



Interviews with

EDWARD W. SAID

Edited by

Amritjit Singh and Bruce G. Johnson

Interviews with **Edward W. Said**

Conversations with Public Intellectuals Series
Douglas Brinkley and David Oshinsky, General Editors

Interviews with

Edward W. Said



Edited by
Amritjit Singh and
Bruce G. Johnson

University Press of Mississippi
Jackson

In memoriam
Barbara T. Christian
1943–2000

www.upress.state.ms.us

The University Press of Mississippi is a member of the Association of American University Presses.

Copyright © 2004 by University Press of Mississippi
Introduction and Chronology copyright © 2004 by
Amritjit Singh and Bruce G. Johnson
All rights reserved
Manufactured in the United States of America

Frontis: Credit Joe Pineiro, Columbia University, Office of Public Relations

12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 4 3 2 1



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Said, Edward W.

Interviews with Edward W. Said / edited by Amritjit Singh, Bruce G. Johnson.
p. cm.—(Conversations with public intellectuals series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-57806-365-5 (cloth : alk. paper)—ISBN 1-57806-366-3
(paper : alk. paper)

1. Said, Edward W.—Interviews. 2. Intellectuals—United States—Interviews.

3. Arab-Israeli conflict. 4. Orientalism. 5. Politics and culture. 6. Postcolonialism.

I. Singh, Amritjit. II. Johnson, Bruce G., 1961–. III. Title: Edward W. Said. IV. Series.

CB18.S25A5 2004

973.91'092—dc21

00-053405

British Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data available

Books by Edward W. Said

- Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966.
- Beginnings: Intention and Method*. New York: Basic Books, 1975; New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978; New York: Vintage Books, 1979; New York: Vintage Books, 1994 (New "Afterword").
- The Question of Palestine*. New York: Times Books, 1979; New York: Vintage Books, 1980; New York: Vintage Books, 1992 (New "Introduction" and "Epilogue").
- Literature and Society*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980 (Edited).
- Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981; New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
- The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*. New York: Pantheon, 1986; New York: Columbia University Press, 1989 (With photographer Jean Mohr).
- Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*. London and New York: Verso, 1988 (Edited with Christopher Hitchens).
- Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1990 (With Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson).
- Musical Elaborations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993; New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1994.
- Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1994.
- The Pen and the Sword* (Interviews by David Barsamian). Monroe, Me.: Common Courage Press, 1994.
- Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- Out of Place: A Memoir*. New York: Knopf, 1999.
- The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2000.
- Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001.

The Edward Said Reader. New York: Vintage Books, 2000 (Edited with Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin).

Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward Said. New York: Pantheon Books, 2001 (Edited with Gauri Viswanathan).

Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society. New York: Pantheon Books, 2002 (With Daniel Barenboim).

Freud and the Non-European. London and New York: Verso, 2003 (With Christopher Bollas and Jacqueline Rose).

Culture and Resistance (Interviews by David Barsamian). Cambridge, Ma.: South End Press, 2003.

Contents

Introduction	xi
Chronology	xxix
The Palestinian Movement	3
<i>Judy Miller and David Gelber</i>	
Palestinian Prospects Now	19
<i>Mark Bruzonsky</i>	
Arafat Visit	36
<i>Robin MacNeil</i>	
Middle East: Boiling Again	39
<i>Jim Lehrer</i>	
Orientalism Revisited: An Interview with Edward W. Said	45
<i>James Paul</i>	
Arab Perspectives of Conflict	59
<i>Paula Zahn and Harry Smith</i>	
Arabesque	64
<i>Edward Ball</i>	

Radical, Chic	69
<i>Zoe Heller</i>	
The Tel Aviv Bombing	81
<i>Alexander Cockburn</i>	
Conversation with Edward Said	84
<i>Bill Ashcroft</i>	
What Is Islam?	104
<i>Alexander Cockburn</i>	
<i>Lenses and Tripods: Edward Said</i>	113
<i>Matthew Rothschild</i>	
Roots of the West's Fear of Islam	115
<i>Ken Shulman</i>	
Edward Said	118
<i>Liane Hansen</i>	
An Interview with Edward W. Said	122
<i>Te-hsing Shan</i>	
Edward Said: A Book Review Interview	138
<i>Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul, and Ania Loomba</i>	
One-State Solution	160
<i>Robert Siegel</i>	
Edward W. Said	163
<i>David Barsamian</i>	

Edward Said: A Contested History	178
<i>Scott Sherman</i>	
Setting the Record Straight: Edward Said Confronts His Future, His Past, and His Critics	184
<i>Harvey Blume</i>	
Interview: Edward Said Talks about His New Book <i>Out of Place and Exile</i>	193
<i>Scott Simon</i>	
<i>The Connection</i> Interview with Edward Said	199
<i>Christopher Lydon</i>	
Edward Said: Embattled But Unbowed	220
<i>Haroon Siddiqui</i>	
Camp David 2000	224
<i>Charlie Rose</i>	
Cultures Aren't Watertight	230
<i>Joan Smith</i>	
Index	245

Introduction

"One of my main concerns is the extent to which people are not frozen in attitudes of difference and mutual hostility. . . . The whole notion of crossing over, of moving from one identity to another, is extremely important to me, being as I am—as we all are—a sort of hybrid."

—Edward Said to Salman Rushdie, 1986¹

Edward Said has been an influential and controversial figure in and around the U.S. academy for well over three decades. His work has played a foundational role in the development of postcolonial studies, even as his books—such as *Orientalism* (1978), *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)—have contributed to a radical transformation of literary studies. He has also written and spoken tirelessly on the evolving issues that surround the still ambiguous fortunes of his native Palestine. One of the best-known Arab-American intellectuals in the contemporary U.S., Said has been hailed as a "Renaissance man," whose "encyclopedic intellect" propels his diverse interests. These interests have revolved around his life-long examination of material conditions that both sustain and conceal socio-cultural and economic inequities, and how they affect institutions such as the university, the press, and the government. In

his prolific publications, speeches, and interviews, Said has explored such controversial issues as the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine and the consequences of the so-called "peace process"; his disdain of Western popular media for its role in perpetuating Arab and Muslim stereotypes; and the damaging effects of poststructuralist and postmodernist discourses that impinge upon our ability to respond to "the complex affiliations" that bind texts to the world.

This selection of interviews from the last four decades, brought together in book form for the first time, provides a point of entry for both the specialist and the general reader into Said's wide and disparate oeuvre. In our research for this volume, we have examined over eighty interviews given in diverse locations around the globe and have chosen twenty-five from among them to convey the range and complexity of Said's interests. The selected interviews, arranged chronologically in this volume, underscore Said's considerable contributions to the discursive practices of many disciplines, including literature, anthropology, political science, international studies, peace studies, history, sociology, and music. In these interviews, Said not only elaborates on his debts to intellectual figures such as Giambattista Vico, Frantz Fanon, Antonio Gramsci, and Noam Chomsky, but also on his quarrels with Marxism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism. He offers clarifications for his critics and admirers alike on the seeming contradictions in the positions he has taken from time to time. He explains, for example, his shifting views on the Middle East, including his 1991 break with Yasser Arafat, as well as his criticisms of the Oslo Accords, and his desire to see Arabs and Jews live together in a binational, democratic, multi-ethnic state.

Long before the 1978 publication of *Orientalism* made him famous in academic circles, Said had begun to grant interviews and give public lectures on literary, cultural, and political subjects. He has continued to do so, despite health problems since 1992, when he was diagnosed with leukemia. In the process, he has reached out to a wide variety of academic and non-academic audiences within the United States and abroad. The diverse venues of his speeches, interviews, and other performances

include colleges and universities, concert halls, public lecture halls, and radio and television shows. Many of his interviews have taken place at National Public Radio, *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*, *The Charlie Rose Show*, and major networks such as CBS and NBC. However, most of the interviews in this volume have been published in academic journals and other forums in the mainstream and the alternative press. These interviews both confirm and enhance Said's reputation and stature as a public intellectual. But, as Tim Brennan has noted, Said is much more than just a public intellectual. He is also a model for others through "his deliberately repetitive elaboration of *how* to write and speak as a public person: that is, not simply his view that being a public intellectual is a good thing, but his prolonged inquiry into the mechanics of being so."²

Evident, for example, in his 1999 interview with Harvey Blume, as well as during his frequent appearances on *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*, Said's outspokenness on some issues, especially those concerning Palestine and the Middle East, has often sparked heated arguments. In an interview with Christopher Lydon in April 2000, he acknowledges that he is "still a militant intellectual[,] . . . my tongue is very sharp, and . . . I give and trade blows with people . . . who disagree with me, I mean that's part of the deal. . . ." As part of this "deal," however, some of his extremist detractors have ransacked his Columbia University office and also sent him death threats.

Though careful to protect himself from physical threats while still making numerous public appearances each year, Said has occasionally received both verbal and written abuse. For example, as Scott Sherman notes in his September 1999 interview, *Commentary*, the official magazine of the American Jewish Committee, printed an article decrying Said's links to Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization with the title "Professor of Terror." Attributing guilt by association, this article implies that Said somehow condones terrorist activity—actions he has consistently rejected and condemned for both humanitarian and political reasons. Similarly, as Matthew Rothschild reports in his 1996 interview, at a lecture Said gave at the University of Wisconsin–Madison ten days after Yitzhak Rabin was

assassinated in 1995, two respondents in the crowd called Said a "terrorist" once again. In a couple of his interviews since 1999, Said has commented upon the accusation by the Israeli scholar Justus Reid Weiner (*Commentary*, September 1999), who stated that Said had "lied" in *Out of Place* about his status as an exile. Weiner contended that Said neither went to school in Jerusalem nor lived in a house there prior to 1948. As Scott Sherman reports in his interview with Said, Said delivered a "blistering riposte" to these accusations, in which he declared, "It is part of the Palestinian fate always to be required to prove one's existence and history!" Again, in June 2000, he tells Haroon Siddiqui that, for him, Weiner's attacks represent the "shabby tactics" used by "extreme right-wing Zionists," to "discredit me because a lot of people are reading me, even in Israel."

Said's commitment to speaking up about Palestine coheres well with several persistent concepts and paradigms in his literary and cultural criticism. In many early interviews, he recounts how, with *Beginnings* (1975), he had made explicit his concept of "worldliness"—an intellectual model that, expanding upon Georg Lukács's theses on alienation and reification, calls for "committed critics" to re-establish the connections between "man and his activity." In a 1976 *Diacritics* interview, Said reminds us of the need to "acknowledge that Lukács was demonstrating the importance . . . of seeing that if you separate what you do from what you are, you are reifying, giving objectivistic form to things that in reality don't have that form; . . . [W]e can use Lukács's observation to assert that criticism is radically misconceived if it tries to reify a) the critic, b) the text, c) criticism."³ Thus, for Said, it is imperative that criticism account for the specific material and historical conditions that produce certain modes and structures of interpretation—"to re-connect, rejoin our analyses, our 'critifacts' as I call them, to the society, agencies or lives from which they derive." To do otherwise, for Said, is to dehistoricize knowledge-making to such a degree that it has no socio-political relevance.

Said has frequently observed how, since the 1960s, U.S. literary and cultural studies have received a "massive infusion" of "theory" in the form of structuralism, poststructuralism, semiotics, Marxism, and feminism.

Frustrated with academic habits and practices that negate the human agency requisite for resisting dominating power structures, Said has since the 1970s focused on lines of inquiry that can lead to the enactment of change in socio-political contexts. Indeed, for Said, the possibility of resisting authoritative regimes and institutions is linked to his resistance to theoretical criticism as it has been produced during the last several decades. Criticizing his own complicity in the prevalence of academic discourses that detract from "actual political and social existence," he explains to Mark LeVine in 1999 that "[t]here's no doubt that the early efflorescence of theory that I participated in [in] the late 1960s has led to a kind of jargonization, specialization, and professionalization which has very little to do with the historical and political world in which people live."⁴

While there has been a definite shift in Said's attitudes toward the relationship between high theory and literary criticism during the past decade or so, Said—much like Barbara Christian in her well-known 1987 essay "A Race for Theory"—does not reject engagement with "theory," only its obfuscation of ideas. For example, Said explicitly incorporated Michel Foucault's early work on "discourse" into the critical paradigms that shape the main argument of *Orientalism*. Furthermore, while he does not subscribe fully to the notion of deconstruction, he does acknowledge certain benefits of a broadly deconstructive thinking in relation to the critique of ideology. However, Said is in favor of theoretical texts that make a clear, concise use of language—something he finds lacking in many contemporary critical texts. He has not hesitated to criticize the abstract, opaque language that sometimes marks the writing of some postcolonialists. For example, Said—who is known to debate complex ideas lucidly and copiously—has faulted Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha for their writing in "such rebarbative and inaccessible language." In the 1995 Ashcroft interview, he describes Spivak as "a very brilliant person" and Bhabha as "incredibly subtle, really quite profound," but regrets that with both Bhabha and Spivak, "the language becomes 'the issue,' not the ideas, or even the experiences you're trying to get across, [serving] . . . a constituency which believes that that kind of language is really a sign of profundity."

Said's faith in the possibility of changing social conditions has found expression for three decades in his untiring efforts to raise public awareness about the fate of Palestine and its people. By his own account, during the 1970s he became increasingly aware of the gap between his political activism as a Palestinian exile and his role as an intellectual in the Western academy. Ultimately, Said turned away from a theoretician like Foucault to the work of Frantz Fanon, the Martinican psychiatrist who worked with the Algerian liberation movement in the 1950s. Like Fanon, Said perceives "history" as a dynamic process in which socio-political situations are contingent upon ever-changing material conditions, and not on a (pre) determined set of discursive practices that deny human beings their power as agents of change. As he argues in his 1997 interview with Bhattacharya, Kaul, and Loomba, "By the time [Foucault] came to America in the late . . . '60s . . . [,] he had changed and he was really not interested in the social movements at all and I think that is clear in his work." This only reinforces what he had told Bill Ashcroft in 1995: "the moment [Foucault] began to generalize into a larger theory—potentially a theory that no resistance was possible[—] I just felt that it was completely wrong. It was not true to his own earlier studies, and also it wasn't true to history and it wasn't true to the way society worked."

Earlier, in July 1987, he had lamented to James Paul that the academy's unwillingness to engage in political discourse impels academics to remain quiet about the power inequities inherent in the world: "There is a reticence to enter the fray and venture statements about U.S. policy, about imperialism at large, about cultural questions, on the grounds that 'I'm really a historian, a specialist, a scholar. I shouldn't get involved in this kind of thing.'" However, by March 1989, in an interview with Bonnie Marranca, Marc Robinson, and Una Chaudhuri, he acknowledges that students too have become increasingly committed to issues of "worldliness" because they "are really no longer interested in theory. They're really interested in these historical, cultural contests . . . [b]etween racism and imperialism, colonialism, various forms of authority, various types of liberation and independence as they are reflected in culture, in aesthetic forms, in discourses and so on."⁵

Parallel to such an evolution in student interests, Said's projects have included his critique not only of critical methods and theories that pay little or no attention to "worldliness," but also of a powerful media that sustains the West's ignorance of the "Rest" by distorting history and perpetuating stereotypes. His dim view of the Western media is based primarily on its perpetuation of negative Arab and Muslim stereotypes. In the November 1986 discussion among Edward Said, Bernard Lewis, Leon Wieseltier, and Christopher Hitchens, Said addresses this issue head-on by delineating "a small handful of essential thematic clusters in today's media coverage of the Middle East." Predominantly, as Said sees it, these "clusters" inform Western audiences of a "congenital" terrorism manifested by Arab and Islamic groups that is in opposition to a "civilized and democratic West."⁶ Expanding upon these negative stereotypes, Said tells Matthew Stevenson in 1987 that, in the Western media, the "Palestinian is either a faceless refugee or a terrorist. I'm frequently struck by the extent to which this picture results not only from ignorance but also from avoidance of the Palestinian as a human being." Certainly, statements like these underscore Said's steadfast commitment to a truly "democratic" world—one which not only resists the gross misrepresentations of material, historical conditions, but also one that promotes a fundamental sense of humanism which insists on embracing, rather than rejecting, "other" cultures.

In his discussions of the media in the 1990s, Said appears to have reserved his sharpest criticism for its coverage of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. In his interview that same year with Matthew Rothschild, Said deplores the media for its hyperbolic representation of a "pure" Israel—one that, as Said has argued all along, is produced concomitantly with the perception of Arabs as evil, degenerate terrorists. Said states, "I think this really was the worst moment for the American press. I've never seen such idiocy. American reporters in Israel asking Israelis, 'Has Israel's innocence been lost?' I mean, this is a country steeped in the destruction of Palestinian society, Palestinian blood." While not condoning the assassination of Rabin—he has consistently gone on record stating his abhorrence of violent solutions to problems in the Middle East—Said

clearly marks his frustration with the complicity of the media in constructing an "innocent" Israel that, for him, is in direct opposition to the material reality of how Israel continues to persecute the Palestinians in their homeland. In the media's continuing construction of Israelis and Jews as "victims" and Arabs and Muslims as "victimizers," Said sees incontrovertible evidence that inverts the relationship between these two groups of people. We find another example of Said's critique of such media hyperbole in his interview with Joan Smith a few months after the tragic events of 9/11: "If you look at the TV or newspapers, you really get the impression that the world has become what is on the TV or in the papers . . . I'm really talking from an American perspective, where we have these awful, ponderous pundits on TV giving the wrong idea—that 'the Muslims' have 'failed.' . . . We need to move away from huge generalizations, look towards literary work, and the multiplicity rather than the sameness of things." Indeed, in one of his most stinging rebukes to the Western media, Said would later write the following about the then-impending U.S.-led war on Iraq in March 2003: "The media has simply become a branch of the war effort . . . There are no antiwar voices to read or hear in any of the major medias of this country, no Arabs or Muslims (who have been consigned en masse to the ranks of the fanatics and terrorists of this world), no critics of Israel. . . . Whatever the dreaded Saddam has done Israel and Sharon have also done with American support, yet no one says anything about the latter while fulminating about the former."⁷

Said's project of demonstrating how certain "ideological blinkers" in both media reporting and academic scholarship are historically shaped is manifest in such works as *Orientalism*—a groundbreaking study of how Western societies continue to benefit from their mythic construction of the "Orient" as an exotic and dangerous place. Arguably responsible for consolidating a variety of critical theoretical approaches that have ultimately given rise to the field of postcolonial studies, *Orientalism* is not only Said's best-known work among Western academics, but it has sold more than a quarter million copies in over thirty languages—concrete evidence of the global interest in Said's analysis. In his 1997 interview with Te-hsing Shan, Said notes how

Orientalism ushered in a new phase in his life as a critic: "My books after 1967—after *Beginnings* really—have political as well as intellectual dynamism. So *Orientalism* was the first one that combines the political and the intellectual and the scholarly. That went along with the fact that after the 1970s, I became politically involved in the Palestinian movement. Even though I lived here, my family was over there, so I would go to Jordan, Lebanon, and various places." This intersection of political and intellectual impulses as contextualized by material conditions would lead Said to develop what he calls "secular criticism," as a counterpoint to "sacred" or "transcendent" discourses. As he tells Joan Smith, "I'm an unabashed, unreconstructed secularist . . . The world of secular history is entirely made by human beings; it can be understood that way and that way alone, not by revelation or by special enthusiasm or insight. That's the key thing."

Although *Orientalism* has been widely acclaimed by an international audience since its publication, it has certainly not been without its critics. For example, more than once in his interviews, Said has discussed the reasons for the "uniformly defensive" reactions to the book among Arab readers and scholars. He notes how, in the Middle East, the term "Orientalism" became an insult and the book did not inspire the same depth of analysis that it did in places such as India, Japan, and South Africa. In July 1987, Said attempted to convey to James Paul his sense of the many reasons for the mostly negative response to his book among Middle East studies scholars. According to Said, Middle East studies is "governed" by "pragmatic and policy-oriented issues. No one pays attention to the larger question of what it is that one is doing. It's extraordinary. The whole theoretical question is completely absent. . . ." There have been other negative reactions to *Orientalism*, such as that of the Marxist critic, Aijaz Ahmad, who has quarreled with Said over the latter's conceptualization of "history"—specifically, with what Bill Ashcroft describes as Said's "unreflective endorsement of a continuous history." In response to such criticisms, Said tells Ashcroft that "the definition or characterization of history itself is . . . highly contentious; . . . people are quarrelling over what history is, and how to get hold of it and how to characterize it."

As if in line with his thinking on the dynamics of history and the instability of the "secular" world, Said has indicated how he constantly remakes himself as a critic—a refashioning that he implies is a lifelong challenge for all "committed intellectuals." In several interviews, but especially so in the Ashcroft piece, Said articulates his indebtedness to specific intellectuals who have helped shape his epistemological frameworks since the 1960s. He admits to his being "bowled over" by Vico when he read him first in 1960. From Vico, whom he calls "[m]y great master" in the Joan Smith interview, Said has borrowed the distinction between "secular" and "sacred" that has guided much of his work for several decades. In both *Beginnings* (1975) and *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), Said has articulated the need for "secular criticism," which reaches out to "some acute sense" of the "political, social, and human values [that] are entailed in the reading, production, and transmission of every text." "Sacred criticism," on the other hand, is invested in deriving meaning from the mysterious, the transcendent, and the religious. The search for a fundamentally "pure" text would privilege "transcendent" discourses that elide the specificity of changing historical and material conditions. These transcendent discourses share some common ground with the prevalent poststructuralist and postmodernist approaches. However, the problem for Said is that often these approaches result in dogmatic, reified "truths" that inhibit or subvert intellectual inquiry and exploration.

In addition to Vico—as well as to the aforementioned Fanon and Lukács—Said has consistently credited thinkers like Theodor Adorno and Antonio Gramsci with prompting his evolving concept of "secular criticism." For example, in his response to Ashcroft's question about "labels" such as "post-colonialism" in contemporary criticism, Said states, "I don't like labels. I find that there is a quality of reification in a label, of a school, a dogma, an orthodoxy. . . . That's why Adorno has been such an important figure for me: he breaks open the label in an anti-identitarian way." In a striking example of how he embraces such "anti-identitarian" methodologies, Said tells Bhattacharya, Kaul, and Loomba that he doesn't consider himself a postcolonialist, as so many of his own followers do: "I do

not think I belong to that field. First of all, I don't think colonialism is over, really. I don't know what they are really talking about. I mean colonialism in the formal sense is over, but I am very interested in neocolonialism . . . So I think to use the word postcolonialism is really a misnomer. . . ." In regard to Gramsci, Said elaborates for Te-hsing Shan that he is "interested in people who are unsystematic. You cannot derive a systematic theory from Gramsci" because he was "involved in culture, in political struggle, in the eccentric forms of the aesthetic . . . and in the adaptation of conventional disciplines like philosophy and psychology, to political science." Like Vico, Fanon, and others who have shaped his life as an intellectual, Said is "involved" in contemporary theoretical and material practices that have helped to raise both the aesthetic and political consciousnesses of his multiple audiences.

One contemporary with whom Said feels a special affinity is Noam Chomsky, the MIT linguist and political activist whose co-authored *Manufacturing Consent* (1988) is a critique of the contemporary media's role in knowledge-production. Said has often expressed his admiration for Chomsky's "morality" and for "his kind of intellectual commitment, his relentless erudition, and his capacity for not being put off by disciplinary barriers." Although Said had told James Paul in 1987 that he was somewhat critical of political commentators like Chomsky who would "routinely avoid Middle Eastern sources" when writing or speaking about the Arab world, Said remains Chomsky's staunch supporter primarily because the latter persists in making his anti-authoritarian voice heard to a public that readily "consents" to political discourses in mainstream media. In fact, as Said tells Bill Ashcroft in 1995, "Chomsky [is] my great hero" because he, like the late Welsh cultural critic Raymond Williams whom Said also reveres, has been uncompromising in his opposition to oppressive sociopolitical forces. Although Said has admittedly become more cynical over the years about the Middle East "peace process"—in 1993 he spoke for many Palestinians when he characterized the Oslo Accords as a "Palestinian Versailles"—his cynicism stems precisely from his commitment to decrying the media's "manufacturing of consent" that is responsible for

constructing the reception of the Accords as a "victory" in the Middle East. Since Ariel Sharon was elected Prime Minister in 2001, the media's coverage of events in Israel and Palestine—especially Israel's response to the second *intifada* that began in 2000—has validated Said's cynicism about the possible outcome of the United States' efforts in shaping the "roadmap" to peace.

Said's enthusiasm for Chomsky is matched by his ambivalence toward another contemporary, the literary critic Harold Bloom. In a 1986 discussion of *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983) with Imre Salusinszky, Said indicates that he has learned from Bloom's ". . . notion of struggle . . . The vision he has of everyone quarrelling over territory and turf is incredibly persuasive." At the same time, Said views Bloom's dismissal of criticism's social contexts as "obvious nonsense." Recapitulating his insistence on the "worldliness" not only of literary texts, but of critical texts as well, Said contests Bloom's claim that texts are produced and received in an essentially "sacred" or "religious" fashion (i.e., transcendently, with no extra-textual contexts). As Said put it, "It sounds clever and brilliant . . . But [Bloom is] obviously in great need of institutional supports, as we all are: he needs an office, he needs workers, he needs grants. . . ." Indeed, Said wryly observes that in accepting the MacArthur Award, Bloom "became an institution himself."⁸

This recognition of the paradoxical relationship between the critic and the academy—including his own—is frequently the subject of Said's interviews. In discussing his role as a "radical" or political activist or public intellectual in relation to the academy, especially the U.S. academy, Said admits that the university is a privileged location that is simultaneously utopian and insidious and coercive. He has also often expressed his discomfort with the "disciple" phenomenon within the academy that tends to stabilize and essentialize theoretical explorations as well as stunt freshness and originality by promoting clannishness. Again, as he tells Te-hsing Shan in 1997, literary criticism in the past few decades has been quite repetitive, the abstractions of "theory" having supplanted more concrete analyses, or "close readings" of the literary texts themselves: "I have a

great impatience with the theoretical writings in the '80s and '90s, that is to say, theoretical writing which has no particular object." However, while he notes that some of his colleagues "keep saying that we should return to the classical [literary texts] and not be bothered with sex, sexuality, gender, and race and all these things[,] I say, no, we have to establish relationships to the contemporary . . . issues. And if they involve reading the classical, canonical work . . . in a new and shocking way, I think that's good." Further, while Said distinguishes himself from those radical critics who would base the curricula solely on responses to the claims of identity politics, he also strongly distinguishes himself from others who would prefer to ignore altogether the impact of recent identitarian constructs.

Beyond Said's continuing influence over cultural studies in the U.S. and elsewhere is his abiding interest in music. As Said tells several interviewers, music and music criticism have been a very special source of pleasure for him. Specifically, Said has an affinity for Western classical music and opera; his favorite musicians and composers include Glenn Gould, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Richard Wagner. In 1991, he collected his writings on music in the volume *Musical Elaborations*. While formal music criticism does not capture his interest, Said still publishes an occasional column on Western classical music in *Nation*. In 2002, together with the renowned Jewish conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim, Said published *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*, which is a collection of conversations over five years between these two international figures. In the 1999 interview with Barsamian, Said states that Barenboim is "very interested, as a Jewish Israeli musician, in the work of people like Wagner, who is, you might say, the total negation of Jews but was a great musician. So he's interested in the process whereby culture and music work in parallel and contradictory ways at the same time." Curiously, in the Ashcroft interview, Said recounts how he lost his interest in ethnic, Arabic music during his childhood, and then adds, "I am not that interested in jazz . . . very, very peculiar. I find that very troubling. I feel I should be interested."

Despite this lack of interest in jazz, Said is very committed to the idea of the "contrapuntal," not only in his music and cultural criticism, but also

in his analyses of national politics. In the early 1990s, Said began to employ a critical methodology he terms "contrapuntal reading" in his renegotiations of fictional texts, which is informed by his interest in listening to the contrastive melodies in certain musical pieces. In 1998 he tells Bhattacharya, Kaul, and Loomba that the term "counterpoint" in music is "where you have one line, a *canto fermo*, a sort of base line, and in the case of a composer like Bach he can devise the most complex contrapuntal structures. . . ." Later, in a 2000 interview, he tells Christopher Lydon that "rather than trying to launder out the stands that are competitive and contradictory, I think one ought to encourage them to live well as they do in music . . . [In musical] counterpoint . . . you manage the voices in a fugue. It makes it more interesting that there are more voices working together than less. . . ." By ensuring that one particular "voice" is not privileged over another, "contrapuntal reading" invites the reader to examine how apparently disparate experiences inform one another to create a more interactive and complex text. As he implies in the Ashcroft interview, the creation of such a text is linked in his thought to cultures that "travel" from one place where they are "settled, . . . to suddenly becom[ing] transported across the sea, producing a fantastic hybrid." In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said states 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 . . ." (66–67). For example, before Said few readers of Jane Austen had established the critical relevance of the Antiguan sugar plantation in her *Mansfield Park* that finances the Bertrams' English estate. For Said, culture has "a negative component, . . . a certain 'nasty' quality," because it can be used as "a screen between the members of that culture and some of the horrid practices that occur, sometimes in the name of culture" (Ashcroft interview).

Additionally, Said's interest in "contrapuntal readings" informs his desire to get the world to recognize how enmeshed Israeli and Palestinian lives already are and allows him to argue more and more for a binational state. For Said, to try to separate these two groups would be to ignore

their day-to-day interdependence and insist on an artificially constructed community. Perhaps his views on the Oslo Accords and a binational state—which have found resonance among some Palestinians and a few Israelis but are considered by most as “utopian”—are a reflection of his diasporic existence. In many interviews, Said speaks about his self-conscious existence as an exile and how that has shaped his perspectives. But while he reveals the pain of being an exile, he also realizes the advantages that such a position affords him. In 1999, he tells David Barsamian, “People like myself who luckily don’t have to face the pressures of living in either Israel or Palestine, but have time to reflect at some distance, can play a role in terms of seeking out discussion and debate with their opposite numbers in the other camp.” Ultimately, however, while he sees the positive and useful role that an exilic sensibility can entail, Said rejects its valorization or romanticization; he does not consider himself a “refugee.”

Throughout his most energetic life as an intellectual with a diasporic sensibility and as a New Yorker, and amidst all the paradoxes and contradictions of his work, what has remained consistent is Said’s fierce commitment to the Palestinian cause ever since he gave it his first public expression after the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. Though he himself is a member of a small Anglican community in Palestine (“a minority within the Christian minority in an Islamic majority setting,” as Said puts it), Said has, as already noted, relentlessly criticized Western media for misrepresenting Islam as “heathen” and Arabs as terrorists. In interview after interview, Said laments the state of affairs in the Middle East and the worsening of the situation under the autocratic leadership of Yasser Arafat. Although he had initially admired and supported Arafat’s deep commitment to fighting for a secure homeland for Palestinians, Said broke with him after Arafat both supported Saddam Hussein in his invasion of Kuwait and signed the Oslo Accords, which Said found “humiliating.” Said views the Oslo Accords as “a result not only of Palestinian weakness, but also of Palestinian incompetence and miscalculation of a catastrophic sort” (Blume interview). He has attacked the selfishness and megalomania of Arafat, who, according to Said, did not even care to understand the full implications of the

peace agreement—his only concern being the “paragraphs [in the treaty] that had something to do with his [Arafat’s] status” (Blume). In a 1995 interview with Mouin Rabbani, Said reflects on what he thought of Arafat before his break: “I felt that Arafat was, genuinely a representative of Palestinian nationalism, far transcending his actual role as a human being.”⁹ Said has claimed that, while he had always had a “critical relationship” with the PLO, the “sell-out agreement” at Oslo brought an end to that engagement too. So, for the last five years of his life, Said strongly urged the consideration of a single binational state which was, for him, the only way of ensuring lasting peace in the Middle East in view of the “irrevocable intertwined” destinies and histories of the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Said’s critical output may be viewed as an attempt to integrate the various strands of his multi-faceted interests and commitments. Nowhere is this process more in evidence than in the interviews he has freely granted throughout his career. In these interviews, Said has often talked at length about his major books and influences, clarifying his goals in writing and responding to misconstructions placed by his critics upon his written texts and public statements. In these conversations, often in response to difficult questions on literature, culture and politics, Said the person and the intellectual come together in many dramatic and revealing ways. While in some interviews Said comes through as feisty and polemical, in most his wit and urbanity allow for a charming persuasiveness. For example, in the Ashcroft interview, Said states: “I am invariably criticized by younger postcolonialists . . . for being inconsistent and untheoretical, and I find that I like that. Who wants to be consistent?” Said frequently challenges the interviewers—appearing at times belligerent—but often succeeds in persuading or provoking the interviewers into a full engagement with the issues at hand. In doing so, he draws them into asking their very “best” questions, even inspiring them away from their script. As his interlocutors raise questions about his evolving or layered positions, these interviews are marked by an understandable repetitiveness, even as they reveal his abiding commitments. Interviewers and scholars invariably comment on

the many paradoxes that define Said for them: for some he is a privileged exile who is not political enough, while for others he is too political; some see him as a vanguard of high theory, others view him as a major critic of theoretical trends like poststructuralism; some highlight his argumentativeness, others praise him for the calm and clarity he brings to complex and often divisive issues. This volume might help readers to make up their own minds. We also hope it will lead to a sharper understanding of this preeminent American public intellectual.

No project such as this can be completed without generous help from colleagues and friends. Those who have read our introduction in draft and/or were otherwise helpful in one way or another include the following: Pal Ahluwalia, Kay Robin Alexander, Steve Alpern, Anupama Arora, Bill Ashcroft, David Barsamian, Gert Buelens, Joan Dagle, Brian DeShazor, Kristie Egan, Nada Elia, Carolyn Fleuhr-Lobban, Ghislaine Geloin, Cheryl Greenberg, Patrick Hogan, Manju Jaidka, Lakshmi Kannan, Laura Khoury, Ulrike Kistner, Akshey Kumar, Rüdiger Kunow, Lisa Suhair Majaj, Mark Motte, Brian O'Connell, Reshma Parmar, David and Judy Ray, Maureen Reddy, Marjorie Roemer, Modhumita Roy, Roshni Rustomji-Kerns, Peter Schmidt, Lavina Dhingra Shankar, Prem Singh, Susan Soltys, Rajini Srikanth, David Thomas, and Rajiva Verma.

We are especially grateful to B. K. Kalia and Daniel M. Scott III for their valuable advice and support regarding many aspects of the project. Kristen Gagne, Jennifer Wickert, and Timothy Shirley served ably as research assistants. Chuck Hyson, Rebekah Greenwald, and Jeff Schneider helped cheerfully with transcribing several audio and video interviews. Myra Blank of Inter-Library Loan Services and the reference librarians at Adams Library, Rhode Island College, all assisted at many stages with unfailing courtesy. Finally, we would like to thank Seetha Srinivasan and Anne Stascavage at the University Press of Mississippi for their most gracious cooperation throughout the checkered history of this volume.

Notes

1. "On Palestinian Identity: A Conversation with Edward Said." In Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981–1991*. London: Granta Books/Viking Penguin, 1991: 182.
2. "Places of Mind, Occupied Lands: Edward Said and Philology." In *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, Ed. Michael Sprinker. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992: 74.
3. "Beginnings." *Diacritics* 6.3 (Fall 1976): 37.
4. "An Interview with Edward Said." *Tikkun* 14 (March–April 1999): 16.
5. "Criticism, Culture, and Performance: An Interview With Edward W. Said." *Performing Arts Journal* 37 (January 1991): 39.
6. "The MESA Debate: The Scholars, the Media, and the Middle East." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16.2 (Winter 1986): 88–89.
7. "Who's in Charge?" March 8, 2003. <http://www.counterpunch.org/said03082003.html>.
8. "Edward Said." In *Criticism in Society*, Ed. Imre Salusinszky. London: Methuen, 1987: 139–140.
9. "Symbol Versus Substance: A Year after the Declaration of Principles." In *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24.2 (Winter 1995): 63.

Chronology

- 1935 Edward W. Said is born in Talbīyah, a section of West Jerusalem, Palestine, on 1 November to Wadie "Bill" Ibrahim (American name: William A. Said) and Hilda Musa. He is the eldest and the only male child of this Anglican Arab family. Has four younger sisters: Rosemarie, Jean, Joyce, and Grace.
- 1941 Attends Gezira Preparatory School in Cairo.
- 1942 Leaves Cairo with his family because of fighting during World War II. The family rents a summer house in Ramallah, north of Jerusalem, and returns to Cairo in November after the battle of el-Alamein.
- 1943 Resumes education at Gezira Preparatory School.
- 1944 Begins to spend summers in the Lebanese village Dhour el-Shweir.
- 1946 Enters Cairo School for American Children in Maadi, Cairo.
- 1947 Leaves Palestine for the last time in December. He and his family move to Cairo, where Said enrolls at St. George's School.
- 1948 Arab-Israeli War. State of Israel established 14 May. Said visits the United States for the first time in late summer. Attends Camp Maranacook in Maine.

- 1949 Attends Victoria College in Cairo.
- 1951 Expelled from Victoria College. Leaves Egypt for the United States. Enrolls at Mt. Hermon boarding school in Massachusetts.
- 1953 Graduates from Mount Hermon. Begins undergraduate education at Princeton, where he studies English and history.
- 1957 Graduates Phi Beta Kappa from Princeton. Receives a scholarship for graduate study at Harvard, but defers for one year in order to visit Cairo.
- 1958 Begins graduate studies at Harvard, where he majors in literature.
- 1960 Receives M.A. in English from Harvard.
- 1961 His father, Wadie, is diagnosed with cancer.
- 1963 Receives Ph.D. in English from Harvard. Accepts position as junior professor at Columbia University. His family settles in Beirut.
- 1966 Publishes *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*.
- 1967 Arab-Israeli War; Israel occupies the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Said receives fellowship from Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Illinois for 1967–1968.
- 1968 Publishes "The Arab Portrayed," his first political essay.
- 1969 Visits family in Amman and Beirut.
- 1970 Travels to Amman and Beirut. Marries Mariam Cortas, a Lebanese Quaker.
- 1971 Said's father dies.
- 1972 Takes sabbatical leave in Beirut for 1972–1973. Restudies Arabic language and literature at the American University of Beirut. Said's son, Wadie, is born.

- 1974 Said's daughter, Najla, is born.
- 1975 Publishes *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. Said is Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University for 1975–1976. Testifies before U.S. Congressional Subcommittee on International Relations.
- 1976 Wins Columbia University's Lionel Trilling Award for *Beginnings*.
- 1977 Elected to Palestine National Council (PNC) as an independent intellectual. Attends session of PNC in Cairo. At Columbia University, Said is promoted to Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature.
- 1978 Publishes *Orientalism*.
- 1979 Publishes *The Question of Palestine*.
- 1980 Edits *Literature and Society* (selected papers from the 1978 English Institute).
- 1981 Publishes *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*.
- 1983 Publishes *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Misses session of PNC in order to remain with his son, who is hospitalized with a serious bone disease. Said's mother is diagnosed with breast cancer.
- 1984 Attends session of PNC in Amman—his first since 1977.
- 1986 Publishes *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* with Swiss photographer Jean Mohr. Said's Columbia University office is vandalized in hate crime.
- 1987 Attends session of PNC in Algiers. Intifada breaks out.
- 1988 Edits *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* with Christopher Hitchens. Attends session of PNC in

- Algiers. Translates Palestinian "Declaration of Principles" into English.
- 1989 Said is appointed the Old Dominion Foundation Professorship in the Humanities at Columbia University. Denounces Arafat in the Arab press.
- 1990 Publishes *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* with Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson. Said's mother dies.
- 1991 Publishes *Musical Elaborations*. Said breaks officially with Yasser Arafat and the PNC.
- 1992 Visits Palestine for the first time in forty-five years, the first visit for his family. Said is promoted to University Professor at Columbia. He is diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia in September.
- 1993 Publishes *Culture and Imperialism*. Visits Cairo. Delivers Reith Lectures for the BBC. Declines invitation to the White House for Oslo Accords signing ceremony, referring to the agreements as a Palestinian "Treaty of Versailles."
- 1994 Publishes new edition of *Orientalism* with "Afterword." Also publishes: *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination*, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, and *The Pen and the Sword* (Interviews by David Barsamian). Undergoes chemotherapy in May.
- 1995 Publishes *Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process*.
- 1998 Speaks in Nazareth, the birthplace of his mother, at Frank Sinatra Hall. He is elected President of the Modern Language Association. Writes a new libretto in place of the spoken dialogue in Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, which is conducted by Israeli Daniel Barenboim at the Chicago Symphony. Receives experimental therapy for leukemia in the summer.

- 1999 Publishes *Out of Place: A Memoir*. Organizes a musical performance at Birzeit University, the West Bank, that includes pianist/conductor Daniel Barenboim.
- 2000 Publishes *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After*. Publishes *The Edward Said Reader*, edited with Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin.
- 2001 Publishes *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Publishes *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said* with an Introduction by Gauri Viswanathan.
- 2002 Publishes *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* with pianist/conductor Daniel Barenboim.
- 2003 Publishes *Freud and the Non-European* with an Introduction by Christopher Bollas and a Response by Jacqueline Rose. Also publishes *Culture and Resistance* (Interviews by David Barsamian). Dies in New York on 25 September.

Interviews with **Edward W. Said**

The Palestinian Movement

Judy Miller and David Gelber / 1972

Reprinted by permission of Pacifica
Radio Archives: Los Angeles, California.
Archive #BC2826. This interview was
broadcast on WBAL, 13 June 1972.

DAVID GELBER: *This is David Gelber. With me is Judy Miller of our Washington bureau and Dr. Edward Said, a professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University. Dr. Said is a native Palestinian born in Jerusalem who has written extensively on Palestinians and the Palestinian movement. Since this week marks the fifth anniversary of the Six-Day War, we have invited Dr. Said among others to discuss the present situation in the Middle East.*

Dr. Said, we heard a lot more about the Palestinians a few years ago than we do now. Why is that?

EDWARD SAID: Well, I think one of the reasons is that the Palestinians became prominent as a political movement shortly after the '67 war. There was a vacuum of sorts created as a result of the Arab defeat and since the Palestinians represented, in the first place, what seemed to be a new political force in the area, one that had not been discredited through military defeat, they immediately came to the fore. I think the battle of Kharami, which was the first major engagement between the Palestinians as an organized group and the Israelis in March of '68 (an event in which the Palestinians acquitted themselves well), gave the Palestinian movement

an importance, which began to subside after the events of September 1970. I should say, however, that this appearance of importance and the subsidence of importance is a surface phenomenon. In other words, I think there is a good deal of publicity and public relations, and press exposure involved in this. I don't think, even though the organized Palestinians are in a state of what seems to be quiescence in this organization, that their importance as a political force in the Middle East has subsided. I think they still represent a major force in the area.

GELBER: *But the impression several years ago was that if the Palestinians wanted to take state power in Jordan, for instance, they could do so almost at will. That impression at least no longer exists.*

SAID: Yes, that is certainly true. There was the impression created, partly by the Palestinians themselves and what was said about them, that one of the major thrusts of the movement was not only that it was a military movement, a movement that had to do with the regaining of Palestine, but it was also a social movement, a social and political movement. So the impression created was that the Palestinians had a kind of readiness to take over state power which I don't think they themselves either had, or felt that they had, until the moment came when their power in Jordan was so directly a challenge to the Jordanian apparatus that their role as aspirants to state power was almost thrust upon them. The Palestinians created a great number of social institutions not only in Jordan, but also in Lebanon and other countries. Schools, medical services, social services of various sorts gave the impression of a state apparatus in the making. But I don't think it ever got to the point that it was really a state apparatus, or that it was able to take over state power in Jordan. I think there was a miscalculation on the part of the Palestinians about their own potential and their own readiness. Not only readiness, but their own willingness to do this.

JUDY MILLER: *Dr. Said, how divided is the Palestinian movement at present?*

SAID: Well, I take it you are talking about the Palestinians who are outside of the occupied territories.

MILLER: Yes.

SAID: I think the divisions are the divisions that have existed from the very beginning. There was a broad-based movement, which is of course Fatah, that remains that. There are a number of smaller groups who differ on the question of ideology, tactics as well as strategy. These divisions have been there all along. I think now they appear to be much more intense, simply because the activity of the Palestinians is now much more restricted. In other words, it used to be a broad-based activity, based not only on military activity but on social services and other sorts of political initiatives. These are now mostly in a state of abeyance, or so it seems. So that the political differences within the movement appear much more marked, and I think this is the impression that one gets now. Also, I think the fact is that the Palestinians are now pretty much restricted at least in what is available to the public to see; they are pretty much restricted to Lebanon, which is a country that is notorious for allowing a kind of maximum exposure of political differences. Lebanon, in a certain way, serves as a kind of debating platform for the whole Arab world. The divisions within the movement appear to be much more marked now, and much more dramatic. But they have been there all along and I think now they are simply much more intense. It is a question of degree rather than of difference between.

JUDY: *And what about those Palestinians within occupied Israel?*

SAID: Well, there is the great question, because shortly after the war in '67 and continuing for at least two years thereafter, the Israelis for the most part deported and/or detained any armed Palestinian in the occupied territories who seemed to be a political threat of any sort. In other words, any Palestinians who seemed capable of organizing resistance, who seemed potentially able to galvanize the population in any way. So these were either deported or removed. So what you have left is essentially a population that is made up of a broad group of classes, most of whom take it as their interest to remain as they are. There are very few people at this point who are willing to rock the boat in it. There have been in the last few months, a series of elections, municipal elections and otherwise, on

the West Bank. These for the most part, can't be taken, I don't believe, too seriously.

MILLER: *Why not?*

SAID: Well, because the issues for the most part, as Israelis themselves have said, have been kept pretty much to local government: questions of local taxes, questions of the water supply, questions of electricity, issues of that sort. The Israelis themselves have said it (I have heard them say in New York); representatives of the West Bank government here in New York have said that they have appealed to the Palēstinians, the West Bank Palestinians' presence. The fact that you are here means, they say to them, therefore you better do everything you can to make sure that your presence on the West Bank is orderly and sustaining and continuous. Therefore, the issues that you'd best deal with are issues of day-to-day questions. The questions of relationships with the Arab world at large and with the Palestinians' resistance organizations are questions that are left unsaid or unspoken. First of all, if they were treated, they would cause a kind of disorder that I think the Israelis don't wish to allow to happen. And secondly, there is not much that they can do about them on the West Bank. In other words, you're really dealing with a captive, an occupied population, and there is really little that can be done.

GELBER: *But Dr. Said, by holding elections on the West Bank, aren't the Israelis really trying to say "Look, we can hold elections and get Palestinians to participate in elections under our jurisdiction and the Palestinian resistance movement can't stop it."*

SAID: Yes, I absolutely agree with that. There is that. There is a gesture, a many-dimensional gesture, to show that the Israeli occupation has, in fact, curtailed the activities of what was the Palestinian resistance, first of all. Second of all, I think it is also a way of showing the viability of Israeli occupation. In other words, giving it a semblance of a kind of a free open election, which in fact it can't be by definition because it is an occupied territory and the people on the occupied West Bank are under very severe constraints of obvious sorts, both economic and political. So I think that has to be kept in mind. Now, another thing that I think ought to be kept in

mind on this very same question is that I think anybody who argues that the Palestinian resistance as such is finished is really quite wrong. I think it should be said that the Palestinian resistance in its past form—in the form that we've seen it take in the last four or five years—is undergoing a major change. It may be transformed. It may, in fact, die; but this doesn't mean that the question of the Palestinian resistance is over. There is a good deal of sentiment, obviously subterranean sentiment in the West Bank and in Gaza, but much more explicit elsewhere in the Arab world and outside the Arab world, which keeps alive the very spirit of Palestinian resistance. So I think that what we are really watching is the transformation of political structures and political organizations, but let us say the sentiment and the idea behind resistance will remain. And I think it's the case in the West Bank.

GELBER: *It would seem to me that actions such as the recent one at the Tel Aviv airport were reflective of a kind of a weakness of the Palestinian resistance movement. I wonder if you saw it that way, and, secondly, where do you see this transformation headed?*

SAID: Well, I think the events of last week are deplorable and wrenching to anyone who has any involvement in the area. Though, it should be said from the outset that the history of this conflict is a peculiar one. The Arab-Israeli, or the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, is a peculiar one, and it has been marked from the very beginning with acts of dramatic and wanton terror on both sides. So I think this is another episode in this. It's probably true to say too that it does argue a fairly large measure of what you and I would call desperation. I think, though, that these acts are liable to lead nowhere in the long run. I don't think that they will accomplish very much. They will probably come to an end as a stronger and more coherent political line develops, as it probably will.

GELBER: *And what do you expect it to pass into?*

SAID: Well, you have to remember that up until 1970 the Palestinians, by and large, firmly believed that their cause was the Arab cause. They did believe that the Arabs stood ready to support them in anything that they might do. It was a very dramatic and important moment when in September

of 1970 the Jordanian army was unleashed on the Palestinians with a tacit cooperation and supervision, in a very abstract way, by the Americans and the Israelis. But this illusion of Arab unity, which is one of the besetting illusions of the Arab world, was shattered once and for all. So now the role of the Palestinians is to identify exactly what their objectives are, who their friends are, who their allies are, and who their enemies are. This is the phase we are passing through right now. Obviously it's a very disorganized and difficult phase and a great many changes will take place before these identifications are made and programs geared to these alignments appear.

MILLER: I'd like to explore that a bit further. You said that one of the things you saw coming out in the next years would be a definition of friends and enemies. This is really what disturbs me. It seems that the Arabs feel (the feeling I had when I talked with Egyptians, for example) that as long as they got Sinai back that the Palestinian issue would be resolved in some kind of deal, that was all they really cared about. It's obvious that Jordan is now hostile, Syria wouldn't really act on behalf of them, the United States clearly won't help them, and Israel has made several statements of intending to keep the occupied territories. I mean, who will be the friends of the Palestinians?

SAID: That's a very difficult and complex question. I think it will work this way: I don't think it will be the definition of friends, but I think it will be the definition of (perhaps that was the wrong word to use) similar interests. The first one that has to be clarified for everyone—for every native of the area, whether Arab or Jew—is that the Middle East, at present, is a kind of open hunting ground for great power interests. In the long run, it's very much to the interest of the inhabitants of the area to realize this. One of the most troubling things—and you mention the Egyptians—about the Egyptian position in the last two years has been a kind of sentimental and terribly disappointing reliance upon the United States. If there was always a feeling that in spite of the fact that we are, the Egyptians say, attacking the United States, in the long run they will bail us out because somehow they have interests in the area and the Americans will have to come to their senses, etc. The fact of the matter is that this is not going to happen. The United States, like any power, is interested in its interests. And

friendships and feelings of honor, etc., etc., are things that it must perceive for its own sake and not be told what these are. What will first happen then will be an awareness, a gradually enlarging awareness, that it does no one any good in the area to rely upon, to become a satellite, or in the orbit of any of the great powers, who have their own interests and will obviously sell out anybody if these interests become quite different. So the first thing to do, and I think this is the direction that the Palestinian movement will probably take, will be for people to realize who exactly has similar interests, who of the Arabs or Jews have similar interests. Let us say that the interest for the Palestinians will be an anti-imperialist one. And therefore, these identifications will become more and more widespread, and I think new alliances will be made. I am not excluding the possibility that liberal or Left Israelis will see that they have many interests in common with Arabs—whether Palestinians, Syrians, Jordanians, Egyptians or not—who have similar anti-imperialist tendencies. In other words, I think it must be a source of great disquiet to Israelis to feel that they are more and more drawn into the United States orbit, more and more a part of the United States Mediterranean or east or southern Mediterranean alliance. And this kind of thing is what I am talking about.

GELBER: *Can you imagine that kind of alliance happening as long as the Palestinians continue to reject the existence of an Israeli state?*

SAID: Well, I think it has to be made clear that Palestinians reject an Israeli state as it is presently constituted. I think that you will find very few thoughtful Palestinians today saying that they wish to throw the Jews into the sea and all the kind of rhetoric that is common, unfortunately, to be associated with this. On the other hand, it is quite likely that there are more and more Israelis who feel that Israel as it now stands is not viable, first of all, because of the large problem of over a million and a half Arabs in Israel, something which has to be dealt with. Secondly, because of the obviously powerful threat of instability in the area, to the area, of the Palestinians. So there has to be a mutual change. In other words, Palestinians will have to see Israel not so much as a monolithic thing, but

rather as a whole complex of forces, some of which one can deal with, can associate oneself with, can align oneself with, can work with, some of which even Israelis will have to work against. I think that kind of thing is very possible. Not only do I think it is possible, I think it is probably happening right now.

GERBER: *Let's talk about specific things and small things. What could happen on the Israeli side and what could happen on the Palestinian and on the Arab states' side that would evolve in a more positive direction?*

SAID: The first one is a common intention to deal with the problem of human rights. If an Arab and an Israeli were to agree that no citizen, whether he is Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Arab or Israeli, ought to be deprived of any of his rights for whatever reason, whether it's a political reason, an economic reason, a social reason or a national reason, one has created a common ground. I would oppose the deportation of Jews out of Arab countries if this takes place. I would also oppose the restrictions placed upon the activities of Jews in Arab countries, but I would also expect the same thing to be supported by Israelis with regard to the Arab inhabitants of Israel or the occupied territory. You see what I am saying?

GELBER: *Yes, including the rights of Arabs to return to Israel.*

SAID: Yes, if this is what they choose. I think obviously that one of the great difficulties here is the problem of immigration. That is the problem of the law of return, which says that only Jews can immigrate to Israel. Now, this is obviously a discriminatory policy; it denies the human right of an Arab who inhabits a land to return to it. That's a large problem. A smaller problem would be the problem of the treatment of Arabs within the occupied territories at present. The deportation and the movement of populations from Gaza to the West Bank, which is taking place right now, and which is creating a furor in Israel amongst the Israelis, is a perfect case in point. Such things as administrative detentions, whether they take place in Israel or in the Arab countries, ought to be opposed. This is a constructive and important plan of political action which can find support, both on the Arab side and on the Israeli side. That's a true beginning.

GELBER: *Of course, there is a strong feeling in Israel, probably the strongest feeling, that things have gotten to the point, whatever the historical basis, where Arab opposition to Israel is so implacable that any gesture on the part of the Israelis in the direction of liberalizing the treatment of Arabs within Israel or within the West Bank is really not going to reduce the hostility of the Arab groupings toward the state of Israel. Things have just gone too far, that kind of gesture might have been workable three years ago, ten years ago, twenty years ago, but it no longer has any viability.*

SAID: Well, you see I think it's certainly true. I can't really judge what the Israelis think and feel inside their hearts. I can just judge what is said in the press. But I recall very well a few years ago that after the '67 war when Israeli officials, beginning with the prime minister and working on down, would say that all the Arabs have to do will be to declare their desire to negotiate some sort of peace treaty with us to recognize us as a state, and then everything will be possible. In fact, for the last two years, there are at least three Arab states that have said this—Egypt, Jordan, and, by implication, Lebanon. And yet, the conditions for some sort of peace have become tighter and harder. The Israelis are less and less satisfied. Everything that is put forward as an Arab position is described and rejected by the Israelis as a precondition. The whole question of withdrawal, for example, which obviously is the sore point between Israel and Egypt, is one that the Israelis have become more and more intransigent about. So I don't think it is a question of liberalizing gestures. It's a question of the Arabs seemingly unable to satisfy a set of more and more unsatisfiable conditions that the Israelis put forward. The reason being that it's obviously becoming more and more apparent to the Israelis, as a colleague of mine said, that they are sitting pretty. There is absolutely no reason in the world at this point why they should give up fifteen percent of Egypt, which is what they are occupying now, or the Golan Heights, or Jerusalem, or the Gaza Strip; there is no military reason and there is no political reason. Even the United States, which up until the end of '69, supported the Arab demand for Israeli withdrawal, as of the end of '69, has removed these conditions, and in fact does not support the Arab

demand for Israeli withdrawal; in fact, supports continued Israeli occupation.

MILLER: *I personally feel that the any change in the Zionist structure of the state of Israel is very unfeasible. I feel most people in Israel really want a Zionist state, a Jewish state. If in fact, such a change is impossible, would you favor the establishment of two states: one a Palestinian state perhaps on the West Bank of Gaza if that could be arranged, achieved somehow?*

SAID: Well, it seems to me there are two parts to your question: The first one about the change in the Zionist. ...

MILLER: Yes.

SAID: I tend to disagree with that. I think that in the very near future you're probably right. But I do think that the Zionist state at this point, for most Israelis, stands more and more for an anti-Arab state. It is a state that is, with regard to its neighbors, more and more intractable, less and less part of the area, you see, more and more of a special case. Secondly, since the state seems to stand more and more for a kind of military strength, way out of proportion with its neighbors, it is very likely that there will develop in Israel, particularly among young people as has developed in this country, a substantial and important anti-war movement. An anti-war movement, in this context, probably means a partly anti-Zionist or anti-status quo movement. The problem of a large number of Arabs under occupation is something that obviously gets to most Israelis. It's one thing to worry about Arabs outside the state as your enemies. It's quite another to watch, as Israelis are always saying, watching Arabs within the state borders multiplying; the Arab population will increase, not decrease. It's becoming more and more apparent to younger Israelis or Israelis who look beyond the immediate impasse to something in the future, that some sort of anti-war, anti-imperialist movement is connected with a change in the Zionist structure. Now, that's one thing.

The second part of your question is about the two states. I don't know whether you are asking about this as a proposal that is an autonomous West Bank proposal, a proposal created by the occupied territories themselves,

one that is of interest to the United States, or one that is of interest to Israel or one that is of interest to Jordan, because at least three of these quarters have proposed this plan. Well, the fact that four such parties proposed it suggests a confluence of interest. The first one being that it is a way of de-fusing the Palestinians; it is a way of containing them; it is a way of putting them in a place where they can stop being irresponsible, as some people have said. Another thing that needs to be said is that it would serve the Israelis rather well because it would be a kind of buffer state. It would be a kind of wedge. And this is something that the Israelis—and this hasn't been talked about enough—have always been very interested in; they always try to keep some sort of wedge, some sort of buffer zone between themselves and the Arabs. I think that this would be a perfect way of doing it between the Arab world and the Israelis. You would have a kind of middle state which is neither completely Arab nor not. This would keep the other Arabs away because there is obviously a great fear that Israel would become assimilated into the Arab world and would no longer be the sort of semi-European or western state than it is at the present. But the problem with all of these plans is that the conditions of bringing forth a second state would be Palestinian weakness; it would be not something that Palestinians ordinarily would welcome. Palestinians would seek for themselves political autonomy, it is true. But they would not like to be granted political autonomy as if it was a solution to a problem, a problem for others. It would be a totally different political process than the result of, let's say, a fight for independence. This wouldn't be the case; it would be a way of creating a new territory, a reservation in fact, where you put problematic people. So in the long run, it would be short-lived and I don't think it could last very long. It's not unlikely to happen, but I don't think its prospects would be very good.

GELBER: Dr. Said, I'd like to pursue with you the question that we've raised before about what the Palestinians do now. You said before that you expect them to develop a more coherent political line. You talked about their increasingly identifying who their friends and who their enemies are, and presumably that means within Israel as well as without. But I'm still feeling a certain amount of dissatisfaction when you answered, quite frankly.

Concretely, how do they go about creating those kinds of alliances? How do they go about developing that coherent political line? What does it mean specifically and concretely over the next couple of months and years?

SAID: Well, I am not a prophet. I mean it would be hard for me to speak concretely about what people do. First of all, I think it should be said that when you talk about the Palestinians you are really talking about an immensely disparate group. They are not in one place; this is an important difference between the Palestinian movement and, let us say, the Vietnamese or the Algerian movement. They are scattered over a number of different locales whether the Arab world, Israel, or outside the Arab world; there are substantial numbers of Palestinians all over the place. The problem of those differences has to be resolved. There has to be an accounting made of the locale in which a Palestinian lives. In other words, is he to be assimilated to the culture in which he finds himself, or is he constantly to feel a tie with Palestine? That problem has to be taken care of; the major problem with regard to that is an organizational one. What kinds of political organizations, given the enormous pressure upon the Palestinians, both inside the Arab world and inside Israel, can be created? I think the organizations over the past four or five years are now a thing of the past. I don't think it's possible to have as exposed and as open political organizations as ones seen in Jordan in '69 or '70, when you were there, for example. That kind of thing is no longer possible, for obvious reasons. So that is one problem that has to be gotten over. A third problem that has to be solved is the ideological one. What exactly is the goal of the Palestinian movement? Is the whole issue of Palestine simply a matter of getting back to the land, or does it involve something much more than that? Does it involve an important political and social change in the whole area? Now I think the third point that I made is where most things are going to hopefully take place. I think it is going to be apparent to a lot of other people than Palestinians the problems that the Palestinians face, whether they are the problems of expatriation, or being deprived of political, social, and economic rights, of being subservient, are fates shared by other people than the Palestinians. There are going to be

alliances made through the identification of common problems between, say, working people in Syria, in Egypt, and amongst the Palestinians which requires a whole different type of organization. It requires a whole different kind of thought. That is as concrete as I can be at this point.

MILLER: *Before you mentioned the United States, at least State Department interest in a separate state plan. How do you view U.S. involvement in the Middle East, specifically as it pertains to the Palestinians now?*

SAID: Well, everything I have been able to read in this country about the Palestinians by Americans has suggested to me, and indeed there was an editorial in *The New York Times* about the events in Lydda airport earlier this week, that the United States views the Palestinians as a major force for instability in the area. The context of that is extremely important and not enough noticed, certainly not enough by Arabs, and certainly, I don't think, enough either by Israelis or Americans. The United States since '67, has in fact intensified and consolidated its position in the Middle East. It's now become clear that in probably no less than three or four years, the United States will have to begin importing to this country, for local consumption, Middle Eastern oil. So the question of the oil is extremely important if you think that the investment of the United States in the Middle East with regard to oil is in the hundreds of billions of dollars, and will continue to grow. This is a major factor. Another one is the constant geopolitical conflict with the Russians, with the Soviet Union. It seems to me that Nixon's visit in late 1970 to the eastern Mediterranean, his stop in Tehran, after the visit to the Soviet Union in which the Shah, you recall, asked Nixon for a kind of blessing to allow Iran to police the Gulf, suggests that there are a number of interests operating here. The oil interest (and here you have the more conservative Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, you have Iran, you have also the geopolitical one in which Israel quite clearly is the most powerful force in the eastern Mediterranean, in some association with Greece, probably with Spain and Iran and Ethiopia) appeals to the sort of geopolitical maneuvering which is hopefully keeping the Russians off base in the Middle East. So all of these things suggest

that were the Palestinians to create social unrest, this resurgence of Palestinian sentiment will probably upset this very delicately kept status quo under which the United States very much continues to draw profit and political stability in the area. Therefore, the attitude of the United States is to try as much as possible to nip Palestinian revolutionary activity in the bud. I think the attitude, by and large, of the United States towards the Palestinians is one of studied apprehension that the Palestinians ought to be pacified, to use that word, and I use it advisedly, as much as possible. They ought to be de-fused by assimilation. There are indications, by the way, that the United States is quite willing to advance huge sums of money for development in the area, economic integration and development, much as plans for Vietnam, for example, involve the massive economic aid after military activity is concluded in Vietnam, to bring the Arab and Arab economies within the orbit of the United States too. Therefore, if they're allowed to get out of hand, to use the expression, the Palestinians represent a major threat.

GELBER: *Then you think that from the American economic perspective, the threat which the Palestinian movement poses is a spark which could conceivably mobilize anti-imperialist feeling throughout the Arab world?*

SAID: Oh, absolutely.

GELBER: *Of course it's been argued widely by the Left that Israel very simply is a rampart of American imperialism in the Middle East. But isn't it also true that it is a political embarrassment for the United States and the Arab world to have to support Israel? Isn't it a threatening thing in terms of American oil interest in the Arab world to have to support the Israeli military and economic posture?*

SAID: Yes, I suppose it is, but I don't think it's been an insurmountable embarrassment. It is quite clear that the embarrassment has been there all along. Another thing that you mustn't forget is that the United States has very important institutional ties with the Arab world that predate Israel, that antedate Israel. I'm talking about universities, missions, and of course the oil interests which go back many, many, many years. These are awfully hard for Arabs to forget; in spite of the fact that they see the

United States supporting Israel, they still feel nurtured by the United States. Look at Sadat over the last two years. No matter what the United States does, he still comes back to it because of this idea that the Arabs have of the United States. So I think the political embarrassment at this moment is not hard to overcome. The Americans know this.

GELBER: *I'd like to share an impression with both of you. The Soviets of course have been supporting the Arab world. But it seems to me as if the Soviets get very little back from their support, that it's a kind of lousy investment from the perspective of the Soviet Union, that in fact it's the Americans who are profiting off of the Arab world, economically anyway.*

SAID: I think that's certainly true at this point. It is awfully hard to know what it is at this moment that the Soviets in Moscow think about their vast outlay of arms and funds to the Arab states. I mean, what is this bringing them?

GELBER: *You think it's not unlike a Christmas card from Sadat then?*

SAID: Perhaps, yes. But it is not certainly. It can't even begin to compare with the rewards reaped by the United States. I mean this is really the staggering thing. Since '67, when most people assume that, as a result of American support for Israel both during the Six Day War itself and then thereafter, it would cut off American influence in the Arab world, that is quite untrue; it is quite the reverse. American influence has increased. And not only American influence, but American profits have also risen sharply. I think this is an important point.

GELBER: *Let me finally put you in the unsolicited role of prophet. Do you expect yet another war in the Middle East between the states?*

SAID: I think one always has to expect that, but I don't think at the present any of the parties want it. I think that it would have to be a very foolish and quite blind Arab to believe at this point that he has any chance in a war with Israel. I think the Israelis feel territorially, and from the point of view of demography, that they have all they can control at present. I don't think they want several hundred thousand more Arabs inside their boundaries. I don't think the United States or the Soviet Union wants it. But as

everyone says, the Middle East is an irrational place. So it's possible to break out, but I don't think it will be ever again—I feel quite strongly about this—I don't think it will ever again be the kind of full-scale war that we saw in '67. I think it will be a much more limited thing if it ever breaks out again. Much more limited, and probably longer.

GELBER AND MILLER: Thank you very much.

Palestinian Prospects Now

Mark Bruzonsky / 1979

From *World View* (May 1979): 4–10.
Reprinted by permission.

BRUZONSKY: *What's your personal background? Were you born in Palestine?*

SAID: Yes, I was born in Jerusalem; my family is a Jerusalem family. We left Palestine in 1947. We left before most others. It was a fortuitous thing. My family was in business in Egypt and so we moved between Palestine and Egypt. I didn't suffer at all. My immediate family was affected only commercially. I was twelve when we went to Egypt. Then I emigrated [to the U.S.] when I was sixteen, but not my family.

BRUZONSKY: *Let's turn to the Palestinian issue. What should the Palestinians do at this historic time?*

SAID: I feel that what is needed is a very clear enunciation of a Palestinian political process around which people can organize and work and significant advances can be made. We need a clearer program for progress toward peace—forthright statements of a two-state solution and some indication of how this might come about beyond slogans like "armed struggle," "continuing the struggle," and so forth. We know we're all going to continue the struggle. The question is: How do you advance the political process to your advantage, given the world in which we live—a kind of post-Camp David world? The armed struggle that was enunciated back in 1969 is not the principal program of the Palestinians. Now, if

that's the case, what is the political program? I don't have an answer. It's not something I can give.

BRUZONSKY: *But you must have some ideas.*

SAID: Sure I do. But I'm simply talking about the need to open a space for debate in the Palestinian community. There's a lot of surreptitious discussion that we need to talk to the U.S., we need to do this, we need to open our ties with Jordan, we need to do something to get the Syrians off our back. I want this debate to take place in forums that will give the possibility for these things to happen, not just an occasional journalistic leak such as Arafat talking to Anthony Lewis and saying x, y, and z, and then the whole thing is dropped the next time somebody comes around. I want it to be embodied in Palestinian political activity. That's all I'm saying.

BRUZONSKY: *How do you evaluate Arafat's leadership of the PLO? Are you indirectly criticizing his leadership?*

SAID: No, no. I think that in the present circumstances he's the only person who could lead the PLO. That's where I begin. He is the figure who represents the Palestinians' fate today. And I think that he now needs the support of more Palestinians like myself who believe that what is necessary is something more than just survival. We want to try to translate the Palestinian dispersion and fragmentation into a kind of process that won't leave us always on the margins, attached to one power or another.

BRUZONSKY: *Why am I having such trouble getting you to tell me something about this more concrete process?*

SAID: Well, because, you know, it's not something that an individual can do.

BRUZONSKY: *Well, you told me the Palestinians should do more with the Americans, and more with the Jordanians, that they don't have a clear enough program. . . .*

SAID: I think we should do it! That's what I'm saying. I'm saying we should do all those things that need to be done at this moment.

BRUZONSKY: *So what are the priorities?*

SAID: I'll tell you. *First*, we ought in some way to regularize and institutionalize our relations with Jordan. *Second*, in some way we should begin to

address in a serious way the U.S. If we believe the U.S. has interests and institutions and things that it supports in the area, and that we stand in an adversarial position with regard to these, then I believe we should address the U.S. politically and not leave it to an occasional statement rejecting [Resolution] 242 and then dropping everything. In other words, I think that what we should do is something that we've never done, and that's to engage the U.S. politically.

BRUZONSKY: *You're talking about showing the U.S. how a Palestinian state could be in the interests of the U.S.?*

SAID: Precisely. Not only in the interests of the U.S., but in the interests of peace. In other words, demonstrating that peace is in the interests of everybody who now has interests in the area. If indeed what we're talking about is peace that will be in the interest of our people, then I think we should make that policy and our vision available to more people.

BRUZONSKY: *Then all you have to do is let the Carter administration know you'll accept 242 with reservations.*

SAID: But that's not necessarily the way we perceive it. That's precisely what I'm trying to say. If we reject 242 with a reservation, what then is the alternative we present? And so far there's no alternative. But I can't outline the specific steps because then I'll get into problems.

BRUZONSKY: *But don't you continue to beg the question of what that new clear policy should be?*

SAID: Well, because I myself am confused. I'm not clear just what our positions on these questions are. I don't think many Palestinians are. Look, the main thing is: Are we a national independence movement or are we a national liberation movement? In a certain way we're claiming that we're both. We're at the juncture where we have to make a decision. What I'm really saying is that the whole period of indecision between one alternative and the other is pretty much at an end.

BRUZONSKY: *And when do you foresee this decision being taken?*

SAID: I think within the year. And I would rather that it was taken by us than, in a certain sense, imposed upon us. Imposed by any combination of the Arabs, the Israelis, and the U.S.—and even the Soviet Union.

BRUZONSKY: *What are the ramifications of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty?*

SAID: The general sense of disenchantment in the Arab world with the U.S. will increase. The feeling that in a sense Egypt has been transformed from an Arab state into a new quantity that is generally unacceptable to the Arab world will intensify.

Palestinian resolve, and with it Jordanian resolve, not to be a part of this—in the present form at least—will stiffen. In this sense Palestinian determination to provide a sort of alternative will become more crucial and will, in the end, prevail on the Saudis. I don't think the Saudis can go along with this, not only because of the separate peace thing, but also because the Israelis have gone out of their way to spell out in no uncertain terms that the "autonomy" is—as a recent article in the *Jerusalem Post* pointed out—an attempt to eliminate Palestinian national aspirations and not satisfy them.

Another thing will be that the demarcation between Israeli and U.S. intentions will grow. And U.S. intentions may well be good.

BRUZONSKY: *Do you think there's any significant likelihood that the Americans and Egyptians will be able to prevail and push this beyond a separate peace?*

SAID: No, my perception of this—and also the general feeling in the Arab world that I sense—is that the treaty in its present form has to be seen as an attempt to throw the clock back to the days before the revolution in Iran. It seems like a throwback treaty that Dulles would have promoted.

BRUZONSKY: *But you also said you think the Americans have sincere intentions.*

SAID: Yes, with regard to the autonomy. But sincere intentions are one thing, and the detailed juridical modalities of this treaty and its consequences will, I think, in the end prevail over the intentions. Because what happens is—as happened at Camp David—you get committed to what

you have. And as many liberal journalists—like Anthony Lewis—have said, “Well, Camp David is all we’ve got.” But when Camp David is pared down to its working essentials, it turns out to be this kind of treaty and then there’s very little you can build on except what’s in it. The Israelis have the machinery, the men and forces and resources on the ground in the West Bank. And it seems to me that just American good intentions are not going to budge them.

BRUZONSKY: *So a year from now, when the Egyptian populace realizes they’ve been told things that aren’t happening—for instance, Prime Minister Mustafa Khalil has said the treaty means the Palestinians will come to control the whole West Bank plus East Jerusalem—what will happen in Egypt?*

SAID: Exactly. And, by the way, Mark, I’m not even sure it will begin in Egypt.

BRUZONSKY: *What will begin?*

SAID: The instability and the oppositional current that will grow. Maybe I’m giving too much credit to what may in fact not exist in the way of oppositional elements. But a lot of what’s in this treaty banks on the fact that the regimes—especially the Sadat regime—are the prevailing realities and will continue and that their people can be made to swallow the line of the regime. So, I could be wrong, but. . . .

BRUZONSKY: *In this atmosphere is it conceivable that the Palestinian leadership can make the clear choice you call for: to choose between being a national independence movement or a national liberation movement?*

SAID: I don’t know. . . . I can’t tell. It’s a very difficult question now. I’m worried that the Palestinian movement will be completely left out of whatever comes now.

BRUZONSKY: *And you’re worried that Arabs other than Sadat will cooperate with the Americans?*

SAID: Yes, of course, it’s perfectly possible that at some point the Jordanians might enter in, that some Palestinians might be found on the West Bank and Gaza to cooperate. Sure.

BRUZONSKY: *What would be the reaction within the Palestinian community if the PLO leadership decided to choose to be a "national movement" rather than a "liberation movement," as you've suggested, and then came out with a statement saying there would be a Palestinian recognition of Israel if the Palestinians get their independent state?*

SAID: I think . . . I think . . . if it came about within the context of moving the Palestinians out of the present morass. . . . In other words, I think it can be politically prepared for. And if it were politically prepared for, then I think it would gain much acceptance.

BRUZONSKY: *Even at the grass-roots level, from people living in the area, in the camps?*

SAID: Yes, by political preparation. What I as a Palestinian would accept is not "Take it or leave it; this is a package deal." But, rather, if it appeared, as I think it ought to, that this is part of the reexamination of the whole Palestinian case, and the whole question of Palestinian rights is being discussed in the context of peace—then I think it would be an acceptable thing. If it were possible to see this two-state solution in the context of a wider discussion of the fate of those Palestinians—let's say in Lebanon—who are not from the West Bank. . . . How are their national rights to be addressed, their lost property, their national identity, their repatriation? Then there's the fate of the Palestinians inside Israel.

So if the overture toward peace was made in the context of addressing all of the issues, I think it would be willingly accepted. But if it's always seen in the context of "We're going to solve the Palestinian problem once and for all by confining all Palestinians on the West Bank in a state that is dominated by Israel," then nobody will buy it. And that's been the case all along.

BRUZONSKY: *You personally believe all those questions can be addressed and the outcome can still allow for a viable Israeli state somewhere within the 1967 boundaries, professing to Zionist ideology in a moderate and nonexpansionist form? Or am I putting words in your mouth?*

SAID: You're putting words in my mouth. There is a Zionist state. There is an Israel. I think we have to credit that most Palestinians can see that there is a state and that there is a society. We're not just talking about a collection of people who can be sent away tomorrow. Most Palestinians, if they're honest,

see it as a state. Therefore, what I also give us credit for is being able to see that state and our state in an area reaching some kind of *modus vivendi*.

BRUZONSKY: *Then why am I putting words in your mouth?*

SAID: Well, all right. But when you say Zionist ideology, for me Zionist ideology denies the existence of a Palestinian people. Anyway though, that's their problem, and I don't want to define for them what their ideology is. What I'm saying is that if there's some recognition—some accommodation—to the idea that there is a genuine Palestinian national identity that has a right to its mode of existence in the land of Palestine—which would also mean for the first time that Zionism has made an accommodation to this that it hasn't done historically—then that Zionism is quite a different thing from the Zionism of today.

BRUZONSKY: *Would you agree with what Abu Iyad said in Eric Rouleau's new book: that when the Palestinians get their state, the military struggle ends?*

SAID: Yes, ends. . . . OK, I would basically agree.

BRUZONSKY: *Isn't this really a three-state solution?*

SAID: You mean with Jordan. Yes. Demographically, the Hashemite Kingdom is part of this Palestinian entity.

BRUZONSKY: *So an historic accommodation to let the king live as long as. . . .*

SAID: Now that I really can't say; I really don't know. I mean, frankly, I don't see any simple resolution of the question of Palestinian nationalism versus Hashemite nationalism at this point. They do seem to me in conflict with each other.

BRUZONSKY: *When you talk of resolving your relations with the Israelis, why can't you resolve them with Amman?*

SAID: There is a kind of overlap between the two, with both making claims to the same constituency, which is quite different from Israel and a Palestinian state. Most Palestinians understand that a choice has to be made between the monarchy and Arafat.

BRUZONSKY: *So in that context the kind of compromise we're talking about. . . .*

SAID: I don't like the word compromise. It suggests there's a median point. What I'm talking about is a kind of engagement between opposing positions in which in the end the just position will get the most adherents and prevail.

BRUZONSKY: *What does that mean? I thought we're talking about a two-state and maybe a three-state compromise—I use the word compromise—where the Palestinians will in reality, if not in complete ideology, give up their claim to 70 percent of what used to be Palestine. . . .*

SAID: I didn't say they're giving up their claim. I said that claim will be addressed. There are 560,000 Palestinians living inside Israel. Who's denying their claim? They're there. That issue obviously has to be dealt with. I certainly don't expect that 600,000 or 700,000 Palestinians will be asked to go and leave Israel and settle on the West Bank.

BRUZONSKY: *No, I suppose they'll be citizens of Israel or maybe some will want to go to the West Bank?*

SAID: Exactly, so that problem will have to be addressed.

BRUZONSKY: *Every time I try to pin you down ideologically on what we've talked about, you do the same thing that the PLO does. You won't speak clearly about what you want.*

SAID: Because we're talking from two different worlds of discourse. You're talking about something that can be arranged. But it's not an arranged marriage. It's something that has to be done *ultimately* by a confrontation between two peoples.

BRUZONSKY: *Well, I'd say the Jewish bottom line is a Jewish state plus peace. Wouldn't you agree?*

SAID: Yes, I suppose that's what they want. Well, I'm not asking to define their world. I want to be given the chance to decide what are the minimal conditions for me. That's what the issue is now. We know what their conditions are.

BRUZONSKY: *But you may never get the chance if you don't convince enough people. . . .*

SAID: It's not about convincing, you see, Mark. I'm saying that we have a political position that is basically very powerful, very potent. And a political

position that we have not yet parlayed into the political process which would then force people—like the Israelis and the Americans who have for years gotten along by ignoring us—to engage with us. We have to make ourselves irresistible. And I don't mean attractive. I mean that we have to be dealt with. And the way you do that is to say, "Look, we're not going to just make remarks; we're going to engage, we're going to fight politically for a program. And the program is clearly a state whose lines are x, y, and z and whose provisions are a, b, and c. . . ."

BRUZONSKY: *So I hear you saying that for the time being you need to play the political game to get a state. This is tactical. But I don't hear you saying that you are assuming an overall strategic, long-term posture.*

SAID: No. It's a definite political goal. We have to stake our political activities on goals and aims for which we are responsible. In other words, these can't indefinitely be left floating and vague. And if that means that we want a state—one whose contours are clear and whose constituency is known and a state that also in some way engages the whole problem of Palestinian national rights in Israel, etc.—then we should adapt ourselves to that goal and not leave to generalities the whole question of the liberation of Palestine. . . . That period is rapidly coming to an end.

BRUZONSKY: *Why hasn't some Palestinian group—either on the West Bank or out of the occupied territories—suggested a suitable autonomy plan?*

SAID: Exactly. That's what I'm saying.

BRUZONSKY: *Maybe Palestine National Council should have when it met in January.*

SAID: I certainly think it should have. This is the place. That's exactly what I mean.

BRUZONSKY: *Let's go to the Americans now. You live in the U.S. and are an American citizen. And I assume you watch Carter as closely as any of us. So how do you evaluate him?*

SAID: I thought that his early statements were very encouraging and unusual. But what impresses me more than anything else as time goes on is what strikes me as a kind of total blank, I mean a human blank, where

the Palestinians are concerned. In other words, one can understand that in an abstract way he wants peace and he wants justice. But as to any sense from the administration that the Palestinians are a functioning, lively, political society with a particular history, a particular culture, a particular tradition, a particular predicament—there's none of it.

BRUZONSKY: *I'm surprised by what you're saying. Bill Quandt is at the White House. Brzezinski was on record even before coming to office as favoring a Palestinian state that would by necessity be PLO-dominated. And the president is on record talking about a Palestinian people, a Palestinian nation. . . .*

SAID: These are abstractions that, at the time, they probably believed. I'm willing to grant the president that when he began his campaign that's really what he felt. But I'm saying that when push comes to shove, when you have to translate this into policy, there's a sort of vacuum, there's a sort of blank. Policy doesn't mean you throw the Palestinians' autonomy and say that they are entitled to *participate* in the determination of their own future—which at best allows for some vague thing called "the Palestinians." In some way you take *serious* stock of what is everywhere happening before your eyes—that there's a people, that there's an organization that represents every Palestinian (and they know it as well as anybody) and which you come to terms with. There's been no coming to terms with the Palestinians.

BRUZONSKY: *What you said earlier, though, implied that you're still hopeful for Carter. Or did I misunderstand you?*

SAID: Well, I'm optimistic in the sense that I believe in the end common sense prevails. Certainly it seems to be that, given what's happened in Iran and what's obviously happening throughout the Arab world and Asia, these kinds of arrangements, where we rely upon rulers who seem to please us and give us the satisfactions that we want, will change.

BRUZONSKY: *Sometimes you speak as an American and sometimes as a Palestinian.*

SAID: I'm both.

BRUZONSKY: *You've linked in your own mind Palestinian interests and American interests in the Middle East?*

SAID: No, no. Some American interests and some Palestinian interests. All of us—all Palestinians and people who live in the Third World. This is one of the interesting antinomies, you might say, of modern political life.

There's a genuine sense of idealism about America. At the same time, there's a very strong revulsion from the American political empire. It's perfectly possible to understand the sense of idealism that people have toward the ideals of a republic and the revulsion from the practices of recent American governments. But I don't think it's paradoxical to say that one feels a genuine admiration for the people and the kind of society in general in which one lives and the ideals that still find voice in the republic. And that's perfectly possible within the American tradition of dissent. And that's what I think most of us can live with.

BRUZONSKY: *There's another school of thought that sees Palestinian interests linked up to Soviet interests. Is that just propaganda?*

SAID: Look, I can't speak for other Palestinians, just for people like myself. I grew up essentially in the West. And there's no question that historically and culturally our ties are more intimate, more strongly linked to the West.

BRUZONSKY: *And politically and economically?*

SAID: Well, for me—and I stress just for me—those are abstractions. I can understand and I feel a kind of sympathy with the Left. I consider myself a man of the Left. But whether that necessarily for me means Bolshevism, I would say, no, not necessarily. I have yet to see—to my mind—a satisfactory translation of European Marxism into Arab or Third World terms. That hasn't come about yet. There is no successful Marxist Arab organization. There have been attempts—noble, valiant, heroic attempts, the Egyptian Communist party, and so forth—but. . . .

As for political and economic interests, certainly it's not lost on any Palestinian that the Soviet Union originally supported partition, that the Soviet Union supports 242, does not support all our programs, does not come to our aid (for example, in the invasion of the south of Lebanon last March). And so on and so forth. The Soviets are slow-moving, ponderous, difficult to fathom as a political force. But it is a tactical alliance.

BRUZONSKY: *Now that we're talking about tactical alliances, let's talk about Iran. Does the Iranian revolution really alter the whole strategic and political equation over there? Or is it just one of those passing things . . . ?*

SAID: Oh, no, it's clearly not a passing thing. I think it's much more than that. I think most Palestinians are reacting quite naturally and quite enthusiastically to the symbolic spectacle.

As to what it might mean in the long or even the short run, it's much too early to tell. But it's perfectly clear that aside from what will take place in Iran in terms of who comes out on top, what you see is that even the most repressive, the most determined force—with a large army and where there seemed to be no hope for change—even that is not invulnerable. In other words, it's a demonstration of political will that gives people who struggle against what they consider to be oppression and injustice a hope for change. It also dramatizes, in my opinion, even more importantly, the short-sighted folly of U.S. imperial policy: reliance upon unpopular, essentially minority regimes.

BRUZONSKY: *What choice does a status quo power have? There's the king of Jordan, there's Anwar Sadat, there's the Saudi royal family. You can't hedge your bets and fully support these regimes at the same time.*

SAID: No, you can't. If you continue to consider everything as essentially bilateral, if you always think of the U.S. and Egypt, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, and so on—and doing so consciously promotes conflict between states in order to safeguard your position as the mediator of everything—then that is what you're going to do. But there's no reason why that need be automatically the way to proceed.

BRUZONSKY: *You're suggesting a regional view?*

SAID: Yes, a regional, a *realistic* focus. When you don't deal with the PLO, when you don't deal with the Ba'aths, you're not making these things go away. What you're doing is provoking a harsher cycle of events, which in the end is not going to hurt you any less than it will hurt the people in the region.

BRUZONSKY: *Your point about "common sense will prevail." This almost sounds like the Western liberal version of historical determinism—"Somehow, it's all going to work out this way."*

SAID: No, I didn't say that. Please. What I meant was the sense that is common will prevail, the position that accrues to it the most loyalties, the greatest sense of justice, the greatest sense of commitment will prevail in the end.

BRUZONSKY: *Well, in some ways that's the opposite of what I thought you meant. That means it is up to the struggling parties to make the future. There's no "common sense" solution we can be sure of at this moment.*

SAID: Right. Absolutely not.

BRUZONSKY: *You perceive that the Palestinian movement could act badly and fail to get anything?*

SAID: Yes, absolutely. You know, I like to say history's on our side. But history's littered with "just" causes that have just died by the wayside. It isn't enough to have a just cause. And it is perfectly possible that an overextended Israeli state, including the West Bank and maybe the East Bank too, will fall. But that by no means guarantees that we as Palestinians will benefit from this fall. That's what I'm trying to say.

So I'm the opposite of historical determinism. I don't believe in historical determinism. What I do believe is that you have to mobilize for a political goal that you feel committed to and which in the end will prevail if it is a common view. It's all a political process that involves constant conflict and organization.

BRUZONSKY: *What creates the conditions where Sadat decides to go against all past positions and accept a separate peace with Israel?*

SAID: The easiest thing to say is that he does seem to me a rather strange combination of messianism and erratic qualities. At one point in his autobiography he says, "I am Egypt," or something like that. He sees himself on a very large sort of canvas. But at the same time, I think that has not traditionally been his arena. So what has happened to him, it seems to me, is a too rapid translation of himself from the small figure into the large

figure, and the erratic quality is the sense of disorientation—that he's dealing in a world which, and I'm talking about the West now, in which he's not accustomed to be patient and follow things out.

BRUZONSKY: *And the effect on Egypt if Carter does succeed in pushing Sadat into a treaty with Israel? Obviously the Egyptian leadership doesn't agree with your assessment about them.*

SAID: From the very beginning, when he went to Jerusalem, I've always felt that one of the most tragic things about Sadat is that he frequently doesn't know what he's getting into. And he only finds that out later. I felt two things very strongly when his Jerusalem trip was announced. One was surprise, a sort of combination of admiration and disgust at the theatrical quality of the gesture. It's imaginative in the sense that he prayed in occupied Jerusalem. It's very hard for me as a Jerusalemite to understand that. That's number one. Two, I felt that he didn't really know what he was doing. Had he studied and found out a bit more about Begin and about the political arena he was entering, he wouldn't have done it.

BRUZONSKY: *How come the Palestinian community and the Arab community as a whole don't have enough grip on American politics to be preparing the climate for 1981, when there might be another shot at a real comprehensive settlement?*

SAID: They don't know anything about it! Forget it! You can literally count on your fingers (and this is something I get into in my book). . . . There is no place in the Arab world today—intellectual institutions, academic institutions, even commercial institutions—that considers itself responsible for the study of the U.S.

This is what I meant also by the need for serious Palestinian efforts. It's not enough. . . . When they want to reject 242, it takes the Palestinians at the Central Council three minutes to say "No." And then they write a little two-sentence thing. But when they want to discuss something as between the rejection front and Fatah, it takes them nine hours to sit down and write a statement. There's something wrong here. You're dealing with a country that is a political reality in the region—the U.S. And this is part of what I said about Sadat. It's part of your responsibility as a political

leader, and above all as an intellectual leader, to know something about this country.

The level of knowledge about how the society functions, how the political process works, how congressional elections work, how a municipality works. . . . They have no idea!

BRUZONSKY: *You're suggesting that the level of naiveté . . .*

SAID: It's not naiveté! It's *ignorance!*

BRUZONSKY: . . . *that the level of ignorance in the Arab world of America is even more than the level of ignorance in the U.S. of the Arabs?*

SAID: It's a different sort. There's ignorance, which my book talks about, where you've got all the resources and you study and go through the process and you produce structures of myths that do what you want.

Then there's the inverse kind of ignorance that comes from the perpetuation of inequality and power—you've historically been the poor man, the weak partner in the relationship, and therefore you assume that you cannot know, that you have to take things as they're given to you, you don't make a *determined* effort to understand the society with which you're dealing. And therefore you say, "Well, the U.S. is simple," and of course you're lulled into thinking this. The Arab world has become a consumer market and you think it's all a matter of consumerism. If you wear blue jeans and drink Coke and watch the "Rockford Files" you understand America.

BRUZONSKY: *Now, about your book. . . .*

SAID: It's an historical and cultural account of the notion that the world can be divided into two halves—one called the Orient and the one called the Occident—and how, as a result of this division (which I call "imaginative geography," since there's no ontological distinction between parts of the world), there has been produced a whole series of knowledge that I call "Orientalism." All of these knowledge—imaginative, scholarly, and so on—essentially propose an imaginative conception that the Orient is in some way fundamentally different from the West, number one; and

number two, that everything in the Orient is Oriental and therefore can be reduced to an ideal type.

Now, historically, I try to show this has never varied. Whether it's in the seventeenth century or whether it is the postcolonial period—say, from the eighteenth century on in France and Britain—whether it's scholarly writing or novelists' imagining, they essentially produce and reproduce the same thing. And ultimately, this is based on a sense of fear and distance from the Orient—the Orient is something that seems attractive and where you can be free because of sex and earthy delights. And yet on the other hand there's a feeling that the Orient is threatening and dangerous and so on.

And within the midst of this complex thing there's the notion of Islam. Islam is the religion that in a certain sense typifies all the antipodal views of the Orient. That is to say, on the one hand it is a fearsome competitor of Christianity because, historically, the Islamic world has been the only part of the East that did not adopt the Western ways. Japan did, China did, India did. Islam never did. It's always challenged the West politically, from the very beginning until now.

On the other hand Islam is essentially something that is, to a certain kind of writer, highly attractive because Islam seems to promote earthly delights, hidden sexual pleasures, fantasies of pleasure and desire. . . .

BRUZONSKY: . . . *and mystery.*

SAID: Precisely. The inscrutable East. The epigraph of my book is a quotation from Disraeli in which he says, "The East is a career." And the first part of the book is an attempt to show how this essentially European legacy of the Orient, which is principally embodied in the imperial careers of England and France, gets transferred to the United States, especially after World War II. And all the Orientalist expertise that comes out of Britain and France is deposited in this country and vulgarized by social science and churned into the kind of parody of stereotyping about the "Arabs" and "Islam" that then rules the popular imagination, the press, and policy.

BRUZONSKY: *How did you time the book so well that it comes out when there's so much interest in "Islam"?*

SAID: Yes, fantastic! Amazing! It's the most extraordinary thing. One thing I don't say in the book is what the Orient really is. I mean I don't think there is any such thing as the Orient. I think you have to look at these things without those spectacles. You can't divide the world into an Oriental part, or an Islamic part, or anything like that. Those are self-limiting and canceling-out tools and can never deliver what reality is.

Arafat Visit

Robin MacNeil / 1982

Copyright 1982 by MacNeil/Lehrer
Productions. Reprinted by permission.
This interview was conducted on the
MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour
15 September 1982.

MACNEIL: *Let us turn to the Palestinian problem. The shifting fortunes of the Middle East are nowhere better illustrated than in the recent fate of the PLO and its leader Yasir Arafat. Since the Israelis thought they had all but destroyed him politically, Arafat has enjoyed a remarkable resurrection—meeting the prime minister of Greece, playing a major role at the Fas Arab summit, and today meeting the Pope and the Italian government. To discuss his rising prestige, we have Professor Edward Said of Columbia University. He is a Palestinian himself, born in Jerusalem, a member of the Palestinian National Council, the highest legislative body of the PLO. Professor Said, in a political sense, has the PLO in fact won the battle of Beirut?*

PROF. EDWARD SAID: Well, you know, this is a very long struggle between Palestinian nationalism and the incoming Zionist settlers in Palestine, and it's been going on for a hundred years. Now, insofar as the Israelis set out to destroy Palestinian nationalism in the form of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in Beirut, they weren't successful. It's essentially a political struggle waged by the Israelis through military means. And all the indications are that despite the attacks—the rather savage and, in my opinion, terrorist attacks by the Israelis on the civilian population of a

far-outnumbered military force of Palestinians in Beirut—they were unable to destroy them, and what has remained is a much consolidated Palestinian nationalism rallying around the PLO, and, according to, for example, recent polls on the West Bank, there is some much stronger support for the PLO and for Arafat. And that is a sign that the Israelis were unable to convert their military superiority into political gains. And insofar as it's a liberation movement, the very fact that it continues is, obviously, a sign that they haven't been defeated.

MACNEIL: *How do you explain Arafat's so-increased prestige in the Arab world when a few weeks ago none of the Arab countries would come to his assistance?*

PROF. SAID: Well, you see, Arafat is an embodiment—I mean, I think it's probably wrong to attach too much importance to the personality as such, but insofar as he is a national leader and acknowledged by all Palestinians as such, he embodies a number of things. One, he stands for Palestinian resistance. That is to say, the very fact that he goes on means that the Israelis can't claim that the Palestinians don't exist, as they used to say, and as now they've been trying to say that they're simply terrorists. All Palestinians, wherever they are, rally around him. Second, he is the only Arab leader who, in the last several weeks, actually stood by his troops and fought. Most of the Arab leaders are surrounded by bodyguards and talk a great deal, have shown no willingness to face the Israelis in any way—economic, political and military. And therefore he stands as a kind of reproach to them, and as such, therefore, his stature in the Arab world—because Palestine and the Palestinian cause is the last remaining idea of Arabism, in a sense, in the Arab world—is—he's its embodiment, and he is the one thing around which all Arabs rally. And every Arab leader knows this, and therefore has to deal with him from his position of superiority as a result.

MACNEIL: *Considering his enhanced prestige, not only in the Arab world, but apparently increasingly in Western Europe, what kind of pressure does this put on the Reagan administration? Let me ask you, is an Arafat visit to Washington remotely conceivable in the near future?*

PROF. SAID: It doesn't seem likely in the near future, simply because the Reagan administration, for all kinds of domestic reasons, continues to isolate itself from world opinion. I mean there's no question, for example, that in Europe, if you go there for a short visit, the attitude is quite different, and Arafat is regarded as a genuine popular hero, as I say, representing the Palestinians in every sense of the word. Over one hundred countries recognize the PLO, and so on and so forth, and that is likely to continue. Now, the essence of the Reagan policy at this moment as far as the Palestinians is concerned, is that it for the first time throws down a challenge to Israel. I mean, the plan is really about the relationship between Israel and the United States. Insofar as it addresses the Palestinian problem, it addresses it still in vague terms that I think on the whole are not negative. I mean, there are certain things in it that one can talk about and one could look at, but there's still this sense in which Palestinians are not viewed, in and of themselves, as their own representatives, as a national movement.

MACNEIL: *Does Arafat's enhanced prestige change that, or is it bringing additional pressure?*

PROF. SAID: Yes, I think it obviously does. I mean, I think there's no doubt, for example, that the Europeans, that the Third World, that the socialist bloc, and so on and so forth, are going to give him the kind of support that, you know, his meeting with the Pope obviously symbolizes, and that's likely to continue.

Middle East: Boiling Again

Jim Lehrer / 1985

Copyright 1985 by MacNeil/Lehrer
Productions. Reprinted by permission.
This interview was conducted on the
MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour 1 October 1985.

LEHRER: *Our focus remains on the Middle East now but shifts to the Israeli raid on the Tunisia headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization. More than sixty persons were reported killed in the raid, and there are claims of even higher casualties. The raid was conducted by six Israeli planes; the target was a PLO unit called Force 17, which Israel blames for a number of terrorist attacks. The official explanation for the Israeli raid came from Tel Aviv.*

YITZHAK RABIN, Israeli Defense Minister: Israel is determined to cope with this act of terrorism, and to find out all the ways and the means by which to cope with terrorism by Mr. Arafat, PLO. I believe that by that we have shown the terrorist groups and the world that there is no place in which terror headquarters or organizations can be immune against our forces.

SHIMON PERES, Israeli Prime Minister: The headquarters of this violent organization is in Tunisia and our air force, after a very long flight of 2,400 kilometers, pinpointed the headquarters of Force 17, which is directly responsible for the act of violence and an operational department of the PLO, which is engaged in acts of terror.

LEHRER: *President Reagan and the State Department said they accepted the Israeli position that the raid was an act of self-defense, but others do not, among them being Edward Said, a member of the Palestine National Council who is a professor of English at Columbia University. He is with us tonight along with a supporter of the Israeli action, Amos Perlmutter, an Israeli-born analyzer of Israeli politics with close ties to the Israeli government. He is a professor of government at American University here in Washington.*

Mr. Said, why is it not an act of self-defense?

EDWARD SAID: The history of Israeli strikes against Palestinians on a scale way out of proportion to anything that is imputed to prior action by Palestinians is pretty well known, number one. Number two, I think the explanation isn't terror. First of all, the people who did the action in Cyprus denied any connection with the PLO, and furthermore, what we're talking about is actually a much more interesting scenario in which for the last eight or nine months there's been unmistakable evidence, evident to the world, that the PLO is in fact interested in peace—there is the Jordanian-Palestinian peace agreement. And that is the threat, you see, the credibility of a Palestinian national movement with leaders who are acknowledged by all Palestinians to represent the Palestinian people ready to engage in a process of peace. Given all the difficulties of our people, who are dispersed everywhere, who have suffered a great deal more than the Israelis—the numbers are shocking beyond description. I mean, it's something like fifty to one displaced, dispossessed. You have an occupation on the West Bank and Gaza which is in fact an apartheid regime, where Palestinians have no rights, with arrests, detentions, killings, blowing up of houses, etc., etc. All of this is part of a campaign by the Israelis to call the Palestinian national struggle mere terrorism and to reduce Palestinians to terrorism and, obviously, with the support, with the blanket support of the United States, which in fact pays for these raids, to carry out raids across borders, to raid sovereign states—Tunisia—with impunity because they know in the end President Reagan will say, "Well, this is legitimate self-defense" or some piece of nonsense like that. In the meantime, peace is in fact destroyed. The Israelis have made no secret of the fact that they're not about to return territory to the Palestinians or to the Jordanians, for that matter. Their claims are quite clear: "We have no

intention of giving up most of the territories on the West Bank and Gaza." And this raid and this continued military action is part of the process.

LEHRER: *Mr. Perlmutter, what do you say to that?*

AMOS PERLMUTTER: Well, I think that this is very interesting propaganda. It's very clear—the PLO demonstrated clearly that it is a terrorist organization. It is not interested in peace; it is not interested in negotiations. The various activities of the PLO recently, the West Bank, its effort to build a military infrastructure now in the Egyptian territory of Rafar, its effort to reestablish itself in Lebanon at the price of killing as many as they can among the Shias, an effort to be part of the Syrian policy of that area which doesn't augur peace, and, in addition to it, the brutal murder of three innocent Israelis in Cyprus demonstrated they have not only no interest in peace; it demonstrates that at a very dire time with King Hussein, on behalf of the Palestinians as well, is talking to the administration about the need to negotiate, and the administration is quite friendly and favorable to him, the PLO does to him what it does. It demonstrates therefore that Arafat is not in control, that the PLO is torn asunder. That is not an organization you can deal with because it's factionalized. Different factions have different actions. And there, you see, it is not ready for peace by the nature of what happened. If Arafat were to be a serious political leader, he would be in command, at least arrest for the time being terrorist activities, murder activities and other activities of PLO. Maybe that he wants to do that, but what happens is that he doesn't do it. He [has] demonstrated he is no leader and [is] not able to harness it.

LEHRER: *What about Mr. Said's point that the people who killed the three Israelis in Cyprus denied they were affiliated with the PLO?*

MR. PERLMUTTER: Well, Mr. Said's sources are as good as anybody else's. Now, he certainly can claim that. I trust more so the Israeli government for that purpose. I'm sure that the Israeli government, especially led by Shimon Peres, the prime minister that is going forward toward the negotiations, would not invent such things. This was an act in Cyprus which was organized by the PLO. It's not a sporadic act. Nothing that the Palestinians do is

sporadic. After all, they are a political organization with terrorist aims. So I deny that completely because he has no sources for it to prove it.

LEHRER: *Mr. Said?*

MR. SAID: Well, I mean, unlike Mr. Perlmutter, I'm interested more in facts than I am in—

MR. PERLMUTTER: In fiction.

MR. SAID: Well, I mean—

MR. PERLMUTTER: You are a professor of English. You like fiction.

MR. SAID: Yes, yes, exactly. I don't quite know what you're a professor of, but it certainly isn't history. I think that the truth of the matter is that the agreement that was made between the Jordanians and the Palestinians in February has been met with an absolute stonewall of silence, or refusal by the Israelis. And, much more important even than that, is that if you look at the actions of the Israeli army and the various settlers on the West Bank and Gaza, in fact the regime has increased in severity and brutality. Most of the universities have been closed. Many of the towns, including, for example, Hebron, have been invaded by settlers; it's an Arab town. More detentions have occurred. The administrative arrest of people without trial and without need to show cause has increased. So when you talk about terror indiscriminately in the way you do, you really try to sort of brush aside to your audience the fact that you're dealing with a military occupation, an illegal military occupation, of a large number of Palestinians, 1.3 million, on the West Bank and Gaza who are defending themselves in the best way that they can. Now, the interesting part of what you said was the contradiction in it. On the one hand, you say he is not a leader and all this sort of thing, and yet he's responsible for everything, at the same time he can't control everything. So you have to, I think—I think you have to really—

MR. PERLMUTTER: Let me answer.

MR. SAID: —come clean and say that the problem for you as an Israeli is the problem of Palestinian nationalism, and there is no way that you can deal with it honestly and say at the same time that, "We are entitled to

hold all the land and to decide who's going to represent the Palestinians and who the good Palestinians are, etc., etc., etc."

LEHRER: *Mr. Perlmutter?*

MR. PERLMUTTER: Well, I'm not going to argue now whether I am representing this point or another. I suggest that you read from time to time my piece in *Foreign Affairs* in which I discuss the need of the withdrawal of military and occupation forces from the West Bank. But you see it's not going to help you to argue again and again that the Palestinians are defenseless, that all of a sudden, you know, Israeli occupation has become more harsh. In fact, I was for six weeks now in Israel and the West Bank. In fact, the Peres government has demonstrated more liberalism than any other government—

MR. SAID: You mean by closing the universities?

MR. PERLMUTTER: I let you talk. I let you talk. You let me talk.

MR. SAID: Well, why did you let me talk?

MR. PERLMUTTER: Because, you know, I want to hear you—

LEHRER: *Well, I'm going to let him talk, Mr. Said, okay?*

MR. SAID: All right.

MR. PERLMUTTER: I would appreciate it. You know, I hope you let your students also speak in your class. The point is very clear. What I have seen when I was on the West Bank is there were, for instance, more than ten personal assassinations of Jews who went to the West Bank in the time that I was there. That was in August. And there were activities, for instance, two or three efforts on the part of the PLO trying to come by sea were foiled by the Israelis. In other words, what I'm trying to argue and I'm arguing very strongly not only that I say that Arafat is not in control; I didn't hold Arafat responsible at all for it. I think he is not in control of the situation. What I'm arguing is that the PLO is no longer a valid political organization that can sit down with peace. In addition, I sat with Mr. Peres and we discussed the matter after Ambassador Murphy was there. In fact, some of Mr. Peres' advisers—I think that I have no right to mention names—said, "We will accept any Palestinian that will come practically to negotiations, but we have great difficulties with it."

LEHRER: *How does this raid today help the peace process?*

MR. PERLMUTTER: Well, I think that it buried the peace process if there was any chance. Look, let's put it this way.

LEHRER: *You mean, in other words, you think that the raid today, as far as the Jordanian-Palestinian group sitting down, that's over now as a result of this?*

MR. PERLMUTTER: Well, I wasn't optimistic to begin with, but I'll tell you what. You have to deal with realities. The Israeli government is made of two political forces, one a more moderate force, that of the Labor Party, and the more radical force, that of the Nationalist Party and the group. Now, what I argue now is that the acts on the part of the PLO in the last several months only strengthens the hands of the militants in Israel, and therefore I doubt whether Mr. Peres could do what he wanted very much to do, to come to terms with the Palestinians and the Jordanians.

LEHRER: *Briefly, Mr. Said, do you agree that today's raid has pretty well scuttled any peace—*

MR. SAID: Yes, yes. Although I hate to agree with Mr. Perlmutter, I must say that I do on this point, and I think we have to also add that it was Israeli warplanes that dealt the final blow to the peace process.

Orientalism Revisited: An Interview with Edward W. Said

James Paul / 1987

From *Middle East Report* (January–February 1988): 32–36. Reprinted by permission.

Edward W. Said, a contributing editor of this magazine, is Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. His 1978 book, *Orientalism*, has had an enormous impact on Western understanding of the Middle East. His most recent book, with Jean Mohr, is *After the Last Sky*. James Paul spoke with him in New York in July 1987.

Q: *How did Orientalism originate?*

A: The immediate background was the period from '67 through '73: two Arab-Israeli wars with different outcomes; the relative explosion of interest in the contemporary Middle East in the Western media and in the academic world. The quality of the writing, intellectually and politically as well as from a literary standpoint, struck me as incredibly impoverished and backward. My own sense of my history as an Arab and as a Palestinian didn't seem to bear any relationship to what I was reading. I felt that my own history, which had been enmeshed with the West in various ways, had never really responded to the challenge of the West.

My generation had grown up in the shadow of direct colonialism and then imperialism. There was a whole texture of relationships having to do

with knowledge and power, and identity and political events, that required an inventory. The thrust to actually write the book with the force that it had owed to the emergence of the Palestinian movement. This I took also to be an attempt to act as an interlocutor rather than as a silent and inert Other.

Q: *This raises the issue of the role of the intellectual.*

A: The problem of expertise and professionalism is directly relevant to the Orientalist sort of policy problem. As Foucault says, studies of this sort are really studies of the present. The beginning point was obviously the moment then—the middle to late '70s. From that present tense I began to work backwards. Originally it was to have been about 150 pages—rather more like Bryan Turner's book [*Marx and the End of Orientalism*] than mine.

Q: *Did your conception of it alter substantially?*

A: Totally. Afterwards I began to see things that I had either done or not done, sides of the book that I hadn't completely understood. I was trying to talk about a series of two or three things, and it was very, very hard to keep them related.

There's also the problem of audience. I was never really conscious when I was writing of the audiences that I thought I was addressing. Later on, you begin to be aware of how an Arab audience would read it in almost comically different ways than, say, an American or European audience. A lot of people thought that I was writing a defense of Islam or that I was writing a defense of the Arabs or an attack on the West. This was the furthest thing from my mind at that point. In fact, I was attacking the notion of the Orient and, for that matter, the notion of the Occident.

The most interesting thing is how the book was taken up and other things developed out of it that I couldn't have possibly predicted or done myself. For example, there's the whole problematic of the so-called Other. Some feminists have connected Orientalism to the discovery of the woman in nineteenth-century culture. The second is the whole problematic of what representation involves—in the visual arts, film, photography

and caricature, for instance. There's also the problem of what is called discourse analysis—how do you deal with systematized languages that purport to deal with subjects. So in that respect it is very closely connected to the things that Foucault was doing in the middle '70s with the book on discipline and punishment, where discourse analysis is connected to political and sociological control.

The least encouraging impact of *Orientalism*, though, was in Middle East studies. There the reaction was uniformly defensive.

Q: *Why?*

A: First, it was published by a mainstream, commercial publisher who gave it some attention. Second, I was not writing as a member of the academic establishment, which allowed me a certain set of presumptions to speak in a particular way. Third, there was a concatenation of various events: the oil crisis, the '73 war, the Iranian revolution a little later on. There was widespread consciousness of the immense power of the means of production of representations—images, media, all of these sorts of things. Anouar Abdel-Malek's article in *Diogenes*, which meant a lot to me, may have been read by a few hundred people. But *Orientalism* was read by many thousands.

What I was doing—this is something that I learned from Foucault—was producing things that become a box of utensils for other people to use. In anthropology in particular, it raised the question of what it means when an entire science is based upon unequal power between two cultures. In sociology, in political science, it also raised the question of how you talk about areas of the world that are seen not neutrally but as part of some political configuration. I wasn't trying to resolve the question of what the Orient is, or what the real Islamic world is, but rather to raise questions.

Furthermore, Middle East studies seems to be governed the most by what you might call pragmatic and policy-oriented issues. No one pays attention to the larger question of what it is that one is doing. It's extraordinary. The whole theoretical dimension is completely absent in Middle

East studies. A historian would never think of turning to a Middle Eastern history journal to try and understand what general lessons might be drawn about the writing of history. Why is there a conscious or unconscious consensus against theoretical work in Middle East studies? That could be political. It could be the formation of people. There could be more immediate stakes here: jobs, patronage, money. Bryan Turner's book, it seems to me, makes the most profound intervention on the theoretical level. And nobody, with maybe two exceptions, has even tried to take up what Turner's talking about—whether as a Marxist, a sociologist, a historian, or a political scientist.

Q: It arrived at a time when the field was at a point of great vulnerability.

A: But what about the people going into the field? They seem so put upon by virtue of the immense amount of positive knowledge that you have to get—languages to master, texts, traditions and all the rest of it—that they have no time for anything else. Why hasn't there been an attempt to connect what has been going on in literary theory? Literary theory is partly to blame; they're not interested in what's going on in political fields like the Middle East. In political science, take Althusser's impact on political theory. You don't see any of that reflected whatsoever in Middle Eastern studies. Or take the question of late capitalism, which seems an essential part of the production of knowledge.

Q: But today MESA [the Middle East Studies Association] seems to be much more receptive to the kind of argument that you were making.

A: Yes, I think we can see the beginnings of a new kind of scholarship which Orientalism was incapable of developing. The other thing is the rather more frank admission on the part of a lot of people in Middle Eastern studies that the field is highly political in nature and therefore the likely site of open contests. People take sides much more openly. People are known, in terms of their scholarly work in Middle Eastern studies, to be openly Zionist or anti-Zionist, or openly imperialist or anti-imperialist. The appearance of new apologists, such as Daniel Pipes and Barry Rubin, has made the debate more open and therefore more lively.

Q: *The debate at MESA definitely marked a changed tone in the professional Middle East studies establishment.¹ How does this connect up with the broader production of understandings and public policy concerning the Middle East?*

A: There has not been much change at the public level. Lewis, at the beginning of his statement in the debate, asserted that very little of our discussion would have any effect on reality, on the way business was conducted, on the way the Middle East was represented and seen, and the way policy went. That was the only thing he said that he was absolutely right about. He knew that power, as it were, was on his side and that the establishment was listening to him no matter what he said, whereas Hitchens and myself were upstarts who command the interest of the audience but very little else.

Nevertheless, Lewis' point of view was discredited to the extent that people expected him to say something more pertinent, more concrete. Instead, he fumbled around and tried a senior commonroom chit-chat, which completely failed. He stood there without very much to say except that his point of view prevailed whereas ours didn't. But we knew that to begin with.

There is a sobering thought to keep in mind here. Lewis revealed the failings of the Orientalist as a generalist, the man who could pronounce about medieval history, about the Arab world, about Arab culture, Islam, in very general terms. In fact, MESA has been taken over by a younger generation of scholars who use modern methodologies, who are influenced by Marxism, by the computer, by all up-to-date research tools, but whose field of interest is much more narrowly defined. They can talk about things in perhaps a less venturesome way, therefore less provocatively. That is not necessarily a better thing. Specialists in Indian, in Latin American, in African studies have produced work that is of interest to

1. The Middle East Studies Association of North America sponsored a debate on "The Scholars, the Media, and the Middle East" on November 22, 1986, at its twentieth anniversary meeting. Edward Said debated Bernard Lewis, professor emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. Their seconds were Christopher Hitchens, Washington correspondent for the *Nation*, and Leon Wieseltier, literary editor of the *New Republic*, respectively. The debate was transcribed in the Winter 1987 issue of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*.

other fields. I don't think the same is true of Middle Eastern work. This could be because the field is so weighted with political contests, because the patronage involved is so great, because the stakes seem to be immediate and direct, and because the issues in the Middle East are so much before the public eye.

Q: Intellectuals in Latin America have had a dynamic impact on Latin American studies. In Asian studies, there is the influence of Chinese Marxism, positive and negative. To what extent are intellectual developments in the Middle East contributing to this poverty in Middle East studies?

A: In the last part of the book I talk about Arabs as important producers of Orientalism. History journals in the Arab world depend heavily on the paradigms of Orientalism. There is no sense in which they are contributing to changing it. At most you may get a few pioneering works about Arab nationalism that acquire a kind of authority. But Geertz's book [*Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society*], for example, has literally not a single Moroccan source cited for the study of Moroccan marketplace ritual! That couldn't happen in Latin American anthropology.

For one thing, Arab and Islamic thought in the last half-century put great emphasis on translations. Early nationalists like Afghani and Abduh stressed the need to catch up with the West, so Arab intellectuals felt it their duty to go out and just translate huge masses of things into Arabic and make them available.

Secondly, regarding the Arab left, you're talking about a kind of philosophy and ideology, a critical science, which seems to have stopped at Marxism as a kind of dogmatic orthodoxy rather than Marxism as a critical tool. There's very little Gramsci or Althusser translated into Arabic. The whole tradition of Western Marxism that produced important major works between the two world wars, that literature isn't there.

The third factor is religious and cultural, which many intellectuals in the Arab world are only now beginning to investigate in ways not dominated by the paradigms of Western Orientalism. What is it that produces, in such a surprising way, the Iranian revolution pretty much under the noses of

most contemporary Iranian intellectuals? If you look carefully at writings of Arab nationalists, there's very little to account for the rise of the Palestinian national movement in the late 1960s and early '70s. Why? Because there's a misapprehension of the sources of authority of the native culture.

Q: *Another factor must be the internal conditions in those societies for intellectual production.*

A: Everything is politicized in the most reductive and mindless way. Nothing is free from being saturated with immediate political reference, which means that it's virtually impossible to portray things on a more nuanced palette. It's easiest simply to say things in the most obvious political manner. There has been such a rush to get on with technological and developmental strategies that you have an almost total neglect of the humanistic, theoretical and critical disciplines. I've been teaching at Columbia for twenty-two years. The only students I have are what you would call first world students. I'm not saying that people should be studying literature necessarily, or English literature in particular. But this simply reconfirms the patterns of political, economic and ideological domination that I was speaking about at the end of my book.

Q: *This gets back to the notion of critical versus non-critical science.*

A: The problem is the following: in my field I'm not talking on a blank stage. There's a large literature dealing with the problems of criticism and critical theory. In Middle Eastern studies, there's no literature at all. What are the theoretical presuppositions of the study of the Middle East today? You would go to [Leonard] Binder's book [*The Study of the Middle East*] which is essentially positivist. There's very little in it which suggests anything more than an archival stocktaking, a history of what people said. The MERIP issue on the Middle East Studies Network [June 1975] is critical but not theoretical. It's an adumbration of an attitude that one would like to see develop.

One place that I find myself going increasingly with admiration really, is Bryan Turner's work. There he puts it all down. He talks about the state, about the family, about history, about sociology, economics, and he tries in many ways to draw forth a model. Maybe because the book is so programmatically Marxist it has turned off a lot of people.

Q: In Middle East studies, it almost seems that if crucial political questions are raised, the entire structure would blow apart. To what extent does this owe to the character of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

A: It's curious how people tend to think of things in terms of Arabs versus Israelis, or Arabs versus imperialists. There isn't an Arab side. The summer of '82 was a perfect example of it. The same is probably true of the other side, whether you call it Israeli or Zionist or Jewish. What we're really talking about is a collective investment in the interest of maintaining blocs. You really have to work at destroying those blocs.

Q: The two sides are not co-equal.

A: No, but they seem to exercise the same kind of control over their respective territories with the same kind of authority.

Q: Is there a place where MERIP can touch raw nerves in the immediate future?

A: What is MERIP's place in this whole congeries of forces? The people whom MERIP is going against can afford not to say what they are. The State Department doesn't need self-consciousness. It has the power: it simply says, this is the way the world is. The media don't have to reflect on their position. But we have to. There has to be a discourse of self-conscious intervention. This is where we are and this is what we're trying to do.

Q: Where does this necessary self-critical reflection take place?

A: The one place in which there's been some interesting and innovative work done in Arab intellectual life is in literary criticism and literary production generally. That never finds its way into studies of the Middle East. You're dealing with the raw material of politics. Literary critics and novelists require a rather more sensitive filtering process. You can deal with a novelist as a kind of witness to something and say, well, Naguib Mahfouz, he's writing about political life in Egypt in the '40s, or Ghassan Kanafani, he's writing about the Palestinian dilemma. Orientalist literary studies are almost all of that sort, examining literature as an index to political, economic and historical things.

The problem of literary language is a real issue. Because in the end, all of us are working with language. We're dealing with sources and what

people said, citations, and the awareness of how political and other forms of language change.

From that you could move to cultural production in general in the Arab world. What does that tell us about the development of the state? There's a very important and quite remarkable magazine in Egypt called *Fusul*, which has been publishing a kind of avant-garde criticism of Arabic literature, both contemporary and classical. How do those kinds of people operate, as opposed to the kinds of witnesses and chroniclers that we generally tend to cite?

Q: *Literature is able to look at society from the vantage point of individuals and their daily lives. Should MERIP pursue some project with a literary side?*

A: Not uncritically. If you assume that literature is essentially about human experience, and that it's specific, you're really espousing a kind of realistic epistemology for literature. But most of the really powerful literature of, say, Latin America is not about that experience at all. We're talking about the fantastic. So we first of all have to separate literature from everyday life in that kind of one-to-one correspondence and think instead of literature as the inscription of certain kinds of forces: libidinal, psychological, historical forces.

I began my professional career as a scholar of Conrad. And one of the interesting things that I discovered, quite by chance, is that a significant number of contemporary African works, both in Arabic and in English and French, were not about daily experience, but were really attempts to rewrite the colonial paradigm, to reinscribe it. Take *Heart of Darkness*. The most interesting novelists, like Chinua Achebe and Ngugi and Tayib Salih, were attempting not to tell about what we really did, but to rewrite Conrad so that the paradigm is not daily experience, but the writer from the colonial era. There's a very sophisticated understanding that literature is about literature. These writers were trying to reinscribe their own myths. This other realm is more interesting—the realm of the fantastic, of the psychological, the unconscious and the historical.

Q: You write of the phenomenon of Orientalism as exceptional in terms of the relations between the powerful and powerless in intellectual production. Is it really any different from how the oppressed are always diminished by the intellectual production of those in power?

A: Central to Orientalism in the Middle Eastern instance is Islam. You can't study the Orient without dealing with Islam. For many Orientalists of past and even present generations, Islam is a deeply antipathetic and repulsive phenomenon. The younger generation is freer in its inhibitions and antipathies. There is a greater attempt to understand a different culture in human and historical terms.

Every imperialist phenomenon resembles every other one, yet every one is quite different. How much is generic to imperialism? It could be a form of paranoia on my part, but it does seem to me that the Orientalism I was speaking of contains a unique set of attitudes, a kind of virulence and persistence that I haven't seen elsewhere. African studies have changed in fairly massive ways in the twentieth century; Indian studies have changed; Latin American studies have changed. Orientalism has a remarkable holding power, supported by the media and popular discourse, in which Arabs and Muslims and terrorism and evil are all wrapped up together. There is a very powerful compactness that I don't find anywhere else.

Q: Orientalism draws largely on the realm of literary and historical studies. Is there a gap between this kind of hegemonic cultural production of the intelligentsia and understandings at a mass level?

A: Fouad Moughrabi's studies of public opinion polls and some of Chomsky's work suggest that if people are given a chance to discuss Palestinian rights, American intervention in Lebanon, Israeli occupation policies, they will generally oppose current U.S. policy. The big difference between this issue and other foreign policy issues is that here you not only have a very powerful pro-Israel lobby, but you also have a much greater degree of ignorance. At the level of literary representations, television and film images, it is virtually impossible to find anything like the degree of mindless or malicious stereotyping that you find in the case of Arabs, Muslims

and the Middle East generally. Publishers have avoided opportunities to translate and publish contemporary and even classical Arabic literature. Journals of opinion and of record avoid anything about the Middle East that would suggest opposition to Israel, sympathy and support for the Palestinians, anything that might humanize Muslims. Even commentators who are sympathetic to, shall we say, the "left" position, the MERIP position on the Middle East—Noam Chomsky, Alexander Cockburn and others—routinely avoid Middle Eastern sources. They would rather quote American, Israeli or European sources. There is something intrinsically untrustworthy about a Middle Eastern or Arab source. They quote a Nicaraguan on Nicaragua, a South African Black on South Africa, but they never quote Arab or Muslim material. I have mentioned this to both of them as a kind of value judgment that they have made, and both admit to being troubled by it. Those are all part of the same picture—this lack of knowledge and this continued politicization so that even the act of translating a novel in a Middle Eastern language is considered a political act with unpleasant consequences.

Q: In spite of the troubled position of the Orientalists in Middle East studies, Orientalism seems to have undergone a revival among the broader literate public, part of the colonialist nostalgia represented by the Banana Republic stores.

*A: In England, France and the U.S., there had been a fairly massive investment in colonialist nostalgia—the Raj revival stuff like *Jewel in the Crown* and *Passage to India*, the film *Out of Africa*. It is a simple, colorful world with heroes and prototypes of Oliver North—the Livingstones, the Stanleys, the Conrads and Cecil Rhodes.*

A much more sinister aspect is a general revulsion with the Third World. In the early '70s, Conor Cruise O'Brien wrote one of the first, and in my opinion one of the most important studies of Camus as a colonialist writer. Ten years later, O'Brien had become an apologist for the Israelis, and to some degree for South African apartheid, as well as a vehement opponent of Irish nationalism. There was a turn. You see it too in people like Chaliand, who had once been an enthusiast of various revolutions of

the Third World. People were disappointed. Revolutionary enthusiasm had been betrayed. We got Bokassas and Idi Amins instead. Pascal Bruckner's *Tears of the White Man* argues that liberal sentiment for oppressed and underprivileged nonwhites—itsself a Naipaulian theme—is a fantastic mistaken illusion. These people are monstrous and deserve opprobrium, not the sympathy of the white man. This is the Reagan option and of course there is no shortage of people willing to go along with that.

Q: This is true among the intellectuals and producers of ideas in New York. But do these sentiments carry over into the broader population?

A: We are talking about trends that are organized and led hegemonically, in the sense that Gramsci uses the term, by "directive classes," people with high visibility, people who command a mass audience. Norman Podhoretz has a column in the *New York Post* and is syndicated all over the country. Herbert Schiller is right: information has become so commodified that the opportunities for oppositional types like us to get our ideas out to a larger audience have become more slender. We should keep trying. There are ingenious ways of getting around these problems and the censorship they represent. But we shouldn't have any illusions about a large public out there, critically examining the clichés on the CBS Evening News every night. The mass media seems to be getting coarser, more reliant upon a few very simple ahistorical clichés. Moreover, various intellectual attempts to remedy this new barbarism, like E. D. Hirsch's book on cultural literacy, or Alan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, are intensely xenophobic and white Western Eurocentric. This all comprises a most disturbing circuit.

Q: You have said that the Middle East studies establishment at first took a defensive and somewhat hostile stance towards your critique of Orientalism. Yet it's clear from our subsequent discussion that its greatest impact has been precisely within the guild, so to speak.

A: I don't think we should be gloating over our successes just yet. Most academic departments of Middle Eastern studies throughout the country, whereas they may pay lip service to the critique of Orientalism, nevertheless are firmly bound by the guild. Take somebody like

Rodinson, an old friend and a man I respect enormously. His view of my critique has been very, to put it mildly, mixed. He supports a lot of what I say on political grounds, but he wants to defend Orientalist knowledge, the privileged perspective of the scholarly observer who is removed from the local contests, from the daily actualities. Why does he do this? In the name of knowledge.

One thing we must do is to introduce into the study of the Middle East not just the methodologies or the jargons of interpretation, but the attitude of interpretation. What we are talking about is interpretive knowledge and not just certain knowledge. We are dealing with human, and therefore historical, modes of production. It also seems to me, and obviously Lewis was alluding to it, that there is still a great deal of *politesse*, that you don't attack me and I won't attack you. This is a gentlemanly kind of thing in which the prevailing norms of investigation, of criticism, of examination are extremely timid and scandalously lax.

Why? It doesn't seem to me that there is very much to be afraid of if you were to take on the canonical work of traditional Orientalism and submit it to the kind of rigorous examination that, for example, Talal Asad has been doing to the work of Clifford Geertz. That is a very apt model. Categories like religion, ritual and tradition can be scrutinized. They are used by anthropologists and other scholars with a kind of abandon that suggests that they are known quantities when in fact they are not. That kind of systematic critique—methodological, ideological, philosophical—is eminently important.

Finally, it is absolutely necessary to be aware that if you are dealing with knowledge, and certainly knowledge about the Middle East, you are dealing with it *in the world*. There is a reticence to enter the fray and venture statements about U.S. policy, about imperialism at large, about cultural questions, on the grounds that "I'm really a historian, a specialist, a scholar. I shouldn't get involved in this kind of thing." People seem to require a kind of anchoring in a corner of the field, leaving the larger questions to others. One ought to remember that one is part of a community of scholars where the intellectual vocation is very important.

It is not just a matter of dealing with a world of policy, but dealing with a world of ideas generally. Middle Eastern scholars are very far removed from the debates in literary theory, in anthropology, in history, in other things, to which they have a lot to contribute. That kind of worldliness is in fantastically short supply.

Arab Perspectives of Conflict

Paula Zahn and Harry Smith / 1990

Copyright 1990 by Burrelle's Information Services/CBS News Transcripts. Reprinted by permission. This interview was conducted on "CBS This Morning" 23 August 1990.

PAULA ZAHN: *The crisis in the Persian Gulf is arousing a mixed response in the Arab-American community. Some even hesitate to criticize U.S. action. And among many there is a fear of discrimination or backlash, especially if fighting should break out involving U.S. forces. With us now to talk about that is Columbia University Professor Edward Said, a member of the Palestine National Council, and in Washington this morning, Jawad George, executive director of the National Association of Arab-Americans. Good morning, gentlemen.*

Jawad, what kinds of reports of discrimination have come into your organization since we have dug our heels into the sands of Saudi Arabia?

JAWAD GEORGE: We've had a number of instances of reports of both physical and verbal abuse directed against members of the Arab-American community. For example, in Chicago, a young Palestinian was discussing the situation with his mother in Arabic in a small shop and was physically accosted by an American. In Cleveland, a young Arab-American was accosted by the police and told to go back to Iraq. In San Francisco, one of the activists who appeared in the media received threatening letters with respect to his particular position. And we've noted an increase in the number of incidents

directed against members of the Arab-American community and the recent immigrants into the United States from the Arab world.

ZAHN: *So as you get these reports, what do you tell your members to do?*

GEORGE: Well, we've been saying to our people that essentially they need to clarify their particular position, that these instances are the exception and not the general rule, that we live in a democracy, that they're entitled to be here, and they're entitled to express their views forcefully, with respect to the crisis.

ZAHN: *Edward, how real is the conflict that some of these people might feel? They feel a sense of unity with the Arab world, and yet they're living here in America.*

EDWARD SAID: I think it is a very sad moment for most Arab-Americans who would feel extremely critical and really despise what Saddam Hussein did in Kuwait, and yet, at the same time, feel that the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia, potentially engaged in a war with other Arab people, is a very difficult thing to deal with. But I think the important thing is the atmosphere around it, which can sometimes get inflamed with comments of a sort, you know, let's nuke them or let's bomb them, et cetera. Most Arabs feel that in general there's a kind of misrepresentation of the Arab world. And one has the sense that our troops are in the Middle East basically in a vast desert with lots of oil underneath it and that a lot of people don't exist there. Whereas, in fact, there are societies. People like myself, who have relatives and friends and so on in place in the Middle East, are tremendously torn by what is likely to be an unpleasant—unpleasant conflagration.

ZHAN: *As you travel around the country, do you find there really is a stereotype of an Arab-American?*

SAID: Oh, absolutely. Oh, absolutely.

ZAHN: *What is it?*

SAID: All we have to do is turn on a television and watch some of the movies like *Delta Force*, and some where Arabs are basically portrayed as terrorists who mutter incomprehensible gibberish, but look menacing and

violent and act that way, or they're sort of sleazy camel jockeys, or they're just large masses of people screaming slogans, which are usually interpreted as being anti-Western, anti-American and so on and so forth. There's very little else in the surrounding culture, certainly in the media, to offset that.

ZAHN: *How do you fight it?*

SAID: Well, I think the important thing to do is not to succumb to it, not to be discouraged by it, and talk about the other things that exist in the Arab world, which are quite plenty. And obviously, rational discourse is the only antidote, I think. I think it's terribly important to rely on that.

ZAHN: *Jawad, your organization actually took out full-page ads in newspapers across the country saying, in fact, you supported the independence and sovereignty of Kuwait. Was that fueled by this necessity—as you had said earlier—to express your view of the situation?*

GEORGE: Yes, essentially, we are Arab-Americans, but we are Americans first. And we support President Bush with the initiatives he's undertaken, first to isolate Iraq, politically and economically. And we, in fact, support the deployment of U.S. troops as a defense deterrent in the region. We hope that the conflict will not escalate to military proportions, but we believe that the United States has vital interests in the world. We believe that the United States needs to respond to its Arab allies, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in particular, in the instant situation.

ZAHN: *Edward, one thing I wanted to ask you about—a couple of days ago, we had an interview with a father whose child was trapped in Kuwait some place, and he expressed the view that they just don't value human life the way we do. Is there a tendency on the American's part to accept Saddam Hussein's view as a universal view when it comes to putting value on life?*

SAID: Well, I think there's a general tendency to regard Arabs and—well, perhaps other less known people too—to Americans—to regard them as sort of less than human in some way, or different in negative ways. So that a statement like that, that they don't value human life the way we do, is basically a racist caricature. I mean, it's nonsense basically.

HARRY SMITH: *You know what it's rooted in though? In that whole business of an Islamic fundamentalism that says I become a martyr if I die in the cause of my country and . . .*

SAID: Right. Yeah. Yeah. That's basically, in my opinion, gibberish. That makes no sense whatsoever. There are lots of Muslims in the world. Not all of them are fundamentalist. I think if you ask most people using the phrase or the word fundamentalist, they wouldn't be able to tell you. They're simply repeating a stereotype or a cliché that they've read in some newspaper, and I can guarantee you that the newspaper reporter knows nothing about it either. Islam is a very complex religion. It's one of the monotheistic religions. It is a culture of about a billion people, and to say that Islamic fundamentalism is X or Y is like saying all Americans are materialists. We wouldn't accept it. So why we would accept it about another people is part of what I would consider to be the conflict between the Islamic and Arabic world on the one hand and the West on the other.

SMITH: *Do you think that comes into play, though, in some manner as we send all these forces overseas?*

SAID: Yes. Yes.

SMITH: *You go back to World War II, for instance, and caricatures develop of Germans.*

SAID: Of Japanese.

SMITH: *Caricatures develop of Japanese.*

SAID: Absolutely.

SMITH: *And a hate develops, and it helps you rationalize why you're falling into that.*

SAID: Oh, there's certainly that. There's certainly that there. But I think there's something special about the Arab and the Islamic world. First of all, it's adjacent to Europe and the West, and historically, there's been a conflict between them. But I don't think that it's a conflict that is inherently there. I think there is a kind of iron curtain which makes it difficult for Americans—and especially Americans—to appreciate the fact that Islam is a culture with literature, with writers and artists and opposition figures. And there's a general tendency then to turn it all into some vast negative. I think Israel plays a big role in this because there's a view that the only thing that you can say about Arabs and Muslims is that they're anti-Israel; therefore, they're monsters and so on and so forth. And that's been fantastically damaging.

ZAHN: *What is your reaction to the role that Jordan is now playing in the crisis?*

SAID: Well, I must say, you know, I have relatives in Jordan. And I feel tremendously sorry for a country which is really sort of caught between these incredible pressures. I feel that the end of this crisis in the gulf will not be good for Jordan no matter what. And I think a tremendous amount of suffering—I mean, the sights, for somebody like myself, who is a Palestinian, of hundreds of thousands more refugees, fills me with pity and horror, in a way, because their lives and the lives of nearly everybody, I think, in the region are going to be disrupted. I just hope that it doesn't end in some tremendous war because it would be a catastrophe.

Arabesque

Edward Ball / 1990

From *New Statesman* 7 September 1990.
Copyright 1999 *New Statesman*.
Reprinted by permission.

Q: The U.S. military build-up in the Middle East, quite apart from the possibility of war it encourages, hands Anglo-Americans an opportunity to educate themselves about the culture and politics of Arab societies, something they've failed to do during the many previous crises. What do you see as the key moment of cultural life in the Arab world?

A: The most important aspect of contemporary Arab political and intellectual culture is the absence of democracy. In every country, almost without exception, people can't say what they want to say. People in universities can't do the research they want, or engage in the kinds of discussions they want.

Lebanon used to be the exception, but that, too, is gone. There are very severe limits on cultural life, and it's difficult for us in the United States and elsewhere to understand, because things are so fraught with secret services, informers, and one form or another of bullying and intimidation. In a sense, culture in Arab societies becomes an extension of politics. It's impossible to imagine anyone writing autonomously: it's always in some way political and, some would say, ideological.

Q: How does this affect cultural products, like literature?

A: In the case of Lebanon, one problem writers deal with is how to devise a style and form to deal with a constantly changing reality. Among Palestinians, the sense of urgency and threat, of insecurity, of perpetual

self-consciousness, has marked the entire literature and culture. If you read Palestinian writers, like Ghassan Kanafani (whose novel *Men in the Sun* is in translation), or the poet Mahmoud Darwish, this feeling of insecurity is clearly obsessive.

Q: How close are intellectuals in Arab societies to political decision making?

A: To schematise in a coarse way, there are the intellectuals of parties, governments, institutions; then there are the intellectuals who are largely oppositional. Sometimes opposition equals Marxism; sometimes it equals Islam, where that poses a challenge. It's difficult to find an intellectual who is considered to be merely a scholar, because everyone is associated with some tendency, some faction, some ideological or political line. In all Arab countries, academic appointments are political appointments: you have to be cleared. The basic distinction is whether you are with the dominant regime, or not. So all intellectuals are political, willy-nilly.

In fact, what we are talking about in the Arab world is the absence of civil society. You have highly politicised societies in what are essentially national security states. Plus, every Arab in one way or another feels threatened by some outside force: whether it's Israel, or another Arab state, or the Americans. If you are in opposition, you might publish samizdat stuff, or go into exile.

There is a large exile literature, especially since the destruction of Beirut. Beirut used to be a place where expatriates from the Arab world could find a place. Now, there isn't a city like that, and in the last ten years expatriates have tended to go to Europe. Arab intellectual life goes forward in places like London and Paris, where people in exile produce oppositional magazines; and, interestingly, the home regimes also publish periodicals. There are Saudi papers in London and Iraqi-backed newspapers in Paris. Places outside the Arab world have become very important because of the unique phenomenon of tremendous dislocation.

Q: Is literary culture in a place like Iraq fairly well mobilised around the state?

A: I've never been to Iraq, but my impression is, yes. Which isn't to say, by the way, that there is not interesting stuff done in Iraq. The arts of

poetry are fantastically developed in Iraq. The work is not astonishing in itself, but it is in relation to what one assumes to be the political atmosphere, which is pretty repressive.

Q: I saw some interesting Iraqi art this year at the Venice Biennial. The officially chosen Iraqi artist for the exhibition, Fadhil Ukrufi, used such things as suitcases filled with stones, and unopened packages that had been mailed to western capitals, to evoke an experience of displacement. It backs up your theory about the importance of exile.

A: The central art in the Arab world is, of course, the verbal art. The plastic and visual arts have been basically ornamental, the so-called arabesque. But in Iraq the difference is stunning. Most of the great visual artists in the Arab world are from Iraq.

Q: Have the U.S. media been as well informed about Arab culture and history as they should be?

A: Oh, no. With one Middle Eastern crisis after another, the media have had so many opportunities to educate themselves, but they haven't. The organisation of views follows a very coarse political and ideological distinction, on the one hand, between "us" and "them," and on the other, between "our friends" and "the terrorists." That's about it. One doesn't get a sense that there are different societies, different histories, different claims and aspirations. The prevailing sense in the U.S. press is that the Arab world, as a place, is quite empty, a desert with a large pool of oil underneath it, with a bunch of camel drivers running around above, and this kind of madman, Saddam, at the top in Baghdad, whatever Baghdad is.

Q: From what I read, it seems to be a sand-blown, adobe-but carpet market.

A: The irony is that Baghdad was designed in the eighth century as a work of art in itself. The city has importance as the old capital of the Abbasid caliphate, the most splendid in the history of the Arabs.

Q: Who are the worst offenders in terms of ethnocentric reporting?

A: I haven't made a study of it, but the television discussion programmes nearly always invite retired generals and secretaries of state, and former national security advisers. All of them, more or less, say, "We can go to war." What's lacking are what you might call Arab points of view, which

would have to be diverse. But I don't even know if any of the American reporters know Arabic.

Q: *Are the U.S. media being complicitous?*

A: Not only complicitous, but war-mongering. They are in advance of the government in that respect. It's only now, four weeks into the deployment of troops, that alternative voices are being heard, after 100,000 soldiers have already gone. But in the present climate, if you say anything that appears to question the deployment, you are called . . .

Q: *... pacifist.*

A: Worse, you are put in the position of being a defender of Saddam Hussein. I've long believed that Saddam Hussein is an appalling and dreadful despot. I've refused several invitations to go to Iraq, and have never been there. I will have nothing to do with him. But on the other hand the idea of a warring Arab world seems horrible to me. Bad enough that Kuwait and Kuwaiti society seem to have been destroyed. But still, there are other questions to be asked. To pose them in the present context, which is so confining, is impossible. You are seen either as a loyal American, or some kind of terrorist.

Q: *To what extent do you believe the current situation in the Middle East is the fruit of imperialism, specifically U.S. imperialism?*

A: American interventionist policies have played a very important role. I've been working on a book called *Culture and Imperialism* which argues that the tactics of the great empires, which were dismantled after the first world war, are being replicated by the U.S., the main difference being that we are no longer dealing with an inert colonial world. Most of these countries are highly politicised and have recently acquired independence. But the American attitude has been that if there is a vital interest, invade. I am very hard put to describe the current conflict as anything but an imperialist issue. The American way of life is thought to be at stake.

Q: *The American way of driving.*

A: There is a sense that the consumer has to be defended, no matter how far away the natural resources are.

Q: My first instinct is to agree: yes, what are called the international oil interests play a powerful role. My second instinct is to say no, I'm tired of hearing the imperialist account of what appear to be local quarrels. At what point do Kuwait and Iraq become responsible for their predicament?

A: I'm willing to say, right away. But the U.S. government didn't say that. It said, "We are responsible, and we have to go in there and fix it."

Radical, Chic

Zoe Heller / 1993

From *The Independent* 7 February 1993.
Reprinted by permission.

Edward Said lives in two worlds: he is one of America's most respected—and one of its most exquisitely-dressed—academics. He is also the country's most visible and articulate Palestinian activist, enduring scorn and death threats from extremists, to speak out for the people he calls the "victims of the victims."

"What kind of sandwich is that?" the professor asked, peering at the package on my lap. We were sitting in his high-ceilinged office at Columbia University in New York.

"Tuna on rye," I said.

"Oh yeah?" he said. "Did you get it at Mama Joy's?"

"No, the deli on 112th Street."

He watched carefully as I unwrapped the sandwich and took a bite.

"What's it like?" he asked. "Is it good? Oh, look—they gave you a pickle to go with it!"

For the urbane, cosmopolitan man that he is, Professor Edward Said is surprisingly easy to intrigue. Another person enquiring so intensely about one's sandwich would have almost certainly been angling for a bite. But Professor Said's probings were entirely disinterested. The strangest things are apt to excite his enthusiasm and wonder: he was just curious about my tuna on rye, was all.

Even Professor Said's more serious preoccupations attest to a determined eclecticism. Any attempt to sum up his accomplishments encounters difficulty—largely because his career has been an exercise in evading simple, disciplinary or professional labels.

For the past thirty years, Said (pronounced Syeed) has been a professor of comparative literature at Columbia University. Fluent in French and Arabic and literate in Spanish, German, Italian and Latin, he has taken a consistently international perspective in his scholarly work. His books, which include a study of Joseph Conrad, a couple of volumes of literary theory and *Orientalism*—a disquisition on the strategies and motives underlying Western portrayals of the East—tend to spill over the margins of the literary into historical, sociological and anthropological disciplines. Professor Said is also a scholar of music and an accomplished classical pianist. (In April, he will give duct recitals with the Lebanese pianist Diana Takiedine in Washington and New York.)

Finally and most famously, Professor Said is America's foremost spokesman for the Palestinians. From 1977 to 1991, he was a member of the Palestine National Council, the PLO's parliament-in-exile. And for the last quarter of a century, as a journalist, author, grass-roots activist and television pundit, his self-imposed task has been to "give testimony to the historical experience of the Palestinians."

It is almost impossible to overestimate Said's importance to the Palestinian cause in America. He is not the only Palestinian activist in the country, but he is by far the most visible and articulate. On the rare occasions that the American media deem it necessary to get the Palestinian view, it is invariably Professor Said that they call. In a country where Arabs—and Palestinians in particular—are consistently represented as gun-toting, ululating "rag-heads," his calm besuited presence alone confounds expectations.

In 1988, Professor Said and Abu Lughud (fellow PNC member and professor of political science at Northwestern University) were invited to discuss elections in the occupied territories with President Reagan's Secretary of State, George Shultz. That this should have taken place when

official American policy was a refusal to communicate with the PLO offers some indication of the strange, limbo territory—somewhere between pariah and respected citizen—that Professor Said's reputation inhabits. It also suggests some of the glamour his activism confers on what would otherwise be an unexceptionable academic life lived peacefully with his Lebanese-born wife, Mariam, and his two children, Wadie, twenty, and Najla, eighteen. During his years in the PNC, when he often divided his week between lectures on Jane Austen at Columbia, appearances on the *Phil Donahue Show* and attendance at PLO summits in Tunis, he was described, more than once, as "Arafat's man in New York."

None of this, however, has had much noticeable effect on the way he discharges his academic duties. I should admit here that some years ago, as a graduate student at Columbia, I was taught by Professor Said. Although I can remember students occasionally griping that he was "spreading himself a bit thinly," never were there any indications of the *amour-propre*, or grandiosity that one might expect.

In fact, in many ways, Professor Said has been a reluctant diplomat. He is too easily bored by the playacting and bluffs of political negotiation to harbour political ambition. And in any case, the realities of representing the Palestinians in a country that donates between \$6 billion and \$9 billion to Israel every year, have offset whatever dubious thrills there are to be had from hobnobbing with George Shultz.

Over the years, Professor Said has appeared regularly on blacklists published by the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee and the Jewish Anti-Defamation League. He has had his office vandalised and been the subject of countless death-threats. A while ago, an article in the American journal *Commentary* claimed that he used his prose as the "verbal equivalent of terrorist weapons." (Although since the author gave his piece the tabloid headline "PROFESSOR OF TERROR," he was perhaps not the most reliable arbiter on matters of style.)

Nor can Professor Said depend with any complacency on support from his fellow travellers of the left. He is an anti-Zionist, not an anti-Semite, and indeed a large part of his New York *milieu*, both social and academic,

consists of Jewish colleagues, students and writers. But one of the hazards of speaking for the Palestinians, a group he has called, "the victims of the victims," is frequent exclusion from even those groups that would seem to offer natural alliances. "I remember," he says, "in '82 they had one of these great marches about the bomb in Central Park. Every ecological and liberationist position was represented and a group of us argued that Palestine should be represented. They refused—they said, 'We'll lose a lot of support if we have you guys'. That happens a lot. You become a kind of stinking fish."

None of this—the slurs, the death threats, the political isolation—was what Professor Said's upbringing and education initially suggested for him. Born in Jerusalem in 1935, the son of a wealthy Christian Palestinian businessman, he was educated at St. George's, a private academy of the Arab Christian élite. In 1947, shortly before the British mandate over Palestine ended and the Zionists' Provisional State Council proclaimed "the creation of a Jewish state in the land of Israel," the Said family fled to Cairo. Their absence was intended as temporary, but by the summer of 1948 all their relatives had followed them out of Palestine and their exile had become permanent.

Professor Said continued his education in Cairo at Victoria College, a British-run school whose old boys' association is today headed by King Hussein of Jordan. Thrown out for "poor behaviour," aged fifteen, Said was packed off by his parents to a grim, Protestant boarding school in upstate New York. Two years there were succeeded by a place at Princeton and graduate studies in comparative literature at Harvard. The Palestinian child became an East Coast college boy.

It was while at Princeton that Said began to think about his Arab identity in political terms. "The Suez war [of 1956] stirred me to write my first political article—I took some very emotional position, I seem to remember." From Harvard he went straight at Columbia where, four years later he was awarded tenure. That was in 1967, the year of the Six Days' War. Said describes it as his year of "political watershed."

From that time on he was rarely out of political controversy, a fact which his father, who died in 1971, did not always find easy to accept.

"His attitude was a combination of disapproval—'Why are you doing this? You're a literary scholar!'—and genuine fear for me. When I went to see him before he died, his last words to me were, 'Be careful! Be careful of what the Zionists can do to you!' Of course he was angry about Palestine—I've never met a Palestinian who went through that experience who wasn't—but he was concerned for me. He had a fear that unnamed things could happen. My feeling was always, yes—bad things can happen, but they have a name. And you mustn't let fear stop you from speaking up."

Professor Said, feels the need to speak up with even greater urgency now. Last year he was diagnosed as suffering from a chronic form of leukaemia. "It's not affecting me physically as yet," he says. "But sure, you know, something like that makes you aware of all the things you want to do and say before you die."

Although he has always scrupulously kept the Palestinian question out of his university teaching, the connection between Professor Said's academic and political life has become even more apparent in his writing. Both the activist and the literary scholar, are concerned with the ways in which the West has traditionally sought to represent the foreign peoples and societies that it subjugates. If you were to identify the one overarching theme of Said's work, it would probably be the cultural forms by which the Western imperial project has constructed and vindicated itself.

His new book, *Culture and Imperialism*, is the summation of Said's inquiry into this area. One of its central arguments proposes that imperialism has irreversibly "intertwined" the histories of the colonisers and the colonised in ways which embarrass the claims of individual nations to pure, cultural traditions. National cultures, he argues, are never the homogeneous and uncontested entities that would justify complacent "ours is best" philosophies.

"I wanted to encourage some greater awareness on the part of those who have traditionally dominated—to say, look, it's not as easy as you think. Once you become involved in the history of 'lesser people,' you become part of the mix, in some way. Also I wanted to address the coarse understanding of America that one sees in the Third World. On one hand,

America as the great Satan and on the other, this absolute fascination with America—the movies, the jeans, the Cokes. I want to encourage an understanding that America is *complicated*. It's not just the Reagan or the Bush administration—there is an oppositional culture."

Professor Said's arguments are perhaps more vulnerable than most to dangerous misinterpretation. It struck me, reading his book, that it was a rather confused version of Said's argument against cultural jingoism that had made certain liberals reluctant to defend Salman Rushdie against the *fatwa*. Professor Said, while acknowledging the offence that *The Satanic Verses* gave to Islam, has spoken unambiguously, both in America and the Middle East, in defence of Rushdie's freedom of speech. "My natal circumstances being Islamic, it would have been easy to say that the book was offensive and leave it at that. But it seems to me, you can make a choice. You are not condemned endlessly to repeat the gestures imposed on you by your culture—you can reject certain ideas. Cultures are not totalistic, enclosed things."

And yet there are liberals in Britain and America who have argued, in good faith, that to condemn the Muslim reaction out of hand would be precisely to assert the authority of their own culture—the culture of free speech and so on—over Islam. What would Said say to them?

"My argument is that the Muslim world did not present one completely united reaction to the book. There is no religion without religious orthodoxy. What I'm trying to say is that there's no orthodoxy without the possibility of a counter-orthodoxy. No culture is that tyrannical or should be allowed to be that tyrannical." It is this failure to recognise the heterogeneity of other cultures that largely accounts, in Said's view, for the often patronising quality of Western judgements about Islam. An anecdote about a seminar on "Peace in the Middle East" that he attended in 1979 seemed to illustrate the point. The seminar, held in the Parisian apartment of the French intellectual Michel Foucault, was organised by Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre.

"Before the seminar had even begun," Said recalled, "De Beauvoir started making all these pronouncements *ex cathedra*, about what should be

done at the seminar. I was flabbergasted by her arrogance. I mean, she and Sartre knew nothing about the Arab world and were both fantastically pro-Israel. It came from some sort of philo-Judaism and some sense of wanting to make restitution for the European Holocaust—whatever. Anyway I start to argue with her in this little corner of Foucault's living room. And then suddenly she jumps up and says she has to go. I say, 'What about the seminar?' She says, 'Oh, no, Sartre will stay here, but I'm going. I have to go to Iran to demonstrate against the *chador*. The women are really benighted there, you know—we have to go and show them how to do it.'"

Said could bear no more. He stood up and walked away, never to speak to her again. "I mean it was outrageous. This is what I mean by patronising and uninformed attitudes." He was no less disappointed by Sartre. For the three days of the seminar, Sartre made no contribution to the proceedings. Then, at the penultimate session, Said protested about Sartre's silence.

"I said, 'Look, I came here because of my admiration and respect for Sartre and I want to hear what he has to say. I mean, we're not just a bunch of natives disporting ourselves before the great, white man!' So Sartre goes off into a corner with one of his little henchmen and eventually the henchman comes back and says: '*Bon. Sartre a décidé que demain il prononcera ses réflexions sur la question de la paix.*'"

The next day, the seminar was reconvened and Sartre spoke. "And he talked for fifteen or twenty minutes on how great Anwar Sadat was. Not a word about the Palestinians! He thought—maybe because he was such a great figure—that he could get away with one or two thoughts on how much he approved of Sadat. This was 'Peace in the Middle East' for him! Now, that kind of view from the outside, without any attempt to link oneself to the process on the inside—*that's* what I find appalling!"

Said now proposed that we leave his office and continue our conversation while walking to his apartment on Riverside Drive. He had to pick up some things, and then, he said, we could share a cab downtown. He was joining his wife at the Lincoln Centre that evening, to see Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*.

In preparation for departure, he straightened out his exquisite bespoke suit, bustled into his overcoat (made of some indistinct but markedly superior wool) and popped a fedora on his head. It would not be unfair to describe Professor Said as obsessed with clothes. (According to his old friend, the journalist Christopher Hitchens, his fastidious nattiness is applied not only to his own suits and shoes and luggage, but to his wife Mariam's wardrobe, too. "Mariam," Hitchens says, "is completely accoutred by Edward.")

If Said's dandyish appearance—the look is basically East Coast Wasp with a dash of the theatrical—upsets received notions of how a Palestinian activist looks, it also fails to tally with one's visual expectations of a socialist academic. Said takes, I suspect, some pleasure in ignoring leftist conventions, sartorial and otherwise. I remember a conversation that took place at the end of one of a seminar, once, when a student described some incident that had occurred on the subway that morning. "Oh, the *subway*," Professor Said said in mock horror. "I haven't been on the subway in *ten years*." I couldn't have been more shocked. Here, I thought, is one of the great left-wing figures of academe, *admitting to an abhorrence of public transport*.

I reminded him of this remark as we walked across the Columbia campus. He smiled. "No? Did I say that?" he asked. "Well, I wouldn't want to give the wrong impression. I do use the subway *occasionally*."

"Really?"

"Sure! I'll prove it to you—we'll take the subway when we go downtown, how about that?"

"Okay." I relished the notion of the professor on his way to the opera, in his fedora, perched on one of the lemon yellow plastic seats of the downtown Number 1 train. But the exotic nature of the promised tableau only proved my point. "You must know what I'm talking about," I said. "You have no socialist puritanism. You don't wear jeans. You haven't even got a leather jacket. You don't make any of those gestures that are meant to show solidarity. . . ."

"Yeah, well, solidarity is one thing and superficial gestures are another," Professor Said replied. "I don't feel obliged to do any of those things just

to make some point. My son always used to go on at me—you know, 'Why don't you have more blue-collar tastes? Why don't you watch sports on TV? Why don't you enjoy pop culture?' And really, it's very simple—I don't enjoy it. I mean, I've tried it, but I get more pleasure out of the *élite* stuff. Actually I *do* have pretty low-brow taste in movies—I like Hollywood and so on—but in general, I'd rather listen to Schoenberg and Bach . . . "

And of course Wagner. Wagner is one of the several instances in which Professor Said's cultural tastes involve him in not just the contest between low- and high-brow, but the more troubled questions of political correctness. He began to tell me about a study of Wagner that he was currently reviewing. The book, by a history professor at Haifa University in Israel, argues that anti-Semitism wasn't merely a quirky biographical footnote to Wagner's work, but a seminal part of his artistic vision. Consequently, the book claims, Wagner should never be played in Israel.

"What can I say?" Said asked. "I mean, I disagree with him. I can't think of it that way! It's like Chinua Achebe refusing to read Conrad. Achebe asks, 'How can Conrad be thought of as a classic, when he dehumanises a whole race of people, turns them into the essence of depravity and evil?' I mean, on one hand, I can understand this. But in the case of both Wagner and Conrad, one can make a distinction, I think, between the political content of their work—which is offensive, even horrifying—and the *experience* of the music, the literature."

Now, Said clearly doesn't belong to the fusty breed which regards art as being, in some ineffable way, "above" politics. His scholarly career has been characterised by a fantastically scrupulous attention to the ways in which art encodes political meaning. His objection is not to political judgements *per se*, but to any easy equation of ideological and literary merit.

"One doesn't," he says, "have to read Conrad or listen to Wagner and accept what they're saying. Think of all the African writers who have re-written Conrad, or the Caribbean writers who have re-written *The Tempest*. One can read interpretatively and creatively or one can read slavishly and reductively—and I'm trying to do the former. Nothing could be easier than to fault Shakespeare for his racism or Rabelais for his anti-feminism, but

then it becomes the critic as schoolmaster, as policeman, which I think is just tiresome."

Out of the American context, it is perhaps difficult to appreciate the incendiary significance of these remarks: the debate about "multiculturalism" and political correctness has never caught on in Britain in quite the way it has in the United States.

Because Professor Said does not believe in the quarantined status of "literary values," because he disparages the embattled conservative position that would defend the literary canon against all non-European intruders (that would ask, in Saul Bellow's famous phrase, to be shown the "Zulu Tolstoy"), he could be aligned with the "multiculturalists." But this would be, in many ways, a false alignment.

Because he refuses to simply expunge all DWEMs (Dead White European Males) from the canon; because he is depressed by the fragmentation of academic life into a collection of competing ghettos based on gender and ethnicity; because he argues in favour of a "more universal outlook" than such ghettos will allow, he puzzles and irritates the multiculturalists too.

Not long ago, he gave a lecture on culture and imperialism at his alma mater, Princeton University. After the lecture, a black female professor of history approached him. "Why," she asked, "did you only mention white men in your lecture?" Said objected that he had made several references to the distinguished Caribbean historian C. L. R. James. "But he's dead!" the female professor replied indignantly. "Why did you not mention any living African-American women?" The conversation continued in this vein for a while, until Said finally lost his temper and made it clear that he thought the woman was talking drivel. She turned away then, remarking bitterly: "Well, Professor, I'll leave you to your *white* friends then."

Professor Said has never been good at toeing lines, he says. "The sense of orthodoxy, the idea that 'this is what we do', has always been anathema to me. Even in Palestinian matters, I have found myself in continual trouble with fellow Palestinians, because I always reserved the right to speak out."

His first serious disagreement with the Palestinian *apparatus* occurred in the late 1970s, when he took a public stand against the PLO's slogan of

armed struggle. "I felt we were participating in the disintegration of Lebanon and that if it ever really came to a military confrontation, Arafat's horrifically antiquated military thinking would cause a catastrophe—which in 1978 and 1982, it did.

His longer standing disagreement with the PLO leadership concerns what he considers its radically inadequate approach to diplomatic relations with America. "You saw it perfectly illustrated in the Madrid talks," he says. "All of the Palestinian representatives saw it as the *ne plus ultra* of their career when Baker invited them to come as a delegation. That was their moment of acceptance by the white man. I said to them, look, why are you making all these concessions just to get in the door? A liberation movement does not just allow the other side to say, 'Okay, we'll talk with you, but not with you.' Our principles are that we want sovereignty, equality, self-determination. You can't say, 'Oh, all right, we won't talk about that stuff'."

A large part of the blame for the short-termism and incoherence of PLO strategy he lays at Arafat's door. "Arafat is, in many ways, a brilliant tactician and I consider him a basically decent man, but he has always had this obdurate quality. I saw it as my whole purpose to explain to him the failures in his understanding of the West. But when I tried, he seemed to think I was in some way *representing* the West."

The past tense in which he speaks suggests the degree of hopelessness with which Professor Said now regards the future of the Palestinian cause. "This is the first time in my life—the last year-and-a-half—that I have really felt pessimism. Given the realities in the Arab world and the current situation in this country, I feel myself much more withdrawn than I've ever felt before."

After we had dropped in at his apartment, an elegant, book-lined residence overlooking the Hudson River, we walked up Riverside Drive, back towards Broadway. Professor Said returned to the subject of his illness. "I think I'm interested now in doing some stuff that I've never given myself time for. I'd like to write some fiction—I've written some before, but just the kind of stuff that sits in drawers. I'd also like to write a memoir of my

childhood in Jerusalem and Cairo. I'd like to play piano more. I guess the best thing that could be said about my situation right now is that I feel like I have some choices."

We arrived on Broadway, right next to the 116th subway station. We stood on the street corner for a moment, with the roar of trains coming up through the gratings beneath our feet. Professor Said glanced disconsolately at the subway entrance and then, quite suddenly, strode out into the slushy road to hail a cab. "Ach," he said with an apologetic shrug, as the cab skidded to a halt and we climbed in. "I'm late for the opera. And I don't think I *could* bear the subway, after all."

The Tel Aviv Bombing

Alexander Cockburn / 1994

From *The Nation* 259.15 (November 7, 1994):
520. Copyright Alexander Cockburn.
Reprinted by permission.

"What about the bomb on the bus in Tel Aviv?" I asked Edward Said a few hours after the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas had taken credit for the explosion that killed at least twenty. Said is the best-known Palestinian in the United States. Between 1977 and 1991 he was a member of the Palestine National Council. He broke with Arafat over the negotiations leading to the Oslo agreement and has been a harsh critic of the "peace process" ever since.

"It's a catastrophe. It's criminal and also stupid. But on the West Bank the bombing has no doubt got a lot of support. They say, 'At least the Muslim people are fighting'. These are the same fundamentalists, more or less, who five days earlier stabbed the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz in Cairo. To make a devil's pact with reactionary religious sentiment is a tremendous mistake. But with, if I may say so, the exception of myself, there is no credible Palestinian voice putting forward the non-Hamas critique of Arafat's actions and the so-called peace process."

Aside from terror, Said went on, Hamas has absolutely no sane strategy of resistance. "Take the settlements and continued expropriation of land—prime cause of contention between us and the Israelis on the West Bank. Just the other day they took another 3,000 acres. Most of the labor

on these settlements and new roads consists of Palestinians working for the Israelis."

"Now, you'd think that the principal responsibility of a national authority or a coherent resistance would be in some way to mobilize the people against participating in the destruction of their own future. But they've never done that."

"Again, take Jerusalem, a core problem. It's now expanded to some 25 percent of the whole West Bank. There are dozens of Palestinians whose land has been taken away, but who cling on in little shacks and simply refuse to move out. They could become the focus of a mass struggle—strikes and so on—to stop the bulldozers, some of which are driven by Palestinians. The Israelis have made no secret of their plans for Jerusalem. They publish their plans all the time. But there has never been a Palestinian response. In the meantime we've become at best a bantustan and at worst an Israeli protectorate."

"The peace process has made it possible for the Israelis to hold on to Gaza and the West Bank through indirect rule without any of the burden. They've made no concession on any other point. Even the meager provisions of Oslo they haven't stuck to!"

"There was a timetable, but the Israelis say no dates are sacred. They were supposed to provide free passage between Gaza and Jericho—sixty miles—and they haven't. They were supposed to withdraw and they haven't withdrawn. They were supposed to turn over authority on the West Bank in thirty-seven areas and they've only given up five. And above all they haven't paid any reparations. After almost thirty years of Israeli occupation the only thing built in the occupied territories were prisons, now being used by the Palestinians. The Israelis destroyed the infrastructure, deported all the capable personnel, and left the place in a state of ruin."

"In the meantime, Arafat has become a parody of a Latin American dictator. The only thing he cares about are these elections he's pushing for, where he will become president for life. He can't get anything done. He hasn't got any money, is surrounded by corrupt people, and has himself made innumerable dirty deals. The negotiations are a joke. They even

rely on Israeli maps. Arafat is now known as the military commander of Gaza, which is what the Israeli title was."

"Obviously people feel relieved to walk on the streets of Gaza and not see Israeli soldiers. It's nice to go to the beach and to see Arafat as your own leader. You can't minimize that. But the realities are that when the Israelis press the button, he jumps. He's autonomous, not independent, and he rules by gangs, thugs."

Said doesn't think the peace agreement will last. "Arafat himself is quite ill and also likely to be shot. Oslo is a failure because they're not giving Arafat the necessary money. They promised him \$2.5 billion and have given him, at most, \$40 million. The Israelis didn't give him the registers so he can't even tax people. He's spending only 10 percent of what the Israeli occupation spent, so you can imagine how people feel."

And if the Oslo agreement really falls apart, what do the Palestinians have to do?

"There has to be resistance at the grass-roots level. Then revive the popular committees of the *Intifada*, which is really what brought the Israelis to their knees. I'm not saying they defeated them, but they made it difficult for the Israelis to rule the West Bank the way they wanted. Two demands: no Palestinian labor on the settlements of any sort; no compliance with the Palestinian National Authority, which is simply a Vichy government, a stooge."

"We have to restate the fundamental objective: self-determination for the West Bank, Gaza, and the Palestinian people. You can't keep changing your objective. That's why I left them in 1991. To go from self-determination to limited self-rule, what kind of nonsense is that?"

Conversation with Edward Said

Bill Ashcroft / 1995

From *New Literatures Review* 32 (Winter 1996): 3–21. Copyright by Bill Ashcroft. Reprinted by permission. This interview was recorded in Edward Said's office, Columbia University, New York, on 20 January 1995.

EXILE

BA: *I was thinking of making Representations of the Intellectual the centrepiece of this discussion of your work. In regard to that I wonder to what extent you see yourself as an exile and to what extent does that state of exile generate your own thinking.*

ES: Oh yes, very much so. It's a rather grand term but I never really lived any place where I felt completely at home. I grew up in Palestine; I was born there, but I left very early. So wherever I was, I felt that I didn't really belong. When I came to this country—I came alone as a schoolboy of fifteen in 1951—I gradually accustomed myself to the idea of living here. The part of the world I came from was gradually disappearing, the Palestine I was born in had disappeared in 1948, and my parents moved to Egypt. After the revolution it changed quite radically there, so my family moved to Lebanon, and when the Civil War began, Lebanon became a "scorched earth" kind of place. So I found exile to be a quite constant theme in my life and it was also a theme in the things that interested me intellectually—Conrad, for instance.

BA: *It provided energy for your work.*

ES: Oh yes, I never thought of it as a negative thing. Obviously you can feel out of sorts, especially in this country after 1967 because I was an Arab and a Palestinian and the atmosphere was very hostile. So in that respect it was negative. But it energised me and provided me with a lot of insights into aspects of this society which people who lived here as part of it perhaps couldn't see quite as readily.

THE WORLDLINESS OF THEORY

BA: *One of the prominent features of your work, it seems to me, is the sense of a divide between your essays on Palestine and the Arab world, and your writing on literary and cultural theory. How do these things come together? Does your identity as a Palestinian in exile generate some of your critical and theoretical perceptions?*

ES: To a certain degree. Not always, but to some degree. For instance much of my work on imperialism in *Culture and Imperialism* derived from the experience of being colonised, whether by the British or by the Israelis. And I think to a certain extent that has been true of my overtly political stuff, but the theoretical work, I feel less so, it's hard to know what that derives from. *Orientalism* was really the first book I wrote which tried to bring together the two aspects of my life. But that was in the mid-seventies, when I had already written *Beginnings* and many other things.

BA: *One of the things which seems to be an issue with many people comes right at that juncture between your identity and your theory, in the notion of a 'real' world. Let me be more specific. It seems to me that the notion of the 'worldliness of the text' is crucial for marginalised, dispossessed people because the real world is so very important, but that puts the theory at odds with much popular postmodern theory.*

ES: Oh absolutely! But I don't think it's just the marginalised person. Authors, whether they admit it or not, are really very interested in what happens to what they write in the world, to what becomes of it—on the very simple level of its publication and reception, how it circulates, the transformations which occur, whether it's read or not, whether it's forgotten—all these things seem to pertain to the real world. And I've never really completely

understood the impulse of some of the postmodern theorists to deny that. I find people like Baudrillard, for instance, quite silly. His is a type of writing which doesn't interest me in the slightest.

CRITICISMS OF ORIENTALISM

BA: *There has been criticism of Orientalism as you know, concerning what some critics see as its assumption of some kind of pre-existing 'real' Orient apart from any discursive construction of it.*

ES: I don't think that's in my book though, it's been imputed to me. But I talk about this in the "Afterword" I've added to the new Penguin edition of *Orientalism*. I talk exactly about that. Because I think it's basically an anti-essentialist book and I don't really have anything to say about an 'Orient.' I make that point right from the very beginning. Where I felt there was a lot more justification (although I don't think it's real justification but somehow it's a more salient criticism) is the notion that I was suggesting that the West was a kind of monolithic presence with a consistency to it. I talk about that in the "Afterword." I don't think I ever actually say that in the book but you could deduce that from what I am saying.

HISTORY

BA: *The notion of history, of an unreflective endorsement of a continuous history seems to be one objection that people like Aijaz Ahmad have. What would you say about that?*

ES: Yes, I tend to be rather uncompromising on that point, partly because at this stage I feel that I'm dealing with several audiences and several constituencies. To an audience in the part of the world from which I come, the question of history is pretty aggravated—partly because of the return to religious Islamism and so forth. Therefore I keep insisting on secularism and on the fact that secular history is continuous and being made and unmade all the time—I believe that very strongly. On the other hand I don't think I ever really talk about history as such. What interests me is historical experience—experience as part of an historical moment or an historical movement. To me, that is a very compelling thing.

BA: *That in itself is very contentious in contemporary theory and I suppose some people would say that for a person who is such a politically radical thinker this conception of history is rather conservative.*

ES: I don't think it's conservative at all. That is to say I don't think the definition or characterisation of history itself is uncontentious. I always say it's highly contentious; that people are quarrelling over what history is, and how to get hold of it and how to characterise it. So as a matter of fact I think it is very problematic. But I assume a kind of bedrock, if you like, a kind of stream, an ontological given which makes possible the secular. That is the historical, and that is part of what is being contested.

BA: *I guess the notion of history as completely deferred, completely contested, completely ambiguous, is not very useful for people in political struggle, but then again, as you said before, it's not useful for anyone.*

ES: Well it's not useful for anyone . . . many years ago I was very influenced by Hayden White's book *Metahistory* in which history turns out to be basically a series of tropes, you know, in the writing of a story. But the trouble with that—what gets eliminated—is the investment in a sense of history that historians have. The need to write history comes from something. One way of looking at it is to say that it comes from history itself . . . it's kind of infectious.

THE WORLDLINESS OF THE TEXT

BA: *The historical is a part of the worldliness of the text.*

ES: Yes that's right.

BA: *Have you thought any more since *The World, the Text and the Critic* about the ways in which the text itself announces its worldliness, the language, the speaking voice, the way it . . .*

ES: . . . Addresses and is anchored in the world. Yes, I have! It seems to me that it's at the front in everything one reads—the questions continually arise: "Where is the text taking place?" "How is it taking place?"

I wrote an Introduction to a book which had a great influence on me when it first came out in the late sixties—*The Performing Self* by Richard

Poirier. He republished it a couple of years ago and I wrote the "Foreword" in which I talked about 'where' and 'how' the text was taking place. This also underlies what I was talking about in *Representations of the Intellectual* in that I am not only talking about the intellectual as a figure but also as a form of energy, a kind of performance over time in which the thick personality is less interesting than this deployment of means—something it has in common with the text; the text as a kind of performance.

SECULAR CRITICISM

BA: *Can we get back to the notion of secular criticism? Did this emerge from your interest in Vico?*

ES: Yes. There's this distinction Vico makes between secular and sacred and it seems to me to be one of the seminal insights, for me anyway, and in many of the critics that I was particularly interested in, like Auerbach, who was Vico's German translator, and Gramsci. It was at that point also that I got very interested in Raymond Williams—the secular for me is a form of historical materialism which I suppose derives from Lucretius—you find it very much in the Italian. But it emerges here and there in various places.

BA: *How does secular criticism affect itself? You say at one stage that 'criticism' modified by labels (such as Marxist) is an oxymoron. Now would that apply also to any kind of label, 'postcolonialism' for instance?*

ES: Yes, it would. I don't like labels. I find that there is a quality of reification in a label, of a school, a dogma, an orthodoxy.

BA: *Once criticism is appended to a dogma it loses its critical faculty?*

ES: A lot of its critical faculty, although one mustn't exaggerate. For instance, Fredric Jameson, who has been an interlocutor of mine for many years, calls himself a Marxist critic, and in a manner of speaking he is a Marxist critic. But what is interesting about him is not so much that he is Marxist and therefore does x, y, and z but that his Marxism is constantly being challenged by all the many quite brilliant things that he does which he'd like to think Marxism somehow contains, but doesn't. That's why Adorno has been such an important figure for me: he breaks open the label in an anti-identitarian

way. We use labels and fixed concepts; perforce, they are part of our vocabulary, we can't do without them. But I think one of the things criticism ought to be able to do is challenge and minimize and diminish them.

ADORNO

BA: *It seems that Adorno is influential in many respects.*

ES: Very much so and partly because he is the only critic I know for whom music was so important. Not that I am an Adorno scholar but I've read a lot about him (there are people who see him as some kind of Hegelian, and espousing a form of Marxism, and that's all very interesting), but with hardly any exceptions his work is interesting because he's confronting the impasse of music. Music is basically an undenotative language, and how do you talk about that? I find that all very compelling.

BA: *Does he embody the notion of the intellectual as you represent it in your book?*

ES: Yes. But also there is something more interesting concerning his relationship to his time. In 1993 I gave a series of lectures in University College, London, called the Northcliffe lectures, and I talked about Adorno, basically as someone who lived before his time. The first lecture was called "Adorno as lateness itself." And it struck me that he, like all the intellectuals I talked about in those lectures, didn't have an easy connection with their own time. In other words you couldn't say "he was of his time" or "she was of her time." There was a kind of anachronistic quality to their work. In fact Adorno devised an entire concept of 'late style' in his enormous unpublished manuscript about Beethoven's later work. I find Adorno interesting because he is so elusive. I admire that because people are always trying to fix you, and here is a man whose whole work attempts to deal with real questions of interpretation but which at the same time seems to elude easy formulations.

THE AMATEUR

BS: *Part of Adorno's character was his incredible breadth of learning, which suggests something I found very intriguing in your work, and that is the notion of "amateurism" which appeals to me greatly. What led you to choose the term 'amateur' rather than, say, 'generalist.'*

ES: Well first of all it was a bit provocative, but really because of the literal meaning of the word—suggesting a love of something. And in the French sense of the word *amateur* meaning someone who is very involved in something without being professional. It seemed to me that it described my own career. You see it is very hard for me to map my interests—why is it that I am interested in this thing, why am I interested in all these other things? So I simply gave up and figured that one is moved in ways that are quite mysterious, and that is better for me than trying to find some system to contain them all. I am invariably criticised by younger postcolonialists (Ahmad, etc.) for being inconsistent and untheoretical, and I find that I like that, who wants to be consistent?

BA: *I think some of the principles of your work have been amazingly consistent; the idea of the amateur is one, that appears very early in your writing.*

ES: Partly, but it also has something to do with my education. In 1987–88, the year before he died I went to visit C. L. R. James in London and he was very frail at the time; he had heard about me but we had never met before and I spent a couple of hours with him. In the middle of the conversation, quite without any preparation he suddenly asked me, "Have you had any great teachers who made a great impression on you?" I think he was asking about schoolteachers. I thought about it for a time, and I had to say, I really didn't. I'd had good teachers, but I've never been anybody's disciple.

I discovered that this 'lack' allowed me to improvise my own way, and to be 'amateur' in that respect. I fulfilled all the formal requirements, but in the end I was really educating myself. I found that to be a much more attractive option for me. I wrote an article several years ago, about Vico, in some obscure journal, called "Vico as autodidact," and the idea of autodidacticism which is somewhat synonymous with amateurism has always been a very consistent theme of mine.

BA: *There is one slight problem with amateurism: with yourself, say, and Adorno, we're talking about people who show a tremendous facility in the areas outside their profession. And I wonder if amateurism has a certain potential for elitism?*

ES: That's not the worst of it. I was afraid you were going to say something more damaging and that is that you're always only an amateur, you're never really finally that good. I think that's the danger. I like to play the piano and I think of myself as a pretty good pianist, but I'm definitely not professional; there's a certain finish which always eludes you and that's tremendously worrying to me, I thought that's what you were worried about—"Well Said, you really aren't that good are you?" "Can you really say about yourself that you're really a professional Conrad scholar?" I don't think I can say that. My great nightmare is being caught in some fundamental amateurish position.

BA: *You've brought up an interesting point with the piano playing—the reason there isn't the 'finish' is because you don't put in eight hours of practice a day.*

ES: Right and I'm not interested in finishing. Because finishing for me means packaging, being able to present it to an audience. It becomes a commodity in that sense.

BA: *So the finish leads to professionalism, and the associated 'theological' convictions of professionalism.*

MUSIC

BA: *Do you play any other instruments?*

ES: No.

BA: *How did you come to have this passion for music?*

ES: I don't know. The big project of my fading years now is a memoir about my early life, up till my late-twenties, and one of the most interesting aspects of this project is the archaeological exploration of my musical and literary interests. My father was a businessman. At a formative period of my life I grew up in a fairly repressive and Victorian kind of atmosphere. I went to colonial schools and I found that my interest in literature and music were really stimulated by my mother. I was an only son, although I had four younger sisters, and my relationship with my mother was very close. I didn't really have friends. We were an anomaly and I was on an endless treadmill. My father was completely obsessed with the idea

that I shouldn't be idle, that I was going to read and work and occupy my time. So the moment of respite was really afforded me by the relationship with my mother who encouraged my creative ability. One hates to say this but I was very gifted musically as a child. I had a phenomenal musical memory and as a three-year-old child could sing endless songs. So I studied music quite early, learning the piano. It was useful but I didn't really have excellent teachers, I educated myself through records and concerts. Cairo in those days had an opera season, and that was really my world. The schools I attended were all extremely alienating and unpleasant, and I was sacked from almost every one of them. So my world was really one of books and music. Of course in those days we didn't have TV's and walkmans, it was all radio and primitive record players. To this day I remember the program on the BBC every Sunday afternoon called *Nights at the Opera*.

BA: *So you might well have been a professional concert pianist.*

ES: Yes, I was very interested in it through my undergraduate days. When I was at Princeton I won a prize and I studied partly at Juilliard in New York, and after I graduated I took a year off and I studied again. I had a wonderful piano teacher called Paul Tiegerman, but I found that it wasn't fulfilling, there was too much emphasis on physical practice, and I was too intellectual.

MUSICAL ELABORATIONS AND AFFILIATIONS

BA: *I'm intrigued at the way music enters into your work, for instance the way you compare musical elaborations with Vico's notion of repetition, these shared affiliations. I wonder to what extent does music demonstrate affiliation?*

ES: Well of course the idea of elaboration itself comes not from Vico but from Gramsci. He was very interested in intellectual work as an elaboration of social energy. And that's why I was interested in that notion of elaboration—elaboration across family lines. What interests me about music is where it is located—I talk about that in the second chapter of *Musical Elaborations*. Obviously there is a private realm, but I'm interested in the

idea that music really belongs first in the church or in the court and then ultimately moves out into the concert hall and the public space. There's a rather mysterious locus of affiliation between audiences, between performers and impresarios and so forth. In that respect it strikes me as the prototype of a really interesting social formation, something which hasn't really been examined.

BA: *Do you see any other cultural elaborations which music could illustrate?*

ES: Well, film! Film is very similar. I don't really have a strong visual sense except for film—not painting for example. The tradition from which I come has a fairly strong abstract influence in ornamental patterns and so on, but film does seem to me also a form of social elaboration of a very interesting kind—relating to music.

Most of us aren't really trained to talk about music, although music is everywhere. . . . I write these columns for the *Nation* on music and I found it a challenge, to try to put the musical experience, which is fairly *recherche*, you know, 'high,' 'elitist,' to use your word, to try to put it in the language of a reader of *Nation* which is basically a left-wing weekly.

BA: *What about the fact that it's mostly western classical music that you're interested in?*

ES: That's a tremendous limitation on my part. One of the defining experiences of my childhood was being taken to a concert of the greatest Arabic singer, El Fasoum. It turned me off Arabic music—what I considered to be 'ethnic' music—forever. I don't know why, it's a very strange thing and I'm quite uncomfortable with it. But for me, music is the western classical tradition. The music of my own tradition? I listen to it, I know something about it, I can talk about it if I have to, but it doesn't touch me. Neither am I interested in the kind of music my children listen to at all; I'm not really that interested in jazz . . . very, very peculiar. I find that very troubling. I feel I should be interested.

AFFILIATION

BA: *Maybe there's a bit of Adorno in you. I've always thought that the concept of affiliation is particularly appropriate for postcolonial society. There seems to be a very clear*

cultural distinction between the filiative affiliations of indigenous cultures and the affiliative networks of the appropriated colonial culture. In which case you'd say that the indigenous culture is filiative.

ES: Yes, of course. It's very dramatically shown in the French colonial system, which I've studied a lot, where you have the strong idea of assimilation. It's very different from the English system because there you could become French without actually being French, by virtue of language and learning the culture and so forth. But as with all affiliation there is a limit to which you can identify . . . it turns up in the example of Senghor, who thought he was French until the age of twenty five, when he realised he was a black. That seemed to break the whole thing.

PALESTINE

BA: *Can we talk a bit about nationalism. You've talked at some length about it, and you had an interesting discussion about it with David Barsamian. Does resistance nationalism always end up being triumphalist, does it always end up being imperialistic?*

ES: Look at the example of Palestine. In my opinion what it turned into was a kind of fraudulent triumphalism. Once the PLO made that agreement with the Israelis in September 1993 the idea was that we had achieved our great national goal—a complete lie. But the most powerful thing about Palestinian nationalism is that it argues itself as the mainstream. People like myself who criticise it and say this is a great mistake, are accused of not really being Palestinian and not understanding the nature of the struggle. Yes, I think it is in the nature of nationalism to eliminate or in some way denigrate its antagonists.

BA: *On the other hand I wonder if it was the absence of some sort of State nationalism which allowed the West to come and completely discount the inhabitants of Palestine.*

ES: Well the whole idea was that we weren't present although we were. There was a strange way in which people didn't see you. The Zionist slogan was "A people without land for a land without people." But I wonder whether that's really just the absence of a state. Or is it a function of the ideology of Zionism, which legislated that there was nobody there, or

if they were there they weren't real people or didn't have the right to be real people?

BA: *How would you define Zionism? Where does it stand between nationalism and imperialism. Its Messianic flavour seems to make it so incredibly imperialistic, incapable of seeing . . .*

ES: . . . Seeing the Other. Yes, I think that's part of it. Another part of it is the incredible ideology of the land, that the land is somehow unoccupied, even though there are people living there. Even for Rabin himself, who is given credit in the West for being a man of vision, seeking change, wanting peace, and all the rest of it. The idea is that the Palestinians are a lesser people, that they are there on tolerance, and above all that the land which the Israelis took—I'm not just talking about the occupied territories, I'm talking about Palestine itself, a major part of it which became Israel in 1948—had been *redeemed* by them. That notion of a redemptive occupation is quite unique, I don't know of any similar example in history. The closest parallel would be the Puritans coming to America in the seventeenth century and saying "this is our land, this is the new Israel." That Messianic, redemptive quality—it's so foreign to me, so outside me, so unlike anything I have experienced, that it endlessly fascinates me. How do people actually think that way? But they do. And such thinking has had a very profound dispossessing effect—that's a very important word for me, "dispossession"—a very profound dispossessing effect on hundreds of thousands of people.

BA: *What do you see in the immediate future for Palestine?*

ES: Well . . . there are a number of alternatives. I don't think this peace they signed is going to last very long. It's already unravelling, partly because of the intransigence and mean-spirited absence of generosity of the Israelis. It's very easy to make peace with Egypt, very easy to make peace with Jordan, there are no territorial issues there at all. But when it comes to what they consider to be 'Jewish land,' including the West Bank, there's an orthodoxy, a whole system of ideology behind that. I don't think they're ever going to be able to do this in the present context.

I think there will be continual low-scale violence, and on the Palestinian side there's going to be more and more of what resembles civil war between

the various factions, with Arafat and his faction never being completely independent. I think that at some point he will be removed, he won't be around very long, and I think his real threat comes from his own people, his own military. He has generals in charge of Gaza and I'm told that whenever he has meetings he has them next to him all the time. So the model for his removal is a kind of Third World officer's coup, and in the long run the Israelis, who have been protecting him, along with the Americans, will find that he is expendable.

One of the things that is totally absent from the Palestinian political scene today is thinking about the future. Everybody is concerned about tomorrow, literally tomorrow, and about Arafat. But he's not immortal, so what happens? We don't have any institutions, so there's likely to be chaos (I think we can accept that) for several decades, and I think a new generation will have to emerge before any alternatives are formed. It's a very sad comment.

CULTURE

BA: *If I could change the topic to the issue of culture itself. I found very compelling early in *The World, the Text and the Critic* a sense of the link between culture and place. And I'm also intrigued by your mention of Matthew Arnold. Your work doesn't seem to make that clear distinction between High and Popular culture which we find in Raymond Williams—the distinction between culture as Art and as a Way of Life. What do you think of that distinction?*

ES: I accept that. But I tend to emphasise more the notion of art, as opposed to way of life.

BA: *I am intrigued by your references to Arnold which, unlike most people's these days, are not condemnatory.*

ES: No. Arnold is one of the inventors of the particular notion of culture which I use which is different from Williams's in that, for Williams, culture, whether a way of life or of art, doesn't have a negative component, whereas I think (partly because of my interest in Arnold) that it does. Namely, it is art, it is the masterpieces, you might say, the tradition, which doesn't exclude way of life, for it's tied to it in some way. But also my

definition includes a certain 'nasty' quality, for culture can be used as a screen between the members of that culture and some of the horrid practices that occur, sometimes in the name of culture. Culture can become a way of disguising the reality, so that one can say "well we're not just a people who flayed all these buggers and niggers out there, we're a people who produced Titian and we produced Michelangelo." And Arnold, I think, meant it that way. For him culture was a way of stemming the tide of rebellion. It was a way of pacifying, of mystifying. I find that incredibly interesting, and it really arises with him. I don't know anybody else who uses it beforehand.

BA: *Certainly the idea was there with Lord Macauley—moving into India—and the huge cultural arrogance that underlay the proposition that India could be civilised by studying English.*

ES: Yes, of course, other people had similar ideas, but Arnold codified it. And he turned it into a kind of theoretical machine. And it became the system by which my generation was educated and I'm sure yours too—"This is our culture"—And that's why I've always regarded it with a certain amount of suspicion.

CULTURAL STUDIES

BA: *In an introduction to a volume called Literature and Society you make some disparaging references to "modish interdisciplinarity." But I wonder if your notion of the worldliness of the text, along with the idea of the critic and theorist as 'amateur' opens the way for cultural studies. For example, you yourself might best be seen as a cultural theorist.*

ES: I've always resisted the word "interdiscipline" perhaps because there's something gimmicky about it. I like the idea of something that's fairly fluid, that doesn't have a label attached to it—Cultural Studies in that sense—but which somehow also preserves the integrity of the discipline, because I'm interested in the life of disciplines.

BA: *Well, Culture and Imperialism, I think Arnold's notion of culture is imperial and unifying. Do you think culture can be seen as an invention of imperialism?*

ES: All societies have culture. I don't have an answer to the question, but what is it about some cultures that makes them—and this related to the notion of travelling theory—what is it that makes them travel? What makes them go from one place in which they seem to be settled, very much part of a stable environment, to suddenly become transported across the sea, producing a fantastic hybrid. It doesn't happen that often, and that's why I was very interested in the relationship between culture and imperialism in that book. What is it about the culture that could make somebody like Seely say that "the real fact about English history and culture is that we are imperial." But why? I don't have an answer to that.

BA: *I wonder if it's simply a function of the exercise of the power?*

ES: Yes, power, but also the technology, travel. You can imagine indigenous people looking to see these arrivals. And one of the things that occurs to you is "well, they're able to come here and we're still here, we're not able to go there." There is a profound asymmetry there.

BA: *That raises an interesting issue in Culture and Imperialism. I wonder if contrapuntal reading is a kind of "reading back" in the manner of "writing back."*

ES: Certainly, it is that. It is "reading back" and "flushing out" what has been hidden or not attended to. Of course the great example was the big fuss made in England about what I said about Jane Austen. Nobody ever thought you could say that Jane Austen had something to do with the slave trade or sugar plantations. But she thought that, so why shouldn't her readers?

BA: *You mention many times the absence of any school of U.S. Studies in the Middle East. Is this, in the same way as reading back—"knowing the other"—a form of reverse Orientalism?*

ES: Again, there are a lot of things I don't have answers for and I find it incredible that the Middle East is full of people who have been educated in the U.S., and yet there's a total absence of systematic interest in understanding what has become in fact the greatest world power. I think the idea is that "they can study us but we're not allowed to study them," and that's even

true in American universities. My brother-in-law is the deputy president of the American university in Beirut, and last summer when I was there I asked him: "Do you have a department of American Studies at the American university here?" and he said "No." So I said, "Do you have any courses in American politics, American culture?"—"No." It's like a prohibition, while they spend most of their time studying themselves—the culture of the Middle East, the Arabs and so on—there is very little attention paid to their enormous patron. I think it's a kind of reverse Orientalism, a) because "we are not allowed to do it," and b) because "we already 'know' about America"—the incredible myths, the conspiracies, the plots, and "America is this" and "America is materialistic," and "Americans are all the same"—unbelievable! It's quite monstrous. It's the exact equivalent of what people say here. "Oh Arabs are all terrorists, they're all fundamentalists, they all like to kill."

America's influence in the Middle East is huge as we saw in the Gulf war, and U.S. policy is to maintain hegemony and dominion over the Middle East. Their policy was to get the Russians out, and now that there are no Russians left they run the place. Yet nobody bothers to figure out what they're up to.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

BA: *This "reading back" or "knowing back." You mentioned writing back. Would you like to say something more about that. The Introduction to the Barsamian interviews said that your work is a kind of "writing back."*

ES: Well, I mean writing back in the sense that we were supposed to be silent, and we were supposed to simply accept, so there is a challenge to the status quo, a refusal to be quiet, a turning of our gaze upon them. This resists the idea that "they cannot represent themselves therefore they must be represented."

BA: *Getting back to representation. How does one really speak truth to power effectively? Can power bear truth?*

ES: Of course! You can't change power. But they hear you. I've been impressed with that, not so much in my own case but in the case of, say,

Chomsky—my great hero, I've learned a lot from him over the years. It's easy to dismiss people like him and say, "well they're outside the mainstream, they're not part of the establishment, they're crazy." But if you're persistent—persistence is the essence—if you do it long enough, and you keep appearing. . . . One of the aims of the exercise is not only to marginalise you but to silence you, to discourage you into giving up ("the *New York Times* will never publish you"). But if you persist, as Raymond Williams says, there are always alternatives. No system can exhaust all the alternatives, you keep popping up, and in the end they hear you. Whether they admit it or not, whether they take it in or not, in the end what you're really trying to do is a) reach an audience that you are weaning away from them, an audience which will come and listen to you and perhaps begin to think in a slightly different way, and b) make an impression on them to show them that they haven't completely won, that the powerful haven't completely dominated the field. That's probably all you can do. But you'd be quite wrong to think that as a result of what you're doing they're going to ask you in, "come and sit with us, tell us what you think."

About three weeks ago, when I was in Beirut, I did an open forum in Arabic on the intellectual and a lot of questions from people were of the kind "Is your view so cut and dried that you believe an intellectual can never be in power? What about people like Andre Malraux, he was a great intellectual, he became Minister of Culture. Does he cease to be an intellectual?" and I said "Yes." I really don't feel there is any way to compromise. The moment you begin to aspire, not just to talk to power, to speak the truth to it, but to try to become part of it, then you lose your bearings. Other considerations come into play, truth isn't one of them. You worry about position, you worry about privileges. My sister has a very good phrase about it. In our part of the world the dignitaries in any audience always sit in the front rows, and she calls it the view from the front row—they're the very powerful people. And it's a totally different view from that of the people sitting at the back. The moment you move from the back to the front, and you are sitting in the front row, you've lost it, you're no longer doing what you do.

INFLUENCES

BA: *This puts you at a bit of a distance from Gramsci. You're clearly developing your own notion of the intellectual. What were some of your shaping intellectual experiences?*

ES: Well certainly reading Vico in 1960. I remember it quite well. I was twenty-five at the time. I was bowled over. That was very important. . . .^{*} Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* is the point at which I thought he went astray. I thought the observations were very interesting—the local observations. But the moment he began to generalise into a larger theory—potentially a theory that no resistance was possible, that we were moving towards a disciplinary society, that there was almost a kind of “clockwork” quality to it—I just felt that it was completely wrong. It was not true to his own earlier studies, and also it wasn't true to history and it wasn't true to the way society worked.

It was at that time also that I read Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*—there's always something going on in this book and it's not just the smooth working out of a massive system of domination. I separated from Foucault at that point. Nevertheless his interest in the notion of discourse, in the notion of systematicity in what is said and what could be said, and the formation of statements—the archaeology of knowledge—all had a great influence on me. And *The Order of Things* was even more important than that. But as I say, once it got generalised into massive, unassailable unapproachable systems, I just think he was wrong.

In the Spring of 1979 Sartre and de Beauvoir organised a seminar in Paris about peace in the Middle East, to which they invited me. For reasons that are to this day unclear to me the seminar took place in Foucault's apartment. He didn't attend, he wasn't part of the seminar, but of course he would come home and all these people would be there. I tried to talk to him—I saw a couple of my books in his library, so he knew who I was—and at the time I could tell he was withdrawing from politics, he had lost interest in politics. He had just been a year earlier in Iran, he had reported on the Iranian

^{*}At this point the tape stopped and the recording was interrupted. In the missed section, Said talks about the influence upon his thinking at different stages of Vico, Gramsci, Auerbach and early Foucault.

revolution but had decided he didn't really want to do that, he wanted to pursue his own thing. I realised there was a fundamental difference in our attitudes: I was still interested in politics and mass movements, because, of course, our movement was still going on. But he was into something else—the cultivation of the self—in the last book of his on sexuality. I thought this showed a tremendous falling off, so I completely lost interest in him. . . . at roughly the time he became a huge industry in this country. Yet I was virtually the first person to write about him in the early seventies.

BA: *That represents pretty much your relationship with poststructuralism throughout the two decades of the seventies and eighties.*

ES: Yes—and I had a similar relationship with Derrida, whom I met earlier than Foucault, I met him in the mid-sixties in this country, he came over for that Johns Hopkins seminar. Actually I got to be closer to him through Jean Genet, whom I met in Lebanon. He said, "You really should be friendly with Derrida, he's very good, a man of the left." So a few months later I was in Paris with my wife and child and I saw Derrida, and we became quite friendly. I invited him to my seminar which was in Paris and he and his wife went out with me and my wife. But it's really the disciples who begin to get in the way. I don't like people who consider themselves to be my disciples, and felt that the disciples were turning Derrida into an institution.

BA: *But what is most interesting is that you are there with the worldliness of the text all along, while this increasingly mandarin notion of deferral and the unattainability of meaning grows, and yet you're still going strong twenty years later. Perhaps there is a metaphor here of the cork bobbing to the surface again—the refusal to let go of the real, because for postcolonial societies oppression, injustice, colonisation have real effects.*

ES: And there's no time or luxury to sit back and ask "Is it real?" Is it decidable or is it not? It's because they're in a different world from me and I'm awfully glad. I'm awfully glad I'm in my world and not theirs.

BA: *I wonder if it is a time for people to come back to that notion of "worldliness." I mean I've always held it in postcolonial theory and I think it would be true to say that post-structuralism has really dominated critical theory in recent decades.*

ES: But don't you think it's losing its hold now?

BA: *Yes, I do. And perhaps that's where the fog lifts to reveal the stubborn and intransigent worldliness of the text.*

ES: Well "fog," but it's a fog of obscurity and a kind of scholastic, dogmatic, unedifying ritual.

BA: *It concurs very much with your notion of the "theological," dogmatic bent of criticism.*

ES: Yes, to me it does. And that what is taking place is less a critical exercise than a kind of ritual. It's definitely not secular.

BA: *What do you think about the colonialist criticism of Bhabha and Spivak say, in this respect, do you think they're a bit "theological"?*

ES: To my way of thinking. I mean Spivak is a colleague of mine, and old friend. Part of what she does I find very interesting, and intelligent; she's a very brilliant person. But there's a quite remarkable difference between the writing and the speaking. She has this great presence. But I find the thing . . . and I think it's also true of Bhabha, who is incredibly subtle, really quite profound. But what I find myself telling Gayatri Spivak a lot is "Why do you use such rebarbative and inaccessible language?" The language becomes "the issue," not the ideas, or even the experiences you're trying to get across. And I feel that sometimes there's an appeal to a constituency which believes that that kind of language is really a sign of profundity.

BA: *That's what remains distinctive about your work, and that's why it's interesting, that it is "copious" rather than "inaccessible." But also I think there is a way of seeing it as re-emerging from the poststructuralist dominance.*

ES: Working through it . . . I feel that way. On the other hand this doesn't always mean that difficult language equals "obscure" and purposely "obfuscatory." I mean I think in the case of the early Derrida the difficult language there really did conceal a struggle to establish a new way of thinking and analysing and so on which to me was very exciting—Of *Grammatology*, *L'Écriture et Le Différence*, for instance.

BA: *We've covered a fair bit of ground here.*

ES: You've worn me out.

What Is Islam?

Alexander Cockburn / 1995

From *New Statesman* 10 February 1995.

Copyright 1999 *New Statesman*.

Reprinted by permission.

AC: *Recently the journal Foreign Affairs, which traditionally addresses foreign concerns of the United States as seen by the policy-making elites, featured a long article by Sam Huntington on "The Clash of Civilisations." Now, Huntington himself has been in and out of government for many years, so his views—however foolish—are not without weight. And one of his major themes was the clash of the west with Islam. How would you resume his ideas?*

ES: His argument is that now the cold war is over, the new form of conflict—and there must be one—is between civilisations, of which he finds six. For Huntington, the definition of a civilisation is that it must be stable, and—more idiomatically—he pretty much says "you know it when you see it," which is not very illuminating. He doesn't really make a distinction between culture and civilisation.

His argument that everyone knows what civilisations are is wrong. Within most of these so-called civilisations or cultures is a great battle over definition of that culture or civilisation. That's true of the Islamic world, true of the United States—what is the real America?—and new voices coming up in each of these cultures is a sign of the volatility of these ideas. So the real battle is not a clash of civilisations, but a clash of definitions.

AC: *Huntington says there are six civilisations: Islam, Confucianism, Africa, Orthodox ...*

ES: He says that Arnold Toynbee in his *Study of History* held there were twenty-one, of which only six have survived.

AC: *And of all of these, the one that menaces the stability of western civilisation is Islam?*

ES: Exactly. Islam is by far the most discussed, along with the west.

Huntington's was really the continuance of a series in *Foreign Affairs*. He began with "Islam a Threat?" in the issue before. Huntington presents Islam as a civilisation that basically rejects western values.

He relies very heavily on Bernard Lewis, and indeed the phrase "clash of civilisations" was used by Lewis in a 1990 article he wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* called "The Roots of Islamic Rage." Lewis says that Islam never admits rationality, has never accepted the west, or modernity—except in the case of Turkey, which became a secular state. The other Islamic countries are basically mired in their own impotence and rage at the west. Huntington follows Lewis. His sources are all very polemical and overwrought. For example, Huntington is very afraid of a menacing complicity between Confucianism and Islam, which I find bizarre.

AC: *This all has a rather nineteenth-century ring to it?*

ES: Indeed. In fact, in thinking about this, I remembered a whole slew of books going back to the late nineteenth century, which have a lot to do with the climax of threats to imperialism. There developed this vocabulary of the threat, of the "other" civilisation. The big figure here is Gustave Le Bon, the psychologist of crowds, then of civilisations ... the threatened world order. There was a great hysteria about threats to the west, common to a large range of writers at that period.

Today, with the presence of a huge Turkish population inside Germany, with a large north African population inside France, with—for the first time—a large Muslim population from north Africa inside Italy; plus substantial Muslim minorities in Sweden and Switzerland, also in England, there's this sense of threat that Islam is moving into Europe and the west. One shouldn't forget, apropos Huntington, that his career was as a theoretician of the cold war, and now he has to carve out a new role for himself.

You'd be surprised at how many symposia and conferences around the country are being held on this theme.

AC: What is the gearing between all this discussion and the evolution of official U.S. policy?

ES: I think State Department policy is twofold. In 1993, I went down to a conference organised by U.S. Military Central Command, in Tampa, Florida. That's the command out of which Norman Schwarzkopf came. I asked the commanding officer, General Hoare, what his responsibilities were, and he said the security of Egypt, the Horn of Africa, the entire Gulf area. Jordan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran, and they were now looking at the former Soviet central republics. The U.S. assistant secretary of defence—the keynote speaker—said the main four topics that concerned policy-makers in that region are—political Islam, the containment of Iran, the security of the Gulf and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Those were the four big issues for them.

But if you go to Cairo, everyone will tell you that the Sheikh charged with involvement in the World Trade Center was "American," meaning that he was invented in the 1980s as part of America's operations with fundamentalists in Afghanistan. It's also well known now that various U.S. embassies throughout the Middle East are in contact with these various radical Islamists. On one hand the U.S. has maintained contact with these radical Islamists, and at the same time publicly condemns extremism and fundamentalism, and is hand in glove with all of those who are fighting these groups. It's policy. They don't want to be caught off guard, as they were in Iran in the late 1970s. So for example, the Muslim leader in the Sudan comes to this country quite frequently. The U.S. has a policy that now attends to the matter of culture—how you deal with different cultures—as a way of promoting elements in that culture that might be useful to the west, and of promoting differences within that culture that might induce disarray. That's the new emphasis in foreign policy.

To go back to Huntington, his error is that he doesn't see that the battle is not between civilisations, but inside them. Islam is always spoken of by

orientalists as dar-Islam, which means the house of Islam, the domain of Islam, and the rest of the world is the house of war, meaning that Islam is at war with everything outside it. But that is largely an invention of orientalists who found it somewhere in the eighth century. There's much more energetic debate now inside the Islamic world over the question of what Islam is. I would say there's a battle over the definition, and who represents the two Islams.

For example, in Egypt the government is fighting the extremists, as they call them, in the name of Islam. And there is an official Islam that includes the Mufti and Al-Azhar, the oldest university in the world, whose teachings and language are authoritative throughout the Islamic world. That is an open alliance with the Egyptian government. Each of these groups within Egypt is at war with all the others. They have different ideas of what an Islamic state should be like and so on. My sense of it is that all these groups—as I wrote in my book *The Politics of Dispossession*, the chapter titled "The Other Muslim"—all these various movements purporting to represent the real Islam are basically Blanquists.

They're not mass movements; they are insurrectionary and inspirational in nature, mostly middle class, led by doctors and lawyers and so on. They wanted to take state power. Well, not one of them has succeeded. Number one, they've all failed. Number two, in places like Egypt and elsewhere, they've alienated large numbers of the population by virtue of their indiscriminate violence. They throw bombs in bus stations and so on. Their methods are in fact reversions to a tiny sectarian movement in the ninth and tenth centuries, the Ismailis—the assassins' movement.

They don't really have a political programme. I debated with them on the West Bank. And they say things like: "Islam is the only solution!" And I say, what are you going to do about electricity, what are you going to do about the economy? And they say. "Well, we'll look into that later." Except for—the thing they are really, in my opinion, tremendously concerned about, and some Muslims who oppose them will tell you it's to the point of psychological illness ... they're obsessed with the regulation of personal conduct. What people should wear and so forth. And particularly—this is

the psychopathological aspect—they're obsessed with what should happen to women. What they should wear, what they shouldn't wear, what they should show, what they shouldn't show, that sort of thing. The regulation of dress is I think the most important thing they contributed (laughs) ... not a very great contribution to the understanding of the modern world.

In addition to that there are in Pakistan, Egypt, the West Bank and Jordan, the larger Islamic organisations, which trace their roots back to the Muslim Brotherhood which was founded in the 1930s. These are in effect populist parties, and continue to this day. They are more mainstream. They want to be elected to the parliament, and this sort of thing. And they frown on the insurrectionary groups, assassinations, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood condemned the knife attack on the Egyptian writer Mahfouz. There are several deputies in the parliament in Egypt, what they call the People's Assembly. So they're a kind of mainstream Islamic movement.

Now all these movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the smaller groups, have in common a protest against the incompetence, corruption and dependency of the ruling elites. Hamas is Muslim Brotherhood, affiliated with the Egyptian groups. The Jihad al-Islami on the West Bank is a splinter group from them, which believes in much greater violence. Hamas, like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the one in Jordan, are against the regime's total capitulation to the Americans—plus the huge amount of corruption. So they do have a very important social and political message, which is that the country is mismanaged to a fantastic degree. The same is true of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria.

These governments have in effect sacrificed their popular legitimacy to the wishes of the Americans and their hegemony in the region. It's true in Saudi Arabia, too. There's a big campaign on the part of the government now to stop these people, because they criticise the way these troops that have been sent to the Gulf cost \$1.5 billion a month, and that bill is going to be footed by the Saudis and the Kuwaitis. In addition to which, the U.S. imports 9.8 million barrels of oil a day from Saudi Arabia. No wonder they threaten war. For that they required compliance from the regime. They can't have any real democracy, because that would be a challenge to the

status quo. All the talk about Iraq ... the extent of the dependency of the U.S. on Arabian oil is really quite stunning. Well over 40 percent. If the oil shipments were threatened, of course they'd go to war, and of course they have a many-pronged and many-tiered approach to the region.

AC: *Do you think these days in Egypt that the only really vigorous challenge to western hegemony, at least in terms of an intellectual prospectus, comes from the Islamic sector?*

ES: No, that's wrong, though some of those Cairo Islamic people are very articulate. But there is a nationalist cultural formation, of whom Mahfouz is a part, which is very strong, very anti-Muslim, very critical of the regime. It's very important to note that it is these people who have refused to have anything to do with Israel, even after Camp David, on a cultural level. They get endless invitations from Israeli universities; Israeli intellectuals come to Cairo, and want to meet them. They refuse to meet. They are against normalisation of relations with Israel and America, so long as the Israeli occupation goes on. It's not the Muslims. I would call them the nationalist cultural group: writers, economists, and sociologists. They represent the national culture.

They're very powerful, because they are the ones who write in the newspapers. They're in a tough position. Mahfouz has been threatened for a long time. Many of the others, too. They're not known in the west, which goes back to my thesis about what is known about Arab culture in the west. A story on the side: a few years ago at PEN we proposed to bring eighteen or twenty Arabs, to engage in dialogue with American writers. It was cleared by PEN. The budget was quite modest, about \$100,000. Well, we've been able to raise \$10,000 and that's it. There's no interest.

AC: *So at the political level, there's no form of convincing Islamic alternative?*

ES: No. I don't think there is an Islamic alternative. There is Islamic protest, or the use of Islam to protest. That's what makes it more complicated. Because there have to be vehicles of protest. Take Algeria when they were fighting the French, or Iran. The one place you could always go was to the mosque. In Iran, they have a clerisy, but there isn't one in the Sunni world.

Number two, there are no political organisations to speak of. They're not interested in mass organisations. Their great moments were, for example, in the Cairo earthquake about two years ago. Much faster than the state, the Brothers and other Islamic groups were able to supply emergency first aid and stuff like that. We're talking about community assistance. And there were Islamic banks and economic societies that would loan money without interest. But that's dried up. The Saudis, both individuals and the state, which used to supply them with money, are very hard up. The Iranians aren't doing very much of it anymore. So there isn't anything.

AC: There's nothing programmatic. That's really what you're saying?

ES: Many of the people I met on the West Bank, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, are in fact students, studying science, they're engineers ... It's important to emphasise there are a lot of middle-class, educated people in these groups. And I asked them, "What is the Islamic programme for the distribution of water, or the Islamic notion of a post office?" They said, "Listen, you've got the wrong idea. Our plan is that we will take the best the world has produced—in physics, chemistry or whatever, and apply it to our society without the western ideology." So then you say, "What does that mean?" And they say, "Isn't it obvious? We keep our Islamic principles, but we take advantage of the developments in technology and science and so forth, from other societies." But it's extremely vague.

AC: The reverse of Gandhi, really?

ES: In a certain way, yes.

AC: Well, does it come down in the end to the denial of capitalist relations?

ES: I asked specifically a question in that context. I asked: "What will your relation be to the IMF and the World Bank?" They said: "We're studying that."

AC: Well, I guess the Islamic masses have rather a direct answer. That's probably why they voted for the Islamic mayor of Istanbul. They wanted to be a bit better off. And as in the rest of the world, for those low on the pole, to hope to be better off is to be against the World Bank and the IMF. So are you pessimistic?

ES: I am because I don't see that there's a proper understanding of what I would call secular politics, which would include some of the elements in their politics: opposition to official corruption and incompetence. I find that the attitude that says, "We will have nothing to do with the west," is mostly based on ignorance. The west, for example, is going through the same general crisis of definition. Which west are we talking about? To say that all Americans are spies and agents of the CIA, and therefore all American literature is compromised, is ludicrous. That seems to me to be the same coin, the other side of which is, the rulers saying: "At all costs we want to be in the American camp." There's a failure not only of secular politics, but what W.E.B. Du Bois was getting at when he said it's especially important for a black person to be very refined in analysis of discrimination. You can't do these wholesale condemnations or approvals, because then you're just trapped. That's the main problem.

AC: *You made a rather nostalgic remark somewhere regarding earlier empires as mosaics of nationalities.*

ES: It was nostalgic. I think it was in the context of the Ottoman empire actually, that the millets, all the little groups of communities which include various groups inside the empire, outside Turkey, they were just interested in taxing them—that's all. They didn't want them to be gum-chewing, hamburger-eating images of America, right? There was a certain amount of coexistence, and of course dominance, in the sense that it was clear who was dominating. I have no particular interest in petty or exclusionary nationalism of the kind that you find among the Maronites in Lebanon. I would argue for a secular politics based on region and culture and so forth, like the Arab nationalist movement in its best moments.

AC: *You have said it is grossly inaccurate to refer to non-Muslim minorities as being outside Islam, which includes everyone. Is this true? It's not the case in Turkey. Did you exaggerate the situation to make the point that Islam is at least as tolerant as Christianity?*

ES: I simply said that in the renaissance of culture and national identity that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century, partly as a response to

Ottoman rule, the Arab world produced a secular culture that was composed of contributors from minorities and majority communities.

I was raised, as were many people I know, Christian as well as Muslim, in the notion that even though I belonged to a Christian minority, my culture is Islamic. That is a perfectly feasible and indeed widely held view of most people. Now, as to the meaning of modernity, I think it's the single most important question. I don't know about Islam—Turkey and Iran and so on—but in the Arab Islamic world it's the single most important cultural question debated by everyone, the meaning of modernity.

It entails our relationship with the past, what the past is, what the useful past is, and above all, what of the past and present must we elaborate on for the future. You never get a sense of that in anything written by these damn policy people, including the lamentable Huntington—that, in fact, is what people are talking about. There's just the catchphrase about Muslim rage. There is rage, obviously, but it's more interesting than that—it's the number one issue. It's certainly true all through north Africa, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon. That is the big question. It comes up also in various ways in the Gulf.

AC: *What is the meaning of being a member of an Islamic culture to you? Is there a role for a secular intellectual?*

ES: For me, since the question of what Islamic culture is, is highly debatable, everyone creates their own view. Speaking as a member of a minority, I would say that a secular culture, a secular intellectual, functions within an Islamic environment—that's what I would say, environment rather than culture. I don't have any problem with that.

AC: *Going back to the book you wrote in the late 1970s on Islam and the western press, do you think in this intervening period western coverage of Islam has got better or worse?*

ES: Worse. There's even more conformity, much less variety.

Lenses and Tripods: Edward Said

Matthew Rothschild / 1995

From *The Progressive* 60.1 (January 1996): 4.
Reprinted by permission. This interview
was conducted on 14 November 1995.

Ten days after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, Edward Said came to Madison. I was interested in hearing what the leading Palestinian dissident in America had to say about this horrible act of violence, and what effect he thought it would have on the peace process. Said had denounced the accords between Yasir Arafat and Rabin in these pages ("A Palestinian Versailles," November 1993) and in *The Nation* (16 October 1995), and I wondered how he foresaw the future.

Before giving a lecture at the university, he made room in his schedule for a half-hour conversation with me on my radio program, *Second Opinion*.

Said himself has received more than his share of death threats from far-right Zionists, so he has an appreciation for the effects of overheated rhetoric. "I've taken an incredible amount of verbal abuse—especially in this country—the likes of which I've never seen in my life," he told me. "And we know now that the cover's been lifted after Rabin's assassination" on the consequences of such "verbal filth."

But Said did not join the American media in bestowing sainthood on Rabin.

"I think this really was the worst moment for the American press. I've never seen such idiocy. American reporters in Israel asking Israelis, 'Has

Israel's innocence been lost?' I mean, this is a country steeped in the destruction of Palestinian society, Palestinian blood. And talk about political assassinations! I mean, only two weeks before, Rabin had given the order for the assassination of [Islamic Jihad leader] Fathi Shqaqi in Malta. He didn't deny it. He was quite proud: 'Another terrorist has been killed.' So to make it seem as if this was a ceremony of aggrieved innocence is really grotesque, monstrous."

Said has no illusions that things will be different for Palestinians now that Shimon Peres is prime minister. "The continuity is quite clear," Said told me. "Peres has the reputation for being kind of a dove. My feeling is that Peres is the same as Rabin. It's the same thing. He was defense minister. One was the good cop; one was the bad cop. There's no reason for any change." As if to bear Said out, shortly after taking over, Peres launched an attack on Palestinians in Lebanon.

Now Said is dedicating himself to the task of trying to improve the peace process. When he spoke with me, he denounced it again as "a kind of entrapment," but it's a fact of life. "The agreement has gone through and it's sticking," he said. "There is a new reality. It's useless to wish it didn't happen or wouldn't happen. It's there. So the big question for me now is to focus on the future and to try to define what it is that Palestinians can do, given this extremely unfortunate situation. Disillusionment is a luxury which I don't think we can afford."

Said has one regret. "I would have liked to play a more direct political role in the area. I would have liked to have gone there." But he cannot go to the West Bank and Gaza because he suffers from chronic leukemia. "I'm doing all right," he told me. "It has its ups and downs, but with an illness like this you need attention and medical help, so I'm not as free as I used to be."

I went to Said's lecture. It was entitled "The Clash of Civilizations." In it, he argued for a concept of society that is fluid, that takes into consideration that "there are always dissenting, alternative, unorthodox, heterodox ideas that are antiauthoritarian" in every culture.

During the question-and-answer period, two people got up and denounced Said as a "terrorist."

Roots of the West's Fear of Islam

Ken Shulman / 1996

From *International Herald Tribune*
11 March 1996.
Reprinted by permission.

Q: *Has the West's attitude toward Islam improved since you published Orientalism in 1978?*

A: I don't think it has improved at all. In fact, it has decidedly worsened. If you look at how Islam is represented today in newspapers and on television, you see that it is still considered a threat, something that must be walled out. The Arab world is depicted as a place full of terrorists and fanatics.

Instead of expanding, the West's comprehension of the Arab world is contracting.

Q: *What is the history of this anti-Arab prejudice?*

A: The prejudice was created at the same time Islam was born, when Islam was a political and economic threat to Europe. It is no coincidence that Dante places Mohammed in the next to last circle of hell in his *Divine Comedy*, right next to Satan. In the Renaissance, we have the figure of Shylock, but we also have the figure of Othello.

It wasn't just the Jew who was suspect in Christian Europe. It was also the Arab. The Arab who was indolent, diabolic, and dishonest. On one hand, this world of the Orient fascinated the Europeans. On the other, it terrorized them.

Q: Is there a hint of truth in the current stereotype of the Arab world?

A: Of course there is, just as there is a hint of truth in all stereotypes. This is what makes it possible for them to be so widely accepted. But the distortions in the stereotype are far greater than the few elements of realism they may contain. Today, the standard view of the Orient is a vestige of nineteenth-century European colonialism, when anti-Eastern prejudice reached its zenith.

The West's almost obsessive emphasis on terrorism and fanaticism in the Arab world is a form of exorcism. They see it in Islam so they won't have to recognize that the same elements exist in their own societies, and in alarming levels.

Q: Is the West's prejudice against the Arab world more virulent than its prejudices toward other non-Western cultures?

A: I don't think so. If you read the European political literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, you will see the same disdain expressed toward India, China, and Africa.

Q: How does a nation that has been treated with such persistent scorn view itself?

A: The self-image of the Arab world is often negative, and this can be quite damaging for a people. There is a great component of self-loathing, and of desperation.

Q: Has the peace accord between Israel and the Palestinians altered the West's perception?

A: Very much so. Once Arafat was portrayed as the most diabolic man on the planet. Now he is supported and invited to appear on mainstream talk shows. Unfortunately, this aperture doesn't apply to all Palestinians. It just applies to the "right" ones, the ones with the "right" ideas. It hasn't led to any greater awareness of the problems and the history of the Palestinian people.

Q: Is there a danger that in using force to maintain order among its own people, the Palestinian Liberation Organization will begin to lose some of the sympathy it has gained in the West?

A: I hope so. Because when the current Palestinian authorities jail newspaper editors and torture prisoners, they are merely doing Israel's dirty work.

Israel and the Western governments want Arafat to repress certain elements of his society. They want him to be a dictator. The mechanism of the peace accord makes this perfectly clear.

I am for peace. And I am for a negotiated peace. But this accord is not a just peace.

Edward Said

Liane Hansen / 1997

Copyright 1997 by NPR®. Used with the permission of National Public Radio, Inc. Any unauthorized duplication is strictly prohibited. This news report by National Public Radio's Liane Hansen was originally broadcast on National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition Sunday*® on 6 April 1997.

LIANE HANSEN: *Joining us now is Edward Said. He's written widely on the Middle East. His latest book is about the peace process. It's called Peace and Its Discontents.*

Professor Said, what do you think can be accomplished at this meeting between the Israeli prime minister and President Clinton Monday?

EDWARD W. SAID: I don't think very much to change what's been happening in the last few weeks. I think Netanyahu obviously is looking for American support. I think the euphemism is "understanding," in which he tries to press the Israeli case: that what Israel wants is security, freedom from terrorism, et cetera, et cetera. In other words, putting the cart before the horse, and to try and make their position on settlements, particularly the one in Jerusalem, in East Jerusalem, that they've just started. And it's caused so much damage—to Clinton and get his—if not endorsement, then a lessening of the criticism. But I don't think anything very much in reality—in other words, I think there will be more cosmetics, which is really what the peace process in my opinion has been all along.

HANSEN: *Explain that. What do you mean "the peace process is cosmetic"?*

SAID: Well, look. My view has been—having read the protocols and all the documents from the very beginning that the enormous disparity in power between the Palestinians and the Israelis is preserved in the peace process. And what Israel has done, in my opinion, has been to make a very cynical and shrewd, but in the end shortsighted, deal by appealing to Arafat's—at the time, isolation and vanity—that is to say, offering him a few trappings of authority on the West Bank and Gaza. They were very happy to get rid of Gaza. And preserving most of the West Bank in another form of occupation. And what has been, in my opinion, totally either misreported or neglected by the U.S. media during the last three years, four years, has been the dramatic worsening of the Palestinian condition. Peace was supposed to have improved things for the average individual. And, in fact, it's made things a lot worse. One indication is, for example, that at the end of '92, early '93, the annual per-capita income of a Palestinian on the West Bank was about \$2,400 per annum. In '96, it was \$1,100. So, it's less than half of what it was. Palestinians are less able to move. They are trapped in their cities. The Israelis control the exits and the entrances. They are continuing to expropriate land. They have put greater pressure on Jerusalem, forcing Palestinians to leave or evict them. And the net result of all of this is—of course, Arafat is Mr. President. But he has autonomy and not independence or sovereignty. The Israelis still retain those.

HANSEN: *So how, then, can we get out of this desperate situation. Can the present agreements be made to work with the present leadership?*

SAID: Oh, of course. Yes, they're going to work. Arafat has no choice. I think the peace process in its current form will go forward, as I say—because Arafat has very little choice—because he wants to stay in power. And he's in power only because of the peace agreement. And the corrupt group around him, which is making a lot of money through monopolies of all kinds, will go on. But I don't see that it's going to last for very long. And anything resembling a true peace, especially if you go to any place in

the Arab world, including the Palestinian territories, you'll know that the level of hostility towards Israel has increased. The arrogance, the willful confiscation of land, the building of settlements, the way in which Palestinians and Arabs are regarded as sort of subhuman people who are not supposed to be there. This adds to the festering wound of the original conquest of Palestine in 1948, which I certainly remember and many generations since then—the refugees et cetera—also remember. So the atmosphere is, I think, all wrong.

HANSEN: *Given everything you've said—and it sounds very pessimistic . . .*

SAID: Mm-hmm.

HANSEN: *. . . how then do you think real peace can be achieved?*

SAID: Well, I think the Israelis are insulated for the most part from the realities of their history. If you drive around Israel and then cross over to the West Bank, it's like driving from Southern California into Bangladesh. And the settlement and the bypassing roads and all of those things on the West Bank are designed to keep Arabs and the reality of Palestinians away from their consciousness and their sight. And I think until the country or some courageous leader who—the truth is widely known. Every Israeli knows, as Dayan once said, every Israeli knows that every Israeli town, every Israeli settlement, is built on Arab land—either Arabs who were killed and pushed out or expropriated since 1967. So, that reality has to sink in, It's very difficult to establish a state by dispossessing another people and the people remains there and is expected to accept and feel peaceful and brotherly—brotherly emotions. I think the key really has to be a kind of sea change inside Israel, where they face the reality, which their own historians have been documenting for the last fifteen years. And so, I'm really talking about a profound sort of acknowledgement of the reality in some way.

HANSEN: *And an apology as well?*

SAID: Well, yes. That's happened in history. Most Palestinians, including myself—I've been there and I've visited the house I was born in—my family's

house in West Jerusalem where I grew up. I don't want it back. I understand. I don't want to dispossess another people, even though they dispossessed us. But I don't want to be considered a terrorist. I don't want to be considered subhuman. I don't want to be considered only a non-Jew. There has to be a sense in which we're talking about a tragic situation in which two people must coexist as equals on this blood-soaked tiny piece of territory.

HANSEN: *Edward Said. His latest book is called Peace and Its Discontents. He joined us from his home in New York.*

Thank you very much, Professor Said.

SAID: Thank you, Liane. Thanks very much.

An Interview with Edward W. Said

Te-hsing Shan / 1997

From *Tamkang Review* 27.4 (1997):
583–601. Copyright 1997 by Te-hsing
Shan. Reprinted by permission.

SHAN: *First of all, what would you say to the Chinese readers of Representations of the Intellectual who have a very long intellectual tradition over the millennia?*

SAID: I feel very humble. But I also come from a very old tradition—we have a long tradition of intellectuals and scribes. I think there are many similarities, but, of course, the Chinese tradition is quite different from ours, from the Arabic-Islamic tradition. Though I don't know as much about it as I should, I think it's probably true that in all these traditions there is the tradition of the court intellectual, the intellectual who speaks to the authority, and it is the intellectual of authority. We have it very much in our tradition as well. And I've always reacted against that. I've always felt that the role of the intellectual ought to be a questioning one, rather than a counseling one—one in which the authority and tradition are looked at with skepticism, and even with suspicion. That's what I would say in particular.

SHAN: *Has this book been translated into other languages?*

SAID: Yes, many. It has been translated into French, Japanese, German, Swedish, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Turkish, Portuguese, Greek, and maybe one or two others.

SHAN: *How is its reception in the Arabic world?*

SAID: Well, there is a big debate, because obviously the relationship between the intellectual and political responsibilities is very important. And I've been criticized in France and in Arabic countries for not paying enough attention to the role of the responsible intellectual, in other words, where calculations have to be made. My stress is on not making calculations. I think the intellectual should speak what he can despite the difficulty. Of course the other big thing in the Arabic world is that we have a great deal of censorship. It is very difficult for the intellectuals to speak the truth without restraint, but at least to stir the debate. Since a year after this book appeared, two of my political books were banned on the West Bank by Yasir Arafat. So it raises the question once again whether it's important for the intellectual to support the national cause in a time of difficulty, or whether criticism is more important. And I take the position that criticism is more important. I think the young people respond better to that. It's the old people who have the idea that you could be an intellectual who is responsible and has connections with power, which I deny. I don't at all believe that you could be an intellectual in my sense of the word and hold offices and positions. So that is the big cause of debate in the Arabic countries.

SHAN: *How would you view this phenomenon in what you once named as "traveling theory"?*

SAID: Well, I'll tell you that in all my books this is the one to which the responses are the most uniform. It doesn't matter whether it's France or Spain or Germany or Sweden. There's always a debate about what the intellectual should do and about the responsibility of the intellectual. I cannot read all these languages and I don't follow everything they said. But to the extent that I have been on the radio and television and have done some interviews—whether I was in France, Lebanon, Egypt or Japan—I have been struck by the fact that the reaction of this traveling book, or, the reaction to this traveling book, is more or less the same. People say that I touch upon the situation that is true in their societies,

even though I don't know those societies at all. I think the main question is the question of freedom of speech over and over again—a society where somebody sets the limits on the freedom of speech, and I am against that. I think there should be unlimited freedom of speech for the intellectual.

SHAN: *Looking back, how would you periodize or categorize your own intellectual career, if such a periodization or categorization is possible at all? Which book characterizes each of these periods or categories?*

SAID: Yes, it is, it is possible. My background in the Middle East when I was growing up was relatively unpolitical. Even though I lived through the last of Palestine in 1948, the Egyptian revolution of 1952, and the Lebanese civil war of 1958—all these were part of my background—neither my family nor I was involved in politics. And my education in the U.S.A. was an establishment education. I mean, I was an undergraduate at Princeton, I got my Ph.D. at Harvard, I was a literary scholar, I came to New York and got a job at Columbia to be an assistant professor of literature. But the turning point came for me in 1967, you know, the Arabic-Israeli war when I realized that the world I had known had disappeared. And many of the reasons for that disappearance were that this country, that is the U.S.A., is the super-power and principal outside influence on the Middle East. So beginning with my book on *Beginnings*, which was really the first book I wrote after 1967, I try to reformulate my sense of intellectual mission. My books after 1967—after *Beginnings* really—have political as well as intellectual dynamism. So *Orientalism* was the first one that combines the political and the intellectual and scholarly. That went along with the fact that after the 1970s, I became politically involved in the Palestinian movement. Even though I lived here, my family was over there, so I would go to Jordan, Lebanon, and various places.

I think the periodization is that first there has been an interest in existential problems of literary production. Then there's theoretical period, *Beginnings*, where the whole question of project was formulated. And third, there's a political period which includes *Orientalism*, *Covering*

Islam, The Question of Palestine, and continues for several years. And in the last period, the one I am in right now, I am going back toward the aesthetic more. I'm writing memoirs, and I'm also writing a book on what I call the "late style"—that is to say, the style of artists in the final phase of their career. Plus, I am now doing more work on music. I have written a book on opera which Cambridge will publish. So it's the return to the aesthetic. But of course, my political concern continues, because I also write for journalism. Two or three times a month I write regular articles for the Arabic on the events there.

SHAN: *I notice that at the end of Beginnings you mention the importance of the intellectual. You have been interested in the question of the intellectual for more than two decades. Why is this long-term "obsession"?*

SAID: Well, I suppose, it's the obsession with what one does, because the question that has been with me really for at least twenty-five years is the question of direct political intervention. And I always chose the intellectual project because I felt for *myself* that it was more important and that it was something I could do better than getting directly involved in politics because (a) I am an exile, you see, I think exile is very important here; (b) I think by temperament and capacity, I'm much of a solitary person—I'm sociable, but not gregarious—and the idea of constantly getting involved with people is something that I don't think I can do; and (c) a political career involves too many compromises, the kind of things that I'm not capable of doing.

I must say, though, that in the last three or four years, I've gotten much closer to politics, given the situation of the Palestinian community, because I think I have now become Arafat's principal opponent. If my health were better, I would certainly enter politics in a more serious way. As it is, I can only do it through writing or speaking, this sort of thing. But if my health allowed me to do it, I would certainly do it at this point, because I think it is the most critical period of the modern history. And I think Arafat and the current leadership are quite bankrupt. And you know, to say it with modesty, my writing and my work have attracted a great

deal of attention and support in the Arab world. So to me it's an important constituency and I would like to spend more time with it, but I can't.

SHAN: *You are best known in the Chinese-speaking world as the author of Orientalism. You also mentioned that Orientalism, Covering Islam, and The Question of Palestine are a trilogy. Can you say something about this?*

SAID: Yes, of course. In all three of them, I focus on the question of representation and how representation is an object of study not independent of, but somehow autonomous from, the study of political and economic institutions. For me, the study of representation is the great cultural issue. What I was dealing with in those three books was the power of representation to determine by coercion and by intellectual power the fates of the so-called non-European peoples, so that the way the West portrayed the Islamic world is connected with the way the Zionists portrayed and represented Palestine as an empty place in which the native was unimportant. And it's also connected with the way in which the media—this is the subject of *Covering Islam*—the contemporary media represented the Islamic world as the world of terror and irrationality and so on. But I think the use of the three books is that they can be extended into other cultural contexts over representations, meanings and formulations of representation, and can go as far as the current issue, which is the conflict of civilizations that Samuel P. Huntington has been talking about. I think that is a natural progression. So what I try to do is to talk about the liberating effects of these works and also to suggest that a more careful analysis of culture will get us beyond the "'us' vs. 'them'" paradigm.

SHAN: *Let's talk about an alternative concept of the "Orient." You set the Arab world as the "Orient" in contrast to the West, but seldom talk about the Asian countries. However, the Chinese-speaking world, or the so-called Far East, is geographically more oriental than the Middle East. Francis Hsu, the author of *Americans and Chinese*, once juxtaposed the Orient with the Occident and excluded India and Middle East from his definition of the Orient. To him, "'Orient' refers to China, Japan, and Korea as the center, and Burma, Thailand, Indo-China, and Indonesia, as the periphery. It excludes India, 'Occident' refers to Europe and all other culture areas occupied by Europeans, and Arab,*

and Africa, north of the Sahara." How would you respond to this definition of the Orient and the Occident?

SAID: Look, the concept of the Orient is extremely flexible. I mean that is one of the points I'm trying to suggest. It can be used in an infinite variety of ways to suggest that which is different from us. You know I focused on Islam. It's just a matter of analytical convenience, because this was *an* Orient which was for a long time *the* Orient. One of the things I talked about in the book is to the extent *that* Orient, that is to say, the Islam or Middle East, gradually came to be superseded by a more distant Orient, which is China, Japan, and Far East. But I would also like to say that there are connections between the different Orients, because they all stood for the opposite of the Occident and they are traveling terms that can be used. For example, you find it's quite common today that an Arab who in the West is called an Oriental would refer to a Chinese as an Oriental and he is something different. So, you see, it is one of these very tricky words that can be used. And I think it always contains a little bit of xenophobia and a little bit of hostility and suspicion. So I think one should be very careful about the situation.

The second large point is that for every Orient there is always an Occident or an opposite. So you can have Orientalism and Occidentalism too, which is the mythification of the West. Here at Columbia an interesting thing in the last few years which I have experienced is that the students have developed the notion of "the Asian American" which usually means Chinese and Japanese. When I ask what about Indians and Arabs, they say that they are not Asians. And I say of course Arabs are Asians and so are Indians. So it becomes a proprietary term—"We are the Orientals, you are not." I find that kind of thing very comic, the way the term undergoes the metamorphoses where in the beginning it's a term of distance and alienation and has become a term of appropriation—"We are the Orientals, not you."

SHAN: Last year, "After Orientalism: A Conference on the Work of Edward Said" was held here. It's been nearly two decades since the publication of the book. But even today at

Broadway, we can still see such Orientalist representations as The King and I and Miss Saigon.

SAID: Listen, it's much worse, I think, it is much much worse. I just read an article today about the Egyptian playboy "Dodi" al Fayed who is going out with Princess Di. If you read the stuff, what the English is saying is something straight out of the late nineteenth century racist and imperialist writing. Here is an Oriental he. All of the suggestions that because this Egyptian playboy is an Oriental, he is more sexually potent—and, of course, sex is very important here. And if you look at Broadway and the movies, the villains have become Asians now. It used to be Russians. And now it has become Kazakstans, Palestinians. Have you see the film *Air Force One*?

SHAN: *Not yet.*

SAID: Then see it. Regularly in the James Bond films, the villains are always Chinese or Japanese. Now I think the situation is getting worse. There is a sense in which these figures of the past have been revived and recycled, filling the fantasy of the white middle class in the metropolitan world.

SHAN: *What would you suggest to cope with this kind of cultural production or misrepresentation?*

SAID: Well, there's a lot of work to be done. First of all, it has to be analyzed, it has to be looked at critically so that people can actually see what's going on. For me, the most important thing is to connect it to a history of a racist thought. Since so many young people—and that is why the young play an exceptionally important role—so many young people are now bi-cultural, I think one must appeal to the need not to think in exclusive terms, not to think in such big and monolithic terms as the Oriental, the Asian, the Chinese, or the Japanese, but to deconstruct them, to show that every culture is mixed and hybrid and that to try to isolate a pure essence of some cultural identity is extremely dangerous and false. And here we can talk about true and false. Cultural studies have become this kind of science, investigating the way cultures work, the way the traditions are invented, the way representations and stereotypes become reality, this sort of things. And that is also connected to the

power of media. I think what need to be done is to integrate all these phenomena in a wide intellectual, cultural, and ideological field and to show how they operate and how they do no one any good.

SHAN: *So this has to do with your critique of "the end of the history school" on the one hand and "the end of the ideology school" on the other.*

SAID: Yes. I think both of them are false. Ideology continues and *Air Force One* is the most ideological film I've seen in my life. It's unbelievable, because the symbols of America are constantly being reinforced in the film.

And of course "the end of history" is a nonsensical phrase, because history continues to surprise us. There are so many upheavals in contemporary history that to think that the end of history is the bourgeois democratic state is a kind of ludicrous concept which can only have been invented in America. But it has been discredited and nobody talks about it anymore. It was a concept that had a brief moment and now disappeared.

SHAN: *And "the end of ideology"?*

SAID: I think "the end of ideology" is still considered in the world we live. The man who formulated the phrase, Daniel Bell, was a colleague of mine. I knew him quite well at Columbia. Of course, with the end of the Cold War, as the Americans say, when "we won the Cold War," ideology was supposed to have died. But I think there are now many critiques being advanced inside the U.S. and in other parts of the non-European world of capitalism and capitalist ideology, so it hasn't solved all the economic problems. There are still many ideological, economical, political problems which the so-called free-market economy hasn't addressed or dealt with. I think soon the appeal of "the end of ideology" will pass and we will be back in the great ideological context which is there—capitalism—and examine it critically. That is where it is now.

SHAN: *You seldom mentioned Jacques Derrida in Beginnings. It seems to me that your concept of "beginnings" has something to do with his concept of "différance."*

SAID: Yes, something to do with it, I suppose, or, his concept of "différance" has something to do with my concept of "beginnings." Don't

forget that the main essay of *Beginnings*, "A Meditation on Beginnings," appeared before "différance." I met Derrida in the fall of 1966 and we followed each other's work for a while, but then I separated. It became obvious that what's missing in his work was the social, political, and historical context. And the notion of indeterminacy to me is unsatisfying, because I'm very interested in determination of history, not indeterminacy of meaning. So in the end his work has become, to me, less interesting. Although we are friends and I admire him, but not his work. Is he well-known in China? Yes, I'm sure he is.

SHAN: *Yes, he is known as a deconstructionist. And Foucault's concept of knowledge and power is obvious in Orientalism. But you are also somewhat dissatisfied with his idea, especially the concept of resistance.*

SAID: Yes. In my short essay "Foucault and the Imagination of Power," which appeared after his death, I talked about the rather striking pattern in his books about power, in which power is always compelling and subduing resistance. And if you try to derive from his books some ideas about the possible modes of resistance, you won't find any. I think he was obsessed with the working of power and not enough concern with the process of resistance. That's partly due to the fact that he theorized around, or, his theories derived from, observations about the French state. He didn't understand the colonial dynamic at all. And he didn't seem to be interested in the patterns of liberation emerging in other parts of the world which are different from what he knew. For example, the last time I met him was in 1979. He just came back from Iran and had written a series of articles for an Italian newspaper on the Iranian revolution. He was very disappointed, because the Iranian revolution didn't seem to be like the pattern he had expected. So there was an ambivalence—he was not at home with the non-Europeans. So all these things, I felt, but especially the consideration of resistance, were serious flaws in his argument.

SHAN: *You once mentioned Raymond Williams as a good friend and a great critic and praised "the idea and human example of Raymond Williams." But to some extent you are also not satisfied with the scope of his concern.*

SAID: [Laughter.] You pick up ... I mean it's true. You know, I'm a critic, you know. It's difficult to completely admire everybody and everything, and people attack me all the time. His work is, to me, very invigorating and very powerful. What is lacking in his work was some adequate comprehension of the British imperial system. It's quite striking. Except for a moment in the last part of *The Country and the City*, he never really discussed empire, which is for me the greatest form of domination, which is the most important. So in that respect, I felt the scope was somehow too limited.

SHAN: *You are one of the earliest scholars in the U.S.A. who introduce the mainstream European Continental theories. Yet on the other hand, you also make use of the ideas developed by Antonio Gramsci, Frantz Fanon, C. L. R. James, and Aime Cesaire.*

SAID: You see, what I'm interested in is people who are unsystematic. You cannot derive a systematic theory from Gramsci, nor can you take out of Fanon, nor can you take out of James, and certainly you cannot take out of Cesaire. These are people who were involved in culture, in political struggle, in the eccentric forms of the aesthetic—James is interested in cricket, for example—and in the adaptation of conventional disciplines, like philosophy and psychology, to political science. And their forms of writing were also highly eccentric. Gramsci produced notes. He never wrote anything completely. They were just fragments. Fanon's books were written not as books, but as pamphlets in a continuing struggle. James wrote history and plays. I mean he was a kind of polymath. And the figure who interests me as much is the German philosopher Theodore Adorno. I have been spending a lot of time on his work because his style, his interest in music and philosophy are ones that I would like to adopt.

SHAN: *You seem to keep coming back to some canonical texts and authors such as Joseph Conrad, Jane Austen, and so on. And on several occasions you also describe yourself as "culturally conservative."*

SAID: That's true.

SHAN: *In addition, in Musical Elaborations, you discuss mainly Western classical music. On the other hand, you have also been viewed as one the founders of postcolonialism or something like that.*

SAID: Against myself. [Laughter.] No. You know it's very interesting. I'm interested in lots of literature and lots of different kinds of aesthetic forms. I grew up and was nourished on what you call the canonical and the classical. But I was nourished on them not as a native, because to me they are foreign books. I mean, to read Jane Austen as a boy in Egypt is not the same thing as reading Jane Austen in rural England.

The second thing is: they are works that seem to me—I follow Lucien Goldmann on this—to determine the limits of aesthetic experience. I mean, the great works set some kind of standard. I also believe that some works are better than others.

The third point to be made is that I've also been very close to much of the work which is produced in the postcolonial period, such as the work of Salman Rushdie and Chinua Achebe. I was one of the first people to talk about these. They were friends of mine, they were part of the experiences that I came to. And I was also trying to add to that the experience of the Arabic, because that has been banned in the West and people don't talk about Naguib Mahfouz and so forth. I try to introduce them all to the common sphere of experience that I call postcolonial. So I don't think it is "either/or." I think it is "and/and." In other words, I like the classical and canonical texts, but I also like the new. One of the things I try to talk about in America today is that two colleagues of mine keep saying that we should return to the classical and not to be bothered with sex, sexuality, gender, and race and all these things. I say, no, we have to establish relationships to the contemporary issues. And if they involve rereading the classical, canonical work, which is what I'm trying to do, in a new and sometimes shocking way, I think that's good.

SHAN: *You theoretical formulations are grounded in or derived from very careful readings or rereadings of certain texts. Can you say something about the interaction between textual readings and theoretical formulations.*

SAID: Yes. I have a great ... not suspicion, I have a great impatience with the theoretical writing in the '80s and '90s, that is to say, theoretical writing

which has no particular object. I'm an empiricist in many ways, you know. I think the experience of reading, the experience of the text, is for me, the first point. And it's very difficult for me to make theoretical statements without reference to what I would call historical experience. So I always insist on the priority of historical and concrete experience. At the same time, I deny the possibility of naive reading. I don't ever say that you can read these books as if for the first time, because we don't read them for the first time. We are reading for the tenth time and we have read a lot of other books, and we know theory, and we know Marx, and we know Freud and so on and so forth. So what I'm trying to do is to make an attempt to bring together the dynamics of reading with constantly moving and evolving theoretical structure.

SHAN: *Reading your works over various stages, I find words such as "representation," "secularity," "worldliness," "resistance," "alternative," "nomadic," "hybrid," "contrapuntal," "critical consciousness," and so on appearing over and over again. Can you find a common thread to piece them together?*

SAID: Yes. One would be complexity and simultaneity, which is very important for me. That is, when you hear one thing, you also hear the other. "Contrapuntal," "alternative" and "resistant"—that is one main strand. The second is a very powerful historical consciousness. I go back to Vico in this respect, for human beings make their own history. So the secular is that which has been made and been made conscious of human effort—made *by* human effort and conscious *of* human effort. That would account for "critical consciousness," "secularism," and words of that sort. Those are the two main things, I think. That is, the idea of the alternative, the resistance, the other which includes "exile," "contrapuntal," "alternative," "resistant"; and second, the historical domain which is created by the human beings, not by the sacred, not by the divine, in which coming to consciousness is part of the process of the historical emergence. These are the ways I would connect those words.

SHAN: *Can we go one step further and say that the concept of the intellectual or your own role as an intellectual brings all of them together?*

SAID: You are very clever. You are trying to nail me down. [Laughter.] Yes, to a certain degree, yes. I think so. And yet of course the intellectual for me is somebody who does this in the public domain. What I am talking about is the intervention. Very often my works are very very reflective and not designed to make public statements. My terms are always very simple. I once gave a lecture at Columbia in 1988 in which I talked about "slow politics" which is reflective and meditative work and "direct politics" which is the work of intervention of the pamphlets of the intellectual.

SHAN: *You often talk about yourself as an exile and cultural outsider. But you are also such an influential critic. Can you say something about this paradoxical role?*

SAID: Well, I must tell you—I'm absolutely honest—I must confess that I have no ... no real ... consciousness of my influence. It's quite serious. It's not something I ever think about. Most of the time I'm much more conscious of being unsettled, exiled, marginal, outside. So the notion of influence, the fact that I'm cited by a lot of people and that people read my books ... is a constant surprise to me. I mean, it's really something that I don't have any abiding faith in. It's not something I can keep coming back and say I've done this. I throw all my books in the background as if they were written by somebody else. I'm really serious. It's a very strange feeling I have had. One of the reasons that I'm writing this memoir is to find out why I feel this kind of disengagement from my own work.

SHAN: *You wrote a book on music and are now writing another one. Can you say something about this—especially its relationship to your study. For instance, the word "contrapuntal" is derived from music.*

SAID: Yes, for me it's a constant flirtation between two realms of the aesthetic—the verbal and the nonverbal. It is this constant approach and distance they expect toward each other. And they are the two fields that I've lived most of my life—in music which is essentially a silent art and in language which is of course the art of speech and articulation. But there are common elements, though they never touch each other in a way and are quite distinct from each other. So I've felt in a very systematic way that the principal dynamic for me is the dynamic between silence and sound,

between speech and music—opposites that reflect each other and are also quite distinct from each other. To me, it's endlessly fascinating, because you can never penetrate the secret of music. So to me, the challenge is to try to describe music in language, to approximate to it, but not to substitute for it.

SHAN: *After the Last Sky is unique in your writings as a collaboration between you and the photographer Jean Mohr. How does your verbal text interact with Mohr's photographic text?*

SAID: Well, I was just asked that question by somebody who wants to do an interview or to discuss with me the whole question of the visible. For me, it's intermittent. I mean, I was struck by this photographer because what he's done in photographing Palestinians who were essentially unseen and invisible had a political meaning for me. But I must say I have never developed in a very systematic way the relationship to the visible. I tend to use my ears more and to read more. I'm not a museum-goer and my tastes in the visual arts are very eccentric and usually based on other considerations. I haven't really given much time to try to formulate a systematic visual theorization ...

SHAN: *You once described it in ...*

SAID: ... partly because ... I will give you the reasons. Sorry, but it's a very interesting thing. Partly because I grew up in a culture where the visible was incomprehensible, as it were. Someone asked me what was the first museum I went to. The first museum I went to was an Egyptian museum and it was all ancient Egyptian art in symbols that were incomprehensible to me. So there's always been a kind of basic identification of the visible and the incomprehensible. And of course, in the Islamic world the visual arts are the least developed, except for abstract patterns, like this [walking to the other side of the room and pointing to a painting on the wall], rather than representative of objects. So we have the arabesque, you see, the pattern in the middle, or these which are repetitious, but they are not representative of anything. I mean they are not figurative in the sense which a picture of a horse or a man or a woman would be. This is the tradition in which I grew up. So the visual tradition is much more

specialized and limited thing for me than it is for people in the West or in your country.

SHAN: *Then, how did you write the text for that book?*

SAID: [Sitting back at the desk.] Very difficult, very difficult. I allowed myself, successfully or not I don't know, but I allowed myself to be guided by instinct, by memory, by association, rather than by the abstract power of images and forms. So for me, each of those images connoted something in my memory, some experience.

SHAN: *In your first book *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* you described Conrad as "a self-conscious foreigner writing of obscure experiences in an alien language." Does this description explain your interest in Conrad?*

SAID: Yes, absolutely. I am stable most of my life. I mean, the writer I keep coming back to more than anyone else is Conrad, because what I notice in Conrad is an experience very similar to what I think mine is. It may not be the most important thing about Conrad, but it is the most interesting to me. That is, there is always a disparity between experience and language, and the two can never come together.

SHAN: *How is your health now?*

SAID: It's from moderate to poor. I go through bad periods that are ... but OK. Because I have a chronic disease, I always have small problems, infections that start and cause pain and discomfort. But I've learned how to live with it and I've learned not to think about it all the time. That is the great lesson: to be able to just focus on what one is doing and to live in a day, rather than to worry about tomorrow and say "How will I be tomorrow? Can I do this tomorrow?"—that kind of thing. I've learned a new kind of discipline, which is necessary. So I feel optimistic most of the time. I don't feel depressed. I mean I'm going to die, but of course everyone dies. And to be able to face it provides a certain kind of calm.

SHAN: *You have been interviewed quite a lot. What do you think about the nature and function of an interview?*

SAID: Very often what I find interesting about an interview is that I learn things which I haven't thought about before. In your case, for example, some of the questions you asked, like the relationship between the terms I used or the question of the visual, stimulate me to the ideas I haven't had before and force me to articulate and learn things that I am very grateful for. The interviews I don't like are the interviews that have to do with my personal life, my feelings about one or the other person, that sort of anecdotal thing, or where I went to school, what my family did, those kinds of things. I think those are properly dealt with by someone who writes a memoir or autobiography. But a challenging, intellectual interview such as this one is, to me, a learning experience and allows me to clarify some of my own ideas and to see some new ones.

SHAN: *Do you anything specific to say to the Chinese readers of this interview?*

SAID: Yes, one of the things I am very conscious of as I grow older is the extent to which my thought is dominated by the desire to have different experiences and experience different cultures in different parts of the world than the one in which I grew. One of the things I constantly tell Arabs is: Why are we always so concerned with the West? Why don't we look to the East? Look at India, look at China, look at Japan—these are great civilizations. And I'm certainly desperately anxious to learn more about them and even to travel there. I've been to Japan. But between the Arab world and Japan, I've been to nowhere. So to me, it is meeting new cultures about which I read, but it is also the privilege of being able to speak to another culture in my language and perhaps to get some feedback.

Edward Said: A *Book Review* Interview

Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul, and Ania Loomba / 1998

From *The Book Review* 12.1/2
(January–February 1998): 39–44.
Copyright by *The Book Review*.
Reprinted by permission.

Born in 1935 in Jerusalem, Edward Said is one of the most articulate advocates of Palestinian nationalism outside Israel. Living in the U.S. since 1950, he has spent much of his academic career trying to shore up Arabic and Middle Eastern cultures against the pressures of dominant western attitudes. In his most important book, *Orientalism* (1978), he argues that for two centuries, Islamic culture has been systematically distorted or misrepresented by explorers and commentators—who have presented prejudice and the complex ideological agendas of imperialism in the guise of objective academic expertise. *The Question of Palestine* (1978) and *Covering Islam* (1981) both deal with modern-day problems in the way the Middle East is discussed. As a highly engaged poststructuralist critic, Said clearly sees his role as one of demystification—picking up on forms of language, clichés of commentary and buried subtexts, then showing where they come from and how they operate. He has also been a vigilant critic of the canonization of “great literature” in university courses, and the easy way that non-western works get pushed off into branches of

Anthropology. An expert on Arabic literature, he also has a valuable familiarity with the philosophies and critiques of Derrida, Foucault, Bloom and Barthes which he has dealt with in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983).

Edward Said was in New Delhi in December to deliver the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Lecture. He gave an exclusive interview for *The Book Review* to Professors Suvir Kaul (Jamia Millia Islamia), Ania Loomba and Neeladri Bhattacharya (Jawaharlal Nehru University), the text of which is published here.

ANIA LOOMBA: *We have decided to structure this conversation around three or four major issues, and then we will keep honing in . . . and what we thought we'd tell you by way of introduction is that some of these issues may seem either reductive or repetitive. But they tap into critiques of your work current in India. So instead of quoting names and mentioning people and particularities, we have actually consolidated a set of issues which are recurrent.*

EDWARD SAID: So who beginneth? . . .

SUVIR KAUL: *All right, this is our "beginnings." This is a quotation from Orientalism, which I am sure you will recognize: "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." Have you revised or rethought the conceptual frameworks suggested here?*

SAID: Perhaps I may have overdone the notion of how systematically—I mean to what extent, to what level of detail—the system operated. Maybe I overstated it. But that there was, to use Foucault's language, a kind of discursive regularity, I have no doubt. Second, I think, may be what you are getting at is the common misunderstanding and misreading of that passage, which claims that I was saying at the same time that there was no answering voice, (to Ania) which I think was the question you asked yesterday.¹ That is not implied here at all. In fact, I say very often that the

1. Said refers to the discussion after his talk at Jawaharlal Nehru University. The question asked was whether Said felt that critiques which accused him of leaving no conceptual space for the resistance and agency of colonized subjects were justified.

question of the Other in this sense was irrelevant, and the example I love to give is the case of Gerard de Nerval who goes to visit Syria for his *Voyage en Orient* and immediately when you read the book—and if you know Syria—you realize that he is talking about some other place. You look a little further and you notice that what he is doing is simply repeating what Edward Lane says about Egypt. That is what I am talking about . . . there is a kind of occlusion, which by virtue of its authority, and by virtue of its successes, academic and artistic, gave Orientalism this kind of . . . persistence, you could call it.

AL: *It is amazing how that misreading, as you call it, has persisted. But I want to shift the discussion slightly because it has been suggested by various recent critics that in post-colonial studies the emphasis is routinely on the analysis of colonial discourses instead of more material institutions, and often your own work, especially Orientalism (and this is ironic because everyone concedes that you are politically engaged and one of the few people who will talk about the material legacy of imperialism and colonial structures of authority) is seen as the source to which all these askew notions of discourse travel back to . . .*

SAID: No, but I make very clear in *Orientalism*—to the best of my ability to discuss it in a manageable frame—that none of this could have happened without institutions, for example. For instance, the influence and the importance of the French school of Orientalism founded by Silvestre de Sacy in France in the late teens: you know that most of the great German Orientalists studied with him and went back to Germany and established colleges of Oriental studies and so on and so forth . . . that is a persistent theme throughout the book. I also talk about the institutionalization of knowledge about the Orientas epitomized by the *Description de l'Égypte*.² And of course in the last part of the book (I am just jumping around now) I talk about the importance of this kind of knowledge to the State Department, to the Defence establishment, to the Intelligence establishment, and the connection between those and Anthropology, Political Science, "field work" and the construction of paradigms—it is all in there.

2. Said refers to the twenty-three volume *Description de l'Égypte*, published between 1809 and 1828 by Napoleon's Institute d'Égypte.

Later, of course, and in other essays, I developed this more and quite specifically. When I addressed the Anthropological Association, I talked specifically about that relationship, and the constitutive problem of a science or a discipline like Anthropology ever escaping this founding moment, which is that ethnography was, in Lévi-Strauss's very famous phrase, "the handmaiden of colonialism." So I think it is a matter of emphasis . . . yes, perhaps if I were to do *Orientalism* again, I would have made it three times longer; spent more time talking about the importance of institutions. Perhaps this was part of my at that time and continuing divergence from Foucault, where I am interested in the individual author. Also it does seem to me that because of my literary training—I think if you read a book you are impressed with the voice and the tone and the habit and the style of the writer—I give more emphasis to that than I do to impersonal institutions, which later critics have taken up and have been perfectly willing and able to develop on their own.

AL: *So do you think the field of postcolonial studies is subject to some of the same problems . . .*

SAID: I would rather not myself talk about it because I do not think I belong to that field. First of all I don't think colonialism is over, really . . . I don't know what they are really talking about. I mean colonialism in the formal sense is over, but I am very interested in neocolonialism, I am very interested in the workings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and I have written about them. I care very much about the structures of dependency and impoverishment that exist, well certainly in this part of the world and my part of the world and in all parts in what is now referred to as the global South. So I think to use the word postcolonialism is really a misnomer and I think I referred to the problems of that term in the Afterword to *Orientalism*.

AL: *I just wanted to finish this by saying that there is a whole debate about the literary emphasis of postcolonial studies or the genesis, the disciplinary home, from which it began. One of the unfortunate spillovers is that precisely those material details . . . you know what Arif Dirlik says . . .*

SAID: (intervenes) are left out. . . . Yes, I agree, I have quoted Arif Dirlik precisely for that reason . . .

AL: . . . *yes, so would you think it is slightly unfair if everyone cites Orientalism as a poststructuralist text . . .*

SAID: Now listen, that is not even half as unfair as the way *Orientalism* is cited as a kind of a sacred text of [religious and cultural] fundamentalism. I mean that is the most difficult burden for me to shake. You know I publicly insult these people [fundamentalists] . . . I mean, in my part of the world. I will be very happy to do it here, but nobody gave me the chance. But. . . .

SK: . . . *you did reasonably when you talked about the weight of tradition in your speech at Jamia, it worked beautifully there . . .*

SAID: Yes, my main regret is not having said more about Rushdie there. But I did refer to him, I think at JNU. I wanted to at Jamia, but it just escaped my mind. I had just seen him in London and he is very upset . . . I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that he has been very wounded by all this and the fact that not enough people have spoken out, although Mushirul Hasan has. I knew about that, I don't know what the state of affairs here is now. I too suffer from my books being banned, *Culture and Imperialism* has just been banned in the entire Gulf . . .

AL: *Really?*

SAID: Yes, absolutely. I mean the Arabic translation. I suppose the English version is allowed, but the Arabic translation has been banned from all the countries of the Gulf. I am very opposed to that . . . the idea of banning books is so primitive and so inimical to everything I believe; and to think that in some way my book licenses these characters [fundamentalists] to fulminate against something called the West, which is a position I abjure. I say even the notions of the Occident and the Orient are ideological fictions and we should try to get away from them as much as possible. And then people say, "well, your 'identity.'" I remember . . . (I am getting excited now) . . . I remember this past summer in Beirut there was a conference held . . . to honour me . . . in the Arab world, and one of the big

discussions was my attack in *Culture and Imperialism* on "identity." "Identity" bores me, I am simply not interested in defending "identity." I mean . . . Palestinian identity, or in the case of something about to be exterminated or where there is political oppression, then of course I will defend against that. But the idea of defending the notion of identity as a kind of . . . how shall I put it . . .

AL: . . . essential . . .

SAID: . . . essential, as a kind of necessary thing, and that we—this may not at all be true in India—but that we as Arabs need to defend our identity against the onslaughts of the West, I believe this is complete nonsense.

SK: *No. There are versions of that claim offered here on almost exactly those terms.*

SAID: Yes, of course. I have great difficulty with those kinds of reductions, you know, but. . . .

NEELADRI BHATTACHARYA: *To continue with the question of Orientalism: in Orientalism you suggested two alternative structures of Orientalism. One, which seeks to appropriate and represent the Orient in scientific ways, codifying and recording the Orient objectively and from a distance, and the other which seeks to commune with the Orient, voyage to the Orient, and in some way exoticise the Orient. Yet we find that in most criticisms of your book there is a recurrent claim that you have seen only the consolidation of a homogenous Orient, the crystallization of an Orientalist vision which is homogenous and has a unitary essence. Would you agree with the criticism and if not, if you were rewriting the book today, would you look at the fractures within Orientalist ideology in other ways?*

SAID: Yes . . . though not to the extent that is done by some postcolonialist theorists, that is to say, you look at the structures of anxiety and suspicion and narcissism and all these other things that suggest a kind of deep fracture within the Orientalist gaze during the period of high imperialism. I mean, both in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, these facts are to me unassailable: you know if you are a white man in the South or in the Tropics or in the East, that is a very powerful thing. There is no way of saying that you are overcome by fear or suspicion and all the rest of it or that

you are anxious . . . you know, Homi Bhabha's elaborations of that just don't speak to me. I don't think they are that important because the other is much more important. Now as to the business of the homogeneity . . . I am not sure which one you mean, the homogeneity of the Orient or the homogeneity of the Orientalist?

NB: *The homogeneity of the imperial conception of the Orient.*

SAID: Well if it was homogenous, I wouldn't have spent so many pages talking about it and giving, adducing, so many examples. The point is that it is not homogenous, but it is possible that as Chomsky has shown in, you know, in his work on syntactic structures that you can devise a fantastically complicated structure, endlessly variant, out of a very small number of elements. I think this is the case with Orientalism . . . I think there is a kind of deep structure of Orientalism which is able to multiply and proliferate in all kinds of ways. But I liked the way you drew attention to the fact that there is a difference between . . . you might call it the administrative and magisterial, like James Mill for example in *The History of British India*, versus let's say Flaubert, where there are all kinds of other things . . .

NB: . . . *Or Lane versus Chateaubriand* . . .

SAID: . . . or Lane versus Chateaubriand, although Lane also has interesting moments. There wasn't time to go into every fluctuation in the text, but later scholars have done that and found you could define a structure. But I think that they all depart from the same premise, that there is a line separating "us" from "them." And it keeps recurring . . . I mean look at this, what's his name, that Huntington—*The Clash of Civilizations* book . . . it has reemerged and it's been there all along, I mean, for hundreds of years. That doesn't mean it's the same, you understand, but it can be reappropriated. I come back to a model I referred to in *Culture and Imperialism*, namely counterpoint, where you have one line, a *canto fermo*, a sort of base line, and in the case of a composer like Bach he can devise the most complex contrapuntal structures . . . but that doesn't diminish the fact that the Goldberg variations are based on a very simple descending motif in the bass.

NB: *You made a distinction between latent Orientalism and explicit Orientalism, the latent is a constant, whereas the explicit is . . .*

SAID: (intervenes) . . . or implied in some way . . . constant, well I am not sure if that is the word I would use . . . I like the word latent for that reason. I mean it may be in abatement, there are certain moments it is less and more than at others . . .

NB: . . . *but the latent is more shared amongst everybody, whereas in the explicit there are shifts and there are changes in styles and narratives . . .*

SAID: . . . yes, exactly, and there are changes in styles and in modes of writing, modes of discursive distribution and reproduction.

AL: *There is a related question to all of this: there are different models of colonial relations which are now circulating, and it is curious that both the people who have criticized you from within colonial discourse studies—you have mentioned Bhabha, who says that the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized is far more interactive . . .*

SAID: (interrupts) . . . I say that too, actually.

AL: *Well, I think you do. But what I am going to come to . . .*

SAID: . . . excuse me, I say that explicitly in *Culture and Imperialism*, which is why I wrote it.

AL: *But amongst social historians . . .*

SK: But that [*Culture and Imperialism*] is taken to be the text in which you rewrite some conceptual problems from your earlier work . . .

SAID: . . . well, I don't know about conceptual problems, but I expand the notion . . . in other words, what I said specifically in the Introduction to *Culture and Imperialism*—although I didn't say that I should have done it in *Orientalism*—is that I didn't pay enough attention to other regions of the world. . . . And because of the time—look, I mean, I wrote *Orientalism* in 1975, and there was nothing available, really . . . there were a few essays here and there. Panikar's book, *Asia and Western Dominance*, was one of the few books that I had cited, but otherwise, there was nothing really. I was attempting something for the first time, on a relatively open field as it were. Second, I thought that the notion of interaction precisely played an

important role, which I now [in *Culture and Imperialism*] wanted to look at, which didn't mean I needed to look at it in *Orientalism* because I was talking of something quite different.

AL: *I am going to push this a little bit because the question I asked you two days ago was really about agency and resistance, and that is a slightly different question. . . . People have argued that even in Culture and Imperialism you look at domination and then you look at resistance, whereas someone like Megan Vaughan working out of African materials, and a lot of people working out of Indian materials, say that the problem is not a question of simply domination and then resistance, but that, as Vaughan puts it, customs and traditions were created out of face-to-face encounters of colonizer and colonized. She specifically says that this is something you don't do and she then goes on to say that older models of writing social history were actually far better in a way for understanding the nature of colonial power than a kind of Foucaultian emphasis, which again she sees—though I must say, she is quite fair to you in some ways because she says that you are interested in the question of resistance—as a contradiction in your work, because the method you imply is not that of the actual interaction. So it is not domination versus resistance, but how do you understand their imbrication. I would like you to spell this out.*

SAID: Well I don't disagree with that . . . I suppose what the problem is, is how do you stylistically get around the problem of representing an interaction, which has to be represented as . . . I mean, in your own prose . . . as basically sequential. I mean it is a going back and forth, but that is still a sequence . . . it's not getting away from the sequence . . . there wouldn't have been resistance had there not been colonial incursion, right? So to say that domination and resistance continue is to say what I think is a commonplace. Obviously they continue and they are implied in each other. There has been far more work developed along these lines . . . you know Terence Ranger has done a huge amount of work on primary and secondary anti-colonial resistance. But the question is how do you . . . how is it best described? I think we probably would agree on the fact that it takes place from the moment the white man sets foot somewhere . . . that he is immediately resisted, I mean, I don't think we have any doubt about that. The question is what is the best way to represent that in a

posthumous prose, if you see what I am trying to say. There are different ways of doing it and I find that analytically, the way I did it in *Culture and Imperialism* is . . . how should I put it . . . more convincing, more analytically clear and in the end probably more certain of what it is doing. I find most of the other things that have been written in this style including Homi Bhabha's—Homi is a friend, I like him—but I mean it is unreadable . . . let's put it that way.

AL: *That it is.*

NB: *I am continuing the same question. There are two related issues: one is how do you bring in resistance in *Culture and Imperialism* and the other is, how is the question of resistance best incorporated in an argument. When I read *Culture and Imperialism*, I felt that you have a temporal argument there—in the way you present it—that first there is a phase of consolidation of empire, consolidation of an Orientalist vision through the writing of novels and other discursive processes, etc., and then there is a process of anticolonial struggle when this vision is contested and questioned. Most of your evidence of contestation shows a twentieth-century questioning of the colonizer . . . now I felt that creates a problem. . .*

SAID: . . . no that is not entirely correct. If I might interrupt you . . . I talk very specifically for instance about the response to Napoleon's invasion by Abd-al-Rahman al-Jabarti, that is simultaneous, that is contemporary with Napoleon. So there are examples like that, but I don't think it is always necessary to give examples at the same time because then it becomes very cumbersome . . .

NB: . . . no, I am not talking about that kind of resistance . . . there obviously has been resistance. What we are bothered about in history is to see how specific forms of contestation lead to the restructuring and refiguration of ideology, of colonial ideology. There I felt that your evidence has problems. For instance, you cite Guba's *A Rule of Property for Bengal* approvingly as an instance of empire writing back. But Guba's conception of ideology in that book conforms to your earlier model for the study of Orientalism. Guba argues that western ideas, physiocratic and mercantilist, shaped policies in India, whereas subsequent historical work suggests that is not the case, and that ideas were refigured through contestation and questioning and the local situation . . . and that is really the

question. If that is occurring then what is the power of ideology to structure colonial society? Does it not also get refigured in the act of domination?

SAID: Yes, in a chapter on the consolidation of the imperial vision, I tried to describe changes that take place—to go back to the question of the novel—to ask: what is the difference between, say, reading a few pages of Jane Austen and then reading a few pages of Kipling or of Conrad?

The imperial vision is much more explicit, there is much more ready and available “content” in that respect . . . this is extremely striking, as is the contrast between one period and another. But, what you are talking about is something that has to do with I think a more, how shall I put it, a more minute or more detailed interaction between ideology and resistance. Is that right?

AL: *Actually, could I rephrase that because it need not even be resistance. I think if you think of it as just “power” and “resistance” then possibly what you are saying is correct, that actually it is impossible to represent either unless you keep them separate. I think that some social historians suggest that colonial authority consolidates itself, indeed articulates itself, by resonating dynamically with what it encounters, whether that is resistance, or earlier structures of power. Or it might be indeed what Terence Ranger talks about, that the creation of the idea of the “tribe” is with local participation, so it is that element of dynamism . . .*

NB: *(intervenes) . . . and dialogue. There is continuous dialogue, where people are not necessarily resisting, but for instance you depend on local informants for knowledge and their information is actually structured through traditional categories and notions of local people, so their ideas get inscribed in . . .*

SAID: *(intervenes) . . . yes, that’s extremely interesting, but that wasn’t my subject. I can see how extremely important that is for social historians but I was talking in particular about a domain I call culture, where culture is, according to my definition of it, a realm that is—let us say like Orientalism—relatively impervious to that kind of dialogue, or that kind of interaction. Now there is of course a sub-cultural tradition, for example, as Guha and others have shown, a whole range of colonial writing which is not artistic but is administrative, is investigative, is reportorial, has to do with conditions on the ground, has to do with interactions depending on the native*

informant . . . all that exists, there's no question about that. I was trying to adumbrate, perhaps a less important, but to my way of thinking, a larger picture of a certain kind of stability which, because of my education, because of my training, has impressed me. Why is it so stable, why does it shake off the kinds of things you are talking about or why does it seem to succeed? Maybe I am wrong, maybe it doesn't, but I think I am not wrong. And why does it seem to hand itself on as "the culture" quite without regard for all kinds of experiences, from horror to interaction, which are somehow excluded from it. Camus is a perfect example. For there's a long history, which he incorporates in some of his prose writings, I mean nonfictional prose, which he deliberately leaves out of *L'Étranger* . . . you know, the life of a lower-middle class *colon* in Algeria who is outraged at the treatment of Algerians like himself and Arabs and Muslims by the French colonial system. But that is left out entirely in this particular vision, and I am really talking about vision in the end, more than I am about policies and working methods of the kind that you're talking about.

SK: *Part of the problem with your concern with what you just described as the, and I like that word, "vision" of imperialism is that it [has] opened you up to the kind of critique that Michael Sprinker (who I believe you know well) . . .*

SAID: . . . he is my student . . .

SK: . . . *well he says that in Culture and Imperialism you lavish a great deal of hermeneutical attention to the explication of metropolitan artists like Conrad, Kipling, Austen or indeed when you do an allegoric reading of Magwitch in Great Expectations, as opposed to the moments in the text when you consider Ngugi, Césaire and Achebe, who come across—in Sprinker's terms—in a "comparatively straightforward analysis." He suggests that in doing so, you valorize that kind of metropolitan culture and its aesthetic achievements, as opposed to a flattened understanding of what exists at the other end. How does your sense of your emphasis on imperial vision work with your reading of these different texts?*

SAID: Well look, there is also the fact that you're writing, or at least one is writing, a book, something one wants to be read; one isn't writing a didactic manual, one isn't writing a workbook for future students like Michael

Sprinker who want everything spelt out! And of course I was writing for a largely metropolitan audience, I was not being published by a local Arab press . . . I was writing for a commercial press in the United States where one wants to get the largest number of readers. I think what he says is really a trivial observation . . . I don't think it has much interest. But of course, your question of the "valorization" of one or the other . . . first of all I never use a word like valorization! But I mean, to think that one is better than the other is inimical to my argument. I never said that. But I am not trying to describe the same thing in both texts, you see, and they try to do different things. And the nature of my subject—perhaps it's a mistake on my part to have made that assumption—is that I was trying to show a wide range of quite dramatically different, impressive responses from Césaire to C. L. R. James to George Antonios to Guha to Ngugi to Naipaul—a lot of writers—and to go through each of them painstakingly in a book that was already far too long . . . actually the book was cut, precisely on that point because I had a huge amount of stuff. Of course in the end they can't cut you unless you agree and I agreed. It seemed to make editorial sense, that rather than go through with the same process in each case it would have been better to telescope it and telegraph it, so it was an exigency of sorts.

AL: *So what particularly was cut?*

SAID: I can't remember . . . I wrote it ten years ago. I started writing different versions of *Culture and Imperialism* immediately after *Orientalism*. So I had a lot on the African novel, on various Arab writers and Caribbean writers, a lot on George Lamming, that was all taken out, a lot on Wilson Harris; so, it was just a matter of emphasis and expectations vis-à-vis my audience. It's very difficult to write for twenty-five audiences. As it is I write for too many, because I am conscious also of my Arab reader . . . it is not always possible to keep in mind the Indian reader and the Chinese reader and the Japanese reader and so on and so forth! Those are all, you know, problems, which I frankly confess I simply can't deal with. But I think the main lines of what I was saying, I stand by.

SK: *If we can shift back a little to slightly more theoretical questions: various forms of poststructuralist enquiry have argued for the political necessity of giving up the "grand narratives" of historical explanation in favour of a more nuanced understanding of local hierarchies of power, etc. Such skepticism asks us to decouple our analysis of, for instance, capitalism and colonialism, which have often been understood and interlinked (that is, one couldn't have taken the form that it did without the other), or indeed to give up a "world systems" approach. Do you have a . . .*

SAID: (interrupts) . . . I have a very strong critique of the world systems approach, in an essay I wrote, I can't remember, about fifteen years ago. It will be published in a collection of my essays which is going to appear in a year or so when I have the time to put it together and write a preface for it. There I spoke about the problems of a world systems approach, which is that most of the work they have done, and I am speaking of Perry Anderson here, or even Samir Amin, depends very heavily on what I consider to be Orientalist sources. I mean, who is the major authority that they cite for example on the emergence of the Ottomans—it is Bernard Lewis. I give a lot of such examples. So, in that sense, I find it flawed. It doesn't take enough account of local scholarship or what you might call new knowledge of that kind . . . not that I have it. . . . I mean what are we talking about if I have to depend upon this kind of thing ["Orientalist sources"] to understand. There is, therefore, a kind of lack of understanding. I remember having used the example of Alatas's book, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*—it is an extremely important book, because there he looks very carefully at precisely the kinds of figures, estimates, trends cited by colonial economists, which they [world systems theorists] rely on, and over which there's a lot of disputation. Also, for instance, it was taken to be the case that capitalism was entirely a western, European invention, and that in Islam capitalism really never had a local base. There has now been some very interesting work by economic historians of a younger sort, anti-orientalist historians like Peter Graham, who shows that in Egypt, seventeenth and eighteenth century Egypt, there was the emergence of a local capitalism which was quite powerful and which has really never been studied as such . . .

SK: . . . *versions of that argument have been made about India . . .*

SAID: . . . I'm sure . . . so the "world system" approach, yes, but with a kind of skepticism about the data that one is using—some of it of the kind that you have expressed and some of it expressed by the critique I get. Such data is always challengeable and one has to be careful about what one is using and what one is not using. But in the end, if one is attempting a global perspective, one then falls into the trap, but at least one is aware of it. . . .

AL: *I was going to say that this has been a big debate around Subaltern Studies as well, they are doing all these local things, they are writing postfoundational history rather than thinking about capitalism, etc. But I was going to ask you about a slightly different version of this debate, which is that in *The World, the Text and the Critic* you have said that you find the Foucaultian understanding of power not sufficient for a politically engaged criticism and now . . .*

SAID: (intervenes) . . . I wrote something beyond that . . . I have written a couple of things on Foucault that appeared shortly after his death. I called one "Foucault and the Imagination of Power." It appears in a collection by David Hoy called *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. What I say is basically that Foucault writes always from the point of view of power, there's never any doubt in your mind when you pick up one of his books that power is going to win out in the end. So that the whole idea of resistance is really essentially defeated from the start. Poulantzas says the same thing, that the sites of resistance in Foucault are very difficult to follow.

AL: *And Stuart Hall says that Foucault doesn't have any understanding of a system. That's the problem. But this idea that this Foucaultian notion of the dispersal of power is incompatible with Gramsci's notions of hegemony and power . . . at JNU, you rightly said that you believe you can combine critical methods and that there is no necessary contradiction. Now some people have offered a critique of Subaltern Studies saying that if you try and combine Foucault and Gramsci, it's like trying to ride two horses at the same time. And Gyan Prakash answers by saying then we all need to become stunt riders!*

SAID: . . . I was just thinking of Charlton Heston!

AL: *I wanted to ask you to comment in a little more detail on what you think is the potential of such combinations . . . is this a productive tension at all between Foucault and Gramsci?*

SAID: . . . extremely productive. . . Well look, one of the problems with Gramsci (having been a very, very assiduous student of Gramsci for many years—I was the first to lecture on Gramsci at Columbia about twenty years ago), is the state of the texts. When you talk about Gramsci, you are talking about something that is extremely slippery. When I gave a series of lectures on Gramsci (which I recall very vividly) and I think this is still the case, I felt that it was necessary to do a kind of philological analysis of the different ways in which he uses the word "hegemony," for instance, or the different ways in which he uses the word "intellectual." All the key words—"war of position," "war of manoeuvre," and others—are constantly shifting and constantly changing because of the way in which he wrote and because of the condition of his notebooks. Most of the readers of Gramsci have read him only in that one volume compendium, which is full of mistakes, by the way. I have corrected some, I don't know whether you know this, but there are passages in it which I quote in *Orientalism*, in a footnote I believe (I can't remember now, it's a long time ago) . . . but the four volumes of *The Prison Notebooks* had just come in the middle '70s, and I noticed that what they [Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith] had the tendency to do was to lop off bits of Gramsci. For instance in that passage that I quote: ". . . history is deposited as an infinity of traces in you without leaving an inventory." That's what you get in the book. But Gramsci goes on to say (and I put it in there) that therefore it is necessary to make an inventory, which is quite a different thing than to say that it leaves us with an infinity of traces without an inventory. And therefore, of course, you have to start by making an inventory. So that problem is very strong. Once you've begun to circulate a bit in Gramsci, you realize that he is talking about very different situations at very different times, and that there is a danger of abstracting from the situation to a general theoretical term . . . which is almost impossible, I mean the danger is almost too great. Nevertheless, Gramsci, unlike Foucault, is working with an evolving political situation in which certain extremely important and radical experiments were taking place in the Turin factories in which he was involved, and from them he generalized periodically, I mean in

periodical form. You don't get that sense in Foucault; what you get instead is a sense of teleology where everything is tending toward the same end, and so the attempt to bring the two together involves in a certain sense breaking up the Foucaultian narrative into a series of smaller situations where Gramsci's terminology can become useful and illuminating for analytical purposes. In other words if you are talking about, let us say, the state of the clinic or the prison at a certain moment, [you need to ask] what else do you need to know about the situation besides what those people have written about it? What is the condition of factory workers at the time or what was the condition of convicts at that time, what class do they come from, what type . . . that's never been referred to in that book on the prison . . . what type of people are put into prison? In that sense, the introduction of historical, what I would call a historical context, to Foucault is extremely important and worth doing.

AL: *And then it becomes possible to negotiate some of the larger tensions of ideological orientation . . .*

SAID: . . . Yes, . . . but what is ideological? There is a big difference with Gramsci, you see, who is always trying to change the political situation.

AL: *That's what I meant.*

SAID: Foucault isn't. Foucault is really not interested in that. I mean there was a little period in the '60s to the middle '70s when he was very interested in the condition of prisoners and so forth, but by the time he came to America in the late . . . I think it was in the late '60s for the first time, but he came consistently during the '70s, he had changed and he was really not interested in the social movements at all and I think that is clear in his work. I am much more interested in that aspect of Gramsci; in other words, how do you modify a political situation by organization and so on, all of which begin—since I am writing at a very restricted level—as Gramsci says, with trying to take stock of the situation. You sit down and work it out, the way he did on the Southern question, which is the only systematic analysis he ever did. So I find myself in that position, which is not the position Foucault found himself in. And from that, because of my

political writing, which is enormous in volume, I am always trying to gear my writing not towards the theoretical constituency but towards a political constituency.

SK: *This may be the time to switch to our last rubric: I had said that some forms of poststructuralist enquiry have asked us to give up on—as a political necessity—grand narratives . . .*

SAID: . . . you mean Chantal Mouffe and Laclau . . .

SK: . . . yes, exactly . . . *that is the model . . .*

SAID: . . . I have no time for that. That's the answer to that question. What does it mean . . . and Baudrillard . . . it's just nauseating, it's just gobbledygook. No, Laclau is a serious man, I don't mean that. Both Baudrillard, and what's the name of that other guy . . . Lyotard . . . it's a kind of provincial atavism of a very very unappealing sort, and I feel the same way about postmodernism. I think it's the bane of Third World intellectuals, if you will pardon the expression . . . I'm not accusing you, of course, present company excluded!

NB: *Again, carrying on from the earlier question about productive tensions and opposite frames: I felt, when reading your books as well as hearing you lecture, that there is a strong tension or opposition between two kinds of frames in your writing. One is what is often identified as a constructionist frame, in which you see nation as a narration, you see the Orient as a narrative, and the imperial idea as a discursive product, etc.; on the other hand there is also the recurring objectivist emphasis which you have in all your work on fact, on reality, on objective events, etc. I was wondering . . . it is not that these two cannot be reconciled . . . but how do you reconcile these two conceptual frames?*

SAID: I don't think they can be reconciled. I think the relationship is frequently . . . in my experience (and I am coming increasingly to that view) . . . there's a sense in which the relationship between one and the other is a relation of distortion and manipulation. Now we are perfectly ready to accept that when Harold Bloom talks about a poet misreading another poet. We are perfectly willing to accept it in the case of a novelist misrepresenting or misreading or misinterpreting reality in order to produce a fiction. But we tend sometimes to find it just as acceptable (and this is one

of the great problems with postmodernism) to say "well, the media always lies, we know that," and to say that we know that representations are always just representations. My interest is in the more pernicious forms of these relationships, where actual lives, actual identities, actual political destinies are distorted and destroyed by a process of this sort. That's why I think the relationship between the "constructionist" and the other one ["objectivist"] increasingly is in my view irreconcilable. It is reconcilable in a way, but for my purposes it's always been something to be profoundly suspicious of . . . the relationship between the two . . . perhaps I am not answering your question?

NB: *No, I had a feeling that in your own writing you are drawing from both.*

SAID: Of course, I am drawing from both.

NB: *And you want to retain that opposition between them?*

SAID: Yes, I do.

SK: *These last two sets of questions have to do with the other important part of your life, which is your role as a public intellectual, your ideas and your performance. You have argued for, and your own career has demonstrated, the need for the public intellectual to work alongside larger collectivities and causes (and this is the Gramscian notion of the organic intellectual). But in recent years, and this too has been paralleled in your own life, you have talked at great length about independence and of the importance for intellectuals to resist the seduction of office and power. Is this a shift in your understanding of the role of a public intellectual or is this to be explained with reference to the peculiar circumstances of the Oslo agreement and the Palestinian-Israeli accord?*

SAID: No, I think it's a development, because I was always close to political power in one way or another, by virtue of my education, by virtue of my class, by virtue of my political involvement. I am not going to waste your time by trying to explain that, except to tell you that's the case . . .

SK: . . . *we understand that in India . . .*

SAID: Exactly. But what I found increasingly important to me was independence . . . and of course this caused a tremendous debate when the Arabic version of *Representation of the Intellectual* came out, because a word which

means "not committed" in Arabic was substituted for the phrase "independent intellectual," and I don't mean it that way. In other words, what I find is that if one is close to power, it takes an increasingly greater effort as one grows older to maintain that distance, and the cost is greater because you have to weigh the consequences, which are that if you did get involved maybe you could make things better, to put it bluntly. I made a choice which is not to do that, and to remain distant from it, and this was well before Oslo. It was all during my period of very close association with the PLO when I was on very close terms *with* them. And not only with them—it's an interesting part of now-forgotten history—but during the '70s the PLO in Beirut was the lodestone for every liberation movement in the world. When I went to South Africa in 1991, for example, when Mandela had just been released, I remember seeing him then, apartheid was still on, but the ANC was acknowledged and had their headquarters in the Shell building in downtown Johannesburg. One of the things that astonished me was how many faces were familiar to me. It was my first trip to South Africa, but many of them I had seen in Beirut or PLO embassies elsewhere: Nicaraguans, Irish, various European liberation groups, but mostly Third World liberation groups that I had come to know. So in that respect I was very close to all that and I knew what was happening in many instances, not *everything* that was happening, but a lot. The thing that impressed me the most was a paradox: on the one hand, in the case of a people who had suffered a great deal, like prisoners, or the spouses of prisoners who disappeared, I saw the importance of the party, of the organization, how it gave hope, how it sustained one, but it exacted a price from one, a price of submission, which was that you gave up a critical distance. And of course on the other side were those who were in power, who used that power in a certain sense to insulate themselves from their mistakes, and from the fact that there were things, particularly in the Palestinian case, that involved tremendous destruction. You couldn't have lived through the various Israeli invasions, or the bombings, or the siege of Beirut in 1982 . . . or I was in Amman during the Black September of 1970 . . . you can't have lived through that without realizing that you are to some extent responsible for that kind of

damage, which produced nothing, only more suffering. So I always had the sneaking suspicion that if you were too close, and you accepted too much, the prerogatives of power, and the insulations of power, and the kind of . . . what my sister used to call quite brilliantly, a seat in the front row, you don't see what is going on behind you. Then, of course, it came to the fore, but my break with Arafat really occurred in 1988 or 1989. I did a public denunciation of him in the Arab press. Then there is the whole question of where you do it; in America where they are already attacked, it doesn't help me to attack him more, so I tried to confine myself mostly to writing in Arabic, which I still do. But then after Oslo, I felt that it was so disastrous, and the Gulf War, and the alliances and the whole tremendous . . . (his voice trails off). Now—to conclude—I have become in my late years, I suppose, partly because of my illness and partly because of other things, I have become very involved in a different view which is—you know, Adorno is very important to me now—the idea of trying to maintain a certain kind of tension without resolving it dialectically, as a sort of witness, a testimonial to what is happening . . . that seems to me to be something worth trying. You know, our situation as Palestinians, and, generally speaking, in the Arab world is so perilous, so desperate, that, *I feel*, perhaps hubristically, that it is important to maintain that distance and the voice. It gives me hope, when they ban my books and I am not allowed to go there and all that sort of thing, to see people reading me in faxes and e-mails and that's a possibility which I exploit. That means a lot to me. Logically, the next step would be to enter politics, because I could, and I am sure that I could spearhead a very serious political opposition to Arafat, but I am too ill to do it, I am too weak physically.

SK: *And bearing witness is a powerful historical practice . . .*

SAID: Yes, it's something, but let's not exaggerate it . . . but it is worth doing, I think, anyway that is all I can do. I don't now have much activity unfortunately, but I place great hopes in my political activities which I now try to confine to the young. I try to see students, Arab students, throughout the world and I always speak to them, and that's important.

SK: *Last question. This has to do with the whole notion of tradition and its weight that you talked about in your lecture at Jamia, which is of great consequence not simply within the confines of Jamia but in India generally. Now what you have been saying is that tradition has proved to be one of the biggest stumbling blocks in the achievement of democracy and human rights in many nations across the world. You have also talked about—you referred to Terence Ranger, for instance—the fact that tradition is always a motivated reinvention of the past to serve the interests of present-day power. Yet tradition is not only invoked by cultural and religious fundamentalists, but also by more secular communities concerned that they must resist the effects of modernization insofar as they understand modernization to be synonymous with American globalization, or consumer culture, or the media culture of the west. What is your sense of, how do you negotiate these . . .*

SAID: . . . I don't take any comfort in tradition. I think it's exaggerated and I think we know too much about its misuse. I very much admire analysts of tradition like Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid, who had to leave Egypt because he did a discursive reading of the Quran and showed to what extent Islamic fundamentalist discourse was a discourse of power and not of vision or ethics as it pretends to be. For which they tried to make him divorce his wife, and he had to leave the country because he lives under a death threat. I think that kind of "us analyzing our traditions" is of the utmost importance. It's the most urgent thing we can do, and understand how traditions are live and not passive things stuck in a closet but they are—and I go back to Vico—made by human beings and that they are recollections, they are customary practices, collective memory, they are all kinds of things, but they are certainly not the simple pure thing to which people return and get comfort in. Maybe because I am so rootless myself and deracinated in that sense, I firmly believe that it is a tremendous mistake to give up to tradition as much is being given up to it, certainly in the Arab world. You know better about it in India.

AL: . . . *here too, and quite dangerously . . .*

SAID: . . . is it the same? . . . yes, the BJP and so on . . .

One-State Solution

Robert Siegel / 1999

Copyright 1999 by NPR® Used with the permission of National Public Radio, Inc. Any unauthorized duplication is strictly prohibited. This news report by National Public Radio's Robert Siegel was originally broadcast on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*® on 11 January 1999.

ROBERT SIEGEL: *The Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said has offered an alternative to continued efforts at implementing the Oslo Peace Accords. In a New York Times Magazine article, Said argues that there is no prospect of separating Israelis and Palestinians. He argues they are too tightly intertwined and contesting the same land at close range. His is an old proposal and one that would probably not carry the day in a public opinion poll, but it's one that Professor Said says is still appropriate—a single country for Jews and Palestinians, based on democratic citizenship.*

EDWARD SAID: The Oslo process had in mind that Palestinians and Israelis should be separated. But that's a total fiction, because, in fact, Palestinians and Israelis are more and more living amongst each other.

Since it's virtually impossible to imagine that they're going to be separated surgically, the two populations, and since the population of the Palestinians is growing so that, by the year 2010, there's going to be parity between them and the Israelis, the only way, in my opinion, that it could possibly work is that there be some arrangement whereby they live together as equals.

SIEGEL: *This idea of having a single, bi-national democratic state would require both sides to give up something that's different from territory, and even different from political power, but to give up the idea of having a nation-state that expresses Jewishness or being a Palestinian, through the existence of that country.*

SAID: Yes and no. In other words, I see no difficulty for Jews in such a state to live as Jews, and Palestinians to live as Palestinians. What it requires, I think, is the giving up the notion that Israel, for instance, is not the state of its citizens, but the state of the whole Jewish people, wherever they are.

Similarly, Palestinians dream of a Palestine that is Arab and that is part of the Arab homeland. So it requires a limitation on, you might say, romantic ideas of the nation that simply fly in the face of the actuality, namely that, for Palestinians, there are Israelis there, Jews, and for Israelis, that there are Palestinians there who are Muslim and Christian Arabs.

SIEGEL: *Do you see anybody but groups on the—well, say, among the left-wing secular intelligentsia of Israel, and also among the Palestinian intelligentsia, being receptive to this kind of solution at this point, now that we've gone this far with Oslo?*

SAID: Well, I think everyone on the Palestinian side that I know, even the leadership, which is heavily invested in Oslo, doesn't have much faith in it. I think secondly, that, having spoken to a great number of Palestinians, of the generation of my children, and both Israeli Jews and American Jews of that generation that they are much less ideological or much less frantic and, how should I put it, obsessed with notions of an Israeli state or a Palestinian state.

SIEGEL: *Can you imagine either the Palestinian leadership of Yasser Arafat, or whoever wins the prime ministership and whatever party supports him in Israel this year, at this moment, abandoning the Oslo process and doing something else, or are you talking about something that might develop, or might occur to people fifteen or twenty years down the road?*

SAID: I'd say less than that. But I certainly don't imagine either Netanyahu's successor or Arafat abandoning the Oslo process, a) because a lot is invested in it, and in the case of Arafat, he has a huge bureaucracy

of about 80,000 people and a security force of another 50,000 people. I mean, you know, to all intents and purposes, he runs his own sort of army and bureaucracy, and gets a lot of money from the Europeans and the United States, and the same is true of Israel.

This is a heavily invested country, it's a modern country, it's economically and commercially dynamic. Nobody's going to just give up the power and the patronage of the United States, moreover. Obviously what I'm saying is a very long shot, but I don't think that long, I mean, because, the signs are that the arrangements that have carried people along from 1948 through Oslo are beginning to crumble.

They're fraying at the ends—at the edges rather—and there is going to be a massive search for alternatives. Now, the one thing that's needed, and I think this is, obviously, the biggest imponderable, is of course the leader, on either side.

I mean, Arafat's not the man, and certainly Netanyahu and all the available people that we know are not the men either, or women, for that matter. What we need is a Mandela, somebody who's able to see beyond the stalemate, which it is, and say, "Look, what we need is one person, one vote. We have to come to an agreement. We need a gesture."

And then, I think, things will move, but until that happens, they're just going to go along, and it's very depressing.

Edward W. Said

David Barsamian / 1999

From *The Progressive* (April 1999):
34–38. Copyright 1999 by David
Barsamian and Alternative Radio.
Reprinted by permission. Alternative
Radio can be contacted via email
at <ar@orci.com>, or via phone in the
USA at 1-800-444-1977. Their website
is <www.alternativeradio.org>.

I have talked with Edward W. Said many times over the last dozen years. A formidable figure, he is not an easy person to interview. The first time I did in 1987, I was nervous, and my anxiety was not eased when he asked me at the outset if I had any good questions.

Said was born in Jerusalem, Palestine, in 1935 and attended schools there and in Cairo. He received his B.A. from Princeton and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard. He is University Professor at Columbia and currently head of the Modern Language Association. He is the author of *Orientalism*, *The Question of Palestine*, *Covering Islam*, *Culture and Imperialism*, *Representations of the Intellectual*, *The Politics of Dispossession*, and *Peace and Its Discontents*. His forthcoming books are *Not Quite Right: A Memoir [Out of Place]*, *Reflections on Exile*, and a work on opera. Currently, he writes a column for the Arabic newspaper *al-Hayat* in London.

"I have been unable," he writes in his memoirs, "to live an uncommitted or suspended life. I have not hesitated to declare my affiliation with an extremely unpopular cause."

The 1967 Arab-Israeli war stirred him to political activism. A year later, his first political essay, "The Arab Portrayed," appeared. When Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir infamously declared in 1969, "There are no Palestinians," Said decided to take on "the slightly preposterous challenge of disproving her, of beginning to articulate a history of loss and dispossession that had to be extricated, minute by minute, word by word, inch by inch," he writes.

For many years, he has been the main spokesman for the Palestinian cause in the United States.

"Palestine," he says, "is a thankless cause. You get nothing back but opprobrium, abuse, and ostracism. How many friends avoid the subject? How many colleagues want nothing of Palestine's controversy? How many *bien pensant* liberals have time for Bosnia and Somalia and South Africa and Nicaragua and human and civil rights everywhere on Earth, but not for Palestine and Palestinians?"

He has paid a price for his profile on the Palestinian issue. He was vilified as "the professor of terror." The Jewish Defense League called him a Nazi. His office at Columbia was set on fire, and both he and his family "received innumerable death threats," he writes.

For more than a decade, Said was a member of the Palestine National Council, where he incurred the wrath of Arab nationalists because he advocated the "idea of coexistence between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs" and because he recognized that "no military option exists." He writes, "I was also very critical of the use of slogan-clichés like 'armed struggle' that caused innocent deaths and did nothing to advance the Palestinian case politically."

Since resigning from the Council in the early 1990s, Said had become one of the most public critics of Arafat and the so-called peace process. His was a rare voice of resistance amid all the euphoria when the Oslo Accords were signed on the South Lawn of the White House in September 1993. He understood instantly what Oslo meant and called it in these pages "a Palestinian Versailles."

"There was Clinton like a Roman emperor bringing two vassal kings to his imperial court and making them shake hands," he told me.

Parallel to his political activism is his enormous contribution to the humanities. With *Orientalism*, Said transformed the way we look at literary representations of Islam, Arabs, and the Middle East. He also explored the way knowledge is used to defend power. *Culture and Imperialism*, which came out in 1993, and *Orientalism* form the bookends to his great cultural work.

Somehow, in his spare time, this Renaissance man has time to play piano and write about music and opera. He loves to quote from an Aimé Césaire poem:

*but the work of man is only just beginning
and it remains to man to conquer all
violence entrenched in the recesses of his passion.*

*And no race possesses the monopoly of beauty,
of intelligence, of force, and there
is a place for all at the rendezvous
of victory.*

Poetry, incidentally, may have turned the trick for me that first time I interviewed him. As soon as I mentioned a couplet by Mahmoud Darwish, the great contemporary Palestinian poet, we began to hit it off. In the ensuing years, I've had a series of interviews with Said, which resulted in *The Pen and the Sword*, a collection published by Common Courage Press in 1994.

Over the last few years, Said has been battling leukemia. I interviewed him in February, and we discussed his health, his current idea for a binational state, and his cultural collaborations with the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim.

Q: In late 1998, you had occasion to speak in your mother's birthplace, Nazareth, which is now in Israel. I hear you spoke in an unlikely venue called Frank Sinatra Hall. What was that like?

EDWARD W. SAID: Frank Sinatra was a great supporter of Israel. In the 1970s, he was prevailed upon to give money for a facility in Nazareth, which is a predominantly Arab town. It has some Jews living in it, particularly in Upper Nazareth. The idea was that this should be a kind of sports facility where

young Arabs and young Jews could get together and play basketball. Over time, it evolved into a facility you could rent for the evening. Azmi Bishara, the Palestinian Israeli who is a member of the Knesset, arranged my visit. It was my first public encounter with Palestinians who are Israeli citizens.

I was asked to talk about the history of my political opinions and how I arrived at the positions I now hold. Then it was basically a free-for-all. They could ask any questions they wanted. I was very impressed. There was a kind of independent tone, an independent language, which reflected the fact that these people had had a different experience from all the other Arabs. They lived as Palestinians, as members of the Palestinian minority, within the Jewish state. So they're much more familiar with Israel than any other Arab group I've ever faced. Most of the questions were about the peace process. And, of course, everybody wants to know what's the alternative to the peace process, which is a difficult question to answer. But the main idea was to engage.

Everywhere I go, I notice a qualitative difference when it comes to generations. There's no question at all in my mind of a new courage and skepticism—an intellectual curiosity—to be found across the board in people who are at the most in their upper twenties. It's quite different from anything that I've experienced in people of my generation and the one that came right after it.

Q: You recently wrote an article in The New York Times Magazine calling for a binational state. Why have your views moved in this direction?

SAID: I went to the West Bank and Gaza and Israel five times in the last year—the most since I left Palestine at the end of 1947. The more I go, the more impressed I am with the fact that Israeli Jews and Palestinians are irrevocably intertwined. The place is so small that you can't possibly completely avoid the other side.

Palestinians are employed by Israelis to build and expand West Bank and Gaza settlements. It's one of the greatest ironies of all. And the Palestinians are workers in restaurants inside Israel in places like Tel Aviv and

Haifa. Of course, on the West Bank, the settlers and Palestinians interact, through antipathy and hostility, but physically they're in the same place.

This is something that can't be changed by pulling people back to separate boundaries or separate states. The involvement of each in the other—largely, I think, due to the aggressivity with which the Israelis have entered the Palestinian territory, and from the very beginning have invaded Palestinian space—suggests to me that some mode of arrangement has to be established that allows them to live together in some peaceable form.

And it's not going to be through separation. It's not going to be the way the Oslo process has forecasted, nor will it be the way I and many others used to talk about—namely partition, that there should be two states.

There is another factor which I think is very important: There is a younger generation—beginning with the Palestinians who are Israeli citizens—who are extremely aware of the difficulty that they face as an oppressed minority and are beginning to struggle in terms of civil and citizens' rights.

Interestingly, they are supported, implicitly, by secular Israelis who are extremely worried about the increased power of the clerics and the whole question of defining the laws of the state by religious means in this debate about "Who is a Jew?" A fairly important body of opinion that is secular has begun to talk about things like a constitution—since Israel doesn't have a constitution—and the notion of citizenship, which defines people not by ethnic but by national criteria. This would then have to include Arabs. That's very impressive to me. I've talked to groups from both sides, independently and together. The trajectory is unmistakable.

Then there is the demographic reality: By the year 2010, there will be demographic parity between the two, Palestinians and Israelis. The South Africans in a country twenty times bigger than Israel couldn't for long maintain apartheid. And it's unlikely that a place like Israel—which is surrounded on all sides by Arab states—is going to be able to maintain what, in effect, is a system of apartheid for Palestinians.

So although a binational state now seems like a totally long shot and completely utopian, not to say to many people a crazy idea, it is the one

idea that will allow people to live with—and not exterminate—each other.

Q: Your vision of inclusion and the one-state solution actually follows one of the old streams of Zionism.

SAID: As many Palestinians have, I've read the history of debates within the Zionist settlers' movement. There were people of a fairly important caliber, like Martin Buber, like Judah Magnes, who was the first president of Hebrew University, like Hannah Arendt, who realized that there was going to be a clash if the aggressive settlement policies and the ignoring of the Arabs pressed ahead. David Ben-Gurion actually said, "There's no case in history where a people simply gives up and allows another people to take their territory over."

So they knew that there would be a conflict, especially Magnes, who really was an idealist. He was a man way ahead of his time, and a remarkable spirit also. He said, "Let's try to think in terms quite morally and profoundly about the Arabs. Let's think in terms of their presence, not their absence."

That spirit is to be found in the work of the new Israeli historians, who have gone back over the national narrative of Israel and reexamined the myth of Israel's independence and discovered how much of it was based on the denial, or the effacement, or the willful avoidance of the Arabs. All that Israel has been able to do for the last fifty years is not, of course, to get security for itself. There is no security of that sort. But it has been maintaining a kind of holding operation by which the Arabs are simply kept out. Over time that can't work because of demographics and the fact that people don't give up if they're beaten down. They hold on even more resolutely and more stubbornly.

So there's a new climate of opinion. I think you could see it as coming out of Zionism. I don't want to appear negative or critical of it. A lot of it is an inter-Jewish debate, not something that's taking place between Palestinians and Israelis. It's taking place within—as it did in the case of Magnes and Arendt and Buber—the Zionist or Jewish camp.

People like myself, who luckily don't have to face the daily pressures of living in either Israel or Palestine, but have time to reflect at some distance, can play a role in terms of seeking out discussion and debate with their opposite numbers in the other camp. That's beginning to happen, more or less systematically. There are frequent dialogues, frequent conferences between Palestinians and Israeli intellectuals, not with an eye towards—as there have been for so many years—settling the problem in a governmental way, as an adjunct to the peace process. That's led nowhere.

This is a new kind of discussion, one that is based upon patient scholarship and scrupulous archival work. It's not carried out by people with political ambitions. It's mostly people who have a certain standing in their community as academics and intellectuals. It's quite a new phenomenon. I don't think it's been too focused on by the media, which is completely obsessed with the failing peace process.

Q: It is clear that Yasir Arafat is not well. He shakes and looks drawn. What reports do you get on his health?

SAID: His loyal supporters—one of whom I saw last week quite by chance, we were on the same plane—say that he's in perfect health. He just has this little shake, this little tremor. Others, including a physician who lives in Gaza and has seen him, are convinced that he has Parkinson's disease. But everyone I've spoken to in the last year who's seen Arafat says he's considerably slowed down and he's not as alert or as perky as he once was. So I suppose that's true. The fact is, however, that he still is in command of everything. He signs every little piece of paper, including employees' vacation requests. Everything has to go past his desk. He's still a micromanager. He shows no sign of delegating authority in any serious way. Most of his employees bad-mouth him, including his ministers. But they're powerless to do anything.

I think it's important to note something that people may not be aware of: He is the largest single employer in the entire area. I include in that the Israeli government. His bureaucracy is now set by the World Bank at 77,000 people. That doesn't include the security apparatus, which is

numbered at roughly 50,000. He employs more than 125,000 people—which, if you multiply by six or seven, roughly the number of dependents per head of household, you're talking about almost a million people. This is a very unproductive segment of the economy, but it accounts for the largest payroll. There is no serious investment in infrastructure. It's only about 3 percent. The situation is, in my opinion, getting worse every day, largely due to his methods, which are essentially to retain control and to make sure that there are no opponents or changes in the structure that is largely dictated to him by the Israelis and the U.S.

Q: Your books were banned in Arafat's realm. Is that still the case?

SAID: It's very difficult to know, actually. You can buy them. They're available surreptitiously. To make matters even more ironic and peculiar, a year after the books were banned by order of the minister of information, whose name was affixed to the order, this same man sent me a letter asking me if they could enter into an arrangement with me whereby they could publish my books on the West Bank. You figure it out. I can't.

Q: What about in Israel?

SAID: They're available.

Q: And other Arab countries?

SAID: It depends, I haven't made a survey. They're mostly available in Egypt and Lebanon. I've heard reports that some of my books have been banned in Jordan and in various other countries of the Gulf. In Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, *Culture and Imperialism* is forbidden in Arabic. But that's the fate of everyone. We're talking about autocracies and despotisms. Somebody sees something that's offensive and they say, "We can't have this." So they ban it. Or they'll ban an issue of a newspaper or magazine. It's all very erratic.

Q: After you visited Israel, you went to Egypt. Is there much interaction between Egyptians and Palestinians?

SAID: What you notice amongst Palestinians, whether inside Israel or on the West Bank and Gaza, is a sense of isolation. There's no question that they live under the shadow of Israeli power. What is missing is easy

contact, natural contact, with the rest of the Arab world. You can't get to any place in the Arab world from Israel or the West Bank and Gaza without going through a fairly complicated procedure, which causes you to think three or four times before you do it: To cross the border, you need permits, and you go through endless customs. This is also true of me, and I have an American passport, but the fact that it says on it that I was born in Jerusalem means that I'm always put to one side. You're automatically suspect. So traveling and being in contact with Arabs in the Arab world is very, very difficult.

Hardly any Arabs who are not Palestinians come into the Palestinian territories, and hardly any at all, practically none, go to Israel. One of the themes of the nationalist and radical intellectuals of most Arab countries has been the opposition to what they call "normalization" (*tatbeea* in Arabic), the normalization of life with Israel and with the Arab states that have made formal peace with it. As an act of solidarity with Palestinians, these intellectuals have refused to have anything to do with Israel. The problem is that Palestinians—who are trying to build institutions, universities, newspapers, hospitals—are cut off from the kind of help they need from like-minded or counterpart Arabs. Arab physicians from Egypt or Syria or Lebanon or Jordan could quite easily come and help Palestinians set up hospitals and clinics. They don't because of this stance against normalization.

The peace with Egypt and Jordan is a cold peace: Ordinary citizens, Jordanians or Egyptians, don't go to Israel, and they have nothing to do with Israelis. Israeli tourists go to Egypt and visit the pyramids. But beyond that, there's very little in the way of the kinds of intercourse—exchanges between universities, learned societies, businesses, and so on—that obtain between neighboring countries otherwise at peace in any other part of the world.

Q: How do Arabs react when you urge them to go to Palestine?

SAID: When I now encounter Arabs and go to these Arab countries, I say to them, especially to the Egyptians, "You can go to Palestine. You can go through Israel because Israel and Egypt are at peace. You can take advantage of that and go help them, speaking, being there for some time, training them."

"No, they say, we can't possibly allow our passports to be stamped. We won't go to the Israeli embassy and get visas. We won't submit to the humiliation of being examined by Israeli policemen at the border."

I find this argument vaguely plausible on one level but really quite cowardly on the other. It would seem to me that if they took their pride out of it, if they did go through an Israeli checkpoint or barricade or border, they would be doing what other Palestinians do every day and would see what it's like.

Second, they wouldn't be recognizing Israel or giving it any credit. On the contrary, they would be demonstrating solidarity with Palestinians. For example, as Israeli bulldozers destroy houses for settlements, it would be great if there were a large number of Egyptians and Jordanians and others who could be there with Palestinians confronting this daily, minute-by-minute threat.

Q: Are there other reasons Arabs are not coming to Palestine?

SAID: It's not only parochialism. There is also a kind of laziness, a kind of sitting back and expecting somebody else to do it. I think that's our greatest enemy, the absence of initiative. They could be helping Palestinians and actually dealing with Israel, not as a fictional entity but as a real power that is in many ways negatively affecting Arab life.

In no university that I know of in the Arab world is there a department of Israeli students, nor do people study Hebrew. And this is true even of Palestinian universities—where again, you can understand it as a kind of defense against this great power that has intervened in all of our lives, that we don't want to have anything to do with it. But for me, I think the only salvation is to encounter it head-on, learn the language, as so many Israeli political scientists and sociologists and Orientalists and intelligence people spend time studying Arab society. Why shouldn't we study them? It's a way of getting to know your neighbor, your enemy, if that's what it is, and it's a way of breaking out of the prison which suits the Israelis perfectly to have Arabs in.

Alas, this passivity, this provincialism, extends not just to Israel. There is very little attention paid to India, Japan, China, to the great civilizations of

the rest of the world. You go to a university like that of Amman. I can guarantee you won't find anybody studying Africa or Latin America or Japan. And it's a sign of delinquency, our weakness, our state of intellectual quiescence, that we are so uncurious about these other parts of the world. We have to break out of our self-constructed, mind-forged manacles and look at the rest of the world—deal with it as equals. There's too much defensiveness, too much sense of the aggrieved. This, in part, accounts for the absence of democracy. It's not just the despotism of the rulers, not just the plots of imperialism, not just the corrupt regimes, not just the secret police. It's our intellectuals' lack of citizenship, in the end. The only way to change a situation is oneself doing it, reading, asking, encountering, breaking out of the prison.

Q: One of the things you stress is the need for Israelis to acknowledge what they did to your people, the Palestinians. Why is that so important?

SAID: Because so much of our history has been occluded. We are invisible people. The strength and power of the Israeli narrative is such that it depends almost entirely on a kind of heroic vision of pioneers who came to a desert and dealt not with native people who had a settled existence and lived in towns and had their own society, but rather with nomads who could be driven away. The construction of the figure of the nomad was a very complex procedure, but it was certainly used by the Zionists to deal with us as a people.

Wherever you go in Israel, the road signs are written in English and Hebrew. There's no Arabic. So if you're an Arab and you can't read Hebrew or English, you're lost. That's by design. That's a way to shut out 20 percent of the population.

The formation and education of Israeli citizens in the 1950s and the 1960s was precisely to construct this shutting out of the Palestinians. It's a very difficult thought to accept—that you are there not because you're a great, heroic figure escaping the Holocaust, but you are there largely at the expense of another person whom you've displaced or killed or driven away.

It seems to me therefore absolutely crucial that to achieve any kind of real normalization—where Israelis can become part of the Middle East and not

an isolated sanctuary connected to the West exclusively and denying, and contemptuous of, and ignorant of the Palestinians—Israelis must be forced intellectually and morally to confront the realities of their own history.

There is a part to be played by the new Israeli historians, but I think it's also important that Palestinians do it directly to Israelis and say, "This is the reality." At this late date, we can begin to talk about Palestinian and Israeli history together—separate histories that can be seen as intertwined and counterpointed with each other. Without that, the Other is always going to be dehumanized, demonized, invisible. We must find a way.

That's where the role of the mind, the role of the intellectual, the moral consciousness is crucial. There has to be a way properly to deal with the Other and render that Other a place, as opposed to no place. So it's very far from utopian. A utopia means no place. So this is a placing of the Other in a concrete history and space.

Moshe Dayan made a famous remark in the middle 1970s. He said every Israeli town and village had a former Arab occupant. He was able to see it, and he said it. But subsequent generations—partly through the effects of the closeness of the U.S. and the diaspora American Jewish community—have eroded the possibility of that sensibility.

I think it's important for those of us who have freed ourselves from the constraints of dogma and orthodoxy and authority to take those steps and to show those places as they really are. And it's important for Arabs to understand, too, that Israeli Jews are not like Crusaders or imperialists who can be sent back somewhere. It's very important for us also to insist, as I often do, that the Israelis are Israelis. They are citizens of a society called Israel. They're not "Jews," quite simply, who can be thought of once again as wanderers, who can go back to Europe. That vocabulary of transitory and provisional existence is one that you have to completely refuse.

Q: Daniel Barenboim is a world-famous pianist and conductor who was born in Argentina and grew up as an Israeli. You've had some interesting interactions with him. How did you get to know him?

SAID: We met seven or eight years ago and quite surprisingly we've become very close friends. He travels a great deal, as do I. Sometimes our paths have crossed. We've tried to do things together. We've had public discussions, not political ones so much, because he's not a politician any more than I am, but we talk about things like music and culture and history. He's very interested, as a Jewish Israeli musician, in the work of people like Wagner, who is, you might say, the total negation of Jews but was a great musician. So he's interested in the process whereby culture and music work in parallel and contradictory ways at the same time. We're doing a book together based on that theme.

But he's also very dissatisfied, as am I, with the prevailing orthodoxy in his own community. He hasn't lived in Israel recently, and last year he refused to do anything with the Israeli Philharmonic for the fiftieth anniversary of Israel. He is very much opposed to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. He speaks openly about a Palestinian state. He's a man of courage.

Music connects us, but also the facts of biography. He arrived in Tel Aviv roughly about the time that my family was evicted from Palestine. I arranged recently for him, for the first time ever, to play a recital at the leading West Bank university, Bir Zeit, which he did. It was a great gesture on his part.

The concert was a fantastic success, one of the great events of my life. This was a humane act of solidarity and friendship. Barenboim was offering his services, which God knows in any concert hall in the world would be in tremendous demand and are very costly. He's at the very top of the musical profession as a great pianist and a conductor. But he was there simply as an individual to play.

All of that gave the evening a very high emotional cultural resonance that was lost on absolutely no one there. Zubin Mehta came, a great friend of Daniel's. He's the conductor of the Israeli Philharmonic. He's an Indian, but he's fantastically, fanatically pro-Israeli. He'd never been to the West Bank. But he came. Tears were streaming down his face. It was an event of considerable importance precisely because it wasn't political in the overt sense. Nobody was trying to make a killing, score a point.

Barenboim's position is that if Israel is going to continue to exist, it has to exist in relations of friendship and equality with Arabs and Muslims. He's desperately anxious to learn Arabic. He's a very remarkable man. There aren't too many of them around.

Perhaps I should also mention that he and Yo-Yo Ma are doing something in Weimar this summer. We have this idea where we would bring gifted, mostly Arab, but some Israeli musicians between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five to Weimar for about ten days. Weimar, interestingly, is about an hour away from Buchenwald. So there's that history. Plus, of course, it's the city of Goethe and Schiller and Wagner, the summit of German culture. So the idea is to have master classes with Daniel and Yo-Yo and musicians from the Berlin State Opera, which Daniel is the conductor of, and in the evening have discussions led by me on the relationship between culture, politics, history, and especially music. We've accepted some wonderful young musicians. It promises to be quite an exhilarating experience for all of us. The good thing about it, for me, at any rate, is that there is no program. Nobody is going to sign a declaration at the end. What we are interested in is the power of music and discussion and culture to create a sense of equality and fellowship otherwise unavailable to us in the anguish and tension of the polarized life of the Middle East.

Q: Your critique of what is called popularly the "peace process" has been unrelenting since Oslo, September 1993. For years, the mainstream media, at least in the United States, pretty much studiously ignored you. However, recently there's been a surge in terms of your visibility—articles in Newsweek and The New York Times, appearances on NPR, PBS, and other venues. What accounts for that?

SAID: It's difficult for me to tell. There's a form of censorship here in the U.S., which is that you're marginalized. You can't appear in the mainstream media. But my stuff is published in the Arab countries, and then it appears on the Internet. It's picked up and people read it. When I got a request to write an article for *The New York Times Magazine* about my idea of a solution, a binational state for Palestinians and Israelis, that was because an editor there had read me on the Internet. Plus, there's the fact that it

was clear, he told me, that the peace process wasn't working, and neither, he said, was Zionism. For those reasons, they turn their attention.

But I don't think it's anything more than just a token kind of side look. "We want to be inclusive so we might as well include him." I think that's really what it is.

In general, the old discourse, the old clichés, the old stereotypes are absolutely in place, untouched by reality or fact. It's quite striking. I was on *Charlie Rose* on PBS, and he kept repeating the conventional wisdom and didn't let me finish my sentences. What I was saying was so outrageous that he couldn't allow it to be said.

Q: It's been about eight years now since, during a routine check on your cholesterol, you discovered that you had leukemia. People want to know about your health. How are you feeling?

SAID: I have had bad periods of time. For the first three years, I didn't need any treatment. Suddenly, in early spring of 1994, I began treatment, first chemotherapy and later radiation. All of which led to various kinds of infections and debilitating consequences which, during 1997 and 1998, were very, very difficult for me. I was sick most of the time. I lost a lot of weight. I have a wonderful Indian doctor who is taking care of me. During the course of all of this, I discovered to my dismay that I have a very rare form of leukemia called refractory leukemia, which resists all the known chemotherapies. Last summer, I did a twelve-week experimental treatment, called a monoclonal antibody, which was incredibly difficult to go through. I was sick the whole time, for twelve weeks. I did it three or four times a week. Happily, I have what is now called a temporary remission. It's not a cure. The disease comes back, but at least it's been able to give me six months so far without major treatment and general good health. I'm feeling good about it.

Q: As they say in Arabic, inshallah, may you be with us for a long time to come.

Edward Said: A Contested History

Scott Sherman / 1999

From *Publishers Weekly* 246.36
(6 September 1999): 74–75.
Reprinted by permission.

In 1991, while attending a conference of Palestinian intellectuals in London, Edward Said received word that his New York–based doctor wished to speak with him about the results of his annual physical. Reached by telephone, the doctor was evasive. “Nothing to get excited about,” he said. “I’m not a child,” Said insisted, “and I have a right to know.” The doctor’s hesitation was understandable, as Said soon learned: a routine blood test indicated that he had a rare form of chronic lymphocytic leukemia.

The diagnosis transformed his life and served as the catalyst for his memoir, *Out of Place*, just published by Knopf. When *PW* visits Said in his cavernous office at Columbia University, where he is a professor of English and comparative literature, he has just returned from an experimental treatment at Long Island Jewish Medical Center. Haggard but serene, he explains how the book, which he started while recovering from three early rounds of chemotherapy in 1994, helped to sustain him through a most difficult period.

“It gave me something to look forward to,” he says. “It gave me a purpose, because I was trying to recreate an earlier world.”

Said is ambivalent about the current avalanche of memoirs flooding the literary world, and he certainly never planned to write one, but the onset of the disease impelled him to proceed. "I'm not a journal keeper," he says. "It was really something that both the disease and the death of my mother in 1990 sort of stimulated. Another purpose in doing it was that I wanted my children to have something to look at." (Said has two children, Wadie, twenty-seven, and Najla, twenty-five.)

By any measure, Edward Said is a preeminent public intellectual, a man who, since taking a doctorate in English from Harvard in 1963, has pursued a dual career: literary and cultural critic (his 1978 book, *Orientalism*, is among the most influential works of critical theory in the postwar period) and uncompromising defender of Palestinian rights. The former made him a celebrated figure in the tidy corridors of academe; the latter transformed Said into a political lightning rod and object of death threats, hate mail and vandalism. Today, he remains highly visible and highly controversial. For admirers like Gore Vidal, Said is "that rare sort of intellectual who is able to illuminate even the stormiest of human prospects with a serene, often revelatory, light." His critics hold a different view: an anti-Said screed published in the conservative journal *Commentary* in 1989 was headlined: "Professor of Terror."

As a public figure, however, Said has remained an elusive presence: eloquent, imperious, indefatigable, but also inscrutable. *Out of Place* brings the man into focus, chronicling the emotional minefield of his youth and capturing "an essentially lost or forgotten world, that of my early life." The memoir depicts an upwardly mobile family shuttling between Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt, while at the same time living a life of luxury—of "tennis, noisy card-playing, and Ping-Pong." But it was a world tipping into disaster: in 1948, when Jewish inhabitants of the former colonial mandate of Palestine established the state of Israel, Said's entire extended family was driven out of Palestine; in 1952, his father's business was wrecked in Cairo street fighting; and in the 1970s, the family's long-time vacation spot, in the Lebanese mountains, was obliterated in the Lebanese civil war.

Recently, however, the details of Said's early life have been sharply questioned. Writing in the September issue of *Commentary*, Justus Reid Weiner, an Israeli scholar, challenged Said's contention that he was raised and schooled in and subsequently displaced from Palestine in the period leading up to Israel's birth—a contention, wrote Weiner, that has served as a "powerfully compelling metaphor for the larger Palestinian condition."

Weiner's three-year investigation turned up no references to Said's parents in pre-1948 telephone directories and no references to Edward Said in the leather-bound registry books for St. George's preparatory school, where Said claimed to have been a student. As for the Jerusalem house where the family reportedly resided, Weiner found that it was registered to Said's relatives, not to his parents. "Jerusalem, it turns out," Weiner concludes, "was not the soul and center of Edward Said's youth."

In a blistering riposte published in London's *Al-Hayat* and Cairo's *Al-Abram Weekly*, Said retorted, "It is part of the Palestinian fate always to be required to prove one's existence and history!" Had Weiner properly consulted *Out of Place*, Said wrote, he would have ascertained that the family divided its time between Jerusalem, Cairo and Lebanon in the years before 1948. In response to Weiner's accusations, Said affirmed that "the family house [in Jerusalem] was in fact a family house in the Arab sense, which meant that our families were one in ownership"; asserted that the records for St. George's school ended in 1946, a year before he enrolled; and, finally, accused Weiner of never bothering to contact him, and of threatening his relatives. "What he cannot understand," Said wrote, "is that I have been moved to defend the refugees' plight precisely because I did not suffer and therefore felt obligated to relieve the suffering of my people." But the real agenda of *Commentary's* editorial board, Said tells *PW*, is far more insidious. "If they can prove that the leading Palestinian intellectual is a liar, what does this say about the rest of the Palestinians?" But some facts are beyond dispute. Said was born to Palestinian parents in Jerusalem in 1935. His father, Wadie Said, founded the largest office equipment and stationery business in the Middle East. Said likens his

childhood to "a gigantic cocoon," and some of the best passages in *Out of Place* are those that describe his parents and the tightly regulated universe they created for their precocious son and other four children, a universe imbued with British colonial attitudes, upper-class Egyptian habits and Horatio Alger ideology imported from the U.S. by Wadie. While his mother fussed over her children, and his father retreated into a private realm of commerce and card games, young Edward underwent a strict regimen of "piano lessons, gymnastics, Sunday School, riding classes, boxing," augmented by lazy afternoons reading Shakespeare and tuning in to BBC opera programs.

Yet reality interrupted his idyllic childhood, and the memoir, which unfolds against the backdrop of Britain's retreat from Egypt, contains radiant portraits of individuals who stirred his conscience, among them, his aunt Nabiha, who worked tirelessly on behalf of the broken Palestinian refugees in Cairo and who, Said says, "was interested in cultivating in me some sense of the Palestinian tragedy," and a family acquaintance, Farid Haddad, whose political outspokenness resulted in his arrest, torture and execution by the authoritarian regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Said's sense of displacement was reinforced by his youthful experiences in the U.S. In 1948, the family passed several tense months at the Commodore Hotel in New York while Wadie Said underwent kidney surgery. To relieve the burden, Edward was dispatched to summer camp in Maine, where his theft of a hot dog led to a traumatic confrontation with a counselor. In 1951, Said enrolled at the Mount Hermon boarding school in Massachusetts, which initially struck him as a kind of Siberian exile. Later, despite his Ivy League education and his meteoric rise to intellectual stardom, Said never lost his sense of rootlessness and dislocation, a sentiment that gives the memoir its title and its principal theme: "I was quite confused to where one belonged," Said says.

In spite of his illness, Said maintains a frenetic schedule. On the afternoon *PW* comes to visit, Said, a skilled pianist and music critic, is preparing to fly to Weimar, where, alongside Yo-Yo Ma and the Israeli composer Daniel Barenboim, he will lead a workshop for a group of

young musicians from the Middle East. As a writer, Said remains astonishingly productive: In addition to a slew of recent essays, he is putting the finishing touches on a new collection of essays, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After*, which Pantheon will publish in the spring of 2000 and *The Edward Said Reader*, which Vintage will release in the fall of the same year. (Said's hefty backlist remains active: he recently signed contracts for Israeli, Estonian, Hungarian and Bulgarian editions of *Orientalism*, which has sold hundreds of thousands of copies in thirty-one languages.)

Said speaks warmly about his colleagues in the publishing world. *Orientalism*, which came out in 1978, was published by Pantheon's Andre Schiffrin. But when Said, on the recommendation of friends like Christopher Hitchens, left his long-time agent, Georges Borchardt, for Andrew Wylie, he also migrated to Knopf. ("I wanted more money," Said admits.)

These days, he works closely with Whelley Wanger of Pantheon, who, while editing *Interview* in the late 1980s, published Said's "Q&A with Yasir Arafat," one of the first sympathetic portraits of Arafat to appear in the U.S. media. He also collaborates with an English editor, Frances Coady, who, Said notes with dismay, was recently "made redundant" by Granta Books. He is on excellent terms with Knopf's Sonny Mehta, whom he refers to in the acknowledgments as "a rare publisher and comrade." Said is especially grateful that Mehta, along with *Grand Street* editor Jean Stein, hosted a private screening in New York for his 1998 BBC documentary, *In Search of Palestine*, a turn of events that led, eventually, to the film's acceptance by Channel 13 in New York.

Readers looking for Said's analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations will not find it in *Out of Place*. The memoir concludes with his graduation from Harvard in 1963, and one can easily imagine a companion volume covering Said's political awakening in the late 1960s, his road to academic fame, his fourteen years on the Palestine National Council, his meetings with high-ranking U.S. government officials, his tumultuous relationship with Yasir Arafat and his behind-the-scenes account of the protracted struggle for Palestinian self-determination. "I have no plans to write that book," Said says. "I feel I've written so much about politics, and

I would have to sort through all of it. That's enough of a record of what I want to say. Also, I don't really trust my memory. I'm OD'd on politics."

These days, much of Said's time and energy is given over to combating what he refers to in *Out of Place* as "an intransigent, treacherous leukemia, which ostrichlike I try to banish from my mind entirely." Said explains: "I had a temporary remission. The bad news is that the disease is coming back. The question is, what does one do now?"

Said may be weary of politics, but he continues working tenaciously on behalf of the unpopular cause to which he has dedicated half his life. We learn from *Out of Place* that Said's ongoing engagement with Palestine left his parents profoundly troubled. "You're a literature professor," Wadie Said pleaded. "Stick to that." His last words to his son a few hours before he died were: "I'm worried about what the Zionists will do to you. Be careful." Said's mother was equally skeptical of political engagement. "It will ruin you," she proclaimed.

All these years later, has it ruined him, or has it enriched him? "Unquestionably enriched me," Said replies. "Unquestionably. It has brought me a great deal in the way of insight, in the way of human enrichment of the spirit, and put me in contact with real people doing real things and suffering real crises. The fact that a lot of Palestinians think of me as somebody who has helped them is the greatest honor that I could be paid."

Setting the Record Straight: Edward Said Confronts His Future, His Past, and His Critics

Harvey Blume / 1999

From *Atlantic Unbound* 22 September
1999 on-line issue. Copyright 1999 by
Harvey Blume. Reprinted by permission.

Born in Jerusalem in 1935 to a prosperous Palestinian Christian family, educated at Princeton, and currently a University Professor of Literature at Columbia University, Edward Said is a writer whose work has had extraordinary range. Perhaps because he himself lives on the cusp of so many cultures, he has striven to join disparate areas of experience, including musical and literary, private and public, First and Third World, and, not least of all, Jewish and Arab. Two of his books, *Orientalism* (1979) and *Culture and Imperialism* (reprinted in 1994), have been important studies of how artistic creation and cultural prejudices intersect.

Said, a spokesman for Palestinian rights, has been called the Arab world's most prominent intellectual, yet has lived in the West for most of his life. A harsh critic of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, he has, at the same time, attempted to educate Palestinians about realities of Jewish experience that have been convenient for Arab nationalists to

deny. To Arabs, in short, he is likely to talk about the Holocaust, to Jews about the dispossession of Palestinians. If, as he has written, an intellectual should not aim to make "audiences feel good: the whole point is to be embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant," then there are many, on all sides of the Palestinian question, ready to agree that he has richly succeeded. His position on the Oslo Accords can serve as a case in point: he opposed them. While many others in the peace movement saw the Accords as a possible turning point in Jewish-Palestinian relations, Said emerged as a gadfly whose arguments were, as always, worth reckoning with.

Since 1991, Said has been battling leukemia. But, as his new memoir, *Out of Place*, shows, he lacks no energy for continued literary effort, nor for the controversy his politics engender. An article in the September issue of *Commentary* attempts to undermine Said's credibility as a spokesman for the Palestinian cause by arguing that he has constantly overstated his and his family's connections to Palestine. Those charges are among the many topics broached in a conversation Harvey Blume had with Edward Said for *Atlantic Unbound*.

Q: *How are you feeling?*

A: I've had four-and-a-half years of useless chemotherapy and radiation because it turned out my leukemia is refractory leukemia. So this great doctor of mine found a treatment, which has given me a remission. That's the good news. The bad news is that it's not a cure. The disease is coming back; it's insidiously creeping back.

Q: *The disease was part of your motive for writing the memoir, was it not?*

A: The disease and my mother's death. My mother died in July of 1990. I was diagnosed in 1991. My connection with my mother was very, very close. And in the last two years of her life, she knew and I knew that she was dying. As I saw her fade away, it struck me that a very important link to my past was disappearing. She was the only member of my immediate family—my father had died in 1971—who had a connection to all of the worlds in which I'd grown up. So I resolved then and there to try and memorialize that. And that was accelerated by my illness.

Q: You allude several times in the memoir to having become interested in writers' and composers' late styles.

A: That also began after the diagnosis of my illness. When I got ill, my interest changed to the last phase of life, and by chance I came upon a fantastic fragment, five or six pages long, by German culture critic Theodor W. Adorno on Beethoven's late style. I was interested in Adorno emphasizing that Beethoven's late style was a much more difficult style. The late piano sonatas and quartets are radical departures from the triumphalist, heroic mode of his second period, and really are all about confronting the end, as it were, with a new kind of stubbornness and artistic intransigence.

Q: Can we switch to something much less transcendent than Beethoven's late quartets, and get into the current controversy? Justus Reid Weiner wrote a piece for Commentary saying, essentially, that you aren't a bona fide Palestinian, that you didn't, in fact, grow up in Jerusalem, you're from Cairo, you've been a liar, you're not a displaced person, you have no right to speak for them.

A: Of course I read Weiner's piece, and was struck by the enormous fabrication of lies and, how shall I put it, maligned construction. He can't get my family relationships right, he can't understand, or won't understand, that my father was a fifty-percent partner in everything my family owned in Palestine, which included the house and all our property. My cousin, now eighty years old, went to Palestine in 1996 for the first time since he left in 1948, and put in a claim for the property that we lost.

Various people Weiner had spoken to wrote me, including classmates of mine from both Egypt and Palestine. One, an Egyptian Jew, was outraged about the distortions in what Weiner said. And then of course the most preposterous thing of all is that Weiner never spoke to me. He worked for three years, he claims to have contacted my secretary, who swears that's a lie, but he never contacted me directly, which he could have simply by writing a letter.

Q: It's not so surprising to me that Commentary would publish what's little more than character assassination. Its views on the Middle East are rabid.

A: The piece is designed to have a harmful effect. For thirty years, these very right-wing Zionists have been trying to get me. They try to rebut me and can't. So the only thing they can do is hire some guy with Michael Milken's money to research my entire life for three years—to come up with what? That I was a member of the Nazi party, or a killer or drug dealer or something? Now, you wanted to talk about?

Q: *The Oslo Accords. Having known of you and of your work all my adult life, I took extreme exception to your opposing the Oslo Accords. I thought, How many peace processes were there to choose from? Isn't this the one we've got to make work? How could he dare oppose it?*

A: I was one of the first people in the Palestinian world, in the late 1970s, to say that there is no military option, either for us or for them, and I'm certainly the only well-known Arab who writes these things—and who writes exactly the same things in the Arab press that I say here.

I'm trying to say that I know the politics of the PLO better than anyone, certainly in this country. I realized that the Oslo Accords were a result not only of Palestinian weakness, but also of Palestinian incompetence and miscalculation of a catastrophic sort. I said from the beginning that given the fact that Arafat had stood with Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War—which was a crime against his people (Kuwait and Saudi Arabia kicked 3,000 of 4,000 Palestinians out of the Gulf in revenge for Arafat's act)—he entered the secret talks at Oslo basically to save himself. And he entered the process without competent advice. Not one of the three people who were closeted in Oslo knew English, not one of them had a legal background. They would call people up in the middle of the night and say, What does the word "self-rule" mean, what does the word "autonomy" mean? They didn't even have maps, didn't even have a map of Palestine. Most of these people had never been there. The people negotiating Bethlehem, for example, had never seen Bethlehem. And on and on and on.

They took the thing back to Arafat and showed it to him. And the man who signed the accord on the White House lawn, Abu Mas'n, said that it took Arafat a year to understand that he didn't get a Palestinian state.

That's what he thought he got, because he read only the paragraphs that had something to do with his status.

Okay, let's assume that all that is inevitable, that there was nothing else he could do. Still, why not level with your people, and tell them: This is all there is. This is all we can get now. We need your help. Let us all get behind this process and do what we can. And if you don't like this, I'll resign, but this is the most I can do. He never did that. Instead, he lied. He said we have gotten sovereignty, we've gotten a state. [But] we've gotten nothing.

Nothing's said about the settlements, nothing's said about the refugees, nothing's said about Jerusalem. To call this an economic and political arrangement like that of a repressive Arab state is an understatement. And this is with the encouragement of the U.S. and the Israelis. They say openly that it's better for Palestinians to have a little tyrannical dictatorship, without sovereignty, without borders, without economic independence. ...

Q: Some of that, though, is a question for Palestinians themselves. Whether or not you tolerate a tyrannical elite is a question for Palestinians.

A: Yes, but don't forget that over fifty percent of the Palestinian population today are refugees. Arafat doesn't represent Palestinians anymore. He represents—and says he represents—people on the West Bank and Gaza. But I agree with you, it is for Palestinians. But when Palestinians make criticisms Arafat puts them in jail, he closes newspapers, he bans books.

Al Gore went to Jericho in March of 1996 and commended Arafat on the creation of state security courts, all in the name of the peace process. Gore backed a tyrannical, corrupt government, with the support of the international community, because this is "the peace process."

Now, I say, if there was good will, and a real sense of wanting to reconcile, why was there not, from the very beginning, an acknowledgment of the thirty years of deprivation and abuse that took place during the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza?

Q: One of the most striking things about Oslo was that both sides said, Look, rule number one is no recriminations. We don't talk about bus bombings, you don't talk about refugee camps. That's the only way we can begin. We have to put aside bitterness.

A: Our society was destroyed in 1948. You don't seem to understand that.

Q: *What you're saying seems to lead to no possible political solution.*

A: That's wrong. I'm not saying that everything has to be given back. You're not listening to me. I said what you need is an acknowledgment of the past, and then we go forward.

Q: *For me, the rhetoric that came out of Oslo, the words that came out of Rabin's mouth about the rights of the Palestinian people are irreversible and profound. They overthrow a few generations worth of lies about the nature of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause.*

A: I'm sorry, you didn't hear what Rabin said at the White House. He said nothing about what happened to the Palestinian people.

Q: *He acknowledged there was a people. I'm not saying you should be grateful. I'm saying, as a Jew, I thought, About time, now we can begin to address reality.*

This is a beginning. And I continue to see it not as a perfect solution, but as a beginning, in lieu of any other beginnings visible to me.

A: You're now arguing with me instead of interviewing me.

Q: *Is that okay?*

A: What is my choice?

Q: *Well, we have many choices.*

A: But I don't think you're listening to what I'm saying.

Q: *Is it possible we disagree?*

A: No, no. That's not a solution. If you say the things that you say—namely, that you believe in two states—it means that there are two peoples between whom there is no equality; there is apartheid. It's like telling a white South African, "Look, give the blacks what they want, and let's not talk about the past." That's nonsense. You can't do that. The genius of the South Africans was that they said, "One person, one vote, and let's have a truth and reconciliation commission."

Q: *That is not a two-state solution.*

A: No, it's not a two-state solution. I don't myself believe in a two-state solution. I believe in a one-state solution.

Q: *Well you've changed . . .*

A: Of course I've changed. Reality has changed. Consider the fact that there are now a million Palestinians who are Israeli citizens, who constitute about twenty percent of the Israeli population. They have no interest at all in moving to a Palestinian state because they are in places like Nazareth and Haifa, which is where they belong. Why should they go to the West Bank? There are now Jews and Arabs on every inch of this tiny little country called Palestine, living next to each other and hopelessly intertwined. And how can we talk about anything unless we say something about the settlements, where they're still taking land—

Q: *Barak has put a freeze on settlements.*

A: Okay, but there are a lot there. Listen to what I'm saying. I'm saying, let them all stay. But first of all, give the Palestinians who are Israeli citizens the rights of citizens, and let Israel become a state of its citizens and not of the whole Jewish people.

Q: *I'm really sympathetic when you point out the flaws and difficulties of the two-state solution. But except for a few intellectuals like you and Noam Chomsky, who argue for what used to be called a binational state, there's no political impetus for it.*

A: I think you're wrong there. One of the reasons for this *Commentary* attack is that there are increasing numbers of Israeli Jews who listen to me. I was invited by the Israeli Anthropological Association last March to give a keynote speech. An audience of 500 or 600 Israeli academics turned up. In my speech—"The Consequences of 1948"—I talked about the one-state solution in the context of the history of the conflict. Much of the whole Zionist thing was to get rid of the Palestinians. And the whole of Palestinian nationalism was based on driving all Israelis out. But, I said, if you look at it now, there's no way of writing the history of either Israelis or of the Palestinians without also writing the history of the other. They are hopelessly, terminally intertwined as two peoples on one land. I said that not only in the writing of history but also in the construction of the present and the future one has to acknowledge that fact. You would be surprised at the reception I got.

And I'll get you something else that I'm not afraid to admit: a lot of Palestinians disagree with me. Most say, "We've got to have our state, even if it means ten square kilometers. We've got to have our own flag." I just don't agree with that.

Q: *Which brings up one of the central points of your work. In Representations of the Intellectual, for example, you refuse to be silenced by perceived tribal or national interests. You say, "never solidarity before criticism." I know that when you talk to Arab students you say, "If you want to understand Jews, you better get used to the fact that there was a Holocaust." I feel very good about you taking that role on, though a little horrified that it had to be done—in other words, that they didn't know.*

A: It's a great problem. A few weeks ago, I spent three weeks in Weimar with Daniel Barenboim—a very close friend of mine—Yo Yo Ma, and a group of young musicians from Arab countries and from Israel. Since Weimar is barely five kilometers away from Buchenwald, we took all of them on a trip to Buchenwald one afternoon. And it was quite interesting, because to the Jews it meant one thing and to the Arabs it meant something quite different.

My role there was to lead the discussions that we had every other night. The night before we went to Buchenwald I gave a talk, and said, "Look, if you just go to this and see it as part of the Jewish experience, it's wrong, because it's part of the human experience, which we as human beings have to understand. In other words, universalize it and understand it as a horror that afflicts all of humanity." It was quite an important moment for me and the Arab kids, who, I think, appreciated my commentary.

Q: *In the memoir, you allude often to an inner self maturing and coming together through your experience of music and literature.*

A: The inner me was always under attack by authority, by the way my parents wanted me to be brought up, by these English schools I went to. So I've always felt this kind of anti-authoritarian strain in me, pushing to express itself despite the obstacles. I think that's probably the most valuable part of my life. Whether in the end the inner self won or not I can't really tell. When you become a public figure, you still think, *That's really not me, there's more to me than that.*

Q: You've maintained a connection to practical politics all your life. Isn't it difficult for something as subtle as an inner self cohering around literature and music to maintain itself when translated into the language of politics?

A: Of course. The memoir was my answer to trying to maintain the integrity of the inner self, by laying open all the contradictions and irreconcilabilities. I think it is an unconventional kind of memoir, in which I allowed myself to spend time on periods of my life when I was nonpolitical, leaving in abeyance the politics of my other writings.

Q: In Representations of the Intellectual you write about the intellectual as engaged, as responsible, as committed both to truth and to politics. The language seems to belong to another era. Today, we talk not of intellectuals being engaged but of knowledge workers, particularly in the world of high tech.

A: Absolutely. But the whole notion of commitment is deeply important to me, as is the notion of humanism, which is a discredited notion. I'm trying to restore some sense of fullness to it. For instance, I have the right, as the president of the Modern Language Association, to organize a presidential forum at the MLA convention this coming December. The title is "Scholarship and Commitment." I've invited Chomsky, Pierre Bourdieu, Michael Freid. Personal example is very important. I want to restore the notion of commitment from an earlier part of this century, as you say, to the end of this century.

Interview: Edward Said Talks about His New Book *Out of Place* and Exile

Scott Simon / 1999

Copyright 1999 by NPR®. Used with the permission of National Public Radio, Inc. Any unauthorized duplication is strictly prohibited. This news report by National Public Radio's Scott Simon was originally broadcast on National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition Saturday*® on 6 November 1999.

SCOTT SIMON: *Edward Said has been sick over the past few years. While being treated for leukemia, he's reflected on the varied life he has spent, and found that no matter how much he's been accepted as a literary critic, essayist and political advocate for the dispossessed of Palestine, he's always felt out of place. Out of Place is the title of the new memoir he's written about being born in Jerusalem, growing up in Cairo, Lebanon and finally the United States. Always moving, roving and feeling like an exile. Edward Said joins us from the studios of member station KUOW in Seattle, and, Professor Said, thanks for being with us.*

EDWARD SAID: Thank you for having me.

SIMON: *May I ask first, how are you feeling?*

SAID: I'm OK. I had a sort of experimental treatment last summer. The summer of '98, which was the only thing available to me after four-and-a-half

or five years of chemotherapy and radiation, and, miraculously, it gave me a remission. It didn't cure me, but it gave me this remission and I feel a lot better.

SIMON: *You write in the book that over the years, and particularly I guess when you were a youngster, even your name could make you feel a little out of place.*

SAID: Well, yeah, because I lived what seemed to me, from my earliest awareness of myself, a series of contradictions that I couldn't really handle because I had a conventional Arabic last name, family name, of course, Said. But for reasons that had to do with my mother's admiration for the Prince of Wales, I was given this very English first name, Edward. And it's important to understand that in those days, Palestine—which is where my family is from and where I was born—in Jerusalem, Egypt—which is where my father's business, or a part of my father's business was—and Lebanon—where we had a summer house—you could pass from one to the other without much of a problem. And in any of those places I never really totally belonged. We were minorities. We belonged to the Christian minority, and even in that we were a minority' cause my father was an Anglican, Episcopalian, and through an accident of birth, my father bequeathed to his children—there were five of us—an American passport. So there was a strange mix of Arab, non-Muslim, Christian, non-Orthodox, American, but not really American because I'd never been there, and this was difficult to sort of maintain.

SIMON: *Could it be enjoyable at the same time?*

SAID: It wasn't then. I have to tell you, I don't remember my early days with anything like the pleasure that I now feel in being a bundle of contradictions or coming to terms with it. No, it was always unsettling for me because one was always—I felt challenged. People would say, "Well, your last name is Arab and you look Arab, but you say you're American?" And then also the schools I went to, which were English schools—don't forget this was the end of the British Empire. This was in the '40s, during the war—the Second World War, and it was a period where authority was demonstrated best, I think, in the teachers that we had who were all English,

and taught us that we were inferior. The phrase for us was Wogs, because none of us was English.

SIMON: *Professor Said, as someone who has made a living and quite a vocation over the years with the exercise and sensitivity to language, I'm wondering, are the memories you have of these times in English, in Arabic?*

SAID: It's very funny. You know, I don't really know because I mention on the first page of the book that it's difficult for me to remember which was my first language. I simply don't know. I tend to think that I must have learned them together. I mean, I feel comfortable in both, and a certain amount of discomfort also in both. That is to say ... because I went to an English school, there Arabic was criminalized. So then Arabic became the language that we resisted with. This equilibrium that I have persists to this day, even though I think I'm pretty good at both languages. You know, almost like Heidegger. "Language is where being dwells." Well, it somehow doesn't for me.

SIMON: *Your father, Wadie was a successful importer of office supplies.*

SAID: Right.

SIMON: *I want to ask about your mother.*

SAID: Well, both my parents were quite silent about their pasts, but my mother would speak about her early days with a certain—I wouldn't call it sentimentality, but a certain kind of—well, they were very enjoyable. She was a brilliant student in school. She was spectacularly beautiful. But she was really never fulfilled. She never did anything. She was a very sleepless woman. She was restless. She had a tremendous amount of energy. And in many ways her life sort of scripted parts of mine, so that my restlessness, my sense of unfulfillment and occasional rest—well, restlessness I guess, comes really from her.

SIMON: *You write a lot about being sleepless.*

SAID: Yeah. It's a tremendous affliction. I remember my mother during her illness—she died of cancer ... a year before I was diagnosed with leukemia, and during her last days she would say things to me like, "I want to go

home." She was in Washington at the time. And I think that represented to me really the plight of the Palestinians. She had been uprooted from her home, went to Egypt, had a Palestinian passport. Of course, after '48, she was the only one of us—the five of us as children, my father all had American passports, but she didn't. So she was unable to travel with us in the same way.

SIMON: *There's a very flattering review of your book that's appeared in the New York Review of Books by the Israeli writer Amos Elon. I bring that up because there have been—you've had your critics over the years and they have struck up a new chorus when this book comes out who—to distill it to one sentence, they find something inauthentic in someone who's been an outspoken advocate for Palestinian rights being someone who spent so little of his life in Palestine.*

SAID: Well, here's the problem I think. The way I read this campaign, it had nothing to do with my book. My book hadn't appeared when they started—when this Israeli—American-Israeli, I should say, wrote his article saying what you just said.

SIMON: *This is in Commentary magazine.*

SAID: In *Commentary* magazine, which ten years ago published an article called "The Professor of Terror," saying that what I taught was terrorism, not English literature. So there's a certain track record of kind of preposterous things, and what he was trying to prove was a political point that used me as a kind of symbol. That I was somebody who said I was Palestinian. He couldn't, of course, deny the fact that I was born there. But he claims to have spent three years researching my life. He never talked to me, and he was desperate to prove that although I spoke as a Palestinian and for Palestinians, that I really never spent any time in Palestine.

Well, it's a desperate attempt not just to discredit me, because the people he claims to have spoken to, most of whom have now responded and said how he distorted what they said, or he lied about what he was doing. It's a dreadful, probably intelligence job. I think he was probably—Mossad was behind it. Because back of it is not so much me, but Palestinians now, during the final status negotiations, who have and clamor for the right of

return. Don't forget that I'm one of many hundreds of thousands—four-and-a-half million to be exact—Palestinians today who are refugees and made refugees—their parents and grandparents—in 1948. So the great question is now what responsibility does Israel bear for this and what is going to be done about them. And in the last paragraph, which Elon actually in his *New York Review* article cites, this man extrapolates—Elon says—outrageously by saying, "Well, if Said says all of this, how can we believe all the other Palestinians. They're obviously liars, too." And the idea is to not discredit my life, but to discredit the whole political tragedy of the Palestinians who say that they are a dispossessed people.

SIMON: Amos Elon, to cap this off. I don't even want to refer to it as "comes to your defense." He criticizes what he characterizes as this diatribe by pointing out that's what they used to say about a great many Eastern European Jews, that they were worthless and cosmopolitan.

SAID: European Jews. Yeah. Yeah. Right. I think the very idea of a kind of Palestinian story or a narrative or a life is something that deeply ideological Israelis reject because if they actually faced it, as, alas, they've had to face it now after fifty years, is that one of the great tragedies of the twentieth century is this extraordinary congruence really of a people who are the victims of genocide and the Holocaust have really created another set of victims by depriving Palestinians of their place so that a Jewish homeland could be established. And it was established by force and, of course, a whole generation of Israeli historians is now corroborating this and even the Israeli school books have been revised to talk about this.

*SIMON: Let me ask you this finally. The book is titled *Out of Place*. It's predicated on the feeling of outsidersness, outsidersness maybe would be the best word to coin. Are you at the point in your life now where you think, in fact, there's some strength in that identity of being a bit of a stranger wherever you are?*

SAID: Oh, absolutely. No question about it. Certainly somebody who has been involved in as many disputatious situations, where people are debating political issues, I think require what Matthew Arnold, the great English critic

of the nineteenth century, called aliens. People who are slightly outside the mainstream, and can see things in a way that becomes their vocation.

SIMON: *Do you mind me asking, Professor, are you lonely?*

SAID: I think yes, in many ways I am. But I think most people are. You know, Conrad, the writer who, more closely than anyone I've followed and written about and identified myself with. He's a much greater writer than I am, but still, there's a passage in *Heart of Darkness*, he says that "We live as we dream, alone." And I think it's a fundamental truth that we do, which doesn't mean that one can't, as I say, have other connections and other relationships of a very deep and intimate sort, but that sense of aloneness, yes, is I think what in the end one has.

SIMON: *Professor Said, thanks very much for speaking with us.*

SAID: Thank you very much.

SIMON: *Edward Said, his new book is a personal memoir called Out of Place.*

The Connection Interview with Edward Said

Christopher Lydon / 2000

Copyright 2000 by *The Connection*.
Reprinted by permission. This interview
was first broadcast 7 April 2000 on
The Connection®, a production of WBUR
90.9 FM, Boston, hosted by Christopher
Lydon and produced by Mary McGrath.

CHRISTOPHER LYDON: *Welcome, Edward Said. It's a great pleasure and honor to have you on The Connection. I wish you'd just begin by reminding people who may have been on Mars for the last five years—when and why you broke with Arafat.*

EDWARD W. SAID: Well, I broke with him in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait when I felt that he supported that invasion immorally and incorrectly. Then he immediately landed in the position of the loser in that war and was forced to accept the rather humiliating conditions, which he made worse, that were set for the peace process that began in Madrid shortly after that. I was involved in the summer of '91 in setting up the terms for Palestinian participation in the peace process and every one of the things that we set as our guidelines he canceled because he wanted to enter no matter what. He wanted to make himself acceptable to the Americans and the Israelis, and since that time, he's, to my mind, been in a kind of tragic fix. Of course he has a long history of achievement as the head of the Palestinian movement in terrible moments of trial and

difficulty. But on the other hand, he has really not considered his people's best interests in the main interest of staying in power.

CL: *How would your guidelines on Madrid have been different? How would the process have had a different result if he'd taken your advice?*

EWS: Well, obviously, it began when they started negotiating in Washington or after Madrid with the Palestinian delegation that came from West Bank and Gaza, and there were certain things that had to be absolutely held on to. For example, the end of the settlements, the idea of taking more land had to be absolutely barred. Of course, in all of this the Israelis have the much stronger hand. They had American support; they were vastly more powerful. They had all the cards. What we had was the Intifada and the support of our people. Progressively, and over time, he undercut that delegation in Washington; he fractured our people; he isolated the refugee community from which he came effectively (which is by far the largest majority of Palestinians in the diaspora) and he confined himself to being a policeman for the Israelis in Gaza and the West Bank. It is a very clear pattern, all to stay in power and that's what they understood—that's what Rabin understood; that's what Peres understood; that's what Netanyahu understood, and that's what Barak understood. This is a man who can deliver in the end; he's useful to keep a vassal; he'll sign; he's a man without any cards. He's become so unpopular now that his appearances are almost always greeted with riots; he's good only to sign the final agreement and then he'll be gone.

CL: *What would the alternative have been? Would it have been an Intifada without end?*

EWS: No, I don't think so. The Intifada was not without end. There were institutions that were being built. He's brought back all the corrupt old ways; he's brought back the rule of the families; he's brought back the rule of the corrupt middle class that he uses to buy people off, and I think there were interesting things happening. There was a revolution in the schooling process; there was a revolution in the organization of the villages; there was a genuine social transformation. Then don't forget that this community of Palestinians all over the world is a very gifted

community. He could have drawn on all the talents of Palestinians—the lawyers, the writers, the intellectuals, the teachers. In fact he's alienated them all, and he's turned us into a community of indifferent and sort of transistorized people who're just watching and given the whole thing away.

CL: *Is it gone for the next generation or will it be. . . .*

EWS: No, I think it's gone for the time being, and I think what we have on the West Bank and Gaza now is a sullen acceptance of the status quo. But there is a tremendous seething unrest. Just last week, the Pope was in this refugee camp Deheishe in Bethlehem. The moment he left, there was a scuffle and a full-scale riot that broke out between the Palestinian police and the refugees in the camp. All of this because they are brutalizing the people. Brutal rule is brutal rule, no matter where it takes place, and I've never accepted the theory that Arafat is the leader and we are in a tough position; we have to follow him. It just doesn't wash. It's gotten us into more trouble and gotten us nowhere. There's now an interesting movement in Palestinian life among the refugees—a movement to return, actually, and to assert our right to return, which has been asserted by the UN since 1948. Look what happened in Kosovo.

CL: *Unlike the right to return to Israel.*

EWS: Yes, absolutely, the right to return to their homes.

CL: *Or to Kosovo.*

EWS: Absolutely. That's been asserted by the UN since 1948 in a Resolution called 194 which says that all refugees have the right to return to their homes. And this is gathering a great deal of force. There's a big petition that's being signed by every independent Palestinian all over the world, and there's a conference in Boston tomorrow to talk about this and put it on the political agenda. I think this is going to cause him some embarrassment, because I think he just wants to forget about the refugees as being too complicated.

CL: *You have children who inherit your stake and your interest and your zeal. What's your vision for them, and what's your hope for them?*

EWS: My daughter is an actress and very interested in the arts, and really not interested in politics. My son, who's a New York City kid, decided at an early age that he wanted to learn Arabic and taught himself Arabic and has the most phenomenal command of the language I've ever seen. It's quite extraordinary. Then he went back. He got a Fulbright to Egypt; he spent a year on the West Bank and he goes back all the time as a volunteer. He's a lawyer now. He's interested in public interest law, immigration law and all the good causes that one can fight through the law. I think he thinks of himself as a dual citizen of Palestine and of the United States, as many of us do.

CL: But what's his hope, what is your hope in him and what's his hope for the kind of reconciliation that you also talk about at the human level?

EWS: I think the history of the last fifty years has been a history of partitions that haven't worked. When the British left Palestine in 1948, they tried to divide it into an Arab and a Jewish state, and of course, the Jewish state was born. This was supposed to produce the security and the end of violence and conflict. In fact, the splintering of communities into racial and ethnic and religious, in my opinion, ghettos, has produced more. We know this; look what happened between India and Pakistan after the Partition. Look what happened in Ireland; look what happened in Cyprus; look what happened in the Balkans. I know it's very difficult to overcome these. Look what happened in Lebanon where the communities not only splintered, but killed each other. My argument is that, that has to be overcome. You cannot live with ethnic and racial fear, and you have to find a way to live with the other, and this is the most important point with regard to Palestine. Two things. Number one, more than one people claims that place; you can't say it's exclusively the right of the Jews or of the Arabs. Both of them have an equal right, in my opinion, in that place, number one. And number two, it's too small a place to divide. If you look at the area between Ramallah in the North and Bethlehem in the South, we are talking about twenty miles, north to south, that contains about a million people, Arabs and Jews. It's impossible to divide them. So you find a way to have them live equitably together, each in his own way of

course, but you cannot have one people with all the rights, and the other without any rights. That's apartheid.

CL: *When you get out of the law office, when you get onto the streets, when you observe it, as of course an American-Palestinian, what do you take to be the possibilities and the real obstacles in this very fundamental matter of living with the Other? And how it might be solved in that twenty-mile strip?*

EWS: That problem has preoccupied me most of my life, intellectually and politically. I think it is the main problem. I think fear and ignorance are the two main factors here, that somehow that contact with the Other will somehow threaten your identity. And second, I think we all have a kind of mythological view of identity as being a single thing that is basically intact, and has to be protected. I think that's simply nonsense. History teaches us that all of us are mixed, that every individual is made up of several different, perhaps even competing, strands. That's to be cherished. Rather than trying to launder out the strands that are competitive and contradictory, I think one ought to encourage them to live well as they do in music. There's a thing called counterpoint where you manage the voices in fugue. It makes it more interesting that there are more voices working together than less, and I think the same thing applies in society. I think we are gradually moving in that direction.

CL: *That's interesting because you said that this is a problem you've been struggling with intellectually and politically all your life. Maybe that's the wrong way. I mean intellectually-politically. Maybe we should be doing it emotionally, musically . . .*

EWS: Yes, intellectually-aesthetically, if you like as well; it doesn't preclude the Other.

CL: *But be as concrete as you can, how you got there, what is it that adds to think of these ancient hostilities as a kind of counterpoint?*

EWS: Well, I'll explain to you because one has to always factor in the role of the imagination and the fantasy. Many years ago, I wrote a book called *Orientalism*, which is really about how the Orient was a construction. It was a fantasy created by mapmakers, by poets, by administrators. There

was this place called the Orient where all the people were Orientals; they thought in the same way; they were different from us, and so on and so forth. What I tried to do in my book was to show that this was a vast construction and had very little to do with what the Orient actually was. The Orient was much more varied, much more different, much more contradictory than all these people are. I think it's generally the case that people are much more complex than it is allowed for in our stereotypes, racial stereotypes or ethnic stereotypes. I think the way to get over it is obviously in direct encounters of one sort or another. The tragedy of what's happening in the Middle East today is that the politics of all of these states, whether it's the Arab states or the Jewish state, is to encourage separation and difference. Difference is there obviously, but the tragedy is to turn difference into barrier rather than into encounters and enriching experience.

CL: *In that sense, do you renounce or not renounce exactly, have you outgrown your own long, long investment in statehood for the Palestinians?*

EWS: It doesn't interest me. I mean, it doesn't.

CL: *It did.*

EWS: I still think that if it was still possible to have a state, I mean a real state . . .

CL: *But you now put that in the sort of separation bag and throw it out.*

EWS: Because I understand the logic of what's happening on the ground; a state today would mean, in effect, an Israeli protectorate. What's being forecast by the Oslo Accords is an enclosure of a few Palestinian territories on the West Bank amounting to about twenty percent fully controlled by the authority, with no borders with any Arab country. For example, the border with Jordan would be interceded by a border with Israel. Do you understand what I mean?

CL: *Sure.*

EWS: Israel would control the Jordan River, the same in the borders with Egypt. Now it seems to me that a state like that is basically a ghetto. It's a

little colony. It doesn't allow the people to live their lives as full and equal human beings. It doesn't mean self-determination. Whereas, what they now have is something that can lead to a kind of self-determination, namely, integration with one large state, which would include Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

CL: *When did you come to that and how? It seems to me that's a really important turn, away from the endless battle for statehood and sovereignty and sort of nationalism into this other very, very different alternative of some sort of integrated democracy?*

EWS: Well, it was my original idea, a notion of an integrated democracy. I've never really been, because of my history which I wrote about in my memoir, part of a state in the conventional sense of the word. I've never believed that the solution to one's problems is to have a country to which one belongs. I've been basically cosmopolitan. I've traveled a lot; I've lived in different places and I felt always slightly uprooted. But there was this drive to getting us our place in the sun. Thirty years ago, nobody could pronounce the word "Palestinians." We were told that we didn't exist as a people, so the assertion and the affirmation of nationalism to say that we do exist seemed to me important. Pretty soon it ran into the obvious problems; it ran into the pettiness of nationalism, of a kind of fanaticism which I've always disliked. Then I started to study the history of nationalism in the Third World, and I noticed how very rare were its critics. Its critics were really in a minority. But occasionally people like Tagore in India understood that Indian nationalism was tending towards chauvinism and had far exceeded any of its earlier uses as an instrument of liberation. What for me was the important thing was the distinction between nationalism and liberation. I saw that nationalism could sidetrack the kind of liberation that I think people are entitled to after years of misery, the right to lead full lives, to express themselves, and so on. I think that's where the transformation came.

CL: *You also draw a big distinction between what governments are capable of, which is mainly flattering and monopolizing power with each other, and what people are capable of. What encourages you at the ground level to think that Arabs and Israelis in the West Bank, in Jerusalem, for that matter, could treat each other as effectively equals?*

EWS: Well, let me just speak about my own experiences with Israelis which have been quite extraordinary. In the last four or five years, I've spoken in Israeli associations; there was a kind of taboo for Palestinians to do that. But I decided it was a silly idea and I thought I should do it. Some of my work has been translated into Hebrew. Courses are taught on my work in several of the Israeli universities. I went and I started to talk to Israeli academics, and I found that there were quite a stunning variety of opinions there. They weren't all, as many of us would have thought, Zionists in the simple sense of the word. There were people who actually believed, for example, in bi-nationalism. There were those who believed in the need for Israel to have a constitution which as a state it doesn't have. There were those who believed that the idea of a state being run by religious authorities was counter to their interest as secular Jews and so on and so forth.

CL: *There are also the new historians who took a somewhat Palestinian view of . . .*

EWS: Exactly, well, it's not a Palestinian view. I'd like to say it's a good objective view, it's what history, what Israeli records, tell us; they drove Palestinians out. A few Israeli historians actually wrote that when the archives were declassified about ten years or fifteen years ago. All of that seemed to me to be a territory worth exploring which, alas, is not too much explored by Palestinians, who are not in the fortunate position as I am, to have jobs in New York. So why not take advantage of it and do it?

CL: *Is it fair to think of you as a man who's evolved in a way from militant intellectual to the Rodney King of this scene?*

EWS (laughs): No, I mean I am still a militant intellectual. My tongue is very sharp, and I give and trade blows with people who disagree with me. That's part of the deal, but there are other relationships and other avenues that I explore that I think are, to me, more interesting than just polemic.

CL: *Let's explore them, and thank you for being here. Shalom is on the line.*

SHALOM: Hello.

CL: *Hello Shalom.*

SHALOM: Professor Said, you are, not to flatter, you are obviously the most sophisticated and prominent of Arab intellectuals in the world today; you may be too modest to admit it. But you propose basically the most sophisticated, if intentionally, unintentionally, or just in good faith (I have no way of knowing), formula for the destruction of Israel as a Zionist and in fact, Jewish State. If Israel agreed to make a joint state with all the Palestinians from the original few hundred thousand refugees who either willingly or unwilling left the area of what was then Palestine, and became about five or six million people (there are fewer than five million Jews in Israel), by simple democratic elections if they chose to dissolve this Israel as a Zionist state, a Jewish state, they could do all kinds of things by simple democratic means. Now, you can say this is just in theoretical . . . but let them agree on theory, not that many will come.

CL: *It's also democratic.*

SHALOM: What?

CL: *It's also democratic.*

SHALOM: It's also democratic. But if . . .

EWS: Not so bad really . . .

SHALOM: Yes, in theory, this is a beautiful, messianic idea. In practice, if it is agreed to by a certain number on principle and later refused, this would be a continuous cause for struggle and war. In fact, as I am sure you know, there were professors and intellectuals on your own level, in Israel, Professors of Hebrew University, Magnes, Martin Buber, famous philosopher and theologian, and Simon, who wanted to have a joint state, and they found that . . .

CL: *Shalom, you've made your point that you think a joint state or equal state would be destructive of Israel. Edward Said, what do you think?*

EWS: I follow your argument. Our views are not that different, but consider this: First of all you said democratic change; I think that's very important. Second of all, by the year 2010, let's say ten years from now,

there will be demographic parity between Arabs and Jews. You cannot ignore the fact that already twenty percent of Israel's population is not Jewish but Palestinian. If you add the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza, and factor in the rate of increase in the population growth, as I said by the year 2010, they will be equal in number. What do you do then?

My idea is that once you have that demographic parity, then the idea would be to invent creative ways by which these populations, which are impinging on each other, which live on top of each other, have to live together. Also, that certain structures of the past, which discriminate against Palestinians, and maybe discriminate against Jews as well on the Palestinian side, simply will not work.

CL: *Shalom, do you want to jump in again or not?*

SHALOM: Yes, I just want to finish my previous sentence. Those professors of Hebrew University, before there was an Israeli state, had wanted peaceful togetherness with Arabs. They were having only one major—you can find it in I. F. Stone's book, which was sympathetic to the Palestinians—Arab, a poet, from the Husseini clan who agreed to talk to them.

EWS: But you are talking about events seventy years ago.

SHALOM: He was assassinated.

EWS: There's been a major transformation of the area.

SHALOM: I know, but . . .

EWS: No, no. Let me just finish because you are saying things that need to be qualified. At the time you are talking about, Arabs were the two-thirds majority of Palestine in the 1930s. Why should they feel that they should give up their territory to five percent of the population? Israel had not been established; we are talking about a movement for bi-nationalism that was, to most Arabs on the ground, a theoretical possibility. The whole situation is transformed totally now, in that there is a large Jewish population. There is also a large Palestinian and Arab population and all around Israel and Palestine there is now a huge Muslim-Arab majority. What is the proposal for living together? Is it the way of the past or is there some new way that would enable the end of violence and a kind of

relationship that doesn't hold on to the mentality of the chauvinist and the frightened fragile identity. Let me give you an example. A couple of weeks ago, there was a major debate in the Knesset instituted by a proposal by the Education Minister. Yossi Sarid, who is a liberal, suggested that as an option for the Hebrew curriculum, high school curriculum, students get the right, the option to choose to read one Palestinian poem by Mahmoud Darwish, who is our national poet. There were two no-confidence motions brought against the government that the reading of the Palestinian poem might corrupt the minds of Israeli youth. This kind of thinking, in which the reading of a poem is so threatening to such a fragile identity, has to be superceded, has to be moved along to another state where people read each other's poetry without fear. That's what I'm talking about.

CL: *Shalom, it's your turn.*

SHALOM: Yes, but, Professor Said, do you see that your formula is a formula for destruction of Israel as a Jewish state?

EWS: I am not talking about . . .

SHALOM: But you admit that fact.

EWS: I am not talking about the destruction of anything. I am talking about the transformation of the State that would allow all the citizens of the State—Arabs and Jews. Now, Arab citizens of the State of Israel don't have the same rights as Jews. Do you admit that?

SHALOM: Do you admit . . .

EWS: No, No, I am just asking you.

SHALOM: Yes.

EWS: Yes, exactly, it's a state for Jews in which there are non-Jews. So I'm saying, by natural transformation, by the democratic process, the franchise—not the franchise, they have a franchise—but the rights, the right to own land, the right to access, to privilege, and so on and so forth, is not restricted only to Jews. That's all I'm saying.

SHALOM: You didn't let me finish my sentence. I admit it, but the degree of differential is so much smaller than what happens to people like the Kurds in Iraq, and to various minorities of which none of the twenty-one

or twenty-two Arab states read any Jewish poets or permit democracy. In other words, you want idealized absolute democracy only in Israel.

EWS: No, I am not idealizing. There is no absolute democracy anywhere. There isn't any in the Arab states. There isn't any absolute democracy, but that doesn't mean that one doesn't struggle for it. .

—Break—

CL: *I am Christopher Lydon. This is the Edward Said "Connection" (music plays). This is Brahms' E-minor Sonata for piano and violin . . .*

EWS: Cello . . .

CL: *Cello, sorry, performed by Edward Said's friend Daniel Barenboim and the late Jacqueline Du Prè. There's always a Brahms connection. There were people who really thought, after World War I, Brahms's music would heal Germany. And listening to this, you sort of wonder, could it heal all of us maybe? Could it heal the Middle East?*

EWS: No, I doubt it. But, it could produce quite extraordinary configurations, like the one that we did last summer in Weimar, which was the cultural capital of Europe. They asked Yo-Yo Ma and Daniel Barenboim . . .

CL: *It was where Brahms met Schumann, wasn't it?*

EWS: I don't know.

CL: *Or Liszt?*

EWS: Liszt lived there for a while.

CL: *Yes. And Brahms fell asleep; Liszt played his sonata for him.*

EWS: Goethe lived there for fifty years. But it was quite an extraordinary thing because we brought together about eighty young musicians from the Middle East who were auditioned quite carefully over a period of six months from all of the Arab countries and Israel. They came to this little town in East Germany and it was an astonishing period of about three weeks. Yo-Yo and Daniel gave master classes, and Daniel conducted and drilled the orchestra. It was amazing. I led these discussions at night with the students who were all very gifted musicians. It was quite interesting at the beginning how many edgy people there were; there were hostilities

and all kinds of things. By the end of the two-and-a-half or three weeks that they were there, quite a different thing had happened; an orchestra had been born. Now I don't think that there's any political fallout from that, except that it's just a new pattern that I think has a role to play in providing models for different kinds of relationships between not just Arabs and Jews, but between Arabs amongst themselves. There were many Arabs who had never met other Arabs there, and for them it was an interesting encounter. And it all came about because of this quite extraordinary power of a figure like Barenboim, who is an amazing musician and a great communicator at the same time.

CL: You've written very movingly, to me, about your friendship with Barenboim, and it's not about an Arab being a friend of a Jew, it's about two men who sort of saw each other in a line in London and immediately recognized the profoundest kind of human sympathy.

EWS: We also share one thing in common, which is that we are never stopped by the ordinary barriers that separate people. Barenboim as a pianist is somebody who's always reaching across the footlights to solicit the attention of his listeners and his audience. In my own work that's what I try to do. There's no other reason for writing and speaking unless you are trying to engage the interest and make them part of your enterprise, with your readers and listeners. We both have a tremendous interest in the Middle East as a place of possibility, not because there are these separations, but because there are these mixtures. Neither of us lives there. Daniel lives in Berlin and Chicago, and I live in New York. But the Middle East is important as a place to go back to. It's a place that's interesting to us because of the incredible variety of lives that are there and the cultures that it's possible to excavate. I know from his point of view, the discovery of going into an Arab home, for example, which he did for the first time when we went to one in Ramallah a couple of years ago, was for him like a major adventure, because, he said, in his own background, growing up as a young musician in Israel back in the fifties, he had no knowledge of what the Arabs were like although they were next door. One of the things he's very interested in doing, for example, is learning Arabic. He actually

made an announcement at a concert he gave in Jerusalem which I attended, a recital, in which he said he was outraged by the fact that the program was in English and in Hebrew but not in Arabic. So that notion of dissipating boundaries that are usually quite, in the end, mechanical and not worth maintaining, I think is very much part of this.

CL: *Do you and he talk about politics, or is that part all simply implicit?*

EWS: No, we do talk about politics. Although, we don't obviously agree on everything. His idea of what happened in the history of the Middle East really begins with 1967, with the moment he says when the Jews for the first time in their history acquired a subject population. For me, the problems in the Middle East begin in 1948 with the dispossession of the Palestinians and the destruction of Palestine. So, we agree that there's a problem. But I think we both agree that the solution, the present peace process of separation and the attempt to set up a kind of phony entity, etc., is not going to lead anywhere. He was the first Israeli musician to come to the Palestinian National Conservatory in Ramallah and play a recital. It was a major step for him, but it was also a major step for Palestinians who think of Israelis especially in Ramallah and Bir Zeit, which is where it was, as basically an army of occupation. And even Israelis who are well intentioned are still thought of with hostility because their troops are there, right? But he came and it was a flawless evening. There were about five hundred people, and he completely charmed them. He donated his services. He was really quite extraordinary.

CL: *What did he play?*

EWS: Well, I'll tell you what he played. He started off with the "Pathétique" sonata of Beethoven. He then played the "Opus 109 in E major, No. 30" of Beethoven. Intermission. He then played a selection of Chopin pieces including the "Fantasy in F Minor," and I think he ended with an Albéniz piece. It was a big program. Then, as an extra encore, I had arranged that a young Palestinian pianist, very gifted pianist, who's from Nazareth, come and play a four-hand piece with him, and they played a Schubert Marche Militaire. It was a stunning evening. Zubin Mehta was

there, and he told me and Daniel that he had never been to the West Bank. He had been conducting the Israel Philharmonic for thirty years. He's never set foot outside of Tel Aviv. His tears were streaming down his face at this quite extraordinary event.

CL: *Invite us the next time, please.*

EWS: In the future I may.

CL: *Good. Invite us all the next time, we'll broadcast it live. Raj is on the line. Hello Raj, welcome.*

RAJ: Yes, thank you. Thank you for having me. My question is about Professor Said's theory in general and I agree with so much and I've learnt a lot from his work, but I wonder what to do with witnessing. Or in other words, the situation when people feel an ethical call to convert or save the Other, to eliminate difference, and therefore they can't live with difference. So what would you say about those cases?

EWS: Oh, listen, I'm totally against it. Don't forget that the history of my particular community, the Christian community in Syria and Palestine, is one of converts. We were converted from Orthodox Christianity, in my case, to the Protestant church. I think the idea of converting people from one sect to another goes deeply against my own interests. First of all, I'm a very secular person; I'm not interested in trying to convert people. But I think I'm interested in engaging them in discussion and debate rather than trying to turn them into new converts. The whole idea of a convert is something that fills me with dread.

RAJ: But there are people who think that it's their moral obligation, their right, to do this.

EWS: Yeah.

RAJ: And they are sincere in feeling this.

EWS: Well, I wish I could say I wish them well. They don't really interest me. I mean, their enterprise is not something that concerns me a great deal. Because I am secular, because I'm basically skeptical, whole, full conversions from one total belief to another are things that make me very, very suspicious, given that the part of the world from which I come is full

of those kind of transformations. And enthusiasm in general, of that kind of total, kind of mind-obliterating experiences are things that I think are very, very dangerous, and one ought to really warn against them and fight against them if possible. I understand that people might feel an ethical obligation to convert and to convert others, but I myself don't share it, and I find myself deeply against it.

CL: *Raj, thank you. Hill is on the line.*

HILL: Hello. I wish we could all share your idyllic vision of a new Middle East, and I'm certainly glad you brought up the issue of curriculum and culture, Dr. Said. I wish you would comment on what would seem a glaring exception to your vision and that's Palestinian education in elementary and high schools.

EWS: It's horrible. It's perfectly horrible.

HILL: Yes, excuse me, but if one were listening to your arguments, one would think that there was this idyllic culture.

EWS: I didn't say that.

HILL: One would think that if Israel only opened its borders that they would be welcomed by Palestinians. The textbooks that are published by Palestinians today, which were published only a year or two ago, which were not Jordanian or Egyptian textbooks, are rife with not simply anti-Zionism or anti-Israel rhetoric, but actually anti-Semitic teachings which are reminiscent of . . .

EWS: Could you name one just so that I could look it up . . .

HILL: Absolutely. *Our Arabic Language for the Eighth Grade* . . .

EWS: Who wrote this? Who's the author?

HILL: I don't have them in front of me, but you can look them up on the Internet if you'd like to.

EWS: Oh, OK. And where are they taught? Which schools? Could you tell me which schools they're taught in?

HILL: They are taught in Ramallah; they're taught in Jenina.

EWS: Which schools in Ramallah?

HILL: They're taught in Nablus.

EWS: I see, OK.

HILL: Israeli textbooks on the other hand, the one I'm looking at right now, says *How We Can Live with Our Arab Neighbors*. So, unfortunately, some of the things you seem to say seem to fall into the rubric if it sounds too good to be true, then it just might be.

EWS: No, can I just reply?

CL: *Sure, sure.*

EWS: Look, I think what you are saying is basically true. I think the level of education, primary education, in the Arab countries, and in Israel by the way, is deeply chauvinist. It's highly defensive. The Knesset debate was one instance, the one I talked about earlier. I didn't at all mean to imply that things on the other side were rosy. I didn't say that at all. I quite resent the notion that what I'm talking about is idyllic. I'm simply talking about the need for change. The situation is bad and I think it needs to be looked at as it is—bad—and transformed into something better. One way of doing that, I agree with you completely, is through education. There's no reason to tolerate any of the ethnic or racial or religious stereotypes, alas, that exist both in Arab textbooks and in Jewish textbooks, where, for example, the plus sign is not even allowed to be used because it's supposed to be token of the Christian cross. That kind of prejudice and ignorance, I think, is simply intolerable. Just as the anti-Semitic and other ethnic things that you talked about is. I haven't seen them myself, but I have no reason to doubt that you are not telling the truth. But the point is that there is a state of war. Look at the Japanese-American situation during World War II; it was full of the most hideous, racial stereotypes and caricatures thought of as part of a state of war. I think one way of transforming this is to enable people to feel, "Well, look our identities don't depend so much on fighting the existence of another," but in somehow coming to terms with it. And that's what I'm talking about. It's not idyllic. I think it is necessary.

CL: *Hill, thank you. Peter is on the line.*

PETER: Well, I have several comments. One is, there is a doctrine in American law, the "clean hand doctrine," which says basically you should

be careful about accusing others of something of which you may be guilty yourself. That's not really precisely what it is, but I'm curious whether Professor Said has ever, in his long career, denounced in the Arab countries the treatment of virtually every non-Arab or non-Muslim group. I'm thinking in particular of the Berbers; he surely must have met Berber exiles in his wanderings in Paris and he knows that a number of them have been killed recently. He knows about the riots, I assume, in Tizi Ouzou and Tamanrasset. He knows that the Berber language is forbidden and has been because of the forced Arabization of the original inhabitants in Algeria.

CL: *The question, Peter, is whether he has criticized this kind of thing?*

PETER: It's about the fact that everywhere in the so-called, and misnamed Arab world . . .

EWS: Why is it misnamed?

PETER: . . . The Copts, the Berbers, the Blacks in the Sudan, and then I would guess, the Maronites in Lebanon, these are the four major, either non-Muslim, or non-Arab groups.

EWS: Well, I belong to one of those groups myself actually. I am a member of a Christian minority.

PETER: Are you a member of the Copts?

EWS: No, I'm not. But I'm a member of an even smaller minority.

PETER: Well, I'm now asking you, don't you find it peculiar that the Arabs who constructed after 1967 this Palestinian Arab people, so that . . .

EWS: I mean, are you giving us a speech? Look, I know what you are asking me and I denounce any type of racial or religious or ethnic discrimination, whether it takes place in the Arab world or elsewhere. Is that all right?

PETER: (Unintelligible)

EWS: Yes, I have. I really don't feel I need to answer every one of your comments here because I can answer them all at once.

CL: *Do you want to speak to the construction of the Palestinian people after '67 or not?*

EWS: I don't know what he refers to. It's quite interesting; coming up on the plane yesterday I read an article in *The New Republic* which sounds very much like what he is talking about and I think he's simply repeating the

argument. It's OK. I don't need to reply to it just this minute. It's pretty silly.

CL: *Carl is calling from the car phone in Providence, Rhode Island.*

CARL: Hello, Professor Said. This is Carl Senna. I am a columnist with *The Providence Journal* and also a long-time aficionado of Dr. Said and his work and a friend of the Palestinian people. I thank you—I think it was you or someone related to you who wrote a note commenting on the column I wrote about the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination League annual meeting in Arlington, Virginia last year. But I'm calling about two things. One, you describe the bi-national state. Would it be possible, where Palestinians have twenty percent of the land? I come from a place, I came from Roxbury, Massachusetts, and grew up there, and we lived among Irish-Americans. I'm a mixed African-American and Mexican, and there were also other groups there. At the time that I was there, during the '50s and '60s, when there was great turmoil, there were heroic types, like Reverend Michael Haynes, my mentor, and other people like that in Roxbury, and they were able to forge a new Boston which is still not settled but at least it has some degree of harmony that I never knew. And I just wondered if individuals like yourself could find individuals in both communities, in the Jewish and Arab communities who would be able to lead the way, like Bishop Tutu in South Africa, etc. The other question is about your book. There was a great deal of criticism about it because some people said, in *Commentary* magazine particularly, that you had fabricated some aspects of your early growing up and that you weren't really legitimately a Palestinian. I just wondered what are you doing about that?

CL: *Carl, thanks for the call. The question is clear.*

EWS: I think there actually is a new constituency. It's just not being allowed to be heard or seen or act. I think there are a lot of Israelis, there are a lot of Palestinians, there are a lot of Arabs, there are a lot of Arab-Americans (the polls show it), who now believe, in effect, that a bi-national state in Palestine, that some arrangement that goes beyond the miserable little bantustans and the little settlements with their barbed

wires and the incredible militarization of the place can't be a portent of the future. It's going no place. They've divided the land up so much that there is no room to move in it anymore and of course an entire people are still dispossessed. So I think a lot of Israelis feel strongly that some new arrangement has to be made. Of course we are now in a stage where we're only able to explore these things verbally the way we are doing now and through associations, and through meetings and exchanging of ideas. But I am convinced that there is a major change taking place on the ground, inside Israel, inside the Palestinian community, as a result of unhappiness with what the peace process, which was supposed to do all these wonderful things, has not done. Palestinians are poorer, Israelis are not anymore secure, and the whole thing has simply ended in a kind of stalemate going no place fast. That's number one. Number two: It does seem to me that a new generation is the only hope, my children's generation, where the hovels of the past, where the legacy of the past is not so heavy. There are still commitments; there is a feeling of attachment to the place, and some sense that the future is ours to construct and it's not going to be done by them, whoever they are, the leaders or the other people. I think that is the only way to get us out of the mess we are in right now. This idea, which I have been very critical of from the beginning—the United States, just because Clinton wants it for his election, or, at the time for his election, and for his Presidency—to have a peace process going is not going to produce the peace. The people are the ones who are going to have to. Egypt has had a peace with Israel for over twenty years and no Egyptian of any note wants anything to do with Israel, despite the peace agreement. Now, that's not a blueprint for other peace agreements. The same is true of the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel. There's no interaction at all between them. So what is the solution? That's really what I'm talking about here. What is the alternative?

CL: Carl also asked a question—I don't want to belabor it—about your identity as a refugee, as a Palestinian, as a child of Jerusalem. Or were you a child of an Egyptian family living in Cairo, and all these kind of things.

EWS: No, and that's very funny. My parents were both Palestinian. My father was born in Jerusalem; my mother was born in Nazareth. My father lived in Cairo. I never said I was a refugee, but the rest of my family was. My entire extended family was driven out of Palestine by the spring of 1948.

CL: *And in that sense the thematic title Out of Place seemed to me entirely sustained by that book.*

EWS: Yes, absolutely.

Edward Said: Embattled But Unbowed

Haroon Siddiqui / 2000

From *thestar.com* 22 June 2000.
Copyright 2000 *The Toronto Star*.
Reprinted by permission.

Toronto has been in Edward Said's consciousness since 1956 when as a student at Harvard he found himself transfixed by a Glenn Gould record. Later he would rush to Gould's performances in Boston; buy all his records; follow his career until his death in 1982; and, being an accomplished pianist himself, write knowledgeably about the genius, including an erudite piece last fall, "The Virtuoso as Intellectual."

So in 1986, Said, professor of comparative literature at Columbia University and the leading Palestinian intellectual of this era, was glad to come to the University of Toronto as the Northrop Frye visiting lecturer in literary theory. And this month to the campus to receive an honorary degree. And ruminate about several subjects, including his health.

Battling leukemia since 1991, and having had unsuccessful radiation and chemotherapy, he is undergoing experimental treatment. "I am functioning pretty well," he says, though he is often tired and out of breath.

But he hasn't let that dent his indomitable spirit. Or the "passion, courage and boldness" for which he was lauded by Linda Hutcheon, U of T professor of English, at the convocation. Or the eloquent advocacy for

Palestinians that Professor Michael Marrus, dean of graduate studies, credited him with.

Said remains combative, in keeping with his often lonely mission to "speak the truth to power." His has been a David and Goliath battle against a range of adversaries: Orientalists, right-wing Zionists, autocratic Arabs, and Holocaust-deniers and anti-Semites among his own people.

In an interview, he spoke provocatively on a range of issues.

THE PEACE PROCESS: Having dismissed the 1993 Oslo accord as a Palestinian Versailles that created bantustans in the occupied territories, Said calls it "a trick" to avoid United Nations resolutions demanding total Israeli withdrawal. He predicts that, current pronouncements notwithstanding, "Israel will accept a Palestinian state but not its boundaries, so that it will be a theoretical fiction of some sort."

EHUD BARAK: The prime minister who promised peace, and has pulled troops out of South Lebanon, is, to Said, "as bad, if not worse, than (Yitzhak) Rabin and (Benjamin) Netanyahu. He wears a better mask but his ideas are the same—unimaginative, conventional, authoritarian."

YASSER ARAFAT: The head of the Palestinian Authority is "a prisoner of the Israelis." He is a tyrant to boot, running a "lawless land, with no constitution and no basic law," and inflicting "horrible repression" on his people, by maintaining "an atmosphere of terror."

HUMAN RIGHTS: "There should be a single standard for human rights, not one for Palestinians and another for the rest of the world." Yet, he says, too many crusaders "talk of human rights for everyone except the Palestinians. It's moral hypocrisy of the worst sort."

THE FUTURE: Said is pessimistic for now—"the current generation is hopeless"—but optimistic in the long run, particularly because of the slow evolution of Israel itself.

The traditional Zionist narrative is being changed to acknowledge unpleasant facts. School texts now say that, contrary to myths, Arabs were indeed expelled in 1948; that Jewish forces enjoyed numerical superiority

over Arabs in that war; and that innocent Arabs were massacred by Jewish zealots. Students also read Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish who, like Said, opposes Oslo.

"The Israeli public," says Said, "is now much more advanced than the Jewry in North America," which feels duty-bound to defend Israel at all costs and attack him even as he gains readers and credibility in Israel (a Hebrew translation of *Orientalism*, his seminal work is coming out).

Pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim has praised him as a Renaissance man of great moral authority. On Said's suggestion, he conducted a concert in the West Bank. And last fall, the two joined cellist Yo-Yo Ma for a workshop in Weimar, Germany, for young Israeli and Arab musicians.

HIS MEMOIR: Said is forceful in refuting the "shabby tactics" used by "extreme right-wing Zionists" to discredit *Out of Place*, his seventeenth book. An article by a Justus Weiner, working for a Jerusalem group funded by the convicted junk bond felon Michael Milken, questioned Said's Palestinian roots. It said the house in which he was born didn't belong to his father, and that he may even have lied about attending school there.

But Said has never said anything other than that he was born in Jerusalem, that he studied in Cairo, that as part of his privileged upbringing he shuttled between those places and a mountain resort in Lebanon, but that his entire Jerusalemite family was uprooted. The house was registered to Said's aunt. A cousin, Yusuf Said, now living in Toronto, took the deed to Israel just three years ago to refile the family's claim.

Said says Weiner "had never even read my book"; didn't talk to him or family members; ignored those who confirmed Said's story; and had the article printed "before my book was even published." The Weiner article ran in a conservative New York magazine, *Commentary*, after first being submitted to the pro-Israeli *New Republic*, which insisted he first check out the galleys of Said's book. Weiner's assertions have since been widely derided as "absolutely rubbish," "obviously wrong," "malevolent" and "scurrilous," designed merely to discredit the most potent Palestinian symbol in

America. Said says the publisher of *Commentary*, Norman Podhoretz, has admitted as much, telling a friend recently that "he published it simply to discredit me because a lot of people are reading me, even in Israel."

But the fuss "helped sell my book, especially in Israel. And the greatest irony is that a Hebrew translation is coming out and will be serialized in *Ha'aretz*," the Tel Aviv newspaper. •

Camp David 2000

Charlie Rose / 2000

From *The Charlie Rose Show* 28 July 2000.
Charlie Rose transcripts reprinted courtesy
of Rose Communications, Inc.

CHARLIE ROSE: *Joining me now is Dr. Edward Said. He is one of the most influential literary critics, also a Palestinian, a former confidante to Yasir Arafat and an adviser to two American secretaries of state. I am pleased to have him here to get his reaction to what happened at the Camp David summit and where he thinks things will go from here. Welcome.*

EDWARD SAID, Columbia University: Thank you.

CHARLIE ROSE: *A lot of people have a hard time understanding—and you too—why the impression is that Barak made all the concessions, none from Arafat. Now I know that you're not here as a spokesperson for Arafat. And you're not here even—*

EDWARD SAID: Or friend.

CHARLIE ROSE: *I know. You two used to be good, but you split for other reasons. The impression is, according to the president of the United States, Barak made a lot of concessions; the Palestinian leader did not.*

EDWARD SAID: Well, I think the position that Barak began from was this sort of mantra that they'd been using in Israel for the last fifteen, twenty, thirty years—you know, that Jerusalem is the undivided, eternal capital of Israel. And once they started to talk about parts of Jerusalem that could be negotiated—in this case, particularly the outskirts of Jerusalem, not actually

the city itself but the parts that were added during the annexation, some of the Arab villages like Abu Dís and Mut Hanina. That's where the change supposedly occurred.

So they were willing to talk about that, but the heart of the old city, even the part of the eastern section of the city that is important to Israel, which is largely Arab, those were not talked about.

Now, of course, Arafat on the other hand—

CHARLIE ROSE: *They were talked about, they just were not agreed on.*

EDWARD SAID: Yeah. But Arafat, on the other hand, has been saying that Jerusalem—east Jerusalem is the capital of any future Palestinian state. And I really don't think that there was any coming back from that. It's certainly not enough to tell him, "Well, you can have part of the outskirts of Jerusalem," unless he's given sovereignty, not only over eastern Jerusalem but also over the 200,000 Palestinians who live there.

I think he had his back to the wall and was unable to back further away from that, not only because that's his position which he has proclaimed in front of his people for years, but also because it is the Arab and Islamic position; that east Jerusalem must return to Arab sovereignty.

CHARLIE ROSE: *Let me understand.*

EDWARD SAID: OK.

CHARLIE ROSE: *If you're a Palestinian or a Muslim, maybe an Egyptian, wherever you come from, if you're an Arab, Muslim—non-Palestinian, Palestinian—it is part of the faith that you have to have sovereignty over east Jerusalem? Why?*

EDWARD SAID: Because the city has a profoundly Arab and Islamic and also Christian cast to it. It's steeped in that history. Not a history of—as, you know, longing, but of actuality. The Haram Al-Sharif is there. The Aqsa mosque is there. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher is there. We're talking about very specific sites, plus religious establishments—Awqaf and foundations—which make the city, have given it this Arab cast for at least 1500 years. And what has taken place since Israel came in 1967, begun actually by Teddy Kollect, was to remove from in front of the Wailing Wall,

to remove large numbers of Arab homes and residents and push them out in order to Judaize the city. So there has been a process of transformation since 1967. And I think the Arab position is unless we restore that which has been either submerged or sort of stamped out by this process of moving people around—I mean, it's a very conscious act of political engineering—then we have no grounds on which to stand before our people and before the Ummah or the Arab-Islamic community.

CHARLIE ROSE: *What would have happened—just go with me on this hypothetical—*
EDWARD SAID: Sure.

CHARLIE ROSE: *What would have happened if Arafat had said, "OK, I'll take joint sovereignty?"*

EDWARD SAID: The people are so intermeshed that the idea of separating them out into sovereignties and authorities artificially or by force will, in the long run, not work. Because, in fact, whether you are Jewish or Arab in Jerusalem today—you've been there—they walk on the same streets. They live together. So, my line from the beginning has been, "Why not acknowledge this?" and deal with that fact instead of trying to go back to some earlier period and say, "This is exclusively the right of the Jewish people" and "exclusively the right of the Muslim people." That cannot work. The country's too small, the histories are too intertwined. The idea of an entirely Jewish history is impossible. You can't think of it—at least not so far as Palestine is concerned. An entirely Arab and Palestinian history is also unthinkable without thinking of Israeli and Jewish history. So, given those realities of a kind of intertwining of the people, what you really need and what we didn't have at Camp David is somebody with a vision. I mean, a really extraordinary vision of a wholeness. OK. I'm even willing to accept the idea that you should achieve this in part. But, unless that's the goal you're moving towards, the idea of partitioning and separating can't work because it's too small and because the people are very close to each other. Look, in ten years' time, there's going to be demographic parity between Arabs and Jews in Palestine—in the whole of historical Palestine. What do you do then? You can't divide the way apartheid

divided, because Palestinians are well educated and the disparities and inequalities of rights and privileges in buying and selling land—all of that is. There's nothing hidden; it's all right in front of one. So, I think one has to move towards what is the optimum solution, rather than the minimal acceptable one, which is what they've been doing all along.

I don't think it's going to work. *

CHARLIE ROSE: *Explain this to me. So, you're suggesting that, unless you can figure out a way to share sovereignty—*

EDWARD SAID: It's the only way—for Jerusalem, in particular. I say, "Start with Jerusalem."

CHARLIE ROSE: *But, if you talk to the Israelis—you're talking about East Jerusalem, yes? "We'll share sovereignty over East Jerusalem, but forget—"*

EDWARD SAID: Before we run away from it, let me explain something to you. . . . West Jerusalem, which is where I was born was entirely Arab—30,000 Arabs who lived and built West Jerusalem. The areas where somebody like Sharansky lives now, the Beka'a was always an Arab-Palestinian section. It's now Israeli-Jewish. So, the roots of the city are not cleanly divided between, on the one hand Arabs, on the other hand Jews. They've always been in some way overlapping. East is much like West, and West very much like East. But, for the purposes of the argument, I'd say, "Yes, let's start with East Jerusalem, which is clearly Arab."

CHARLIE ROSE: *Exactly.*

EDWARD SAID: Yeah, So, fine. West Jerusalem is very dear to me.

CHARLIE ROSE: *OK. Let's assume that—you said they needed lilted vision there.*

EDWARD SAID: Right.

CHARLIE ROSE: *A very creative person.*

EDWARD SAID: Right.

CHARLIE ROSE: *We've got to believe the president of the United States had that kind of vision. He desperately wanted to make this work. He's no dummy.*

EDWARD SAID: Oh, but it's not over yet. See, I take a cynical view of this. I think that both of them—Arafat and Barak—you know, I have no information at all. But my hunch is that in the end there's going to be an agreement, not a good agreement.

CHARLIE ROSE: *Before September 13.*

EDWARD SAID: Before September the thirteenth. And I think it was very important, given the dramatic loss of support that Arafat had and that Barak has. It's very interesting. There's a quite dramatic parallelism between the two of them. Their domestic support was falling off greatly—for different reasons. And I think it was, therefore, very important for them to come to the summit, battle to what seemed like a draw, and then go back and say, "We didn't give up anything." Or "We were willing to give up and they weren't." Something like that. Arafat—

CHARLIE ROSE: *No, Arafat can say that more than Barak.*

EDWARD SAID: Exactly. Arafat has gotten a hero's welcome. To me—

CHARLIE ROSE: *Barak has gotten a—*

EDWARD SAID: To me this looks like the beginning of a coming down, a climbing down.

CHARLIE ROSE: *Let me conclude with this.*

EDWARD SAID: Yes.

CHARLIE ROSE: *Camp David 2000 was a good idea or a bad one? Was it in the end positive? Or negative?*

EDWARD SAID: No, I think it was positive. I think it was an important sort-of stirring of the pot. That these people—many of whom—let's talk about the Arabs and the Israelis—thrive on the absence of the other were forced to sit down and listen to the other. I'm for that. I think, in and of itself, it can't be bad. So, in that respect, I think it was a good thing. What it'll give in the future in terms of on the ground and improving the lives of people, which Camp—not Camp David, Oslo hasn't done yet. The lot of the Palestinians—

CHARLIE ROSE: *Well, Oslo hasn't played itself out.*

EDWARD SAID: —has gotten worse.

CHARLIE ROSE: *This is what Camp David's about.*

EDWARD SAID: That's true. That's true. But up to now, since Oslo, for the last seven years, things have gotten worse for the Palestinians. Now, I'm for anything that'll improve the situation. And so, if something will come out of Camp David that will improve the lot of the ordinary Palestinians, stir Arafat into some kind of reform, galvanize younger people on the West Bank and Gaza to think beyond the terms of the rather impoverishing situation that they live today, then I think it's good. I think anything that shakes things up a little bit is better than quiescence and what happened in Syria, for example.

CHARLIE ROSE: *It's always great to see you.*

EDWARD SAID: Good to see you.

Cultures Aren't Watertight

Joan Smith / 2001

From *guardian.co.uk* 10 December 2001.

Copyright 2001 Joan Smith.

Reprinted by permission.

JOAN SMITH: *It's a great pleasure to welcome Professor Edward Said from Columbia University. I wanted to start by talking about your book, Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays. This is a work spanning three decades—when you were putting this together, did you find yourself disagreeing with your younger self at all?*

EDWARD SAID: Yes, and also feeling some disbelief that I could have written such gibberish. Disagreeing and wondering how I came to be interested in that particular subject, and then wishing that I could take it back and change it. It's a grim moment.

JS: *But you didn't actually rewrite any of the pieces?*

ES: Not rewrite completely, but I changed a lot of them quite radically. I think, in some ways, perhaps improved them.

JS: *What were your criteria for deciding what went into the book?*

ES: The main criterion was to make them clearer. I think there's been an evolution in the way I have written; I've tried over the years to write for a larger, rather than a smaller, audience. I tried as much as possible to eliminate academic references and jargon. I removed expressions that at the time were very common—in the years when people were getting very excited about French authors and so on.

JS: *There's a quote from an American judge called Learned Hand that I've always liked, he said, "The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right."*

ES: Absolutely—skepticism before everything. I find myself often qualifying what I say, so I try to keep the qualification but leave out the hesitation and the appearance of circling around a subject. But always being skeptical. The writers I like most are not sermonisers or pronouncers of undying truths, but those who puncture other people's pronouncements—like Swift, who is a great favourite of mine, or, Conrad, where what seems to be clear really isn't so clear because it is surrounded by doubt and uncertainty about what you've seen. I like that very much.

JS: *So you don't rate consistency as an absolute virtue?*

ES: I've often been criticised for my inconsistency. I remember one of the first, long, very good reviews—in that it taught me a lot—of *Orientalism*. It said I was inconsistent—that I was trying to unite humanism with theory, following the idea that you can't do that. I responded at the time that inconsistency was very important, because I hate systems and I hate determinism and it seems to me that the whole idea is to fight them.

JS: *There is a kind of current intellectual thought that says that if you can catch someone out—find a passage that disagrees with something they wrote twenty years ago—then you've made some kind of extraordinary point.*

ES: I'm not really that interested . . . There's another consistency that I find in writers like Conrad, and that is the consistency of concern. They keep coming back. In Conrad, it's extreme situations, situations of extraordinary solitude, of doubt. As I was preparing this collection there seemed to me to be a consistency—a number of themes to which I have remained loyal. You may be writing about different subjects, but you're really focusing on the same things in different times and situations.

JS: *One of the things that surprised me about the book was that I couldn't always tell when the essays had been written. This suggests a consistency of approach, at least.*

ES: The ones that are tied to situations are essays like the one on bull-fighting, which was a phase of my life that some people would rather

forget. It was an enthusiasm of the 1960s, when I followed some bullfighters around Spain. In that sense, that was a situation that has now disappeared.

JS: *I sense a growing openness in the essays to currents like feminism, which when you started writing was not necessarily a great concern of yours. It comes through your writing much more, that sense of women as another silenced constituency.*

ES: Obviously I was very affected by the emergence of the women's movement in the late 1960s. Don't forget, I went to boys' schools all my life—the university I went to, Princeton, I still refer to as a boys' school because it was really like a prep school for young men. Women were banned. They were not allowed on the campus except as mothers . . . Let me not go into the details of what a celibate life is like, it's pretty dismal. In those days you had to go long distances—to New York—to get to the women's colleges . . .

So the whole idea of women as intellectuals, writers and people in the world was actually denied by the world I grew up in and was educated in.

JS: *One of the most interesting essays in the book is about a belly dancer.*

ES: This is Tahia Carioca, who was, I think, the greatest dancer I ever saw—I like dance as an artform. She changed my whole way of looking at it . . . They all fail after her—including Suzanne Farrell—in my mind. One of the things about Tahia Carioca was that she was a film star. I only saw her dance live once, which is the time I talk about; she was at a great distance and I was fourteen and terribly repressed. She seemed to represent every type of possible—and impossible—erotic experience that one could have.

JS: *What feminists would call "the experience of the other."*

ES: Well, yes, in a sort of degraded, slaving . . . she was totally the other. The seed was planted in my head that I should sometime get to know her—and I did, almost forty years later, when I went back to Egypt. But she wasn't exactly what she was when I'd seen her on stage.

She had become a fantastically contradictory creature. She had been very politically active in her youth. She appears in one of the Youssef Chahine films about his life in Alexandria, where she was a kind of rabble-rouser. About twenty years ago she went to Greece to do a kind of trip of

returning refugees to Palestine. A lot of artists and writers from the Arab world went to Greece to get on this boat. They never made it. They never made it out of Athens.

She'd become very religious when I saw her in the late 1980s; she'd also tripled in size. It was an extraordinary melange of the Wife of Bath and a pious Muslim woman. It was irresistible, because you felt that the two were somehow meant for each other in some way.

JS: You also write of your memories as a young child going to see the Tarzan films, which is quite a surprising juxtaposition to the other essays in the book.

ES: Yeah, in a way. But it's part of my interest in the manufacture of exoticism. When you realise that Edgar Rice Burroughs was a Californian who never went near Africa and that all the films were made in Florida . . .

I read all the Tarzan books, and realised that they were actually quite different. Burroughs, who was a Californian ne'er-do-well, imagined Tarzan as an English aristocrat—Lord Graystoke—while the Hollywood Tarzan was a kind of wild man. Weissmuller, who was a champion swimmer, played the part perfectly—he spoke in those monosyllabic sentences. Burroughs, however, imagined that Tarzan had educated himself and spoke in long, complicated sentences and knew a lot about Kant and Hegel.

Lord Graystoke was supposed to have switched between worlds and was a great wine expert, but as soon as he got to the jungle he took off his clothes and became Tarzan. I was fascinated by the way that the more the myth continued, the more different it became; it had several different lives. Poor old Weissmuller, who was a great hero of mine—I longed to be like him—ended his life as curator of the Swimming Hall of Fame in Florida.

JS: It reflects the distance of your life. You were a Palestinian-born boy living in Egypt, with American citizenship, going to English schools and watching American films about Africa.

ES: I really didn't realise for a long time that I was living in Africa; you don't think of it in quite that way.

JS: One of the most touching essays in the book is about exile, but it seems to me that all those experiences are preparation for your exile, because they are such a cultural mix.

ES: Not only a cultural mix. Going back to Tarzan, what fascinated me about those films was that he didn't seem to come from anywhere. He obviously wasn't an African. The films were terribly racist because the Africans were either porters, or they were these terrible savages whom Tarzan killed without a second thought before dinner.

But Tarzan himself was unaccounted for. That's what gripped my imagination; the films were really about a waif, and not this tremendous hero. There was something pathetic about him—which I could identify with, in a funny sort of way.

JS: *You quote Günter Grass in the book: "The predicament of the intellectual without a mandate." That interested me, because you've almost had a mandate forced upon you that you didn't choose. There's also an interesting bit where you talk about the inherent irreconcilability between intellectual belief and passionate loyalty to the tribe, sect and country—you say, "I've never felt the need to close the gap, but have kept them apart as opposites, and have always felt the priority of intellectual, rather than tribal, consciousness."*

ES: I've tried never to put solidarity before criticism. Someone like myself, who's never had a political office and never wanted it—maybe out of cowardice in not wanting to take responsibility for getting a job done—the one thing I can do is try to clarify a situation by analysing it and allowing people to make judgments on the basis of the best evidence I can put forward.

But I don't write about just anything—I don't think I'm capable of doing that. I write about things that matter to me, and obviously one of those things is the idea of tribalism—one's origin, and the place that I was born in. But never without clarifying it in as dispassionate a way as possible, and always with some commitment to greater values—more universal values than just the ones of nation, tribe and family. Those issues would be issues of justice, oppression, giving a historical context when it's lost.

In the end I don't think I have any commitment to summing things up or having a ready-made position. If you do that, you spend a lot of time herding details to fit rather than letting the details guide you to the next problem.

JS: *I wonder if you feel that we live in a world that constantly tries to make writers and intellectuals do that? When my book came out people said, "You've raised all these questions, but you've offered no solutions."*

ES: Yes, they always want answers. In a certain sense you have to provide some answers, but they're different kinds of answers to different kinds of questions. I'm often asked about the Middle East—people always want to know what is going to happen. The other kind of question is, "Why don't you stop killing people?" Well, that's an American question.

I think it's important for an intellectual to steer discussion away from what passes for pragmatic things, things that require quick answers. They should try to show that most of the time answers simply aren't possible. There are some times, when you are living through a particular moment, when you can't articulate a full response. But in the end I find myself instinctively, partly because the sense of criticism is so strong in me, on the other side of power. There are people who speak as though everything's been prearranged; the kind of people who know that when they step outside the door there will be a car waiting for them. There's a sense of having resolved everything.

Look at how Bush speaks—it sends me round the bend because it's so assured. Well, to be fair to him . . . actually, why should we be fair to him? To be fair to him, there's a little bit of the scoundrel about him; he's always looking around shiftily to check his minders are still there. The other day he said, "Those that do business with terrorists will not do business with America." The fact that anyone can talk in such huge abstractions—"America" or "Islam"—makes me want to puncture their pomposity.

JS: *There has been a real rush to judgment since September 11. It seems to me that you're talking about standing back from those emotional responses and crafting something much more subtle. Some people don't seem to be aware that they have been writing melodramatically at all.*

ES: I was in New York on September 11, and the first thing we all had to do was register the shock—and not just shock but also a sense of violation and anger at such a senseless and terrible deed. But then I felt—and it's a

real quandary—I felt that there were a lot of people out there who had to fill up columns. So beyond the shock and the outrage, “This is a terrible thing” and so on, people were trying to outdo each other with vivid descriptions of what they thought took place.

If you try and talk analytically about it, you are seen as justifying it. The next step after that is the idea that you are being anti-American or un-American. The culmination of all that was a list published two weeks ago by Lynne Cheney, the Vice President’s wife. She used to be head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and spent her time trying to close the whole thing down, which I thought was an odd thing to do. So she and somebody else published a list of 112, maybe it’s 117, people who are un-American. People who have said things that they shouldn’t have said. That’s where we are now. Unless you are vying to provide descriptions of outrage and anger that say “On with the war,” then you are un-American. In a situation like that, it’s very difficult to speak and write, but I think you have to make the effort.

JS: *Samuel Huntington’s book, The Clash of Civilisations, is back on the bestseller list.*

ES: Is it? Oh dear.

JS: *One of the strongest essays in your book is the one on Huntington. It seems to me that there is just as strong a fundamentalism growing in the west as there is in the east.*

ES: Yes, Huntington’s an interesting case. He had a great career as a cold war theorist; but he strikes me as someone who suddenly panicked at the end of the cold war—“there’s nothing more for me to do.” He had to invent something, so he came up with this. Like every bad student, the more he wrote, the worse it got. He knows nothing about culture, he knows nothing about civilisation, he knows nothing about history. I suppose he knows something about politics, but these large designations like “the West” or “Islam” or “Confucianism.” . . . He actually tells us to be very careful—and this is something you should watch out for as you walk out of the theatre—he says, “Beware the conjuncture of Confucianism and Islam.” Well, that’s deadly. You see these characters called “Confucianism” wandering around the street with a yellow hat on. . . .

He never thinks that cultures are about questioning, they really aren't watertight—they're made of jelly, they keep falling into each other and combining. The idea of fundamentalism is common to every one of them. It's really about literalism. That's what people like Huntington and Osama bin Laden are about: they take a text, which may be full of subtlety and uncertainty and incertitude, and they turn it into a clear pronouncement for action.

JS: *This is a time when we should stand up for secular and humanist values.*

ES: Totally. I'm an unashamed, unreconstructed secularist. My great master, Vico, teaches that, and it's absolutely right. He says that the world made by human beings, the historical world, can be understood only because it is made by men and women. The sacred history and the world of nature; well, a human being has very little command over that—except in the case of nature to destroy it, and in the case of the sacred to misinterpret it.

The world of secular history is entirely made by human beings; it can be understood that way and that way alone, not by revelation or by special enthusiasm or insight. That's the key thing. One thing that people misunderstand about the United States is that it is the most religious country on Earth. In a survey, 88% of people said that God loved them.

All the major religions become quite different when they're in America. They are a strange mix of exceptionalism, positive thinking and, above all, theocentric imaginings in which the American enterprise is at the centre of the entire world. That's worth taking shots at.

JS: *An Iranian poet who was in London last weekend said at a reading: "Poets cannot write about September 11, it is necessary to have written about it beforehand." I think he's wrong, but it shows that people with those sorts of imaginations write about these sorts of events.*

ES: I don't think I would agree with that. I think it's a question of having experiences that are similar to that. One of the things that makes it so difficult to write about September 11 in America is that it is supposedly without precedent. But that's only because America is a very privileged and protected space. Those Americans that come from other parts of the world, say from the Middle East, are used to seeing buildings blown up.

I remember as a kid the destruction of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. I can remember the explosion. Those kind of things prepare you for the sort of event that happened on September 11, but not necessarily on the same scale or with the same horrible force that it had.

JS: We're going to take questions now.

Q: In light of the recent events in the Middle East, what are your views?

ES: I don't really know where to begin except to say a couple of things about Ariel Sharon, whom I've been studying and have been fascinated by for many years. First of all, though he seems to exude, with his enormous girth—there's something very unattractive about the way he walks, or rather rolls—he is born to lose. Everything he does . . . Not only has he created a trail of blood and destruction behind him, but it has never worked out the way he wanted it. That's an impressive record for someone who's been doing it in the public domain for thirty years—namely, killing Arabs. He has single-handedly tried to destroy Palestinian nationalism by killing Palestinians. He's never succeeded. He's just made it stronger.

Nineteen years ago he did the same thing he's trying to do now—surround it, bomb it, besiege it, go after Arafat—and it didn't work. He's doing the same thing and it will have the same results. He'll kill a lot of people, make everyone's lives miserable, and Arafat will pop up somewhere else and he won't go away.

There is a kind of blindness there that is so relentless; it is the exact opposite of what so many Israelis actually want, which is a normal life in a secure environment. But they seem to have a penchant for picking leaders who will deliver exactly the opposite. In the long run I have no doubt that there will be some kind of peaceful resolution . . . I mean, you can't destroy two peoples. I think Sharon will pass from office much more quickly than people suspect, and I think that the Palestinian people will continue their seemingly endless struggle. By just staying on the land they will foil whatever he is trying to do.

As to what will happen next, I am in no position to say. But I am confident that the Israeli effort to just shut these people up will not work. I asked an

Israeli-American friend of mine what Israelis thought when they voted for Sharon and she said, "I think they wanted to subdue the Palestinians."

I said, "What does that mean?"

And she said, "I don't know."

Q: *What relevance does Frantz Fanon's work have today?*

ES: I feel a bond with him because he died of leukaemia, which I also have. The appendix to *The Wretched of the Earth* is all about the kinds of dreams and disturbances that occur, not only in the Algerians, but also in the French that he treated. He puts me in mind of the fact that colonialism, or the domination of one people by another—which is plainly what is happening now, with the Israeli army in control of the West Bank and Gaza and trying to break the will of the Palestinians—creates deeper distortions than the people in power seem to want. They want everything to go back to square one and the natives to go back to being natives.

That doesn't happen, obviously. All the things that colonialism introduces, which are damaged institutions and damaged spirits, children who have seen their parents humiliated by young Israeli soldiers—this causes a sort of twist in the soul and mind of the young person, and that creates a deeper sense of injustice and a more relentless will to inflict injustice on the other. Some kind of retaliation. Fanon is extraordinarily good at describing that.

He was also interested in the purifying and cathartic effects of violence. I happen not to agree with that, though there was a time when I did. I think Sharon and his people have tried, in a sense, to create incidents so that they can deepen their occupation and make their power even stronger over the Palestinians.

It doesn't always work that way. In South Africa we saw an oppressed people create a vision that compelled the other through its humanity and generosity. It isn't always about brutality and revenge; it can, in some instances, which Fanon doesn't allow, lead to a different kind of synthesis. So I see a great analytical scrutiny in his work that I find very powerful and interesting, but I'm not sure I always agree with the conclusion.

One other thing: at the end of his work, he intimates that it's no good simply trying to replace the coloniser with the "brown" or "black" equivalent. He says, "We didn't fight this liberation struggle to replace the white policeman with the brown policeman." He talks about the need for liberation to go beyond just independence. Had he lived, I think he would have gone on about that more. I agree with that. I think great struggles for human liberation don't just give you a negation of the previous state; they can, in the best instances, give you a great deal more.

Q: Christopher Hitchens wrote in the Guardian that he had been given warnings that Osama bin Laden had nuclear weapons and that he should leave Washington immediately. Did you get similar friendly advice?

ES: He said something quite clever—that he left late and returned early, just to make himself feel better. I don't have Christopher's gift for being friendly with top Washington insiders. The only ones I know are the outsiders. I do get a lot of abusive emails—which is a very American thing, by the way—saying you're such a rabble-rouser, you're so un-American, why don't you just leave? But they're not from anyone who signs their name at the end.

There is a kind of gigantism in discourse, where the language of justice and truth and so on has grown in size. It has been hijacked by the powers who claim that they're bringing justice and goodness to the whole world. It makes it very difficult for the intellectual to dissent from it.

It's very hard to say anything now. One is at a loss for words because you can't invent a new language, and you don't want to repeat what they just said. You don't want to use words that are so complicated that no one understands them, but you do want to fight back, to regain control of the language. I think the way to do it is by very minute and concrete descriptions of landscapes of horror and suffering that we are ideologically, minute by minute, being trained to forget or ignore.

If you look at the TV or at the newspapers, you really get the impression that the world has become what is on the TV or in the papers. An intellectual must try to restore memory, restore some sense of the landscapes

of destruction—what it's like to stand on the edge of a village and just bomb into it. Particularly when there are no defences on the other side.

There is a new phenomenon for which the U.S. and the Israelis seemed to have an amazing gift, which is to fight casualty-free wars at 50,000 feet. None of us seems to know what takes place on the ground. That has—I'm not saying it is—that has similar structures to terrorism. Innocent people on the ground are obliterated. The person in the plane has no idea what's happened on the ground. In the case of a suicide bomber, that person will be obliterated; in the case of a B-52 bomber he just goes back to St. Louis or wherever and doesn't give it a second thought.

That is immensely troubling. It is the same with people who fly missiles or rockets at destinations they can't see or don't know anything about. One should try to understand how that is made possible—how people can be driven, whether by desperation and poverty or by deranged pathology, to acts of tremendous, senseless destruction. The space is there but it's very difficult to claim it.

Several weeks ago I was interviewed by a Danish journalist who told me that she wanted to read the Koran, and I said, "Why on Earth would you want to do that?" and she said, "To understand."

"To understand what?"

"September 11th."

But she couldn't buy the Koran in Copenhagen because it had sold out. So I said, "In a sense you should be relieved." But then she said, rather earnestly, "Don't you think it's a good idea?"

"It's a terrible idea." She looked rather puzzled. "Let me put it this way, would you say that in order to understand Denmark we should read the Bible, or Hans Christian Andersen?"

"Oh, Hans Christian Andersen!"

"Exactly. Why not read a novelist?" So there is an interest, but it's the wrong kind. The idea is that every Muslim wakes up, reads the Koran every morning and goes out and does "it". Whatever "it" is.

I'm really talking from an American perspective, where we have these awful, ponderous pundits on TV giving the wrong idea—that "the Muslims"

have "failed" . . . We need to move away from huge generalisations, look towards literary work, and the multiplicity rather than the sameness of things.

I'm afraid Muslims and Arabs in America are hopelessly outnumbered. I have no right to speak for everyone, but I think all of us feel tremendously threatened. There is an enormous cloud hanging over us, we all feel discriminated against. If you speak Arabic on the street . . . The Tsar for Homeland Security, Governor Ridge, said yesterday, "It's a generic threat that we face." Whatever that means. "Go about your daily lives, but be on the alert. If you see anything unusual or strange, report it."

Then we have the Presidential Secretary saying, "You better watch what you say." That atmosphere is too much for Arabs and Muslims in America. They tried in the beginning, but the racial profiling, the picking up of suspects on the basis of religion, race and national origin is pretty much now out of control. I fear it. With the antiterrorism bills and all the rest of it, there is a very fearful atmosphere in the United States. I don't think we're going to be having a very happy time.

Q: Do you think there are things that Arab leaders in the west should be doing? Or are they too small a voice?

ES: I think they should try to build coalitions with other people. The great danger is of appearing isolated. That's what's happening—they are singled out from the rest of the population and seen to be a threat. My feeling is that you should try and associate with other people in the community who have also been singled out, whether that means Latino-Americans or Afro-Americans . . . You should try for understanding and human exchange, which is sometimes very difficult.

Q: Aside from building coalitions of minority groups, are there ways that people in this country and America could make stronger representation to the empowered majority?

ES: Not in those terms. That's why, when I'm asked to appear on television, I often refuse: because you are tokenised. The one thing you want to do is to show a kind of common ground. In schools, educated people might suggest that the teaching of geography and history might include

the history of the Arab world. But beyond that, I think it's very hard not to fall into the trap, which is that you are somehow special and you really aren't a terrorist . . . Do you see what I'm trying to say?

Q: *So if they have run out of the Koran, is there a novel you would recommend?*

ES: Yes, because what novels do is break the mould. You can no longer think of people as programmed terrorists who want to go out and kill—or throw rocks. One book everyone should read is *The Muslim Jesus* by Tarif Khalidi, a compendium of sayings about Jesus in the Koran and in Muslim writings, which shows that there is an enormous interest on the part of Muslims in the founder of Christianity. Not as a god, but as an important and admirable human being. It gives you an idea of the possibilities within religions like Islam for openness and a sense of exchange with others.

JS: *Thank you.*

Index

- Abdel-Malek, Anouar, 47
Abduh, Muhammad, 50
Abu Dís, 225
Achebe, Chinua, 53, 77, 132, 149
Adorno, Theodor W., xx, 88–91, 93–94,
131, 158, 186
Afghani, Jamal, al-Din, 50
Afghanistan, 106
Africa, 49, 105, 116, 173, 233
African National Congress (ANC), 157
Ahmad, Aijaz, xix, 86, 90
Air Force One, 128, 129
Al-Abram Weekly, 180
Alatas, Syed H., 151
Al-Azhar University, 107
Albèniz, Isaac, 212
Alexandria, 232
Al-Fayed, Dodi, 128
Al-Hayat, 163, 180
Alger, Horatio, 181
Algeria, 108, 109, 149, 216
Al-Jabarti, Abd-al-Rahman, 147
Alternative Radio, 163
Althusser, Louis, 48, 50
America-Israel Public Affairs Committee, 71
American Jewish Committee, xiii
American University, 40
Amin, Idris, 56
Amin, Samir, 151
Amman, Jordan, 25, 157, 173
Andersen, Hans Christian, 241
Anderson, Perry, 151
Anthropological Association, 141
Antonios, George, 150
Apartheid, 40, 55, 167, 189, 203, 226–27
Aqsa Mosque, 225
Arab-American Anti-Discrimination
League, 217
Arab-Israeli War (1967), xxv, 3, 11, 17, 18,
72, 120, 124, 164
Arab-Israeli War (1973), 47
Arafat, Yasser, xii, xiii, xxv, xxvi, 20, 25,
36–38, 39, 41, 43, 79, 81–83, 96, 113,
116–17, 119, 123, 125, 158, 161–62,
164, 169–70, 182, 187–88, 199–200,
201, 221, 224–26, 228–29, 238
Arendt, Hannah, 168
Arnold, Matthew, 96–97, 197
Asad, Talal, 57
Asia, 126–28, 137, 145
Ashcroft, Bill, xv, xvi, xix, xx, xxi, xxiii,
xxiv, xxvi
Athens, 233
Atlantic Unbound, 185
Auerbach, Eric, 88, 101
Austen, Jane, 71, 98, 131–32, 148, 149;
Mansfield Park, xxiv
Ba'ath Party, 30
Bach, Johann Sebastian, xxiv, 77, 144

- Baker, James, III, 79
 Balkans, the, 202
 Ball, Edward, 64
 Bangladesh, 120
 Barak, Ehud, 190, 200, 221, 224, 228
 Barenboim, Daniel, xxiii, 165, 174–76, 181, 191, 210–13, 222
 Barsamian, David, xxiii, xxv, 94, 99, 163
 Barthes, Roland, 139
 Baudrillard, Jean, 86, 155
 Beethoven, Ludwig van, 89, 186, 212
 Begin, Menachem, 32
 Beirut, 36–37, 65, 100, 142, 157
 Beka'a, 227
 Bell, Daniel, 129
 Bellow, Saul, 78
 Ben-Gurion, David, 168
 Berbers, the, 216
 Berlin State Opera, 176
 Bethlehem, 187, 201, 202
 Bhabha, Homi, xv, 103, 144–45, 147
 Bhattacharya, Neeladri, xiv, xvi, xx, xxiv
 Bin Laden, Osama, 237, 240
 Binder, Leonard, 51
 Bir Zeit, 212
 Bir Zeit University, 175
 Bishara, Azmi, 166
 BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), 159
 Black September (1970), 157
 Bloom, Alan, 56
 Bloom, Harold, xxii, 139, 155
 Blume, Harvey, xiii, 184
 Bokassa, Jean-Bédél, 56
 Bolshevism, 29
 Bond, James, 128
 Borchardt, Georges, 182
 Bosnia, 164
 Boston, Mass., 201
 Bourdieu, Pierre, 192
 Brahms, Johannes, 210
 Brennan, Tim, xiii
 British Broadcasting Company (BBC), 92, 181–82
 Bruckner, Pascal, 56
 Brzezinski, Zbigniew, 28
 Buber, Martin, 168, 207
 Buchenwald, 176, 191
 Burma, 126
 Burroughs, Edgar Rice, 233
 Bush, George H. W., 61, 74
 Bush, George W., 235
 Cairo, 72, 80, 81, 92, 106, 109–10, 163, 179, 180, 181, 218–19, 222
 Camp David, 19, 22–23, 109, 224–29
 Camus, Albert, 55, 149
 Carioca, Tahria, 232
 Carter, Jimmy, 21, 27–28, 32
 CBS *Evening News*, 56
 Cesaire, Aime, 131, 149, 150, 165
 Chahine, Youssef, 232
 Chaliand, Gerard, 55
 Channel 13 (New York), 182
Charlie Rose Show, The, xiii, 177
 Chateaubriand, François de, 144
 Chaudhuri, Una, xvi
 Cheney, Lynne, 236
 Chicago, Ill., 59
 China, 34, 116, 122, 126–27, 137, 172
 Chomsky, Noam, xii, xxii, 54, 55, 100, 144, 190, 192; *Manufacturing Consent*, xxi
 Chopin, Frederic, 212
 Christian, Barbara T., xv
 Christianity, 34, 111–12, 194, 243
 Church of the Holy Sepulcher, The, 225
 Cleveland, Ohio, 59
 Clinton, Bill, 118, 164, 218
 Coady, Frances, 182
 Cockburn, Alexander, 55, 81, 104
 Cold War, 129, 236
 Columbia University, xiii, 36, 40, 45, 59, 72, 76, 124, 127, 129, 134, 153, 164, 178, 184, 220, 224
Commentary, xiii, xiv, 71, 179–80, 185–87, 190, 196, 217, 222–23
 Commodore Hotel, 181
 Confucianism, 105, 236
Connection, The, 199

- Conrad, Joseph, 70, 77, 84, 91, 131, 136, 148, 149, 231; *Heart of Darkness*, 53, 198
- Copts, the, 216
- Cyprus, 41, 202
- Dante, 115
- Darwish, Mahmoud, 65, 165, 209, 222
- Dayan, Moshe, 120, 174
- De Beauvoir, Simone, 74, 101
- Deheishe Refugee Camp, 201
- Delta Force*, 60–61
- De Nerval, Gerard, 140
- Derrida, Jacques, 102, 103, 129–30, 139; *Of Grammatology*, *L'Écriture et Le Différence*, 103
- De Sacy, Silvestre, 140
- Description de l'Égypte* (Napoleon's Institute d'Égypte), 140
- Diacritics*, xiv
- Dickens, Charles, 149
- Diogenes*, 47
- Dirlik, Arif, 141–42
- Disraeli, Benjamin, 34
- Du Bois, W. E. B., 111
- Dulles, John Foster, 22
- Du Prè, Jacqueline, 210
- Egypt, 8, 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 29, 31–32, 84, 95, 106, 107, 108, 109, 111, 112, 140, 151, 170, 171–72, 181, 194, 196, 204, 218, 232
- Egyptian Communist Party, 29
- Egyptian Revolution (1952), 124
- Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty (1979), 22
- El Fasoum, 93
- Elon, Amos, 196–97
- Ethiopia, 15
- Fanon, Frantz, xii, xvi, xx, xxi, 131; *The Wretched of the Earth*, 239
- Farrell, Suzanne, 232
- Fas Arab Summit, 36
- Flaubert, Gustave, 144
- Foucault, Michel, xv, xvi, 46–47, 74–75, 130, 139, 141, 152–54; *Discipline and Punish*, 101–02; *The Order of Things*, 101–02
- France, 109
- Frank Sinatra Hall, 165
- Freid, Michael, 192
- Freud, Sigmund, 133
- Frye, Northrop, 220
- Fusul*, 53
- Gandhi, M. K., 110
- Gaza, 11, 40, 41–42, 82–83, 96, 112, 119, 166–67, 170–71, 188, 200, 208, 229, 239
- Geertz, Clifford, 50, 57
- Genet, Jean, 102
- George, Jawad, 59–60, 61
- Germany, 105, 140
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, 176, 210
- Golan Heights, 11
- Goldmann, Lucien, 132
- Gore, Al, 188
- Gould, Glenn, xxiii, 220
- Graham, Peter, 151
- Gramsci, Antonio, xii, xx, xxi, 50, 56, 88, 92, 101, 131, 152–54, 156
- Grand Street*, 182
- Granta*, 182
- Grass, Günter, 234
- Greece, 15, 232–33
- Guardian, The*, 240
- Guha, Ranajit, 147–48, 150
- Gulf War, the, 60, 108
- Ha'aretz*, 223
- Haddad, Farid, 181
- Haifa, 167, 190
- Haifa University, 77
- Hall, Stuart, 152
- Hamas, 81, 108, 110
- Hand, Learned, 231
- Haram Al-Sharif, 225
- Harris, Wilson, 150
- Hasan, Mushirul, 142
- Hashemite Kingdom, 25
- Harvard University, 72, 124, 163, 179, 182, 220

- Haynes, Reverend Michael, 217
 Hebrew University, 168, 207–08
 Hebron, 42
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 89, 233
 Heidegger, Martin, 195
 Heston, Charlton, 152
 Hirsch, E. D., 56
 Hitchens, Christopher, xvii, 49, 76, 182, 240
 Hoare, Joseph, 106
 Hoare, Quentin, 153
 Holocaust, the, 75, 173, 185, 191, 197
 Horn of Africa, 106
 Hoy, David, 152
 Hsu, Francis, 126
 Huntington, Samuel P., 104–07, 112, 126;
The Clash of Civilizations, 104, 144, 236–37
 Hussein, Saddam, xviii, xxv, 41, 60, 61, 66, 67, 187
 Hutcheon, Linda, 220
- India, 49, 97, 116, 126, 143, 147, 156, 159, 172, 202, 205
 Indo-China, 126
 Indonesia, 126
 International Monetary Fund (IMF), 110, 141
Interview, 182
Intifada, xxii, 83, 200–01
 Iran, 15, 28, 30, 75, 101, 102, 106, 109, 112, 130
 Iranian Revolution (1978–1979), 47, 50–51
 Iraq, 59, 61, 65, 67–68, 109, 209
 Islam, xviii, 34–35, 46, 54, 62, 65, 74, 86, 104–12, 115–17, 122, 126–27, 236, 242–43
 Islamic Jihad, 110, 114
 Islamic Salvation Front, 108
 Ismailis, 107
 Israel, xxiv, xxv, 5–6, 9–14, 16, 17, 24–27, 31, 38, 39, 41, 43, 81–83, 95, 113–14, 116–17, 118–20, 160–62, 166–76, 179–80, 188, 190, 197, 201, 204, 206, 207–09, 210, 212, 215, 218, 221–23, 224–25
 Israeli Anthropological Association, 190
 Israeli Philharmonic, 175, 213
 Italy, 105
 Iyad, Abu, 25
- James, C. L. R., 78, 90, 131, 150
 Jameson, Fredric, 88
 Jamia Millia Islamia, 139, 142, 159
 Japan, 126–27, 137, 172–73
 Jawaharlal Nehru University, 139, 142, 152
 Jenina, 214
 Jericho, 82, 188
 Jerusalem, 11, 19, 23, 32, 80, 82, 118, 119, 121, 171, 180, 188, 194, 205, 219, 222, 224–27, 238
Jerusalem Post, 22
Jewel in the Crown, 55
 Jewish Anti-Defamation League, 71
 Jewish Defense League (JDL), 164
 Jihad al-Islami, 108
 Johannesburg, 157
 Jordan, xix, 4, 8, 9, 14, 20, 25, 63, 95, 106, 108, 112, 170, 171, 204, 218
 Jordanian-Palestinian Group, 44
 Jordan River, 204
 Juilliard School, 92
- Kanafani, Ghassan, 52, 65
 Kant, Immanuel, 233
 Kaul, Suvir, xvi, xx, xxiv
 Kazakstan, 128
 Khalidi, Tarif, 243
 Khalil, Mustafa, 23
 Kharami, 3
 King David Hotel, 238
 King Hussein of Jordan, 41, 72
 King, Rodney, 206
 Kipling, Rudyard, 148, 149
 Knesset, 166, 209, 215
 Knopf, Alfred E. (publisher), 178, 182
 Kolleck, Teddy, 225
 Koran, the, 159, 241, 243

- Kosovo, 201
 Kurds, the, 209
 Kuwait, xxv, 60, 61, 67, 68, 108, 109, 170, 187, 199

 Labor Party (Israel), 44
 Laclau, Ernesto, 155
 Lamming, George, 77, 150
 Lane, Edward William, 140, 144
 Latin America, 49, 53, 173
 Lebanese Civil War (1958), 124, 179
 Lebanon, xix, 4, 11, 41, 64, 79, 84, 102, 111, 112, 170, 171, 180, 194, 202, 222
 Le Bon, Gustave, 105
 LeVine, Mark, xv
 Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 141
 Lewis, Anthony, 20, 23
 Lewis, Bernard, xvii, 49, 57, 105, 151
 Liszt, Franz, 210
 Livingston, David, 55
 London, England, 65, 180
 Long Island Jewish Medical Center, 178
 Loomba, Ania, xvi, xx, xxiv
 Lord Graystoke, 233
 Lucretius, 88
 Lughud, Abu, 70
 Lukács, Georg, xiv, xx
 Lydda Airport, 15
 Lydon, Christopher, xiii, xxiv
 Lyotard, Jean-François, 155

 Ma, Yo-Yo, 176, 181, 191, 210, 222
 Macaulay, Thomas, 97
MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, The, xiii
 Madrid Peace Conference (1991), 79, 199–200
 Magnes, Judah, 168, 207
 Mahfouz, Naguib, 52, 81, 108, 109, 132
 Malek, Anouar Abdel, 47
 Malraux, Andre, 100
 Malta, 114
 Mandela, Nelson, 157, 162
 Maronites, 111, 216
 Marranca, Bonnie, xvi
 Marrus, Michael, 221

 Marx, Karl, 133
 Marxism, 29, 38, 49–51, 65, 76, 88–89
 Mas'n, Abu, 187
 Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), xxi
 Mediterranean, 9, 15
 Mehta, Sonny, 182
 Mehta, Zubin, 175, 212–13
 Meir, Golda, 164
 Michelangelo, 97
 Middle East, 3, 15–18, 36, 39, 45, 47–49, 56, 59–63, 106, 214–15, 221
Middle East Report, 45
 Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), 51–53, 55
 Middle East Studies Association (MESA), 48–49
 Middle East Studies Network (MESN), 51
 Milken, Michael, 187, 222
 Mill, James, 144
 Modern Language Association (MLA), 192
 Mohammed, 115
 Mohr, Jean, 45, 135
 Morocco, 50
 Mossad, 196
 Mouffe, Chantal, 155
 Moughrabi, Fouad, 54
 Mount Hermon School, 181
 Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, xxiii
 Murphy, Richard W. (ambassador), 43
 Muslim Brotherhood, 108

 Nablus, 214
 Naipaul, V. S., 56, 150
 Napoleon, 140, 147
 Nasser, Gamal Abdel, 181
Nation, The, 93, 113
National Broadcasting Company (NBC), xiii
 National Endowment for the Humanities, 236
 Nationalism Association of Arab-Americans, 59
 Nationalist Party (Israel), 44
 National Public Radio (NPR), xiii, 118, 160, 176, 193

- Nazareth, 165, 190, 212, 219
 Nerval, Gerard de, 140
 Netanyahu, Benjamin, 118, 161–62, 200, 221
New Republic, 216, 222
Newsweek, 176
New York Post, 56
New York Review of Books, 196–97
New York Times, 15, 100, 176
New York Times Magazine, 166, 176
 N'gũgĩ, Thiongo'o wa, 53, 149, 150
 Nicaragua, 55, 164
 Nixon, Richard M., 15
 North, Oliver, 55
 Northwestern University, 70
 O'Brien, Conor Cruise, 55
 Occident, the, 33, 126–27, 142
 Orientalism, 33–35, 45–50, 54, 56–57, 98–99, 107, 115–16, 126–28, 139–45, 147–48, 151, 203–04
 Oslo Accords, xii, xxi, xxii, xxv, xxvi, 82–83, 127–28, 156–58, 160–62, 164, 167, 185, 187–89, 204, 221, 222, 229.
See also Said, Edward: *Works: Orientalism*
 Ottoman Empire, 111, 151
Out of Africa, 55
 Pakistan, 108, 202
 Palestine, xvi, xxv, 3–18, 19, 20–21, 22–29, 31–32, 36–38, 40, 42–43, 46, 51, 55, 73, 79, 84, 94–96, 99, 112, 114, 116, 120, 124, 157, 160–62, 164, 166–67, 169–75, 179–80, 183, 186, 188–90, 196, 202, 204–05, 208–09, 212, 216, 219, 226, 233
 Palestine National Council (PNC), 27, 36, 40, 59, 70–71, 81, 164, 182
 Palestinian Authority, 221
 Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), xiii, xxvi, 20, 24, 28, 30, 36–38, 39–41, 43–44, 70–71, 78–79, 94, 116, 157, 187
 Palestinian National Authority (PNA), 83, 221
 Palestinian National Conservatory, 212
 Panikar, K. M., 145
 Pantheon Books, 182
 Paris, France, 65, 102, 216
 Paul, James, xvi, xix, xxi
 PEN, 109
 People's Assembly (Egypt), 108
 Peres, Shimon, 39, 41, 43–44, 114, 200
 Perlmutter, Amos, 40–44
 Persian Gulf War (1990–1991), 59–63, 158, 187
 Pipes, Daniel, 48
 Podhoretz, Norman, 56, 223
 Poirier, Richard, 87–88
 Pope John Paul II, 201
 Poulantzas, Nicos, 152
 Prakash, Gyan, 152
 Princess Diana, 128
 Princeton University, 72, 78, 92, 124, 163, 184, 232
Providence Journal, The, 217
 Public Broadcasting Station (PBS), 176–77
Publishers Weekly, 178, 180–81
 Puritans, 95
 Quandt, Bill, 28
 Rabbani, Mouin, xxvi
 Rabelais, François, 77
 Rabin, Yitzhak, xiii, xvii, 39, 95, 113–14, 189, 200, 221
 Rafar, 41
 Ramallah, 202, 211, 212, 214
 Ranger, Terence, 146, 148, 159
 Reagan, Ronald, 37–38, 40, 56, 70, 74
 Renaissance, the, 115
 Resolution 194 (UN), 201
 Resolution 242 (UN), 21, 29, 32
 Rhodes, Cecil, 55
 Ridge, Tom, 242
 Robinson, Marc, xvi
 Rodinson, Maxime, 57
 Rose, Charlie, 177
 Rothschild, Matthew, xiii, xvii
 Rouleau, Eric, 25

- Roxbury, Mass., 217
- Rubin, Barry, 48
- Rushdie, Salman, xi, 132, 142; *The Satanic Verses*, 74
- Sadat, Anwar, 17, 23, 30, 31–32, 75
- Sahara Desert, 127
- Said, Edward: accused of endorsing terrorism, 71, 114, 164, 196; on the "Afterword" to *Orientalism*, 86, 141; on amateurism, 89–91; on anthropologists, 47–48; on anti-Semitism, 214–15, 221; on Arab apathy, 172–73; on the arabesque, 64–68, 135; on Arab intellectuals, 51, 123, 137; on Arab stereotypes, 54, 60–62, 115–17, 164; on being a public intellectual, xii–xiii, 46, 124–25, 133–34, 156–57, 174, 179, 185, 206, 234; on binational state, xxiv–xxv, 12–13, 24, 160–62, 166–69, 176, 189–90, 202, 204, 206–10, 217–18, 226–27; on bullfighting, 231–32; on censorship, 123, 170, 176; childhood and upbringing, 19, 79–80, 91–92, 93, 137, 179–81, 194–95; on colonialism and neo-colonialism, 45, 53, 55, 88, 90, 94, 102, 103, 116, 132, 141, 145–48, 239–40; on the contrapuntal, xxiii–xxiv, 98, 133, 134–35, 144, 203; on conversions, 213–14; on culture and cultural studies, 64–66, 74–75, 78, 95–98, 104, 123–24, 128–29, 131, 137, 148–49, 175; death threats to, 71, 164; on elaboration, 92–93; on exile, 84–85, 125, 134, 169, 181, 194–98; on feminism, 46, 232; on film, 55, 60, 77, 93, 128–29, 232–33; on fundamentalism, 86, 106–07, 142, 159, 235, 236; on hate mail, 240; on hegemony and the "Other," 95, 105, 153, 174, 203, 232; on his audiences, 100, 149–50; on his break with Arafat, 125–26, 199–200; on his children, 202; on his clothes, 76; on his elitism, 77; on his health and his illness, 73, 79, 114, 125, 136, 158, 165, 177, 178–79, 183, 185–86, 193–94, 195, 220, 239; on his influence, 134; on his parents, 91–92, 179–81, 183, 185–86, 194, 195–96, 219; on history, 31, 86–87, 129–30, 133, 153–54; on the Holocaust, 176, 185, 191, 221; on human rights, 9, 221; on identity, 142–43, 203; on imperialism, 9, 12, 34, 45, 54, 67–68, 73, 95, 97–98, 143–44, 148; on intellectuals and intellectual life, 57, 88–89, 101, 112, 122–25, 133–34, 156–58, 173, 174, 185, 192, 206, 235, 240–41; on interviews, 136–37; on labels, xx, 88, 132, 141; on literary studies and canon, 48, 51–55, 64–66, 78, 132; on media, xvii–xviii, 52, 56, 66–67, 112, 113–14, 115, 119, 126, 129, 169, 176, 241; on the Middle East peace process, xxi–xxii, 8, 19, 22, 40, 44, 81–83, 94–96, 101, 114, 116–17, 118–21, 156, 161–62, 168–69, 176–77, 187–89, 199, 212, 218, 221; on Middle East Studies, 47–58, *en passim*; on modernity and modernization, 112, 156, 159; on museums, 135; on music, 77, 89, 91–93, 125, 134–35, 144, 174–76, 186, 205–06, 210, 212; on nationalism and liberation, 94–96, 166–68, 205–06, 217–18, 239–40; on oil interests, 15–16; on Palestinian education, 214–15; on political commitments, 26–27, 101, 129, 134, 154–57, 192, 203; on postcolonialism, xx–xxi, 90, 103, 131–32, 140–43; on poststructuralism, 102–03, 129–30, 142, 151–52, 155; on repeating or revising himself, 46, 137, 139–40, 230–31; on representation, 46, 99–100, 126, 146, 155–56; on resistance, xvi, 133, 146–49, 152, 195; on secularism and secular criticism, xix–xx, 86–89, 111–12, 133, 213–14, 237; on sleeplessness, 195; on terrorism, 15, 36, 39–42, 116, 235, 241–42; on theory, xiv–xv, xxii–xxiii, 48, 85–89, 97, 101–03, 130–33, 151; on tradition, 159; on "traveling theory," 98, 123–24, 127; on

- tribalism, 234; on U.S. policy, 8–9, 15–17, 21–23, 27–30, 33, 38, 40, 46, 52, 54, 67–68, 89, 99, 106, 108, 118; on visual culture, 135–36; on war, 241; on worldliness, xiv, xvi, xxii, 57–58, 85–87, 97, 102–03, 237; on “world system” theory, 151–52
- Works: After the Last Sky*, 35, 45, 135; *Beginnings*, xiv, xix, xx, 85, 124–26, 129–30; *Covering Islam*, 124–26, 138, 163; *Culture and Imperialism*, xi, xxiv, 67, 73, 85, 97–98, 142–47, 149–50, 163, 165, 170, 184; *The Edward Said Reader*, 182; *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After*, 182; *In Search of Palestine* (documentary), 182; *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, 136; *Literature and Society*, 97; *Musical Elaborations*, xxiii, 92–93, 131–32; *Orientalism*, xi–xii, xv, xviii–xix, 33–35, 45–47, 54, 70, 85–86, 115, 122–24, 126–30, 138–46, 149–50, 153, 163, 165, 179, 182, 184, 203–04, 222, 231; *Out of Place*, xiv, 163, 178–83, 185, 191–92, 193–94, 197–98, 219, 222; *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*, xxiii; *Peace and Its Discontents*, 118, 121, 163; *The Pen and the Sword*, 165; *The Performing Self*, 87–88; *The Politics of Dispossession*, 107, 163; *The Question of Palestine*, 125–26, 138, 163; *Reflections on Exile*, 163, 230–37; *Representations of the Intellectual*, 84, 88, 122–23, 156–57, 163, 191–92; *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, xi, xx, xxii, 87, 96, 139, 152
- Said, Nabihah, 181
- Said, Najla, 179, 202
- Said, Wadie, 179–81, 195, 202
- Said, Yusuf, 222
- Saint George's Academy, 72, 180
- Salih, Tayib, 53
- Salusinszky, Imre, xxii
- San Francisco, Calif., 59
- Sarid, Yossi, 209
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, 74–75, 101
- Saudi Arabia, 15, 22, 30, 60, 108, 110, 170, 187
- Schiffirin, Andre, 182
- Schiller, Friedrich von, 176
- Schiller, Herbert, 56
- Schoenberg, Arnold, 77
- Schubert, Franz, 212
- Schumann, Robert, 210
- Schwarzkopf, Norman, 106
- Second Opinion*, 113
- Seely, J. R., 98
- Senghor, Leopold, 94
- Senna, Carl, 217
- September 11, 2001, xviii, 235–38, 241–42
- Shakespeare, William, 115, 181; *The Tempest*, 77
- Shan, Te-hsing, xviii, xxi, xxii
- Sharansky, Natan, 227
- Sharon, Ariel, xviii, xxii, 238–39
- Sherman, Scott, xiii–xiv
- Shias, 41
- Shqaqi, Fathi, 114
- Shultz, George, 70, 71
- Siddiqui, Haroon, xiv
- Sinai, 8
- Sinatra, Frank, 165
- Smith, Geoffrey Nowell, 153
- Smith, Joan, xviii, xix, xx
- Somalia, 164
- South Africa, 55, 157, 164, 167, 189, 217, 239
- Soviet Union, 15, 17, 29
- Spain, 15, 232
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, xv, 103
- Sprinker, Michael, 149–50
- Stanley, Henry, 55
- Stein, Jean, 182
- Stevenson, Matthew, xvii
- Stone, I. F., 208
- Subaltern Studies, 152
- Sudan, 106, 216
- Suez War (1956), 72
- Sunni Muslims, 109
- Sweden, 105
- Swift, Jonathan, 231

- Swimming Hall of Fame, 233
 Switzerland, 105
 Syria, 8, 9, 15, 41, 112, 140, 171, 229
- Tagore, Rabindranath, 205
 Takiedine, Diana, 70
 Tamanrasset, 216
 Tarzan, 233–34
 Tehran, 15
 Tel Aviv, 81–83, 166, 175, 213, 223
 Thailand, 126
 Thompson, E. P., 101
 Tiegerman, Paul, 92
 Titian, 97
 Tiz Ouzou, 216
 Tolstoy, Leo, 78
 Toronto, University of, 220
 Toynbee, Arnold, 105
 Tunisia, 39, 40
 Turin, 153
 Turkey, 105, 106, 111, 112
 Turner, Bryan, 46, 51
 Tutu, Bishop Desmond, 217
- Ukrufi, Fadhil, 66
 United Nations (UN), 201
 University College, London, 89
- Vaughan, Megan, 146
 Venice, 66
 Victoria College (Cairo), 72
 Vico, Giambattista, xii, xx, xxi, 88, 90, 92, 101, 133, 159, 237
- Vidal, Gore, 179
 Vietnam, 16
 Vintage Books, 182
- Wagner, Richard, xxiii, 75, 77, 175–76
 Wailing Wall, 225
 Wanger, Whelley, 182
 Weimar, 176, 181, 191, 210–11, 222
 Weiner, Justus Reid, xiv, 180, 186–87, 196, 222
 Weissmuller, Johnny, 233
 West Bank, 6–7, 24, 26, 27, 41–43, 81–83, 95, 110, 114, 119–20, 123, 166–67, 170–71, 175, 188, 200, 205, 208, 229, 239
 White, Hayden, 87
 White House, 187, 189
 Wieseltier, Leon, xvii, 49
 Williams, Raymond, xxi, 88, 96, 100, 130–31; *The Country and the City*, 131
 Wisconsin-Madison, University of, xiii
 World Bank, the, 110, 141, 169
 World Trade Center, 106
 World War I, 210
 World War II, 194, 215
 Wylie, Andrew, 182
- Zeid, Nasr Hamed Abu, 159
 Zionism, 12, 24–25, 36, 48, 52, 71, 73, 77, 94–95, 126, 168, 177, 183, 187, 190, 206–07, 214, 221–22
 Zionists' Provisional State Council, 72

