

Culture and Imperialism

Edward Said

Edward Said - Life, Works and Critical Reception

INTRODUCTION

A Palestinian refugee in his youth and a respected though controversial professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, Said (pronounced sah-EED) is an influential and often polemical cultural critic.

Said is a public intellectual who frequently writes about the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East and actively supports the cause for Palestinian national rights. His most celebrated and contentious work, *Orientalism* (1978), which examines Western representations of Middle Eastern societies and cultures, established his reputation for innovative and provocative explorations of the interrelationships between texts—literary and otherwise—and the political, economic, and social contexts from which they emerged. In his writings Said adopts a Continental, interdisciplinary approach to literary criticism and uses the principles of phenomenology, existentialism, and French structuralism to make connections between literature and politics. Although his theories and methods have exerted a profound influence on the American academy, especially on literary theory and cultural studies, Said often is the target of phone threats and hate letters, principally for his unwavering advocacy of Palestinian political and cultural rights in the Middle East. "Said occupies a unique place in contemporary literary criticism," wrote John Kucich. "He is a much-needed link among humanistic values and traditions, theories of textuality, and cultural politics. His work is ... a careful integration from these various positions and an original prescription for the renovation of literary and cultural study."

Biographical Information

Said was born November 1, 1935, in Jerusalem in what was then Palestine. The only son of Wadie and Hilda Musa Said, prominent members of the Christian Palestinian community, he was baptized as an Anglican and attended St. George's, his father's alma mater. In December, 1947, his family fled to Cairo, Egypt, to avoid the turmoil surrounding the establishment of Israel as a nation. In Cairo, Said studied at the American School and Victoria College, the so-called "Eton of the Middle East," before he completed his secondary education at a preparatory school in Massachusetts. Said became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1953. After graduating from Princeton University in 1957, he undertook graduate studies in comparative literature at Harvard University, where he earned his M.A. in 1960 and his Ph.D. in 1964. His dissertation on the psychological relationship between Joseph Conrad's short fiction and his correspondence became his first published book, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966). Hired as an instructor in English at Columbia University in 1963, Said became a full professor by 1970; his distinguished teaching career at Columbia included two endowed chairmanships in the 1980s and 1990s. Said enhanced his growing reputation for literary scholarship with *Beginnings* (1975), which won Columbia's Lionel Trilling Award in 1976. During the 1970s Said actively involved himself in the Palestinian cause by writing numerous essays for scholarly journals and independent publications. From 1977 to 1991 he belonged to the Palestinian National Council, the Palestinians' parliament in exile, meeting Yasir Arafat many times and helping to draft the Palestinian declaration of statehood in 1988. Said pursued his work following the groundbreaking *Orientalism*, which was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award, with

the publication of two "sequels," *The Question of Palestine*(1979) and *Covering Islam* (1981); the essay collection, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*(1983); and a meditative essay on Palestinian identity featuring the photographs of Jean Mohr, *After the Last Sky* (1986). During the 1980s and 1990s, Said was named to several visiting professorships and lectured extensively on both literary and political themes. In 1991 he published *Musical Elaborations*, a volume of original music criticism that grew out his lifelong fondness for playing the piano. Said was diagnosed with leukemia in 1993. His subsequent works—*Culture and Imperialism* (1993), *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994), *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994), and *Peace and Its Discontents* (1995)—continue to provoke controversy.

Major Works

Said's writings cover diverse topics, but at their center lies a concern for the multiple relationships between the act of writing and cultural politics, language and power. *Beginnings* theorizes about the reasons several writers begin their works the way they do, demonstrating that prevailing cultural ideas of the beginning act change and limit a writer's choice to begin. *Orientalism* reveals how Western journalists, fiction writers, and scholars helped to create a prevalent and hostile image of Eastern cultures as inferior, stagnant, and degenerate, showing the extent to which these representations permeate Western culture and have been exploited to justify imperialist policies in the Middle East. *Orientalism* provides much of the theoretical and thematic groundwork for many of Said's subsequent works, and it contains the dictum of orientalism: "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented." *The Question of Palestine* outlines the history of the Palestinians and the Arab-Israeli conflict, describing the opposition between an Israeli world informed by Western ideas and the "oriental" realities of a Palestinian culture. *Covering Islam*, elucidating the themes of Said's previous books in more practical terms, investigates the influence of orientalist discourse on the Western media's representation of Islamic culture. Written between 1968 and 1983 on wide-ranging literary and political topics, the twelve essays comprising *The World, the Text, and the Critic* offer an assessment of contemporary criticism and scholarship in the humanities, highlighting Said's notions of "antithetical knowledge" and the synthesis of literary and political writing. *Culture and Imperialism* examines how imperialism, the "culture of resistance," and postcolonialism helped to shape the French and English novel, exemplified by close, provocative readings of Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, Albert Camus, W. B. Yeats, and Jane Austen. The essays in *The Politics of Dispossession* critique the Islamic revival, Arab culture, Palestinian nationalism, and American policy in the Middle East, revealing a moderating stance toward Israel and a distancing from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (P.L.O.). *Representations of the Intellectual* is a case study of the intellectual persona.

Said is best known for describing and critiquing "Orientalism", which he perceived as a constellation of false assumptions underlying Western attitudes toward the East. In *Orientalism* (1978), Said described the "subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arabo-Islamic peoples and their culture."^[14] He argued that a long tradition of false and romanticized images of Asia and the Middle East in Western culture had served as an implicit justification for Europe and America's colonial and imperial ambitions. Just as fiercely, he denounced the practice of Arab elites who internalized the American and British orientalists' ideas of Arabic culture.

In 1980 Said criticized what he regarded as poor understanding of the Arab culture in the West:

So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Moslems and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of

the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have instead is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.

Orientalism has had a significant impact on the fields of literary theory, cultural studies and human geography, and to a lesser extent on those of history and oriental studies. Taking his cue from the work of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, and from earlier critics of western Orientalism such as A. L. Tibawi,^[16] Anouar Malek-Abdel,^[17] Maxime Rodinson,^[18] and Richard William Southern,^[19] Said argued that Western writings on the Orient, and the perceptions of the East purveyed in them, are suspect, and cannot be taken at face value. According to Said, the history of European colonial rule and political domination over the East distorts the writings of even the most knowledgeable, well-meaning and sympathetic Western 'Orientalists' (a term that he transformed into a pejorative):

I doubt if it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India or Egypt in the later nineteenth century took an interest in those countries which was never far from their status in his mind as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact – and yet *that is what I am saying* in this study of Orientalism. (Said, *Orientalism* 11)

Said contended that Europe had dominated Asia politically so completely for so long that even the most outwardly objective Western texts on the East were permeated with a bias that even most Western scholars could not recognise. His contention was not only that the West has conquered the East politically but also that Western scholars have appropriated the exploration and interpretation of the Orient's languages, history and culture for themselves. They have written Asia's past and constructed its modern identities from a perspective that takes Europe as the norm, from which the "exotic", "inscrutable" Orient deviates.

Said concludes that Western writings about the Orient depict it as an irrational, weak, feminised "Other", contrasted with the rational, strong, masculine West, a contrast he suggests derives from the need to create "difference" between West and East that can be attributed to immutable "essences" in the Oriental make-up. In 1978, when the book was first published, with memories of the Yom Kippur war and the OPEC crisis still fresh, Said argued that these attitudes still permeated the Western media and academia. After stating the central thesis, *Orientalism* consists mainly of supporting examples from Western texts.

Critical Reception

Owing partly to the nature of his thought and partly to his allegiance to the Palestinian cause, Said has generated controversy upon publication of nearly every book. Despite his persistent denials, he has been questioned about terrorism throughout the course of his career. Robert Hughes has reported that "none of Said's political foes have been able to cite a single utterance by him that could be construed as anti-Semitic or as condoning either tyranny or terrorism." Most scholars, however, have recognized the extent to which his oppositional criticism has influenced debate beyond literary issues and cultural politics, especially *Orientalism*, which has been cited as often as criticized by literary theorists, historians, anthropologists, and political scientists—the book even has spawned a new subdiscipline, the cultural study of colonialism. "The Orient was a product of the imagination," opined Albert Hourani of that book, "and Mr. Said's delicate and subtle methods of analysis are good tools for laying bare the structure of the literary imagination."

Dinitia Smith remarked that *Orientalism* "has changed the face of scholarship on the Arab world and the Third World in general." Although many critics have praised the study, some have focused on imperfections in the argument of *Orientalism*, accusing Said of perpetuating the same Eastern stereotypes for which he had faulted the Western imperialist. Some critics have noted that although many of Said's writings have been translated into many different languages, his books on Palestinian affairs had not been published in Arabic by 1994. Robert Hughes has described Said as "a scholar and humanist,... the controversial voice of Palestine in America and an eloquent mediator between the Middle East and the West."

Supporters of Said and his influence

Said's supporters argue that such criticisms, even if correct, do not invalidate his basic thesis, which they say still holds true for the 19th and 20th centuries and in particular for general representations of the Orient in Western media, literature and film. His supporters point out that Said himself acknowledges limitations of his study's failing to address German scholarship (*Orientalism* 18-19) and that, in the "Afterword" to the 1995 edition of *Orientalism*, he, in their view, convincingly refutes his critics, such as Lewis (329-54).

Said's continuing importance in the fields of literary criticism and cultural studies is represented by his influence on scholars studying India, such as Gyan Prakash, Nicholas Dirks, and Ronald Inden, and literary theorists such as Hamid Dabashi, Homi K. Bhabha^[34] and Gayatri Spivak.

Both supporters of Edward Said and his critics acknowledge the profound, transformative influence that his book *Orientalism* has had across the spectrum of the humanities; but whereas his critics regret his influence as limiting, his supporters praise his influence as liberating.

Criticism of US Foreign Policy

In a 1997 revised edition of his book *Covering Islam*, Said discussed instances of what he said was biased reporting in the Western press: "speculations about the latest conspiracy to blow up buildings, sabotage commercial airliners, and poison water supplies." Said opposed many US foreign policy endeavors in the Middle East. During an April 2003 interview with Al-Ahram Weekly, Said argued that the Iraq war was ill-conceived:

My strong opinion, though I don't have any proof in the classical sense of the word, is that they want to change the entire Middle East and the Arab world, perhaps terminate some countries, destroy the so-called terrorist groups they dislike and install regimes friendly to the United States. I think this is a dream that has very little basis in reality. The knowledge they have of the Middle East, to judge from the people who advise them, is to say the least out of date and widely speculative....

I don't think the planning for the post-Saddam, post-war period in Iraq is very sophisticated, and there's very little of it. [US Undersecretary of State Marc] Grossman and [US Undersecretary of Defense Douglas] Feith testified in Congress about a month ago and seemed to have no figures and no ideas what structures they were going to deploy; they had no idea about the use of institutions that exist, although they want to de-Ba'thise the higher echelons and keep the rest.

The same is true about their views of the army. They certainly have no use for the Iraqi opposition that they've been spending many millions of dollars on. And to the best of my ability to judge, they are going to improvise.

Pro-Palestinian activism

As a pro-Palestinian activist, Said campaigned for a creation of an independent Palestinian state. From 1977 until 1991, Said was an independent member of the Palestinian National Council who tended to stay out of factional struggles. He supported the two-state solution and voted for it in Algiers in 1988. In 1991, he quit the PNC in protest over the process leading up to the signing of the Oslo Accords, feeling that the Oslo terms were unacceptable and had been rejected by the Madrid round negotiators. He felt that Oslo would not lead to a truly independent state and was inferior to a plan Arafat had rejected when Said himself presented it to Arafat on behalf of the US government in the late 1970s. In particular, he wrote that Arafat had sold short the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in pre-1967 Israel and ignored the growing presence of Israeli settlements. Said's relationship with the Palestinian Authority was once so bad that PA leaders banned the sale of his books in August 1995, but improved when he hailed Arafat for rejecting Barak's offers at the Camp David 2000 Summit. Ultimately, Said came to prefer and to support a state that would afford Palestinians a home with equal human rights in place of the 'Jewish' state of modern-day Israel.

In June 2002, Said, along with Hadr Abd-Shafi, Ibrahim Dakak, and Mustafa Barghouti, helped establish the Palestinian National Initiative, or *Al-Mubadara*, an attempt to build a third force in Palestinian politics, a democratic, reformist alternative to both the established Fatah and Islamist militant groups, such as Hamas.

In *Al-Ahram Weekly*, in April 2002, Said observes:

Above all we must, as Mandela never tired of saying about his struggle, be aware that Palestine is one of the great moral causes of our time. Therefore, we need to treat it as such. It's not a matter of trade, or bartering negotiations, or making a career. It is a just cause which should allow Palestinians to capture the high moral ground and keep it.

In August 2003, in an article published online in *Counterpunch*, Said summarizes his position on the contemporary rights of Palestinians vis-à-vis the historical experience of the Jewish people:

I have spent a great deal of my life during the past 35 years advocating the rights of the Palestinian people to national self-determination, but I have always tried to do that with full attention paid to the reality of the Jewish people and what they suffered by way of persecution and genocide. The paramount thing is that the struggle for equality in Palestine/Israel should be directed toward a humane goal, that is, co-existence, and not further suppression and denial.

It is important to note that while Said was seen - and indeed, often appropriated by various Islamic groups - as a global intellectual defender of Islam, Said himself denied this claim several times, most notably in republications of *Orientalism*. Said's primary objectives were humanistic and not Islamic; his vision for Palestine and Israel's peaceful co-existence necessarily took Islam into consideration, but emphasized the needs of Palestinians and Israelis as two ethnic groups whose basic needs, such as food, water, shelter and protection, were to be valued above all else.

Said notes that "in all my works I remained fundamentally critical of a gloating and uncritical nationalism.... My view of Palestine ... remains the same today: I expressed all sorts of reservations about the insouciant nativism and militant militarism of the nationalist consensus; I suggested instead a critical look at the Arab environment, Palestinian history, and the Israeli realities, with the explicit conclusion that only a negotiated settlement between the two communities of suffering, Arab and Jewish, would provide respite from the unending war." He notes that every

Arabic publisher who was interested in his book on Palestine "wanted me to change or delete those sections that were openly critical of one or another Arab regime (including the PLO), a request that I have always refused to comply with."

Furthermore, he was one of few Palestinian activists who at the same time acknowledged Israel and Israel's founding intellectual theory, Zionism. Said was one of the first proponents of a two-state solution, and in an important academic article entitled "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims," Said argued that both the Zionist claim to a land - and, more importantly, the Zionist claim that the Jewish people needed a land - and Palestinian rights of self-determination held legitimacy and authenticity. In this way Said stood out among the crowd of Palestinian activists as one who could simultaneously stand at the center of Palestinian nationalism on the one hand and intellectual, meta-nationalistic humanism on the other. This uncanny self-assurance in both base political and elite intellectual spheres helped raise his status in the intelligent public's eye.

Said's books on the issue of Israel and Palestine include *The Question of Palestine*(1979), *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994) and *The End of the Peace Process* (2000).

A Thematic Study of Edward Said's multidimensional Personality

In a major retrospective, Stephen Howe considers the life and work of the Palestinian scholar Edward Said "We travel like other people, but we return to nowhere. As if travelling Is the way of the clouds... We have a country of words. Speak speak so I can put my road on the stone of a stone. We have a country of words. Speak speak so we may know the end of this travel."

The clouds hung heavily over New York as Edward Said, the great intellectual traveller, took his last journey on 24 September. That oppressive weather seemed all too gloomly and grimly appropriate, matching the mood of all who had known Said or admired his work – but its sudden shifts, alternating torrential rain with bursts of brilliant sunshine, also felt apt for the passing of so intellectually mercurial a man, so varied in his passions and his interests.

The Making of Edward Said

Said was in both literal and metaphorical senses a constant traveller: one who, in the words of another great poet, Arthur Rimbaud, changed countries almost as often as shoes. Having lost a country, Palestine, in early youth, he wrote often that he never felt fully at home anywhere – except perhaps in the 'country of words'.

New York, where he died, and Columbia University where he taught for forty years, came closest. New York, as a place of multiple cultural formations, multiple migrancies, minorities and diasporas, as well as a centre of corporate, media and cultural power – and his own position there, combining privileged professional status with marginal, exilic consciousness – influenced everything he did and thought.

The figure of the traveller in Darwish's poem stands for the Palestinian people, with whose fate and homelessness Edward Said's entire career was also inextricably bound up. But for Said it had also a more universal and more positive association. He once suggested that the theme of his work is the figure of crossing over: "The fact of migration is extraordinarily impressive to me: that movement from the precision and concreteness of one form of life transmuted or imported into

the other...and then of course the whole problematic of exile and immigration enters into it, the people who simply don't belong in any culture; that is the great modern or, if you like, postmodern fact, the standing outside of cultures."

Accompanying the notion of the enabling intellectual consequences of an exilic position, Said therefore also suggested the idea of the 'traveller' as a desirable one for critical thinkers. It was an image which depended not on power, but on motion, on daring to go into different worlds, use different languages, and "understand a multiplicity of disguises, masks, and rhetorics. Travellers must suspend the claim of customary routine in order to live in new rhythms and rituals...the traveller crosses over, traverses territory, and abandons fixed positions all the time."

This image is opposed to that of the scholar as monarch or 'potentate', proclaiming mastery over an academic field: this latter was in Said's eyes a quite negative and destructive role, if not an impossibly hubristic one. Yet clearly, everything depends on how one travels. Those whose migrancy had been from colony to metropole, but whose 'crossing over' is to intellectual and emotional identification with the dominant metropolitan culture and political attitudes – a stance with which, for instance, he associated V.S. Naipaul – aroused Said's intense anger and scorn.

A mediator of worlds

Edward Said was, by any measure, among the most important thinkers and writers of our time. His writings had a massive, worldwide impact both on scholarship and on wider public debate; an impact which traversed continents, audiences, and academic disciplines. Among literary critics and cultural theorists, historians, anthropologists, political analysts and even within the subdiscipline Said so bitterly attacked, third world 'area studies', his work is constantly cited, constantly drawn upon, almost as constantly criticised.

Furthermore, Said was not only an enormously productive and influential scholar, but a globally significant political voice. He was for many years a member of the Palestinian National Council, the Palestine Liberation Organisation's 'parliament in exile', and a key mediator between Arab and American worlds both in public debate and, sometimes, in secret negotiation.

In the United States and to a great extent in the British and other European news media, he came constantly to be presented as the pre-eminent intellectual representative of 'the Palestinian case' or even 'the Arab viewpoint' – and latterly gained a very prominent media presence in the Arab world itself. He was certainly the best-known Arab intellectual of his and perhaps of any time, on a worldwide scale; indeed one of the few modern public intellectuals whose reputation was genuinely global.

Said's work ushered in what seemed to be quite novel forms of cultural and historical study, and effectively founded two, still rapidly growing new academic genres, 'postcolonial studies' and 'colonial discourse analysis'. As an American Historical Review symposium in 2000 documented, Said's influence can be found, and is indeed very important, in fields as far distant from his own main concerns as medieval history, studies of the Balkans, and American diplomatic history. The impact of those ideas has gone wider: it can be traced among visual artists and museum curators, novelists and film-makers, and a quite broad general reading public. To his admirers, Said became the ideal type of the critical intellectual.

His remarkable range of expertise and interests encompassed several academic disciplines and art forms as well as diverse political milieux. He wrote about, and had an impact on debates over, the study of history, politics, anthropology and geography, the influence of the media, the

purposes of education and the responsibilities of the intellectual, ideas about migration, exile, diaspora and multiculturalism, religion, language and war, and many more. His career was a kind of standing rebuke to the narrow academic specialisation and pigeonholing which he himself often lamented.

All this made of him a very important kind of culturo-political interpreter or mediator between distant, often antagonistic worlds. But it also had its costs. At times, as he complained, his role as Palestinian spokesperson meant that he was treated in these media milieux ‘like a diplomat of terrorism, with a place at the table.’ Academic critics in several of the fields where he ventured angrily charged him with caricaturing, abusing or traducing their expertise.

For others, he was an intellectual hero. Indian historian Partha Chatterjee wrote that: “Orientalism was a book which talked of things I felt I had known all along but had never found the language to formulate with clarity. Like many great books, it seemed to say for the first time what one had always wanted to say.”

Some saw the significance of Said’s work as world-historical. Thus Sudipta Kaviraj proclaims that “In a truly heroic gesture of singlehanded revenge for what the West had done to his people, Edward Said wrote his Orientalism.” Sumit Sarkar, less friendly, writes of living in “an intellectual climate saturated by Edward Said” where invocation of his ideas “has become obligatory”.

Already at least four volumes of essays have been published in tribute to him, another four books are devoted to dissection of his thought, and hundreds more are indebted to or even plagiaristically dependent on his ideas. Less usually for a university teacher, he was also the subject of several television documentaries and profiles. With his death, that flow of secondary analysis and tribute will no doubt quickly become a flood.

It was partly his sheer range and mixture of roles – leading scholar among scholars, ubiquitous critic of imperialism in Reagan’s, Clinton’s and the Bushes’ Americas, militant Palestinian in a public culture where pro-Zionism has been hegemonic – that accounted for the extent as well as the bitterly contested nature of Said’s reputation.

But that is not to slight the power and range of his work itself. Whatever the flaws, the overstatements and the inconsistencies in his writings, they have lastingly transformed the map of contemporary intellectual life. And those inconsistencies are, in addition, often of a kind which will be found in the work of any major thinker when subjected to close reading, by a process which Said himself well described: “(W)e come back over the text, we make distinctions, we move forward and back, and occasionally, we discover these instances of ambiguity and even instability, where words may belong in one or another level of discourse.”

The privilege of mobility

The bare facts of a life are recorded, now, in hundreds of obituary notices – and in some instances misrecorded, as with the New York Times’ sloppy and mean-spirited ‘tribute’, or the London Daily Telegraph’s poisonous posthumous comments. They are important: for Said, perhaps more than for most authors and thinkers, biographical data may not explain, but do provide an essential explanatory backdrop to, the mass of his published texts.

These data, especially those of his early life, have also been accorded great symbolic and politically-charged significance both by Said himself and by some of his fiercest critics. For him

too, more than for many writers – and certainly far more than for most academics – the circumstances of his past and present were constantly foregrounded in his writing. Indeed an ever more crucial element in his style and approach came to be the intimate intertwining of the autobiographical with the theoretical and the political.

Said was a product of the Palestinian upper middle class, his father a successful businessman. The family was also Protestant – members of the Anglican communion in Palestine, though his maternal grandfather was a Baptist minister in Nazareth and his parents were married in that church, while some other close relatives were Catholics – so that as a Protestant among mainly Eastern Orthodox Palestinian Christians, among overwhelmingly Muslim Palestinians, themselves soon to be a minority among Jewish Israelis, Said was in a Russian-doll minoritarian position which has been in the long run influential for his view of the world.

Yet his was, simultaneously, a highly privileged minority in both class and confessional terms. As was typical of that milieu, the family was geographically mobile. His father, Wadie Ibrahim Said, a native Jerusalemite (Edward's mother, of mixed Lebanese-Palestinian parentage, was from Nazareth and had been educated mainly in Lebanon), had left Palestine at the age of sixteen to escape the Ottoman military draft.

Wadie lived in the US in his later teens and early twenties, from 1911 to 1920. As a result, he and his family possessed US citizenship; a fact which was significantly to shape Edward's later life. The relationship with his father seems, however, to have been distant. Edward always found Wadie 'rather mysterious' and 'very severe'. He 'rarely spoke, and when he did it was in Victorian platitudes'. His mother was a far warmer personality, the 'closest companion of my youth' who 'tried to spoil me' in compensation for the father's severity.

The Said family's connection to Jerusalem was broken in 1947-48. They were already settled mainly in Cairo well before this, while other relatives seem to have been among the many more prosperous Palestinians who exited before the crisis, at least in part because they could see it coming. Some Palestinian leftists, and some historians, have charged that such behaviour represented a treasonable abandonment of the national soil and cause by those who should have stayed and provided leadership for anti-Zionist resistance.

Sensitivity to such charges, however unfair, may partly account for Said's subsequent, occasional vagueness – at least until his extended 1999 memoir, *Out of Place* – about the extent and timing of his family's residence in Jerusalem, and the causes of their ceasing to be even occasional residents there. Such ambiguity provided a little plausible-sounding support, though no really valid basis, for some attempts near the end of his life to claim he had falsified his early history in order to appear 'more Palestinian' than he truly was.

Said attended a series of elite schools in Cairo: the Gezira Preparatory School, the Cairo School for American Children, then Victoria College. At Victoria College, the teaching staff were almost all British, and the English language was not just the medium of instruction but the only permitted language even of playground or sportsfield. The pupils, most of them Arabic-speaking, routinely defied the regulation; a resistance Said later associated with a then still inchoate but growing sense of Arab nationalism. Said's contemporaries at Victoria came from many parts of the region and many different ethnic or religious backgrounds: 'a motley crew of Arabs of various kinds, Armenians, Greeks, Italians, Jews and Turks'.

Said, though, was sent on to another prestigious school, Mount Hermon in Massachusetts: in his view, his father deliberately chose somewhere as far away as possible from the Middle East. He thus moved from an ethnically varied to an extremely homogeneous environment, from which he transferred first as a student to Princeton, then Harvard, and in 1963 to a teaching post at Columbia.

Although he made regular visits to the Middle East, mainly to Lebanon where his parents settled – and where his widowed mother was to live throughout the tragedies of the 1970s and early 1980s civil wars, Israeli and Syrian invasions – and although some family members became closely involved in Palestinian exile and other Arab politics, he remained almost entirely disengaged from political activity until his early thirties.

“I did really nothing else but study” as a graduate student and young lecturer, he recalled. Certainly he never wrote on Middle Eastern or other political themes before the late 1960s. He ‘missed the revolution’ of 1968 in US academia, which convulsed Columbia with especial drama, having been on sabbatical leave in the Middle East at the time.

An intellectual in politics

It was the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, so Said repeatedly stressed, which both induced his general turn towards politics and focused this on his region of birth. The Arab states’ crushing defeat in that war was “the great event of my political life”. For the first time he “felt genuinely divided between the newly assertive pressures of my background and language and the complicated demands of a situation in the US that scanted, in fact despised what I had to say about the quest for Palestinian justice.”

Visiting Amman in 1969 – then very much the centre of Palestinian exile politics, before the following year’s ‘Black September’ destruction of PLO influence in Jordan – he became intensely involved in Palestinian political activity, and began to write and broadcast on the subject in the US. Meanwhile he helped found and co-edited the *Arab Studies Quarterly*.

Full reconciliation or assimilation with either Arab or American worlds, however, never proved possible: “I always have the sense that I’m not really writing in my own language. In fact, I don’t really know what my own language is. I use English, but I was brought up speaking Arabic.” The childhood sense of being always ‘out of place’ was never entirely lost – but was rather turned to intellectually productive uses. The linguistic uncertainties surely also account for Said’s particular admiration for literary works like those of Ahdaf Soueif, which are among the handful of ‘Arabic novels in English’.

Throughout his long involvement in PLO politics, Said never joined any of the Palestinian political parties nor even became formally a member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation itself. When he later sat on the Palestinian National Council (PNC) it was as an independent. He was, however, initially sympathetic to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, often seen as the most leftist, internationalist and intellectual of the guerrilla groupings. In later years, his nearest friends and associates were more often to be found in the dominant Fatah faction of the PLO, and he was for a time close to and acted as an adviser for its leader Yasser Arafat.

Said joined the PNC in 1977, and resigned from it in September 1991 – because, he says, of the coincidence of his disillusion with the direction taken by Palestinian and especially Arafat’s politics, with Said himself being diagnosed as gravely ill from leukemia. Ordinarily, it seems, his

participation in PNC activities was limited – he rarely spoke or even voted, and often did not remain for the whole duration of meetings.

He later referred to his membership of the body as having been “for symbolic reasons”. Yet Said was responsible for the English version of the 1988 PLO declaration of statehood, and reports that much of its phraseology was indeed his own, overruling suggested changes even from Arafat himself. And for his writings and media interventions on Palestinian issues, he came to be quite widely seen as ‘the voice of Palestinian nationalism’, especially in the US.

In 1978-79, in an incident which he has described briefly in various articles and interviews, he seemed to be given the opportunity to open a ‘back channel’ for US-PLO dialogue or even negotiations. Said was invited by secretary of state Cyrus Vance to be conduit for proposals from Washington to Arafat, and vice versa.

Said tried to fulfil this role, but he claimed that the PLO leadership simply refused to take up the opportunity; although the US proposals offered Palestinians considerably more than was to be accepted by Arafat in the 1990s. Said’s first return visit to Israel/Palestine was in 1992: at the time of the Israeli elections which brought Yitzhak Rabin to power and thus initiated what became the Oslo peace agreement.

Subsequently he returned several times, writing and making a TV documentary about his experiences, and offering ever sharper criticisms of the emerging structure of PLO rule in Gaza and parts of the West Bank. He rejected strongly, then publicly and repeatedly criticised, the ‘peace process’ which followed the Oslo meetings; viewing it as a betrayal of Palestinian aspirations and rights.

Said was among the first Palestinian intellectuals to take part in unofficial meetings with Israeli ‘doves’ – though eventually he came to believe such meetings served little purpose, at least in the form which they usually assumed in the 1970s and 1980s. He was also among the first to advocate Palestinian recognition of Israel’s existence, and to repudiate ‘terrorist’ violence as both immoral and counterproductive: but simultaneously, wrote trenchantly on the blindnesses and dishonesties involved in much western public discourse about Middle Eastern ‘terrorism’ and especially the ways in which the Palestinian cause as such became stigmatised as essentially terrorist in character.

That kind of stigmatisation was frequently visited on Said himself; and the attacks were not only verbal. He encountered death threats, first from extremist Jews and later, ironically, from ultra-nationalist Arabs who thought his stance too conciliatory. His office at Columbia was firebombed. In the 1980s especially, his lectures on the Middle East on campuses and elsewhere throughout the United States frequently drew protests and even physical disruption from militant Jewish-American groups. He also, unsurprisingly, received a vast quantity of hate mail.

More recent and even more distasteful instances of the kind of passions – and vilification – Said evoked included the artificial storms whipped up in 2001 after a seemingly rather trivial incident: he was photographed throwing a stone across the Lebanese-Israeli border. In the aftermath, among other disreputable responses, some students and others at Columbia demanded his dismissal, and the Freud Institute in Vienna withdrew a prior invitation for him to lecture there.

The landscapes of the mind

Meanwhile his American and subsequently worldwide reputation as first a literary, then a more wide-ranging cultural and political, critic became ever higher. The breakthrough stemmed first from his 1975 book *Beginnings*, (his 1966 Joseph Conrad having sunk into relative obscurity), but was decisively established by his 1978 work *Orientalism*. The latter initiated a kind of trilogy on western representations of the Middle East; the subsequent, more narrowly focused and directly political volumes were *The Question of Palestine* (1980) and *Covering Islam* (1981).

1984's *The World, the Text, and the Critic* collected the previous several years' essays on literary theory, and he continued to offer thoughts on 'the future of criticism', but his interests were moving ever more thoroughly away from that field and into historical and political questions. In 1986 he published *After the Last Sky*, an emotive essay on Palestinian identity including strong autobiographical elements and accompanied by Jean Mohr's remarkable photographs.

A very different kind of book appeared in 1991: *Musical Elaborations* was the most substantial reflection of his lifelong musical interests. Meanwhile he was publishing several lengthy essays on imperialist themes in the work of such diverse artists as Jane Austen, Rudyard Kipling, Giuseppe Verdi and Albert Camus: all these went into the making of his massive 1993 book *Culture and Imperialism*.

Subsequently he collected much of his writing on Middle Eastern politics in *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994a), *Peace and Its Discontents* (1995a), and *The End of the Peace Process* (2000a); the first including several lengthy reflective essays as well as more occasional pieces, the latter volumes consisting mainly of polemical articles originally published in Arabic. *Representations of the Intellectual*, also in 1994, derived from his Reith Lectures on BBC radio, and drew together the results of another lifelong preoccupation. In 1999 he published *Out of Place*, a memoir of his early life and family.

At the end of 2000 most of his hitherto uncollected essays and longer reviews, spanning three decades and ranging from the densely philosophical, through the fiercely polemical, to the elegiacally autobiographical, appeared as *Reflections on Exile and other Essays* (2000). In 2001-03, there appeared *Power, Politics and Culture*, a collection of interviews – many of them major intellectual statements in their own right – edited by his friend and former student Gauri Viswanathan, another and slimmer interview book with David Barsamian, and a volume of collaborations and conversations with Daniel Barenboim. The final major publication of Edward's lifetime was a small book on Freud and the Non-European, the text of a lecture at the London Freud Museum.

A still further collection of political writings, a book on opera, and a study of the idea of 'late style' were in preparation in his last years. He also said that he intended to produce a major study of 'humanism in America'. A number of essays already published clearly relate to these works in progress, and we can hope that large parts of them were far advanced enough for posthumous publication.

Despite his severe ill-health, he continued to write, lecture, broadcast and travel intensively almost up to his last days. The final publications still embraced both literary and cultural themes, and directly political interventions such as his fierce opposition to Nato military action over Kosovo in 1999 and to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Contours of cultural influence

Edward Said could be viewed as a great exponent of the deployment and redeployment of cultural capital. The savings accumulated in one sphere can be spent – or reinvested – in another. After building a reputation initially as a literary critic and theorist, he was able to use the credit gained there to obtain an audience for his views on Middle East politics.

More, status as a prominent scholar of the humanities and a professor at one of America's most prestigious universities made it possible for him to state a case which was otherwise almost beyond the American pale: the case for Palestinian grievances and nationhood. No other Arab in the US could have done that; not even the scattering of other Palestinian academics there or elsewhere in the west.

Said would not have been given access to prime-time TV or the pages of the US's better newspapers if he had not already amassed a considerable **repute** as a literary scholar. Subsequently, the process **was** able to operate in the other direction too: his prominence as a political and media **figure** gave his literary and cultural writings a **public profile** and a size of readership that few if any 'pure' literary critics could match.

But this is to put it too simply, and perhaps too cynically. Said was not just **someone** who moved to and fro, or transferred cultural capital, between literary studies and politics. His most important work – in a sense, all his work since the late 1970s – mixed **those things**, and was influential above all because of the arguments he made about the inevitability of their mixing.

He was most famous for his insistence, ever since his celebrated (though also bitterly attacked) book *Orientalism*, on the ubiquitous intertwining of culture and imperialism: how a vast range of cultural products, from the masterpieces of Jane Austen, Flaubert or Verdi to most contemporary academic writing about the Middle East, is deeply implicated in the histories of European and latterly of US aggression against the rest of the world.

It might also be underlined that whilst it took Said's substantial credentials of expertise and scholarly clout to get media access for his decidedly challenging views, people with no discernible proficiency in relevant knowledges can rather easily and routinely gain such access if what they say better fits the dominant culture's preconceptions. Said himself often noted and polemicised about this – how in the US especially, quite ignorant pundits (most typically, greenhorn journalists) can be accepted as 'authorities' on Middle Eastern or Islamic affairs provided they simply repeat what is already 'known' to the public sphere about Islamic barbarism or Arab incompetence.

Although he was based in New York, Said's influence as a uniquely personable and effective advocate of Palestinian rights was almost as great in Britain, where pro-Palestinian activism had long been dominated by two small, wildly incompatible cliques, neither of which could gain much credit outside their own spheres.

There were factions of the ultra-left for whom the Palestinian struggle was part of the always-imminent world revolution; and there were ageing conservatives, often ex-Foreign Office officials or politicians, for whom Palestrophilia was an outgrowth of their romantic Arabism, of their lucrative links with various oil-rich regimes, or sometimes, it must be said, of ill-disguised anti-semitism.

Said, essentially a man of the moderate Left, quite detached both from the wilder shores of Trotskyism and from the embrace of the Gulf sheikhs, and someone who (despite regular, predictable and dishonest smears) could never credibly be called an anti-semitic, effortlessly transcended those polarities.

There has been no shortage of Palestinian intellectuals and public figures: from the early propagandists, poets and novelists to the historians and other scholars who have latterly begun to reconstruct the Palestinian national story in great and accurate detail. Hardly any of them, though, has a known image or reputation outside specialist circles.

Said was the great exception: for international and especially north American audiences, he was the voice of Palestine. Only Yasser Arafat is better known on a global scale as a public image of the Palestinian cause. And in many ways Said – elegant as against Arafat's calculated bristly unkemptness, massively fluent as against Arafat's inarticulacy in English, a widely cultured aesthete as compared to Arafat's lack of any known non-political interests – was the chairman's antithesis, and latterly of course his opponent.

For those who disliked Said or his message, his very charm and urbanity were dangerous: he was far too unlike their stereotypes of ‘the Arab’. Some critics, like an anonymous Sunday Telegraph profilist (1993), even seemed obscurely to hold Said's physical good looks against him.

Yet his purpose had, he insisted, never been to act as a cheerleader for ‘third worldist’ counter-assertions. Far from it: he repeatedly scorned what he called ‘the politics of blame’, even if occasionally – usually when stung by hostile criticism – he seemed to slip into it himself. His own utopian vision was not one of nationalist purity but of global interconnections and cultural mingling.

There is a deep and almost tragic irony – not lost on Said himself – that this quintessentially cosmopolitan man spent so much of his career as publicist for a nationalist movement. The irony is only deepened by the fact that Said came to view that movement's institutional form – Arafat's semi-state in the West Bank and Gaza – with bitter contempt for its ineptitude, corruption and increasingly repressive character.

Most recently, he appealed for Jewish and Arab intellectuals, in their diasporas as well as in the Middle East, to engage in a new kind of dialogue, based on mutual recognition of past suffering – of the Holocaust and the Nakba. This built again on a longstanding theme: Said's insistence that creating peace with justice in the Middle East required acts of acknowledgement, even atonement, for past wrongs – above all, naturally enough in his perspective, statements of atonement by Israelis for the dispossession of the Palestinians.

He urged the need for a Palestinian, and still more a wider Arab, coming to terms with the realities of Israel. Part of this process is that Arabs must come to understand better the burden of Jewish history, just as Israelis must do for the Palestinian past – and this must include recognising the power and resonance of memory of the Holocaust, eschewing the tendency among some Arab intellectuals to flirt with or admire such anti-semitic European figures as Roger Garaudy; a tendency Said viewed as morally and politically disastrous. And he extended his reflections, both autobiographical and theoretical, on the ambiguities of identity to a somewhat startling conclusion:

“I'm the last Jewish intellectual. You don't know anyone else. All your other Jewish intellectuals

are now suburban squires. From Amos Oz to all these people here in America. So I'm the last one. The only true follower of Adorno. Let me put it this way: I'm a Jewish Palestinian."

A humanist intellectual

Said's appeal to many readers has been a matter not only of the multiple and arresting themes he has addressed, or the innovative character of much of his work, but of style too. He modestly insisted that his own prose does not rise above the level of craft: "I am not an artist", he once urged. Yet much of his writing, if it is 'only' craftsmanship, is of an indubitably high order. His most personal and impassioned books, *Out of Place* and *After the Last Sky*, achieve moments of great rhetorical power, and others of intense pathos; as do many of his shorter essays. For his admirers, there is a quality of the unexpected constantly to be found in his work, one that is sadly rare in the routinised world of academia.

His reputation and influence thus owed much also to his personality, as revealed or presented in his writing and public appearances. This persona could appear irascible, sometimes a little sanctimonious, certainly intolerant of criticism. As one friendly critic, W.J.T. Mitchell, put it, he seemed "to vacillate between the professional tones of the immensely learned scholar, working collaboratively to sift the innumerable details of specific colonial episodes, and the voice of the prophet crying in the wilderness, alienated even from the community he has helped to create."

But alongside his many other qualities – of humour, charm, erudition – the Edward Said that gradually unfolded to public view across many years' writing had a quality even rarer among senior academics than it is with most other kinds of public figure: he was seldom if ever pompous. His work gave the reader an intense and ever increasing sense of engaging one in conversation with an erudite, sometimes aggressive, but open, indeed often startlingly vulnerable man.

Beginnings, the first really influential work, can be tough going; its style is more compressed, its matter often more abstract and philosophical than any of the later books. Said was then one of the pioneers in developing literary theory as a heavyweight academic subject in its own right, and Beginnings is dense with references to thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, and above all Giambattista Vico and Michel Foucault. Later, Said reflected, he deliberately moved toward a more accessible style.

Yet it soon became apparent that Said's approach and intentions were radically different from those of most literary theorists. As he later noted, the newfound enthusiasm for theory in the 1970s was widely seen as insurrectionary, as being somehow loosely associated with the radical ferment of 1968 and after in US, French and other western universities and societies. In fact, though, the impact of the new theoretical currents in North America soon appeared to become far removed from any obvious political engagement. Indeed as Said complained, much of this theoretical work abandoned 'the existential actualities of human life, politics, societies and events'.

Already in a 1976 interview, he was saying that while he shared many of the theoretical interests of critics like Harold Bloom and of the Yale deconstructionists, he regretted their lack of concern with historical and political questions. Paul de Man's influence, in particular, dictated a formalistic, indeed technical style of 'deconstructive' reading, seemingly sharply divorced from any political or social concerns (de Man's own dark political secret, his past as a Nazi collaborator and anti-semitic writer in wartime Belgium, was only revealed after his death).

Said insisted that he was himself, by contrast, motivated above all by politico-moral concerns: “I guess what moves me mostly is anger at injustice, an intolerance of oppression, and some fairly unoriginal ideas about freedom and knowledge.” It should be noted, though, that whereas his writing constantly intertwined these things, he was insistent that in his role as a teacher he deliberately eschewed any political role or intention to proselytise.

In his best work, he often blended together an argument about a particular literary or musical text, a conception of the functionings of cultural representation, a view of history, and a politico-moral stance, into a seamless and eloquent whole. A complex set of ideas was expressed in prose of deceptive limpidity.

And he kept more affiliations to tradition than did most of his deconstructionist and poststructuralist contemporaries. He retained high regard for the sheer scholarly weight of the philological tradition, to which he continued often to refer back in affirmative terms in his later work including Orientalism, even as he also criticised that tradition for its ethnocentrism and its associations with colonial expansion.

More strikingly still, Said remained in some troubled, ambiguous but strong sense a traditional humanist, at a time when French-model anti-humanism was hegemonic among avant-garde critics – as indeed it still was in the late 1990s. Even when Said was most under the influence of such theories and especially of Michel Foucault, in the 1970s, he kept his distance from them in this regard, frequently qualifying Foucault’s and Derrida’s anti-humanism with such adjectives as ‘bleak’, ‘tyrannical’ and ‘nihilistic’. And in early essays like that on Merleau-Ponty, his enthusiasm is reserved for those figures in modern French thought who stress the immediacy and concreteness of lived experience – those who remain humanists – as against the constructors of grand but alienating philosophical systems.

An inner ambivalence

Nonetheless, there are important connections between the earlier and the later work. Some of these connections may be sought in the idea of beginning itself. Said was always interested in the notion of politics as an affair of rival narratives, with each movement trying to validate its picture of the world by telling a tale about its own birth and origin.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a classic example. He often noted that presenting the Palestinian case in the world media meant having to keep retelling the story from the start, insisting that there is a story. Indeed this became a characteristic trope of Said’s: to link the uses or abuses of language directly with political programmes. He suggested that a bygone and to-be-mourned European humanism as represented by writers like Auerbach, Adorno and Blackmur had been replaced by a configuration which owed a great deal to various cultural nationalisms (enshrined in ideas of ‘the national canon’) on the one hand, ever more arcane and formalistic academic specialisms on the other.

He contrasted this situation with the far more attractive and vigorous atmosphere he found among historians, from whose work he clearly drew most of his intellectual inspiration in recent years. He insisted, indeed, that in his own work: “I’m nothing if not historically based. I’ve always said that the study of literature is basically a historical discipline.”

One of the problems with his most influential work, as several critics noted, is that in raising such important general questions about the ideas of culture and representation, Said failed to state very clearly what aspects or inflections of them were specific to Orientalist discourses. His questions

thus themselves raise further ones, which go to the heart of all his later writing. What, if anything, makes ‘transcultural’ interpretation and representation different from other kinds? Does this very way of posing the issue not risk reifying and essentialising the idea of ‘a culture’? Is it the case that all cultures and societies tend to produce hostile or reductive images of those outside their own boundaries – as Said sometimes seemed to suggest, especially in his later work?

If so, what makes Orientalism as he defines it distinctive: its unusually elaborate, systematic and enduring character, the directness and strength of its affiliations to political power and especially to colonialism, its especially arrogant claims to constitute ‘objective’ knowledge, or perhaps its capacity not only to (mis)describe, but actually to create, that which it treats?

In different places, Said appeared to assert all these and more. Thus there is what one of Orientalism’s most thoughtful critics, James Clifford, called a persistent hermeneutical short-cut at the very heart of the book’s argument. Said himself later offered yet another kind of short-cut, claiming in *Covering Islam* – albeit in a judgment which seems at odds with much that he had elsewhere written – that his view is: “(n)othing that Orientalism is more biased than other social and humanistic sciences; it is simply as ideological and as contaminated by the world as other disciplines.”

Said’s thought, then, was amphibious – or ambivalent – in its most basic epistemological assumptions. Whilst often arguing that the objects of knowledge are always discursively constructed, he could also be found, especially in his most polemical vein, engaged in asserting empirical truths against alleged misrepresentation or fabrication.

The apparent inconsistency of Orientalism in this regard has been noted by many critics: is ‘the Orient’ a purely discursive construct, or is there a ‘real Orient’ which has been misunderstood or traduced in politically interested ways by western scholars? Said’s own most direct response was blantly commonsense: there is no problem here because “Obviously enough, there could be no Orientalism without, on the one hand, the Orientalists, and on the other, the Orientals.” Obviously enough, this statement does not resolve the difficulty. Nor did his numerous subsequent reflections on such issues, above all in 1993’s *Culture and Imperialism*, seem to his critics to do so.

Orientalism, and most of Said’s subsequent work, are then about the relationship between culture and politics, or between the making of images and narratives and the exercise of power. Those Europeans and, later, North Americans who wrote about the East did so in ways inescapably shaped and determined by their countries’ drive to dominate and exploit Oriental peoples.

The sheer inequality of power relations between West and East could not but be reflected in – and furthered by – their writings, even if as individuals they might be sympathetic or attracted to the cultures they described. But more directly, very many of these writers were closely associated with the drive for colonial power.

A high proportion of the earlier European Orientalists whom Said discusses were employees of, or in some way commissioned and funded by, colonial authorities. The later American ones were just as often associated with the US’s ‘foreign policy establishment’ or, in some cases, with that of Israel. Said’s critiques of such figures often shifted emphasis between stressing the broader and less direct association of artists and scholars with political power, through a shared discursive formation, and emphasising instead their more simple and obvious affiliations of jobs, money, or

political interest: shifts, that is, between stress on what Said called 'latent' Orientalism and its more easily evident 'manifest' forms.

What remained consistent was Said's indignant humanism, his eloquent and morally compelling critique not only of imperialism's continuing legacies, but of self-styled oppositional theories which perpetuate imperialism's cultural assumptions while claiming to reverse them. "In our wish to make ourselves heard, we tend very often to forget that the world is a crowded place, and that if everyone were to insist on the radical purity or priority of one's own voice, all we would have would be the awful din of unending strife, and a bloody political mess, the true horror of which is beginning to be perceptible here and there in the re-emergence of racist politics in Europe, the cacophony of debates over political correctness and identity politics in the United States, and – to speak about my own part of the world – the intolerance of religious prejudice and illusionary promises of Bismarckian despotism, a la Saddam Hussein and his numerous Arab epigones and counterparts." (*Culture and Imperialism*, p.xxiii)

Adventures of the aesthetic

His recent work also moved ever more decisively toward celebrating or emphasising recuperation of the voices of the colonised, the anticolonialist and postcolonial – as against critics' complaints that in Orientalism everything was dictated by the worldview of the powerful. Narratives of historical change could (or, Said seems sometimes to imply, against the academic 'spirit of the age', necessarily do) carry messages of progress and emancipation.

For Said, the intellectual still has – or could have – a degree of autonomy from political power. He insists, then, on the importance of the individual author's responsibility. She or he can choose to write and act in politically accountable, and emancipatory, ways. The institutions of academia, media and intellectual production are not inherently bound to the service of imperialism; though they can choose to betray their true avocation and become its servants – and in the US, he says, they usually have done so. Said was surely right to urge that "Resistance cannot equally be an adversarial alternative to power and a dependent function of it, except in some metaphysical, ultimately trivial sense." And he was right against many of those who have been most influenced by him.

Said's conception of artistic value was an unashamedly 'conservative' one: his tastes in literature and in music are classical and canonical. He said that: "I do believe that some literature is actually good, and that some is of bad quality, and I remain as conservative as anyone when it comes to, if not the redemptive quality inherent in reading a classic rather than staring at a TV screen, then the potential enhancement of one's sensibility and consciousness by it."

In Orientalism, as he later noted, "the heroes are basically the novelists" as opposed to the academics and policy-makers. In the visual arts his avowed tastes were also very much within an established canon: Picasso, Cezanne, El Greco and above all Goya. Yet some critics – usually people who have only the dimmest knowledge of Said's actual work, or who have their own political axes to grind – have attacked his aesthetic stance by way of viewing him not as an elitist but as some kind of cultural vandal, aiming crudely to debunk or devalue the great artworks of western history by dragging them into the dirt of sordid materialism and past racial arrogance.

Thus Peter Conrad, in a particularly silly phrase, described Said as a "master of querulous special pleading." This is very far from the truth. In the instance which apparently aroused most fury, Said's treatment of Jane Austen, he is not saying "Mansfield Park has a half-hidden subtext of

colonial slavery and exploitation; so you shouldn't read it." Works of genius remained, for him, masterpieces: to see how they relate to issues of political, economic and racial power is to understand them in a new and deeper way, not at all to diminish them.

He has been just as scornful of the idea that the works of Dead White European Men should be banned from the 'multicultural' classroom as any conservative could be. If anything, perhaps Said overstated the greatness of some stridently imperialist art: he praised Rudyard Kipling to the skies, and would even write unaffectedly and affectionately of how his own son Wadie reminded him of Kipling's Kim. Equally, he wrote with pleasure, nostalgia and more than a little abiding love for Johnny Weissmuller's Tarzan films, which most 'anti-imperialist' critics would dismiss with total scorn.

Said's celebration of the freedom from social and political constraints which he found in some great music may also, however, reflect a wider shift in some of his own preoccupations. In discussing the idea of 'late style' which so fascinated him in his last years, he found in the last great works of such artists as Beethoven, Bach and Ibsen a turning away from the public roles which they had embraced in their earlier lives, a 'turning inward' and a new emphasis on the private, the personal and on the forms of art itself.

In part prompted, as he openly acknowledged, by his own illness and awareness of impending mortality, Said began to develop his own 'late style', where (without abandoning his lifelong concerns with the public, political and social implications of art and writing, let alone his political engagement) he too introduced a greater stress on the private and the inward. It was expressed most obviously in *Out of Place* and other late-1990s autobiographical writings, but also in his perceptions of such figures as Adorno, Beethoven, or Britten.

There was a new, or renewed, fascination with the intensity of private satisfactions found in reading as a 'solitary and consciously interpretative' process, and in the act of writing itself, both as sensuous pleasure (but also hard physical work: in one of his al-Ahram columns Said ponders on the sheer unrelenting labour involved in any kind of serious creation, and especially in that labelled genius) and as "a refusal of the silence that most of us experience as ordinary citizens who are unable to effect change".

Today, he feared, we may be losing that connection, and thus that special kind of stubborn intellectual heroism. We cannot, he insists, afford to do so, but must find new ways of pursuing the values once embodied by the solitary writer wrestling with ink and paper, ways appropriate to a globalised and electronic age.

The dialectics of opposition

Perhaps Said remained uncertain, emotionally torn right to the end, as to how far his wider themes of cultural hybridity, of colonialism as a shared experience to be understood contrapuntally, of reconciliation and syncretism, could really be applied in the especially painful territory of Israeli-Palestinian relations. In some of his 1990s writings there are hints that these perspectives may, cautiously, find a home there too. Here again, however, his view darkened with time; and that notion of a different and better future seemed far more distant: this was 'a dialectical conflict', but one with no possible synthesis.

Did Said perhaps over-insist on his own isolation and marginality? Did that sense of himself perhaps owe as much to the particular strains on his childhood self-image, especially those induced by the complex and difficult relationship with his parents which he analysed so

poignantly in Out of Place, as to adult political stances and circumstances? Is there a touch of exaggeration, even of vaingloriousness, in the insistence on the necessary loneliness of the critical intellectual? Have there not been costs, as well as gains, in the ever greater prominence which Said's writing has given to his own background and circumstances, from the relatively brief, Gramscian invocation of "an attempt to inventory the traces upon me, the Oriental subject" in Orientalism to the repeatedly autobiographical register of his more recent writings?

Even if we feel there is some justice in such complaints, at least we may be grateful for the seriousness with which Said took these issues. Although the stance of the intellectual for him should ideally always be a dissenting and oppositional one, and although he has suggested that "I am much more interested in the politics of loss and dispossession than I am in the politics of triumph and fulfilment", this has never been reducible to opposition for its own sake, as it has seemed to be for some postmodernists.

So many of his central themes have not been about the polarity and negativity of unalloyed oppositionism, but (even in what many saw as his most purely negative stance, against the Israeli-Palestinian 'peace process') about the search for more inclusive and affirmative alternatives; or in more theoretical vein have been about connections and counterpoints.

Edward Said reflected many times on the benefits, and the strains, of being an outsider – an exile. Usually, he stressed the intellectual advantages to be gained from such a position; and granted the intellectual exile or migrant an especially crucial role in modern culture. He suggested that an 'exilic' consciousness, and always problematic relationship to a lost 'home', shaped his entire critical disposition and influenced the way he thought and wrote, even in his least political works.

Most of his own work's greatest strengths and insights, too, came from this position on the margins. He also, though, pointed to the dangers of this position: "You could be an outsider, and become more of an outsider, and cultivate your own garden, feel paranoia, all the rest of it." His memoir of childhood, Out of Place, concludes by reaffirming the freedom that can be won by being always 'not quite right', never feeling fully at home, experiencing oneself and one's life as an unstable 'cluster of flowing currents' rather than a fixed, solid entity. Yet the enduring pain which repeatedly surfaces in the memoir is also testimony to the emotional costs which that stance exacted from him.

Still, like Frantz Fanon, he was deeply committed to the belief that "a subjective experience can be understood by others". That belief impelled almost all his work. It underpinned his passionate, and perhaps unfashionable, faith in the redemptive powers of great imaginative literature. And it drove the uniquely potent mixture of analysis, diagnosis, advocacy, polemic and confession which characterised his best writing.

Perhaps, even, the sheer recurrent inconsistency of Said's arguments is what saved him from the worst excesses of much contemporary academic 'radicalism'. He was unable to be as persistently ahistorical, essentialising and manichean as are many of those who have, ironically, been inspired by his own work. Maybe inconsistency is not, in this field at least, so great an intellectual sin. It may even be a sign of intellectual honesty.

Said's importance lies finally and mainly in the range and power of the questions he has raised, rather than in his own answers to those questions. He therefore almost invites us to refer back to the closing lines of Beginnings, written almost three decades ago: "In the course of studying for and writing this book, I have opened, I think, possibilities for myself

(and hopefully for others) of further problematics to be explored...These are studies to which I hope our moral will shall be equal – if in part this beginning has fulfilled its purpose."

Edward Said's death removes hope that he could fully pursue the many possibilities that his work opens up; but whoever now does pursue them, the honour of the beginning, of the first discoveries and of the moral example, will be his.

Edward Said as an Intellectual

For years, he was a familiar face on the network news – an urbane, articulate man, invariably dressed in an elegant suit and tie, who could always be counted on to provide polished, unaccented, pro-Palestinian (or, more generally, pro-Arab or pro-Moslem) spin on recent Mideast developments. Yet Edward W. Said is more – much more – than just another TV talking head.

A longtime professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University as well as a former president of the Modern Language Association, Said is also largely responsible for the influential school of literary and cultural criticism known as "postcolonial studies." Which is not as far removed from being a Palestinian spokesman as it may sound, for, as Said has made clear in such works as *The Question of Palestine* (1979), he views Israel as (above all else) a product of colonialism – a pseudo-European state carved by Western imperialist powers out of lands rightly belonging to the subjects of empire.¹

Said has been in the spotlight for a long time now, but in the last two or three years – and especially since September 11 of this year – his public profile has been higher than ever. Vintage Books, after reissuing several of his works in matching paperbacks, published his memoir, *Out of Place*, in 1999. In the next year, two new volumes appeared from various publishers: *The End of the Peace Process*, a sizable gathering of articles and op-eds on the Middle East, and *The Edward Said Reader*. These were followed in 2001 by *Reflections on Exile*, a hefty collection of essays, and *Power, Politics, and Culture*, a lavish compilation of Said's interviews.² In these times when major publishing houses almost invariably disdain collections of anything, the treatment accorded Said's essays, op-eds, and interviews – which tend not only to date rapidly but also to repeat the same broad points over and over again – is nothing less than stunning. On the dustjacket of *Power, Politics, and Culture*, Nadine Gordimer ranks Said "among the truly important intellects of our century." Surely his publishers would appear to be telling us that something extraordinarily important is indeed going on here – though, in the aftermath of the events of September 11, one might reasonably wonder if any of those publishers have reconsidered their enthusiasm.

What is going on here? Let us begin at the beginning. The son of a Lebanese mother and an affluent Palestinian father (whose World War One service for Uncle Sam won him U.S. citizenship), Said was born in Jerusalem in 1935, was baptized in the Anglican Church, and grew up as a member of Cairo's privileged set. Fluent from childhood in both Arabic and English, he attended exclusive British and American schools in that city, then went on to a New England prep school, to Princeton, and to Harvard, where he received his doctorate. He began a fairly typical career in the American academy, only to be politicized (he has said) by the Six-Day War. Before long he was working closely with Yasir Arafat (with whom he has since fallen out) and serving as a member of the Palestinian National Council (from which he has since resigned). He became a

familiar media presence. And with his book *Orientalism* (1978), he also attained academic superstardom. Examining at length the works of T.E. Lawrence, Sir Richard Burton, and Ernest Renan, among others, Said argued in *Orientalism* that Westerners have long looked upon the Orient, and in particular upon Moslems and Arabs, with a condescension born of ignorance, solipsism, and a colonialist mentality.³

Orientalism made some valid points: there is something wrong, for example, with the fact that many American students who receive comprehensive educations in Western civilization gain only the most rudimentary understanding of the world's other civilizations. (The fact that many students are graduated knowing very little about *any* civilization is another topic altogether.) But ultimately, Said's thesis amounts to a truism: that people look at the "other" through their own eyes, and tend to judge alien cultures by their own culture's standards. A problem? Yes. But Said's take on it is problematic, too. Almost consistently, he condemns any negative commentary by any Westerner on any aspect of the Orient. Often he seems to imply that the only proper Western posture toward the East is to suspend judgment entirely and bathe everything in sympathy. ("Sympathy" is a favorite Said word: routinely, he slams Western observers of the non-Western world for failing to show enough of it.) Yet in Said's view even so sympathetic a Westerner as Burton is guilty of elevating his own "consciousness to a position of supremacy over the Orient," a position in which "his individuality perforce encounters, and indeed merges with, the voice of Empire." In Said's view, in short, simply to write can be to coerce, control, colonize.

What *Orientalism* does with Western scholars' ideas about the Orient, *Covering Islam* (1981, 1997) does with the notions of Islam set forth in the Western media.⁴ Repeatedly, Said serves up quotations from newspaper op-eds and television news programs that depict Moslems as potential terrorists and/or religious fundamentalists; and his complaints about these media images are not entirely off base. But what's odd about *Covering Islam* is that it never really gets around to the ticklish topic of Islam itself. Granted, the Western media have frequently simplified and caricatured the Islamic world – but then, they do this to everything. Besides, a substantial percentage of Moslems are in fact religious fundamentalists who despise individual liberty and sexual equality, who believe profoundly that all sorts of things should be punished by death, and who readily cheer acts of violence directed against innocent civilians in the West. Tirelessly, Said dances around or rushes past these facts. Time and again he dismisses "fundamentalism" as an anti-Moslem code word. Confronted with the multi-volume *Fundamentalism Project*, which usefully examines fundamentalism in a variety of religions, Said (who invariably represents himself as having the utmost respect for serious scholarly work) ignores its contents and instead presumes to read the editors' minds: "My suspicion," he says darkly, "is that the project itself was started precisely with Islam in mind, although Judaism and Christianity are in fact discussed." They certainly are discussed, and at great length; nowhere in the *Fundamentalism Project* can one find evidence that Said's "suspicion" has any basis.

On occasion, to be sure, Said admits the downside of recent Islamic history. Yet he is always quick to turn his focus – and his criticisms – westward. Typical of his approach is a passage about Saddam Hussein from a 1990 essay that appears in Said's 1994 omnium gatherum *The Politics of Dispossession*.⁵ Saddam, he admits, "is a deeply unattractive, indeed revoltingly tough and callous leader, who has suppressed personal freedoms..." and so on. "But he is neither mad nor, I would suggest, an unlikely figure to emerge out of the desolation that has characterized recent Arab history." And of course much of the responsibility for that "desolation" can be laid on the United States, with its "imperialist" and anti-Arab policies. By paragraph's end, Said has

brought in the American invasion of Grenada and the bombing of Libya in order to make the point that Saddam, in invading Kuwait, was after all only doing what the U.S. does all the time.

Throughout his *oeuvre*, Said singles Noam Chomsky out for praise with astonishing frequency. What may not be clear to many readers is that Said practices (also with astonishing frequency) a rhetorical strategy that Chomsky may be said to have perfected. For Chomsky's way of addressing the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge – or, rather, of not addressing it – was to focus on the errors and oversimplifications of Western journalists and on the wiles of Western officialdom. The effect, which one could hardly see as anything other than intentional, was to minimize the genocide itself. Said approaches Saddam, Khaddafi, & Co. identically: skirting their negatives, he attends rather to the peccadilloes of Western media and governments, reminding readers constantly that though many Westerners tend to view Islamic culture monolithically ("[Daniel] Pipes speaks...as if Islam were one simple thing"), it is in fact a complex phenomenon whose adherents number over a billion. (Forget events such as the recent U.N. AIDS conference at which the Islamic countries *did* vote monolithically – opposed by virtually every other sovereign state on earth, except the Vatican – to disinvite a scheduled speaker from a gay AIDS organization.) For Said, it can seem, *any* generalization about the Islamic world is an outrageous overgeneralization. In *Covering Islam* he mocks concerns about "organized Islamic militancy" by saying that such militancy "accounts for less than five percent of the billion-strong Islamic world." (Which adds up to something under fifty million organized militants: how comforting!)⁶

As *Covering Islam* scratches away at the Western media, so *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) picks its way through Western literature.⁷ It contains the most notorious single example of Said's postcolonial criticism, namely his underscoring of the fact that the privileged lives of the main characters in *Mansfield Park* are made possible by the labor of colonial Antiguans whose harrowing existence is of no interest whatsoever to Jane Austen. Point taken. Yet it seems ironic that the principal contribution of this book, written by a man who demands that the West recognize the complexity of Islam, the Orient, the Arab world, etc., was to advance a species of criticism that neglects human and literary complexities in favor of inane, vacuous, and unilluminating cant about Western imperialism.⁸ Yes, Europe's colonial legacy, with its attendant cruelties, is an established historical fact; but it should be remembered that the concepts of human equality and individual rights are Western legacies, too – and are perceived as such by many people in the East. (The courageous citizens of Islamic countries who work as human-rights advocates are customarily savaged by their governments, and by many of their compatriots, as traitors, tools of the West, opponents of "Islamic values.") Said has spent his career studying Western civilization and enjoying its freedoms, yet, just as he sidesteps the less salutary realities of today's political Islam, so he continually avoids acknowledging that the very values by which he judges Western governments and media are Western values. Indeed, the principal reason why Said has served so effectively in America as a TV pitchman for the Palestinians is that his self-presentation is thoroughly Western: he comes off as the very model of a tolerant, liberal Western academic, his distinguished appearance and civilized manner serving to dispel any notion of Arabs as irrational, zealous, terror-prone.

It's all about image – and a key element of Said's quite consciously contrived personal image is the word "intellectual." For Said, this word is manifestly nothing less than a mantra, a lodestar; it's a cloak in which he wraps himself proudly, apparently confident that it confers upon him an air of higher objectivity. And, above all, it's a weapon. He wields it constantly, employing it to shoot down ideological adversaries whom he depicts variously as ill-informed, economically corrupted hirelings, as hysterical, politically compromised ideologues, and as vulgar,

professionally incompetent journalists – *non-intellectuals* all, naturally – and whom he contrasts with himself, the intellectual who stands above petty prejudices and personal motives, embodying pure thought, humanistic sentiments, and disinterested truth-seeking. In *The Politics of Dispossession*, for example, he dispatches two opponents (both of them exceedingly knowledgeable and perceptive students of Middle Eastern culture and politics) as follows: "[*New York Times* writer Thomas] Friedman is a journalist....[Fouad] Ajami is a second-rate scholar who has written one collection of essays...and a very bad history of Musa Sadr. These are all people who belong to the genre of celebrities. They have no particular anchor in the process of intellectual work or in institutions of intellectual production." As opposed, of course, to Said himself, who begins *Reflections on Exile* by telling us that the book constitutes "some of the intellectual results of teaching and studying in one academic institution, Columbia University in New York," who states in *Out of Place* that his "first opportunity for intellectual instruction during the summer came in 1949" (he is speaking here of himself at age 13 or 14), and who pads book after book with gratuitous references to "intellectual concerns in the scholarly community" and the like. Said's acolytes play the same game: the editors of *The Edward Said Reader*, in their introduction, use the word "intellectual" several times on one page, concluding that "Ultimately, what we find in the broad variety of works we present here is an affirmation of the intellectual vocation, an unwavering belief that the rigors of intellectual thought and the courage to speak one's convictions will lead one down the incorruptible road to discovering and demanding equal justice for all."

The apotheosis of all this silliness is *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994), an unbearably stuffy little book – originally a series of lectures – in which Said defines the intellectual as "neither a pacifier nor a consensus-builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do. Not just passively unwilling, but actively willing to say so in public."⁹ The intellectual, in short, engages in the act of "speaking truth to power." From this it is only a short, easy step to connecting the word "intellectual" with Said's own opposition to various official U.S. positions while denying the label to those with differing views. For Said, "speaking truth to power" clearly means, among other things, deplored America's actions in the Gulf War, though it does not encompass explicitly condemning terrorist acts by Palestinians and others who, in his formulation, cannot be understood to have "power."

In the wake of the destruction of the World Trade Center, to read Said on the subject of terrorism – a term he often puts in quotation marks, as if to question its legitimacy as a concept – is an experience in a category of its own. In a 1988 article that appears in *The Politics of Dispossession*, Said does his best to suggest to the reader that the very notion of "terrorism" is imprecise, ideologically charged, and – well – downright *vulgar*, and that the connection in Western minds between this term and Arab and Moslem societies is unjust. ("The uniqueness of this region [the Middle East] and its people to discussions of terrorism is, I believe, quite special," he writes. "To my knowledge, of no other country, no religion, culture, or ethnic group except Islam and its societies has it been said that terrorism is, after a fashion, endemic.") Arguing that terrorism-targeted nations such as the United States are in fact responsible for "state violence" that dwarfs the "private violence" of so-called terrorists, Said praises as "sensible" an article by one Eqbal Ahmad, who describes terrorism as "a violent way of expressing long-felt, collective grievances" and who refers sympathetically to "the violence of the helpless." In a piece that appeared in the *Observer* on September 16, 2001 – a mere five days after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington – Said expresses impatience with the consensus interpretation of those attacks,

arguing that "what is going on" is simply that "an imperial power [has been] injured at home for the first time." He admits that "there has been terror of course," but feels called upon to pronounce that "nearly every struggling modern movement at some stage has relied on terror." After reading this article, one no longer wonders why it appeared in a British newspaper rather than on the op-ed page of Said's usual high-profile outlet, *The New York Times* – whose readers, many of them ordinarily receptive to Professor Said's critiques of Western democracy and whitewashing of Islamic tyranny and terror, were perhaps too busy that week trying to recover from the violent assault on their city to be able to profit from his wisdom.¹⁰

Routinely, Said reduces terrorism from a horrific reality perpetrated by terrorists to a distasteful locution perpetrated by Western journalists and scholars. "Both the United States and Israel," he remonstrated in 1997, "are...enamored of clichés about Islamic terror"; in the 1988 article, sounding like a fastidious music critic responding to some harsh dissonance, he refers to "the unpleasant tingling induced by the word *terrorism*." Rejecting Benjamin Netanyahu's claim that "the root cause of terrorism is terrorists," Said sniffs that this view "is open to objection on both journalistic and scholarly grounds as well as on aesthetic and grammatical ones." In a phrase, moreover, that may read somewhat differently than intended to those who witnessed the ash- and grime-covered aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center, Said excoriates various Western Arabists for their contributions to what he calls "the verbal dust storm induced by terrorism." One might think that the events of September 11 would have shamed him into silence on at least this particular topic, but no: in his September 16 *Observer* article, while wisely allowing himself a few negative words about the World Trade Center attackers and their "lying religious claptrap," he again zeroes in on the deplorable role of "words like 'terrorism' and 'freedom'" in American political rhetoric, complaining that "such large abstractions have mostly hidden sordid material interests, the influence of the oil, defence and Zionist lobbies now consolidating their hold on the entire Middle East, and an age-old religious hostility to (and ignorance of) 'Islam' that takes new forms every day." No, Professor Said: these "large abstractions" describe living realities that are now clearly at war with each other.

"I must...confess," Said has written, "that I find the entire arsenal of words and phrases that derive from the concept of terrorism both inadequate and shameful." Well, for my part I must confess that I find Said's slick, supercilious, faculty-lounge intellectualization of terror morally unsettling. It is one thing to analyze terror; it is quite another to attempt, as Said has done repeatedly, to analyze it away. He would have us forget that the arsenals that matter, where contemporary terrorism is concerned, are composed not of "words and phrases" but of guns, knives, and bombs – and, in the year 2001, commercial airliners that have been hijacked and employed as guided missiles. (To be sure, Said is invariably careful to insert into any discussion of terrorism a sentence or two acknowledging that violence against innocents is always wrong; but whenever he writes a sentence like "Terror bombing is terrible, and cannot be condoned," you can be certain that the next sentence will begin with "But.")

Said's image as a truth-seeking, truth-speaking intellectual came under serious attack in September 1999. An article by Justus Reid Weiner in that month's *Commentary* argued persuasively that Said had on occasion misrepresented his early life, describing himself as having grown up in Jerusalem and fled to Cairo as an exile in 1947 or '48, around the time of the founding of Israel, when in fact (as Weiner's research showed, and as Said's memoir, also published in 1999, belatedly acknowledged) he was raised in Cairo and only spent relatively brief periods in Jerusalem.¹¹ Weiner cites a 1992 *Harper's* article by Said: "I was born, in November 1935 in Talbiya, then a mostly new and prosperous Arab quarter of Jerusalem. By the end of 1947, just

months before Talbiya fell to Jewish forces, I'd left with my family for Cairo." Similarly, in *London Review of Books* (1998): "I was born in Jerusalem and spent most of my formative years there and, after 1948, when my entire family became refugees, in Egypt." And a 1998 *New York Times* profile reads: "Mr. Said was born in Jerusalem and spent the first twelve years of his life there." Weiner's comment: "A great deal of the moral authority accruing to Edward Said derives as much from his personal as from his intellectual credentials"; yet "although Said has defined his own intellectual vocation as one of 'tell[ing] the truth against extremely difficult odds'... it turns out that, in retailing the facts of his own personal biography over the years, he has spoken anything *but* the plain, direct, or honest truth." Said's aim, according to Weiner? "To strengthen his wider ideological agenda – and in particular to promote the claims of Palestinian refugees against Israel."

Said replied to Weiner's article with a short piece in the weekly English-language edition of the Cairo newspaper *Al-Ahram*.¹² In a subsequent letter to *Commentary*, a group of people identifying themselves as founders of the "Arab-Jewish Peace Group" claimed that "each one of Mr. Weiner's allegations is addressed and refuted" in Said's *Al-Ahram* article; another Said supporter wrote, "Now that Justus Reid Weiner's assertions about Edward Said's life and origins have been found inaccurate, does *Commentary* have any plans to issue a formal apology or clarification?" Yet Said's article in *Al-Ahram*, entitled "Defamation, Zionist-style," provided no such refutation. Instead Said added to his autobiographical duplicities an audacious misrepresentation of Weiner's charges. Weiner, he claimed, "attacks my life and story as a Palestinian by pretending to show that I am neither Palestinian, nor ever lived in Palestine, nor that my family was evicted from Palestine in 1948....It is part of the Palestinian fate always to be required to prove one's existence and history!" But at no point did Weiner deny that Said was a Palestinian, or that he may at some point have resided briefly in Palestine, or that members of his extended family were forced to leave Palestine in the late 1940s. On the contrary, Weiner specifically charged Said with maintaining that he had grown up in Jerusalem and been driven from it by the Israelis – and this was an accusation to which Said obviously had no answer. In *Al-Ahram* Said wrote that "what *Commentary* wants is not the truth but the Big Zionist Lie." Yet truth was something that Said had plainly bent in the past, and was bending again in *Al-Ahram*.

The Arab-Jewish Peace Group's letter insisted that "claims like Mr. Weiner's hurt the Palestinians in the same way that revisionist historians who try to deny the Holocaust hurt the Jewish people." But if any harm was done to the Palestinians, it was not by Weiner's article but by Said. Why, one wonders, did he fib about his past? My own sense of Said from his writings leads me to suspect that he simply couldn't help himself – that for him it was not enough that there is some justice in Palestinian claims; his overweening *amour-propre* compelled him to place himself at the center of it all. He needed to be not just a spokesman, but a symbol. And why, it may be asked, do Said's untruths matter? They matter because the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a nearly hopeless moral quagmire in which each camp has racked up a litany of legitimate world-class grievances and a history of unspeakable deeds. To take a leadership role on either side is to enter an atmosphere rife with double-dealing, propaganda, and spin. In such circumstances, truth becomes the dearest commodity of all. Those who participate in such a conflict in sincere hopes of achieving a fair and peaceful resolution must strive to honor the truth. Thus Said's are no ordinary deceptions, but instead resonate in a way that, say, the recently revealed prevarications by the historian Joseph Ellis (who for years told his classes at Mount Holyoke that he had served in Vietnam) do not.

The Ellis case, indeed, makes for an arresting comparison. "What has puzzled nearly everyone," noted a *New York Times* editorial about Ellis' falsehoods, "is the transparency of these stories.

Why should a man as successful as Mr. Ellis...feel compelled to reinvent his past? One might almost suppose that he was not so much reinventing his past as confirming his present, projecting his current degree of success backward in time, living up to a version of himself.¹³ Quoting the executive director of the American Historical Association to the effect that Ellis' case "has provoked a conversation about the limits and the values of truth," the *Times* insisted that "that is exactly what this case should not do," since Ellis's stories were neither "part of some self-avowed exercise in personal fiction nor...a post-modernist experiment in the boundaries of truth": they were lies, pure and simple.

Excellent said. Yet where, one may wonder, was the *Times* editorial on Edward W. Said, who has contributed to that newspaper's editorial pages on innumerable occasions over the years, and to whom many of the *Times'* observations about Joseph Ellis seem eerily applicable? It is hardly less than astonishing that while Ellis' reputation has been forever tarnished by the revelations about him, Said emerged utterly unscathed from the *Commentary* episode. Nor does his good name seem to have been damaged by a photograph, published in *The New Republic*'s issue of July 24, 2000, that showed him, on a recent visit to Lebanon, hurling a rock across the border at an Israeli guardhouse. Commenting on the picture, *TNR*'s editors made note of "the purity that [Said] has claimed for his own activity as an intellectual. He has made a career of defining a high, romantic ideal of intellectual life and heroically adducing himself as an example of his definition." Yet the photo, wittily captioned "Representation of the Intellectual," plainly contradicted Said's image as (in *TNR*'s words) "an exquisite, wounded soul distracted by politics from art."

More than a year after the appearance of that photograph, however, Said – surely the Teflon intellectual *par excellence* – not only endures but thrives. Indeed, even before the events of September 11 provided him with a fresh wave of media prominence, his latest crop of books had arguably raised him to new heights of renown. After all, how many other English professors these days could persuade a major publisher to issue such a mixed bag as *Reflections of Exile*, whose topics include Tarzan, pianists, the Egyptian belly dancer Tahia Carioca, *Moby-Dick*, Michel Foucault, R.P. Blackmur, Chopin, Hemingway on bullfighting, Eric Hobsbawm's *Age of Extremes*, and Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations?* One piece in this collection grew out of an encounter with a black woman history professor who complained that a seminar paper by Said had focused too much on white European male writers; in response, Said assails such bean-counting even as he seeks to certify his credentials as a hero of "the victims of race, class, or gender." In another essay, Said attacks V.S. Naipaul as a "scavenger" for choosing to survey the Third World's "follies, its corruption, its hideous problems...rather than to render that history's processes, occasional heroism, intermittent successes" – for, that is, telling the truth rather than propagandizing. (Naipaul, according to Said, lacks Nadine Gordimer's "sympathetic insight.")

Throughout *Reflections of Exile*, Said seesaws between aesthetics and politics. It is hardly an exaggeration, in fact, to describe him as being two writers in one. The writer that I think may fairly be identified as the more genuine of the two – and who can be seen at work in Said's music criticism for the *Nation*, in *Out of Place*, and in some of his literary criticism – is a Western-oriented highbrow of the first water, a cultural traditionalist who genuinely loves European and American literature and classical music, who believes fervently in the idea of literary and artistic greatness, who brings serious critical standards to bear on his material, and who says what he thinks. It is in his political writings, and in those of his critical writings in which aesthetics are overwhelmed by politics, that the less attractive, and (I believe) less genuine, Said emerges – the Said who plays unworthy rhetorical shell games, avoids uncomfortable truths, and (while

frequently insisting on his opposition to terrorism) seeks to cultivate sympathy for the murderers of innocents. At times one has the distinct impression that, deep down, Said feels (to coin a phrase) rather out of place in his role as flayer of "U.S. imperialism" and empathic observer of "the violence of the helpless."

One would have hoped that if he had any conscience at all, Said's sense of discomfort in this role would have been exacerbated by the events of September 11. Yet his *Observer* article, alas, betrays little if any hint of remorse over his years of faithful service as an apologist for terrorism. In a contribution to a *London Review of Books* symposium on the terrorist attacks,¹⁴ moreover, Said's talent for dissembling seemed once more in evidence as he described a post-attack America that I didn't recognize from anything else I had read: "Hundreds of Muslim and Arab shopkeepers, students, women in hijab, and ordinary citizens have had insults hurled at them, while posters and graffiti announcing their imminent death sprang up all over the place." Ignoring the President's endless insistence that Islam is a religion of peace and his firm entreaties that Americans not blame their Moslem neighbors for the terrorist attacks, Said accused Bush of drawing "God and America into alignment" against Islam.

To touch briefly on Said's other recent titles, both *The Edward Said Reader* and *Power, Politics, and Culture* offer useful enough surveys of Said's career – the former by collecting highlights from his books, the latter by rounding up a quarter century's worth of interviews in which Said summarizes those books' arguments. Meanwhile, the articles and op-eds brought together in *The End of the Peace Process* – which picks up where Said's previous grab-bag, *The Politics of Dispossession*, left off – add up to an exceedingly detailed and repetitious chronicle of developments in the Middle East during the second half of the 1990s, especially those relating to the Oslo accords (which Said fervently opposed, calling the U.S. a less than impartial intermediary).

Finally, there's *Out of Place*. To read it is in one sense a curious experience, for the memoir does pretty much what *Culture and Imperialism* accuses Austen of doing in *Mansfield Park*: it vividly portrays Said's early life as a member of Cairo's highly Westernized privileged class while offering hardly a glimpse of the 99-plus percent of that city's many millions who (then as now) lived in staggering poverty. Indeed, by rendering Cairo's poor all but invisible, and by focusing instead on the ways in which he, as an Arab boy, felt slighted by the Western curricula of his elite schools, Said manages to depict his younger self not as an insufficiently sensitive beneficiary of economic oppression (which is, of course, how he views Austen's characters) but rather as a victim of social injustice.

To read the memoir with a knowledge of Said's history of autobiographical fabrications, moreover, seriously damages one's experience of the book (which, if one were somewhat less well-informed, one might find lovely and moving). Among other things, *Out of Place* suggests that Said's career can be understood largely as a reaction to his father, who comes across in this portrait as an almost mythic figure – a rich, powerful, brilliant businessman, seemingly indomitable (until his last years), and always putting down his effete, precocious only son (who, for his part, seems to have viewed his tough and unsophisticated *père* with something close to condescension). The elder Said adored the U.S., loathed Palestine, and was eager for his boy to become a successful, respected American and to turn his back forever on the Middle East and its messy politics. For a long time Said seemed determined to leave the impression that his conspicuous support for Palestinian rights had as its background a fondly remembered childhood in a Jerusalem that was stolen from him by the founders of Israel; can it be that his powerful self-identification with

Palestine is, rather, a defiant response to a father who absolutely hated the place? Might it be, furthermore, that if Said clings so fiercely to the word "intellectual," it is precisely because this is the one thing his otherwise awe-inspiring parent was not?

After September 11, 2001, to be sure, such questions can seem not only trivial but beside the point. For one of the many effects of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington was to underscore the essential wrongheadedness of the ways of thinking about these issues that have been promoted over the years by the likes of Edward Said. Those attacks made it clear that the West's cardinal error, in regard to the Arab and Moslem world, has not been a failure of "sympathy," as Said would have it, but a refusal to grapple with the basic realities of that world and the very considerable challenges that its most refractory elements pose to the security and values of our own civilization. It should now be thoroughly clear that part of what is required of us in the present world order is that, far from joining Said in his comprehensive denigration of things Western, we take more seriously than we have heretofore our obligation to defend civilized values from barbarism, fanaticism, and tyranny – from people who have no moral boundaries where violence is concerned and who regard us and the ideas by which we live with a hatred that lies beyond our comprehension. After September 11, Westerners can no longer luxuriate in the illusion that that hatred is not real or that it can somehow be dissolved by means of a sufficient application of "sympathy." If we are to show sympathy, rather, it should be for the brave souls in that region who are struggling under perilous circumstances, and against formidable odds, to nudge fundamentalist Islam out of the Dark Ages and to turn rogue states into respectable members of the community of nations. This is, to say the least, a tall order; and in such a monumental struggle, the glib deceptions and slippery distortions of an Edward W. Said can play no positive role.

Said's views on Islam and west

The Islamic Orient today is important for its resources or for its geopolitical location. Neither of these, however, is interchangeable with the interests, needs or aspirations of the native Orientals. Ever since the end of World War II, the United States has been taking positions of dominance and hegemony once held in the Islamic world by Britain and France.

With this replacement of one imperial system by another have gone two things: first, a remarkable burgeoning of academic and expert interest in Islam, and, second, an extraordinary revolution in the techniques available to the largely private-sector press and electronic journalism industries. Together these two phenomena, by which a huge apparatus of university, government and business experts study Islam and the Middle East and by which Islam has become a subject familiar to every consumer of news in the West, have almost entirely domesticated the Islamic world. **Not only has that world become the subject of the most profound cultural and economic Western saturation in history—for no non-Western realm has been so dominated by the United States as the Arab-Islamic world is dominated today—by the exchange between Islam and the West, in this case the United States, is profoundly one-sided.**

So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Moslems and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have instead is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make

that world vulnerable to military aggression.

...in the United States at least, there is no major segment of the polity, no significant sector of the culture, no part of the whole community capable of identifying sympathetically with the Islamic world.

On the other hand, most of the Third World is now fully bathed in U.S.-produced TV shows, and is wholly dependent upon a tiny group of news agencies that transmit news back to the Third World, even in the large numbers of cases where the news is *about* the Third World. From being the source of news, the Third World generally, and Islamic countries in particular, have become consumers of news. **For the first time in history (for the first time, that is, on such a scale) the Islamic world may be said to be learning *about itself* in part by means of images, histories and information manufactured in the West.**

In other words, whole swatches of Islamic history, culture and society simply do not exist except in the truncated, tightly packaged forms made current by the media. As Herbert Schiller has said, TV's images tend to present reality in too immediate and fragmentary a form for either historical or human continuity to appear. Islam therefore is equivalent to an undifferentiated mob of scimitar-waving oil suppliers, or it is reduced to the utterances of one or another Islamic leader who at the moment happens to be a convenient foreign scapegoat.

What is crucially important about this presentation of Islam is the media's ascendancy, their intellectual and perceptual hegemony, over the whole thing, and since the media sell their product to consumers who prefer simplicity to complexity, the uniform image of Islam that emerges is constructed out of much the same material from which history, society and humanity have been eliminated.

Said goes on to address the question of "What can be done?":

To begin with, what should be avoided is an attempt to alter, improve, beautify, make more appealing the image of Islam. Such an effort falls into the trap of believing that reductive images can be made substitutes for a very complex reality, and it ends up perpetuating the entire system of ideological fictions by which Islam is made to do service for Western designs upon riches, peoples and territories that happen to call themselves Moslem. A hard and fast distinction has to be made between serious consideration of the Islamicate world and nearly everything that passes for Islam in the media and in all but a few places in the culture.

To dispel the myths and stereotypes of Orientalism, the world as a whole has to be given an opportunity to see Moslems and Orientals producing a different form of history, a new kind of sociology, a new cultural awareness: in short, the relatively modest goal of writing a new form of history, investigating the Islamicate world and its many different societies with a genuine seriousness of purpose and a love of truth. But, alas, we must recognize that even with vast sums of money easily available, the Islamic world as a whole does not seem interested in promoting learning, building libraries, establishing research institutes whose main purpose would be modern scientific attention to Islamic realities and to seeing whether in fact there is something specifically Islamic about the Islamic world.

He concludes:

That this distortion has occurred at all is a function of power, and in this instance style and image are direct political indices of power. Thus, we must concede that any drastic attempt to correct distortions of Islam and the Arabs is a political question involving the use and deployment of power.

Islam” and “the West” are inadequate banners

Spectacular horror of the sort that struck New York (and to a lesser degree Washington) has ushered in a new world of unseen, unknown assailants, terror missions without political message, senseless destruction.

For the residents of this wounded city, the consternation, fear, and sustained sense of outrage and shock will certainly continue for a long time, as will the genuine sorrow and affliction that so much carnage has so cruelly imposed on so many.

New Yorkers have been fortunate that Mayor Rudy Giuliani, a normally rebarbative and unpleasantly combative, even retrograde figure, has rapidly attained Churchillian status. Calmly, unsentimentally, and with extraordinary compassion, he has marshalled the city's heroic police, fire and emergency services to admirable effect and, alas, with huge loss of life. Giuliani's was the first voice of caution against panic and jingoistic attacks on the city's large Arab and Muslim communities, the first to express the commonsense of anguish, the first to press everyone to try to resume life after the shattering blows.

Would that were all. The national television reporting has of course brought the horror of those dreadful winged juggernauts into every household, unremittingly, insistently, not always edifyingly. Most commentary has stressed, indeed magnified, the expected and the predictable in what most Americans feel: terrible loss, anger, outrage, a sense of violated vulnerability, a desire for vengeance and un-restrained retribution. Beyond formulaic expressions of grief and patriotism, every politician and accredited pundit or expert has dutifully repeated how we shall not be defeated, not be deterred, not stop until terrorism is exterminated. This is a war against terrorism, everyone says, but where, on what fronts, for what concrete ends? No answers are provided, except the vague suggestion that the Middle East and Islam are what “we” are up against, and that terrorism must be destroyed.

What is most depressing, however, is how little time is spent trying to understand America's role in the world, and its direct involvement in the complex reality beyond the two coasts that have for so long kept the rest of the world extremely distant and virtually out of the average American's mind. You'd think that “America” was a sleeping giant rather than a superpower almost constantly at war, or in some sort of conflict, all over the Islamic domains. Osama bin Laden's name and face have become so numbingly familiar to Americans as in effect to obliterate any history he and his shadowy followers might have had before they became stock symbols of everything loathsome and hateful to the collective imagination. Inevitably, then, collective passions are being funnelled into a drive for war that uncannily resembles Captain Ahab in pursuit of Moby Dick, rather than what is going on, an imperial power injured at home for the first time, pursuing its interests systematically in what has become a suddenly reconfigured geography of conflict, without clear borders, or visible actors. Manichaean symbols and apocalyptic scenarios are bandied about with future consequences and rhetorical restraint thrown to the winds. Rational understanding of the situation is what is needed now, not more drum-beating. George Bush and his team clearly want the latter, not the former. Yet to most people in the Islamic and Arab worlds the official US is synonymous with arrogant power, known for its sanctimoniously munificent support not only of Israel but of numerous repressive Arab regimes, and its inattentiveness even to the possibility of dialogue with secular movements and people who have real grievances. Anti-Americanism in this context is not based on a hatred of modernity or technology-envy: it is based on a narrative of concrete interventions, specific depredations and, in the cases of the Iraqi people's suffering under US-imposed sanctions and US support for the 34-year-old Israeli occupation of Palestinian

territories. Israel is now cynically exploiting the American catastrophe by intensifying its military occupation and oppression of the Palestinians. Political rhetoric in the US has overridden these things by flinging about words like “terrorism” and “freedom” whereas, of course, such large abstractions have mostly hidden sordid material interests, the influence of the oil, defence and Zionist lobbies now consolidating their hold on the entire Middle East, and an age-old religious hostility to (and ignorance of) “Islam” that takes new forms every day.

Intellectual responsibility, however, requires a still more critical sense of the actuality. There has been terror of course, and nearly every struggling modern movement at some stage has relied on terror. This was as true of Mandela’s ANC as it was of all the others, Zionism included. And yet bombing defenceless civilians with F-16s and helicopter gunships has the same structure and effect as more conventional nationalist terror.

What is bad about all terror is when it is attached to religious and political abstractions and reductive myths that keep veering away from history and sense. This is where the secular consciousness has to try to make itself felt, whether in the US or in the Middle East. No cause, no God, no abstract idea can justify the mass slaughter of innocents, most particularly when only a small group of people are in charge of such actions and feel themselves to represent the cause without having a real mandate to do so.

Besides, much as it has been quarrelled over by Muslims, there isn’t a single Islam: there are Islams, just as there are Americas. This diversity is true of all traditions, religions or nations even though some of their adherents have futilely tried to draw boundaries around themselves and pin their creeds down neatly. Yet history is far more complex and contradictory than to be represented by demagogues who are much less representative than either their followers or opponents claim. The trouble with religious or moral fundamentalists is that today their primitive ideas of revolution and resistance, including a willingness to kill and be killed, seem all too easily attached to technological sophistication and what appear to be gratifying acts of horrifying retaliation. The New York and Washington suicide bombers seem to have been middle-class, educated men, not poor refugees. Instead of getting a wise leadership that stresses education, mass mobilisation and patient organisation in the service of a cause, the poor and the desperate are often conned into the magical thinking and quick bloody solutions that such appalling models provide, wrapped in lying religious claptrap.

On the other hand, immense military and economic power are no guarantee of wisdom or moral vision. Sceptical and humane voices have been largely unheard in the present crisis, as “America” girds itself for a long war to be fought somewhere out there, along with allies who have been pressed into service on very uncertain grounds and for imprecise ends. We need to step back from the imaginary thresholds that separate people from each other and re-examine the labels, reconsider the limited resources available, decide to share our fates with each other as cultures mostly have done, despite the bellicose cries and creeds.

“Islam” and “the West” are simply inadequate as banners to follow blindly. Some will run behind them, but for future generations to condemn themselves to prolonged war and suffering without so much as a critical pause, without looking at interdependent histories of injustice and oppression, without trying for common emancipation and mutual enlightenment seems far more wilful than necessary. Demonisation of the Other is not a sufficient basis for any kind of decent politics, certainly not now when the roots of terror in injustice can be addressed, and the terrorists isolated, deterred or put out of business. It takes patience and education, but is more worth the investment than still greater levels of large-scale violence and suffering.

Edward Said and Islamic Awareness

Samuel Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations?" appeared in the Summer 1993 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, where it immediately attracted a surprising amount of attention and reaction. Because the article was intended to supply Americans with an original thesis about "a new phase" in world politics after the end of the cold war, Huntington's terms of argument seemed compellingly large, bold, even visionary.

He very clearly had his eye on rivals in the policy-making ranks, theorists such as Francis Fukuyama and his "end of history" ideas, as well as the legions who had celebrated the onset of globalism, tribalism and the dissipation of the state. But they, he allowed, had understood only some aspects of this new period. He was about to announce the "crucial, indeed a central, aspect" of what "global politics is likely to be in the coming years." Unhesitatingly he pressed on:

"It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future."

Most of the argument in the pages that followed relied on a vague notion of something Huntington called "civilization identity" and "the interactions among seven or eight [sic] major civilizations," of which the conflict between two of them, Islam and the West, gets the lion's share of his attention. In this belligerent kind of thought, he relies heavily on a 1990 article by the veteran Orientalist Bernard Lewis, whose ideological colors are manifest in its title, "The Roots of Muslim Rage." In both articles, the personification of enormous entities called "the West" and "Islam" is recklessly affirmed, as if hugely complicated matters like identity and culture existed in a cartoonlike world where Popeye and Bluto bash each other mercilessly, with one always more virtuous pugilist getting the upper hand over his adversary. Certainly neither Huntington nor Lewis has much time to spare for the internal dynamics and plurality of every civilization, or for the fact that the major contest in most modern cultures concerns the definition or interpretation of each culture, or for the unattractive possibility that a great deal of demagogic and downright ignorance is involved in presuming to speak for a whole religion or civilization. No, the West is the West, and Islam Islam.

The challenge for Western policy-makers, says Huntington, is to make sure that the West gets stronger and fends off all the others, Islam in particular. More troubling is Huntington's assumption that his perspective, which is to survey the entire world from a perch outside all ordinary attachments and hidden loyalties, is the correct one, as if everyone else were scurrying around looking for the answers that he has already found. In fact, Huntington is an ideologist, someone who wants to make "civilizations" and "identities" into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and countercurrents that animate human history, and that over centuries have made it possible for that history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing. This far less visible history is ignored in the rush to highlight the ludicrously compressed and constricted warfare that "the clash of civilizations" argues is the reality. When he published his book by the same title in 1996, Huntington tried to give his argument a little more subtlety and many, many more footnotes; all he did, however, was confuse himself and demonstrate what a clumsy writer and inelegant thinker he was.

The basic paradigm of West versus the rest (the cold war opposition reformulated) remained untouched, and this is what has persisted, often insidiously and implicitly, in discussion since the terrible events of September 11. The carefully planned and horrendous, pathologically motivated suicide attack and mass slaughter by a small group of deranged militants has been turned into proof of Huntington's thesis. Instead of seeing it for what it is--the capture of big ideas (I use the word loosely) by a tiny band of crazed fanatics for criminal purposes--international luminaries from former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi have pontificated about Islam's troubles, and in the latter's case have used Huntington's ideas to rant on about the West's superiority, how "we" have Mozart and Michelangelo and they don't. (Berlusconi has since made a halfhearted apology for his insult to "Islam.")

But why not instead see parallels, admittedly less spectacular in their destructiveness, for Osama bin Laden and his followers in cults like the Branch Davidians or the disciples of the Rev. Jim Jones at Guyana or the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo? Even the normally sober British weekly *The Economist*, in its issue of September 22-28, can't resist reaching for the vast generalization, praising Huntington extravagantly for his "cruel and sweeping, but nonetheless acute" observations about Islam. "Today," the journal says with unseemly solemnity, Huntington writes that "the world's billion or so Muslims are 'convinced of the superiority of their culture, and obsessed with the inferiority of their power.'" Did he canvas 100 Indonesians, 200 Moroccans, 500 Egyptians and fifty Bosnians? Even if he did, what sort of sample is that?

Uncountable are the editorials in every American and European newspaper and magazine of note adding to this vocabulary of gigantism and apocalypse, each use of which is plainly designed not to edify but to inflame the reader's indignant passion as a member of the "West," and what we need to do. Churchillian rhetoric is used inappropriately by self-appointed combatants in the West's, and especially America's, war against its haters, despoilers, destroyers, with scant attention to complex histories that defy such reductiveness and have seeped from one territory into another, in the process overriding the boundaries that are supposed to separate us all into divided armed camps.

This is the problem with unedifying labels like Islam and the West: They mislead and confuse the mind, which is trying to make sense of a disorderly reality that won't be pigeonholed or strapped down as easily as all that. I remember interrupting a man who, after a lecture I had given at a West Bank university in 1994, rose from the audience and started to attack my ideas as "Western," as opposed to the strict Islamic ones he espoused. "Why are you wearing a suit and tie?" was the first retort that came to mind. "They're Western too." He sat down with an embarrassed smile on his face, but I recalled the incident when information on the September 11 terrorists started to come in: how they had mastered all the technical details required to inflict their homicidal evil on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the aircraft they had commandeered. Where does one draw the line between "Western" technology and, as Berlusconi declared, "Islam's" inability to be a part of "modernity"?

One cannot easily do so, of course. How finally inadequate are the labels, generalizations and cultural assertions. At some level, for instance, primitive passions and sophisticated know-how converge in ways that give the lie to a fortified boundary not only between "West" and "Islam" but also between past and present, us and them, to say nothing of the very concepts of identity and nationality about which there is unending disagreement and debate. A unilateral decision made to draw lines in the sand, to undertake crusades, to oppose their evil with our good, to extirpate terrorism and, in Paul Wolfowitz's nihilistic vocabulary, to end nations entirely, doesn't make the

supposed entities any easier to see; rather, it speaks to how much simpler it is to make bellicose statements for the purpose of mobilizing collective passions than to reflect, examine, sort out what it is we are dealing with in reality, the interconnectedness of innumerable lives, "ours" as well as "theirs."

In a remarkable series of three articles published between January and March 1999 in *Dawn*, Pakistan's most respected weekly, the late Eqbal Ahmad, writing for a Muslim audience, analyzed what he called the roots of the religious right, coming down very harshly on the mutilations of Islam by absolutists and fanatical tyrants whose obsession with regulating personal behavior promotes "an Islamic order reduced to a penal code, stripped of its humanism, aesthetics, intellectual quests, and spiritual devotion." And this "entails an absolute assertion of one, generally de-contextualized, aspect of religion and a total disregard of another. The phenomenon distorts religion, debases tradition, and twists the political process wherever it unfolds." As a timely instance of this debasement, Ahmad proceeds first to present the rich, complex, pluralist meaning of the word *jihad* and then goes on to show that in the word's current confinement to indiscriminate war against presumed enemies, it is impossible "to recognize the Islamic--religion, society, culture, history or politics--as lived and experienced by Muslims through the ages." The modern Islamists, Ahmad concludes, are "concerned with power, not with the soul; with the mobilization of people for political purposes rather than with sharing and alleviating their sufferings and aspirations. Theirs is a very limited and time-bound political agenda." What has made matters worse is that similar distortions and zealotry occur in the "Jewish" and "Christian" universes of discourse.

It was Conrad, more powerfully than any of his readers at the end of the nineteenth century could have imagined, who understood that the distinctions between civilized London and "the heart of darkness" quickly collapsed in extreme situations, and that the heights of European civilization could instantaneously fall into the most barbarous practices without preparation or transition. And it was Conrad also, in *The Secret Agent* (1907), who described terrorism's affinity for abstractions like "pure science" (and by extension for "Islam" or "the West"), as well as the terrorist's ultimate moral degradation.

For there are closer ties between apparently warring civilizations than most of us would like to believe; both Freud and Nietzsche showed how the traffic across carefully maintained, even policed boundaries moves with often terrifying ease. But then such fluid ideas, full of ambiguity and skepticism about notions that we hold on to, scarcely furnish us with suitable, practical guidelines for situations such as the one we face now. Hence the altogether more reassuring battle orders (a crusade, good versus evil, freedom against fear, etc.) drawn out of Huntington's alleged opposition between Islam and the West, from which official discourse drew its vocabulary in the first days after the September 11 attacks. There's since been a noticeable de-escalation in that discourse, but to judge from the steady amount of hate speech and actions, plus reports of law enforcement efforts directed against Arabs, Muslims and Indians all over the country, the paradigm stays on. One further reason for its persistence is the increased presence of Muslims all over Europe and the United States. Think of the populations today of France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Britain, America, even Sweden, and you must concede that Islam is no longer on the fringes of the West but at its center. But what is so threatening about that presence? Buried in the collective culture are memories of the first great Arab-Islamic conquests, which began in the seventh century and which, as the celebrated Belgian historian Henri Pirenne wrote in his landmark book *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (1939), shattered once and for all the ancient unity of the Mediterranean, destroyed the Christian-Roman synthesis and gave rise to a

new civilization dominated by northern powers (Germany and Carolingian France) whose mission, he seemed to be saying, is to resume defense of the "West" against its historical-cultural enemies. What Pirenne left out, alas, is that in the creation of this new line of defense the West drew on the humanism, science, philosophy, sociology and historiography of Islam, which had already interposed itself between Charlemagne's world and classical antiquity. Islam is inside from the start, as even Dante, great enemy of Mohammed, had to concede when he placed the Prophet at the very heart of his *Inferno*. Then there is the persisting legacy of monotheism itself, the Abrahamic religions, as Louis Massignon aptly called them. Beginning with Judaism and Christianity, each is a successor haunted by what came before; for Muslims, Islam fulfills and ends the line of prophecy. There is still no decent history or demystification of the many-sided contest among these three followers--not one of them by any means a monolithic, unified camp--of the most jealous of all gods, even though the bloody modern convergence on Palestine furnishes a rich secular instance of what has been so tragically irreconcilable about them. Not surprisingly, then, Muslims and Christians speak readily of *crusades* and *jihads*, both of them eliding the Judaic presence with often *sublime* insouciance. Such an *agenda*, says Eqbal Ahmad, is "very reassuring to the men and *women* who are stranded in the middle of the ford, between the deep waters of tradition and *modernity*."

But we are all swimming in those waters, Westerners and Muslims and others alike. And since the waters are part of *the ocean of history*, trying to plow or divide them with barriers is futile. These are tense times, *but* it is better to think in terms of powerful and powerless communities, the secular politics of reason and ignorance, and universal principles of justice and injustice, than to wander off in search of vast abstractions that may give momentary satisfaction but little self-knowledge or informed analysis. "The Clash of Civilizations" thesis is a gimmick like "The War of the Worlds," better for reinforcing defensive self-pride than for critical understanding of the bewildering interdependence of our time.

Introduction to Edward Said's Culture and Imperialism



The extraordinary reach of Western imperialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is one of the most astonishing facts in all of geopolitical history. Neither Rome, nor Byzantium, nor Spain at the height of its glory came close to the imperial scope of France, the United States, and particularly Great Britain in these years.

But while the rule of these vast dominions left scarcely a corner of life untouched in either the colonies or the imperialist capitals, its profound influence upon the cultural products of the West has been largely ignored. In this dazzling work of historical inquiry, Edward Said shows how the justification for empire-building was inescapably embedded in the Western cultural imagination during the Age of Empire, and how even today the imperial legacy colors relations between the West and the formerly colonized world at every level of political, ideological, and social practice.

With **Culture and Imperialism**, Said offers a powerful investigation of the relationship between culture and the imperialism of the West. Probing masterpieces of the Western tradition--including Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Verdi's *Aida*,

and Camus's *The Stranger*--Said illuminates how the justification for empire-building in the 19th and early 20th centuries was inescapably embedded in the cultural imagination of the West. The result was a way of thinking that affirmed not merely the Europeans' right but also their obligation to rule--and touched nearly every facet of life in both the colonies and the imperial capitals.

Said reveals as well how writers such as W. B. Yeats, Salman Rushdie, Aime Cesair, and Chinua Achebe have challenged this imperial vision to reclaim for their peoples the right of self-determination in history and literature. Imperialist assumptions, Said argues, continue to influence our politics and our arts--from the media's coverage of the Gulf War to debates about what literatures are worth teaching in our schools. Finally, Said argues for an awareness that all cultures are interdependent and that the true human community is global. Probing some of the great masterpieces of the Western tradition - including Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Verdi's *Aida*, and Camus's *L'Estranger* - Said brilliantly illuminates how culture and politics cooperated, knowingly and unknowingly, to produce a system of domination that involved more than cannon and soldiers - a sovereignty that extended over forms, images, and the very imaginations of both the dominators and the dominated. The result was a "consolidated vision" that affirmed not merely the Europeans' right to rule but their obligation, and made alternative arrangements unthinkable. Pervasive as this vision was, however, it did not go unchallenged. Said also traces the development of an "oppositional strain" in the works of native writers who participated in the perilous process of cultural decolonization. Working mainly in the languages of their colonial masters, these writers - including William Butler Yeats, Salman Rushdie, Aime Cesaire, and Chinua Achebe - identified and exposed mechanisms of control and repression. In so doing, they reclaimed for their peoples the right of self-determination in history and literature. In today's post-colonial world, Said argues, imperialist assumptions continue to influence Western politics and culture, from the media's coverage of the Gulf War to debates over what histories and literatures are worth teaching in our schools. But his vision reveals a hopeful truth: if the West and its former subject peoples are to achieve a meaningful, harmonious coexistence, it will depend upon the development of a humanistic historical understanding that all cultures are interdependent, that they inevitably borrow from one another. Finally this passionate and immensely learned book points the way beyond divisive nationalisms toward an awareness that the true human community is global.

Critical Summary: Culture and Imperialism by Edward Said

PROFESSOR SAID says that his aim is to set works of art of the imperialist and post-colonial eras into their historical context. "My method is to focus as much as possible on individual works, to read them first as great products of the creative and interpretive imagination, and then to show them as part of the relationship between culture and empire."

He says he has not "completely worked out theory of the connection between literature and culture on the one hand, and imperialism on the other"; he just hopes to discover connections. He says it is useful to do this because "by looking at culture and imperialism carefully ... we shall see that we can profitably draw connections that enrich and sharpen our reading of major cultural texts." Indeed, it is more than useful; it must be obligatory if he is right in saying that the "major, I would say determining, political horizon of modern Western culture [is] imperialism," and that to ignore that fact, as critical theory, deconstruction and Marxism do, "is to disaffiliate modern culture from its engagements and attachments."

Having set himself this vast task, which would cover virtually all Western history for the past three centuries, Professor Said must cut it back to manageable size: he will deal with parts of the British and French empires only, and culture will be represented by a small number of novels and one opera. Thereby the proposed Herculean labors come down to looking for references to the colonies in some works of fiction.

That occupies only the first two of four chapters. He then turns to the question of how decolonization is reflected in the culture of newly independent nations. In turn, this large subject is cut down to "one fairly discrete aspect of this powerful impingement"--that is, the work of intellectuals from the colonial or peripheral regions who wrote in an "imperial language" and who reflected on western culture. So we pass from Jane Austen's mentions of Antiguo Caribbean, Bengali and Malaysian views of imperialist practices. It is an original idea to put them together, but already the reader feels that the book is beginning to sprawl. That feeling grows when this third chapter deviates into a theory about decolonization as a political process, and about the difference between independence and liberation. By the fourth and last chapter Professor Said has quite lost the thread and we are treated to a familiar denunciation of "American cultural imperialism." The only Western works of art mentioned here are "Dynasty," "Dallas," and "I Love Lucy" and there is no suggestion that they refer to empire in the way Kipling and Conrad did. There is much perfervid sweeping generalization about Western intellectuals' treatment of the Third World, notably of Islam during the Gulf War, balanced (if that is the word) by frank denunciations of the lack of liberty in that same Third World, notably again in Islam.

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So what we have here is a book on literature plus two or three pamphlets that contain much ranting, all barely held together in a bad case of intellectual sprawl. For the casual reader, there is plenty of interesting erudition and some sensitive literary analysis too much heated political diatribe. For students--supposing this book attains the trendy academic status of Said's Orientalism--there is only confusion, engendered by shifting definitions of such key words as "imperialism" and by Said's propensity to extravagant generalization, of this sort: "Without empire, I would go so far as saying, there is no European novel..." These vast generalizations (which alternate with angry attacks on other people's unwarranted "totalizations") are followed by passages of hedging and qualification, where Said affects to be moderate and cautious, but he soon resumes his extreme claims as though he had conceded nothing. One gets the impression that he wants to occupy all possible positions on a subject, always readying himself to deal with criticism by retorting, "Oh, but I say that too!"

Perhaps the basic difficulty and source of confusion is that "and" in his title. The reality is that the spread of British people and their civilization to the American colonies, to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere was a cultural phenomenon or it was nothing. That we can also call it imperialism does not mean that we thereby get two distinct things, one

called culture and the other called empire, so that we can now ask how one "intersects with" or determines or causes the other. This is what happens when, for example, people ask whether ideology is determined by the economy. In order to get two things so distinct that one could determine the other, we have to find a completely non-ideological economy, and since that is impossible the discussion becomes confused.

There is a perfectly logical way of fudging this sort of problem: give each term so narrow a definition that you do get two distinct things which might then interact. For instance, you decree that the economy is "money-grubbing" and ideology is "highfalutin' ideas." You then have a genuine question: how do high-falutin' ideas disguise or glorify money-grubbing. The trouble is, conceived so narrowly, the problem loses much of its interest and descends to petty "unmasking." This is the method Said adopts in the first part of his book. Imperialism is given the narrow definition of stealing territory: "The actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about." Culture is given an even narrower definition: "a realm of unchanging intellectual monuments, free from worldly affiliations." So now the supposed problem is how the activity of stealing land from natives shows up in, is romanticized or excused in, apparently apolitical works of art. It should be clear in advance that, first, such a narrow matter could be described as "imperialism and culture" only in a fit of grandiloquence; second, it will dredge up a list of allusions, hints, and mere mentions so long as it deals with works of art and not political tracts; third, it will culminate in So What?

The narrow view of imperialism as naked territorial rapacity cannot, of course, be sustained for long. When Said wants to denounce U.S. foreign policy, he has to call it "imperialism without colonies" and "cultural colonialism," silently abandoning his own theory. Well before that he finds he cannot even account for classic imperialism, because he thinks there is a problem about how "Britain's great humanistic ideas, institutions, and monuments, which we still celebrate ... co-existed so comfortably with imperialism." He is genuinely puzzled that the land of Jane Austen, John Stuart Mill, and Keats could run an empire, which is why he goes looking for tell-tale signs of guilt about empire in the highest reaches of British culture. Blinded by his narrow view of it, he cannot see that imperialist culture included not only authoritarian, commercial, and supremacist strains, but also libertarian, reformist, and co-operative forces dedicated to ideals of trusteeship, devolution (after the shock of the loss of the American colonies) and eventual partnership. Even more important, it was these latter forces that in the end won out over the likes of Curzon and Churchill; without always actually meaning to decolonize, they made so many adjustments, concessions, and reforms that empire was eroded from within. As P.J. Marshall has said, "An imperial identity ebbed away over a long period without a sudden disorientating crisis of loss." That is how scores of nations were freed from European imperialism, whereas Said's narrow view could only explain (in part) exceptional cases like Algeria, where land was tenaciously clung to.

SAID DESCRIBES his aim thus: "my subject [is] how culture participates in imperialism yet is somehow excused for its role." Or again: "One of my reasons for writing this book is to show how far the quest for, concern about, and consciousness of overseas dominion extended not just in Conrad but in figures we practically never think of in that connection like Thackeray and Austen and how enriching and important for the critic is attention to this material..." Well, what does he deliver?

He takes Jane Austen's Mansfield Park and turns up six references to Antigua and one to

slavery. Now, in fact that is extremely interesting, as long as you can resist (as, alas, Professor Said cannot resist) the temptation to jump to earth-shattering, world-historical conclusions. When Jane Austen tells us that Sir Thomas Bertram's business trips are to the Caribbean and that it is not done to mention slavery in his house, she is hinting that that marvelous world of decorum, comfort, and respectability to which Fanny Price aspired was financed in part by plantation slavery. I am ashamed that I missed that point when I read the novel and watched the television series, and I am grateful to Said for stressing it. But he only knows because Jane Austen told him, so his airs of unmasking the imperialist villain, of smoking out perfidy from ethereal aesthetic creation are hardly warranted.

Thackeray is promised as another example, in the passage I have quoted. He goes on being promised and appearing in lists of imperial writers, but nothing ever comes of it but this: one character in *Vanity Fair* is described as a nabob and there are sundry other "mentions" (Said's word) of India in the novel. Said concludes, "All through *Vanity Fair* there are allusions to India but none is anything more than incidental ... Yet Thackeray and, I would argue, all the major English novelists of the mid-nineteenth century, accepted a globalized world-view and indeed could not (in most cases did not) ignore the vast overseas of British power."

The rest of his evidence for this large conclusion is equally slender: Rochester's deranged wife in *Jane Eyre* was a West Indian, and was not Abel Magwitch in *Great Expectations* transported to Australia? A character in Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady* took a trip to Algeria and Egypt! The pickings are so slim that Said admits that through much of the nineteenth-century empire was "only [a] marginally visible presence in fiction." He even takes to complaining that it is not mentioned enough, because the wretched imperialists took it for granted, like their servants who feature only as props in novels. None of this deters him from his grand conclusion: there could be no novel without empire. Why not? Because of "the far from accidental convergence between the patterns of narrative authority constitutive of the novel on the one hand, and, on the other, a complex ideological configuration underlying the tendency of imperialism." This central mystery is never explained. One example is proffered (to Said's credit, diffidently): "Richardson's minute constructions of bourgeois seduction and rapacity" in *Clarissa* resemble "British military moves against the French in India occurring at the same time."

In one of those accesses of mock moderation, Said adds, "I am not trying to say that the novel--or the culture in the broad sense--|caused' imperialism, but that the novel, as a cultural artifact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other ... imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible, I would argue, to read one without in some way dealing with the other." No such "moderate" conclusion has been established, but Said is soon back to claiming that "we can see it [the novel] as participating in England's overseas empire" and that British imperial "power was elaborated and articulated in the novel." Therefore, we are bidden to re-read "the entire archive of modern and pre-modern European and American culture," no less, in order to discover "the centrality of the imperial vision." It will be worth the effort because we shall be rewarded with such nuggets of knowledge as that the Wilcox family in *Howard's End* owned rubber plantations! And the plague in "Death in Venice" came from the East! So did the wandering Jew, Leopold Bloom! Thus and thus does fiction fortify imperialism.

Said then tries his hand at opera, choosing the easy target of Verdi's *Aida*. The Cairoopera house had opened in 1869 as part of the celebrations for the inauguration of the Suez Canal and

although Verdi declined the invitation to write a hymn for that occasion, he soon after agreed to write an opera for the Khedive, one based on an Egyptian story. So Said is correct to see Aida as a quintessential imperialist party-piece, a slap-up night out for the Suez speculators in the phony European sector of Cairo. Aida, he says, is "not so much about but of imperial domination."

But Said cannot rest there. He soars aloft: "The cultural machinery [of spectacles like Aida] ... has had an aesthetic as well as informative effect on European audiences ... such distancing and aestheticizing cultural practices ... split and then anaesthetize the metropolitan consciousness. In 1865 the British governor of Jamaica, E.J. Eyre, ordered a retaliatory massacre of Blacks for the killing of a few whites..." Not everyone in Britain would condemn Eyre; Ruskin, Carlyle, and Arnold would not. Their attitude reminds Said of American popular approval of the Gulf War: "making America strong and enhancing President Bush's image as a leader took precedence over destroying a distant society," even so soon after "two million Vietnamese were killed" and while "Southeast Asia is still devastated."

At this point the bemused reader is apt to rub his eyes and run his finger along the text, for how did we get, literally from one page to the next, from Aida in Cairo in 1871, to a Jamaican massacre in 1865, to Vietnam and then to the Gulf War? We did it because Said reasons that Western art about an Oriental subject anaesthetizes Western consciousness to the point where at least some people are brought to excuse massacres of natives and foreign wars. And that is one way culture is connected to imperialism.

At least, it is one way Said slides from literary criticism to political tub-thumping. The whole book takes just such a slide partway through the third chapter. He has been discussing the interesting fiction and theory coming out of the new nations, and he notes that some of it is highly critical, not so much of the former imperialists as of the nationalist rulers who have succeeded them. He readily agrees that decolonization has, in many countries, led only to a change in the color of the oppressors, to "an appalling pathology of power," to dictatorships, oligarchies, and one-party systems. He lists Third World countries where human rights are denied and asks, is this the only alternative to imperialism? No, there is another answer to imperialism besides nationalism, "a deeper opposition" and "a radically new perspective."

Astonishingly, the radically new perspective turns out to be an idea that Frantz Fanon published over thirty years ago: true liberation, as distinct from mere national independence, can only be won in a war of cleansing violence that will set the peasants, the damned of the earth, against not only the imperialists but their own urban compatriots. In the course of this war of liberation, there will occur "an epistemological revolution," and "a transformation of social consciousness." Said has a long section on Fanon's *Les Damnes de la Terre* (1962) which consists of ecstatic paraphrase. The "shift from the terrain of nationalist independence to the theoretical domain of liberation," Said declares, requires "a fertile culture of resistance whose core is energetic insurgency, a |technique of trouble|" and sometimes armed insurrection.

Said calmly says of this liberationist literature that "there is an understandable tendency ... to see in it a blueprint for the horrors of the Pol Pot regime." Indeed there is, and Said does nothing to counter that tendency except to assert that the violence invoked is only "tactical." That is one of those fine distinctions that gets overlooked in the killing fields. Moreover, as one might expect from a fine connoisseur of fiction who ventures into political theory, Said is vague

about whether this miraculous cultural rebirth in violent war has actually occurred anywhere (apart from Cambodia, I suppose) or whether it could happen anywhere else. "Algeria was liberated, as were Kenya and the Sudan," he says but is careful not to hold them up as successful cases of rebirth. He finally concedes that Fanon's ideas failed because he had no answer to nationalism.

Why spend so much time on him then, trumpeting him as the inventor of the alternative to both imperialism and nationalism? Said's reply to that seems to be that liberationist ideas survive as "an imaginative, even utopian vision which reconceives emancipatory (as opposed to confining) theory and performance." Besides that, such ideas encourage "an investment neither in new authorities, doctrines, and encoded orthodoxies, nor in established institutions and causes, but in a particular sort of nomadic, migratory, and anti-narrative energy." It is not clear what that means but it does not sound like practical politics.

I suspect, basing myself on passages scattered throughout this book, that Said is being coy here, even evasive. I believe he has in mind a specific case where Fanon's ideas about cleansing violence and cultural rebirth still have a chance. That case is the Palestinian intifada in the occupied territories of Israel.

He has spoken of the imperialist West's "regional surrogates" in the Middle East in a context that makes plain he has Israel in view. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands thereby becomes a case of imperialism, and anyhow it answers to his definition of imperialism as stealing land from natives. Consequently, the Palestinian intifada becomes "one of the great anti-colonial uprisings of our times." It ranks with such vast causes as the ecological and women's movements as an example of a worldwide "elusive oppositional mood and its emerging strategies," a mood that must "hearten even the most intransigent pessimist." It is one of those mass uprisings such as occurred in the Philippines and South Africa, which feature "impressive crowd-activated sites, each of them crammed with largely unarmed civilian populations, well past the point of enduring the imposed deprivations, tyranny and inflexibility of governments that had ruled them for too long." Those stone-throwing Palestinian youths are memorable for the "resourcefulness and the startling symbolism of the protests," just like the heroic mobs of South Africa and communist Eastern Europe.

This comes to rating the intifada pretty highly, but there is nothing absurd in that, nor anything ignoble. If Said does not say outright that the Palestinian cause is the last hope of Fanon's liberationist ideals, it might be because he is not sure. When he wrote this book, he had not visited the land of his birth since 1947 (although he was a member of the Palestine National Council, the parliament-in-exile, from 1977 to 1991), but since then he has gone back for a visit. He is now composing a memoir about it. It might tell us something interesting, particularly if it relies on what he sees rather than on the theories proposed in *Culture and Imperialism*.

The Source of Culture and Imperialism

Edward W. Said's latest work, *Culture and Imperialism* is indebted to Gramsci in several respects, even if less obviously than *The World, the Text and the Critic*. Gramsci's unfinished essay on the southern question is one of Said's points of reference as a work that sets the stage for the critical attention given in the *Prison Notebooks* to the "territorial, spatial and geographical foundations of life." Said's analyses of a wide range of literary texts, which he uses as sources for understanding the dynamics of politics and culture in their connections with the whole imperialist enterprise, can be read as fulfillments of the historical materialist premises

outlined in fragmentary form in both the *Prison Notebooks* and the *Letters From Prison*. Unlike Gramsci, Said does not adhere explicitly to Marxism, nor does he identify himself with any one political current or movement. Nevertheless, underlying his work is a set of theoretical principles and practical stances that are certainly in harmony with a Gramscian world view. Certain tensions in Said's relationship to Marxism have been noted by the Indian Marxist Aijaz Ahmad, who argues in his book *In Theory* that Said has not really assimilated the materialist and revolutionary principles undergirding Gramsci's work. Ahmad frames his critique of Said within the boundaries of a rather strict interpretation of Marxism in his commitment to socialism as the foundation on which to build a genuinely oppositional culture. He is skeptical of Said's foregrounding of anti-imperialism and the principle of "liberatory" politics that avoids explicitly socialist partisanship.

Literary Allusions in Culture and Imperialism

Said's message is that imperialism is not about a moment in history; it is about a continuing interdependent discourse between subject peoples and the dominant discourse of the empire. Despite the apparent and much-vaunted end of colonialism, the unstated assumptions on which empire was based linger on, snuffing out visions of an "Other" world without domination, constraining the imaginary of equality and justice. Said sees bringing these unstated assumptions to awareness as a first step in transforming the old tentacles of empire. To this end he wrote *Culture AND Imperialism*.

Let's have a sense of Edward Said's view of empire and colonialism in the cultural and literary context. The first passage I want to share with you is on pp. 88-89, in which he describes Fanny and Sir Thomas from Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. I'm going to assume that you are not familiar with the novel, which is the story of Fanny's being taken into Sir Thomas' life at Mansfield Park, where she eventually adjusts into the role of mistress of the estate.

Fanny was from a poor line of the family, and her parents are not scrupulous and capable and good and sensible managers of wealth. These are skills which Fanny acquires when she goes, at 10, to live at Mansfield Park. Edward Said notes that Jane Austen devotes little time to the colonies or the management thereof. But he identifies throughout the novel, her proclivity to accept the colonies as a proper means of maintaining the wealth of England. Said also notes that England, unlike the Spanish and to some extent the French, was more focussed on long-term subjugation of the colonies, on managing the colonized peoples to cultivate sugar and other commodities for the English. Said uses the literature of that period to illustrate the extent to which acceptance that subjugated peoples should in fact engage in such labor, and that the proceeds from that labor should support the English.

Said quotes the following passage describing Fanny's visit to the home she left at 10:

"Fanny was almost stunned. The smallness of the house, and thinness of the walls, brought every thing so close to her, that, added to the fatigue of her journey, and all her recent agitation, she hardly knew how to bear it. Within the room all was tranquil enough, for Susan (Fanny's younger sister) having disappeared with the others, there were soon only her father and herself remaining; and he taking out a newspaper---the customary loan of a neighbour, applied himself to studying it, without seeming to recollect her existence. The solitary candle was held between himself and the paper, without any reference to her possible convenience, but she had nothing to do, and was glad to have the light screened from her aching head, as she sat in bewildered, broken, sorrowful contemplation."

"She was at home. But alas! it was not such a home, she had not such a welcome, as---she checked herself; she was unreasonable. . . . A day or two might shew the difference. *She* only was to blame. Yes, she thought it would not have been so at Mansfield. No, in her uncle's house there would have been a consideration of times and seasons, a regulation of subject, a propriety, an attention towards every body which there was not here." [Footnote omitted.]

Quoted at p. 88 of *Culture AND Imperialism*.

Said's comment on this passage highlights the extent to which he sees in Austen's writing the reflection of empire:

"In too small a space, you cannot see clearly, you cannot think clearly, you cannot have regulation or attention of the proper sort. The fineness of Austen's detail ("the solitary candle was held between himself and the paper, without any reference to her possible convenience") renders very precisely the dangers of unsociability, of lonely insularity, of diminished awareness that are rectified in larger and better administered spaces."

As I contemplate Said's description, I am confounded once again by Spivak's insistence that suffering from racism is not the same as suffering colonialism. I do understand her insistence that the colonized are objectified as inevitably unworthy of enjoying the product of their own labor, and that the colonized have essentially nothing to gain. But when she suggests that those suffering from racism, or any form of ethnocentrism or sexism, I suppose, should rely on the access they have to the presentation of validity claims in the dominant discourse, I become skeptical. Throughout Said's analysis, I am constantly reminded that the mere illusion of access to "the goodies" simply distracts us from an understanding that there are very real ceilings to our aspirations. (Robert K. Merton spoke of these "three myths" of American society already in 1935, in *Social Theory and Social Structure*.

To describe workers under racism and other ism's as having real stakes that the colonized do not have, I think is to delude ourselves. If awareness is, in fact, the first, best step we can find towards peace and understanding, then I find such delusions dangerous. jeanne

A few pages later in *Culture AND Imperialism*, Said points out the importance of this deeper and more complex criticism he has offered us of Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Most criticism, from whatever it's theoretical perspective, does not go into what Said calls "the structure of attitude and reference." [At p. 95.] And Said does not intend this postcolonial perspective to replace other perspectives. He expects such criticism to be used in addition to traditional literary criticism. His emphasis is on how much more there is of importance to the slight references to the colonial world made in great literature. He suggests that it is precisely in great literature that we are able to see the internal structure of conflict over a morality that, though not acceptable in the polite society of the empire, has permeated the thinking of those for whom the great literature was written. Jane Austen's sensibility could not deal with the issue of the "slave trade," which, in *Mansfield Park*, was met with "dead silence." Edward Said's comment: "In time there would no longer be a dead silence when slavery was spoken of, and the subject became central in a new understanding of what Europe was." [At p. 96.]

Jane Austen and Conrad

The cherished axiom of [Jane] Austen's unwordliness is closely tied to a sense of her polite remove from the contingencies of history. It was Q. D. Leavis (1942) who first pointed out the tendency of scholars to lift Austen out of her social milieu, gallantly allowing her gorgeous sentences to float free, untainted by the routines of labor that produced them and deaf to the tumult of current events. Since Leavis, numerous efforts have been made to counter the patronizing view that Austen, in her fidelity to the local, the surface, the detail, was oblivious to large-scale struggles, to wars and mass movements of all kinds. Claudia Johnson(1988), for example, has challenged R. W. Chapman's long-standing edition of Austen for its readiness to illustrate her ballrooms and refusal to gloss her allusions to riots or slaves and has linked this writer to a tradition of frankly political novels by women. It is in keeping with such historicizing gestures that [Edward] Said's Culture and Imperialism insists on Mansfield Park's participation in its moment, pursuing the references to Caribbean slavery that Chapman pointedly ignored. Yet while arguing vigorously for the novel's active role in producing imperialist plots, Said also in effect replays the story of its author's passivity regarding issues in the public sphere. Unconcerned about Sir Thomas Bertram's colonial holdings in slaves as well as land and taking for granted their necessity to the good life at home, Said's Austen is a veritable Aunt Jane - naive, complacent, and demurely without overt political opinion.

I will grant that Said's depiction of Austen as unthinking in her references to Antigua fits logically with his overall contention that nineteenth-century European culture, and especially the English novel, unwittingly but systematically helped to gain consent for imperialist policies (see C, p. 75). [The novel] was, Said asserts, one of the primary discourses contributing to a 'consolidated vision,' virtually uncontested, of England's righteous imperial prerogative (C, p. 75). Austen is no different from Thackeray or Dickens, then, in her implicit loyalty to official Eurocentrism. At the same time, Said's version of Austen in particular is given a boost by the readily available myth of her 'feminine' nearsightedness... This rendering of Austen is further enabled, I would argue, by Said's highly selective materialization of her... [Mansfield Park] is, in fact, almost completely isolated from the rest of Austen's work. If the truth be told, Said's attention even to his chosen text is cursory: Austen's references to Antigua (and India) are mentioned without actually being read...

But this picture of Austen is disembodied in not only a textual but also a larger social sense. Though recontextualized as an English national in the period preceding colonial expansion, Austen's more precise status as an unmarried, middle-class, scribbling woman remains wholly unspecified. The failure to consider Austen's gender and the significance of this omission is pointed up by Said's more nuanced treatment of Conrad. According to Said, Conrad stands out from other colonial writers because, as a Polish expatriate, he possessed 'an extraordinarily persistent residual sense of his own exilic marginality' (C, p. 24). The result is a double view of imperialism that at once refutes and reinforces the West's right to dominate the globe. As Said explains, 'Never the wholly incorporated and fully acculturated Englishman, Conrad therefore preserved an ironic distance [from imperial conquest] in each of his works' (C, p. 25). Of course Austen was not, any more than Conrad, 'the wholly incorporated and fully acculturated Englishman.' Lacking the franchise, enjoying few property rights (and these because she was single), living as a dependent at the edge of her brother's estate, and publishing her work anonymously, Austen was arguably a kind of exile in her own country. If we follow out the logic of Said's own identity politics, Austen, too, might therefore be suspected of irony toward reigning constructions of citizenship, however much, like Conrad, she may also in many respects

have upheld them. The goal of this essay is to indicate where and, finally, to suggest why Said so entirely misses this irony. My point, I should stress, is not to exonerate Austen of imperialist crimes. Surely Said is right to include her among those who made colonialism thinkable by constructing the West as center, home, and norm, while pushing everything else to the margins. The question I would raise is not whether Austen contributed to English domination abroad but how her doing so was necessarily inflected and partly disrupted by her position as a bourgeois woman.

Introduction to the book Orientalism by Edward Said

With the publication of this book, Edward Said had an impact on fields ranging from literary studies to political science to postcolonial studies. Said, who died in 2003, was a Palestinian-American professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia University. In his later life, he became a controversial figure for expressing radical political views on the Israel-Palestine conflict. He wrote *Orientalism* while at the Center for Advanced Study at Stanford University in the 1970s.

Orientalism examines the Western academic field of "Oriental Studies" in terms of how its discourses have shaped and structured a fictionalized and exoticized "Orient" that serves as the subaltern Other for the West. It states that Orientalist academic discourse served political and imperialist ends, despite its claims to "objective" neutrality. It specifically examines British, French, and American constructions of the Middle East and North Africa from the 18th century to the present, but is applicable to discourses on other parts of the Orient (China, India, etc.) as well. In Said's words, *Orientalism* is the Western "corporate institution for dealing with the Orient -- dealing with it by making statements about it, authoring views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short... a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (*Orientalism*, 1978: 3).

Key Terms used in Orientalism

Orientalism - A set of discursive scholarly and literary practices with political motivations that create an image of the mysterious, feminine "Orient" as the Other to the rational, articulate, masculine West.

The Orient - The "Orient" is less an actual geographical or cultural territory than a fictional construction of the Western world's subaltern mirror image, propagated by means of representations in various forms of media.

Knowledge as power - A concept from Foucault, implying that the production of bodies of knowledge acts as a site for power in its impact upon the world.

The "Other" - The oppositional image of the "foreign", i.e. the representation of alterity that negatively defines an individual or culture's sense of "Self" by contrast.

Affiliated Discourses & Historical/Cultural Context: Some of Said's influences in this work include Foucault, Gramsci, and the French socialist author Anwar Abdel-Malek. He particularly uses Foucault's ideas about knowledge as a site for the production of power. Said writes from the starting point of the tradition of literary studies and criticism, but with an interdisciplinary perspective that covers representation in fields such as history, anthropology, and visual art. He writes with a stated personal interest in the issues at hand, as he identifies himself as occupying the dual identities of both an "Oriental" and a scholar within Western academia. The book is credited as a major influence on the burgeoning field of postcolonial studies that was prompted by the emergence of newly independent Third World countries in the mid-twentieth century.

Applications/Thoughts:

Said's critique has a continuing applicability to the contemporary political and cultural scene, i.e. Western attitudes towards Arabs and the Middle East (or the Third World/Global South in general) as they show up in distorted media biases and pop culture depictions, political commentary based on stereotyping, paternalistic economic and "development" policies, and so on. The level of controversy that surrounded Said's political activism and the extent to which this was used to discredit him as a scholar is interesting as it relates to the questions he raises in the introduction to this book about the viability and truthfulness of academic "objectivity".

Earlier Orientalism

The first 'Orientalists' were 19th century scholars who translated the writings of 'the Orient' into English, based on the assumption that a truly effective colonial conquest required knowledge of the conquered peoples. This idea of knowledge as power is present throughout Said's critique. By knowing the Orient, the West came to own it. The Orient became the studied, the seen, the observed, the object; Orientalist scholars were the students, the seers, the observers, the subject. The Orient was passive; the West was active.

One of the most significant constructions of Orientalist scholars is that of the Orient itself. What is considered the Orient is a vast region, one that spreads across a myriad of cultures and countries. It includes most of Asia as well as the Middle East. The depiction of this single 'Orient' which can be studied as a

cohesive whole is one of the most powerful accomplishments of Orientalist scholars. It essentializes an image of a prototypical Oriental--a biological inferior that is culturally backward, peculiar, and unchanging--to be depicted in dominating and sexual terms. The discourse and visual imagery of Orientalism is laced with notions of power and superiority, formulated initially to facilitate a colonizing mission on the part of the West and perpetuated through a wide variety of discourses and policies. The language is critical to the construction. The feminine and weak Orient awaits the dominance of the West; it is a defenseless and unintelligent whole that exists for, and in terms of, its Western counterpart. The importance of such a construction is that it creates a single subject matter where none existed, a compilation of previously unspoken notions of the Other. Since the notion of the Orient is created by the Orientalist, it exists solely for him or her. Its identity is defined by the scholar who gives it life. **Contemporary Orientalism**

Said argues that Orientalism can be found in current Western depictions of "Arab" cultures. The depictions of "the Arab" as irrational, menacing, untrustworthy, anti-Western, dishonest, and--perhaps most importantly--prototypical, are ideas into which Orientalist scholarship has evolved. These notions are trusted as foundations for both ideologies and policies developed by the Occident. Said writes: "The hold these instruments have on the mind is increased by the institutions built around them. For every Orientalist, quite literally, there is a support system of staggering power, considering the ephemerality of the myths that Orientalism propagates. The system now culminates into the very institutions of the state. To write about the Arab Oriental world, therefore, is to write with the authority of a nation, and not with the affirmation of a strident ideology but with the unquestioning certainty of absolute truth backed by absolute force." He continues, "One would find this kind of procedure less objectionable as political propaganda--which is what it is, of course--were it not accompanied by sermons on the objectivity, the fairness, the impartiality of a real historian, the implication always being that Muslims and Arabs cannot be objective but that Orientalists. . .writing about Muslims are, by definition, by training, by the mere fact of their Westernness. This is the culmination of Orientalism as a dogma that not only degrades its subject matter but also blinds its practitioners." **Said's Position**

Said calls into question the underlying assumptions that form the foundation of Orientalist thinking. A rejection of Orientalism entails a rejection of biological generalizations, cultural constructions, and racial and religious

prejudices. It is a rejection of greed as a primary motivating factor in intellectual pursuit. It is an erasure of the line between 'the West' and 'the Other.' Said argues for the use of "narrative" rather than "vision" in interpreting the geographical landscape known as the Orient, meaning that a historian and a scholar would turn not to a panoramic view of half of the globe, but rather to a focused and complex type of history that allows space for the dynamic variety of human experience. Rejection of Orientalist thinking does not entail a denial of the differences between 'the West' and 'the Orient,' but rather an evaluation of such differences in a more critical and objective fashion. 'The Orient' cannot be studied in a non-Orientalist manner; rather, the scholar is obliged to study more focused and smaller culturally consistent regions. The person who has until now been known as 'the Oriental' must be given a voice. Scholarship from afar and second-hand representation must take a back seat to narrative and self-representation on the part of the '**Oriental.**'

CONROVERSY IN ORIENTALISM

"Orientalism" and other work by Said has sparked notable controversy in the academic community.

Ernest Gellner argued that Said's contention that the West had dominated the East for more than 2,000 years (since the composition of Aeschylus's *The Persians*) was unsupportable, noting that until the late 17th century the Ottoman Empire had posed a serious threat to Europe. Mark Proudman notes that Said claimed the British empire extended from Egypt to India in the 1880s, when in fact the Ottoman and Persian empires intervened.

Another criticism is that the areas of the Middle East on which Said had concentrated, including Palestine and Egypt, were poor examples for his theory, as they came under European control only for a relatively short period in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These critics suggested that Said devoted much less attention to more apt examples, including the British Raj in India, and Russia's dominions in Asia, because Said was more interested in making political points about the Middle East. Islamic apostate Ibn Warraq was the most recent critic of Said's Orientalism in his titular book; *Defending the West: a Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism*

Strong criticism of Said's critique of "Orientalism" has come from academic Orientalists, including some of Eastern backgrounds. Albert Hourani, Robert

Graham Irwin, Nikki Keddie, Bernard Lewis, and Kanan Makiya address what Keddie retrospectively calls "some unfortunate consequences" of Said's *Orientalism* on the perception and status of their scholarship. Bernard Lewis is among scholars whose work Said questioned in *Orientalism* and subsequent works. The two authors came frequently to exchange disagreement, starting in the pages of the *New York Review of Books* following the publication of *Orientalism*. Lewis's article "The Question of Orientalism" was followed in the next issue by "Orientalism: An Exchange." Other scholars, such as Maxime Rodinson, Jacques Berque, Malcolm Kerr, Aijaz Ahmad, and William Montgomery Watt, also regarded *Orientalism* as a overly simplistic - or dangerous - account of Western scholarship.

Some of Said's academic critics argue that Said made no attempt to distinguish between writers of very different types: such as on the one hand the poet Goethe (who never even travelled in the East), the novelist Flaubert (who undertook a brief sojourn in Egypt), Ernest Renan (whose work is widely regarded as tainted by racism), and on the other scholars such as Edward William Lane who was fluent in Arabic. In Said's mind their common European origins and attitudes, overrode such considerations, these critics contend. Irwin (among others) points out that Said entirely ignored the fact that Oriental studies in the 19th century were dominated by Germans and Hungarians, from countries that, inconveniently for Said's purposes, did not possess an Eastern empire. Such critics accuse Said of creating a monolithic 'Occidentalism' to oppose to the 'Orientalism' of Western discourse, arguing that he failed to distinguish between the paradigms of Romanticism and the Enlightenment, that he ignored the widespread and fundamental differences of opinion among western scholars of the Orient; that he failed to acknowledge that many Orientalists (such as Sir William Jones) were more concerned with establishing kinship between East and West than with creating "difference", and had frequently made discoveries that would provide the foundations for anti-colonial nationalism. More generally, critics argue that Said and his followers fail to distinguish between Orientalism in the media and popular culture (for instance the portrayal of the Orient in such films as *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*) and academic studies of Oriental languages, literature, history and culture by Western scholars (whom, it is argued, they tar with the same brush).

Finally, Said's critics argue that by making ethnicity and cultural background the test of authority and objectivity in studying the Orient, Said drew attention to the question of his own identity as a Palestinian and as a "Subaltern."

Ironically, given Said's largely Anglophone upbringing and education at an elite school in Cairo, the fact that he spent most of his adult life in the United States, and his prominent position in American academia, his own arguments that "any and all representations ... are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions and political ambience of the representer ... [and are] interwoven with a great many other things besides the 'truth', which is itself a representation" (*Orientalism*²⁷²) could be said to disenfranchise him from writing about the Orient himself. Hence these critics claim that the excessive relativism of Said and his followers trap them in a "web of solipsism", unable to talk of anything but "representations", and denying the existence of *any* objective truth

Chapter-Wise Summary of ORIENTALISM By Edward Said

Orientalism by Edward Said is a canonical text of cultural studies in which he has challenged the concept of orientalism or the difference between east and west, as he puts it. He says that with the start of European colonization the Europeans came in contact with the lesser developed countries of the east. They found their civilization and culture very exotic, and established the science of orientalism, which was the study of the orientals or the people from these exotic civilization.

Edward Said argues that the Europeans divided the world into two parts; the east and the west or the occident and the orient or the civilized and the uncivilized. This was totally an artificial boundary; and it was laid on the basis of the concept of them and us or theirs and ours. The Europeans used orientalism to define themselves. Some particular attributes were associated with the orientals, and whatever the orientals weren't the occidents were. The Europeans defined themselves as the superior race compared to the orientals; and they justified their colonization by this concept. They said that it was their duty towards the world to civilize the uncivilized world. The main problem, however, arose when the Europeans started generalizing the attributes they associated with orientals, and started portraying these artificial characteristics associated with orientals in their western world through their scientific reports, literary work, and other media sources. What happened was that it created a certain image about the orientals in the European mind and in doing that infused a bias in the European attitude towards the orientals. This prejudice was also found in the orientalists (scientist studying the orientals); and all their scientific research and reports were under the influence of this. The generalized attributes associated with the orientals can be seen even today, for example, the Arabs are defined as uncivilized people; and Islam is seen as religion of the terrorist.

Here is a brief summary of the book:

Chapter 1: The Scope of Orientalism

In this chapter, Edward Said explains how the science of orientalism developed and how the orientals started considering the orientals as non-human beings. The orientals divided the world in to two parts by using the concept of *ours* and *theirs*. An imaginary geographical line was drawn between what was *ours* and what was *theirs*. The orientals were regarded as uncivilized people; and the westerns said that since they were the refined race it was their duty to civilize these people and in order to achieve their goal, they had to colonize and rule the orientals. They said that the orientals themselves were incapable of running their own government. The Europeans also thought that they had the right to represent the orientals in the west all by themselves. In doing so, they shaped the orientals the way they perceived them or in other words they were *orientalizing* the orientals. Various teams have been sent to the east where the orientalists silently observed the orientals by living with them; and every thing the orientals said and did was recorded irrespective of its context, and projected to the *civilized* world of the west. This resulted in the generalization. Whatever was seen by the orientals was associated with the oriental culture, no matter if it is the irrational action of an individual.

The most important use of orientalism to the Europeans was that they defined themselves by defining the orientals. For example, qualities such as lazy, irrational, uncivilized, crudeness were related to the orientals, and automatically the Europeans became active, rational, civilized, sophisticated. Thus, in order to achieve this goal, it was very necessary for the orientalists to generalize the culture of the orientals.

Another feature of orientalism was that the culture of the orientals was explained to the European audience by linking them to the western culture, for example, Islam was made into *Mohammadism* because Mohammad was the founder of this religion and since religion of Christ was called Christianity; thus Islam should be called *Mohammadism*. The point to be noted here is that no Muslim was aware of this terminology and this was a completely western created term, and to which the Muslims had no say at all.

Chapter 2: Orientalist Structures and Restructures

In this chapter, Edward Said points the slight change in the attitude of the Europeans towards the orientals. The orientals were really publicized in the European world especially through their literary work. Oriental land and behaviour was highly *romanticized* by the European poets and writers and then presented to the western world. The orientalists had made a stage strictly for the European viewers, and the orientals were presented to them with the colour of the orientalist or other writers perception. In fact, the orient lands were so highly *romanticized* that western literary writers found it necessary to offer pilgrimage to these exotic lands of pure sun light and clean oceans in order to experience peace of mind, and inspiration for their writing. The east was now perceived by the orientalist as a place of pure human culture with no necessary evil in the society. Actually it was this purity of the orientals that made them inferior to the clever, witty, diplomatic, far-sighted European; thus it was their right to rule and study such an innocent race. The Europeans said that these people were too naive to deal with the cruel world, and that they needed the European fatherly role to assist them.

Another justification the Europeans gave to their colonization was that they were meant to rule the orientals since they have developed sooner than the orientals as a nation, which shows that they were biologically superior, and secondly it were the Europeans who discovered the orientals.

not the orientals who discovered the Europeans. Darwin's theories were put forward to justify their superiority, biologically by the Europeans.

In this chapter, Edward Said also explains how the two most renowned orientalists of the 19th century, namely Silvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan worked and gave orientalism a new dimension. In fact, Edward Said compliments the contribution made by Sacy in the field. He says that Sacy organized the whole thing by arranging the information in such a way that it was also useful for the future orientalist. And secondly, the prejudice that was inherited by every orientalist was considerably low in him. On the other hand, Renan who took advantage of Sacy's work was as biased as any previous orientalist. He believed that the science of orientalism and the science of philology have a very important relation; and after Renan this idea was given a lot attention and many future orientalists worked of in its line.

Chapter 3 : Orientalism Now

This chapter starts off by telling us that how the geography of the world was shaped by the colonization of the Europeans. There was a quest for geographical knowledge which formed the bases of orientalism.

The author then talks about the changing circumstances of the world politics and changing approach to orientalism in the 20th century. The main difference was that where the earlier orientalists were more of silent observers the new orientalists took a part in the every day life of the orientals. The earlier orientalists did not interact a lot with the orientals, whereas the new orientals lived with them as if they were one of them. This wasn't out of appreciation of their lifestyle but was to know more about the orientals in order to rule them properly. Lawrence of Arabia was one of such orientalists.

Then Edward Said goes on to talk about two other scholars Massignon and Gibb. Though Massignon was a bit liberal with orientalists and often tried to protect their rights, there was still inherited bias found in him for the orientals, which can be seen in his work. With the changing world situation especially after World War 1, orientalism took a more liberal stance towards most of its subjects; but Islamic orientalism did not enjoy this status. There were constant attacks to show Islam as a weak religion, and a mixture of many religions and thoughts. Gibb was the most famous Islamic orientalist of this time.

After World War 1 the centre of orientalism moved from Europe to USA. One important transformation that took place during this time was instances of relating it to philology and it was related to social science now. All the orientalists studied the orientals to assist their government to come up with policies for dealing with the orient countries. With the end of World War 2, all the European colonies were lost; and it was believed that there were no more orientals and occidents, but this was surely not the case. Western prejudice towards eastern countries was still very explicit, and often they managed to generalize most of the eastern countries because of it. For example Arabs were often represented as cruel and violent people. Japanese were always associated with karate whereas the Muslims were always considered to be terrorists. Thus, this goes on to show that even with increasing globalization and awareness, such bias was found in the people of the developed countries.

Edward Said concludes his book by saying that he is not saying that the orientalists should not make generalization, or they should include the orient perspective too, but creating a boundary at the first place is something which should not be done.

What is Culture and what is Imperialism and how does Said relate the Two in the Literary Context? (P.U. 2003)

Edward Said, a brilliant and unique amalgam of scholar, literary critic and political activist, examines the roots of imperialism in the Western culture and traces the relationship between culture and imperialism. Imperialism has always fascinated the literary writers and political thinkers as a subject. It was a major theme of nineteenth and twentieth century native and non-native novelists and poets. Different writers have different perception about the phenomenon. A lot has been written on the subject in the past but Edward's book *Culture and Imperialism* attracted everybody's attention. This book was read and discussed in all parts of the world and was hailed by reviewers and critics as a monumental work.

In the Introduction to *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward states that his previous work *Orientalism* was limited to Middle East, and in the present book he wanted to describe a more general pattern of relationship between the modern West and its overseas territories. This book, he says, is not a sequel of *Orientalism*, as it aims at something different.

According to Edward there are two types of attitudes towards culture. One that considers culture as a concept that includes refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of best that has been known and thought. The other is the aggressive, protectionist attitude viewing culture as a source of identity that differentiates between 'us' and 'them', and power with which we can combat the influences of the foreign cultures. Such an attitude is opposed to liberal philosophies, as multiculturalism and hybridism, and has often lead to religious and- nationalist fundamentalism. Culture conceived in this way becomes a protective enclosure that divorces us from the everyday world.

"I have found it a challenge not to see culture in this way- that is, antiseptically quarantined from worldly affiliations, but as an extraordinary field of endeavour."

Edward Said sees the European writing on Africa, India, Ireland, Far East and other lands as part of European effort to rule distant lands. He says that Colonial and post-Colonial fiction is central to his argument. These writings present the colonised lands as 'mysterious lands' inhabited by uncivilized barbarians, who understood only the language of violence, and deserved to be ruled. This is a misrepresentation of the native people and their cultures, and needs to be redressed. Edward Said finds a connection between these narratives and the imperial process, of which they are a part. These writing ignore the important aspect of the reality- the native people and their culture.

Edward Said refers to two novels in order to explain what he had in mind: Dickens' *Great Expectations*, and Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*. Dickens' *Great Expectations* is a primarily a story about Pip's vain attempt to become a gentleman. Early in life Pip helps a condemned convict, Abel Magwitch, who after being transported to Australia, pays back Pip with huge sums of money through his lawyer. Magwitch reappears illegally in London after sometime. Pip does not welcome him and rejects him as an unpleasant criminal. Magwitch is unacceptable being from Australia, a penal colony designed for rehabilitation of English criminals. This is a remarkable

according to Said, but the focus of the narrative is London, not Australia. Dickens did not bother to discuss the plight of the convicts in Australia, from where they could never return. In Said's judgment the prohibition placed on Magwitch's return is not only penal but also imperial. These ugly criminals could not be allowed to return to England-the land of decent people.

Conrad's *Nostromo*, the second example picked up by Said, is set in a Central American Republic, independent, but dominated by outside interests because of its immense silver mines. In this novel Holroyd, the American financer tells Charles Gould, the British owner of a mine:

'We shall run the world's business whether the world likes it or not.'

The world can't help it- and neither we can, I guess.'

This is the general thinking of the imperialists. Much of the rhetoric of 'The New World Order' with its self-assumed responsibility of **civilizing** the world, seems to be originated from this thinking, says Edward Said,

The problem with Conrad is that he writes as a man whose Western view of Non-Western world is so ingrained in **as to** blind him to other histories, other cultures and other aspirations. He could never **understand** that India, Africa and South Africa had **lives and** cultures of their own, not totally controlled **by** the imperialists. Conrad allows the readers to **see** that imperialism is a system and it **should** work in a proper fashion. There are certain obvious **limitations** of Conrad's vision. Conrad was both imperialist and anti-imperialist, progressive in **rendering** the corruption of overseas domination, deeply reactionary in ignoring the fact that Africa and South America had independent history and culture, which the imperialist violently **disturbed** but by which they were ultimately defeated.

All such works, says Edward Said, seem to argue that source of world's significant action and life was the West, and rest of the world was mind-deadened, having no life, history or integrity of its own. It is not that **these westerners** had no sympathy for the foreign cultures; their real drawback was their **inability** to take seriously the alternatives to imperialism. The world has changed since Conrad and Dickens due to imperialistic globalisation. Now various cultures have a closer interaction and have become interdependent. The colonisers and the colonized do not exist in separate worlds. So, one-sided versions cannot hold for long. Even those who are on the side of those fighting; for freedom from imperialists need to avoid narrow-mindedness and chauvinistic trends. One has to listen to what people are saying on other side of the fence. (This is what Seamus Heaney says in *Redress Of the Poetry*.) This, says, Said, is a positive development. One should always suspect the impressions of an exclusive consciousness. Most of the Western writers, for example, could never imagine that those 'natives' who appeared either subservient, or uncooperative were one day going to be capable of revolt.

In the last part of the Introduction to 'Culture and Imperialism' Said makes some other points about the book. The purpose of his book, he says, is to trace the relationship between culture, aesthetic forms and historical experience. His aim is not to give a catalogue of books and authors, "Instead, I have tried to look at what I consider to be important and essential things." My hope is that readers and critics of this book will use it to further the lines of enquiry and arguments about the historical experience of imperialism put forward in it." Moreover, he has not discussed all the empires. He has focused on three imperial powers: British, French, and American. This book is about past and present, about 'us' and 'them', he says.

Said says that the origin of current American policies can be seen in the past. All powers aspiring for global domination have done the same things. There is always the appeal to power

and national interest in running the affairs of 'lesser peoples', and the same destructive zeal when the going goes rough. America made the same mistake in Vietnam and Middle East.

The worst part of the whole exercise has been the collaboration of intellectuals, artists and journalists with these practices. Said hopes that a history of imperial adventure rendered in cultural terms might serve some deterrent purpose.

Said makes it clear that the criticism on imperialism does exempt the aggrieved colonized people from criticism. The fortunes and misfortunes of nationalism, of what can be called separatism and nativism, do not always make a flattering story. Narrow and dogmatic approach to culture can be as dangerous to culture as is imperialism. Secondly, culture is not the property of the East or the West.

Edward Said, by necessity, was in a position to be objective in his approach, as he lived most part of his life in exile and had the personal experience of both the cultures. He was born in Middle East and lived as an exile in America, where he wrote this book. He sums up his position in following works.

"The last point I want to make is that this is an exile's book. Ever since I remember, I have felt that I belonged to both the Worlds, without being completely of either one or the other", He says.

To how many classical English novelists does Edward Said refer in his introduction to Culture and Imperialism; in what context and what purpose? (P.U. 2004)

When we have an analysis of Said's book "*culture and imperialism*" in detail, we come to know that the main idea of this book was inspired by Said's earlier work *orientalism*. This book was limited to the Middle East. But his book culture and imperialism presents a clear picture of the domination on the distant territories of the countries of Asia and Africa for capturing their natural responses of raw materials by the imperial western countries. Said also includes the Caribbean Islands, Ireland, the Middle East, East and even some certain areas of the USA.



It is also very worthy to note here that Said does not draw his subject matter from European writings on Africa, India, Far East, Australia and the Caribbean Islands. The writings of these European writers were based on rhetorical figures like the mysterious East, the Indian, Africa or Irish mind and further they depicted violation, torture to death, punishment of flogging the primitive barbaric people for civilizing them. They also asserted in their writings that such punishments were being required when they misbehaved or became rebellious.

Said takes much interest in the cultural study of imperialism and is of the view that the best source of such kind of study can be drawn by the fiction of the period. He also believes that the novel serves as the best source of forming of imperialist attitudes, references and experiences of a certain age. Being a professor of Comparative literature, he has devoted his entire professional life to teaching literature and yet his outlook was influenced further by the colonial system of the Englishmen. That's why, it became his habit to expose and draw the imperialistic implications in the stories. Further, he also quotes the references from the great novelists' works to support his view point on cultural imperialism. Referring to the great novel Great Expectations by Charles Dickens, he says:

"What Dickens envisions for Pip, being Magwitch's London gentleman, is roughly equivalent to what was envisioned by English benevolence for Australia".

As it is known that Said always writes in organizing the resistance against imperialism, so, his genius tallies to Conrad's genius, who also writes on the imperialistic exploitation of the basic rights of Africans by the Englishmen. Being the great admirer of Joseph Conrad, Said's conscience is spurred up or affected by Conrad's superb criticism of imperialism, especially in Heart of Darkness. In this novel, Conrad openly and clearly exposes the feigned claim of civilizing the barbaric uncivilized people of Congo in Africa. Kurtz who was a British administrator, was sent to Congo to prepare a report on the unspeakable rites, customs and behaviours of the savages of Congo and took suitable steps or measures to eliminate these rites. But what Kurtz did there, was absolutely contrary to our expectations because an imperialistic effect got the better hold of his noble intentions and he turned into a beast by looting, exploiting and snatching their basic rights. He became a cruel collector of ivory and started robbing the wealth of the natives of Congo. In short, we can say that this novel is **absolutely and rightly** regarded as the severest indictment of imperialism. In the very introductory paragraph of Introduction to Culture and Imperialism, Said rightly utters:

"For the enterprise of empire depends upon the idea of having an empire, as Joseph Conrad so powerfully seems to have realized in Heart of Darkness. He says that the difference between us in the modern period, the modern imperialists, and the Romans, is that the Romans were there just for the loot. They were just stealing. But we go there with an idea".

Here, one point is very worthy to note though Said's criticism and indictment of imperialism are not so severe and violent as Conrad's are yet it is his indictment of imperialism which has shaken the sentiments of the people all over the world.

Commenting on Conrad's detachment, Said points out in the following words:

"Never the wholly incorporated and fully acculturated Englishman, Conrad therefore preserved an ironic distance (from imperial conquest) in each of his works".

In his views on Culture and Imperialism, Said chooses four novelists whose work clearly highlights and promotes their current ideas of their day about the British Empire.' These four great novelists are as Conrad, Kipling, Jane Austen and Dickens.

Quoting Jane Austen, Said says that it seems that by causally referring to Antigua in Mansfield Park, Austen revealed that she had the empire in the back of her mind most of the time, that she was nevertheless indifferent to the condition of the subjected peoples. Actually, in the Mansfield Park, she sublimates the agonies of the Caribbean existence to a mere half dozen passing references to Antigua, and that she dodged facing up to her true responsibility to condemn imperialism and all its works.

At another place in the book culture and imperialism, Said refers to Dickens in Great Expectations. In this novel, we see that he sent the convict Magwitch off to Australia, which was absolutely a dreadful place, unfit for decent Englishmen, it showed that Dickens intentionally knew that he was a despised colonial lad.

Said is of the views that colonialism is also a consequence of imperialism and it takes its final shape in implanting of settlements on distant territory. Here he quotes the historian Michael Doyle who states as:

"Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political

collabouration, economic, social or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire".

In addition to the novelists, Said also quotes some prominent historians of English society who have differently favoured the imperialism and domination of the western countries. For example, a very allowable but curious idea was propogated by the English historian J.R. Seeley. He was of the views that some of Europe's overseas empires were originally acquired by accident, it does not by any stretch of the imaginative account for their inconsistency, persistence and systemized acquisition and administration, let alone their rule and sheer presence.

As David Landes also speaks in the same connection but to some an extent it is about the industrial expansion of western countries. He states in the following words as "*the decision of, certain European power to establish plantations, that is, to treat their colonies as continuous enterprises, was, whatever one may think of the morality, a momentous innovation*".

In the mid of 19th century though the era of imperialism came to an end because France and Britain gave up their strong possessions after World War II yet that era had an identity — for example, Eric Hobsbawm, talked about the latter part of the nineteenth century. He utters as:

"Though the age of empire clearly had an identity all of its own, and historians talk about it roughly from 1878 through World War II, the meaning of the imperial past is not totally contained within it, but has entered the reality of hundreds of millions of people. Its existence as shared memory in a highly conflicted texture of culture, ideology memory and policy still exercises tremendous force".

Talking about the flattering notion of the French and the British that they were going to improve and civilize the barbaric people of backward regions, Franz Fanon, another historian openly exposes the real cruel nature of exploitation of the imperialists of the western countries in the following words:

"Colonialism and imperialism have not paid their dues when they withdrew their flags and their police forces from our territories. For centuries the foreign colonists have behaved in the underdeveloped world like nothing more than criminals".

The end of the Cold War resulted in a new world order with the United States at the top. Edward Said is of the views here that it is a new kind of imperialism which gave US an authority of setting things right all over the world. In the present age, we see its implementation in almost all the countries of the third world because this doctrine of "world responsibility is now considered as justification for US involvement in any affair of every country".

In this regard, Said rightly quotes the words of Chomsky who aptly and beautifully lashes out at the western ideology of "world order" and "world responsibility" in the following words:

"It is an absolute requirement for the western system of ideology that a vast gulf be established between the civilized west, with its traditional commitment to human dignity, liberty and self determination, and the barbasic brutality of those who, for some reason perhaps defective genes, fail to appreciate the depth of this historical commitment, so well revealed by America's Asian Wars, for instance".

In the concluding portion of the book, Said gives reference from Kurnan's saying who points out that now America's self-appointed writ is running and working throughout the world today. As the utters:

"America loved to think that whatever it wanted was just what the human race wanted".

Every prominent critic knows and believes that the counter forces to imperialism are migrant workers, refugees, decolonized people. Imperialism always threatens personal freedom as well as environment ironically under the guise of trying to civilize and improve these both. Under these circumstances, these millions of dislocated may unite on these two points and rise a very dreadful revolt against the champion of world order and responsibility. It is also observed now that U.S.A has become weaker and unstable due to its inner problems of economic and cultural crisis, for example, there has been a lot of discussion about the "Canon". Its power is decreasing due to these internal crisis and on the other hand there is ascendancy of Pacific Rim States, like Taiwan, China and Japan.

In what sense does Edward Said refer to culture as a “sort of theatre”. Explain with reference to the literary forms the society that engages in colonial practices. (P.U 2005)

A series of lectures that Said delivered on the relationship between culture and empire in the universities in the United States, Canada and England shows that Said wants to expand the appeal of his arguments to the rest of the world. The arguments which he put forward in "Orientalism" were particularly focused on the Middle East but now through the subject matter of these lectures on culture and imperialism, he wants to describe a more general structure of relationship between the modern metropolitan West and its overseas territories.

It is worthy to note here that instead of doing so really by the cores of heart, the imperialists just did not care to apologize. There were their vanity, pride and feigned arrogance which did not allow them to bow before the people over whom they had ruled. As far as the matter of financial loss is concerned; those who suffered by the land and property, could have been compensated by the imperialists but they did not do so. Instead, they ironically bestowed independence on the natives as a favour which actually could not have been held back longer in the changed post-war situation. The African writer Franz Fanon rightly utters in this regard:

"Colonialism and imperialism did not pay their dues when they withdrew their flags and police forces from our territories".

Edward Said quotes another writer named Noam Chomsky who very aptly and clearly exposes the lame and feigned western claims of civilizing the uncivilized, brutal and ignorant people of Asia and Africa. Apparently Western ideology was of ensuring human dignity, liberty, self-determination and self-sufficient economy for all the independent countries of the world but practically it served for fulfilling the interests of the western imperial powers. In fact, this ideology or claim of the western countries has proved the cruel

nature of the Englishmen. They want to keep under developing countries poor, ignorant and insufficient in modern technologies so that they may rule over them through the various money-lending agencies like the World Bank and I.M.F. Whatever Chomsky has pointed out by saying, is absolutely right in the present age. Western imperialists are holding the economies of the third world countries by lending loans through World Bank and I.M.F. and above all they proclaim that they are favouring these countries by helping them in their difficult time of poverty, lackage of technology and feeble economy. Noam Chomsky rightly points out in this connection and utters:

"It's an absolute requirement of the western system of ideology that the vast gulf be established between the civilized west, with its traditional commitment to human dignity, liberty and self-determination, and the barbaric brutality of those who, for some reason, perhaps defective genes, fail to appreciate the depth of this historical commitment".

In all aspects whether it is intervention or domination or interference, one thing or reason is very much evident that it is unending thirst or greed for capturing and looting the raw materials of most of the countries of Asia and Africa. Said once again rightly refers to British and French imperialism which once had dominated and penetrated to the farthest territories of distant lands. It had been the practice of imperialistic Englishmen that wherever they found any sign of raw materials in any country, they went for capturing it without caring how many miles these distant territories might be. The subcontinent was one case in point; so was Congo. The history of these continents shows that Englishmen had once ruled over these lands by capturing all their natural resources of raw materials for fulfilling their industrial needs. They came in these lands under the feigned guise of professing an aim of developing the resources for the welfare of the natives, but their intervention was actually inspired by economic and strategic interests.

Their intervention and domination of a long period resulted in an interaction of cultures in the process. Said also takes much interest of this interracial culture which has its positive and negative results for the natives. Actually these developments and enlightenments did come through the interaction; as it still haunts the nations that remained under imperial rule. He takes too much interest in, the cultural impact of this interaction, and opines that the attitudes and feelings of the nations involved towards each other owe to their origin to the colonial experience of the past.

To conclude this above mentioned discussion, we can say that Said has very openly and clearly exposed the inner cruel nature of imperialistic society of Europe. He has very strictly rebuked and condemned the supreme authority

of the United States. After the end of the cold war, America has been assigned a role of setting the things right in all the countries of the third world under the devised term of world's responsibility. USA has also introduced a new world order which is nothing more than a reproduction of the old imperial order. Said's lectures on the subject of culture and imperialism clearly and openly show the feigned supremacy and imperialistic attitude of the Englishmen of western countries. The appeal of his lectures not only affects the subjugated people of the dominated territories of the third world but also the rest of the people of the whole world. Whatever Said has said in his lectures, did absolutely happen in the history; and is still happening by the western countries under the feigned claim of civilizing the uncivilized nations of the third world countries.

How far has Edward Said succeeded in stripping the mask from the ugly face of Imperialism? Elaborate with special reference to his Introduction to Culture and Imperialism. (P.U. 2006)

Before discussing Said's views on culture and imperialism, it is better to have a brief view on those events, reasons and trends of English Society which caused extending or expanding their culture and imperialism to the other territories of the world. I would like to talk historically at first as the history of English society shows Though the trend of industrialisation had been initiated or started in the 17th century yet it took its speed or rapidity in 18th century.

Under the influence of this trend of industrialisation, the landlords, farmers and peasants of rural class of English society were converting their farms, lands and dairies into industrial units. As the industries or industrial units were becoming more under the influence of the trend of industrialism in European countries, hence their demands for raw material as iron, silver, chemical, oil, stone etc. were also increased. To fulfill their basic needs arid demands of running the industrial units for modernization, European as well as other super powers extended their immense power to the other territories of the other weaker or underdeveloped countries which were loaded with natural sources and raw material. To capture the natural sources of other territories of the countries, the imperial countries dominated over metropolitan centres of other countries and then started ruling over distant territories.

It is very worthy to note here that these imperial countries outwardly gave an expression to the rest of the world that they had intervened or came into these territories in order to civilize the ignorant, uncivilized and uncultured natives but as a matter of fact is concerned, they intruded in their countries in order to loot or capture their natural resources of raw materials. That's why, Said says rightly that this immense power which concentrated in Britain and France as a result of industrialization, was more formidable than the power of Rome, Spain, Baghdad or Constantinople in the past. Gradually, other Western countries especially US also joined with Britain and France in this practice. So, we can say that 19th century showed a climax of ascendancy of the west.

Here, Said also points out a very important fact that Western countries extended their domination of acquisition of foreign territory by the rate of 247000 square miles a year. These

Western countries did so under the influence of their expanding economics which were "hungry for overseas markets, rawmaterials, cheap labour and fertile land".

This practice increased more after the mergance of the North American territory. Now these allied countries captured distant lands of Philippines, the Caribbean Central America, Barbary coastal parts of Europe and the Middle East, Vietnam and Korea. Said rightly says in the regard:

"The US was forward as an empire that would expand its population and territory and increase in power". Subcontinent was also dominated and ruled by Englishmen. As the history of subcontinent itself shows that Englishmen invaded over sub-continent through trade and business and ultimately occupied the whole territory. As this territory was enriched or loaded with minaral and natural sources, it fulfilled the demands and needs of raw material for the industrial units of the Western Countries for a long time.

There was a time when Romans also exploited or looted the territories of other countries but the exploitation of the rights of the natives of dominated territories by the imperialism of French and the British was different in its nature. In other words, it means to say that they went out with The aim of improving those backward regions. It was their outward feigned declaration which, history had itself shown the falsity of that flattering notion. They were more interested in exploiting and looting their rights as well as raw materials than civilizing them.

To prove this fact, Said gives reference of Conrad's Heart of Darkness in which Conrad has openly and ruthlessly exposed the violation, exploitation and cruelty of the natives of Congo in Africa by the Englishmen. Another writer named as Franz Fanon also openly says in this regard in the following words:

"Colonialism and imperialism have not paid their dues when they withdrew their flags and their police forces from our territories. For centuries the foreign colonists have behaved in the under developed world like nothing more than criminals".

The literature of this time only exhibits the vice of imperialism because whatever the writers and critics felt in that period, portrayed through their literary compositions and works. Edward Said rightly says in this connection:

"Imperialism means the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre that rules a distant territory".

Throwing light on the term "colonialism" Said utters:

"Colonialism which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory".

There is no doubt in saying that some European writers of that time wrote on the problem of nostalgia; faced by dislocated natives and immigrants who were colonialized in the foreign territories; it was nothing but a yearning for-the supremacy which they enjoyed.

After the second world war, imperialism did not come to an end even after the post-war decolonization. The cultural effects of western countries can even be observed or seen in the countries like India and Algeria which are still linked in a legacy of connections to France and Britain.

The ending of the second world war heralded the message of freedom and liberty from the foreign imperial rulers and as a result many colonized territories were decolonized, yet the influence of the cultural rites and customs was very much dominant on the ways of life of subjugated people of dominated and occupied territories by western rulers. Though direct

colonialism like the British in India' and French in Algeria has almost vanished yet it does not end from its roots absolutely. Now it is present in its other forms. It is rather reflected in the changed outlook or mentality of the two nations.

It is very worthy to note here that some of the European writers defined imperialism as:

"... ideas that certain people and certain territories require and beseech domination".

Some European writers and critics of the second half of the 19th century illustrated this above mentioned idea by favouring it as that India was created only in order to be ruled by England. Said quoted Kipling's novel Kim to support in this connection.

Said further says in his lectures on "*Culture and Imperialism*" that after the end of the cold war, the super powers of the world devised a new world order. In this respect or regard, US is at the top of the list. In other simple words, it is a new brand of imperialism.

Willy Brandt presented a so-called report on North South problem in 1980. This report also demanded a sudden solution of the problem because the newly diagnosis of the North South problem was being applied to all the underdeveloped countries in the world. This-new world order is itself a doctrine of US's responsibility to set things right all over the world.

Now in the present age, we see that USA is the guardian of setting all the things right in all the countries of the world. The 'doctrine of "world responsibility"' is taken as justification for US's involvement in any affair of other countries under the sun. Once again Said absolutely says right in this connection:

"The goal of US foreign policy is to bring about a world increasingly subject to the rule of law. But it is the United States which organizes the peace and defines the law".

Said has rightly said that these terms as "*world responsibility*", "*new world order*" symbolise a new brand of imperialism. It is also an open and causeless exploitation and loot of the rights as well as the raw materials of the third world countries. In this present age, we see that under the guise of world's responsibility to set things right, the guardian of the world is making its involvement in affairs of the third world in order to fulfill their economic interests by capturing the natural sources and raw materials of these countries rather than having any genuine concern for the people of the world.

In this connection Chomsky rightly condemns this so called western ideology in the following words:

"It is an absolute requirement for the western system of ideology that a vast gulf be established between the civilized west, with its traditional commitment to human dignity, liberty and self-determination, and the barbaric brutality of those who, for some reason, perhaps defective genes, fail to appreciate the depth of this historical commitment".

It is also very rightly observed that USA advocates its self-appointed writ which runs in the entire world of today. Americans think that whatever their country thinks or regards, it is just as the rest of the people of the world want.

Said is of the view that if the counter forces to imperialism such as migrant workers, refugees and decolonized people, black immigrants, urban, squatters, students and popular insurrectionists are united on two points—one is of security of personal freedom and second is of environmental concerns, these millions of dislocated people can rise a formidable revolt. Moreover, these dislocated humanbeings are free from ethnic and national prejudices because their dislocation has made them free from these rational, national and ethnic prejudices. They also know that if they indulge in such kind of petty prejudices, it will help imperialists. They

make it easy for them to divide and rule. Actually they are the instruments of the so called and vicious system enforced by imperialism.

To conclude this above mentioned discussion, we can say openly and forcefully that whatever Said has delivered in his lecturer on culture and imperialism, absolutely shows the clear picture of the so called imperialism, exploitation and lootings of the basic rights of natives of the subjugated territories of the world. The hunger of the western economies for fulfilling the needs, necessities and demands of raw materials for industrialization, led the western countries to extend their domination on the distant territories of the other countries in order to capture their natural sources of raw materials. This imperialism even did not come to end after the post war decolonization but it shaped in newly devised world order by the US which was no more than a worst kind of reproduction of the old imperial order under the feigned guise of setting the things right in all the other countries.

Edward Said's Prose Style

Introduction

Style is a fundamental aspect of prose. It is the literary element that describes the ways that the author uses words, sentence structure, figurative language, and sentence arrangement which work together to establish mood, images, and meaning in the text. Style describes how the author describes events, objects, and ideas. An author's style is what sets his or her writing apart and makes it unique. Edward Said is a distinguished prose writer of 21st century. Most of his writings are about discourses of imperialism, Islam, Palestinian colonization by Israel and music. Said's style of writing can be studied in thematic analysis of his essays and books. Paradoxical nature of identity, celebration of exile, repetition of ideas, writer as theorist, interrogative introduction, imperialistic allusions, musicality of text and coining new terms are the salient features of Said's prose style.

1. The Paradoxical Position

As critic, political commentator, literary and cultural theorist or New York citizen, Edward Said demonstrates the often paradoxical nature of identity in an increasingly migratory and globalized world. In him, we find a person located in a tangle of cultural and theoretical contradictions: contradictions between his political voice and professional position; contradictions between the different ways in which he has been read; contradictions in the way he is located in the academy. The intimate connection between Said's identity and his cultural theory, and the paradoxes these reveal, show us something about the constructedness and complexity of cultural identity itself.

2. Celebration of Exile

Said deliberately celebrates exile in his prose. Whatever he writes, we see an intangible effect of nostalgia and thrust for rootlessness, because of all the trauma and pain of homelessness he has suffered. This places the exile in a singular position with regard to history and society, but also in a much more anxious and ambivalent position with regard to culture: "Exile ... is 'a mind of winter' in which the pathos of summer and autumn as much as the potential of spring are nearby but unobtainable. Perhaps this is another way of saying that a life of exile moves according to a different calendar, and is less seasonal and settled than life at home. Exile is life led outside

habitual order. It is nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal; but no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew."

3. Repetition of Ideas

Another important feature of Edward Said's writing is repetition of ideas. Repetition imposes certain constraints upon the interpretation of the text; it historicizes the text as something which originates in the world, which insists upon its own being. Said's work constantly rehearses the features of his own peculiar academic and cultural location, or the 'text' of his own life -- exile, politicization, the living of two lives, the insistent questions of identity, and the passionate defense of Palestine. All his essays in one or other way talk about same thing even he keeps stressing on one thing in one essay. For example his essays like "Islam as News" and "Orientalism" talk in a language of "binary opposition" to undermine the western culture and imperialism and its operation in the entire globe.

4. Writer As Theorist

Out of the issue of Palestine grows one of the most important themes in Said's theory -- the role of the intellectual. From the position of a professional literary theorist established in the elite academic environment of Columbia University, Said has been required to adopt the role of a spokesperson, called out to talk about political issues for which he had no special qualification. This confirmed his belief in the value of amateurism, but much more than that it gave him a vision of the importance of exile in empowering the intellectual to be detached from partisan politics in order to 'speak truth to power'. The sense of 'non-belonging' has confirmed his own sense that the public intellectual needs to speak from the margin. It is his unique characteristic of being a prose writer whom invents new positions and roles for a writer than just being a critic.

5. Interrogative Introduction

The style of Said seems to be discursive, conversational and even repetitive, but his writings are quite thought provoking. The most striking feature of his essays is that he begins his essay with a question like statement to set a course of discussion in the mind of reader. In Representations of the Intellectual, while discussing the role of an intellectual, Said poses an important questioning the beginning: how far should an intellectual go in getting involved? Is it possible to join a party or faction and retain a semblance of independence? This question asking style has positioned Said's writings at a unique height of literary canon.

6. Imperialistic Allusions From Literature

In Said's writing while talking about relation between imperialism, colonization and culture we come across references of different Victorian novels like Robinson Crusoe, Great Expectations, Heart of Darkness and Mansfield Park to understand the underlined imperialist ideologies. Said believes that novel has been important in formation of imperialistic attitudes, references, and experiences. In Said's writing, novels are not the ones which caused imperialism, but that the novel is the cultural artifact of bourgeois society. He argues that the narratives of emancipation and enlightenment mobilized the people to rise against the yoke of imperialism. In short, illusions of previous time's fiction is a very striking feature of Said's writing.

7. Musicality of Text

Said was a music lover and a musician himself. Said was fascinated by the connection between memory and music, by how remembrances of things played, as he once put it, are enacted. Music for Said was inspiring. When he played Schubert's Fantasie in a film about him directed by Salem Brahimi, his face quivered with every note that his hands transported on the keyboard. Indeed, Said would always make connections and references to Palestine, even in his more esoteric essays about literature, theory, or music. Fantasie might also have served as a kind of premonition for Said that it would be his swansong, his passion for music always made him feel nostalgic about his past and homeland. Even in his text structure we see a very smooth pattern making his writing bit musical.

8. Coining New Terms

Said coined some useful terms like Orientalism and contrapuntal. In his book "Orientalism", Said defines orientalism as the acceptance in the West of "the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, mind, destiny and so on". Borrowed from music, where it refers to the relationship between themes, the term "contrapuntal reading" is used by Edward Said in "Culture and Imperialism" to describe the relationship between narratives set in metropolitan centres, or at least in the countryside, of the dominant colonial nations such as England and France, and the colonies upon which the great powers depended for their wealth.

Conclusion

Edward Said's prose style is inspiring, generative and eloquent. For writers striving to create structures of clarity and meaning, Said has few competitors. He is different from all other prose writers in sense of content and text. The concepts which he deals with are not discussed by any other prose writer. Underneath the self-posturing verbiage there is an acute analytic mind at work. Said is not only a critic but a socialist and a reformer as well. By dealing with sensitive issues like colonization, imperialism and trying to counter Islamophobia presented by the West, he mostly focuses on themes. In short, the most prominent features of Said's prose style are his use of imperialistic illusions and coining of new terms.