in the second half of *Musical Elaborations*. In that work, fictional composer Adrian Leverkühn makes a devil's bargain in order to transcend the classical canon of music (associated with a kind of historical health of the state, though it paralyzes the creative will through stultifying repetition and *cliché*). He does this by virtue of a technical genius for parody and critique, strategies thematically associated in the novel with madness and disease and which assume the tantalizing character of a cancerous will to power that we come, as readers, to link allegorically with National Socialism. Said goes on to discuss Mann's treatment of the disease that reinvigorates, the critique that aspires to artistry, the revision that achieves originality:

Originality cannot be derived from health because the canon form, which in its regulated permutations is Mann's symbol of a historical time ruled over by God, has exhausted all the possible combinations of notes. Therefore parody and critique propose themselves as the only true novelty in so overripe and exhausted a period, and their equivalents in the life of the truly gifted individual are disease and the barbarism of the elemental, which exist outside time and culture, and beyond the scope of anything elaborated in ordinary duration. (*ME* 46-47).

Thus parody, critique, and revision (as well as "barbarism," which I will address later in the context of Orientalism) are associated by Mann with a kind of disease of state, though a disease that is possibly indistinguishable from Faustian or Nietzschean self-overcoming. But, as Said goes on to show through a reference to *Death in Venice* in the

same essay, Mann also fears pollution of the state by contact with the Other, i.e., through the popular, Dionysian, indeed oriental, peril that becomes the harbinger of cultural death and decomposition in the modern era. Yet these same *mortifications*, as it were, paradoxically compel art along a path of cultural self-definition, self-knowledge, and self-overcoming—a path of persistent, formal innovation that preserves art's autonomy, integrity, and future as a creative endeavor. Thus, while parody and critique are allied by Mann, they point, like the Avant-garde itself, in opposite directions—toward pollution *and* purification, toward critical integration with the world *and* aesthetic removal from the world. Is it because parody and criticism have essentially contrapuntal implications? The difference is perhaps clarified by replacing the term “parody” with “pastiche,” a term Fredric Jameson famously employs in “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” (Jameson 111-25). In that essay, pastiche is distinguished as a kind of objectless parody in which no explicit literary models are mocked but in which language itself has become the object of ridicule. For Jameson, pastiche constitutes Postmodernism's often uncritical repackaging of history through an eclecticism of contemporary forms that evoke an illusory feel of history by utilizing outmoded representations that appeal to our sense of nostalgia. All postmodern popular art becomes pastiche, a tireless reiteration of obsolete forms for the sake of sensory stimulation, but not for any critical reinsertion into the archive of history. In essence, a form of distraction, as Walter Benjamin conceived it in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Thus art, as pastiche, becomes art about art, disconnected from any existential or historical reality, but minutely responsive to sensory demands of the moment, our contemporary, consumerist requirements of instant gratification in hyper-civilization.

Thus for Said, the use of the word parody is probably significant, inasmuch as it suggests a critical, even satirical, appropriation and revision of historically- or canonically-embedded forms, though it can also be construed (not unlike pastiche) as a deflection of direct experience by way of these forms, despite the illusion of historical engagement. With respect to this ambiguity of intention between parody and pastiche, the New York poets, often cited as neo-Avant-garde heralds of postmodern developments, illustrate the sometimes critical, sometimes disengaged, attitudes of various avant-gardists with respect to history. In this way, we are reminded of Bürger's thesis that avant-garde engagement is rooted in aestheticist disengagement. As

we have seen, Said sometimes describes this sensitivity to history with such terms as “actuality,” “direct experience,” and “immediacy,” all of which add another dimension to his sense of the historical, indicative not only of the real complexity, even contradictory nature of the historical attitude, but of the avant-garde attitude as well. This is because one finally has to ask, if only to deepen one’s understanding of the issue, how, precisely, the Avant-garde and its practitioners actually define their relation to history. Although members of the Avant-garde are conscious of its role in history as a cultural preparative of the future, certain exigencies, actualities, of avant-garde production would seem to work against this notion. Many an avant-garde sensibility seems to be less about anticipating the future, in a way that highlights the Avant-garde’s historic mission, than about redefining the present, reconstituting the present moment as an actually lived “event,” a moment that implies a kind of sensory immediacy and a virtual forgetting of history.

Postmodern Reformulations of Avant-garde Strategy and the Question of Narrative

In a chapter of his book *L’Inhumain: les causeries sur le temps* (1988), postmodern theorist Jean-François Lyotard examines the relation between the Avant-garde and the Sublime, locating the latter in the former’s literary and plastic attempts to capture the lived immediacy of the Now, the sublime moment of shock in which one seems, as it were, most alive. Lyotard gives this experience-entity various names—such as the Heideggerian *Ereignis* or “event”—suggesting its compatibility with phenomenological moments of being, the stream of consciousness, or Bergsonian *durée*—that preconscious, pre-intelligible zone of being in which past and present are continually, intuitively coalescing. But more to the point, this moment of sensory shock is radically different from those that follow, those in which the theoretical faculty battens down on experience to assign it a value in a rational system; but the *Ereignis* also differs from the terrifying, perpetually anticipated moment of ontic annihilation that seems always to threaten the Now, the Being-Event. This threat is what makes the Being-Event supremely sublime for Lyotard and what makes it the tenuous and ever-diminishing zone of aesthetic attention for the Avant-garde. As Lyotard sees it, the avant-garde artist—his prime example is Barnett Newman, though other Action Painters and

Surrealists also seem exemplary—"attempts combinations that allow the event" (*The Inhuman* 101). In doing so, the avant-gardist strives to represent the unrepresentable, or the Sublime, as a result of which the broader social community no longer recognizes itself in such endeavors and dismisses them as incomprehensible, indeterminate, and incommensurable. "Incommensurable" is Lyotard's special word for whatever remains heterogeneous or essentially unassimilable to the *sensus communis* or to the ideology of the "decision makers" who strive to incorporate everything into an operational totality. And with an ominous pessimism that recalls Adorno's sense of the totally administered society, Lyotard reveals how the decision makers succeed in achieving this operational totality through what he calls "terror": the entire apparatus of compulsion in the struggle for maximum efficiency of the system (*The Postmodern Condition* xxiv).

Among other instances of Avant-garde works that exemplify this striving after the Event in a way that implies aesthetic autonomy not from life but from "the system," Lyotard offers the example of Paul Cézanne, whose question "What is painting?" resonates within Lyotard's own question of "What is it Now?" Cézanne once described his use of color as "little sensations," an epithet Lyotard expands upon to mean "elementary sensations without history" (*The Inhuman* 102), or sensations—elemental, instinctual, barbarous—that somehow get beneath the radar of habitual, traditional, or "universal" perception (what art theorist Norman Bryson designates as the fiction of "universal visual experience" [Bryson 6]) and thus evade the system of total efficiency enforced through terror. What this implies, of course—with reference to Lyotard's famous report on knowledge, *The Postmodern Condition*—is that these elemental sensations that were constitutive of early avant-garde antagonism compare favorably with Lyotard's "*petites histoires*," social and cultural phenomena that evidence a postmodern incredulity to modern metanarratives, the so-called grand narratives. The Avant-garde, then, anticipates the postmodern. And while these little histories provide what may be the last remaining enclaves of autonomy within the world system—private language games and other modes of dissent—they are as cultural islands, separate and incapable of concerted opposition or broad-based resistance, because they are impervious to consensus, which is seen as another vehicle of terror. This equivalence between consensus and terror is argued despite Jürgen Habermas's contention that "legitimacy is to be found in consensus and discussion" (*The Postmodern Condition* xxv), or, as Habermas argues in "Modernity versus Postmodernity," through the rein-

tegration of the specialized discourses to create a new, postmodern public sphere, which is simply the fuller realization of the modern public sphere (Habermas 98).

In “Representations of the Intellectual,” Edward Said offers his own assessment of Lyotard’s postmodern thesis and, by implication, the postmodern reformulation of certain avant-garde theses. After discussing Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus as emblematic of the modern intellectual (and whose motto—silence, cunning, and exile—coincides, for the most part, with avant-garde practice [Poggioli 3]), Said goes on to assert that

The purpose of the intellectual’s activity is to advance freedom and knowledge. This is still true, I believe, despite the often repeated charge that “grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment,” as the contemporary French philosopher Lyotard calls such heroic ambitions associated with the previous “modern” age, are pronounced as no longer having any currency in the era of postmodernism. According to this view grand narratives have been replaced by local situations and language games; postmodern intellectuals now prize competence, not universal values like truth or freedom. I’ve always thought that Lyotard and his followers are admitting their own lazy incapacities, perhaps even indifference, rather than giving a correct assessment of what remains for the intellectual a truly vast array of opportunities despite postmodernism. For in fact governments still manifestly oppress people, grave miscarriages of justice still occur, the co-optation and inclusion of intellectuals by power can still effectively quieten their voices, and the deviation of intellectuals from their vocation is still very often the case. (*RI* 18)

In this statement Said echoes an earlier, though less caustic, response to Adorno’s own pessimism about the capacities for resistance to the world system among different intellectual communities. Said also seems, according to the terms of Lyotard’s argument, to be very much on the side of Habermas with respect to continuing the modern project of enlightened public discourse. Clearly the grand narratives of enlightenment and emancipation have truth value for Said, predictably demot-

ing Lyotard's posture to that of seeming to recommend a withdrawal from any kind of concerted public activism and into the autonomous, but probably illusory, sphere of pure art and language games. Indeed, Lyotard's preoccupation with the Event in his discourse seems to relegate the activist dimension of the Avant-garde to a minimum, if not zero. As Said goes on to say, "there can be no escape into the realms of pure art and thought or, for that matter, into the realm of disinterested objectivity or transcendental theory" (*RI* 21).

But Said pays, I think, short shrift to the ways in which Lyotard's argument also challenges many of the same powers—powers of political and cultural hegemony and homogenization—against which Said also struggles. By identifying terror as the source of these powers, Lyotard makes clear it is the market imperialists and their apologists who have debased the narratives by appropriating and distorting their terms. As the spin-doctors of empire twist the grand narratives into crude rationalizations for their own agendas, a natural skepticism of the rhetoric of freedom, enlightenment, and science sets in. Attention is turned to local situations, *petites histoires*, verbal dissimulation or Nietzsche's "youthful secret languages" so symptomatic of avant-garde practice (Poggioli 36), all of which encode and mask authentic human aspirations, spaces in which a modicum of genuine freedom or knowledge might still be obtained at a distance from the surveillance mechanisms deployed by the system in its relentless, narcissistic drive to convert all conspicuous opposition into the mirror of its own interest. The fear of consensus is really a fear of clandestine or coded disenfranchisement, like peace treaties cynically enacted in the hope of facilitating land removal later on. Indeed, much of Said's own discourse seems preoccupied with similar abuses of narrative, and he warns, in "Holding Nations and Traditions at Bay," how the intellectual must work conscientiously to show how group and national identities are not "natural or god-given . . . but . . . a constructed, manufactured, even in some cases invented object, with a history of struggle and conquest behind it . . ." (*RI* 33). Thus Said himself recommends narratives of "skepticism and contest" against the easier ones of consensus. He goes on to cite, among others, Kirkpatrick Sale who has argued that the once virtually sacred assumption in the United States of American exceptionalism now appears, thanks to the critical consciousness of more recent American Studies scholars, "hypocritical and racially based" given the systematic "pillage and genocide" that were necessary to create the new republic (*RI* 37). The traditions and

symbols of other national entities are also examined in Said's work, prompting a cautious skepticism concerning all such "grand" narratives of national identity, no less with respect to new postcolonial states as with older Western ones. Echoing the great anti-colonial intellectuals Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, Said writes:

[A]lthough there is inestimable value to what an intellectual does to ensure the community's survival during periods of extreme national emergency, loyalty to the group's fight for survival cannot draw in the intellectual so far as to narcotize the critical sense, or reduce its imperatives, which are always to go beyond survival to questions of political liberation, to critiques of the leadership, to presenting alternatives that are too often marginalized or pushed aside as irrelevant to the main battle at hand. (*RI* 41)

In his willingness always to criticize, to risk marginalization, to stand aloof from the national enthusiasms of leaders and decision makers, their apologists, and followers, Said's activist intellectual upholds certain narratives and undermines others depending on the application and merit of each. But, like many an avant-gardist, he must be prepared to stand outside the unquestioned institutions, to work against the grain of the accepted discourses to which so many uncritically adhere, because in the end, the intellectual is a kind of perennial exile whose first loyalty is to his own critical integrity, and whose presence in any collectivity almost always has an unsettling, destabilizing effect. From the standpoint of Lyotard, however, this integrity may mean nothing more than the rationalistic re-articulation of the discursively-resistant cultural object (a form of *petite histoire*) into the fabric of a humanistic discourse, thus making it a potential resource of the dominant ideology. While the original motives may have been unimpeachable, the work of the critic may thus contribute to the terroristic homogenization of formal difference, of stubborn singularity, of undefined otherness. Indeed, this partly explains Lyotard's identification of immediacy with the Event insofar as it demonstrates the slipperiness of direct experience, its inherent resistance to all representation, especially linguistic representation of which criticism is a privileged example. Ironically, Lyotard's criticism is no less vulnerable in this regard, thus rendering the problem, as it were, insoluble, if not simply false. For Said, experience may be "immediate," "direct," "actual," but it is

ultimately presentable and representable, albeit with extreme critical care. And because of this representability, or at least because of the necessity of representation, direct experience has a history that can be examined, if not always explained. Thus, narrative and history are not necessarily “terrorizing” if pursued in the spirit of critical consciousness, a consciousness that can successfully reinvest the signs and figures of representational discourse with the kind of urgency and conviction that actually help to confront institutional terror, not assist it. Therefore, Said seems to say, if history is terror according to Lyotard’s terms (*The Inhuman* 102), then is that not an argument for knowing history and confronting it? Nowhere does Said’s adherence to enlightenment values seem to preclude their re-examination. Indeed, as he suggests in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, the critic’s methodological independence depends on a vibrant distrust of the “traditional continuities” of nation, family, biography, *Zeitgeist*. Instead, like the surrealist responding to “*le hasard objectif*,” the critic must “improvise . . . in acts of an often inspired bricolage, finding order out of extreme discontinuity” (WTC 146).

An instance of this “inspired bricolage [that finds] order out of extreme discontinuity” can be seen in one of the few art reviews Said wrote. An exhibition of the art of Mona Hatoum at London’s Tate Gallery (2000) provided Said with an opportunity not only to discuss the work of a fellow Palestinian exile, but to apply his critical acumen to a body of work (installations, sculpture) that concretized its concerns through the medium of the avant-garde *objet trouvé* in various assisted, assembled, or accumulative modes of presentation. Many of Hatoum’s works employ a range of objects conventionally associated with “the home” or “the everyday,” but in a way that suggests the disorienting effects of exile or the alienating effects of modernity. The result, for the viewer, is a surreal sense of menace attaching to the otherwise comforting normalcy of mundane objects: doormats made of needles, coiled bed springs without mattresses, stainless steel cribs, erratically flashing lights arranged among kitchen utensils on drop-leaf tables and placed between wire enclosures, gigantic rotary vegetable shredders one might fit into, maps made of steel filings and glass, bars of soap arranged on the floor and embedded with the contours of a map representing the dismemberment of the West Bank.

In his review, Said’s method contributes to this quality of accumulation and dislocation by offering a surprising narrative supplement to the physical immediacy of these items. Through a discus-

sion of Jonathan Swift, T. S. Eliot, and their relevance to the work at hand, Said partly frames, partly enhances Hatoum's work, but without detracting from the concrete assertiveness of her project. Thus he provides a critical narrative that avoids the reductiveness of mere explanation but helps open up the works to the critical richness they already imply as objects. Said's astute perception of the Swiftian coordinates of Hatoum's critical reinvestment of the found object suggests that the novelty of such plastic strategies is itself historically embedded as a kind of parodic re-scaling, re-positioning, and juxtapositioning of distant realities as found in *Gulliver's Travels*. Thus the epistemological displacements and critical misanthropy at work in Swift's *oeuvre* are shown to have avant-garde, postmodern, and postcolonial valencies and cogencies. At the same time, both Said and Hatoum insist on the secular and unredeemed aspect of the objects' being and history, an insistence that repudiates the reductive mythologizing of the decision-makers, the empire-builders and their apologists, who would erase difference, nuance, and complexity, to secure the continuities of "acceptable" tradition. In this regard, the perspective of the Palestinian exile who is consistently placed outside these reassuring recuperations indeed makes "the entire world as a foreign land" and the comforts of home a cruel joke. For him or her, such *found* objects can offer "neither rest nor respite" ("The Art of Displacement" 7) without, perhaps, some critically compensatory narrative of their own.

Orientalism and the Avant-garde

Another way in which avant-garde appropriations and aestheticizations of direct experience both interrogate and mortify the Western tradition, and thus seem to correspond to Saidian discourse, can be found in the movement's conspicuous attempts, especially in the plastic arts, to achieve a new, "elemental" kind of expression. This ambition often required the creative utilization of non-European forms in a deliberate effort to "barbarize," as it were, Western art and thereby challenge its conception of the beautiful. If the Avant-garde seems to contradict its own anti-traditionalism in its free, yet intellectually justifiable, appropriations of forms from other traditions, its maneuvers are shown to be consistent when one considers—as Poggioli explains—that

The Avant-gardes turn their attention almost exclusively to Negroid sculpture and the art of savages [*sic*], pre-historic graffiti and pre-Columbian and Indian art; they turn . . . toward cultures remote in space and time, almost to prehistory itself. This particular mode of rediscovering remote and forgotten traditions is not contradictory to what has already been said about avant-garde anti-traditionalism, precisely because the Avant-garde can evaluate archaic traditions better than official art and conservative criticism can, if only by way of polemical reaction to the erroneous interpretations and evaluations of the academy.¹² (Poggioli 55)

In this preoccupation with the pre-Classical, as well as African, pre-Columbian, and Oceanic forms,¹³ the Avant-garde distinguishes itself from the Romantics, whose own retrospectivism is much broader, including not only the literary and academic study of the “barbaric and the exotic” (Poggioli 55), but of the medieval and oriental as well. These Romantic interests were based on assumptions—not dissimilar to those of the Avant-garde—that these other cultures and periods represented a non-materialist alternative to a materialist West in need of spiritual or at least cultural regeneration (*Orientalism* 115). However, with respect to the medieval and oriental, the avant-gardist remains skeptical of “romantic notions of spiritual and cultural inheritance” (Poggioli 47), seeking instead cultural alternatives that destabilize Western assumptions of what constitutes the human. Thus the Avant-garde is more likely to embrace, not oriental forms (which it associates in part with the monotheistic traditions it scorns in Western culture), but the apparently shocking (for the time) and putatively de-humanizing pagan or “savage” forms produced in other parts of the world, at other times in history. And while it may share with Romanticism—not to mention with Said himself—a modern sense of historicism (the idea that cultures, if left to themselves, have distinct and unified histories), the avant-gardist seeks, almost perversely, to intervene in Western history through a kind of formal alternative (and thus, indirectly, via Otherness), in order to shock the West out of its materialist complacencies and the imperialist propensities accompanying them.

The Avant-garde’s attraction to the Other, then, is in many ways anti-orientalist because it distrusts the reductively rationalist and clas-

sificatory methodologies that characterize such academic study. At the same time, insofar as the Orient itself seems to confirm orientalist assumptions that it can be reduced to patriarchal, monotheistic religion, it is met with the same contempt the Avant-garde holds for the Judeo-Christian tradition, particularly in these religions' shared discomfort with the (mostly female) body and the need to regulate human sexuality through the discredited, "filiative" institution of marriage, as the Avant-garde considers it. The Avant-garde, like Communism, simply dismisses all religion as a political opiate for the masses and as institutionalized superstition. When the Avant-garde is attracted to the Near East, for instance, it is so by virtue of everything that is eccentric and unfamiliar about it, especially its vestiges of a pre-Islamic culture. Not surprisingly, most modernists and avant-gardists have been more responsive to pharaonic Egypt than to its Islamic heritage—to animism, Buddhism, and Tantrism than to the varieties of Muslim religious experience, though Sufism has made occasional inroads along with other mystical traditions. As to the contemporary East, most elements of the Avant-garde have shown themselves sympathetic to, if not actively supportive of, whatever attitudes, impulses, or ideas may have contributed to the struggle against Western imperial control (this is especially true of the Surrealists and the Beats who were staunch opponents of such adventures as the Moroccan, Algerian, and Vietnam Wars of the twentieth century).

Said's mostly accepted, indeed critically-acclaimed, work on Orientalism raises interesting questions with respect to his views—though never fully expounded—of the Avant-garde and its aesthetico-poetic production. While the orientalist is correctly judged for tendentially deploying a system of representation vis-à-vis the Orient that simplifies, reduces, and essentially deforms a whole world to satisfy pre-formed cultural assessments or even hegemonic aspirations, the Orient itself is necessarily polemically recast as virtually un-presentable. It is a valid maneuver given the "un-presentability" of the Occident as well, despite millennia of attempts. And if the difference between Orientalism and such "Occidentalism" is that the latter has produced many brilliant "failures" while the former has yielded mostly mediocre to bad "successes" (successful in the sense of reinforcing a particular, and mostly unchallenged attitude in the West toward the Orient), it only goes to show that self-representation, as opposed to other-representation, may have always been deemed the more significant task of the Western theorist. This perhaps inevitable imbalance confirms and explains Said's

dissatisfaction with the critically undisciplined efforts to represent the Orient, so many examples of which were based on the premise that any such undertaking was not only possible, but relatively easy—an endless cycle of textual reproduction of a supposedly unchanging and ahistorical Other.

On the other hand, the Avant-garde's attempts to complicate the entire notion of representation, to highlight and accentuate the possible un-presentability of direct experience—the Event, the Now—as some inherently sublime, unknowable thing that ontologically refuses, as it were, to be assimilated into a universal discursive system, are met with predictable skepticism on the part of Said, whose critical instinct is to dismiss these endeavors as essentially self-enclosed formalisms, or “language games,” that in fact have little to do with direct experience, and instead strive for a kind of ahistorical status like that of the autonomous art object. The Avant-garde's theoretical justifications—particularly those formulated by Lyotard—seem to have been rejected as so much inflated rhetoric, if not mere noise, in support of an untenable aesthetic insularity, despite claims of radical engagement. What for some constitute serious engagements with the actual or the real, for Said can often be brought down to a persistent narrative mode: Kantian aesthetics and the demand for artistic autonomy. But if this at first implies that Said himself is being merely reductive in his assessments of “alternative” systems of representation (even as he cultivates his own anti-hegemonic position that, ironically, often utilizes the avant-garde strategies of bricolage, self-conscious critical alertness, and a general aesthetic openness to experience), one should quickly reconsider, since Said himself has always expressed appreciation, and a vital one, for aesthetic brilliance. This sometimes extends to orientalist texts—such as those of Flaubert or Nerval—which he distinguishes and analyzes with extreme critical sensitivity, though fully acknowledging their quotient of orientalist prejudice.

Conclusion

Literary scholar and aesthetician W. J. T. Mitchell has also called attention to the worldliness and sensitivity of Said's multifaceted and endlessly challenging critical *oeuvre*. In an interview of Said on visual art, Mitchell characterized his friend as a “high modern aesthete” (Bové 47), a label Said did not object to. Mitchell went on to ask how Said reconciled or negotiated his “respect for the formal

autonomy of the arts” with his political activism—two things that many see as inherently opposed. And while he did not demur from describing as “a mystery” the ineluctable appeal of certain works of art even in light of the heinous political postures their creators sometimes assumed (his example was Wagner), Said insisted that, far from nullifying the aesthetic value of such works, his critical attempts to reconnect them with political, historical, and ideological circumstances should actually be seen as an enhancement, a way of making their aesthetic dimensions all the more meaningful, even if that meaning is sometimes painful to acknowledge. Said’s tolerance of the aesthetic—a tolerance, I think, that also extends to a number of avant-garde works—is indeed part of what makes his critical attitude all the more persuasive, serious, and profound.

In the end, both the avant-gardist and the cultural critic partake of a kind of self-imposed exile that makes them, as Said has written of exile in general, a kind of social pariah or leper (*RI* 47). This association of the work of the modern intellectual with cultural sickness—whether invoked by reactionary bigots or such sophisticated thinkers as Lukács himself—marks another zone of identification for the critic and the avant-garde practitioner. Both pursue strategies that unsettle the complacent, mostly silent, majority: the Avant-garde through seemingly incomprehensible acts, works, gestures, and affronts; the critic through always incisive, sometimes deeply challenging, analyses of issues or practices that are often simply taken for granted. While the one may use a language (or language game) of exclusion and calculated discontinuity to confound its audience, the other employs a clearer, but no less demanding, critical discourse. Yet both antagonize through a form of staged confrontation, either as aesthetic object-event, or as institutionalized public discourse (the latter venues of which are often controlled by the “decision makers,” whether in the university, the media, the publishing house, or the public forum). Far from meeting these critical or aesthetic overtures with any kind of appreciation, the public—or certain sectors of it—usually reacts with incomprehension, hostility, or scorn—as if to the impertinence of mental pathology or physical rot. Such impertinence seems always to threaten the listener/viewer’s sense of identity, well-being, and good sense. But the still-functioning myth that holds these agents of the new (or alternative) in tense proximity is that of the sickness that brings health, the madness that yields insight, the irrelevance that captures the truth of a thing. The real sickness, both figures seem to say, is the “normative”

response to modernity, the uncritical, anaesthetized assimilation to the everyday, the forgetting of the Now and its history. It is the genuine critic and the committed avant-gardist—their contending discourses and anti-discourses—that promise the unpleasant, though necessary cure through strategies of intellectual fortification.

Notes

- ¹ Said describes affiliation in the following terms: “The only other alternatives [to filiation seem] to be provided by institutions, associations, and communities whose social existence [is] not in fact guaranteed by biology, but by affiliation” (*WTC* 17). Said’s description sounds very similar to Poggioli’s description of avant-garde practice: “The modern artist replaces that particular environment, determined by his family and social origins, with what the French call *milieu artiste*. There, sect and movement become a caste; hence a social fact in a primarily psychological way, motivated by vocation and election, not by blood or racial inheritance or by economic and class distinctions” (Poggioli 31).
- ² Bürger makes this point clear after quoting Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”: “Here, the loss of aura is not traced to a change in reproduction techniques but to an intent on the part of the makers of art. The change in the ‘overall character of art’ is no longer the result of technological innovation but mediated by the conscious acts of a generation of artists” (Bürger 29).
- ³ Poggioli also uses the term “critical consciousness” to express the Avant-garde’s link to a historical situation that thus accounts for its unprecedented emergence (Poggioli 167).
- ⁴ Poggioli writes: “But what best validates the . . . infantile avant-garde antagonism is that the new generation (that of the avant-garde artist) opposes the old generation, the academy and tradition, by means of a deliberate use of an idiom all its own, a quasi-private jargon. This tendency calls to mind the theory sustained in a paradoxical essay by the youthful Nietzsche. According to his theory, metaphor—that is, the idiom of poetry—would have originated in the desire of a group of youths to distinguish themselves by a kind of secret language. Their language would be opposed to the prose idiom, since that was the means of communication in the old generation and, in the patriarchal society it dominated, the sign of authority and an instrument of power” (Poggioli 37).
- ⁵ Said, however, puts some critical distance between himself and Lukács in the essay “Between Chance and Determination: Lukács’s *Aesthetik*”

- where he describes Lukács as “incapable of being led to writers who shattered literary values, like Rousseau or Artaud . . .” (*RE* 63).
- ⁶ Said’s insight is partly confirmed by the Avant-garde itself through a plethora of supplementary manifestos and polemics.
 - ⁷ Said’s description of modern “characters” is echoed in the lifestyles and works of various avant-garde personae such as Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Apollinaire, Duchamp, and Stein.
 - ⁸ I base this observation on two passages from *Reflections on Exile*: 1. “Anyone who is really homeless regards the habit of seeing estrangement in everything modern as an affectation, a display of modish attitudes” (*RE* 182); and 2. Said’s frequent citation of Hugo de St. Victoire: “The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his” (*RE* 185). This second quote suggests that exile is indeed a state of mind and one that is virtually recommended for the modern intellectual, who lives, as Adorno’s example attests for Said, in a condition of permanent in-betweenness, or intellectual restlessness (*RI* 56-57).
 - ⁹ Two classic examples are Tristan Tzara’s description of how to write a poem and André Breton’s description of automatic writing.
 - ¹⁰ Poggioli’s *Teoria dell’arte d’avanguardia* was published in 1962.
 - ¹¹ As John Ashbery once wrote: “One finds it difficult to imagine how [the work of Picabia, Arp, Schwitters, and Duchamp] could ever have been construed as anything but a high form of art” (7).
 - ¹² Including, one presumes, academic Orientalism in Said’s sense of the word.
 - ¹³ Forms which, in the early twentieth century, were often considered “junk” and thus comparable to the *objet trouvé*.

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**Said and Achebe:
Writers at the Crossroads of Culture**

Fadwa AbdelRahman

Between the already encoded eye and reflexive knowledge there is a middle region which liberates order itself. (Foucault xxi)

Many of the most interesting post-colonial writers bear their past within them—as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending toward a new future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory taken back from empire. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 31)

Following Mikhail Bakhtin's belief that hell is the "absolute lack of being heard" (126), it can be argued that non-European and non-white peoples were living in such a kind of hell during most of the period of colonization. During that period, European texts

were in most influential instances premised on the silence of the native. When it came to what lay beyond metropolitan Europe, the arts and the disciplines of representation . . . depended on the powers of Europe to bring the non-European world into representation, the better to be able to see it, to master it, and, above all, to hold it. (Said, *C&I* 99)

This remained the case until a rupture in this structure of the articulate white master versus the silent native took place, resulting in a change of *épistémé*. A new generation of educated natives were finally able to use the tools they acquired through their encounter with the West to combat those representations, opening up new galaxies of ideas and creating new literary spheres. In those spheres new ways of reading and writing

paved the way for new perspectives, broke ground for new avenues of thought, decoding the deep-seated images of colonial representation and re-coding new images of the self in order to escape the chain that was/is all too signifying. Thus, from that moment on, there emerged “the process of ‘re-storying’ peoples who had been knocked silent by the trauma of all kinds of dispossession” (Achebe, *Home and Exile* 79).

This trend has become evident since the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century when children of empire began their revolt against their own hell of silence and decided to be heard by the whole world. Influential theorists and talented writers began their careers at that decisive moment of history: “the nationalist movement in British West Africa after the Second World War brought about a mental revolution which began to reconcile us to ourselves. It suddenly seemed that we too might have a story to tell” (Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* 123). Thus if the emergence of post-colonial studies as an independent and highly regarded field of study in Western academia can be dated back to the publication of Edward Said’s seminal work *Orientalism* in 1978, many of the ideas that helped to form Said’s work have been in the air for at least two decades.¹ This article examines the relevant works of Said and Achebe that are considered the first post-colonial attempts at challenging the cultural hierarchies imposed by decades of Western political and cultural hegemony through re-reading canonical English texts.

Both Achebe’s and Said’s cultural relations to empire can be examined metonymically through their respective personal names. Proper names are no longer considered just referents without signified(s). They are rather regarded as being descriptive, not only of particular individuals as such, but of whole “systems of particulars, classes or series” (Kristeva 234). Thus, under the hegemonic effect of the English culture, the process of naming became a signifier of the power of the colonizer and his culture and the extent of the hybridization that the colonized societies underwent. In this sense, it becomes easy to understand the significance of the names of both Said and Achebe.

Achebe was baptized Albert Chinualumogu, signifying the double cultural influences operating on his world. Shunning the “tribute to Victorian England,” Achebe dropped the “Albert” and playfully wrote saying “if anyone asks you what her Britannic Majesty Queen Victoria had in common with Chinua Achebe, the answer is, they both lost their Albert” (*MY* 118). He also abbreviated his Igbo name to “Chinua,” thus asserting that his native heritage is adopted, not arbitrarily, but

electively and according to his own terms. Hence, for Achebe, naming is turned into “a site of empowering self-definition, a means by which to revise one’s own identity and reject imposed descriptions of the self” (“Naming”).

In the same way, Said was named after Queen Victoria’s son, the young Prince of Wales, “‘Edward,’ a foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said” (*Out of Place* 3). Said did not take the drastic step of changing his name. However, it took him “about fifty years to become accustomed to, or, more exactly, to feel less uncomfortable with [it]” (*Out of Place* 3). In addition, when it was his turn to name his own children, he chose for them distinguishably Arabic names: Wadie and Najla.

Following the same mode of resistance, the two writers refused the assimilated identity offered them by their familial circumstances and Western education. Achebe, son of a devout evangelical missionary, was raised up to look down upon his own people and their traditional culture: “when I was growing up I remember we tended to look down on the others. We were called in our language ‘the people of the church.’ . . . The others were called, with the conceit appropriate to followers of the true religion, the heathen or even ‘the people of nothing’” (*MY* 115). However, the little Achebe had a fascination with his native culture as he used to attend local “heathen” festivals and to eat with his peers from the meals offered to the idol gods (against the will of his strict parents). Through these subversive practices, Achebe learnt a lot about the songs, dances, folk-tales, and other cultural elements that formed “the quiet education [his] hometown came slowly to embody for [him]” (*H&E* 19). This kind of education helped him to counteract the effect of his formal education fashioned upon Western style and carried out mainly by Western teachers and professors.

Similarly, Said, son of a Palestinian-American, was living in Cairo but excluded from the real life of the city. His family appeared, in their seclusion, as “a family determined to make itself into a mock little European group despite the Egyptian and Arab surroundings” (*Out of Place* 75). Being educated in Cairo, he ironically “had no Egyptian teachers at all, nor was [he] conscious of any Arab Muslim presence in the school” (*Out of Place* 36). At school only Western texts were to be encountered by the students, texts that “were mystifyingly English” (*Out of Place* 39) and that ignored both the history and geography of their surrounding spaces. The Arabic language was taught as a minor subject and in rigid ways that resulted “in more than

twenty years of alienation from Arabic literature before [Said] could return to it with some pleasure and enthusiasm" (*Out of Place* 185). In this sense, Said's interest in the Arab part of his self was chosen rather than given; it was an answer to "an existential as well as felt political need to bring one self [the Arab] into harmony with the other [the acquired Western self]" (*Reflections* 561). This interest materialized in the way he "educated [him]self gradually in Arab history and politics" (*Out of Place* 123). In addition, in 1972 he spent a year in Beirut where he devoted himself "to the study of Arabic philology and literature" (*Reflections* 561). Consequently, he succeeded in re-immersing himself in the culture he was meant to be cut off from.

As a result, both Achebe and Said are situated, temporally as well as spatially, at what Achebe calls "the crossroads of culture," which is a "transitional period that manifests . . . the great creative potential. It's an area of tension and conflict . . . of power and possibility" (Lindfors 80). In order to get the best of their liminal position, Achebe further explains, writers of that generation have had

to know a lot more than either tradition. . . . This is the problem of being at the crossroads. You have a bit of both, and you really have to know a lot more than either. So their situation is not very easy. But it's very exciting. Those who have the energy and the will to survive at the crossroads become really exceptional people. (Moyers 333)

As Said puts it: "belonging . . . to both sides of the imperial divide enables you to understand them more easily (*C&I* xxvii). It is the necessary step backward or upward that enables the observer/critic to both transcend the naïve reification of traditional cultural norms and to avoid submission to a power that is not his own. In this sense, the "expressions of the solitary researcher tend toward the assemblage . . . of a collective enunciation [of a certain communal identity] even if this collectivity is no longer or not yet given" (Deleuze and Guattari 18). Consequently, both Said and Achebe have been typically considered representatives of their respective peoples despite their atypical circumstances.

In this context, both Said's and Achebe's works are proofs of Said's opinion that "no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances" (*Orientalism* 11). It is through this involvement in the socio-political conditions of their respective worlds

that Achebe and Said manage to “violate the protocol of pretended suprapolitical objectivity” (*Orientalism* 10) that used to dominate the field of Western literary criticism and confine it to “hermetic textual analyses” (*Orientalism* 14)—analyses that neglected, to a great extent, the wider material contexts out of which literary texts emerge.

Through this new method of reading and interpretation, Achebe was able to avoid what Roland Barthes condemns as the consumption of the text and its reduction to “a passive, inner mimesis” (Barthes 162). It is the same kind of “contrapuntal reading” (*C&I* 66) that Said later attempts to apply to canonical works in order to “include what was once forcibly excluded” (*C&I* 67) from them by Western readings. However, Achebe is the first to start this critical method and revolutionize, through his article “An Image of Africa” (1975), how readers and academics alike approach one of the most read and taught canonical English texts, namely, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902). As a young secondary school boy, Achebe went through a phase of literary innocence that prevented him from realizing the degenerating nature of black characters in Western Africanist discourse and drove him even to “identify with Europeans [in those novels]. . . . You simply didn’t want the adventurers to be harmed by the savages” (Lindfors 112). In this sense, Achebe, as a black reader, was co-opted into participation in an experience from which he was explicitly excluded; he was asked to identify with a selfhood that defined itself in opposition to him. However, he was later able to transcend the limitations of this attitude as he became “conscious of the possibilities of representing somebody from a certain standpoint, from that moment [he] realized that there must be misrepresentation, there must be misjudgment, there must be even straightforward discrimination and distortion” (Lindfors 112).

This shift of outlook is embodied in his attitude towards Joseph Conrad. Conrad was once one of Achebe’s favorite writers: “I used to like Conrad, I used to like Conrad particularly,” he asserts in an interview with Lewis Nkosi (Lindfors 6). But this appreciation for a talented master turned to a lasting grudge against the writer whose *Heart of Darkness* has been so ingrained in Western discourse about Africa that it helped to shape and color most Western writing about the continent: “whatever Conrad’s problems were, you might say, he is now safely dead. Quite true. Unfortunately his heart of darkness plagues us still” (“IA” 793). Achebe recognizes that any attempt to represent a different picture of the continent and its people will not have a full impact until the *Heart of Darkness* tradition is challenged and decomposed, and this is what he sets out to do.

In addition, Achebe realizes that Conrad's African characters are denied a voice so that everything is told through the voice of Marlow and his white characters. The Africans are granted speech only in order to condemn themselves out of their own mouths. Achebe is aware of the argument that defends Conrad's portrayal of Africa on the grounds of its being not a real place at all but just a backdrop to give Conrad the necessary environment for the moral trial and degradation of Kurtz. This justification does not make things better for Achebe, who sees it as representing the peak of Western arrogance that reduces a whole continent and its people to the props necessary for the breakdown of one petty white character. Achebe clearly realizes the consequences of being excluded from a text that claims to define one's identity.

The problem with that constructed identity does not stem from the false representation of the African in the eyes of the European *per se*. It resides more importantly in the form of powerlessness—not simply the powerlessness that derives from not seeing one's experience articulated, treated, and legitimized in art, but the powerlessness that results in the formation of liminal entities that lack a sense of self-worth and who look up to the Other as the source of all civilization, of all progress. Africa

has been the most insulted continent in the world. Africans' very claim to humanity has been questioned at various times, their persons abused, their intelligence insulted. These things have happened in the past and have gone on happening today. We have a duty to bring them to an end. . . . And "we" includes writers. (MY 138)

Thus motivated, Achebe sets off to overcome the negative image of the self as constructed by the Other and to restore to his people their confidence in themselves and in their way of life. Hence, his declared aim as a writer becomes to "teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first European, acting on God's behalf, delivered them" (MY 72).

This is the same declared aim in Said's *Orientalism*: "my hope is to illustrate the formidable structure of cultural domination and, specifically for formerly colonized peoples, the dangers and temptations of employing this structure upon themselves or upon others" (25). Writing from a space physically situated within metropolitan culture, Said, nevertheless, identifies himself as an outsider. He sees himself as part of

“the counter-culture [from which] comes the critique of authority and attacks on what is official and orthodox” (*Reflections* 578). Growing up in the Arab world, Said felt the constructed nature of the Orient as understood by the West. Thus, his aim in studying the structure of Orientalism “has been an attempt to inventory the traces upon [himself], the oriental subject, of the culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals” (*Orientalism* 25).

As a Palestinian, he was aware of the allegations of Israeli writers and politicians that “there are no Palestinians” (*Reflections* 563). Accordingly, all his *oeuvre* can be seen as an attempt “to articulate a history of loss and dispossession . . . to uncover the longstanding, very varied geographical obsession with a distant, often inaccessible world that helped Europe to define itself by being its opposite” (*Reflections* 565-66). As a result, in Said, as in Achebe before him, the beginning was with the negative: “the non-existence, the non-history which I had somehow to make visible despite occlusions, misrepresentations, and denials” (*Reflections* 563). This is the kind of negativity that had to be deconstructed before any new understanding of both the self and the Other could be possible.

Consequently, both Said’s argument and that of Achebe are based upon the philosophical premise that poses the Other as the one who “actually defines me because it is the ultimate signifier of everything I am not” (“Other”). The result deduced from such a premise is that the self is implicated in the Other and that the very constitution of identity rests upon negativity. In this light, Achebe explains “the desire—one might indeed say the need—in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil in Europe, a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar in comparison with which Europe’s own state of spiritual grace will be manifest” (Achebe, “IA” 783). It is the age-old ritual of scapegoating: The sacrificial scapegoat is the black African who becomes “a carrier onto whom the master unloads his physical and moral deformities so that he may go forward, erect and immaculate” (Achebe, “IA” 792). In the same sense, it is through this process of projection that “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (Said, *Orientalism* 3).

In this context and because “strong language is in the very nature of the dialogue between dispossession and its rebuttal” (Achebe, *H&E* 77), Achebe does not hesitate to vilify Conrad and goes as far as to call him “a bloody racist” (“IA” 788). Achebe points out

that the success of the novella rests on its perpetuation of “comforting myths” (“IA” 784) that coincide with white readers’ prejudices and their need to set up Africa as the antithesis of Europe, projecting on it and on its people every negative and bestial trait. This projection is done by means of the dehumanization and fragmentation of the African people, who are portrayed as a bunch of howling savages, making strange faces and stranger noises on the banks of the river Congo. By depending heavily on the regime of stereotype, Conrad manages to create a highly polarized image of binary oppositions between a black, savage, and dark world and a white, civilized one. Conrad, following social Darwinism, sees Africa and its people as representing a stage in human development that is anterior to that of the European societies, a stage that embodies the origins of human nature that he sees as essentially evil and corrupt. In this sense, if some of the white characters are criticized, it is because they permit themselves to forget the gulf which civilization is supposed to have created between them and the black savages and actually go native.

Because of all these reasons, Achebe asks for excluding such “an offensive and totally deplorable book” (“IA” 790) as *Heart of Darkness* from the list of serious art altogether and consequently to stop prescribing it in literature courses in English Departments everywhere. However, if Achebe’s argument is to be followed, such banning will not be the lot of Conrad’s novella alone. It would have to be applied to other similar or even more offensive works, not only on Africa, but also on a whole range of ex-colonized continents and countries.²

Said criticizes Achebe’s attitude towards Conrad and declares that “he either says nothing or overrides the limitations placed on Conrad by the novel as an aesthetic form” (*C&I* 76). In Said’s opinion, the novel itself is “a literary institution” (*C&I* 97) with its own conventions that might compel the writer to mold his narrative into certain forms that coincide both with the systematics of the disciplinary order and with the readers’ expectations of it. That is why prose narratives like the novel “were immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences” (*C&I* xiii). In this sense, “imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible . . . to read one without in some way dealing with the other” (*C&I* 71). Battles over geography, history, and identity “were reflected, contested and even for a time decided in narrative” (*C&I* xiii).

Achebe does not deny the importance of those narratives himself. He understands that “man is a story-making animal. He rarely passes an opportunity to accompany his works and his experiences with matching stories. The heavy task of dispossessing others calls for such a story” (*H&E* 59). That is why almost all the imperial works that made a mark on Achebe’s mind and gave him the urge and the motive to begin his own writing career were novels such as *Heart of Darkness* or Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson* (1952). It is the importance of those narratives that made Achebe more unrelenting in his criticism of those works and more willing to transmute the conventions of the novel into African literature through his own novels. Thus, he practically demonstrates that the novel is never a straightjacket that limits the freedom of its author and imprisons him within a number of calculated and pre-conceived cultural values and forms. Achebe even manages to prove that this very Western genre can undergo a shift to the other side of the imperial divide and become a weapon in the hands of the ex-victimized peoples.

However, Said still does not approve of either Achebe’s aim in reading those narratives or his strong language and downright condemnation of them. He declares his desire to transcend what he calls “a rhetoric of blame” (*C&I* 18) and to adopt “what might be called a comparative literature of imperialism” (*C&I* 18). Thus, Said’s aim in re-reading those canonical works of empire (Conrad’s included) is far from “condemning or ignoring their participation in what was an unquestioned reality in their society” (*C&I* xiv). It is rather an attempt to read and understand, even to appreciate, them without being implicated in their ideological messages and hegemonic influences.

On the other hand, Achebe makes a very important point, i.e., that Conrad’s work is part of a whole discourse about Africa that includes “whole libraries of books devoted to the same purpose” (“IA” 783).³ Because of the influence of that massive and collective prejudice against the black man and his continent, Achebe cannot deny that “Conrad did not originate the image of Africa which we find in his book. It was and is the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination and Conrad merely brought the peculiar gifts of his mind to bear on it” (“IA” 792). It is the same proposition that Said later makes as he contends that “Conrad’s Africans . . . come from a huge library of Africanism, so to speak, as well as from Conrad’s personal experience” (*C&I* 67). In this relation, Said asserts that “without examining Orientalism [and all similar fields of representation] as a discourse,

one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient” (*Orientalism* 3).

Consequently, Said does not aim at just proving the falsity of the image of the Oriental in Western discourse, but rather to point out the fact of its being a discourse. This fact, in itself, explains how these reductive images have been transformed, through language, into truths in Nietzsche’s sense of the word. Here Said quotes Nietzsche’s opinion that truths are but “a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms . . . which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are” (*Orientalism* 203). Hence, the process of unveiling their systematic nature as part of a whole discourse becomes, for Said, the first step in deconstructing them.

The question that arises here is: How, in the light of this overwhelming power of the mainstream canonical representation of the Other, can the power of the individual writer as a cultural agent be understood? Achebe is very clear in his opinion on this issue. In relation to Conrad, he asserts that “even after due allowances have been made for all the influences of contemporary prejudice on his sensibility, there remains still in Conrad’s attitude a residue of antipathy to black people which his peculiar psychology alone can explain” (“IA” 789). Thus, being part of a discourse cannot eliminate the agency of the individual writer and his ability to subvert its influence and to resist it, if he chooses to.

Achebe returns to this particular point in “Africa’s Tarnished Name,” published in his book *Another Africa* (1998). In this essay, he chooses to refute the most common defense of Conrad as being a natural outcome of his own time and culture. If “that were so,” he contends, “it would still be a flaw in a serious writer—a flaw that responsible criticism today could not gloss over” (AA 112). Moreover, Achebe goes on to prove that it is not really true that all people at that time held the same opinions as Conrad’s. He gives an example of David Livingstone, who was contemporaneous with Conrad, if a little older. Achebe quotes Livingstone as saying,

I have found it difficult to come to a conclusion on their [Africans’] character. They sometimes perform actions remarkably good, and sometimes as strangely the opposite. . . . After long observation, I came to the conclusion

that they are just a strange mixture of good and evil as men are everywhere else. (AA 112)

It is a testimony that proves a writer's ability to inhabit plausible oppositional positions and attitudes that set him against the mainstream ideas and racial representations of his culture.

Said holds an attitude, towards the issue of agency, very similar to that of Achebe. Despite his theoretical indebtedness to Foucault, Said asserts his right to differ with him and to use his theory catachrestically in a way that will later be the main method of post-colonial thinkers in their adoption of Western methodological sources. Said transcends Foucault's conception of power as a mystifying category capable of "obliterat[ing] the role of classes, the role of economics, the role of insurgency and rebellion" (*The World, The Text, The Critic* 243). Instead, he denies the inability of individual agents (such as authors and thinkers) to avoid power's dictates as well as its hegemonic construction of its others: "I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism" (*Orientalism* 23).

Again, in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said asserts: "I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class, or economic history" (xxii). In this respect, Said gives some examples of writers "who have, in effect, crossed to the other side—Jean Genet, Basil Davidson, Albert Memmi, Juan Goytisolo, and others" (xx). That is why, for Said, Conrad's main limitation is that, despite his realization that imperialism is an evil system that has a degrading effect on the natives and the whites alike: "he could not then conclude that imperialism had to end so that 'natives' could lead lives free from European domination" (*C&I* 30).

However, on different occasions Said seems to be contradicting himself as he asserts, for example, that "it is therefore correct that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric" (*Orientalism* 204). In this sense, Conrad's imperialist attitudes are themselves pardonable on the ground that "in the closing years of the nineteenth century [they] seemed to be at the same time an aesthetic, politics, and even epistemology inevitable and unavoidable" (*C&I* 24). Thus, if Conrad could not find any alternatives for white dominance over the rest of the world, it is because "the system has simply eliminated them and made them unthinkable" (*C&I* 24).

The only way to come to terms with these two opposite attitudes towards the idea of agency is to assume that Said occupies a middle ground through which he tries to synthesize an approach from a variety of disparate theories on the topic. In this sense, authors, as agents, are perceived as both constrained and enabled by the power structures prevalent in their societies. Consequently, it becomes possible to think of them as both implicated in and separate from these structures: “authors are . . . very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measures” (*C&I* xxii). However, Said’s theory fails to satisfy the reader by introducing a consistent attitude on this subject and his tendency towards syncretism ultimately blurs, rather than clarifies, how readers are supposed to regard the writer as a social agent.

The second important point Achebe makes about Africanist discourse, of which *Heart of Darkness* is a part, is that it is an embodiment of the interrelation between knowledge and power:

To the colonialist mind it was always of the utmost importance to be able to say: I know my natives, a claim which implied two things at once: a) that the native was really quite simple and b) that understanding him and controlling him went hand in hand—understanding being a precondition for control and control constituting adequate proof of understanding. (*MY* 6)⁴

That is why any wavering in colonial control as a result of unrest among the natives “was an occasion not only for pacification by the soldiers but also (afterwards) for a royal commission of inquiry—a grand name for yet another perfunctory study of native psychology and institutions” (*MY* 7).

It is the same alliance of different kinds of power—political, intellectual, and cultural—that Said is to point out as being at the basis of Orientalism. Said asserts that this kind of discourse

is, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different . . . world; 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.
(*Orientalism* 12)

Against this regime of power, comes the educated native who forms a threat to the traditional, hierarchical system and is able to return the gaze of power upon its white beholders in ways that jeopardize their cultural authority. Consequently, this native is represented in Western literature as being worse than his primitive brothers in the bush. Whether a colonialist administrator or a writer, the white master seems to confirm: "I know my natives; they are delighted with the way things are. It's only these half-educated ruffians, who don't even know their own people" (*MY* 7).

In this sense, the educated native represents what Homi Bhabha later describes as "that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification—a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority" (113). Achebe quotes from *Heart of Darkness* Conrad's reaction to the black fireman who represents one such subversive image that blocks the reification of accepted stereotypical ones. That man "was an improved specimen . . . to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs. . . . He ought to have been clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank" ("IA" 785).

It is the same reaction Said had to deal with on a personal level during his stay in the United States. He recounts how he was a nuisance for some people who were accustomed to seeing the world via a certain hierarchical order that was threatened by that Arab young man claiming to be able to write books and play the piano. A Boston psychologist came a very long way to see how Said lived and was astonished to see that he could really play the piano. In the same way, an American publisher actually refused to sign a contract with Said before he had lunch with him "to see how [he] handled [himself] at the table" (*Reflections* 566). In a nutshell, "being a Palestinian was the equivalent of something mythological like a unicorn or a hopelessly odd variation of a human being" (*Reflections* 566).

However, despite the similarities detected between Said and Achebe in their treatment of different critical issues, there are deep differences between them, especially in their assessment of Conrad. Those differences are further evidences of the impossibility of objectivity and impartiality in the human sciences, an argument at the heart of Said's theory. Said himself admits that "an Indian or African scholar of

English literature reads *Kim*, say, or *Heart of Darkness* with a critical urgency not felt in quite the same way” (*C&I* 65) by scholars from other parts of the world. It is this “critical urgency,” emanating from personal involvement, which accounts for the force and implacability of Achebe’s attitude towards *Heart of Darkness*. Material conditions of the black continent coincide with existential and hermeneutic functions to finally mold the way he reads and understands the text.

On the other hand, some critics cannot apply the same logic and try to understand Said’s argument in defence of Conrad, given Said’s personal circumstances as an exile. Instead, they condemn Said’s judgment on Conrad and deem it “inconceivable from the author of *Orientalism*” (Moore-Gilbert 66). However, any reading of Said’s attitude towards Conrad has to take into account the degree with which Said identifies with him as an exilic writer. Deterritorialized and multilingual, like himself, Conrad represents for Said the possibility of rupture and momentum, of cultural transplantation and negotiable identity. Said is conscious of the bright side of exile that makes a writer, like himself or Conrad, “conscious of other contrapuntal juxtapositions that diminish orthodox judgment and elevate appreciative sympathy” (*Reflections* 186). It is this shared “provisionality that came from standing at the very juncture of this world with another” (*C&I* 24) that makes Said believe wholeheartedly that Conrad’s criticism of imperialism is not just a contrived adoption of the “humane views appropriate to the English liberal tradition which required all Englishmen of decency to be deeply shocked by atrocities in Bulgaria or the Congo of King Leopold of the Belgians or wherever” (“IA” 787), as Achebe claims. Said realizes that Conrad is “never the wholly incorporated and fully acculturated Englishman. [it is this marginality that enables him to] preserve an ironic distance” (*C&I* 25), resulting in narratives very different from the downright imperialist ones written by people like “Cecil Rhodes or Frederick Lugard” (*C&I* 24).

Finally, there is no denial that whatever Said’s objections to Achebe’s ideas are, Achebe has managed to initiate a debate and to raise a number of issues that brought life and motion to the stagnant waters of Western literary criticism. Those same issues were later taken up by Said, developed (at times contested), fleshed out, and expressed in the form of high theory. This was done in ways that changed the structure of marginalization-centralization, which has long assured the stability of cultural explanations. It also opened the door for producing inexhaustible readings that outdid the strictly univocal or limited multivocal understanding of literary texts.

The very differences between Said and Achebe, especially in the way they approach Conrad, are yet another proof of the possibilities of reading opened up by such a polemic. Such differences also work as a safeguard against falling in the trap of homogenizing the post-colonial space as yet another creator of a monolithic entity that necessitates some kind of sameness and harmony in the way writers can approach literature and the world. Furthermore, they affirm the negotiability of that space at the crossroads of culture and coincide with the multiplicity and heterogeneity of that imaginative territory and the kind of “re-storying” it can generate.

List of Abbreviations

AA: *Another Africa*.

C&I: *Culture and Imperialism*.

H&E: *Home and Exile*.

“IA”: “An Image of Africa.”

MY: *Morning Yet on Creation Day*.

Notes

- ¹ Concentrating on Achebe’s influence on Said does not eliminate the influence of other important writers such as Frantz Fanon.
- ² Achebe’s argument had a very strong impact on the literary arena especially on scholars of Conrad. For reactions to Achebe’s argument see, for example, Susan L. Blake, “Racism and the Classics: Teaching *Heart of Darkness*,” *College Language Association Journal* 25 (1982): 396-404; Hunt Hawkins, “The Issue of Racism in *Heart of Darkness*,” *Conradiana* 14 (1982): 163-71; and Cedric Watts, “‘A Bloody Racist’: About Achebe’s View of Conrad,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983): 196-209.
- ³ For an excellent discussion of the effect of Western Africanist discourse on *Heart of Darkness* see Patrick Brantlinger, *The Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988), 255-74.
- ⁴ This quotation is from an article, entitled “Colonialist Criticism,” based on a paper read to the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies in January 1974. Achebe’s argument comes prior to Foucault’s linking all forms of “the will to power” and all modes of cultural representation of the Other. Said, on the other hand relies heavily on Foucault for his understanding of the relation between Power and Knowledge.

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Edward Said, Eqbal Ahmad, and Salman Rushdie: Resisting the Ambivalence of Postcolonial Theory

Youssef Yacoubi

The strength of Said's personal and intellectual relationship to Eqbal Ahmad and Salman Rushdie, two highly visible South Asian intellectuals, rests in a shared notion that history, narrative, and politics are inextricably intertwined. This view can be traced back to the anti-imperialist discourse shaped by Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and C. L. R. James. These formative thinkers foregrounded ways of articulating the materialities and violences of colonialism. They were involved in the fundamental obligation that Said understood later to be assigned to intellectuals: to speak against power, to question structures of coercion, injustice, and silencing. The task of the intellectual would be to create alternative readings of history and culture.

The intellectual's work should be adversarial. Eqbal Ahmad has occupied this position for a long time along side Said. He has played a major role in changing the American perception of Palestinians and their history. Ahmad relentlessly formed the meanings of revolutionary struggle against colonial power. His understanding of revolutionary thinking would always be based on a fundamental realization that opposition to ignorance, prejudice, and oppression will be more relevant after the alleged exuberance of territorial independence. The process of decolonizing especially the mind is desperately incomplete and dynamic. The depth and long-term orientation of Ahmad's theory of anti-imperialism has always impelled Said's indefatigable watchfulness of new forms of Orientalism. Both have insistently identified emerging foundationalist images of American media—in "perfect synchrony," as Said would say, with the administration. Between Said and Rushdie the experience of "paradoxical identity" offers new imagined homelands and new intellectual frontiers to cross.

I propose that the influential arguments of anti-imperialism, which translates most often in the struggle of Palestinians for self-determination, connect Said, Ahmad, and Rushdie. Said and Rushdie's friendship is glued more by a shared condition of exile and cultural

hybridity. I argue that despite vigorous advances made by other prominent South Asian intellectuals especially Homi Bhabha, and V. S. Naipaul (of Indian ancestry, born in Trinidad) to depoliticise the edifice of colonialism, Said, Ahmad, and Rushdie have cooperatively (and as far as Palestine is concerned) maintained that imperialism is structurally monolithic and historically intransigent. On this account, I shall discuss in my last section the major limitations of Bhabha's theories of ambivalence, mimicry, and translation. For Said a number of non-Western intellectuals have seriously reduced imperialism to dubious notions of Western charity and cultural relativism. They have emptied the very experience of colonialism from its *materially* raw realities of discrimination, stereotyping, and segregation. Homi Bhabha in particular was more seduced by academic professionalism and specialization. Said, Ahmad, and Rushdie have found V. S. Naipaul and Homi Bhabha's critical consensus on the ambivalence of imperial rule particularly unsettling. The theory of ambivalence has depended largely on ideological constructions of division and exclusion of the other.

I. Sharing the Realms of Empire

Said dedicated one of his most important works on colonial history, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), to Ahmad. Said's gesture reminds us that Ahmad's work and thinking must be situated at the heart of anti-imperialist politics. Until the time of his death, Ahmad continued to speak against neo-colonialism, and especially against the US policies of regime change and its ongoing grand blueprint to "democratize" the Middle East.

Said and Ahmad were largely formed by colonial histories and by a hybrid and peripheral existence within the West. Both were born in the mid-thirties under British rule in Palestine and Pakistan. They both migrated to the US and studied at Princeton University and later taught in American universities. Ahmad grew up in colonial India and witnessed the Partition of India and Pakistan. After the Partition of 1947, he migrated to Pakistan. Ahmad was associated with Frantz Fanon in the Algerian National Liberation Front. His anti-colonial activism found its expression during the years 1964-1968 as he became one of the most vocal and notable voices against American brutalities in Vietnam and Cambodia, and a disciplined commentator on the Palestinian resistance movement since 1968. Ahmad remained, for Said, "that rare thing, an intellectual unintimidated by power or

authority, a companion in arms to such diverse figures as Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Richard Falk, Fred Jameson, Alexander Cockburn, and Daniel Berrigan.”¹ The Arab defeat of 1967 by Israel sharpened Said’s political consciousness and brought him in line with Ahmad’s essentially revolutionary and anti-imperialist affiliation, developed during his politically formative years in French Algeria and British India. Said and Ahmad were formed by the colonial experience itself. Born and brought up in the political and cultural realms of European and American empires, Said and Ahmad were made by the very matter and knowledge of peripherality. When Ahmad died of heart failure in Islamabad on May 11, 1999, Said described him in the foreword to *Confronting Empire* (2000) as straightforwardly “our dear friend and comrade.” Because he lived and witnessed colonial control with its relentless dehumanization of the natives, Ahmad, for Said, remained “a real friend in the struggle” for the rights of Palestinians.

Since their meeting in Beirut in 1980 with the renowned Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Said and Ahmad wanted to develop common strategies of opposition to Israeli colonialism. Before the Oslo Accords, David Barsamian recounts in his interview that Ahmad conferred with Arafat at that time to build a flexible approach based on principles of equality and inclusion. He argued to the leadership and in a lecture in Beirut, “The PLO has been entrapped in a rejectionist posture to its enemy’s benefit, that it should tactically pass the burden of rejectionism to its adversaries, that rejectionism is historically and theoretically alien to the revolutionary tradition.”²

Said and Ahmad agreed very early on that the Palestinian leadership must acknowledge the fact that the new state of Israel came into being to stay indefinitely. The PLO must now focus more creatively and constructively on the struggle to actualize its own right for self-determination. They persuasively argued that revolutionary struggle must involve political plasticity, distinguishing tactic from strategy, understanding the enemy’s moves, deploying clandestinity when necessary, and unremittingly re-examining one’s premises.³ In the early 1980s, Ahmad maintained that the PLO’s “tactical inflexibility,” “rejectionist posture,” and physical isolation in the South of Lebanon during the Camp David negotiations were irrevocable mistakes. As a consequence, the post-Camp David period, according to Ahmad’s analysis, was characterized mainly by increased settlements, more expropriation of Palestinian land, and a systematic interruption of

Palestinian life. By insisting on the complex connections that Israel has with US economic interests and hegemony in the Middle East, Ahmad was responding to a PLO at that stage fixated on the absolutism of armed struggle. He went further by formulating alternative strategies that would strengthen the idea of resistance to the Zionist scheme to annihilate Palestinian collective memory. During some of the most decisive junctures of the Palestinian struggle against Israeli systematic uprooting and annexation of Palestinian land, Ahmad proposed a number of action plans. In 1968-1969 he wished that

large marches . . . be organized into the West Bank and Gaza. Return home. When old men and women die in refugee camps, they wish to be buried in their ancestral villages. Funeral processions should move across the frontiers into Israel. The symbol of exodus must be reversed. A liberation movement seeks to expose the basic contradictions of the adversarial society. Israel seeks legitimacy as the haven of a long persecuted people, but it is founded on and still expands at another people's cost.⁴

Ahmad theorized that a liberation movement must be creative and alert to historical details. In the light of similar policies of land grabbing in 1989, he further warned the PLO to make the cessation of Jewish settlements in Occupied Territories the ultimate priority. He advised the leadership to "address the question of Jewish immigration . . . [and] do more in the area of public education."⁵ Said himself depended on Ahmad's practical propositions, and on his ability to deliver precise and persuasive strategies. He called him simply "my guru in political matters."⁶ Said notes that Ahmad, who is not a Palestinian, "was a genius at sympathy."⁷ For Said, the facility to think in terms of alternative ideas, alternative political strategies, and alternative readings for the sake of others was what determined Ahmad's immense contribution to the Palestinian cause. Ahmad not only influenced Said's thinking about Palestine; he supported Said's criticism of the Oslo Accords, which forced the PLO to accept a flawed "peace process." Both of them could see that it offered no real chance for national self-determination. Instead the Oslo Accords, as well as the recent "Road Map," have reinforced the narratives of Israel's colonial supremacy.⁸

What Said found estimable about Ahmad, then, was not only his knowledge of the workings and brutal dynamics of Zionist ideology, but his natural ability to operate across plural registers and cultures. Ahmad was also able to remain true to his fundamental self and political convictions. Said's approbation echoes Ahmad's profound esteem for Said's scholarship and moral vision. In his introduction to *The Pen and the Sword* (1994), Ahmad considers Said to be "among those rare persons in whose life there is coincidence of ideals and reality, a meeting of abstract principle and individual behaviour."⁹ This common sentiment made Palestine the cornerstone of the two comrades' political attention, sympathy, and anxiety. Ahmad and Said have unswervingly agreed on one important principle: The intellectual must identify with a political cause; he must anchor himself with issues involving justice, truth, and democratic knowledge. Ahmad demonstrates this mutual commitment to truth by being constantly aware of Said's own sensitivity to deception and the degradation of language. He explains that Arafat's "capitulation" to Rabin's demands in the Oslo negotiations, "touched something deep in Said's emotional and intellectual being."¹⁰ Ahmad and Said realized that past and present forms of colonialism have always masked their true objectives behind statements or gestures of benevolence and respect for the other.

The meeting in Beirut overshadowed by the Civil War in Lebanon embodied both the realism and the poetry of the moment. Faiz's poem, "Lullaby for a Palestinian Child," was a counter-narrative to the surrounding reality of despair, banality, and Arab powerlessness. This incident, as Ahmad expounds, demonstrates Said's power of concentration and engagement. Or simply put by Ahmad, "when [Edward] is absorbed, he doesn't care." More interestingly, Ahmad goes on to explain that Said is someone who disciplined himself to be totally focused, and morally apt.¹¹ Paul Bové makes similar remarks. He explains that Said's work typifies a symbiotic combination of "breadth and depth of knowledge, historical and scholarly rigor, and a profound basis in political morality of a kind that alone makes civilization possible."¹²

Said's courage and moral audacity lay in his refusal to surrender to authority, fear, and amnesia as is demonstrated in his memoir, *Out of Place* (1999). The memoirist passionately praises the virtues of sleeplessness, of being constantly watchful, of losing sleep over the safety of others. *Out of Place* portrays Said's ultimate "psychic

exhaustion.” The narrator and protagonist, Edward, is determined to transform sleeplessness into a constant refusal of death. Despite, perhaps because of, a lethal illness, Said has learned to accept and appreciate the fragments of his childhood memory. For Said, “sleeplessness . . . is a cherished state to be desired at almost any cost.”¹³ Said’s memoir shows to what extent his commitment to preserving the story of Palestine haunted his formative subconscious self. In Ahmad’s terms, Said’s preoccupation with the collective memory of historical Palestine means “the commitment to never let a dominant myth or viewpoint become history without its counterpoint.”¹⁴ Said was always able to accomplish this because his approach of re-reading history was always dependent on immediacy, or, as Rushdie concedes, “Edward has always had the distinguishing feature that he reads the world as closely as he reads books.”¹⁵

Said’s two major works on Palestine, *The Question of Palestine* (1980) and *The Politics of Dispossession* (1995), in particular required an extraordinary power of single-mindedness, and a deep conviction inseparable from the very skin of Said himself. In fact, it is important to understand Said’s allegedly excessive political passion, not necessarily and only as an existential engagement with the politics of loss, but, more importantly, as his obsession with justice and democratic truthful knowledge. The re-inscription of Palestinian history has been as much a matter of intellectual necessity as it has indeed been something of autobiography, of nature, of skin and blood. Being Palestinian means a constant sense of loss, even if Said himself is far from being stateless or, as he freely admits, far from living the miserable and life-threatening condition of a refugee. Said speaks from an exile’s perspective.

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), he tells us that ever since he can remember, he belonged to two “worlds, without being completely of either one or the other.”¹⁶ It is not difficult to note, as Timothy Brennan does, that Said’s persona is a jumble of a number of experiences and influences. Said’s formative period “was characterized by a willing and untroubled assimilation”;¹⁷ thus Said’s understanding of exile is “less literal than positional, less filiative than political. Exile for him was also . . . ideational.”¹⁸ Because of exile, Said was able to see and understand things, and in particular the tragedy of Palestine, as he would say, with more than one pair of eyes. Said’s constant outrage, his sense of crisis about canonized narratives, and the exigency to re-exam-

ine them, stem from what Salman Rushdie calls this “compulsion to excess,” which Said illustrates in *After The Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986). Rushdie explains:

One of the problems of being Palestinian is that the idea of interior is regularly invaded by other people’s descriptions, by other peoples’ attempt to control what it is to occupy that space—whether it be Jordanian Arabs who say there is no difference between a Jordanian and a Palestinian, or Israelis who claim the land is not Palestine but Israel.¹⁹

Said knows, as Rushdie insists, that the exile of his people is not literary or bourgeois: “in the case of the Palestinians . . . exile is a mass phenomenon: it is the mass that is exiled and not just the bourgeoisie.”²⁰ Indeed, Said’s political worldview and critical work are rooted in a Diaspora experience lived, and intellectually constructed, as a utopian space for independent thinking and imaginative interpretation. This explains in part why Said has been vigilant to human suffering. He was totally committed to grasping the reality of corruption and subjugation of weaker peoples. He combined the precision, clarity, and rationality of the intellect with the indispensability and humanity of moral consciousness. What he shares with Ahmad, and what Ahmad notes to be Said’s most influential attribute, is an ethical responsibility that may even border on obsessive anxiety. Ahmad and Said have stood for restless watchfulness and repetition of truth.

In his appraisal of another important comrade in the struggle against Israeli occupation, Noam Chomsky, Ahmad concedes that this concept of repeating the same truth or principle over and over again is a fundamental strategy for questioning power, and ultimately for writing dispossessed people as agents in nationalistic politics. Thus, repetition reinforces a counterview to ideology and stereotyping. It is a counter-knowledge whose ultimate aim is to create and guarantee the surge of critical consciousness. A counterview opposes the domination and duration of totalizing narratives. This is another way of explaining the fact that “speaking the truth to power is no Panglossian idealism: it is carefully weighing the alternatives, picking the right one, and then intelligently representing it where it can do the most good and cause the right change.”²¹

Said explains to Rushdie that Jean Mohr's pictures in *After the Last Sky* tell a number of stories, one of them how Palestinian identity resides in constant movement and restless self-making. These stories and memories of fragmented existence, according to Said, should be said "loudly enough, repetitiously enough and stridently enough."²² Repetition is indispensable for the very legitimacy of resistance and confirmation of Palestinian presence. Inscribing Palestinian history remains interminably vital because Israel, as Said insists, distorts the archives, takes them away, or steals them as was the case in 1982.²³

Despite death threats, numerous accusations of lying, and worse still, name calling, the "Professor of Terror," vilified in the media and by the infamous post 9/11 CampusWatch.com, Said focused continuously on his political mission. According to Ahmad, Said proceeds humanely and individually. He did not waste his time responding to the intellectual mediocrity of the media and specialized interest groups. He actively implicated his critique in the life of ordinary people, under circumstances of occupation and oppression. This was evident in the BBC documentary of 1998 *In Search of Palestine*, which marks an act of bringing Said's political ideas and activism together. The documentary targets a Western audience in particular, recasting the reality of Palestinian dispossession as raw and inhuman. Said meets people from all walks of life, including Israeli soldiers, politicians, homeless Palestinians in Gaza, and Israeli-Palestinians who complain to Said about their treatment as second class citizens. Each of these living characters is interwoven in Said's act of correcting Israeli archives, of pressing the notion that Palestine exists as collective, human, and material consciousness. Said attempts to grasp the concreteness and ugliness of occupation; the feelings of pain expressed by his dispossessed people; and, ultimately, the banality of division, segregation, and merciless expropriation of land. The purpose of Said's return to Palestine was to promote whatever contact was still possible even as he realized that he had to resign himself to the loss of "home."

Perhaps Said's most sensitive and productive act of watchfulness over the other, in this regard, as Ahmad and Rushdie keep reminding us, is Said's human appreciation of, and sensitivity to, what the history of anti-Semitism meant for the Jews. As he said:

I can understand the intertwined terror and the exultation out of which Zionism has been nourished. . . . And yet, because I am an Arab Palestinian, I can also see and feel other things—and it is these things that complicate matters considerably, that cause me also to focus on Zionism's *other* aspects.²⁴

Said did not settle for simplistic and comfortable readings of history. The history of suffering of the Jews and the Palestinians is complex and multi-faceted. To work against ideological procedures of oblivion, elision, indifference, and amnesia, one must be patient enough to tease out deep psychological and moral underpinnings that have shaped and combined the two histories. Perhaps, on the basis of this sensibility, the greatest irony about Said's influence is the fact that the Palestinian experience of suffering, dispossession, denial, death, and elimination—which both Ahmad and Rushdie highlighted publicly and in writing whenever they had to—is the very experience which had shaped Said's universalist consciousness, his intellectual generosity and ethical wakefulness. Said embodied a life of severe paradox and irony. He, in fact, personified irony as a point of view. This position of paradox is well defined on the first page of Said's memoir which ingenuously states that "There was always something wrong with how I was invented and meant to fit in with the world of my parents and sisters." From the obvious conundrum of an English name, 'Edward,' alongside an Arab surname, 'Sa'id,' to Said's many travels as a young boy within colonial, patriarchal, and elitist schools and institutions, Said's story, as Michael Gilson explains,

is a story of someone, deeply flawed in his making, who could not have been other than he is: child of Christian Palestinians in colonial Cairo, without social supports, sustaining themselves by a *bricolage* of habits and values patched together from multiple Arab, American and British sources.²⁵

Said, like Ahmad and Rushdie, grew up living, watching, and absorbing all these foundational flaws and contradictions of colonial discipline, attitudes, and expectations.

II. Crossing Borders, Confronting Frontiers

Exile, as Said recognizes in others, is a transformative and innovative experience. In this regard, Salman Rushdie's own positioning as a metropolitan displaced writer is what decides the depth of Said's admiration of his work. Said's own arguments of empire are inescapably anchored in his experience of unhousedness. On this account, Said developed a particular affinity with Salman Rushdie—who is very much like Joseph Conrad, an immigrant writer, and, for Said, a major dissenting voice. Conrad and Rushdie both mastered English and used it to write about the relationship between culture and imperialism, and, in Rushdie's case, about the condition of migration—as Said put it:

[T]he texts that interest me the most are . . . mixed in some way. This whole notion of a hybrid text, of writers like Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie, the issues of exile and immigration, crossing of boundaries—all of that tremendously interests me for obvious existential and political reasons, but also it strikes me as one of the major contributions of late-twentieth-century culture.²⁶

According to Said, Rushdie, being in-between and occupying more than two cultural spaces, is someone who is engaged in double critique; in using the metropolitan to articulate Third World condition. Rushdie, then, is “really part of something much bigger than just one individual. He can write in a world language and turn that language against its own sources of authority and consolidation.”²⁷ Said groups Rushdie among serious literary figures, like Thomas Pynchon and Garcia Marquez, who can boast the attention of an international audience, and also because the works of these authors, as Said concedes, “work as agents of social, intellectual and cultural change, because they introduce whole new worlds.”²⁸ On this account, he goes on to explain, “to read Rushdie is to read something completely new. I mean it has connections with the world of Kipling and Forster, but it is transformed, it is post-colonial and has its own magic, its own brilliance. And it also introduces a particular hybrid experience into English.”²⁹ Said admired especially Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* because it is a work of creative and independent imagination. Rushdie's narrative weaves fundamental incongruities, and allows them some important

resolution; he consciously mixes the discourse of the West and makes it “acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories.”³⁰ Rushdie’s work belongs to “the earlier generation of resisting writing” whose “effort” Said calls “*the voyage in*.”³¹ Said notes that in 1984, before the publication of *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Rushdie was a rare voice criticizing the British government’s ideological manipulation to legitimize the Falklands War. Around this time, a number of films and articles revived recollections of the alleged victories and advantages of the British Raj.³² Rushdie was making an important point that artistic fictions of the past had always been deployed to revive colonial ambitions. So it is imperialism, the question of Palestine, and the creative strategies of hybridity and irony that Said has found of great interest in Rushdie’s work.

Thus defending Rushdie against Khomeini’s *fatwa* of 1989 for his novel *The Satanic Verses*, for Said, was a commitment to the major vocation of a secular intellectual who must defend freedom of expression at all costs because, as he explains,

Freedom of expression cannot be sought invidiously in one territory, and ignored in another. For with authorities who claim the secular right to defend divine decree there can be no debate no matter where they are, whereas for the intellectual, tough searching debate is the core of activity, the very stage and setting of what intellectuals without revelation really do.³³

Said has maintained that “the case is not really about offence to Islam, but a spur to go on struggling for democracy that has been denied us, and the courage not to stop. Rushdie is the *intifada* of the imagination.”³⁴ The intellectual must engage in total criticism; he must be able to question internal and external structures of authority and coalescence: “One of the shabbiest of all intellectual gambits is to pontificate about abuses in someone else’s culture and excuse exactly the same practices in one’s own.”³⁵ Since the publication of *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie’s prose has raised serious questions about the limits of nationalism, imperialism, and religious obscurantism—be it Islamic, British, or Hindu. Secular criticism means a “passionate engagement, risk, exposure, commitment to principles, vulnerability in debating and being involved in worldly causes.”³⁶ For Said,

Rushdie is everyone who dares to speak out against power, to say that we are entitled to think and express forbidden thoughts, to argue for democracy and freedom of opinion. The time has come for those of us who come from this part of the world to say that we are against this fatwa and all fatwas that silence, beat, imprison, or intimidate people and ban, burn, or anathematize books.³⁷

Said supported Rushdie because he realized that Rushdie's novel was a critique of all structures of oppression, theological and political. Said understood that Rushdie had skilfully interwoven a re-examination of Islamic tradition in order to provoke debate among Muslim intellectuals. This affinity is easily justifiable. Ahmad reminds us that Said himself shows "his quest of positive and universal alternatives to sectarian ideologies, structures and claims."³⁸ Like Rushdie, Said has criticized religious fundamentalism of all forms. It goes without saying that the secular criticism championed by Said and Rushdie remains sensitive to the role and function of religion. For Said, religion is "understandable and deeply personal," because it shapes collective identity.³⁹ He explains:

[L]ike culture, religion . . . furnishes us with systems of authority and with canons of order whose regular effect is either to compel subservience or to gain adherents. This in turn gives rise to organized collective passions whose social and intellectual results are often disastrous. The persistence of these and other religious-cultural effects testifies amply to what seem to be necessary features of human life, the need for certainty, group solidarity, and a sense of communal belonging.⁴⁰

Said condemns the closure of religious discourse. For him, some of the tactics that the Islamic movements—like Hamas in the West Bank, the Islamic Jihad, or Al-Qaeda—have used remain primitive and unimaginative forms of resistance.⁴¹ Said, of course, has never failed to stress the role of US hegemony and foreign policy in making and unmaking reactionary and militant movements.

Said and Rushdie have constantly pointed out that the failure of militant and fundamentalist 'Islam' lies in its uncanny compromise with the devices and procedures of US interventionism. Therefore,

Said's intellectual sympathy with Rushdie stems from this realization that all ideologies of closure, even when they come from within the colonized field, are anti-theoretical and insipid.

The response to Rushdie's novel indicates, then, to what extent the question of modernity is still the controlling hermeneutical crisis in the Arab and Muslim worlds:

It is indeed *the* battle . . . [because it raises] the whole question of what tradition is, and the Prophet said, and the Holy Book said, and what God said. . . . There is a school of writers, poets, essayists, and intellectuals, who are fighting a battle for the right to *be* modern, because our history is governed by *turath*, or heritage.⁴²

In the midst of the Rushdie affair, Sadik Jalal al-Azm noted that many commentators who defended "liberalism" against "fundamentalism" had theorized away Rushdie's treatment of Islam. They did not consider the question of tradition and modernity, which baffled and occupied the thinking of early Arab intellectuals like al-Tahtawi, Taha Hussein, Mohamed Abdu, and others. They did not fathom the possibility that Rushdie may be a Muslim dissident, who is constructively (and properly) re-imagining his religious tradition in the similarly revisionist fashion of Rabelais, Voltaire, and James Joyce. Rabelais ridiculed and satirized the prevalent ecclesiastical machine of control; Voltaire captured the ideological disease of his time in his famous dictum that "those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities"; and James Joyce exposed the disease of an Ireland—or rather a Dublin—torn by religious sectarianism, the dogmatism of the Catholic Church, and British racism.⁴³ Al-Azm goes on to assert that "Rushdie's fiction is," in the end, "an angry and rebellious exploration of very specific inhuman conditions" that prevail in the Muslim world.⁴⁴ Said explains that "for us, the crisis of 'modernism' and 'modernity' is a crisis over authority, and the right of the individual, and the writer, the thinker, to express himself, or herself."⁴⁵ In its very publication, and inscription in the imperial space, *The Satanic Verses* has complicated the problematic overlapping of totalizing narratives. It has indeed demystified multiple structures of nationalism, tokenistic culturalism, and religious obscurantism—all somehow infected by the factuality of imperialism.

Even as they consistently named and shamed other structures of control, Said, Ahmad, and Rushdie have de-romanticized the narcissism of neo-colonialism as a state of singular and irreversible duration. Their work, be it imaginative or non-fictional, operates both processes of demythologization and demystification. They have attempted to invent new forms of reading non-Western history and culture by demythologizing the illusions and myths of empire and other systems of silencing. Their work essentially locates that which is relentlessly and intractably oppressive, that which political and theological ideologies must repress to regulate their operations of *exclusion and suppression*.

During his period of hiding, Rushdie continued to appreciate Said's own vulnerability in the American public space. He understood Said's problematic condition of being out of place, *the Palestinian in New York* with the watchtower of the Jewish Defence League, which is "not the easiest of fates."⁴⁶ The two commentaries, "On Palestinian Identity" in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991) and "October 1999: Edward Said" in *Step Across This Line* (2002), have the benefit of thematic and political coherence. Rushdie represents Said, first of all, as a Palestinian voice, and, secondly, as a true intellectual made by exilic existence. In both interventions, Rushdie concentrates on the artistic spaces and meanings that Said has attempted to create for a Palestinian identity and presence. In his reading of *After the Last Sky*, Rushdie sees Said's reflection and the photographs assembled in the book as a passionate attempt to make sense of the Palestinian experience of displacement and landlessness, so much so that "the classic rules about form or structure cannot be true to that experience; rather it is necessary to work through a kind of chaos or unstable form that will accurately express its essential instability."⁴⁷ In response to the ferocious attack on Said's memoir, *Out of Place* (1999), Rushdie contends:

[T]he attack on Said is also an attack on what he stands for; on the world he has hoped for decades to argue into being: a world in which Palestinians are able to live with honour in their own country, yes, but also a world in which, by an act of constructive forgetting, the past can be worked through and then left in the past, so that Palestinians and Jews can begin to think about a different sort of future.⁴⁸

Rushdie reiterates what Said has single-handedly done towards the question of Palestine in Western imagination: He has reinforced the notion of the basic humanity of Palestinians and their right to tell their stories. Rushdie has perceptively chosen to focus on two of Said's most imaginative books on Palestine because they deal with (among other things) the experience of uprootedness and metamorphosis. Both *After the Last Sky* and *Out of Place* narrate personal stories about the historicity and fragmentation of Palestinian identity and life. *Out of Place* is particularly aware, as Rushdie notes, of the power and necessity of invention: "All families invent their parents and children; give each of them a story, character, fate, and even a language."⁴⁹ The writing of *Out of Place* punctuates and coincides with Said's leukaemia, and, on this account, the telling of Said's story "is a heroic instance of writing against death."⁵⁰ *Out of Place*'s portrayal of displacement is close to Rushdie's own experience of multiple "rootings and uprootings, about feeling wrong in the world."⁵¹

Out of Place, a political memoir, reconfigures the Palestinian experience, reconstitutes the political in Said's life. Because Said's early childhood was immunized to the politics of Palestine, his memoir has conscientiously retrieved the remains of early memories of wreckage, crumbling, and flight. Said retrospectively explains that there was no vocabulary adequate enough to speak about the loss of Palestine: "All of us seemed to have given up on Palestine as a place, never to be returned to, barely mentioned, missed silently and pathetically."⁵² Such sentiment coincides with the fact that Said's father, Wadie, never shed a tear on the loss of Palestine. The repression of Palestine "occurred as part of a larger depoliticization on the part of . . . [Said's] parents, who hated and distrusted politics."⁵³ Paradoxically enough, these amputations for Said have helped the process of recovering the interrelatedness of the personal and the political.

Just as he evoked the political situatedness of Said in the execution of pictures and images in *After the Last Sky*, Rushdie notes the immense irony in the reception of Said's memoir. Full of extraordinary passion, honesty, integrity, and ruthless examination of one's cultural and psychological making and un-making, Said's memoir still received the expected Right-wing *avalanche* of accusation of fraud, of falsification of facts, and, in short, of the repeated ideology to deny the Palestinianness of Palestinians. Rushdie takes issue with Justus Reid Weiner, a writer for the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, who set

out to discredit Said's family history, their ownership of a house in Jerusalem, and Said's attendance of St. George School in eastern Jerusalem. Rushdie concedes that "when a distinguished writer is attacked in this fashion—then there is always more at stake than the mere quotidian malice of the world of books."⁵⁴

Early on, Rushdie pointed out in his first conversation with Said that those working as "Israel's defenders" in the US, backed by American press in particular, continued to silence Palestinian voices and to dismiss the very historical presence of Palestinians as a people. Rushdie remarks that no American paper was willing to publish Said's rebuttals, which appeared in British and Israeli press.⁵⁵ Rushdie describes here the process by which myths become validated in the collective imaginary. If there were a single over-arching story in *Out of Place*, which makes many so called experts of the Middle East, professional policy makers, and specialized interest groups very uncomfortable, it would certainly be the story of Palestine itself; a story of bereavement and recovery, of imagination and refusal to be silenced.

Said's argument for Palestine insists on a process of collaboration that characterizes US imperialism, Israeli Zionism, and their reception in the Arab-Islamic world. Imperialism operates through the movements of various authoritarian structures. It does not act independently but feeds from, or flows over to, what looks like itself; it collaborates with violence, singularity, and binary opposition. All movements of exclusion created myths to legitimize themselves. Zionism, for example, as Ahmad notes "has the distinction also of creating a large body of myths about Palestine and Palestinians: Palestine was a land without a people for a people without a land."⁵⁶ Ahmad refers here to Said's essay "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," in *The Question of Palestine*, in which Said questions the ideological distance between "idea" and "reality." Zionism as an idea, it has been argued, is immobile in its essence because of its actual realization in the state of Israel. Yet such an idea obliterates and elides the non-Jew, and cuts itself from the historical context of European ideology of racism. On this account, because Zionism presents itself to be fundamentally exclusionary and selectively amnesiac, its central ideas have to be inspected,

historically in two ways: (1) *genealogically* in order that their provenance, their kingship and descent, their affiliation both with other ideas and with political institutions may be demonstrated; (2) as practical sys-

tems for *accumulation* (of power, land, ideological legitimacy) and *displacement* (of people, other ideas, prior legitimacy).⁵⁷

Undoubtedly, Ahmad and Rushdie have expressed an unfailing sympathy towards the Palestinian issue, understanding well the structural connections sustaining imperialism and Zionism. Ahmad boldly relates Zionism to colonialism, and colonialism to actual occupation and control of land, water, and institutions. Their common political *sentiment* is to reject the politics of collaboration, and to embrace a resolute position of opposing Israeli power.

III. Resisting Bhabha's Theory of Ambivalence

This brings me to the question why Said, by contrast, is unmistakably less sympathetic to other equally important and visible South Asian writers and theorists. According to Said, Naipaul sees that the wounds caused by European domination were instead self-inflicted, and thus there is no need to go on about the legacy of colonialism.⁵⁸ Compared to Rushdie, Naipaul is one of those rare postcolonials who ascribe the present decline of the "Third World" to "native histories" and to some "genetic" inclination towards the pre-colonial past of barbarism.⁵⁹ Naipaul evidently disconnects the transgressions of empire, resistance to it, and its continuities in the present. In *Among the Believers* (1981) and *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples* (1998), he casts much of the blame on the out-fashioned archaic habits, histories, or belief systems of non-Western cultures, and particularly on Islam's impulse for imperial domination, hate, and rage. The converted of Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia are stripped of agency and confused by their inability to speak the sacred language of the Book, which alienates and binds them at the same time. These indictments, as Rushdie argues, are "highly selective truth, a novelist's truth masquerading as objective reality."⁶⁰ The reason lies in Naipaul's emptying of the history of the converted from the impact of colonialism and postcolonial authoritarianism.

Naipaul is just determined to prove that these countries are ravaged exclusively by religious dogmatism and Mullah-dominated perspectives, ignoring the way military dictatorship uses 'Islam' as a means of control.⁶¹ This simplistic and superficial view was clearly consolidated by the Iranian Revolution, the *fatwa* against Rushdie, and

definitely legitimated by 9/11 and the discourse of terrorism associated with the name 'Islam.' According to Said the 'soft-core' language of post-1960s intellectuals like Naipaul and Homi Bhabha has rendered anti-imperialist pioneers like Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire irrelevant. What makes Said cynical of such a pretentious reading is its level of abstraction. Somehow, imperialism is a mere psychological irregularity that can be fixed by the power of theoretical cleverness. Bhabha in particular depends on the magic of specialized jargons, assuming that somehow the abuses of slavery, racism, and oppression of non-Western peoples may be eased and made bearable.

This critique of a self-indulgent and hygienic treatment of empire is perhaps as old as the institution of postcolonial theory itself. Arif Dirlik points out that Bhabha obfuscates questioning his position as a spokesperson for "Third World" peoples in Western academy because he is formed in the language of "First World" cultural criticism. Bhabha constantly reduces the experience of colonialism into relativist and universalizing categories.⁶² Benita Parry contends that the problem with Bhabha's own attempt to expose "the myth of the transparency of the human agent" is that "in eschewing the notion of agency as performed by the subject on contested ground, and disclaiming resistance as social practice, Bhabha's proposal is incommensurate with accounts of 'a culture of resistance.'"⁶³ Bhabha's version of postmodern analysis depoliticizes postcolonial consciousness and dismisses the agency of the colonized. His theoretical triangulation of hybridity, ambivalence, and mimicry, which moves away from explicitly recognizing the continuing encroachment of colonialism, has been high-ranking in the politics of postcolonial representation. According to Bhabha's typically poststructuralist reading, the notion of ambivalence interrupts oppositional binaries, deterministic and functionalist modes of representation.

Bhabha has attempted to move beyond what he saw to be unhelpful categorizations of "East" and "West," "Us" and "Them" inherent in *Orientalism's* thesis. He makes the strategic claim that instead of binary oppositions, there is a fundamental interiority of splitting which interrupts the calculated partition intrinsic to colonial discourse. According to Bhabha, the way out of the foundationalist and divisive ideology of colonial discourse (including Macaulay's Minute) is to examine the "processes of subjectification."⁶⁴ Bhabha argues that the intellectual and psychological collusion between the Orientalist and the Orientalized is essentially of a paradoxical nature.

Thus the colonial stereotype system may be seen in terms of ambiguous “phobia and fetish” that “threatens the closure of the racial/epidermal schema for the colonial subject and opens the royal road to colonial fantasy.”⁶⁵ The process of Orientalization is based on fetishism, on the “scopic drive” to render the other visible for pleasure and erotic domestication.⁶⁶ The colonial/postcolonial site is not ravaged exclusively by fixity, immobility, but by the interzonal shuttle of fixity and fantasy, fear and desire.⁶⁷

Kojin Karatani has identified this type of analysis, in the slightly different context of Japan, as the aesthetic in colonialism, or what he calls “aestheticentrism.”⁶⁸ Karatani argues that the aesthetic in colonial reading is a form of “sadistic invasion” which allows some anti-imperialist gestures to still repeat forms and readings belonging to imperialist discourse. By looking at moments of difference that seemingly combat European ethnocentrism, Bhabha wants to show “respect” to native cultures. He wants to recognize their intellectual and ethical presence denied by the colonizers. However, his strategy of difference involves looking down on the other as an object of scientific examination. Karatani explains that the stance to regard the other as an object of study belongs to eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, whose aesthetic dimension here is to try to appreciate and appropriate the other, knowing that the other occupies a position of inferiority.⁶⁹ Therefore, “aestheticentrism refuses to acknowledge that the other who does not offer any simulative surprise of a ‘stranger’ lives a life ‘out there.’ Aestheticentrists always appear as anticolonialists.”⁷⁰

The general dissatisfaction that Bhabha expresses with regard to Said’s thesis in *Orientalism* is surely nuanced, but may unwittingly be close to the views of the staunchest opponents of Said, especially Bernard Lewis, Fouad Ajami, Daniel Pipes, and Martin Kramer. They all have obstinately attacked Said for being deliberately anti-Western and anti-American. Said, they argue, has misrepresented the history of Orientalism. He, in fact, supports Islamism and Muslim fundamentalism.⁷¹

When Bhabha reproaches Said for ignoring the internal procedures of violence and control of such movements like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Joseph Massad concedes that

Bhabha . . . never describes the Zionist enterprise or Israeli occupation as having anything to do with colonialism, which leads him to call not for an end to Israel’s col-

onization and occupation, but for a negotiated “just and lasting peace” (terms borrowed from US State Department pronouncements that also never mention colonialism or occupation).⁷²

One important point that Massad makes in response to Bhabha’s obituary is to link Bhabha’s charge of Said’s “rage” and passionate solution to the Palestinian question to the standard Zionist attacks on Said’s work, and to the Israeli government’s notions of security. Bhabha reads the condition of Palestine as simply a matter of competing nationalisms, as a conflict over territory. In the final analysis, Massad considers Bhabha a “domesticated” and “tamed” postcolonial theorist. He argues that Bhabha, unlike the two other pillars of postcolonial trinity, Said and Gayatri Spivak, appears “to be committed to depoliticizing deeply political questions.”⁷³ According to Massad’s view, Bhabha is even trapped in a precarious game of self-Orientalization. In a sarcastic tone, Massad concedes,

Bhabha . . . is not encumbered by the emotional passions dogging Orientals of the Said variety. Moreover, it would seem that Said, like all Orientals (Bhabha excepted), had mortgaged his reason for the benefit of his passion. . . . Rejecting the irrational rebarbative solution of Said, Bhabha tells us that his presumably dispassionate “vision” of a solution for the Palestinian condition “would be based on a shared awareness that the territorial security of a peoples [sic] is more relevant today than a nationalistic demand for territorial *integrity*.”⁷⁴

What validates such criticism is the standard, typical of multicultural tropes of postmodern translation and excessive mimicry, by which Bhabha reads everything. In the same methodological spirit, Bhabha tells us the protagonist Chamcha in *The Satanic Verses* stands “in-between two border conditions.”⁷⁵ On this account, then, “[t]he fundamentalist charge has not focused on the misinterpretation of the Kuran, as much as on the offence of the ‘misnaming’ of Islam.”⁷⁶

Again, Bhabha’s reading depends more on ready-made theoretical packages. Exchange, miscegenation, polymorphism, and solicitation are essential principles of critical analysis. They are excessively deployed and expertly applied, at the expense of historical specificity.

Much of what Bhabha's theoretical sophistication brought to the debate in postcolonial theory has remained Eurocentric and essentialist. Ambivalence has not rehabilitated the existential and epistemological status of real colonized subjects in history. Difference, which stems from the postcolonial repository of the West, is itself a denial and a suppression of other complexities of the hybrid mimic. Difference still depends on a single perspective of ignorance. When Bhabha claims that ambivalence allows the possibility of subversion within the context of Diasporic condition, he approaches the problem from a monolithic angle, simplifying the meanings of fixity and difference in metaphysical and historical orders. When Bhabha mentions the name 'Islam' in his schema of translatability he disallows its entry into the realm of critical precision, specificity, and fine differences. His understanding of the conflict between Islam and the West is always a matter of alienation and excessive translation.

On this account, Bhabha's dismissal of Islam's inner complexity and historical difference is ultimately an ethical *cul de sac*; it is *ignotum per ignotius*—that is, an attempt to explain the pre-national, pre-modern, manifestations of Islam's atavism (Islam's humanism obviously disregarded) by the more obfuscatory postmodernist tools of reference. Doubtless, the cultural critic is innovative and nuanced but he lacks the patience to appreciate what Said calls the battle of modernity. In other words, his ignorance stems from ignoring his own ignorance of precolonial experience of nationhood, collective identity, authority, and mythical rationalities.

This type of theorization recycles old structures of epistemological oppression and the idea that modernity is categorically European. Bhabha's and Naipaul's strategic positing of fixed categories of neo-colonial oppressor and post-colonial victim has maintained the wholesomeness and originary presence of the privileged ideological position of the neo-colonizer. Pedagogically, the center still enjoys a certain symbolic *usefulness* when postcolonial thinking ignores its complicity in the conditions of powerlessness exacerbated by 9/11 and neo-conservatist domination. Mimicry has surreptitiously legitimized the ethical superiority of the neo-colonizer. Therefore, it has made the ethical responsibility of the postcolonial subject to resist, to speak out, to repeat his stories over and over again, and ultimately to refuse to be silenced, a matter of inconvenience, an infringement on the circumscribed security of empire.

Collaboration is insistently interested in the compromises that different structures of authority use to create alliance with other structures perceived to be oppositional. What the protagonist Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children* calls "the world of linear narrative" has dominated postcolonial movements of resistance and reform. Fundamentalist thought which is not specific to 'Islam,' but to other religions, secular ideologies, and—more recently—to American neo-conservatism, in the language of *Shame*, inhabits "things that cannot be said. No, it's more than that: there are things that cannot be permitted to be true."⁷⁷ Critical consciousness, as Said understands it, means an endless search for hidden layers of unreported patterns of subjugation and silencing. Rushdie and Said, in this sense, are unflinchingly interrupting the conventional meaning of the colonial. The novel's attack on obscurantist thinking would have to be understood not just in terms of the very materiality of oppression and annexation of territory, or the "radical destruction" of culture and economy (something Rushdie stressed principally in his early fiction), but as a complex and incalculable interference of other tendencies and cognitive habits (internal and external) which remain original in all discourses of suppression and censorship, always contaminated by the ultimate fixity and moral conceit of imperialism. The characters and narrators of Rushdie's prose are, in his own words, "handcuffed to [a] history" of internal destinies of India, Britain, Europe, and the "Land of the Pure," Pakistan. They are driven by partitions from a number of ideologies: colonialism, nationalism, and religious dogmatism. Said, Ahmad, and Rushdie have constructed the idea of empire to be structurally unbending, as seen clearly in the case of Zionism. Their life-long project on reconfiguring empire theorizes, thinks, and testifies to an unlimited space of "leaking," to borrow Rushdie's term. Empire leaks across other fields and temporalities. And because it leaks in a number of ways and regardless of territorial decolonization, its malevolent persistence should not be theorized away. Empire always hides what Rushdie calls the stories and narratives of "massacred history."

Therefore, for Said, Ahmad, and Rushdie, the ultimate aim of intellectual decolonization is to insist on the continuities of imperial systems of control, and the constant exigency to create new spaces of imagining newness, justice, and moral responsibility in the world. Ultimately, Said, Ahmad, and Rushdie have insistently refused the triumph of empire's logic of closure and immunity. Their discriminating realization that colonialism is still well and kicking is what fuels their

insistence that Israel, being a colonial power, exists on the ruins of Palestinian land, memory, and identity. There is just no other vocabulary, no matter how refined, sophisticated, and nuanced, capable of writing off raw realities of injustice, dispossession, and racism. Fanon has reminded us in the case of colonial Algeria that the Arab is now “permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization.”⁷⁸ Said would say the issue here is always “a matter of principle. Invasion is invasion.”⁷⁹ In the end, whilst Rushdie uses fiction to explore the political usefulness of fragmentation, post-colonial experience, cultural unevenness, and inequality of idioms and languages, Said and Ahmad have told the story of the oppressed by relentlessly intervening in colonial realities and archives always in the making. The approach is, of course, different, yet the political drives remain similar, if not complimentary and interrelated. Each one of them has envisaged and helped create a transcolonial understanding of imperialism, which moves beyond the very conventional pedagogy of *understanding*, *relating* to, and *representing* colonial experience.

Those, like Homi Bhabha and V. S. Naipaul, who may wish for a depoliticized discussion in the most political times (reignited by 9/11 and the so-called War on Terror) may be irresponsibly fooling the Wretched of the Earth. In the heat of Bush’s new *ipse dixit* and his Evangelical zeal to save the Muslim world, Bhabha’s reading can only throw us back on the imperial soap box shouting and forcing rational infiltrations, evidentiary demurrals, detours of splits, *corpus delicti*, and stoppages. Bhabha’s perspective, in the end, builds on a need to turn the idea of resistance itself into respectability for collaboration with power.

The durability of Said’s influence has not only depended on the ground-breaking insights of *Orientalism* and many of his other resourceful writings, but more on the political impact of those books. The connections between this trinity of postcolonial intellectuals demonstrate that Said’s legacy lies chiefly in the sheer *transference* and travel of his ideas and political vision into the imaginative and historical realms of other individuals and other geographical contexts. Said deservedly gained the sympathies and respect of Ahmad and Rushdie and many others who have shared a fundamental belief that the experience of empire is irreversible. Empire is irreducible to the excess of jargon and academic professionalism. Imperialism is what decides the current rifts between black and white, Arab and non-Arab, Muslim and Western, between occupying authorities today in Iraq and the oppressed natives. Said’s intellectual, personal, ethical, and human

affinity with Ahmad and Rushdie should reinforce the need to keep telling our stories, to repeat our testimonies and be ready to supply a counterpoint to the indulgences of postcolonial theory—and to do this mercilessly. Despite the *avalanche* of sexy obscurantist rereading of much of postcolonial writing, the *force* of Said's central imperatives has remained intact: to *continue* inventive debate, to *nourish* 'critical consciousness,' and to *hold on* to skepticism.

Notes

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- ² Eqbal Ahmad, "Yasser Arafat's Nightmare," *MERIP Reports* 119 (Nov-Dec 1983): 19.
- ³ Eqbal Ahmad, "Yasser Arafat's Nightmare," 22.
- ⁴ Eqbal Ahmad, "Yasser Arafat's Nightmare," 21.
- ⁵ Eqbal Ahmad, et. al., "Middle East Peace Priorities in the US: Seven Perspectives," *Middle East Report* 158 (May-June 1989): 6.
- ⁶ Qtd. in Eqbal Ahmad, *Confronting Empire: Interview with David Barsamian* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), xx.
- ⁷ Qtd. in Eqbal Ahmad, *Confronting Empire*, xxi.
- ⁸ Edward Said, *Peace and its Discontents: Gaza-Jericho 1993-1995* (London: Vintage, 1995).
- ⁹ Eqbal Ahmad, "Introduction," Edward Said, *The Pen and the Sword*, 8.
- ¹⁰ Eqbal Ahmad, "Introduction," Edward Said, *The Pen and the Sword*, 13.
- ¹¹ Eqbal Ahmad, "Introduction," Edward Said, *The Pen and the Sword*, 8.
- ¹² Paul A. Bové, "Introduction," *Boundary 2* 25.2 (1998): 1.
- ¹³ Edward Said, *Out of Place* (NY: Vintage Books, 1999), 295.
- ¹⁴ Eqbal Ahmad, *Confronting Empire*, 11.
- ¹⁵ Salman Rushdie, "On Palestinian Identity: A Conversation with Edward Said," *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta Books, 1991), 166.
- ¹⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (NY: Knopf, 1993), xxx.
- ¹⁷ Timothy Brennan, "Edward Said and Comparative Literature," *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXIII.3 (Spring 2004): 25.
- ¹⁸ Timothy Brennan, "Edward Said and Comparative Literature," 25.
- ¹⁹ Salman Rushdie, "On Palestinian Identity," 170.
- ²⁰ Salman Rushdie, "On Palestinian Identity," 171.
- ²¹ Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (NY: Vintage, 1994), 102.

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- 27 Edward Said, "Overlapping Territories: The World, the Text, and the Critic," *Power, Politics and Culture*, 64-65.
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- 29 Edward Said, "The Road Less Traveled," 416.
- 30 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 260.
- 31 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 261.
- 32 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 22-23.
- 33 Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 89.
- 34 Edward Said, "Against the Orthodoxies," *For Rushdie: A Collection of Essays by 100 Arabic and Muslim Writers*, eds. Anouar Abdallah et al (NY: George Braziller, Inc., 1994), 261.
- 35 Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 92.
- 36 Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 109.
- 37 Edward Said, "Against the Orthodoxies," 261.
- 38 Eqbal Ahmad, "Introduction," *The Pen and the Sword*, 11.
- 39 Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 113.
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- 42 Edward Said, "People's Rights and Literature," *Power, Politics, and Culture*, 259.
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- 47 Salman Rushdie, "On Palestinian Identity," 168.
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- 49 Edward Said, *Out of Place*, 3.
- 50 Edward Said, *Out of Place*, 282.
- 51 Salman Rushdie, "October 1999: Edward Said," 282.
- 52 Edward Said, *Out of Place*, 115.
- 53 Edward Said, *Out of Place*, 117.
- 54 Salman Rushdie, "October 1999": Edward Said," 283.
- 55 Salman Rushdie, "October 1999": Edward Said," 283-84.
- 56 Iqbal Ahmad, *Confronting Empire*, 15.
- 57 Edward Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," 57.
- 58 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 20.
- 59 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 23.
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- 69 Kojin Karatani, "Uses of Aesthetics: After Orientalism," 146.
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Perspectives of Polyphony in Edward Said's Writings

Rokus de Groot

I. An Early Experience: Umm Kalthoum and a 'Lack of Counterpoint'¹

When Edward Said was eight or nine years old, he was taken to a musical recital for the first time in his life. The singer whose art the child was witnessing, turned out to be none other than the grand lady of Arabic music, Umm Kalthoum. In an interview for Dutch television, recorded in 2000, Said gave a surprising comment on this seminal event:

It was a dreadful experience for me. . . . It did not begin until 10 o'clock at night. I was half asleep. I was a kid. And there was this great crowded theatre. There did not seem any order to it. The musicians would wander on stage, sit down and play a little bit, wander off, and then come back, and finally *she* would appear. And they would sing together with her orchestra. And her songs would go on for forty to forty-five minutes. And to me there was not the kind of form or shape [I was used to in Western classical music], it seemed to be all more or less the same. And the tone was mournful, melancholic. I did not understand the words. Above all what I missed, I realize now, was counterpoint. It is very monophonic music. I think it is designed to send people, not exactly into a stupor, but it would induce a kind of melancholic haze, which people like. And I found it very disturbing. Mentally it made you inactive. [My assessment of this music practice] . . . is entirely subjective. So I very early on rejected it and began to focus exclusively on Western music, for which I hungered more and more.²

Said's childhood judgment is rather similar to the way Western listeners, well-versed in Western classical music, used to comment upon music from the Middle East. It resembles very much an 'Orientalist' stereotypical prejudice about Arabic music, and Oriental music in general.³

Edward Said, a Palestinian by birth, was raised by parents who were ardent lovers of Western music. It was this kind of music, and not Arabic music, that he was made familiar with, although he was introduced by his mother's brother to some of the *repertoire* of the oud at family gatherings in Lebanon. Said's family did not possess Arabic recordings, but had a collection of discs with Western classical music (mainly Beethoven, Mozart, Rossini, some Bach, Wagner, and Richard Strauss) (Zeeman).

In his book *Musical Elaborations*, after almost five decades, Edward Said returned to Umm Kalthoum, with observations on his early experience of her art:

The first musical performance I ever attended as a very small boy (in the mid-1940s) was a puzzling, interminably long, and yet haunting concert by Umm Kalthoum, already the premier exponent of classical Arabic song. I had no way of knowing that her peculiar rigor as a performer derived from an aesthetic whose hallmark was exfoliating variation, in which repetition, a sort of meditative fixation on one or two small patterns, and an almost total absence of developmental (in the Beethovenian sense) tension were the key elements. The point of the performance, I later realized, was not to get to the end of a carefully constructed logical structure—working through it—but to luxuriate in all sorts of byways, to linger over details and changes in text, to digress and then digress from the digression. And because, in my preponderantly Western education (both musical and academic) I seemed to be dedicated to an ethic of productivity and of overcoming obstacles, the kind of art practiced by Umm Kalthoum receded in importance for me. (*Musical Elaborations* 98)

This is an important passage in Edward Said's reflections on music. Indeed, Said, raised, especially by his mother, with Western

classical music, had internalised its values and standards early in his life. For many years his conscious feelings were, that the experiences of the mid-1940s with Umm Kalthoum's singing had "either been superseded by substantial changes in [his] taste or forgotten and left behind in a past with which [he] no longer [has] an active connection" (*Musical Elaborations* 98).

It is significant that in Umm Kalthoum's art he emphasised the lack of that which he so valued in Western classical music: *counterpoint*. Apparently he became acutely aware of this alleged lack through this stunning childhood experience of Arabic music. However, the role of Umm Kalthoum in Said's life did not end with his early rejection of her music. As we shall see shortly, he re-evaluated her music later in his life. It would play—ironically maybe—an important 'contrapuntal' role in his appreciation of Western music.

In the present text I concentrate on counterpoint—and more generally on polyphony—as a key concept in the interpretation of Said's reflections on music: counterpoint as a musical practice, as his personal guide to relate divergent musical and cultural backgrounds, and as a metaphor for humanistic emancipation. Before going into this, I would first like to devote some thoughts to counterpoint and polyphony.

II. Polyphony and Counterpoint

I take polyphony as the simultaneous unfolding of two or more different voices, each with its own identity, and at the same time each with a 'responsibility' to the other and for the *ensemble* of voices. In polyphony there is typically no domination of one voice over others; if it does occur, it is usually temporary, and the role of prominence will change from one voice to another. Interesting practices of polyphony employ voices with articulate identities; as we shall see below, these very identities often become less clear-cut as the voices engage in polyphonic play. In musical parlance about polyphony, 'voice' is not restricted to vocal parts, but includes instrumental ones as well, and, in the twentieth century, by extension, also groups of parts (simultaneously related to other such groups).⁴ Later I will use the term also in a metaphorical sense, as is common in cultural analysis.

Within polyphony two dimensions may be discerned: *counterpoint* and *harmony*.⁵ *Counterpoint* refers to the differentiation between simultaneous voices. Characteristically they differ in their melodic and rhythmic shapes, and may be different in timbre as well.⁶

This results, for instance, in a variety of melodic movements occurring at the same time between voices (counter, oblique,⁷ and parallel ones; with a preference for the former two), as well as in rhythmic disparity and complementarity.

At the same time, in the relevant Western music traditions, the voices are not conceived as co-existing indifferently. Polyphony is not a matter of an unordered set of independent voices. Usually the voices are attuned to each other. Part of this mutual attuning belongs to the *harmonic* dimension. The concept of harmony applies to the pitch relationships between the simultaneous voices, according to norms for their sounding together well, holding in the particular music tradition. Harmonic is not the same as 'harmonious.' In fact, a great deal of dissonance between voices may occur. Another aspect of mutual attuning lies in ways of rhythmic complementarity and disparity, mentioned above.

The harmonic norms, and consequently harmonic acceptability, differ considerably from one musical practice to the other, historically and synchronically. In Renaissance polyphony, for example, the attuning of the voices in relation to the overall harmonic structures and processes was articulated in terms of consonance and dissonance, in which consonance counted as the principle reference. On the other hand, Charles Seeger developed a concept of *dissonant* counterpoint, in favor of what he called "a purifying discipline."⁸ In his turn, Boulez considerably extended the notions of 'voice' and 'harmony.' Voices may consist in themselves of complex structures (this is the term Boulez uses), comprised of complexes of pitches, durations or timbres, or groups of voices.⁹ In the case of Boulez, the concept of harmony is certainly not limited to classical tonal, or pre-classical modal structures. He introduces the notion "multiplied harmony," which is expressed as a system of degrees of density (Boulez 117-18).¹⁰

The expression "responsibility," used above, has been proposed by composer Pierre Boulez to characterize the ways in which the participant voices are related to each other, shape each other (e.g. in melodic and rhythmic complementarity), and contribute to the articulation of the overall texture and of overall processes (in particular, in the dimension of harmonic structure [Boulez 118]).¹¹ The word responsibility is taken in its literal sense of 'ability to respond.' Responsibility in counterpoint is thus actualized in two dimensions of ordering: the relation between one individual voice to each of the others (contrapuntal), and the relation between the indi-

vidual voice and the collective of voices (harmonic). Together the voices articulate the harmonic framework, and may transgress it individually as well. Boulez emphasizes that it is in the aspect of responsibility that polyphony distinguished itself from monody, heterophony and homophony.¹²

A consequence of this ‘ability to respond’ is that the voices may be perceived as transforming each other continuously. Because of their harmonic interference, they elicit sonorous aspects in each other that cannot be observed if the voices were sung or played separately. Even *new* voices may be heard which are not performed as such. This is due to the interference between overtones, and may also be effected when voices are crossing each other in pitch position (*Stimmtausch*), thereby partly losing their identity (at least in comparison with the situation in which they were considered separately). In the latter instance, possibilities arise of perceiving fresh melodic formations out of fragments of these crossing voices.

What will happen between voices through their sonic interference is unpredictable to a large extent, depending also on the performance space, the position of the listener, etc. One example of such interference is *resonance*. When in a particular voice, a fundamental pitch with its overtones happens to be harmonically in agreement with pitches in other voices, these pitches may sound more emphatically than others. On the other hand, a dissonant relationship will bring out rich spectra of overtones, with unforeseen dynamic sonic processes.

Polyphony as a musical practice is not restricted to Western traditions, though it is (or rather has been) characteristic of them. One meets polyphony also in Central Africa and Polynesia, for example. The concept may also be extended, transgressing the limits of what was commonly understood as polyphony in the West before 1900, that is, *melodic* polyphony. The extended concept includes rhythmical, or even timbric, voices. In this way, Arabic and Indian classical music traditions may be involved in the study of polyphony, too, if one takes into consideration the relationships between vocal or instrumental solo parts, on the one hand, and percussion ones, on the other.¹³

The concepts of polyphony and counterpoint have been used by composers quite regularly in a metaphorical sense. Thus Matthijs Vermeulen viewed his “polymelody” or “authentic horizontalism” in an emancipatory, utopic way, as a totality of equal social relationships (Braas, chapter 2.4). It is in a metaphoric sense that I will further explore the significance of polyphony and counterpoint in Said’s work.

III. Reflections on Music in Said's Work

The Role of Music in His Life

Music occupied a privileged place in Edward Said's life. He was a gifted piano player. In 1999, together with Daniel Barenboim, Said brought together young Arab and Jewish musicians to play in Europe as *one* orchestra. This "West-Eastern Divan Workshop," alluding to Goethe's famous collection, was devised to dissolve, if only temporarily, political polarity by musical cooperation.¹⁴ It may be called a sonic intervention with musical, ethical, and political dimensions. Music gave Edward Said ample occasion to reflect on matters like the relation between the private and the public, between the dominant and the alternative, between aesthetics and ethics. He has repeatedly deplored the present cultural situation in the West, in which, of all the arts, the least is known about (classical) music, by the generally educated public and intellectuals alike. Dismayed and puzzled by this, he voiced his impression that music is losing its authority (Barenboim and Said 137).

Music's Loss of Authority

Referring to the decrease in importance of music in intellectual discourse, Said spoke of "a kind of apartheid," unique to our time and very different from the nineteenth century's (Barenboim and Said 130). He related this situation to Adorno's account of the negative teleology of Western classical music during the twentieth century, "[s]o autonomous has music become with Schönberg . . . that it has withdrawn completely from the social dialectic that produced it in the first place" ("From Silence to Sound and Back Again," 515).¹⁵ Instead of a representation of society—as was the case with music of the triumphant bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century—(classical) music has become a representation of the *inability* to function within the society: "the true new music is the music that cannot be performed and cannot be heard" (Barenboim and Said 131).¹⁶

The Private and Public Roles of Music

Said emphasized and even defended the privacy and pleasure of listening to and playing music for oneself.¹⁷ The privateness of music and its autonomy as an art seems to be furthered, as observed by Said, by the notion that music does not share a common discursivity with language (*Musical Elaborations* 40). He even speaks of the "muteness" and "allusive silence" of music (*Musical Elaborations* 16, 75).¹⁸

Said has repeatedly expressed his puzzlement over this side of (Western classical) music (Barenboim and Said 156).

At the same time, Said strongly de-mystified the nineteenth-century concept of so-called absolute music, the idea that music would be a purely autonomous art. To him, music is not at all separate from political and social processes, even though a degree of separateness has been taken for granted for at least a century through the concept of 'absolute' music (*Musical Elaborations* xii). Stated more positively, he holds that Western classical music "shares a common history of intellectual labor with the society of which it forms so interesting and engaging an organic part," constituting, in Gramsci's words, the "elaboration" of Western civil society (*Musical Elaborations* 70).¹⁹

Both aspects of music, the private and the public, are combined in Said's reflection upon Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*: "Music is of fundamental interest therefore because it represents the rarity, uniqueness, and absolute individuality of art [in terms of work, artist, performance, auditor/reader/spectator], as well as its intermittent, fragmentary, highly conditional, and circumstantial existence" (*Musical Elaborations* 75).

In line with his insistence on aesthetics as a realm of human activity in its own right, this does not mean to Said that the practice and understanding of music could, or should, be reduced to the socio-political sphere. In his humanistic perspective, music, and more generally the aesthetic, should be able to function as a voice of *resistance*, "as an indictment of the political . . . , a stark contrast, forcefully made, to inhumanity, to injustice" (Barenboim and Said 168).²⁰ Expressing his interest in that which cannot be resolved and which is irreconcilable, Said concludes: "For me, as somebody who cares so deeply about music, a very important part of the practice of music is that music, in some profound way, is perhaps the final resistance to the acculturation and commodification of everything" (Barenboim and Said 168).

Music, then, has for him the potential to serve as a powerful "contrapuntal" voice in the texture of human expressions. This must be seen in the context of Said's humanism of alternatives: "But for intellectuals, artists, and free citizens, there must always be room for dissent, for alternative views, for ways and possibilities to challenge the tyranny of the majority and, at the same time and most importantly, to advance human enlightenment and liberty" (Barenboim and Said 181).²¹

Amateurism and Transgression

Said writes about music as a passionately committed *amateur* intellectual. “Amateur” is his own expression, and he uses it in a clearly positive key (*Musical Elaborations* xvii). He describes “amateurism” as related to “the desire to be moved not by profit or reward but by love for and unquenchable interest in the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to a specialty, in caring for ideas and values in spite of the restriction of a profession” (*Musical Elaborations* 76).

There is a remarkable resonance between Said’s notion of amateurism and his concept of *transgression*, through the characteristic of crossing borders, emphasized by him in both. Furthermore, in the context of our present reflection, it is significant to note that he views music as a transgressive medium *par excellence*: “In short, the transgressive element in music is its nomadic ability to attach itself to, and become part of, social formations, to vary its articulations and rhetoric depending on the occasion as well as the audience, plus the power and the gender situations in which it takes place” (*Musical Elaborations* 70).²² To deal with music in an “amateurish” way thus seems to be very apt, given Said’s contention that transgression is a key characteristic of the medium.

IV. Umm Kalthoum Revisited as a Contrapuntal Voice

Elaboration Versus Development

Later in his life, Said noticed that this childhood experience of Umm Kalthoum’s recital kept coming back to his mind, connected with a revival of his interest in Arabic culture. This is how he concludes the passage quoted earlier: “But of course it [the art of Umm Kalthoum] only went beneath the surface of my conscious awareness until, in recent years, I returned to an interest in Arabic culture, where I rediscovered her, and was able to associate what she did musically with some features of Western classical music” (*Musical Elaborations* 98).

Though in Said’s perception Umm Kalthoum’s music was lacking in counterpoint, I propose to view his experience of this very music as functioning for him as a contrapuntal voice to especially the Austro-German classical music traditions. In short, I believe that the experience with the Arabic music star contained the seed of later articulations of *alternatives*, as Said calls them, to dominant Western

schemes, both in music and music philosophy. Eventually, the contact with Arabic music also enabled Said to detect alternatives *within* the canon of Austro-German music.

I will now give some arguments for this, and will concentrate on Said's observations in *Musical Elaborations*. This book contains his Wellek Library Lectures in Critical Theory, given in 1989, at the University of California at Irvine. In these lectures, one meets discussions of musical details which betray an attention much closer to Arabic aesthetics than to a Western classical one. There is an amazing remark in relation to just ornamental turns in classical and romantic compositions such as by Schumann, Brahms, Wagner, and Richard Strauss: "these basically conventional ornaments manage somehow to communicate a speechless, contentless eloquence I find very difficult to explain" (*Musical Elaborations* 86).²³

As a more general observation, I should like to point to the fact that a large part of the Western compositions Said discusses are sets of *variations*. Again, this interest of Said's is more typical of the tradition of Umm Kalthoum than it is of Western classical music practices. In the context of the latter, a much more prestigious and central musical artifact is the sonata form,²⁴ as employed especially in the first movements of symphonies. It is in the latter that the emphasis is on—and I resume Said's terms—"developmental tension" and "carefully constructed logical structure," rather than on variation and elaboration. Indeed, the latter qualifications, presented as characteristic of Arabic music, suit the Western *variation* compositions quite well.

In fact, this attention to Western variation compositions is to an extent a symptom of Said's conscious resistance against the core of Austro-German classical music: the (first movement) sonata form. Essential to this form is an overall formal process to which every part contributes: the exposition with the first and second themes, in a relationship of tension because of difference in key and melodic-rhythmic outline; then the development section in which key and thematic tensions are heightened, and finally the recapitulation in which first and second themes return, but now in the same key.

Edward Said tends to portray sonata form so persistently in terms of unequal power relations, against the background of Western cultural ideologies—largely passing over transgressions within actual sonata practice—that the relevant texts sometimes acquire a touch of Occidentalism. Furthermore, he constructs a polarity which does not always do justice to the variational and

elaborative aspects within the sonata formal process (though he does prove to have an ear for this), nor to the developmental qualities in variation compositions. This is what he has to say about the sonata form:

So much of the discipline of music is severe and rigorous, so much of it dominative and specialized . . . that it is no wonder that sonata form, which can be read and is frequently described as a disciplinary essentialization of coercive development, achieved so great an authority in classical nineteenth century compositional and performance techniques. The model for the sonata form is, I think, pedagogic and dramatic: what we have in it is a demonstration of authoritative control in which a thematic statement and its subsequent development are worked through rigorously by the composer. . . . Thus themes undergo development, there is a calculated alternation of dominant and tonic keys, and a clangorous affirmation of the composer's authority over his material is achieved (*Musical Elaborations* 100).²⁵

All this amounts to what Said's perception of Umm Kalthoum's music and non-Western classical music is precisely *not*. That is why he speaks about *variation forms* in Western music as an alternative, and even as a counter-tradition. As to the latter music, it is the aesthetics and music of Olivier Messiaen which Said views as a symbol of the alternative (*Musical Elaborations* 99).²⁶ Messiaen's work does not rely on the central values of the main Western musical tradition, that is, it does not base itself on concepts of development and mastering time in "forward logical control . . . according to a linear model"; his music is rather an "anti- or non-narrative alternative to the mainstream tradition" (*Musical Elaborations* 99), offering "infinitely possible variations" (*Musical Elaborations* 101). It is in relation to Messiaen's work that Said observes:

From the different, private perspective of a contrary artist, however, music is another way of telling . . . , digressive, reiterative, slower in its effects because built up through the whole series of affirmations and associations that come with not focusing on getting through time

but of being *in* time, experiencing it together, rather than in competition, with other musics, experiences, temporalities (*Musical Elaborations* 100).

One will not miss, first of all, the striking similarity of this wording with the way Said described his early experience with Umm Kalthoum and, secondly, the evident—and unexpected—partiality of this characterization, and even identification with it.

It is noteworthy that Said connected the concept of counter-tradition not only with variational forms in the usual sense, but also with the contrapuntal mode. (One may, indeed, view textures of counterpoint, especially homogeneous ones which use the same melodic patterns for all voices, like in canons and fugues, as forms of variation—that is, in an overlapping instead of a consecutive way.) He even paraphrases counterpoint as contrapuntal to the model of the authoritative sonata form:

. . . [Y]ou think of and treat one musical line in conjunction with several others that derive from and relate to it, and you do so through imitation, repetition, or ornamentation—as an antidote to the more overtly administrative and executive authority contained in, say, a Mozart or Beethoven classical sonata form. (*Musical Elaborations* 102)

I should add that Said again constructs a polarity here in which differences are overstressed. Also contrapuntal textures may well manifest “overtly administrative and executive authority.”

Interestingly, a connection may be made between this description of counterpoint and that other favorite concept of Said’s, elaboration. Textures of homogeneous counterpoint show explicit processes of elaboration since the parts are each other’s overlapping variants. But also, in a more general way, contrapuntal voices modify each other in endless and unexpected ways. This is due to (psycho-)acoustic and syntactical interferences between the perceived simultaneous voices as explained earlier in this text. This elaboration could be called the ‘aura of polyphony.’

Polyphony, with its contrapuntal and harmonic processes, often constitutes such a complex texture, that it eludes cognitive grip, and can be listened to many times, without the sonorous processes being

cognitively exhausted. The voices have, so to speak, a mutually elaborative effect on each other. If any musical texture had to be chosen as the epitome of defying a single authoritative listening, polyphony would be a convincing candidate. While the contrapuntal voice of Umm Kalthoum's art elicited alternatives within the voice of Western classical music for Said—the variational, elaborative, ornamental—it did also right within the core of the latter music. He pointed to the fascination of Beethoven during his third creative period with fugal and variational forms, as “his way of getting away from the coerciveness of sonata form, opening music out exfoliatively, elaboratively, contemplatively” (*Musical Elaborations* 101). In such a counter-tradition, according to him, disciplined organization of musical time is dissipated and delayed (*Musical Elaborations* 102).

An Alternative Concept of Time

For Said, the musical counter-tradition to, as well as within, Western classical music seems to involve a concept of time, different from the one allegedly induced by the dominant tradition as connected with the sonata form. This ‘alternative’ concept is related to the experience of a certain slowness, a feeling of leisure, a sense of being invited to reflect, to contemplate, and to become aware of an endless richness of possibilities of sonorous relationships. In contrast, ‘dominant’ time was related in Said's experience to the sense of duty and the ethic of productivity (*Musical Elaborations* 100).

Again, the time concept of leisure and slowness, related to the experience of a counter-tradition within art music of the West, as well as related to an ‘alternative’ listening to that music, shows a striking resemblance with what Said observed about Umm Kalthoum's recital. Also there he noted a contrast between, on the one hand, the sense of time he was educated in (which made him dedicated to an ethic of productivity and of overcoming obstacles), and, on the other hand, the non-directional, but rather “luxuriating” approach to time by the great singer of Arabic music.

Finally, a link may be made between the alternative concept of time and polyphony. If the interferences between the simultaneous parts, resulting in multiple, mutually elaborative, effects in acoustics and syntax are to be appreciated in listening, then the taking of ample time is called for.²⁷

Counterpoint between Musical Traditions

Above, I have expressed my opinion that the art of Umm Kalthoum, even though apparently suppressed by Edward Said during decades, has played an important role for him as an *alternative*, as a contrapuntal voice to Western classical music. In Said's personal history, Western and Arabic musics have become interfering voices. The concept of counterpoint may be extended in this context from the confines of a singular musical work or tradition to the mutual response between traditions. Such inter-musical counterpoint has been conducive in Said's case to detect new ways of listening to both Arabic and Western classical musics. His judgement that Middle Eastern music, such as Umm Kalthoum's, is non-developmental, used to bear the Orientalist mark of rejection. However, to him this very characteristic later served as a starting point of protest against dominant tendencies in Western classical music, and as the incentive to envisage musical and cultural alternatives. In fact, he noted himself that his alternative ways of listening to Western classical music have been inspired by his early contact with Arabic music. He wrote that his experience of Brahms's variations opus 18 is "threaded through" with the singing of Umm Kalthoum and other non-Western musics—along with Western ones (*Musical Elaborations* 97). At this point he himself used the musical notion of counterpoint to characterize the relationships between these voices of his life during his later years (Zeeman).

V. Musical Polyphony as a Model for Humanistic Emancipation

As a conclusion, I should like to take polyphony as a metaphor one step further. There is a suggestion in Said's work of polyphony as a humanistic *model*. A reference to his humanistic perspective may serve here: "It seems to me that the basic humanistic mission today, whether in music, literature, or any of the arts or the humanities, has to do with the preservation of difference, without, at the same time, sinking into the desire to dominate" (Barenboim and Said 154). His is a humanism of alternatives, always with room for dissent, ultimately geared to further human (rational) enlightenment and liberty.

A 'difference' is understood by Said as relating, for example, to an identity or a tradition, but in a specific sense. In the perspective of his mission, he takes these notions as contrary to the common practice

in which difference is expressed—or forced to express itself—in terms of the *affirmation* of identity, often accompanied by a tendency towards either domination or subjugation. In concordance with his view, Said does not hold that the ‘differences’ (identities or traditions) involved should be conceived of in an essentialist way as “pure,” or, worse, should be made “pure.” An identity “is itself made up of different elements. But it has a coherent sound and personality or profile to it” (Barenboim and Said 154).²⁸ Humanist community was characterized by Said as the overcoming of divisions without destroying the differences (Zeeman). This is an eloquent paraphrase of polyphony with its dimensions of counterpoint and harmony.

Said’s work offers ample occasion for viewing polyphony as a representation of a humanist community, to serve as an emancipatory model. I propose to assess the various aspects of polyphony in music discussed above, while envisaging them in that perspective.

- Respect for Difference without Domination, within a Shared Harmonic System

Polyphony as a social model entails the welcoming of difference—without which counterpoint is not possible—as well as the eagerness to involve oneself in the endless richness of ever-changing mutual response between voices. Though one voice may seem temporarily more prominent—but not dominant—than others, this role changes between the participants, and is not lasting. Musical polyphony indeed serves as a humanistic model here, since there is no tyranny of the majority or a minority, and there are always dissident voices, as well as alternative manners to listen to the ever alternative ways the voices are musically interrelated.

What about the shared harmonic framework, by virtue of which the contrapuntal voices can interact? In the case of a metaphorical interpretation of polyphony, this may be translated within the intercultural perspective of Said as radical secular humanism, including “amateurism” in the true sense of the word. Thus, the ‘harmonic dimension’ may be understood as: mutual respect, the joyful readiness to interact in complementarity and disparity, and, essentially, love.

Of course, the harmonic dimension, which in polyphonic music used to be very exacting, needs more thought when taken in a metaphorical sense in the context of humanist emancipation. Who are the ones to devise this harmonic dimension (which, like in music, will be continuously redefined by the participants)? How to reach tempo-

rary consensus about it? How to prevent the exacting nature of ‘harmony’ (again, not ‘harmoniousness,’ since ‘dissonance’ is an important part of it) from becoming oppressive?

- The ‘Alternative’ Time Concept

This concept was developed by Said in relation to counter-traditions to Western classical music, both Western and non-Western. It was also observed to be favorable to the appreciation of musical polyphony according to him. It is a concept described as allowing time to reflect, to contemplate. It involves a sense of leisure, commensurate with a certain slowness in the unfolding of sound textures and processes. Such a concept is clearly suitable to a humanistic community, in counterpoint (now metaphorically speaking) to a time concept of duty and productivity. A monophonic ethic of pressure to produce is likely to cause a constant sense of time shortage. And the sense of a chronic ‘lack’ of time is conducive to the experience of being a prisoner, of being isolated as an individual or as a group, deprived of the possibility to reflect and to mature. In fact, to inspire a constant sense of time shortage is a very efficient, totalizing means of “dramatic control”—to borrow an expression of Said’s—used by economic corporate power to make people seemingly voluntarily into slaves. The economizing of time, resulting in the imposition of time shortage, works as a modern variant of systematic social suppression. On the other hand, the alternative time concept counts in Said’s perspective as emancipatory. Variation and elaboration appeal to the faculties of individual discovery, reflection and enjoyment, opening up the listener to the inexhaustible richness of possibilities, in playful “contrapuntal” response to individual expressions of others, bringing in a perspective of maturation.

- Dissidence

In polyphony, especially in the case of Bach, individual voices quite frequently provide moments of dissidence, when the logic of their melodic motion finds itself in conflict with the prevailing harmonic structure as suggested by (some of) the other contrapuntal voices. The roles of either emphasizing or countering overall harmonic structures shift constantly between voices. As a metaphor for socio-cultural and political situations, this musical *ensemble* of ‘contrapuntal behaviours,’ seems an appropriate one in Said’s humanistic ideal. I refer again to his view that humanistic commu-

nity would always offer “room for dissent, for alternative views, . . . to advance human . . . liberty” (Barenboim and Said 181). Polyphonic textures are ‘dissident’ in themselves from the listener’s point of audition. While ever allowing shifts of attention from one voice to another, the textures constantly defy complete cognitive grip. One may well learn to appreciate this as conducive to freedom from the drive to control, while the listening may yet orientate itself to a ‘harmonic’ dimension of ‘polyphony.’

- Transgression

We have observed that counterpoint thrives when articulated with well-defined melodic, rhythmic, or timbric identities. At the same time, the richness of sonorous relationships between simultaneous voices resulting in multiple, mutually elaborative, effects often will make the definition of voice identities less evident. This grants the listener ample opportunity to develop ‘nomadic abilities’ of attention. Polyphony stimulates perceptive transgression, which actualizes itself in the mobilizing of perspectives on the sound texture. Such a listening practice may well be conceived as a representation of Said’s concept of transgression in the context of humanistic emancipation.

Edward Said’s work holds the potential of a double-faced emancipation in relation to music. Firstly, underlining music’s eminent privateness, bringing to attention counterpoint as a highly evolved discipline in the field of the aesthetic, and calling music the possibly final resistance to the general commodification, Said’s reflections imply the promise of a re-emancipation of music as a voice of authority in the intellectual debate, and in society at large. Music’s re-emancipation may unfold, when, secondly, it assumes a public role and serves as a model for the humanistic emancipation of society, in particular *as* polyphony in the metaphorical sense—offering an alternative non-totalizing time concept and multi-voicedness—as well as *by means* of polyphony in the musical sense, for instance, in general education from an early age. In that sense, Said’s work on music may be read as a “contrapuntal” expression in relation to Adorno’s negative teleology.

The presentation, in this article, of musical polyphony as a homologous model for, or parallel to, a (utopia of) radical humanist society may be considered—and criticized—as a ‘homophonic’ or even ‘monophonic’ approach, instead of a ‘polyphonic’ one.²⁹ On the other hand, it is not to be expected that music will be totally

emulated in socio-political practices. May music—and models based on it—remain a “contrapuntal” voice, in exacting and challenging relationships to society.

In the writings of Edward Said, music is not merely an abstract, formal model for humanist emancipation. His involvement in the art is that of an “amateur”—and this means that love, joy, and passion are its motivation. This could make music into a privileged model. In Said’s “amateur” world view, love is likely to be the transfigurative power in this emancipation.

Notes

- ¹ An extended discussion by the same author of Said’s thinking on music will be published as “Edward Said and Counterpoint” in the forthcoming book edited by Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom *Edward Said: Emancipation and Representation*, to be published by the University of California Press in the fall of 2005.
- ² Interview by Michaël Zeeman with Edward Said, conducted in 2000 and broadcast by Dutch Television on September 28, 2003 to commemorate the passing away of Said.
- ³ This is not the place to elaborate on the immense significance of Umm Kalthoum (1904?-1975; spelling of her name as by Said) for the Arabic world and the world at large. See, for example: G. Braune, V. Danielson, H. Ben Hammed, and Y. Saïah-Baudis et. al.
- ⁴ ‘Voice’ is taken here as a sequence of sounds which meets criteria of coherence specific to a particular music tradition.
- ⁵ The term ‘counterpoint’ derives from the Latin ‘punctus contra punctum’ (‘note against note’), which betrays the role of script as a technological device of developing counterpoint in the history of Western music. I will point out later, however, that contrapuntal music practices are by no means limited to traditions employing written notation.
- ⁶ That is, they differ from the perspective of simultaneity. Voices in themselves may well be identical or very similar, like in canons or fugues, but in polyphony they are unfolding, shifted in time in relation to each other, so that they overlap. This is sometimes called ‘homogenic polyphony.’ Alternatively, participant voices may be highly different in themselves, which is called ‘heterogenic polyphony.’ Combinations may occur, like in the work of J. S. Bach. For the terminology, see Zimmermann.
- ⁷ Oblique motion entails the fixation or repetition of a given pitch in one voice, while the melody in another voice rises or falls.

- ⁸ Seeger's is a didactic design in which the rules for classical Western counterpoint were reversed: The requirement of consonance on certain syntactical positions, like the end of phrases, was turned into the requirement of dissonance. This did not only regard melody but also rhythm, which also could be made 'dissonant.' Composers inspired by this notion and developing it in their own ways were Ruth Crawford-Seeger and Carl Ruggles. The Dutch composer Matthijs Vermeulen also developed a variety of dissonant polyphony, by changing the norms for harmonic relationships. He shifted the normative reference within the overtone series from proximity to the fundamental pitch to distance from it.
- ⁹ In fact, also in Renaissance polyphony a voice is a complex phenomenon as well: a totality of fundamental tones and overtones (harmonics), because of which often unpredictable interferences between voices arise.
- ¹⁰ Again, this may be considered as a generalization of the concepts of consonance and dissonance, since the former are acoustically less dense than the latter, in terms of fundamentals plus overtones.
- ¹¹ ". . . [W]e must now study the concept of polyphony, which is distinguished [from monody, homophony, and heterophony] . . . by the responsibility which it implies from one structure to another."
- ¹² Monophony: the performance of a single melodic line, by one voice, or shared by several voices; heterophony: simultaneous variation of the same melodic line in two or more voices; homophony: the performance by two or more voices of different melodic lines, simultaneously identical in rhythmic structure. Also Matthijs Vermeulen has applied the notion of responsibility for the relationship between voices in polyphonic music (he spoke of 'polymelodic' music). In a letter dated August 29, 1942, he wrote: "[E]ach voice retains its autonomy and at the same time complies with the purely harmonic aspect of the expression, and in this sense becomes *responsible* for the result." (qtd. in Braas 54; translation and emphasis mine).
- ¹³ In North-Indian classical music, apart from rhythmical polyphony, also melodic-timbral polyphony may occur. For example, in performances for more than one *shenai* (double reed instrument), usually one player responds to the solo lines of another by means of shifting drones, as an accompaniment. Moreover a polyphonic play may arise between melodic (vocal or instrumental) solo parts and quasi-melodic patterns played on the two percussion instruments which together compose the *tabla*, especially the *bayan*-part of the couple.
- ¹⁴ The West-Eastern Divan Workshop was presented at Weimar 1999, in that year Culture Capital of Europe. Apart from Arabic (from various nation-

al backgrounds) and Israeli musicians, a smaller group of German musicians participated. The organizers included the cello player Yoyo Ma. The event celebrated the 250th birthday of Goethe. The Workshop was named after this poet's *Der west-östliche Divan* published in 1819, written after he had acquainted himself with translations of Persian literature.

- 15 This passage relates Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* to Adorno's *Philosophie der Neuen Musik*.
- 16 See also p. 130. Edward Said mostly deals with classical Western music and its successors, and hardly with jazz, pop, or rock music. Premonitions of the process described are found by Said in the last works of Beethoven. He observes about these works that "... the whole question of affirmation and communication has become very problematic. . . . And I think that symbolizes the moment when music really moves out of the world of everyday exertion, of effort, of human solidarity and struggle, into a new realm, which symbolizes the obscurity of music to contemporary audiences today. In other words, music becomes a highly specialized art." (Barenboim and Said 142).
- 17 Said holds that pleasure and privacy do remain connected with the art of music in spite of its reification, disagreeing with Adorno here, "for whom in the totally administered society no person is exempt from ideological coercion." (*Musical Elaborations* xvi).
- 18 On many occasions, Said has expressed his wonder about this, for instance: "Anyone who has written or thought about music has of course confronted the problem of meaning and interpretation, but must always return to a serious appraisal of how music manages in spite of everything to preserve its reticence, mystery, or allusive silence, which in turn symbolizes its autonomy as an art." (*Musical Elaborations* 16). See also "From Silence to Sound and Back Again" 517.
- 19 See also p. 15.
- 20 Said suggests that this aspect of resistance is what people respond to in Beethoven's music.
- 21 This is a stance that Said has emphasised consistently. See, for example, "The intellectual . . . [represents] an individual vocation, an energy, a stubborn force engaging as a committed and recognizable voice in language and in society with a whole slew of issues, all of them having to do in the end with a combination of enlightenment and emancipation or freedom" (*Representations of the Intellectual* 73); "... [O]ne of the main intellectual activities of our century has been the questioning, not to say undermining, of authority" (*Representations of the Intellectual* 91). This leads to the pressing question: "How does the intellectual address authority: as

a professional supplicant or as its unrewarded, amateurish conscience?" (*Representations of the Intellectual* 83). The tension in musical practices between the private and the public is a particular instance of a more general characteristic of the intellectual. Said observes the positioning of the intellectual from his own personal perspective: "There is therefore this quite complicated mix between the private and the public worlds, my own history, values, writings and positions as they derive from my experiences, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, how these enter into the social world where people debate and make decisions about war and freedom and justice" (*Representations of the Intellectual* 12).

- 22 Among other descriptions of transgression, we read that "faculty music has to travel, cross over, drift from place to place in a society, even though many institutions and orthodoxies have sought to confine it" (*Musical Elaborations* xv). Said refers to "transgressions by music into adjoining domains—the family, school, class and sexual relations, nationalism, and even large public issues" (*Musical Elaborations* 56). He has also reflected on transgression as a concept of secular humanism: "Secular transgression chiefly involves moving from one domain to another, the testing and challenging of limits, the mixing and intermingling of heterogeneities, cutting across expectations, providing unforeseen pleasures, discoveries, experiences" (*Musical Elaborations* 55).
- 23 Said gives examples from Brahms's *Theme with Variations* op. 18, Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, and Strauss's *Capriccio*.
- 24 The term 'form' is not a very apt one, but is still generally found in musical parlance; 'formal process,' as used later in this text, is a more acceptable one.
- 25 It should be stressed here that when the concept of (first movement) sonata form is discussed in this chapter, it is Said's. In classical-romantic practice we typically find many transgressions of the strict sonata form scheme; to invent such transgressions is likely to have been a challenge for the composers involved.
- 26 Said quotes Boulez who suggests that Messiaen offers a paradigm "to think things through together, heterophonically, variationally" (*Musical Elaborations* 97, referring to P. Boulez, *Orientations: Collected Writings*, ed. M. Cooper [London: Faber and Faber, 1986], 406-07.). I note in passing that Said consistently misspells the composer's name as 'Messaien.'
- 27 It is striking that in Western classical music itself, especially since Claude Debussy (1862-1918), these alternatives became dominant. In most twentieth-century textbooks on the history of Western music this receives

ample attention. See R. P. Morgan 40-50. This phenomenon has been considered as both the effect of, and the condition for, Western interest in non-Western musical traditions. Even before Debussy, 'alternatives' were present in Western music, particularly in relation to the concepts of 1. the archaic (Arcadia), 2. the world of the folk (Pastorale), 3. nature (in the Romantic sense, in contrast to the urban world), and 4. the exotic (C. Dahlhaus). To this list we can add: 5. the world of magic (usually connected with chromaticism as an autonomous system, such as in the work of Wagner and Rimsky-Korsakov). See also R. de Groot.

²⁸ See also p. 155.

²⁹ This observation was made by Karin Bijsterveld in relation to a presentation by the author during the conference *Sonic Interventions* of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA), March 30, 2005, in Amsterdam.

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Said, Orientalism, and Japan

Daisuke Nishihara

I. The Japanese Reception of Said

The name of “Edo-wa-a-dou Sa-yi-yi-dou” is very popular among Japanese intellectuals today. While strolling down the aisle of bookshelves labeled “contemporary thoughts” in major Japanese bookstores, you can easily find piles of translations of Said’s works, although you may sometimes encounter a bookshelf mistakenly entitled “Se-ddo” or “Za-yi-yi-dou.” The first Japanese translation of Edward W. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) appeared in Japan in 1986, published by Heibonsha Ltd., eight years after the publication of the original in English. Thereafter, various translations of Said’s work successively emerged one after the other.¹

Apart from these books, there are numerous translations published in a variety of Japanese magazines and proceedings and not referred to in this article. Moreover, special issues of journals have been devoted to Edward W. Said. Examples include the March 1995 and November 2003 issues of *Gendai Shiso* (Contemporary Thoughts) and the March 1995, November 2003, and January 2004 issues of *Eigo Seinen* (The Rising Generation). Since Said’s publication in Japan, his postcolonial theory and writings on the Islamic world have attracted considerable attention among Japanese scholars, who mainly fall within three categories: students of Middle East studies, researchers within Japanese studies interested in the relationship between Japan and other Asian countries in the Modern period (although Said seldom mentioned East Asia in his writings, it seemed possible for them to apply Said’s theory to the history of the Japanese Empire that possessed colonies for over fifty years), and scholars of European studies who were also interested in Said’s postcolonialism as his theoretical works had already become a common language within that field. Members of the Department of English Literature were especially influenced by Said and other postcolonial theorists. In addition, Said’s various articles on

the problem of Palestine were widely welcomed as basic introductory information among the wide range of enthusiastic readers.

What then are the characteristics of the Japanese reception of Edward W. Said? What are the meanings of Said's theory of Orientalism in a Japanese context? First, it should be noted that Said's *Orientalism* has not evoked the same strong antipathy from Japanese conservatives that it did in the West. On the contrary, most Japanese intellectuals, whether Marxist or conservative, are sympathetic towards Said's unsparing criticism toward the West. Being an Eastern nation, Japan has been exposed to strong political and militaristic pressure from such Western powers as Britain, the United States, and Russia since the early stages of modernization. At the same time, Japanese intellectuals have always been aware of the prejudiced representation of the Orient by the Occident and that Western discourse on the East was deeply connected to the former's power structure. Said's *Orientalism* endorsed what the Japanese had instinctively felt from the time of their first encounter with the West. A significant example is what the Japanese aesthete, Tenshin Okakura (1862-1913), writes about a century ago in *The Awakening of Japan* (1905):

Has not the West as much to unlearn about the East as the East has to learn about the West? In spite of the vast resources of information at the command of the West, it is sad to realize to-day how many misconceptions are still entertained concerning us. We do not mean to allude to the unthinking masses who are still dominated by race prejudice and that vague hatred of the Oriental which is a relic from the days of the Crusades. But even the comparatively well-informed fail to recognize the inner significance of our revival and the real goal of our aspirations. It may be that, as our problems have been none of the simplest, our attitude has been often paradoxical. Perhaps the fact that the history of Eastern civilization is still a sealed book to the Western public may account for the great variety of opinions held by the outside world concerning our present conditions and future possibilities.²

Tenshin Okakura was an eager spokesman for the Japanese culture, publishing *The Awakening of the East* (1902), *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (1903), and

The Book of Tea (1906). He also worked for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts from 1904 to 1906. These above views from the beginning of *The Awakening of Japan* are consistent with what Edward W. Said professes. At the turn of the last century, Japanese intellectuals were well aware of the problem of the representation of the Orient to the Western world. Japan possessed a soil already fertile enough to plant and sustain a counter Orientalist theory. It is no wonder that the seeds of the Orientalist theory sown by Said soon began to germinate within Japan's academic world.

Secondly, the reception of Said did not end up as a mere resurgence of anti-Western sentiment. Rather, the manner in which Said's work was received emerged out of the feelings of guilt associated with the fact that Japan itself, just like Western nations, had been a colonizer. The Japanese Empire had colonized Taiwan, Korea, Micronesia, and Manchuria. In the final stage of the Empire, it occupied vast areas of mainland China and Southeast Asia. "The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" once mercilessly prevailed over all East Asia. Thus, the history of the Japanese Empire cannot but become a target for severe criticism under Orientalist theory. As a result, Said's conception of postcolonialism was smoothly adopted by the tradition of Japanese Marxism that had condemned prewar militarism. So-called left wing scholars started to apply Said's theory in order the better to analyze Japan's prewar discourse on other Asian countries.

Finally, Edward W. Said's reception in Japan is a phenomenon worth considering. It is extremely ironical that Japan, situated at the "Far East," studied what it meant to be peripheral to the "Western" theory of postcolonialism through the "global" language of English. It is undeniable that Said's work was welcomed and accepted as new "Western" thought in Japan. Western academism is so strong that anyone seeking to make an international academic appeal, including Said himself, should use English as a vehicle to convey one's ideas. This is the reality of the world we live in today: Eastern languages like Japanese, Chinese, Korean, or Arabic are far less influential than English. In this sense, Said's theory, ironically, contributed to the hegemony of English as well as American academism, at the time his work was adamantly criticizing Orientalism.

In May 1995, Edward W. Said was invited to the International Mécénat Congress in Tokyo to give several lectures at Japanese institutions. On this occasion, Said's thought and career were highlighted by the Japanese media. Great attention was paid to his early life in the

Middle East and his involvement with the problem of Palestine. Judging by the articles published in Japanese newspapers, Said's mind seemed to be occupied by the seemingly hopeless conflict between Israel and Palestine. The purpose of his visit to Japan was mainly to address contemporary political issues rather than carry on a mutual exchange of views with Japanese intellectuals. As is always the case with noted "Western" scholars' short-term visits to Japan, Said was soon surrounded by Japanese worshippers and sympathizers, including Nobel Laureate Kenzaburo Oe (1935-).

How does Said mention Japan in his writings? Said himself seems to regard Japan as an "Oriental" country. He writes in *Orientalism*: "Americans will not feel quite the same about the Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East (China and Japan, mainly)." ³ At the same time, Said also claims that "its [Orientalism's] influence has spread to 'the Orient' itself: the pages of books and journals in Arabic (and doubtless in Japan, various Indian dialects, and other Oriental languages) are filled with second-order analyses by Arabs of 'the Arab mind,' 'Islam,' and other myths." ⁴ Further, Edward W. Said points out the following in *Culture and Imperialism*:

The relationship between America and its Pacific or Far Eastern interlocutors—China, Japan, Korea, Indochina—is informed by racial prejudice, sudden and relatively unprepared rushes of attention followed by enormous pressure applied thousands of miles away, geographically and intellectually distant from the lives of most Americans. ⁵

It can be said that Said's reference to Japan is fragmented. It is also true that he focuses on Japan solely as a member of the Orient and neglects its other side: Japanese imperialism. However, this flaw of Said's writing provides an incentive for Japanese critics to examine Orientalist theory in an East Asian context.

II. Japan as Orient/Occident

Japan has characteristics of both the Orient and the Occident. This is the reality of modern Japanese history. There is no doubt that the country is geographically situated in what is known as the Orient, but in a political sense it has tried to become a "Western" nation.

Looking back on the world of a century ago, Japan was the only developed nation in the East. Most other Asian and African countries were colonies suffering from the exploitation of Western powers. In this context, the strategy adopted by Japan was contradictory. When it was necessary for the nation to insist on the uniqueness of Japan, stress was first put on the spirit of the Orient. When it came to the matter of civilization, Japan behaved like a fully Westernized state. Japan adopted a we-are-Asian policy when the nation needed cooperation from other Asian countries. However, it practiced Western-style imperialism when it ruled its neighboring colonies.

In this context, Said's binomial antagonism of Orient/Occident and colonizer/colonized becomes extremely complicated. Noriko Imazawa, the translator of *Orientalism*, claims in her "Afterword" that:

In the structure of Orientalism, the West, as the subject or the inspector, and the East, as the object or the inspected, stand in opposition. Regarding this structure, modern Japan has an extremely special position. Geographically and culturally, Japan, being a part of the non-Western world, no doubt belongs to the object or the inspected. Modern Japan, however, tried to be one of the imperialistic powers and thus the nation was eager to learn Western thought in order to establish its own colonies. For example, Cromer's *Modern Egypt* (1908) which is discussed in *Orientalism*, was translated into Japanese and published under the title *Saikin Egypt* (1911) by the Association of Great Japan Civilization, the purpose of which was to introduce contemporary European and American thought to the Japanese. In the preface, the president of the Association, Ohkuma Shigenobu (politician, 1838-1922), explains: "Sir Cromer's management of Egypt is very helpful to our nation's protectoral rule of Korea." Through such efforts, Japan even adopted the Western view of the Orient and became the subject or the inspecting side of Orientalism.⁶

As for Japan as an Oriental country, examples are quite abundant. The Western discourse on Japan, as well as on the Islamic world, was characterized by dictatorship, fanaticism, and cruelty. The representation of Samurai warriors was created along this image. The tradi-

tion of *harakiri* suicide and even the *kamikaze* attack during World War II were interpreted as evidence of the barbaric characteristics of the Japanese. Samurai swords were the key image of violence. Even an academic work like *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1944), written by the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1887-1948), was filled with prejudices. It is even possible that Japanese intellectuals themselves contributed to these representations. They seemed to be happy with the Western image of a Samurai and cooperated to spread it worldwide. For example, Inazo Nitobe (1862-1933), author of *Bushido, the Soul of Japan* (1900), depends on the Samurai image in order to proclaim the greatness of Japanese traditional ethics.

Another example is the *geisha* girl in English and *mousmé* in French as the epitome of the *cliché* of imposed sensuality on Japan. The Orient, including Japan, was associated with the gratification of sexual pleasures by Western men. The *geisha* repeatedly appeared in Western literature and art. *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887) by Pierre Loti (1850-1923) and *Madame Butterfly* (1904) composed by Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), depended heavily on *geisha* images. However, a hasty conclusion that the sexual image of the *geisha* was unilaterally imposed by Western Orientalism is inappropriate. The Japanese also utilized the discourse on *geisha*. In the Japanese context, the sexual image was toned down and the *geisha* became a symbol of Japanese beauty made more acceptable for the Japanese.

The best example of Japan as an object/subject of Orientalism is the case of novelist Jun'ichiro Tanizaki (1886-1965), author of *The Makioka Sisters* (1943-1948) and *The Key* (1956). His works before 1930 greatly depend on the discourse of Orientalism for the representation of both Japan and China. Tanizaki orientalizes Japan itself when he expresses the charm and beauty of the country from the perspective of a Westerner (Self-Orientalism, Japan as the object). But when it comes to representing China, the Japanese writer confidently adopts the colonizer's viewpoint (Japan as the subject).⁷

It is extremely interesting to trace the origins of Tanizaki's Orientalist discourse on China. Orientalism in French literature and art first came to influence the Japanese writer Nagai Kafu (1879-1959), whom Tanizaki deeply respected. Jun'ichiro Tanizaki never visited Europe or America, whereas Kafu lived in both the United States and France for several years. In Kafu's works *America Monogatari* (America Stories, 1907) and *France Monogatari* (France Stories, 1909), there is an abundance of Orientalist dis-

course on the Islamic world. Next Tanizaki applied Kafu's discourse of Orientalism to Korea and China instead of the Islamic world. Kafu writes in *France Monogatari*:

I respect Turkey. At least, Turkey is not a country of hypocrisy. It is not a country driven by the frivolous vanity of becoming part of Western powers. It is not a country of hypocrisy keeping up appearances of fake civilization. Turkey! Turkey of polygamy! Turkey of despotism! Mysterious Turkey! Ferocious Turkey! Turkey of great satire and endless enigmatic words! I suddenly recall the three lines of verse that Musset sings in the Psalms:

C'est le point capital du mahométanisme
De mettre le bonheur dans la stupidité.
Que n'en est-il ainsi dans le christianisme?
[The fundamental idea of Islam
Is finding happiness in stupidity.
Why is this not so for Christianity?]⁸

These sentences occur in a scene depicting Kafu's experiences on a ship sailing through the Suez Canal on its way to Japan. Although he never went to Turkey, he spoke garrulously of it. Kafu relied solely on French literature for the representation of this Muslim nation. Edward W. Said points out in *Orientalism*: "Knowledge no longer requires application to reality; knowledge is what gets passed on silently, without comment, from one text to another. Ideas are propagated and disseminated anonymously, they are repeated without attribution."⁹

The process of dissemination continued. Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, who had never been to the West, applied the discourse of Orientalism to the rest of Asia. He confessed in his story entitled "Dokutan [German Spy]" (1915) that he would direct his attention to China and India if he had to develop exotic stories. In fact, he published three short stories on India: "Yuan Chwang," "From Lahore," and "Magic of Hassan Khan." As the author had never been to India, he had to depend on academic works by British Orientalists. In these stories, he quotes John Campbell Oman's Orientalist book *The Mystics, Ascetics, and Saints of India* (1903). The British scholar's Orientalist discourse concerning Indian superstition, displayed in his book, flowed into Japanese literature through these three stories by Jun'ichiro Tanizaki.

In 1918, Tanizaki first traveled to the Chinese continent and started to create exotic stories on China, such as “Gourmet Club” (1918), “Travel to Suzhou” (1918), “A Night at Qinhuai” (1918), “The Moon of Xihu Lake” (1919), and “Dreams of Velvet” (1919). Through his series of fictional works and travelogues, the writer repeatedly stresses the stagnancy, antiquity, and unchangeability of the old country. He also denies the possibility of development for the nation. On the other hand, Tanizaki was an enthusiastic admirer of beauty, not only of Chinese landscape but also of Chinese women. His works on China can be characterized by a fascination with beautiful scenery and sexual pleasure.

However, Jun’ichiro Tanizaki’s Orientalist approach to China could not last long. When he landed on China for the second time in 1926, the novelist encountered anti-Orientalist discourse by Chinese intellectuals. In Shanghai, Tanizaki became acquainted with Guo Moruo (writer, 1892-1978) and Tian Han (dramatist, 1898-1968), both well known Chinese men of letters who highly esteemed Tanizaki. Tanizaki recalls the incidents of one evening when these three men conversed in his essay “Shanghai Koyuki” (1926). These are Tanizaki’s views on China:

If you go to rural areas, Chinese peasants, even today, are easygoing, saying: “What kind of relationship is there between the Emperor and me?” They seem to be completely indifferent to politics or diplomacy. Eating cheap food and wearing cheap clothes, they seem to live calmly.¹⁰

Guo Moruo and Tian Han readily opposed Tanizaki’s opinion. They told the famous Japanese author that China was suffering from exploitation by foreigners. Tanizaki was astonished and realized that his limited understanding of the country was wrong. Tanizaki consequently revised his optimistic Orientalist discourse. After 1926, he never created exotic stories on China. This manifests the significant role that this conversation played. Tanizaki’s previous monologue displayed in his exotic stories on China was replaced by information presented in the form of a dialogue; one-way discourse was changed into two-way communication. Jun’ichiro Tanizaki’s experience in Shanghai suggests how an Orientalist approach can, and should, be overcome.

III. What Does Japanese Orientalism Ask in Return?

In section II, I enumerated the characteristics of Japanese Orientalism, the position of Japan as both subject and object. What does the Japanese experience of Orientalism ask in return? How does the discussion of Japanese Orientalism contribute to the theory of Orientalism as a whole?

First to be raised is the question of changeability between subject and object. In Said's theory, the Orient always antagonizes the Occident. The roles of colonizer—mainly Britain, France, and the United States—and colonized—principally Muslim countries—are fixed. In the case of the Middle East, this structure may be valid. However, if we consider other areas in the world, the situation is more complicated. Such questions as whether nations like Russia, Turkey, or Japan belong simply to the West or to the East would engender much controversy. In the East Asian context, China, Korea, and Vietnam have had a history of exercising hegemony over neighboring countries. They cannot be solely regarded as innocent victims of imperialism within the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Even China, once divided by such Western powers as Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan, can be the subject of Orientalism. Said's severe criticism of Western hegemony coincides with China's indigenous tradition of anti-Western sentiment, a sentiment which is not only the result of communism but also of the nation's deep-rooted Sino-centrism that regards "red-haired" Europeans as barbarians. Of course, the Chinese today openly admit the superiority of modern civilization, believing at the same time in their own ability to one day take revenge on the West by building a new Eastern civilization. "East wind overwhelms west wind" is a common Chinese expression. Said is often cited in this context in China.

However, it seems that some Chinese scholars are still unwilling to admit that they themselves are the colonizers, now exercising hegemonic power on minorities within the boundary of the nation. It is regrettable that some Chinese intellectuals do not hesitate to impose their unconcealed Orientalist discourse on Tibet, Uighur, and other ethnic groups. So far, Said's writings have not influenced the Chinese academic world enough to cause its members to reflect upon their own brand of Chinese Orientalism. Some Chinese academics deny the existence of Said's Orientalism between the majority and minority of peo-

ple within China. Further, some academics have the *hubris* to claim that the current Orientalist discourse on varying ethnic groups within mainland China is solely a Chinese domestic affair and is not subject to questioning by citizens foreign to China.

Korea is another example of how Orientalist theory functioned in an East Asian context. As the entire Korean peninsula was colonized by Japan for about 35 years, Said's theory endorsed an anti-Japan sentiment within the nation. The Japanese representation of Korea was colored by Orientalist theory. It is no wonder then that Korean-Japanese scholar Kang Sang-jung (1950-), author of *Orientalism no Kanata e* (Beyond Orientalism, 1996), was among the most enthusiastic propagators of Edward W. Said in Japan. It is also true, however, that this anti-Japan sentiment derived not only from the fact of colonization, but also from Korea's deep-rooted tradition of contempt for neighboring countries. Traditionally, Korea regards Japan as its "younger brother," thus the nation is expected to obey Korea, the elder brother. Said's Orientalist theory, once brought into the East Asian context, can play a new and unexpected role. The Self/Other, subject/object, and colonizer/colonized formulae are not necessarily fixed.

Changeability of subject and object also applies to the West itself. Jun'ichiro Tanizaki's representations of the West, for instance, are not necessarily precise. Moreover, a lucid analysis is presented by Jacqueline Pigeot (1939-) of his discourse on the West. In her essay, she points out that Tanizaki never visited the United States or Europe, and that he had little knowledge about the reality of Western countries. She also claims that Tanizaki's versions of "West" and "East" merely represent two poles of his psychological tendencies: brightness against darkness, clarity against mystery, and transparency against muddiness. Summarized briefly, Tanizaki's image of the West can be associated with light. In Pigeot's essay, she maintains that Tanizaki's dualistic theory simplifies reality. In other words, Tanizaki's so-called "West" is merely an image created by the writer himself.¹¹

What is the relationship between West/East and colonizer/colonized? The representation of the West by the East can be distorted either intentionally or unconsciously. Eastern nations, however, never colonized the Occident. Representation of the Other—in this case the West—is not necessarily related to colonialism. Representation of the Other belongs to the realm of culture,

whereas colonialism derives mainly from economic and political origins. Terry Eagleton criticizes postcolonialism as a kind of culturalism in *Literary Theory*:

Culture is on any estimate important in a neocolonial world; but it is hardly what is finally decisive. It is not in the end questions of language, skin colour or identity, but of commodity prices, raw materials, labour markets, military alliances and political forces, which shape the relations between rich and poor nation. . . . Post-colonialism, in short, has been among other things one instance of a rampant “culturalism” which has recently swept across Western cultural theory, over-emphasizing the cultural dimension of human life in understandable overreaction to a previous biologism, humanism or economism. Such cultural relativism is for the most part simply imperial dominion stood on its head.¹²

This criticism by Terry Eagleton might be an excessive generalization which neglects the reality of imperialistic enterprises practiced by Western powers. But as far as Tanizaki’s representation of the West is concerned, Eagleton’s perspective is very illuminating. Tanizaki’s representation of the West is distorted even though Japan never colonized any Western country. Within Orientalism, object and subject can change, and this is what makes a discussion of Japanese Orientalism possible.

Additionally, Edward W. Said’s theory has enabled non-Western countries, such as Japan, to participate in the on-going discussion of literary theory. Before Said’s *Orientalism*, literary theory, whose importance to comparative literature had already been recognized, was a sphere completely occupied by Western scholars. Their literature excluded non-Western masterpieces. Western theorists mainly constructed schools of literary criticism, namely, Russian Formalism, New Criticism, Structuralism, Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Feminism. Because of either a poor working knowledge or lack of exposure to Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Arab, and other Asian and African literatures, their theory did not seem to take non-Western works into consideration. Literary theory seemed, and seems, to be the last stronghold of the West. In these theories, history was uncon-

sciously or consciously bracketed, and non-Western literatures were beyond the scope of their expertise.

Although all these Western theories proclaimed universality, they actually neglected the great traditions of Eastern literatures. That is the reason Eastern literatures are seldom referred to in their works. The role allotted to non-Western scholars was to apply such theories to their own literatures. As a result, the structure of Euro-centrism continues. It was inevitable for non-Western researchers to make use of these theories and publish their work in Western journals, but in doing so they came to resemble lower-level colonial officials mobilized to rule the colony. International conferences on literary theory typically include a small number of non-Western academics.

There is no doubt that Said's *Orientalism* successfully expanded the geographical scope of literary theory. He successfully focused on the relation between literature and history, a relation that had long been neglected in theoretical works. In the East Asian context, Said's writings revived the discussion concerning both the presence of the West in this part of the world and the history and repercussions of Japanese imperialism. It is also true that China's recent economic development and vibrant expansion further complicate the situation. Additional examination of the changeability of the subject/object and colonizer/colonized relationships is necessary and should be urgently pursued.

Notes

- ¹ The list of Japanese translations in independent volumes is as follows (titles are arranged according to the order of the publication of the Japanese edition): *Orientalism*, trans. Noriko Imazawa, supervised by Yuzo Itagaki and Hideaki Sugita (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1986); *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, trans. Nobuo Asai, Shigefumi Sato, and Mari Oka (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 1986); *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, trans. Kazumi Yamagata and Masao Kobayashi (Tokyo: Hosei UP, 1992); *Representations of the Intellectual*, trans. Yoichi Ohashi (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1995); *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, trans. Kazumi Yamagata (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1995); *After the Last Sky*, trans. Hiroyuki Shima (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995); *Musical Elaborations*, trans. Yoichi Ohashi (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 1995); *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, trans. Masafumi Masubuchi, Katsuo Ando, and

- Yoshikatsu Otomo (Tokyo: Hosei UP, 1996); *The Pen and the Sword*, trans. Makiko Nakano (Tokyo: Clane, 1998); *Culture and Imperialism* [2 volumes], trans. Yoichi Ohashi (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 1998; 2001); *Entre Guerre et Paix* [collection of articles on Palestine], trans. Inuhiko Yomota (Tokyo: Sakuhinsha, 1999); *Out of Place: A Memoir*, trans. Makiko Nakano (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 2001); *War and Propaganda: A Collection of Essays* [4 volumes, collection of articles from *Al-Ahram Weekly*], trans. Makiko Nakano and Takanori Hayao (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 2002-2003); *Freud and the Non-European*, trans. Yutaka Nagahara (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2003); and *The Question of Palestine*, trans. Hideaki Sugita (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 2004).
- ² Tenshin Okakura, *The Awakening of Japan* (London: John Murray, 1905), 4-5.
- ³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978; London: Penguin, 1985), 1.
- ⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 322.
- ⁵ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993; London: Vintage, 1994), 350.
- ⁶ Noriko Imazawa, "Yakusha Atogaki [Afterword]," *Orientalism* vol. 2 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993), 393-94; my translation.
- ⁷ Daisuke Nishihara, *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro and Orientalism* (in Japanese) (Tokyo: Chuokoron-shinsha, 2003).
- ⁸ Nagai Kafu, *France Monogatari, Kafu Zenshu* vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971), 578; my translation.
- ⁹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 116.
- ¹⁰ Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, "Shanghai Koyuki," *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro Zenshu* vol. 10 (Tokyo: Chuokoron-sha, 1982), 578; my translation.
- ¹¹ Jacqueline Pigeot, "Tanizaki Jun'ichiro no *In'ei Raisan*," trans. Hiromasa Mizushima (Tokyo: Tokyo UP, 1973), 335-53. Translated into Japanese from *L' éloge de l'ombre de Tanizaki* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1971).
- ¹² Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, second edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 205.

Edward Said, Cultural Politics, and Critical Theory (An Interview)

Terry Eagleton

Ferial Ghazoul: At what point in your academic career did you know Edward Said and how was your response on first reading him or meeting him? How did your response to Said develop?

Terry Eagleton: My first encounter with Edward Said was when he wrote to congratulate me on my book *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, which must have been in 1976. I read *Beginnings* as soon as it was published, and then in 1978—the year of *Orientalism*—I was invited by Fred Jameson to speak at Yale; he and I having taught together a couple of years earlier in California. On the way home, I stopped off at Columbia and spoke to a seminar Said was running; I can't remember what about. So this was our first meeting in person. I remember I had my eldest son with me, who was nine years old at the time, and having heard that Said was an Arab, he was very disappointed on meeting him that he wasn't accompanied by a camel and wasn't wearing a head-dress. (My son is now a Thai-speaking famine researcher with a well-known relief organisation, so perhaps he knows a bit better). Said and I then met on several occasions over the years, mostly in London, Oxford, and Dublin. A few years before he died I dedicated one of my books to him, and he responded with a typically warm-hearted letter of thanks. That was the last contact we had.

Dalia Mostafa: Both you and Said wrote memoirs about your childhood recollections and early youth (*Out of Place* by Said and *The Gatekeeper* by you), while reflecting on family relations as well as political and cultural changes taking place in your own respective environments. How is a memoir important for the cultural theorist or the cultural critic in their life-long journey of writing? Do such self-portraits help understand the theoretical and critical positions of their authors?

Terry Eagleton: I'm not sure that memoirs are particularly important for cultural theorists. Said's is, of course, because his life was so vital

a context for his work. His personal career embodied various public or ‘world-historical’ shifts and conflicts, and his work represents a quite extraordinarily subtle, intimate point of intersection between a general history and an individual one. The same might be said of someone like Raymond Williams. I wouldn’t say this was true of most cultural thinkers, however, and in general I’m a little suspicious of the idea that the work necessarily reflects the life. For all we know, Jane Austen might have run a brothel and Joseph Conrad might never have clapped eyes on the ocean. It wouldn’t make any difference to the impact of their work. I really don’t know quite why I wrote *The Gatekeeper*, but then I don’t really know why I write any of my books. I just find myself writing them. Sometimes, looking back after a number of years, I begin to get a glimmering of what the motivation of a particular book was. But it’s rarely what I thought it was at the time.

Barbara Harlow: “Nationalism,” “colonialism,” “literature” are the keywords of the title to the 1990 publication (University of Minnesota Press) of three essays—yours, another by Fredric Jameson, and the third by Edward Said—essays that were originally published as Field Day pamphlets in 1988. Would you comment on the changed resonance, or even meaning, that those terms might have acquired over the intervening years?

Terry Eagleton: I’ve spent quite a lot of time since writing that pamphlet trying to figure out how one can be an anti-colonialist without being a nationalist. It so happens that nationalism has been overwhelmingly the ideological form which anti-colonial struggles have assumed in the modern age, for all kinds of intriguing reasons. But I doubt that there’s any logical or necessary bond between the two. Socialists, for example, have always been anti-colonialists, long before this stuff became fashionable in universities. Anti-colonialism is a precious inheritance from the radical Enlightenment, whereas nationalism is a Romantic doctrine, slightly later in date.

Since writing the Field Day pamphlet I’ve actually been living in Ireland, so the issues have taken on a sharper focus for me. Most Irish opponents of British colonialism on the island are nationalists—which is to say, from my own viewpoint, that they support the right cause for the wrong reasons. I don’t, for example, accept the view that the simple fact of being a distinctive ethnic group automatically entitles you to political self-determination. Nor, incidentally, did Lenin—a mighty foe of imperialism, of course. I think this Romantic,

rather sentimental belief in the unity of the *ethnos* has created an immense amount of political mayhem and misery. There's no simplistic correlation between 'nation' and 'state,' though that's too complex a narrative to develop here.

In my view, the Irish or the Egyptians, like any other people, have a right to self-determination because they are human beings, not because they are Gaels or Egyptians. It's democracy which matters, not ethnicity. Anyway, not all of the Irish *are* Gaels, which is another defect of this doctrine. I think Said would have broadly agreed with this case. He was an internationalist, a cosmopolitan critic of colonial power, not a Romantic nationalist.

As for literature: well, let's say very generally that in the epoch of modernity, with what one might call the privatisation of cultural production, literature doesn't really matter all that much, has very little resonance in the public sphere (or what vestiges of that somewhat mythical sphere remain). Where literature *does* matter, very acutely, is in those societies which are still trying to break into modernity (a mixed blessing, to be sure!)-which is to say, so-called neo-colonial nations. Here literature can clearly play a powerful role in the process of identity-formation. It retains a public resonance which is largely pre-modern. Many ordinary men and women have heard of Pablo Neruda, whereas not many have heard of T. S. Eliot. So the only place where literature remains 'political' is exactly not in the up-to-date metropolitan nations. It's among those peoples who still need to find a tongue for themselves, and can do so in part through imaginative writing.

Barbara Harlow: Seamus Deane, editor of the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, wrote in his introduction to *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* that its three essays share the "conviction that we need a new discourse for a new relationship between our idea of the human subject and our idea of human communities. What is now happening in Northern Ireland (constitutionally an integral part of the United Kingdom)," Deane went on, "is only one of the many crises that have made the need for such a discourse peremptory. In Africa, South America, the Middle East, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe, the nature of the crisis is more glaringly exposed and its consequences seem both more ominous and far-reaching in their effects." That was "then," but in the current "now," and given the drastic and dramatic changes that have transpired in each of the arenas that Deane cites, what do you consider to be the current and most urgent imperatives for a "new discourse for a new relationship between our idea

of the human subject and our idea of human communities”?

Terry Eagleton: Seamus Deane is an old friend of mine, but I must confess I’m not sure what “a new discourse for a new relationship between our idea of the human subject and our idea of human communities” means. It sounds to me like one of those rather blurred phrases typical of literary critics, more suggestive than meaningful. We don’t need a new discourse for this relationship: we have one, a very ancient and venerable one, and it’s known as ethics. But this is an area the political left has greatly neglected. They’ve made the disastrous error of believing that ethics is primarily about personal relationships, and therefore not political. The Christian right in the USA believes just the same: for them, ethics is about the bedroom, not the boardroom. It concerns the foetus, not the battle for Falluja; adultery but not armaments. Against this, I’ve tried to argue that for a mainstream ethical tradition from Aristotle to Aquinas and Marx, the ethical always means the politico-ethical.

Barbara Harlow: Declan Kiberd, another noted Irish critic, wrote in the *Irish Times* of the three contributors to *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (and cited on the back cover of the volume), that “[u]nlike the more usual type of ‘foreign expert’ invited in by the native middle-class to do for its members what they cannot do for themselves, these men have been more concerned to learn than to preach.” Is there, do you think, still the same distinction to be made between the concerns of learning and the impulse to preach? As a corollary, and considering the respective trajectories of your own and Edward Said’s subsequent careers, has the relationship between “foreign experts” and “native middle-classes” altered at all, particularly in regard to the avocations and advocacies engaged in on the part of literary critics in a post-bi-polar world order?

Terry Eagleton: The word ‘preaching’ isn’t at all pejorative for me, as it is for most liberals these days. One of the most venerable and fascinating of all literary genres is the sermon. Today, people in the West use the word ‘preach’ to indicate a kind of self-righteous hectoring. But theology has always understood that the basis of all effective preaching is personal humility. And of course humility is central to Islam. There’s absolutely nothing wrong in telling people what you think they ought to do, as long as you tell them respectfully, and as long as they are free to reject it.

To dismiss this as ‘dominative,’ or whatever the fashionable

term might be, logically entails that nobody can tell *you* what to do either. And that's highly convenient for you. If it's odiously patronising for the West to tell the amusingly-called underdeveloped world how to behave, since cultures are supposedly incommensurate, then this applies the other way round as well. The same goes for the word 'didactic,' which actually simply means 'pertaining to teaching,' with no necessary hint of bullying, as well as the word 'dogma,' which means simply 'things taught.' I have no liberal terror of any of these terms. I see nothing wrong with a didactic art, which for liberals is a contradiction in terms.

Let me illustrate the point with an anecdote. An Oxford don once gave a lecture at Ruskin College in Oxford, which is a college for working-class trade unionists. He began with the standard self-deprecating liberal gestures about wanting to learn rather than teach, not really knowing anything about the matter in hand, and so on. A gruff voice then called out from the back: 'You're paid to know!'

If middle-class Western specialists have something useful to say to people who lack their privileges, then they should say it, without false modesty or fruitless guilt. If they haven't, they should shut up. It doesn't matter where the knowledge comes from. Only liberal educators worry about that, not the dispossessed, who can't afford to be so fussy. I learnt a lot from my Cambridge Tutor, one of the most conservative and outrageously overprivileged men I've ever met. Anyway, it's a mistake to think that dominative powers don't listen. Often they listen very carefully, so as to refine their technologies of manipulation.

Ibrahim Fathy: Was Said in *Orientalism* able to make a dialectical synthesis of Foucauldian ruptures and Auerbach's continuity, or did he refuse any kind of synthesis all together?

Terry Eagleton: I think it's vital to appreciate that Edward Said wasn't primarily a theorist. One might say that he was more important than that. In fact, he ended up quite hostile to so-called theory. His trajectory was really from Auerbach to Foucault and back to Auerbach. His great fellow US radical, Noam Chomsky, is equally scornful of theory. Theory is partly (though only partly) part of the problem to which it offers a solution, as Karl Kraus remarked about psychoanalysis. In a letter to me, Said once referred tartly to certain strains of post-colonial theory as 'gobbledygook.' (He could, of course, be very acerbic, which, given the vile personal assaults on him, is hardly surprising).

Said was, intellectually speaking, a quite old-fashioned human-

ist who was forced by the exigencies of history into kinds of intellectual work which challenged the tradition in which he was bred. Perhaps he would have liked simply to listen to opera rather than write about Palestine. His aim, like that of every radical, was to get to the point politically where writing about oppression would no longer be necessary, since it would have been overcome. Then we can all get on with enjoying Schumann and writing about colour imagery in the early D. H. Lawrence. When we can do that with a good conscience, it will be a sign that we've succeeded. The quicker we can dispense with radical politics, the better. Beware of any political radical who hasn't grasped that simple fact. But radical politics are like social class and nationhood: to get rid of them, you first have to have them.

This wariness of theory makes Said's work a lot more interesting than that of a theorist who had been, so to speak, born and bred to the trade. The New Historicists, for example. It meant that he assailed Western culture from a standpoint which was steeped in that culture, which had a deep affection for it, and that kind of critique is always harder for a governing power to ward off than a merely external one. He had absolutely no patience with what one might call theoreticism. Given his urgent political situation, it simply wouldn't have been possible for him. So there is a sense in which to lump Said together with, say, Roland Barthes or Harold Bloom, or even with Jameson, is to commit what the philosophers would call a category mistake. If he was interested in Foucault early on, it was partly because Foucault was a political activist like himself, who saw ideas pragmatically rather than abstractly.

Said and I once crossed swords in a session in London when he spoke up against theory, and I claimed rather glibly that this itself was a theoretical position. He dismissed this case, a move which at the time I thought was wrong, but which I now suspect to be right. It involves an illicit word-play on the term 'theory.' On the other hand, Said's nervousness of theory had its limits. He steered well clear of Marxism, for example. Was he even a socialist? It's significant that we don't really know, or at least I don't. All I can say is that if he wasn't, he ought to have been. There was a whole dimension of leftist politics which seemed closed to him, no doubt partly because of his well-heeled background.

Andrew Rubin: What, in your opinion, is the greatest contribution that Edward Said made to the field of literary and cultural criticism and theory? It has been argued by the critic Abdirahman Hussein that

critics have often almost entirely overlooked the importance of Said's second book *Beginnings: Intentions and Method*, which Said had written several years prior to *Orientalism*, the work for which he is most renowned. Do you think there are aspects of Said's work that have been overlooked, underestimated, or even overestimated, and in what ways would you revise or alter the more or less current reception to which his work has been subjected?

In many ways I see Said's work as tirelessly and restlessly attempting to provide the conditions for a non-dominative and non-coercive form of knowledge, the antithesis of the coercive and Western forms of knowledge and power that he challenged in *Orientalism*. His work is, in my estimation, in no way complete, though he certainly did his best intellectually and even physically to complete it. But we live in a world where knowledge and power continue to be exerted in real ways at an extraordinary cost to the lives of human beings. Now that Edward Said has passed away, where do we go on from here? What is to be done?

Terry Eagleton: I agree that Said's strictly literary work has been rather underestimated in the clamour around his more post-colonial writing. *Beginnings* has always struck me as a remarkably innovative but oddly neglected text. It was a victim of his own later celebrity. Let me say what I *don't* think was one of his major contributions: he wasn't a great stylist. He wrote lucidly and gracefully, but with nothing like the extraordinary flair and imaginative brio of, say, a Jameson, a Barthes, or a Foucault. It is remarkable how many modern theorists, despite the fact that they're often condemned for being 'anti-aesthetic,' are superb writers. On the whole, it's their acolytes who get theory a bad name by writing so atrociously.

Perhaps Said's sheer erudition has been a little underestimated as well. He wasn't in the traditional sense a scholar, but his knowledge was quite formidable, ranging as it did over so many areas. You had the feeling that he knew exactly what was new and exciting in Iranian poetry, or the Icelandic novel, but that he had also just absorbed a huge amount of research about the oil industry. Only Jameson matches this range; I myself couldn't begin to approach it.

Where does his death leave us? Grossly bereft and impoverished, in a savage, bloody political epoch when we need all the illumination we can muster. I am most sorry that Edward is dead. We have lost the kind of rare spirit which comes only once in a generation or so. But I'm not particularly sorry that he isn't alive to witness a world in which Iraqi

children are being incinerated so that the West can protect its profits. He is well free of such obscenities. What then is to be done? Well, what did Said do when he learned he was terminally ill? He kept on fighting. Because even if the left is defeated in the end, and the prospects for global justice frankly don't look too brilliant at present, we can still have the comfort of knowing that we did the right thing, despite everything. If you can stare death in the face and still act in the name of the living, then you have won for yourself the ultimate freedom. Then you really are unconquerable. This is what Edward Said did.

Ibrahim Fathy: In Edward Said's *Beginnings* (1975), he writes:

[I]t is significant that the desire to create an alternative world, to modify or augment the real world through the act of writing (which is one motive underlying the novelistic tradition in the West) is inimical to the Islamic world-view. The prophet is he who has *completed* a world-view; thus the word heresy in Arabic is synonymous with the verb "to innovate" or "to begin." Islam views the world as a plenum, capable of neither diminishment nor amplification. (81)

It is puzzling to find echoes of the orientalist's simplistic reductionism applied by Said to forms of narration in Arabic literature, that are complex, rich, and far from homogeneity. Would you consider this a gross concession, on Said's part, to ideas he spent most of his life refuting?

Terry Eagleton: I, too, was surprised by this argument, and I'm interested in Ibrahim Fathy's claim that it is simplistic. In any case, innovation isn't everything. Making things new has a very long history. The avant-garde is a deeply archaic phenomenon. Euripides was bang up to date. History is a series of innovations which have grown old and stale. And nobody values innovation more than the Texan oilmen. Contrast with this Walter Benjamin's concern for the revolutionary potential of tradition. Only avant-gardists and Americans commit the crass error of believing that originality is always to be prized. Fascism was one of the twentieth century's great political innovations. And what, after all, is it to be original? If a lecturer claims that the lawnmower is a twentieth-century invention, there will always be somebody at the back of the hall who insists that they've just unearthed one from an ancient Celtic burial site.

Dalia Mostafa: Edward Said criticized Joseph Conrad's work on the Empire, while pinpointing the paradox embedded in his fiction, particularly when referring to *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo*. In his introduction to *Culture and Imperialism*, Said wrote:

... Conrad was both anti-imperialist and imperialist, progressive when it came to rendering fearlessly and pessimistically the self-confirming, self-deluding corruption of overseas domination, deeply reactionary when it came to conceding that Africa or South America could ever have had an independent history or culture, which the imperialists violently disturbed but by which they were ultimately defeated. (xx)

In the context of the development of the English novel at the turn of the twentieth century, and in the light of your new book *The English Novel: An Introduction*, how do you view Said's interpretation of this paradox in Conrad?

Terry Eagleton: Said's dialectical view of Conrad seems to me far superior to those who either praise him as a proto-post-colonial theorist, or dismiss him out of hand as a racist and imperialist. He was indeed in a sense both. *Heart of Darkness* (a text which I personally think is grossly overrated in aesthetic terms, but I'm almost in a minority of one on this subject), announces: 'Look, Westerners are just as much savage brutes as the Africans.' Is this a pro- or anti-imperialist attitude? E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* says: 'Look, India is such a vast, impossible sprawling chaos that the West's petty-minded schemes for subduing it are ridiculous.' Is this pro- or anti-imperialist?

The true ambivalences of Conrad, however, seem to me to lie in questions of form rather than abstractable political content. *Heart of Darkness*, for example, is both surrealist modernist 'textuality' and traditional sea tale. To those who simply extract political attitudes from literary works, I would say: look for the politics of form. That's where everything happens, not what the author or work 'says.' Don't just stare through the signifier to the signified. Don't talk about sexual or ethnic stereotypes while cavalierly ignoring tone, pitch, pace, texture, syntax, address, rhythm, register, narrative structure. So there you are, you see: I'm just an old-fashioned product of the Cambridge English School. Just as Edward Said was an old-fashioned product of Lionel Trilling's Columbia. But as Trotsky wisely remarked, we Marxists have always lived in tradition.

Rana El Harouny: Jane Austen defines “an ideal English self,” a self that prides itself on its “decency,” and “morality.” To challenge Jane Austen is therefore to challenge the English notion of “self-hood,” and moral legitimacy. Edward Said, however, does exactly this in his essay “Jane Austen and Empire.” Said argues that as a national icon, Austen belongs to a literary canon that was used by Empire to project to the colonial enterprise the very virtues that English literature inscribed to the nation. Furthermore, he argues that the tendency of orthodox/conservative scholars to disembodied Austen and transcendentalize the moral values and ethical framework that her novels espouse from any contextual contingencies is part of a larger historical (and seemingly Machiavellian) attempt to divorce English literature from politics. Said, however, develops this radical intellectual framework based on a conventional, conservative view (or myth) of a passive author, disengaged from the public sphere, in effect, decontextualized. This has resulted in a slew of equally radical counter-criticism, in the main from feminist and new historicist critics. What is interesting about this criticism is that although it leaves Said’s central premise more or less unscathed, his central paradox of a humane Austen nonetheless accepting the injustices of imperialism is de-fanged. Recontextualizing Jane Austen unravels Said’s contention that *Mansfield Park* should be seen in the main “as resisting or avoiding that other setting which [its] formal inclusiveness, historical honesty, and prophetic suggestiveness cannot completely hide.”

Said, in his delivery, focuses on teasing out the silences in *Mansfield Park*. What, in your opinion, however, are the silences in his own work that have provided such fodder for counter-criticism? Furthermore, is it fair to argue that Said, in failing to properly position Austen within the social, cultural, and political *milieu* of her time, is guilty of forcefully projecting his own postcolonial agenda onto her work: guilty, in fact, of abstraction, the sin of Empire; turning *their* Jane, into *his* Jane?

Terry Eagleton: Even though I myself first commissioned that essay, as part of a volume of essays in homage to Raymond Williams, I always had a few doubts about whether it didn’t overdo the imperial theme in Austen. Just as I’m not convinced that *Culture and Imperialism*, the volume in which the essay finally ended up, really validates its case about the centrality of imperialism in nineteenth-century English literature. Of course one must historicise Austen, and I myself try to do this in a very brief, scrappy way in a recent book

(*The English Novel: An Introduction*). Austen is indeed a conservative, striving to recall the English gentry to a classical code of values in order to consolidate its power at a moment when it is under threat from radical changes in the English countryside. It is threatened not least by a dissolute haute bourgeoisie which seems to have abandoned all tradition of moral responsibility and paternal concern for the lower orders in its possessive egoism and moral brittleness.

What I admire about Austen (among hundreds of other commendable qualities) is her traditional rather than modern conception of morality. She sees it, as did Aristotle, Aquinas, and Marx, as a matter of public conduct, not as the inner light, interior emotions, what you happen to be feeling, what you find aesthetically alluring, and the like. She's an extremely tough-minded ethical realist in an increasingly corrupt, sentimentalist culture. She isn't in the least a liberal, for both good and ill, however much English critics try to turn her into one. (They try to do the same to Joyce, and just about any writer you care to mention). I feel that Said's splendid essay, in focusing so tightly on the colonial question, misses many of these matters in its resolute one-sidedness.

What are the silences in his work? Well, for a start he has nothing whatsoever to say about Salford, the grimy little town in which I was born. I put it in this facetious way because of course every writer's work is full of millions of silences. Nobody can say everything at once—which is why it's so foolish to accuse someone who's writing of, say, women in Victorian England of not speaking of social class or the environment or sanitation or cruelty to donkeys as well. Some silences are simply empirical, but others are symptomatic. I've mentioned one eloquent silence in Said's work already: socialism. Or, if you like, classical leftist politics in general. Another might be theology, which of course all the Western left are dreadfully embarrassed by, even though religion is far and away the most successful, hugely popular symbolic form history has ever witnessed. How far can a liberal secularist like Said tackle questions of 'Orientalist' culture without venturing into this area?

Andrew Rubin: Edward Said has long expressed throughout his writing, lectures, and interviews a commitment to questioning and even undermining the tradition of Western Literature by emphasizing the overlapping and interdependent relationships between cultures. For Said, culture is never monolithic, never homogenous, never totalizing, never singular, but the result of sometimes domi-

nant but an always shifting relationship between cultures. Culture is always politics for Said.

In your book *The Idea of Culture*, which you dedicate to Edward Said, you provide an account of various valences of the concept of culture by examining the works of figures such as Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, Raymond Williams, and Edward Said, among others. Do you think that there is in Said's work a fundamental distinction between culture as politics, on the one hand, and the aesthetics on the other? That is to say, how does Said—who throughout his writings considers the literary works of Jane Austin, Flaubert, Henry James, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, T. S. Eliot, and Thomas Mann, among others, to be works of great artistic and aesthetic achievement—how does he interpret them also as works of culture and as politics if they are also, and at the same time, for entirely autonomous reasons, great works of art? What is the distinction in your mind between the role of the aesthetic and the role of culture in Edward Said's vast *oeuvre*?

Terry Eagleton: I don't know whether Said believed that culture and politics are the same thing, but I don't happen to believe this myself. Culture means, roughly speaking, a distinctive way of life; and though all ways of life are subtly caught up in processes of power (which is how, generally speaking, I'd define politics), they aren't in my view reducible to them. The 'expansionist' use of the word 'politics' on the left—'Everything is political!'—risks emptying the term of meaning and depriving it of a cutting-edge, like any semantic overstretching. Culture and politics occupy distinct temporalities: culture is a *longue durée*, politics a matter of the conjuncture.

Equally, I don't regard the aesthetic as reducible to either culture or politics, and I doubt that Said did either. When I spoke earlier of the 'politics of form,' I meant that politics or ideology in artefacts is distilled first and foremost in the minutiae of their aesthetic substance. The very autonomy of the aesthetic (which is, incidentally, an historical and material phenomenon, not—as so many on the left seem to think—merely a false perception of works of art), itself speaks political volumes.

Nor do I by any means regard aesthetic autonomy as merely 'reactionary,' and I don't think Said did either. We owe it to perhaps the finest of all Marxist aestheticians—Theodor Adorno—to be able to recognise the art-work's autonomy of traditional social functions as *at once* progressive and dominative, emancipatory and enslaving. The other side of the left's dual mistake here, in believing that aesthetic

autonomy is (a) just a matter of a false perception, and (b) always and everywhere to be politically regretted, is its naïve belief that to inscribe a work in its material or historical context is *ipso facto* radical. Not in the least. Most European historicism has been a right-wing, not a left-wing tradition. Not all conservatives are card-carrying formalists. And so on. Lots of confusions are possible here.

Despite all that, however, I do think that Said probably kept his aesthetics rather apart from his politics. Palestrina and Palestine don't mix very easily. This is part of what I meant earlier by saying that he was really a traditional humanist forced by a historical crisis into a political stance which was partly askew to the cultural traditions he inherited. No doubt he needed his private utopian moments, like the rest of us, in contrast to the quotidian world of politics, and music seems to have been the chief name for this in his life. Who would begrudge it to him?

We should of course look at art historically; but we should beware in doing so of falling into a new kind of leftist puritanism, for which aesthetic delight can be seen only as a privileged distraction from the grimly essential business of politics. On the contrary, as Oscar Wilde might have said but probably didn't: we're in radical politics because we want to get to the point where such delights—which have no need to justify themselves at any stern-faced tribunal of Utility or History—will be available for everyone. We're aiming for a point at which we can leave all this debilitating political strife behind us and simply live in the fullness of our own and one another's being. That's 'aestheticist' alright—but, I think, in all the best political ways. We want a society in which people will be positively astonished to learn that once, a long time ago, people went hungry, and that other people made such a fuss of largely irrelevant matters like class or gender or ethnicity. In the meanwhile, the aesthetic may be one of our few lonely anticipations of this eminently desirable condition, deformed and denatured though it is by the fact that at the moment one person's civilisation is another's barbarism.

Ferial Ghazoul: Both you and Edward Said admire Raymond Williams immensely, though not uncritically. Said contributed to your edited book, *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives* (1989); and when you wrote your book, *The Idea of Culture* (2000)—using the title of an essay written by Raymond Williams (1993)—you dedicated the book to Edward Said. Is there a *rapport*—what Said would call affili-

ation—between you and Said specifically because of the Williams connection? In what sense do you diverge from Said in your assessment of, and attraction to, Williams?

Terry Eagleton: Like Said, Williams was never really a ‘theorist.’ Indeed, I don’t think I ever heard him use the word. Both men shared a deep suspicion of disembodied abstractions (not that theory *has* to be that), and both had a remarkably quick, deep sense of material process, of tangible actualities. Both of them spun exceptionally original bodies of work out of lived personal experience, without for a moment confusing or conflating the two spheres. Both lived through key historical eras: in Williams’s case, the second world war, in which he was a tank commander; in Said’s case, the wave of mid-twentieth-century colonial independence, which is to say the single most successful emancipatory movement which modernity has so far witnessed.

These historical grand narratives deeply infiltrated their work, though more guardedly and obliquely in Williams’s case. Both men felt vulnerable and isolated, and could be defensive in reaction to this. Both were hugely admired by the left, and mocked and detested by the powers of this world, as any worthwhile individual will be. In both cases, the written work reverberated with the sense of a powerful, complex, resourceful personality, though Said was more combative, acerbic, and impatient than Williams, who provided living disproof of the most dreary of all *clichés*: that youth is radical, but grows more ‘moderate’ as it ages. Williams actually moved further to the left as he got older. Two men from remarkably different backgrounds (Williams plebeian, Said patrician) met on the common ground of marginality—rather as, when Williams met Jacques Derrida (and you could hardly think of two intellectuals more different in style), the Welsh working-class socialist found an instant *rapprochement* with the Algerian Sephardic Jew.

Andrew Rubin: Late in his life Edward Said became increasingly preoccupied with the concept of *Spätstil*, or late style, a critical category that he had borrowed from Theodor Adorno, who had written about Beethoven’s late style at length by arguing that rather than an author’s late works providing a complete and unproblematic closure of the author’s life and of all their previous works, the late style of works was fundamentally fragmented, rebarbative, discontinuous, and dissonant. Said found examples of this in works such as Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Sophocles’s *Oedipus at Colonus*, and Thomas Mann’s *Dr.*

Faustus, among others. Said seemed to be fundamentally interested in the cultural politics of the irreconcilable. While he never fully elaborated how this would look as a form of cultural politics, this direction that his work took in his final years seemed to be a great concern in his writings as well as in his seminars.

Having written what is in my opinion one of the most masterful explications of Theodor Adorno's view of the relationship between aesthetics and politics ("Art After Auschwitz: Theodor Adorno" in your book, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* [1990]), what do you think Said might have meant or what would have been entailed by this interest in the category of irreconciliation? He often argued that the situation of teaching and the role of the intellectual was one that taught students as well as readers to work through these irreconciliations—whether these irreconciliations took the form of the relationship between Israel and Palestinians or the relationship between literature and the world which it inhabits.

Terry Eagleton: It's generally thought that youth is combative, while middle age is mild, pacific, and resigned. But in a sense it's the other way round: youth has a passion for absolute transformation, for closure, whereas middle age—even when it still clings to this passion—is more wryly aware of the irreconcilable, the irredeemable, the inevitability of dissonance, conflict, and fragmentation. (Why, incidentally, do we instinctively think of fragmentation as a bad thing? Why, when we see fragments, do we automatically itch to put them together again? Might Melanie Klein provide part of the answer?) Perhaps this is partly because the middle-aged are closer to death, which is a sign of all that can't be abolished. Death is the dissonance which is here to stay.

So yes, there can be a fetish of reconciliation as much as of anything else, one against which Adorno warned us when he cryptically observed that an emancipated society 'would by no means form a totality.' For him, modernist aesthetics meant thinking reconciliation in the light of the unavoidable persistence of dissonance. And might not things just grind to a halt without it? We should beware of thinking of dissonance or conflict as inherently negative. Without contraries, no progression. For both Adorno and Benjamin, only God can restore what is broken, so that totality as practised by human beings becomes a form of idolatry. Without fragmentation, we would not even know that wholeness was possible. Works of art must be unfinished, imperfect, to avoid being fetishes, and to remind us that there is a history out there

still to be made. So we have to work these fragments through in the psychoanalytic sense of the term ‘working through’—which is to say, becoming aware that the unity and totality of the transcendental signifier is part of our sickness and delusion, not of our cure.

Rana El Harouny: Post-9/11, we live in a world where America’s hegemonic ambitions are thinly cloaked by a vulgar and empty rhetoric of freedom and democracy. What seems to have arisen in this new era is a new kind of colonialism, one that specifically exists in the Middle East. Given the urgency of events in this region, and the bulldozer-like subtlety and efficiency with which the American media has effaced the humanity and individuality of its so-called “enemies,” perhaps the label of post-colonialism (associated with Said) in general, and Said’s *Orientalism* in particular, should be revisited and adapted to this new political reality of “contained subversion.” In your opinion, is there need for such an evolution, and, if so, in what direction?

Terry Eagleton: Yes, freedom now means the anarchy of the marketplace, and democracy the installation of states compliant to the USA’s predatory ends. Within the West, democracy means which individuals in what are really one-party states will be selected to act as executors of the ends of corporate capitalism for the next few years. So we’re living in hard times, as Said didn’t need to be told—though there are also new forms of resistance, as there always are. And it may well be that the post-colonial label (which incidentally covers a multitude of sins) doesn’t match up to this new reality. There’s nothing really *post*-colonial about the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, or indeed about the situation in Northern Ireland.

I don’t know this for sure, but I suspect that one of Said’s deepest professional regrets was unwittingly to have helped to originate a style of thought (so-called post-colonialism) with which he was in many ways profoundly out of sympathy. He was out of sympathy with it partly for philosophical reasons (he remained a classical-style humanist and in some ways a child of Enlightenment, as most post-colonialists are not), and partly for political ones (post-colonialism could serve as a welcome distraction from the problems of a stalled class-struggle within the West itself, as well as generating a lot of modish new ‘discourses’ for a post-political age to indulge itself with). The good news, however, is that his work has been so powerful that it has survived what it started. One is not always well served by one’s disciples—though I must confess that I’m a little exceptional in that regard, since if I can be said to have any disciples at all, they have on the whole done me proud.

A Bibliographical Guide to Edward Said

Yasmine Ramadan

This bibliography is not meant to be exhaustive, but it strives to be as inclusive as possible, to serve as a guide for researchers. Besides works *by* Said, there is also a section of works *on* Said that does not attempt to cite all writings on him, but refers to books and special issues of journals devoted (or devoting a *dossier*) to him.

When Said published an essay in more than one place (both in a journal and, later, in a book of his, for example), we have selected the version that is more accessible to the reader (in this case the book, rather than the article in a journal). Some of Said's books were published by more than one publisher (occasionally in the same year). We opted for listing only one. When referring to books by Said, a table of contents was provided to give the reader an idea of the breadth of the topics the book deals with.

As for Said's journalistic essays—many of which have been collected in books—we simply referred to the dailies, weeklies, and monthlies in which Said wrote regularly, and provided their websites, so that those interested can undertake the search themselves online. We have also included websites devoted to Said and available documentaries.

The bibliographical guide is divided into the following categories:

- I. Individual Books by Said
- II. Edited Books by Said
- III. Co-authored Books by Said
- IV. Articles, Introductions, and Other Writings by Said
- V. Periodicals to which Said Contributed Regularly
- VI. Documentary Films on Said
- VII. Books on Said
- VIII. Special Issues of Journals on Said
- IX. Websites and Electronic Lists dedicated to Said

For an Arabic bibliographical guide to Said, consult the Arabic section of *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 25 (2005), which lists the translations of Said into Arabic and other works on him. Here, we have only mentioned English-language periodicals for which Said wrote *regularly*.

I am grateful to the *Alif* team for their help in compiling this bibliographical guide, and to many others who have kindly advised me in this project and whose names are acknowledged as supporters of *Alif* on the first page of the issue. No doubt, some errors or missing information will be discovered after this issue goes to press. We urge anyone who is interested in preserving the legacy of Edward Said to inform us by e-mail (said-admin@aucegypt.edu), so that we can correct and update this bibliographical guide periodically, making it available to the electronic Said Forum and to whoever might need to consult it.

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17. Collective Passion 18. Backlash, Backtrack 19. Adrift in Similarity 20. A Vision to Lift the Spirit 21. Suicidal Ignorance 22. Israel's Dead End 23. Emerging Alternatives in Palestine 24. The Screw Turns, Again 25. Thoughts about America 26. What Price Oslo? 27. Thinking Ahead 28. What Has Israel Done? 29. Crisis for American Jews 30. Palestinian Elections Now 31. One-Way Street 32. Slow Death: Punishment by Detail 33. Arab Disunity and Factionalism 34. Low Point of Powerlessness.

Part Three: Israel, Iraq, and the United States:

35. Israel, Iraq, and the United States 36. Europe versus America 37. Misinformation about Iraq 38. Immediate Imperatives 39. An Unacceptable Helplessness 40. A Monument to Hypocrisy 41. Who is in Charge? 42. A Stupid War 43. What is Happening to the United States? 44. The Arab Condition 45. Archaeology of the Road Map 46. Dignity and Solidarity.

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Forward by Mariam C. Said.

Introduction by Michael Wood.

Chapter One: Timelessness and Lateness.

Chapter Two: Return to the Eighteenth Century.

Chapter Three: *Così fan tutte* at the Limits.

Chapter Four: On Jean Genet.

Chapter Five: A Lingering Old Order.

Chapter Six: The Virtuoso as Intellectual.

Chapter Seven: Glimpses of Late Style.

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Literature and Society. Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1980. (Edited, with a Preface and an article, "Molestation and Authority," by Edward Said).

Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*. London, Penguin: 1987. (Edited, with an Introduction and Notes by Edward Said. Introduction later appears in *Culture and Imperialism*).

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Chapter One: History and Political Development:

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Chapter Two: Political Status and Organization of Palestinians Today:

I. Palestinian National Organization II. Political Activity in Countries of Residence and Dispersion III. Effect of the 1967 War.

Chapter Three: The PLO After the 1967 War:

I. Political Aims II. Structure of the PLO III. Effect of Israeli Assault on Lebanon.

Chapter Four: Demographic Circumstances:

I. Present Demography II. Fragmentation of the Palestinian Community.

Chapter Five: Socio-economic Circumstances:

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Economic Circumstances.

Education.

Conclusion

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Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature [With Terry Eagleton and Frederic Jameson]. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1990. (Said's essay is entitled "Yeats and Decolonization").

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Mona Hatoum: The Entire World as a Foreign Land [With Sheena Wagstaff]. London: Tate Gallery Pub., 2000. (Said's essay is entitled "The Art of Displacement: Mona Hatoum's Logic of Irreconcilables,").

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Chapter One:

A Question of Place; Rehearsal Styles; The Weimer Workshop; National Identity and Interpretation; Globalism and Partition; An Audition with Wilhelm Furtwängler .

Chapter Two:

The Singularity of Performance; Ephemerality of Sound; The Score and Literary Text as Absolute; The Psychology of Tonality; Composers, Writers, and Society, Art and Censorship; Detail is All; Timing and the Oslo Accord.

Chapter Three:

Art, Politics, and Institutions; On Mentors; A Style of Conducting' The Importance of Extremes; The Art of Transition; Space and Tone.

Chapter Four:

Flexibility of Tempo; The Color and Weight of Sound; The Open Pit and Bayreuth; Adorno and Wagner; National Socialism and Wagner; Manipulation and Yielding; The Question of German Art.

Chapter Five:

What is Authenticity Now; Interpretation in Text and Music; Past and Contemporary Masters; A Musically Literate Listener; Modernism and Inaccessibility.

Chapter Six:

Organic Beethoven: Symphonies and Concertos; Music of the Social Realm; Long *Crescendo* versus *Subito Piano*; Music and the Line of Most Resistance.

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"Barenboim and the Wagner Taboo" by Edward Said.

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- "On Jean Genet's Late Works." *Imperialism and Theatre*. Ed. J. Ellen. London: Routledge, 1995. 230-42.
- "Orientalism, an Afterword." *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 14.3 (Winter 1995): 32-59.
- "Preface." Hanna Mikhail. *Politics and Revelation: Mawaradi and After*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995.
- "Projecting Jerusalem." *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXV.1 (Autumn 1995): 5-14.
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- Hamon, Emmanuel, dir. *Selves and Others: A Portrait of Edward Said*. Warnip Films, 2003.
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- *Boundary 2* 25.2 (Summer 1998).
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- *Social Text* 40 (Fall 1994).

IX. Websites and Electronic Lists Dedicated to Said (arranged alphabetically):

Electronic Said Forum (e-mail list).

For subscription contact: <said-admin@aucegypt.edu>.

The Edward Said Archive. <<http://www.edwardsaid.org/modules/news/>>. Comprehensive selection of interviews, news stories, and articles by and about Edward Said.

Truth to Power: A Bibliography of Edward Said Online. <<http://www.themargins.net/said.html>>.

Primary and secondary materials arranged chronologically: introduction in progress.

University of California, Irvine Library. Bibliography and Reviews of Edward Said's Works. <<http://sun3.lib.uci.edu/~scctr/Wellek/said/1970.html>>.

A bibliographic index of Said's works and offline scholarly reviews of them.

Notes on Contributors

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Ferial J. Ghazoul is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the American University in Cairo and author of several books and articles on medieval literature and postcolonial criticism, including *Nocturnal Poetics: The Arabian Nights in Comparative Context*. She is the editor of *Alif* and the co-editor of *The View from Within*. She has translated several texts from and into Arabic, English, and French, including writings by Althusser, Riffaterre, Ricoeur, Said, and Matar.

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Edward W. Said (1935-2003) was one of the most influential intellectuals in the twentieth century. A University Professor of English and Comparative Literature, he was known as a public intellectual who spoke on behalf of the dispossessed in general, and the Palestinians in particular. He published more than twenty books, and hundreds of essays, on literary criticism, cultural and political issues, and music—including *Orientalism*, *Beginnings*, *Covering Islam*, *Culture and Imperialism*, *Musical Elaborations*, *Representations of the Intellectual*, and a memoir, *Out of Place*.

Najla Said studied Comparative Literature at Princeton University, where she also obtained a certificate in Theater and Dance. She is a founding member of *Nibras*, the Arab-American theater collective. She is an actress and writer. Her work has appeared in *Mizna* and *HEEB* magazines. She has performed in several plays and has made numerous appearances in television and films.

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